



helps children
communicate



A Chance to Talk

Report on a new model for primary
schools to support children's speech,
language and communication





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Headlines...

Between 2010 and 2012 we worked with **30** schools in **4** Local Authorities representing a total of **8,308** children aged 4 to 7 years old.

A focus on children's speech, language and communication led to on average a **50% increase in progress in reading** over that time.

All schools involved in the initiative are continuing to support children's communication at three waves.

Schools reported that they **identified children earlier** and were able to spot previously overlooked SLCN as a result of their involvement in *A Chance to Talk*.

Children with delayed language development...

We gave **611** children help with their delayed language development in small groups.

They made between **9 and 18 months** progress in language after a 10 week intervention - on average over **three times** the 'normal' rate of progress.

Up to 80% of these children moved into the typical range of language development, helping to **narrow the gap** between them and their peers.

This focus on language for children with delayed development **accelerated the progress** they made academically. **90%** of them met or exceeded the progress expected for all children of their age group in reading, **69%** in writing and **76%** in numeracy.

Children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)...

Clusters of schools shared the **commissioning** of speech and language therapy.

393 children with SLCN received specialist intervention individually or in small groups from a speech and language therapist.

Head teachers and speech and language service managers feel *A Chance to Talk* provides an effective, value for money model of commissioning for developing all children's speech, language and communication, as well as for children with SLCN.



A Chance to Talk

100% of parents were highly satisfied with a school based speech and language therapy service.

Children with SLCN had better speech, language and communication skills, found learning in the classroom easier, and were noticeably more confident and sociable.



Introduction

Primary school pupils need effective speech, language and communication skills to learn and develop socially and emotionally.

A Chance to Talk is an initiative which improves the communication skills of 4-7 year olds in primary schools.

The initiative offers schools a **model of commissioning** support for all children's speech, language and communication over three levels or waves. It operates across clusters of primary schools, building their capacity to work with children's language.

The *A Chance to Talk* model provided:

- training and development for schools to develop good quality teaching that supports all children's language
- a targeted intervention – *Talk Boost* – for children with delayed language delivered by trained teaching assistants
- speech and language therapy for those with more complex SLCN

This report describes the pilot of *A Chance to Talk* across four areas in England, and is for all those involved – schools, speech and language service managers, funding partners, and our expert advisors. It also aims to communicate the excitement, success and opportunities of *A Chance to Talk* to those who may want to commission support in a similar way.

A Chance to Talk was developed, piloted and evaluated by I CAN, the children's communication charity working with The Communication Trust, supported by the Every Child a Chance Trust.

- A Chance to Talk aimed to:**
- Improve outcomes for children – with and without speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)
 - Empower staff to support children's speech, language and communication and identify those with SLCN
 - Engender closer relationships between schools, speech and language therapy services and parents in supporting speech, language and communication
 - Improve accessibility and quality of provision for children and their families
 - Develop a cost effective model of commissioning services to support all children's speech, language and communication



Why we need A Chance to Talk

- Language and communication are fundamental life skills and without them children can't learn and make friends.
- Good language skills are important for children to achieve at school and are a strong predictor of later academic success.
- More than a third of children are not working securely in communication, language and literacy by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and in some areas of deprivation, more than half the children start school with delayed language.
- 10% of children have long term and persistent language and communication difficulties, that's 2 or 3 in every class.
- In primary schools SLCN is the most prevalent reported special educational need (SEN), and most children with other SEN will have a measure of SLCN.
- Children's communication difficulties are a barrier to accessing the curriculum and developing the emotional and social skills they need for a successful experience at school.
- Children with poor language development at 5 years are at substantial risk of low achievement at 7 years and beyond.
- Research also tells us that two thirds of 7-14 year olds with serious behaviour problems have language impairment.
- Recent reports show great variability in service provision for children with SLCN, a lack of confidence in school staff, and children's language development not being adequately supported.
- Employers report poor communication skills in their new recruits.

How we piloted A Chance to Talk

A Chance to Talk was piloted from the Summer Term 2010 until July 2012 across 4 areas in England. The areas all had significant deprivation, but represented a wide demographic range.

In each area, 7 or 8 primary schools were recruited making a total of 30 schools in all, representing a total of 8,308 children aged 4 to 7 years old.

Across the 30 schools taking part in the pilot, 63% of schools had above average numbers of children eligible for free school meals, an indicator of social disadvantage. 70% of schools had above average numbers

of children recorded as having special educational needs and disabilities. The schools were ethnically diverse.

All the schools came to the project with different existing provision to support children's speech, language and communication, and different reasons for taking part. For most of them, the increasing number of children starting school with poor language, together with limited access to specialist speech and language therapy services were key factors in joining the pilot.

In each school, there were activities at 3 'waves'.

North Yorkshire is the largest county in England, its population density is low, with most residents living in small towns. Four of the seven schools who took part were in rural areas with less than 70 pupils on roll.

8 pilot schools were situated in Gravesham, a major regeneration area on the north Kent coast, with a population of about 100,000. It experiences high mobility and is culturally diverse - the Sikh community representing 7% of the borough's population.

In Rochdale Metropolitan Borough, Greater Manchester, 8 schools took part. Schools included those with very high English as an Additional Language (EAL) populations, high mobility and high levels of social deprivation.

7 schools took part in Kirkby, a town in the north west of England about 6 miles from central Liverpool. The area has historically high levels of long term unemployment, ill health and deprivation. Kirkby's population is largely white, English speaking and the town has one of the highest scores in England in indices of overall deprivation.

The A Chance to Talk 3 Wave Approach

Wave 1 'Universal Level'

High quality inclusive class teaching in a language-rich environment which promotes all children's language development.

All children

Wave 2 'Targeted Level'

Teaching assistants trained to deliver *Talk Boost* intervention to small groups.

Children with 'delayed language' just below what is expected for their age

Wave 3 'Specialist Level'

A speech and language therapist works across the schools providing specialist intervention to individual children or groups with support for school staff.

Children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)

At Wave 1

- Training for school staff in how to support children's speech, language and communication based on I CAN's *Primary Talk* programme
- Practical classroom-based strategies for supporting children's language.

Good practice strategies to promote an environment where language is better understood include:

- Making instructions simpler
- Saying children's names first to help them listen
- Giving them a bit more time to answer
- Teaching children how to ask when they don't understand



At Wave 2

- *Talk Boost* delivered to small groups of children with language delay
- Groups of four children enjoy three weekly 30-40 minute activity sessions run by trained teaching assistants over a period of 10 weeks.
- Sessions focus on 5 core elements of language and 120 activities are available.

At Wave 3

- Small group or individual intervention planned by a speech and language therapist based in the cluster of schools.
- Information and support provided to families based around their children's specific areas of need.
- Supported generalisation of skills and strategies through team teaching, demonstration and class-based activities.

School staff identified children for wave 2 and 3 intervention. They were supported in identifying children by a specially designed progression tool, and discussion with the therapist.

What does an *A Chance to Talk* classroom look like?

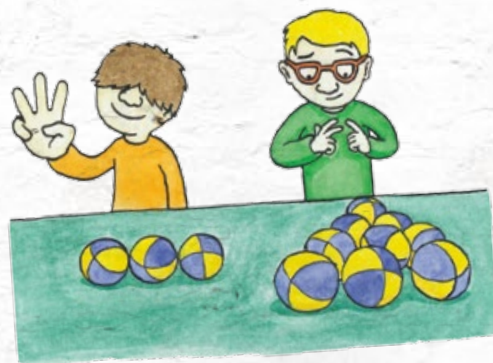
A Chance to Talk classrooms are carefully arranged to minimise distractions. Teachers make sure some children are seated where they can listen better – this might be near the front in whole class activities, or facing whoever is talking in small group or individual work.

Displays remind children of what will help their learning and communication, such as

- A sequence of pictures or symbols showing the timetable
- Key words linked to current topics – maybe with a symbol or picture
- Prompts for children showing them what they can do if they need help – to support independent learning
- Reminders about different styles of talking: the style for story-telling or reporting a science investigation
- A scale to show what volume of talking is appropriate – number 1 is silence

Staff know that they must point them out and change displays regularly – otherwise they just become ‘part of the wallpaper’.

‘We use strategies ... such as modelling back correct speech, giving alternative words that they might know. “When we’re talking about this, we could use all of these different words” as a lot of the children only know one word for a particular thing.’ Headteacher



Staff skillfully monitor their own language and adjust it for different children e.g. simplifying instructions for children with SLCN, exploring alternative vocabulary or encouraging longer sentences for more able pupils. They use excellent questioning skills to check understanding and promote thinking skills.

Providing a ‘good language’ model is a key role of adults in the classroom - they show good communication or thinking through their own talking, scaffold sentence constructions to support all children, while giving children time to think about their answers.

Staff praise children for good language and communication skills. Praise is also specific to the speaking and listening learning objectives, which are shared with the children in ways they understand.

There are well-established routines and ways of allowing children to think about what they want to say. Children might have a ‘talking partner’ and are always given specific tasks or things to talk about for a short time in lessons. Talking in groups is carefully managed and structured to support learning.

**‘Why did Samia give that orange to the boy?
How do you think they decided that?’**

‘Hmmm, I need to think about this... it helps me if I talk it through... that one is bigger so it must go...!’

‘I can see you’re really listening Sam - you’re asking some great questions - well done’

‘When you talked about your ideas with Jamal, your answer was so much clearer - a level 3!’

Links are made between good communication and successful learning or interaction – and said out loud to make it clear to children.

Children are encouraged to ask questions and praised when they do, so they have the skills and confidence to say when they don’t understand and can learn ways of seeking clarification.

Information about the children’s learning is shared with parents / carers, including ways that they can support their child’s language development. There may be ‘talk’ homework tasks instead of some written work. Children rehearse what they might say to tell their parents about their school day.

‘In the classroom is where it makes the most impact. Good sitting, good listening, good looking. All those skills that are so important to learning.’ Foundation Stage Leader and *A Chance to Talk* Coordinator



So you could go up to Sasha and say ‘please can I have a turn?’



Outside there are demarcated play areas including calmer areas for chatting. There is also equipment to encourage interactive games and activities. There might be a ‘buddy’ system to help children find someone to talk to.

Adults on duty outside understand the importance of language and communication, and know ways that they can support the children.

- When there are disagreements, children are guided to work things out: clear turn-taking rules, suggestions for what they can say, a visual framework to help them to give their account of what happened.
- Children are given opportunities to rehearse what they might say to join a game, or suggest a new one.



What happens in a *Talk Boost* session?



Teachers identified children with delayed language using the Progression Tool; these children attended *Talk Boost* sessions in groups of 4. The 30-40 minute sessions were run 3 times per week for 10 weeks. *Talk Boost* sessions are lively and fun! They include a mixture of activities covering most of the key components of Attention and Listening, Vocabulary, Building Sentences, Story Telling and Conversations. In each session, the children learn about the essential skills and why they are important.

'We need to look at our partner and listen carefully so that they know we are listening to them – that will help us to be friends.'

'This game is about sorting things out, so that we know which things go together.'

'So now we can put things in the right order to help us telling our news.'

The groups are run by specially trained teaching assistants who understand the importance of the different components of language and how they are introduced and practised throughout the 10 weeks.

After quick introductions (remembering everyone's names) Mrs Jones (teaching assistant) explains the first activity –

'I want you to tell me something about your weekend news – but I might or might not be listening very well.'

Harry starts talking, but Mrs Jones isn't looking at Harry, she's fidgeting and squirming around in her chair, checking her watch and looking around the room. The children laugh. Mrs Jones checks with the children – what's she doing wrong? How did they know she wasn't listening to Harry?

Harry starts again and Mrs Jones remembers some of the advice the children gave her ... but still gets it 'wrong'. She stops Harry once more, and gets help from the others. And so it goes on, until the children have corrected all the poor listening behaviours, and Mrs

Jones can check with them all the things she must do to be a 'good listener'. Harry finally gets to tell all his news to Mrs Jones showing all the correct things to do as a listener. She shows the group all these behaviours on the *Talk Boost* 'Good Listening' poster, which she sticks up and leaves as a reminder for the next few sessions.

'So, to be a good listener we have to ...'

Each component has its own set of principles, based on research-informed evidence. Running through all of them are the principles of:

- Working on understanding and talking
- Children building their awareness of their own skills
- Adults making the learning clear, talking about the purpose of each activity

Activities linked to 4 of the 5 components form part of every session so that the children in the groups get a 'little and often' kind of approach.

Then it's on to the next activity.

Mrs Jones brings out a picture of a bridge. (The class just happen to be doing a topic on 'Journeys'). 'What's this?' she asks – 'We're going to talk about it and think about as many things as we know about it'. Using the questions on the 'Word Magic' chart as a guide, together the group come up with what it's for, what you do with it, where you see it, what it might be made from, what sound it starts with and so on. Mrs Jones then checks they can all remember at least one thing about 'bridges'.

'Next time we see one of these, we can remember all these things about it, and that will help us to remember its name' explains Mrs Jones.

The intervention materials include a detailed session by session breakdown and any special resources needed, together with ideas for reinforcing key messages in whole class activities. The pilot project showed improved outcomes for the children when this happened.

Next it's the 'Silly and Sensible Sentences' activity – the children take it in turns to pull a card out of the bag. The cards match with the colour coded sentence template showing a person, an action and an object / a place. When the template is filled up, that child says the sentence and decides if it is a 'silly' or 'sensible' sentence.

'The girl... is painting... a sandcastle' says Chloe – 'That's silly!' she declares 'You don't paint a sandcastle when you're on the beach like that!' She's correct, and wins the cards. When all the cards have been used up, Mrs Jones helps the children to review –

'So we can put a person, an action and an object or place together to make a sentence'. Next time this activity comes up, Mrs Jones notes, she'll use the 'and' and 'because' cards to help the children combine sentences.

Another key resource is the Children's Activity Book. Each child in the group receives their own copy to take home and share with their family. There are suggestions and tips for adults in the home to support their child by giving further opportunities for practising what they have learnt in the groups.

Just before the end of the session and the awarding of 'smiley faces' for good listening, Mrs Jones runs over the activities they have done. The children think about and rehearse what they will say about the session so that when they get back to class, they can tell the class teacher. This 'review' back in the whole class is important for reinforcing the learning, and showing how the class teacher values what the children do in their *Talk Boost* groups.

Children made between 9-18 months progress in language after the 10 week intervention. Up to 80% of these children moved into the typical range of language development, helping to narrow the gap between them and their peers.

Olivia's story

Staff at school were concerned that Olivia was very shy and did not interact with school staff or her peers. Olivia did not answer questions in class nor would she ask for help. She would wait for staff to come to her.

Olivia took part in the *Talk Boost* program. At first she still would not contribute so her teacher would ask her questions that she knew Olivia would be able to answer. This resulted in Olivia gradually gaining confidence and taking part in the *Talk Boost* activities.

Olivia has now moved to juniors and this transition has gone well. She will now sit with her friends during carpet time (rather than needing to be near the teacher) and she will put her hand up and answer questions. Olivia is interacting much more with school staff and will say hello when she sees staff in the corridor. Olivia is also making academic progress.



A day in the life of an *A Chance to Talk* speech and language therapist

The school based therapists get involved in a range of activities across the three waves.

I work across 8 different schools, so each day is different. However, I've got to know the staff and children in each school much better so I can work with the whole school and not just specific children.

A quick chat in the staff room then I'm off to my first group of the day – four Year 2 children, modelling some language activities with a TA for her to continue running the sessions when I'm not around. After the session we discuss the activities and how she might adapt them to push the children on a bit.

Assessment

At 10am the interpreter arrives to help me with an assessment I've arranged. The child in question has been in school for 2 terms and started with very little spoken English. I brief the interpreter, and with their help I get some useful information on the home background, how much the child says at home and his level of understanding. It appears that he's struggling with both languages. I explain my concerns to the mother and talk through what we can do together.

Part of the school community

Break time and I head for the staff room – an important part of my day – spending time talking with staff, following up on strategies or activities I've suggested, picking up on any new concerns they might have noticed.

Team teaching

I meet up with the Year 1 teacher, and we head off to class talking about the vocabulary activities that we're going to use in a numeracy session we've planned together. She has a number of children that I'm involved with but I know the language focus will help all the children in her class.

Support for staff

After lunch I've set up a short meeting with some of the TAs running *Talk Boost* groups. We go over a few of their queries and soon get into discussing ways that they might simplify or extend activities.

Individual specialist intervention

Now it's a couple of one-to-one sessions with children I've been seeing for a while. This has given me time to get to know them and their families, and work out ways of building their confidence as well as their language skills.

Training

After school I have a short session with all the teachers. I have prepared some prompt cards to show and discuss, which children in some of the classes can use to show when they're not sure what to do.

At the end of the day

On reflection, I know I can make a difference to the children with more complex SLCN, but what I've also found through working this way is that I can have an even greater impact on all the children, through my work with the teachers and teaching assistants right across the school. Tough but rewarding!

Ellie's story

Ellie had been attending speech and language therapy sessions in a clinic from the age of 3 due to concerns regarding her speech sounds. When she started school she was transferred to the *A Chance to Talk* initiative for school based therapy. An assessment by the *A Chance to Talk* speech and language therapist showed that Ellie made several mistakes in her speech. The speech and language therapist developed a programme and worked individually with Ellie, supported by school staff.

After a year, the programme was reviewed and she had therapy with a group of children who had similar needs. This was to help increase Ellie's confidence when communicating. She made good progress, and when re-assessed her speech skills were

appropriate for her age so she was discharged from the service.

Ellie's parents are very pleased with the progress she has made. They were worried as she hadn't made progress in the clinic based service.

Ellie's mum says: *'When Ellie first started school, we were told she was behind academically. She was better in numeracy than literacy, which I felt was a result of her speech difficulties, which could sometimes make it hard to accurately assess her.'*

I always felt that she would be capable of more if it wasn't for her speech and confidence.

As soon as therapy started taking place in school, Ellie started making progress, which as a parent was an enormous relief.'

Evaluation

A Chance to Talk was evaluated using a mixed methods approach, gathering both quantitative and qualitative data from a range of sources.

Measuring the impact on children's language and school performance:

- School attainment data – in a sample of 6 schools, representing 1990 pupils, we looked at progress in reading, writing and maths for children in Years 1 and 2
- Interviews were carried out with head teachers, *A Chance to Talk* co-ordinators, therapists and service managers for speech, language and communication
- Throughout the pilot, case study information was gathered from school staff, therapists, parents and from children themselves

In addition to this, for children with delayed language taking part in *Talk Boost*, data was gathered from 163 pupils over 17 schools in all 4 areas. Progress was measured using standardised language tests before and after intervention. Similarly, for children with SLCN a range of language tests was used to measure progress.

Quantitative data was analysed, providing information about progress in relation to expected levels and rates of progress. Previous cohort attainment data was used as a comparison group, with national expectations of progress.

Measuring the impact on staff knowledge, skills and confidence – and on practice:

- Training evaluation questionnaires – feedback following training events using rating scales
- Additional information gathered through case studies and reflection encouraged using learning logs
- Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders included questions relating to changes for staff



The impact of *A Chance to Talk*

30 schools in all took part, representing a total of 8,308 children aged 4 to 7 years old

63% of schools had above average levels of children eligible for free school meals, an indicator of social disadvantage. 70% of schools had above average numbers of children with SEN. The schools were ethnically diverse

Children who were eligible for free school meals had lower levels of language initially, but made significant progress

For children with delayed language 90% of pupils met or exceeded expected progress in reading, 69% in writing and 76% in numeracy

611 children with delayed language had intervention from trained teaching assistants using *Talk Boost*

Children made, on average, 50% more progress in reading, exceeding the progress expected nationally for their age group

393 children received specialist intervention from a speech and language therapist

Impacts seen by parents on behaviour, confidence, self esteem and friendships

100% of parents of children with SLCN were highly satisfied with the *A Chance to Talk* school-based model

Over 80% of children with delayed language caught up with their peers



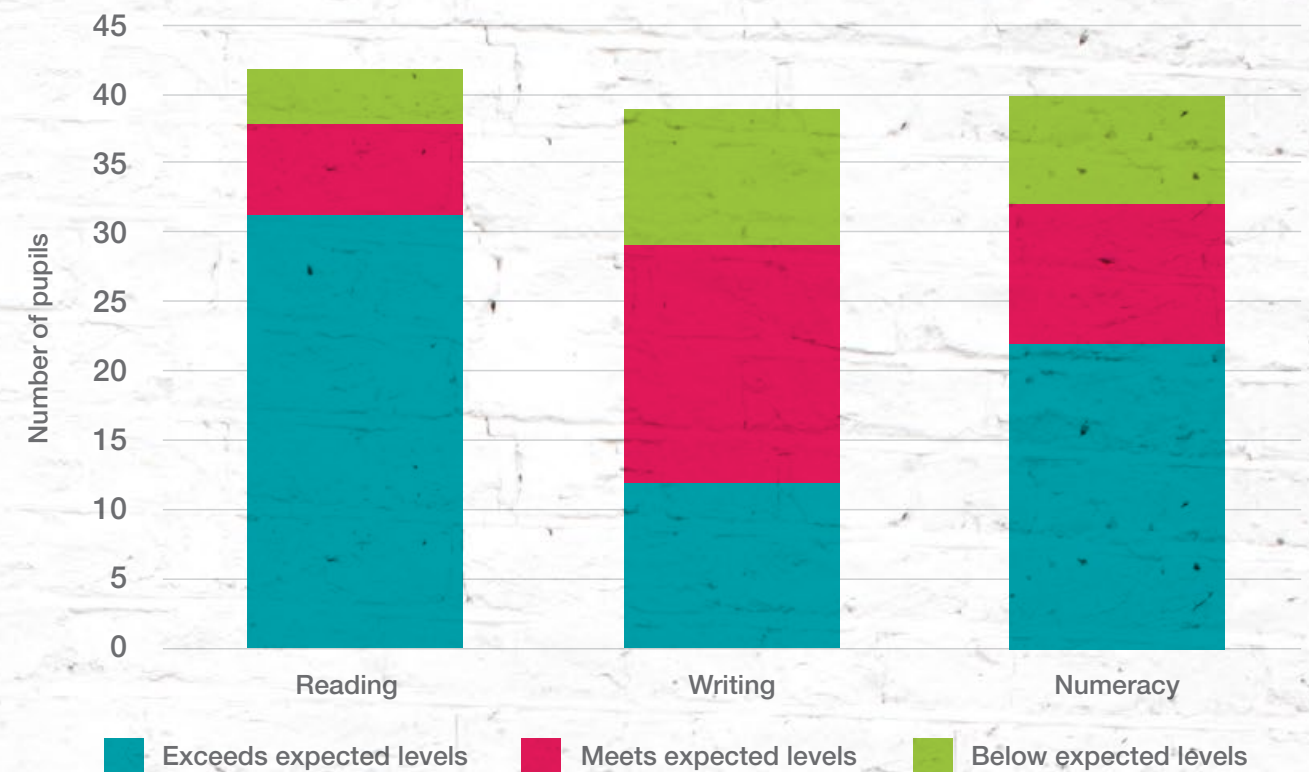
Results for different groups of children

This analysis shows the powerful influence that language has on learning. Enhancing children's speech, language and communication has a knock on impact on the progress they make – particularly in reading.

- **Children in A Chance to Talk schools** made on average 50% more progress in reading at key stage 1. This exceeded the progress expected nationally for their age group.
- **Children with delayed language** made significant progress after the *Talk Boost* intervention in language tests. Gains ranged from between 9 and 18 months progress following the intervention.
- **Children with English as an additional language and children on free school meals** have a lower starting point. They do make significant progress, though less than other children.

- *Talk Boost* is effective for children in all three year groups. Overall, **year 1 children** made most progress.
- **90% of children with delayed language** made or exceeded the progress expected for all children of their age group in reading, 69% in writing and 76% in numeracy.
- This is also true for **children with SLCN**. After the *A Chance to Talk* initiative was introduced, there was a 50% increase in children who met or exceeded expected progress in reading, a 36% increase for writing and 61% for Maths.
- *A Chance to Talk* has had a positive impact on outcomes for children, particularly those with delayed language and those with longer-term speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

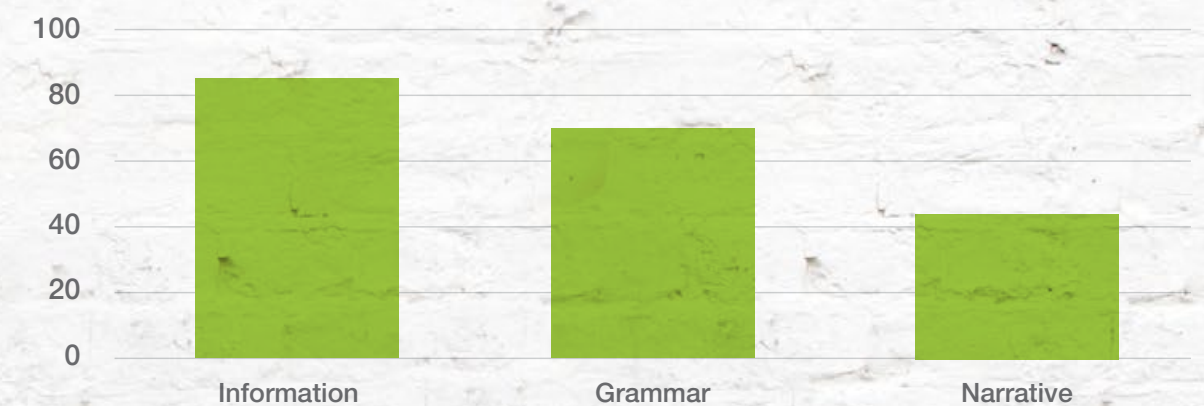
Progress for children with delayed language development after *Talk Boost*



Progress Data – Children with speech, language and communication needs

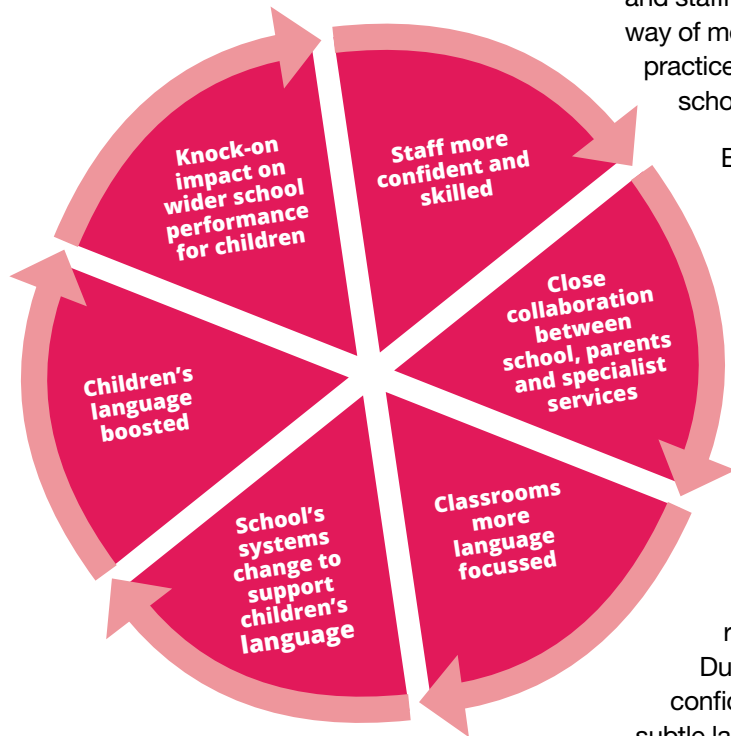


Percentage of children with language levels in the typical range after *Talk Boost*



Wider impact

A *Chance to Talk* had a significant impact on outcomes for children, but also proved to be a catalyst for change both in schools and specialist services.



flexible. Therapists were involved in a broad range of activities across the 3 waves, such as jointly running parent groups, team teaching, advising about the classroom environment and staffroom discussion. This was a powerful way of meeting pupils' needs, and developing practice in schools – both for therapists and for school staff.

Both head teachers and speech and language therapy service managers reported that **A Chance to Talk provides an effective, value for money model of commissioning** for developing all children's speech, language and communication, as well as for children with SLCN.

Initially, schools found it hard to **identify children with SLCN**, in particular to differentiate children for *Talk Boost* groups from those who required speech and language therapy. During the initiative, staff became more confident, in particular at recognising more subtle language difficulties that previously would have been overlooked.

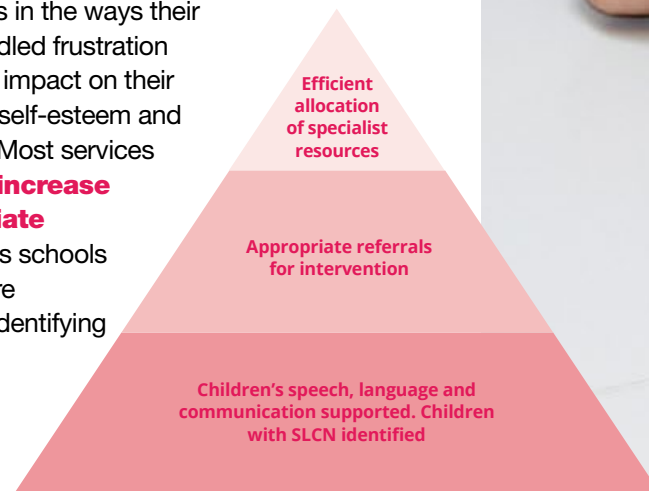
Through *A Chance to Talk*, earlier identification led to more appropriate support. Parents valued the school-based service and expressed a high level of satisfaction with the service received through *A Chance to Talk* (88% at targeted wave 2 and 100% at specialist wave 3). Parents saw changes in the ways their children handled frustration and saw the impact on their confidence, self-esteem and friendships. Most services reported an **increase in appropriate referrals**, as schools became more accurate in identifying the children who needed specialist intervention.

The initiative developed staff knowledge and confidence in working with children's speech, language and communication.

In particular, school staff became more aware of the language and communication aspects that may previously have been interpreted in terms of the child's behaviour or the environment. For some staff, it also confirmed the attitude that speech, language and communication has to be a central aspect of learning.

A Chance to Talk also impacted on changes to classroom practice – something other programmes have found hard to shift. Key factors that helped this were running *Talk Boost* groups, discussing strategies in training, building in simple ways to measure impact and working closely with a speech and language therapist.

For both school and therapists, *A Chance to Talk* gave them the opportunity to **develop a new way of working together** which was



What people say about *A Chance to Talk*

Children...

'Yes, because every two weeks you come and help me and leave me to practise. It will be easy one day.' (Pupil's response when asked if talking was getting any easier)

'Yes. I can talk much better.' How does that feel?: 'Be happy.' (Charlotte was asked if talking was getting any easier)

'I enjoyed everything, especially building sentences'

'Fantastic group...loved it all... liked describing best'

SLT: Why is talking hard?

Pupil: Because me keep forgetting the right words

SLT: How does that feel?

Pupil: Lonely, because everyone can talk proper except me

SLT: Is talking getting easier?

Pupil: Yes, because every two weeks you come and help me and leave me to practise. It will be easy one day.

Parents...

'I feel that speech and language therapy in school has been life changing for Ellie. We have seen a big difference in her confidence and her behaviour is more settled because she is less frustrated and we can understand her'

'Since H has started on this programme I have seen a real change in him, he seems to be getting more confident, and has formed a great friendship group'

'she's so much clearer, she's saying longer sentences she's not scared to talk in front of strangers anymore... even in school she's opening up to people more. She's joining in more in class; she's got no problem with standing up in front of the other children and explaining something'

'The sessions have made me reflect how I speak to my child and the impact this has on my child's confidence'

Teaching assistants...

'one boy who was very reluctant to speak in class... will now answer in a large group'

'The class have picked up on the listening, how can we be good listeners because we're constantly reminding them in class when they're on the carpet 'how can we be good listeners' and they're all picking up on those aspects.'

'...the before and after form came back and showed that the training improved our knowledge and understanding, it was really beneficial'

'Talk Boost has helped with their sentence building immensely. It has given them a lot more confidence in class to speak out.'

Head teachers...

'It's improved our knowledge and understanding'

'There's been a gap, for years we've been saying it and this (Wave 1) is beginning to plug that gap.'

'Thanks to *A Chance to Talk*, our staff team are now trained and confident in identifying children with delayed language or significant language difficulties. We are able to offer the right support at the right time to children we identify with communication needs to ensure children can fulfil their potential at school.'

'...we are referring much sooner... but referring the children for the right level of support now, and this has improved over time'

'Well I think in practical terms it actually makes a difference in removing barriers to learning of which there are many and the children, it's not just about the speech and language therapy it's actually a strategy that is of great benefit to virtually all children'

'Language and effective communication is key to being able to learn. This project has been invaluable in aiding the school to develop this important area.'

Speech and language therapists...

'Hard to reach families are now engaged with the service, which in itself is priceless.'

'Initially we focused on individual children that the school staff were most concerned about and follow up work was done by the school's SEN teacher. Over time we realised this was impractical and barely scraping the surface. We changed tack and set up groups run by the class LSAs. This worked well in this school as it meant that many children were being supported weekly and a number of members of staff were being skilled in supporting children with SLCN.'

'Working with *A Chance to Talk* was a massive shift in my working practice. Being able to spend time with each child, working with them over a number of sessions, talking to their parents, teachers, and other school staff meant that I got a much better picture of each child's strengths and areas of need. Developing relationships with school staff and understanding the curriculum meant that I could set more appropriate and functional targets.'

Teachers...

'a boy... who when speaking would look away from you, be barely audible and would often avoid communicating with adults and peers altogether....now he has confidence in class discussion, communicates with all adults, not just those he knows, and will interact with peers'

'The progress the children make in all areas of the curriculum after *A Chance to Talk* is great.'

'One boy who used to struggle with written work has really come on. In the past getting him to produce one sentence was hard work, but just last week he 'cracked on' and wrote a number of good descriptive sentences.'

Service managers for speech, language and communication

'The beauty of the *A Chance to Talk* project was that the training wasn't just for one or two people within a school; it was for the whole school and everybody working within that school down to the dinner ladies and the cleaners or whatever.'

'It's an ideal way of working and if we could do it in all schools we would.'

'Schools are aware that there's never going to be enough time to work with every single individual child on an individual basis so they've got to take it (children's language) on board.'



Stories from schools



Shears Green Infants School

Shears Green Infants School in Kent serves an area of some deprivation. Headteacher, Sue Bennett, found the decision to sign up to the *A Chance to Talk* project a simple one. The school recognised the fundamental importance of speech and language development and knew that children coming into the school had a far greater need than they had had in the past.

From the start the school, with the project speech and language therapist, carefully planned the three levels of support provided by *A Chance to Talk*. The school organised a whole school inset day of training followed by a series of twilight sessions.

Staff tried out ideas between sessions, sharing experiences and the impact they'd seen. The school ran *Talk Boost* throughout the two years; the positive impact of these was clear e.g. a withdrawn child with delayed language who started to communicate confidently.

In addition to this 27 children with more complex SLCN were referred for specialist intervention. Individual programmes were planned, delivered and supported by the therapist. This meant that children had their difficulties recognised and tackled early through expert input. Sue and her team are very clear that this was highly unlikely to have happened in the same way, and certainly not in the same timescale, without *A Chance to Talk*. The school are delighted to see Foundation Level scores increasing, and improving Reading and Writing attainments at the end of KS1, and they are convinced that their involvement in *A Chance to Talk* contributed to these outcomes.

Sue is a great supporter of the model to other local head teachers. There are plans to continue *A Chance to Talk* to an increased number of schools, who are pooling resources to fund it.

St John's Roman Catholic Primary School

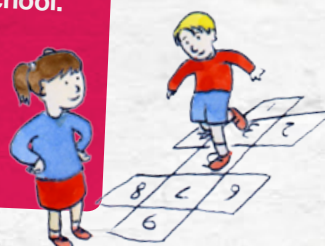
St. John's Roman Catholic Primary school in Rochdale is a school where nearly three quarters of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The Headteacher Jed Morgan was interested in being involved in the *A Chance to Talk* project to get more speaking and listening in the classroom to support his learners with English as an Additional Language as well as children with language delay. He was also attracted by the possibility of having a speech and language therapist in school to work with children who often missed their clinic appointments.

Jed and the I CAN advisor planned whole school training sessions that matched with their existing development priorities: identification of SLCN, the whole class environment and developing vocabulary and sentences.

Following the training, staff had lots of ideas to try out in class. Positive feedback from the teachers showed that they felt it had a big impact on their teaching.

Alongside this several teaching assistants were trained to deliver *Talk Boost* groups. Jed is quick to highlight the children loved doing the groups and enjoyed getting their certificates in assembly; a great way of highlighting the importance of communication to the whole school. Jed described the good progress that the children working directly with the speech and language therapy made too. In fact he felt it was 'just a shame it couldn't have involved more children.'

Jed is now thinking about next steps and ways of sustaining the initiative in school. He is clear that the *A Chance to Talk* programme makes a difference in removing barriers to learning and is of benefit to virtually all children.



St Hedda's Roman Catholic Primary School

St Hedda's Roman Catholic Primary School in North Yorkshire has only 36 pupils based in two classrooms, an infant class for four to seven year olds and a junior class for seven to eleven year olds. When the chance to take part in the *A Chance to Talk* project came along, Headteacher Mari Palmer saw it as a way of establishing regular input into the school from a speech and language therapist as the small numbers of children in the school make it less likely for the school to get opportunities for regular visits. This involved opportunities for work with children, parents and staff, and for staff training within the school.

Due to the very rural location there is limited nursery provision in the villages around the school. Some children arrive with limited school readiness skills, and higher than average numbers of children are identified as having language difficulties. In addition to this, some families have considerable difficulty in accessing speech and language therapy services because of the rural aspect of the school and limited public transport available.

The benefits of the targeted support were wide-reaching. *Talk Boost* was implemented with groups of 4 children and they all made progress. '*A Chance to Talk* also really helped with issues many of the children had with phonics as well as their language' said Mari. She adds that where children were struggling 'the *Talk Boost* sessions helped these children with their listening skills greatly and it transformed my class into one that was much calmer and with children more ready and responsive to learn, this then benefitted all of the children in the class'.

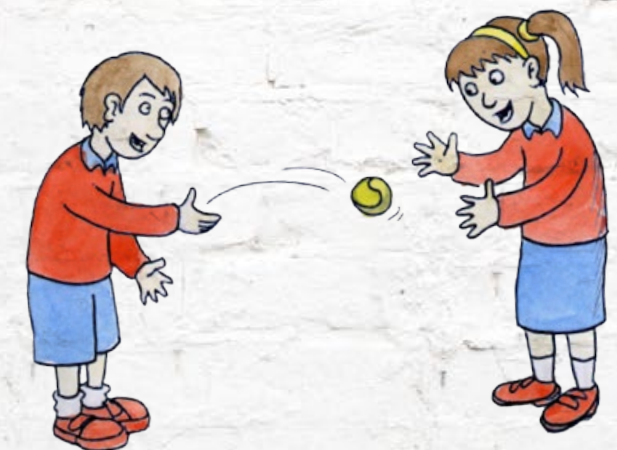
Mari believes that the accessibility to therapy within school made a huge difference to the number of children accessing it. Ten children received *A Chance to Talk* intervention in school over the two years, however only one child had been previously been receiving speech and language therapy by the local service.



Mari feels that boundaries were broken down and described one family who gave permission for their child to access speech and language therapy as part of the project in school, who would not have consented to help outside of the school environment.

And it was not only St Hedda's that benefited from the project. Mari recognised that other small village schools in their cluster also had access to regular specialist staff training opportunities. The *A Chance to Talk* training sessions were arranged to be delivered during twilight sessions; staff from another 6 schools were invited to take part and received the benefits of the *A Chance to Talk* specialist input.

Mari is keen for the *A Chance to Talk* programme to continue. She says '*A Chance to Talk* has had such a positive effect on my school that I would like the in-school speech and language therapy support to continue.' She is exploring how the local cluster of schools might commission such a service in the future.



Conclusions

A Chance to Talk shows how effective focussing on children's language skills can be in accelerating children's progress at school. This is particularly true for children from areas of social and economic deprivation, because of the strong link between disadvantage and language delay.

Developing and running a 3 level school-based model, where professionals work closely together to support children's speech, language and communication brings benefits for everyone involved. As well as improved outcomes for children, the model helps to develop staff confidence and skills. Supportive collaborative relationships between health and education professionals, and school staff with enhanced skills, are the result. The pilot schools considered *A Chance to Talk* to offer excellent value for money. Parents were very positive about it too.

A Chance to Talk had a positive impact on children's speech, language and communication - and a knock-on impact on their reading and wider school performance. It is particularly effective for children with delayed language and more severe needs in speech, language and communication.

Commissioning Guidance

Practical guidance to guide primary schools in commissioning support for children's speech, language and communication across 3 waves, for local authorities to inform their local offer, and for speech and language therapy services to inform their way of working.

To download I CAN's school commissioning guidance, visit www.ican.org.uk/achancetotalk



Primary talk

Primary Talk

An evidence-informed programme, developed by I CAN, that helps schools become environments that develop speech and language skills for all children, and ensures effective school based provision for children with language difficulties. Schools can access training and / or accreditation, which provide schools with a framework for whole school development as well as a nationally recognised award moderated by I CAN.

www.ican.org.uk/primarytalk

Talk Boost

A targeted and evidence-based intervention developed by I CAN and The Communication Trust, supporting language-delayed children aged 4-7 to make significant progress with their communication skills. *Talk Boost* includes small group activities undertaken three times a week, the progression tool for identifying children needing support and a weekly classroom activity delivered by trained teachers and teaching assistants.

www.talkboost.org.uk



The future

Pilot schools

The *A Chance to Talk* model is being taken forward in all 4 areas, in a range of different ways. All areas are using both the outcomes of the programme and the model to shape future commissioning.

Kirkby and Gravesham are continuing with the model at all 3 waves in a very similar way to the pilot programme. In Rochdale, schools plan on commissioning therapy directly from the local service, working across schools focusing on children requiring specialist intervention.

North Yorkshire are looking to extend their work at wave 1 and 2 with training and accreditation from I CAN's *Primary Talk* programme and through the *Talk Boost* intervention for children with delayed language.

Getting involved

This report describes the evidence of impact of the combination of **specialist support** and a **targeted intervention** programme in the context of a communication supportive school. This combination is what really makes a difference for children.

Local Authorities can embed the 3 level model of *A Chance to Talk* in their local offer for children and young people with special educational needs.

Schools can replicate the model in part or as a whole by:

- Using downloadable commissioning guidance, developed by I CAN, to plan support for children's speech, language and communication across three waves. This includes how to contact local speech and language therapy services.

- Introducing the *Talk Boost* intervention and *Primary Talk* programme, which are available and currently being used by hundreds of schools across the country.

With poor language and social disadvantage so closely linked, this evaluation also provides crucial evidence of an effective intervention to improve school performance for children receiving the pupil premium.

Further information

I CAN

I CAN is the children's communication charity. We are here to ensure that no child is left out or left behind because of a difficulty speaking or understanding. Nobody wants a child's potential to be wasted. It happens because communication difficulties are not visible, often mistaken for something else, or not noticed at all. I CAN's mission is to make sure that everyone in contact with children knows how important communication is, what a communication difficulty looks like and what they can do to help. www.ican.org.uk.

For a copy of the full evaluation report of the *A Chance to Talk* pilot please contact info@ican.org.uk.

I CAN Help

A parent or practitioner with questions or concerns about a child's communication can arrange a free, confidential call-back with an I CAN speech and language therapist. www.ican.org.uk/help

Talking Point

A website for parents and practitioners for information and resources to develop children's communication from age 0-17 years. www.talkingpoint.org.uk

The Communication Trust

The Communication Trust is a coalition of nearly 50 leading voluntary sector and community-based organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication. It does this by raising awareness, influencing policy, promoting best practice among the children's workforce and commissioning work from our members. It harnesses collective expertise to support the children's workforce and commissioners to meet the speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) of all children and young people. www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

Every Child a Chance Trust

The Every Child a Chance Trust was established to unlock the educational potential of socially disadvantaged children through the development and promotion of evidence-based, early intervention programmes.

Better Communication Research Programme

The Better Communication Research Programme was a 3 year research programme, part of the government's response to the Bercow Review of provision for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs, published in July 2008. The 17 reports from the BCRP were published by the Department for Education in December 2012.

From this research, evidence of successful programmes and interventions are available from the *What Works* database www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/whatworks

Thank you to all the funders that support the development and implementation of *A Chance to Talk*, we are grateful for all your support.

Man Group Charitable Trust	E L Rathbone Charitable Trust	Zochonis Charitable Trust
SHINE (Support and Help in Education)	Split Infinitive Charitable Trust	Sir James Roll Charitable Trust
BT	Ravensdale Trust	EBM Charitable Trust
Department for Education as one of the strategic projects in <i>Hello</i> the national year of communication 2011	Proven Family Charitable Trust	Souter Charitable Trust
Sobell Foundation	Albert E Procter Charitable Trust	Grand Charity
Beatrice Laing Charitable Trust	A M Pilkington Charitable Trust	Pilkington Charitable Trust
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I CAN is a member of the Fundraising Standards Board and is committed to the highest standards in fundraising practice.



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The Communication Trust
Every child understood

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