



Talk Boost Interim Report

The development phase



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the teachers and teaching assistants of the schools who took part in the *Talk Boost* project; their helpful feedback made a big difference.

In particular, thanks goes to the teaching assistants who went the extra mile to prepare for sessions in evenings and weekend – and of course the children who took part in the project. A special mention goes to Melissa for her speech and language therapy expertise when analyzing many of the formal assessments.

Thanks also to the Calderdale and Huddersfield speech and language therapy department who were involved in the project from the beginning to help identify schools and to carry out speech and language therapy assessments.

Finally, thank you to Tim Pring from City University who generously has given his support and advice as well as providing statistical analysis of the *Talk Boost* data.



all the equipment



compost in the pot



seeds in the pot



watering



sunshine and shoots



grown flower

Headlines

Development

A **10 week evidence based intervention programme** has been developed

- 30 sessions of activities with materials
- Activities for the whole class and parents
- Monitoring and evaluation documentation

Testing

- 12 schools in West Yorkshire were recruited
- 8 ran the programme, 3 delayed until September 2010, 1 opted out
- A training programme was designed; more than 50 teachers and teaching assistants were trained
- 10 BT volunteers were signed up and trained

137 children were assessed before and after the intervention period, none of whom were receiving additional support for language development before the intervention.

Standardised tests of three language measures were used; **information, grammar and story telling**: Before the programme

Information scores - 78% below average for their age

Grammar - 81% below average for their age

Story telling - 90% below average for their age

Many children had **mixed profiles**; with age appropriate scores in one area and low scores in another. 4 children had age appropriate skills across all language measures.

Results show

Children with English as a first language (n26) made statistically significant progress compared to children receiving no intervention on 2 of the 3 language measures

Children with English as an additional language (n38) have made statistically significant progress compared to children receiving no intervention on 2 out of 3 language measures

Average rates of progress for all children

Scores	English first language	English Additional Language
Information	18 months	15 months
Grammar	18 months	6 months
Story telling	19 months	12 months

Feedback from staff is positive

"This is just what our children need" - Head teacher

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 What is it?

Talk Boost is a targeted and evidence-based intervention, which supports language-delayed children aged 4-7, to make significant progress with their communication skills.

It is part of a wider programme *A Chance to Talk* (ACTT) designed to improve primary school pupils' speech, language and communication. ACTT does this through whole school approaches, targeted interventions and specialist support across Waves 1, 2 and 3.

Talk Boost has been developed by I CAN and The Communication Trust with support from the Every Child a Chance Trust



Talk Boost provides support to small groups of children and is delivered by trained adults. The programme of work is built on a foundation of evidence based practice.

1.2 How does it work?

- Delivered by teachers, training assistants and volunteers to small groups of children that have been identified with language delay
- The children are from reception classes, year one and year two (age 4 -7)
- Sessions last 30 - 40 minutes and run three times a week over a ten week period by the teaching assistant
- Each session focuses on the key components of language – listening and attention, vocabulary, sentence building, storytelling and conversations
- In total, 120 activities are delivered over the ten week period
- Whole class activities are provided to be delivered each week by the teacher to ensure a focus on language permeates the wider classroom

Talk Boost:

- Supports children with language below the average for their age who need additional support in order to 'close the gap' with their peers
- Addresses all elements of language and communication
 - appropriate to this age group
 - through an evidence informed programme of activities
- Provides an intervention, which is easy to understand and delivered by school staff and trained volunteers
- Supports teachers to identify children with language delay
- Supports teachers to embed speaking and listening into whole class activities
- Secures understanding of the importance of early intervention in language development to prevent the long term impact of such delays
- Contributes to the ACTT evidence base

Testing

Talk Boost was trialled and data collected to provide robust evidence for the effectiveness of the intervention. Further data is being collated from the national pilot

Aim

The aim of *Talk Boost* is to support language and communication development in those children who are being unnecessarily held back in their academic and social development by poor speech, language and communication skills.

1.3 Why do we need *Talk Boost*?

Language development is accepted as being critical to learning, cognitive development¹ and literacy.² In the classroom, spoken language is the primary medium through which teachers teach and children learn³.

It is expected that, when a child starts primary school, they will be able to understand much of what is said, express themselves clearly, share their feelings and make their needs known. This level of proficiency in speech, language and communication is critical to the development of a child's cognitive, social and emotional well being.^{4 5}

Children starting school with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) may struggle with any aspect of speech, language and communication. A child who struggles to speak will often struggle to read and write.^{6 7} This issue can be compounded if children are exposed to teaching of reading and written language before their spoken language skills are developed enough to access this teaching.⁸

Teachers involved in *Every Child a Reader* and *Every Child Counts* programmes find that children's literacy and numeracy is frequently hampered by under-developed language skills.

They have identified a need to do more to tackle speech, language and communication to increase the immediate and longer term impact of literacy and numeracy interventions and, ideally, to reduce the number of children requiring intensive intervention.



1 Goswami, U. and Bryant, P. (2007) *Children's Cognitive Development and Learning* (Primary Review Research Survey 2/1a) Cambridge: University of Cambridge Faculty of Education.

2 Snowling, M and Stackhouse, J (Eds) (2006) *Dyslexia, Speech and Language: A Practitioners Handbook: A Practitioner's Handbook* (Dyslexia Series, Whurr

3 Lee, W *Speech, language and communication needs and primary aged children*, I CAN talk series, issue 6

4 Rose J. (2006) *Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading* DfES

5 Dr Tanya Byron, *Chatter Matters* DVD, www.ican.org.uk

6 Stackhouse, J. and Well, B. (1997) *Children's Speech and Literacy Difficulties: A psycholinguistic framework* Whurr

7 Dockrell, J., Lindsay, G., Mackie, C. and Connolly, V. (2007) *Constraints in the Production of Written Text in Children with Specific Language Impairments* *Exceptional Children* 73, 147-164.

8 Locke, E., Ginsborg, J. and Peers, I. (2002) *Development and Disadvantage: implications for early years* *IJLCD* Vol 27 No1

Children with SLCN can become withdrawn or present with challenging behaviour within the primary school environment.⁹ Many children with SLCN can be withdrawn socially; they play alone more and are less liked by others in their class.¹⁰ Others display significant behaviour difficulties.

Almost all children with language or communication difficulties need support with some aspect of learning to read or write.

Without the right help, between 50% and 90% of children with a persistent language difficulty will go on to have reading difficulties.

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The Communication Trust's *Talk of the Town* project highlighted **that over 50% of children** starting primary school in the Manchester Federation **are in need of extra support** to help them with their speech, language and communication skills, many with significant speech, language and communication needs impacting on their learning

In addition to this, as children progress through the Manchester Federation there are continued high levels of SLCN and staff are **struggling to accurately** identify those children who are **not at age appropriate levels**.

12

9 Hart K.I. Fujiki M. Brinton B. Hart C.H. (2004) The Relationship between Social Behaviour and Severity of Language Impairment *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research*, 47, 3, p. 647

10 Coster F.W. Goorhuis-Brouwer S.M. Nakken H. and Lutje Spelberg H.C. (1999) Specific Language Impairments and Behavioural Problems *Folia Phoniatria et Logopaedica* 51:99-107

11 Stothard et al 1998

12 www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/schools/projects/talk-of-the-town.aspx

2.0 Why a Wave 2 intervention?

10% of all children have SLCN. These children have long-term, complex or more persistent needs as a result of either a specific impairment or as a consequence of another disability or special educational need. Many of these children will need a wave 3 intervention; a personalised approach to support their learning and development of speech, language and communication skills.

In parts of the UK, particularly in areas of social disadvantage, upwards of 50% of children enter school with SLCN.¹⁷ Some of these children are unable to speak in sentences, or understand simple instructions, listen or join in with conversations either socially or during school tasks. *Teaching* staff have expressed similar concerns; that around half of children start school with inadequate language skills.¹⁸ Many of these children do not have an underlying impairment and have the potential to “catch up” if they receive timely intervention and support.

We believe with the right support, at the right time, many of these children can catch up with their peers

Many of the evidenced interventions supporting SLCN focus either on a specific element of language development, such as vocabulary or narrative, or on wave 3 interventions for children with long term SLCN.

¹⁷ Locke A. Ginsborg J. and Peers I. (2002) Development and Disadvantage: implications for early years IJLCD Vol 27 No 1

¹⁸ Basic Skills Agency (2002) Summary Report into Young Children’s Skills on Entry to Education No. 4, 423–440

Better provision at wave 2 results in fewer children needing expensive and intensive specialist help at Wave 3

The wave 2 intervention aims to close the gap for children with significant language delay, supporting development across all areas of language, as appropriate to their age.

This is the first report on *Talk Boost*, with the aim of reporting on evaluation of the development phase and giving information on progress since then in the national pilot.

It will explain each of the **four phases** for the development and testing of the intervention, providing **comments and lessons learnt** and giving **recommendations** or next steps where appropriate.

3.0 Four Phases of development and testing for *Talk Boost*

To date, there have been four phases of development for *Talk Boost*. The aim was to develop and carry out **initial testing** of the intervention to feed into the national ACTT pilot, which started in September 2010.

3.1 Research and Development

- Desktop research; research and existing impact evidence of
 - Interventions currently available for children with SLCN
 - Ways in which to support identification of children
 - Links with educational context, pedagogy and adult learning theory
 - Approaches to piloting and researching the wave 2 intervention
- Development of:
 - A programme of work with materials to support activities
 - A checklist and inclusion / exclusion criteria
 - A training package
 - Research design to ensure robust data collection

3.2 Testing: Preparation: recruitment, training and assessment of children

- Liaison with local Speech and Language Therapy departments and Local Authority officers
 - To identify appropriate schools
 - To identify SLTs to do assessments
 - Meetings with local practitioners involved in programmes such as Every Child a Talker
- Meetings with head teachers/senior leadership teams
- Identification and assessment of children
- Training of teachers and teaching assistants
- Volunteer element; recruitment, programme design, management, training

3.3 Testing: Delivery of the programme

- Staff worked through the programme
- Support available to schools on request to model interventions / troubleshoot
- Staff completed monitoring documentation commenting on impact on children and delivery/content of the programme to support evaluation

3.4 Evaluation of the intervention

- Re-assessment of all children; formal language assessment and informal speech and language therapy assessment
- Collation of monitoring documentation, focus groups with staff members, discussions with head teachers
- Collation and evaluation of all data

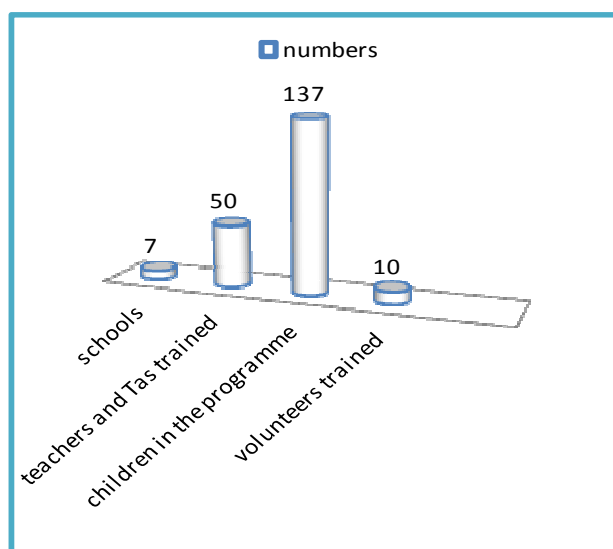
4.0 Research and development of *Talk Boost*

4.1 Research

The *Talk Boost* element of the ACTT project was tested prior to the full ACTT national pilot in the development phase, with the aim of testing out the wave 2 intervention. Following this evaluation, *Talk Boost* was embedded in a national pilot, from which we continue to collect data.

Numbers involved in the development phase:

- **12 schools** signed up to the *Talk Boost* testing project; of varying sizes, ethnic mix and socio-economic area, though predominantly in areas where a significant number of children were coming from poor socio-economic backgrounds (10 out of the 12).
- Around **160 children** were assessed; the final number of children available for statistical analysis dropped to 137. This was due to a number of children being sick or on holiday during reassessment periods (n11) and one school withdrawing from the project (n12) between the first and second assessment.
- More than **50 teachers and support staff** trained
- **10 volunteers** signed up



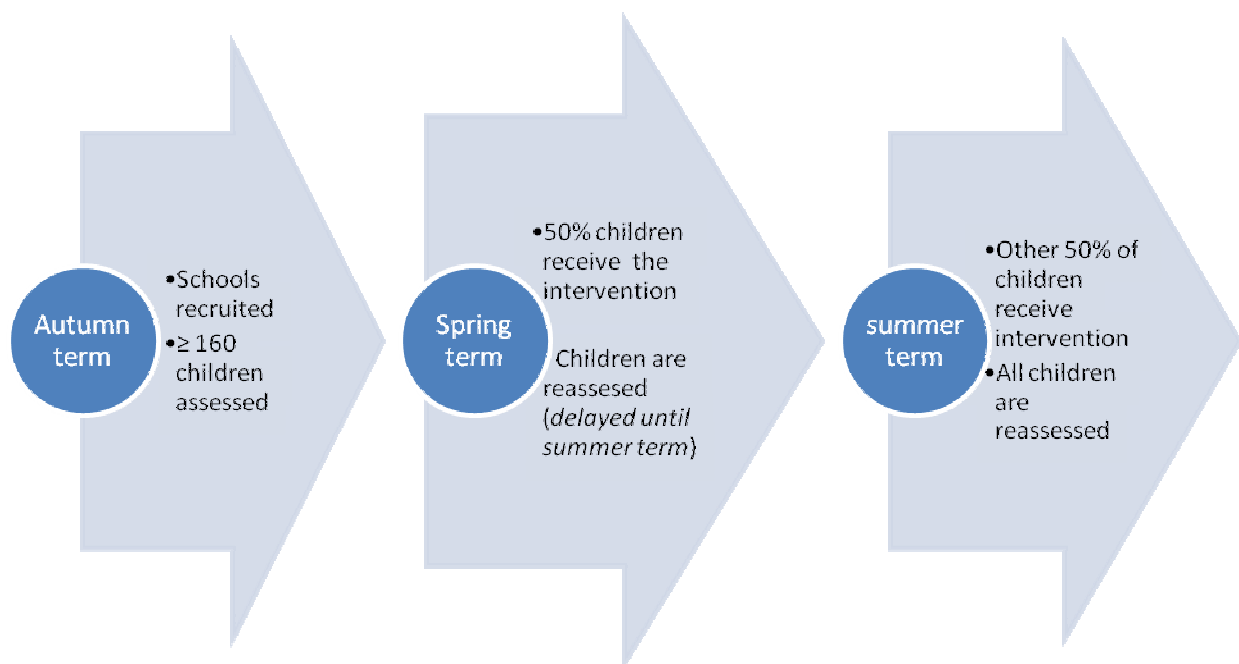
Final numbers

7 of the 12 schools fully ran the programme.

5 were unable to run the full programme, due to a range of reasons:

- Unable to complete the training within the year (e.g. a training session was cancelled due to an Ofsted inspection)
- Staffing issues; key staff on long term sick
- Capacity issues; needed volunteer support (CRB checks very delayed)

4.2 Research timings



4.3 Identification of children

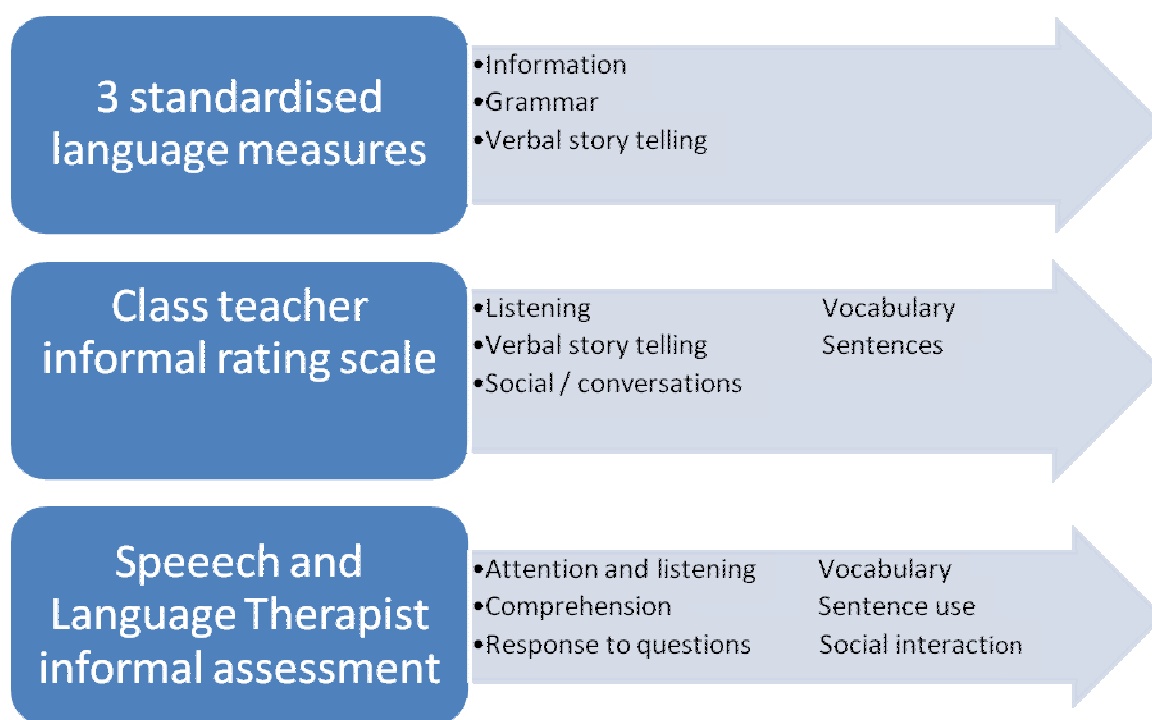
Teaching staff were given information on how to identify relevant children for the intervention project. In essence, these were children with **language delay**. This was defined using inclusion criteria that described children who have immature language for their age, for example, poor vocabulary, immature sentences or insufficient language for learning, play or socialising.

This was contrasted with exclusion criteria which described children with an underlying impairment either related to another condition or as a primary or specific speech, language and communication need.¹⁹ In addition to inclusion and exclusion criteria, teachers were given a rating scale to support them in identifying children, with some additional guidance and further information of typical language development.²⁰

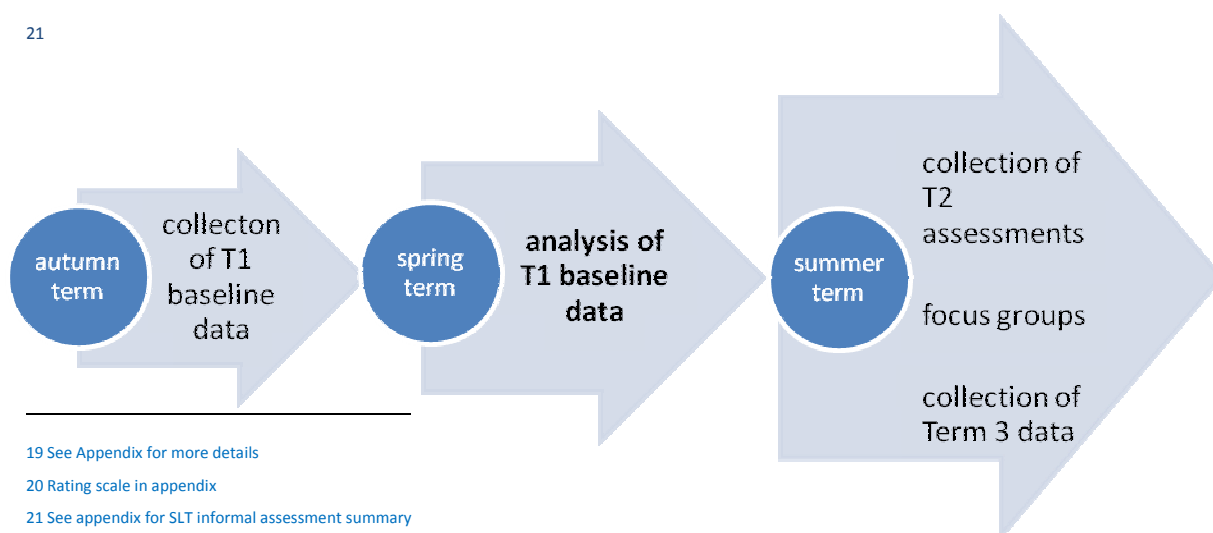
For children with English as an additional language (EAL), staff were encouraged to include children whose home language they felt was delayed, rather than those who had a strong home language and were learning English.

4.4 Assessment summary

All children involved in the project took part in the following assessments:



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¹⁹ See Appendix for more details

²⁰ Rating scale in appendix

²¹ See appendix for SLT informal assessment summary

August 2010

- Statistical analysis of quantitative data
- Analysis of qualitative data
- Comparisons made between groups
- Teacher judgements in relation to assessments analysed
- Discussions with senior leadership teams about next steps
- Feed results and lessons learned into the national project



Report

5.0 Development of *Talk Boost*

The **10 week intervention programme** has been developed to include:

- 30 sessions of activities; around 4 activities in each session
- Picture materials and games developed to support the sessions
- Some simple follow up activities for the whole class (including materials to support)
- Some simple follow up activities for parents/carers
- Monitoring and evaluation documentation

Although the materials provide comprehensive guidance for the support staff delivering the sessions²², the intervention package has a strong foundation of **principle over recipe** as highlighted in the Cambridge review.²³

The ultimate aim was to give teachers and teaching assistants the **principles** for supporting the development of language skills within an educational context, rather than a prescriptive recipe book approach they must follow. For them to be able to see specific areas where children would benefit from a ‘boost’ and identify best principles and practice to enable that support to happen.

A **training package** with the following aims was developed:

For teaching and support staff to:

- 1. Consider the importance of speech, language and communication**
 - What is meant by speech, language and communication
 - What happens when these skills break down
 - The impact of speech, language and communication needs
- 2. Understand principles and processes for *Talk Boost* :**
 - Who, what, when, where, how and why
 - Principles for teaching language and communication
 - Importance of programme structure and themes
 - Linking wave 2 to whole class approaches for language teaching
 - **Feel confident to run the programme**
 - Modelling and practice of activities and session plans

During the development phase, the training was delivered to more than 60 teachers, teaching assistants and volunteers. Many more teachers and TAs have subsequently been trained during the national pilot, which covers 32 schools across four areas of the country.

²² See appendices for example of a session plan

²³ Alexander et al (2009) Children, their World, their Education Final Report and Recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review

6.0 What we learnt about the children at the start of the testing phase - baseline data (T1)

Around 180 children were identified to take part in the project.

Only around 160 were available for the first assessment due to sickness, holiday, non-attendance or involvement in other activities on the assessment day (Christmas concerts, plays etc). Timing and resources were very tight; therefore we were unable to revisit to assess these children.

The **standardised assessment** used was the Renfrew Action Picture Test and Renfrew Bus story, which consists of the following:

- For **information** and **grammar** scores, children are shown a picture, asked a predetermined question, e.g. “Tell me what the man is doing” and their responses are recorded and then analysed for information given and grammatical structures appropriate to their age.²⁴
- For the verbal **story telling** assessment, children are told a simple story based around 12 simple pictures in a picture only booklet with 3 pictures on each page. Children then retell the story using the pictures.²⁵
- Assessors are allowed to “prompt” children within test guidelines.

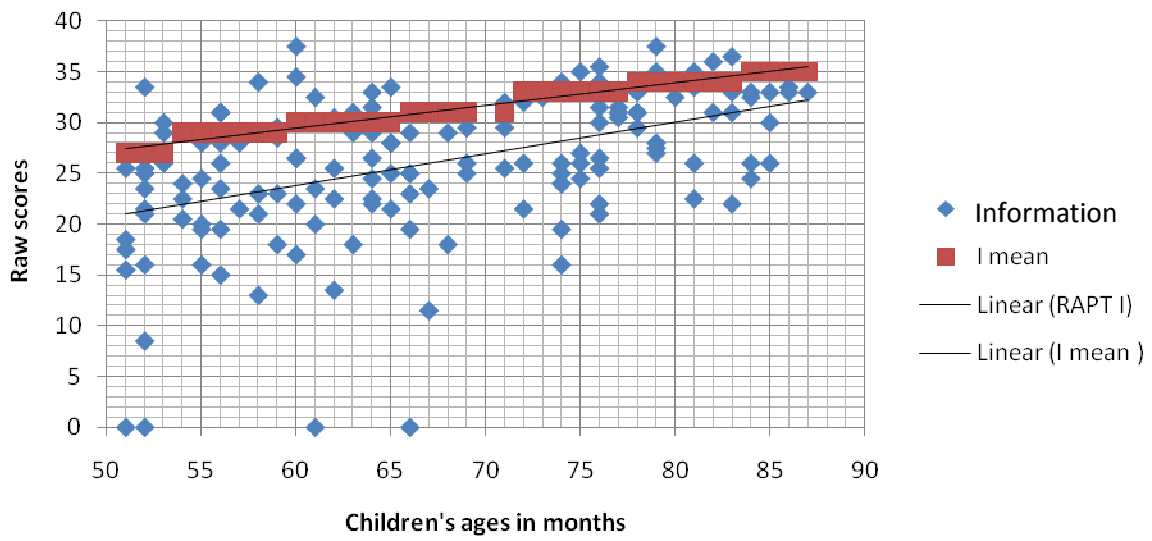
The following graphs represent the individual scores of all children (blue diamonds) against the expected mean for normal language development (red line).

Age range: 4 years 3 months to 7 years 3 months (determined from the first assessment date)

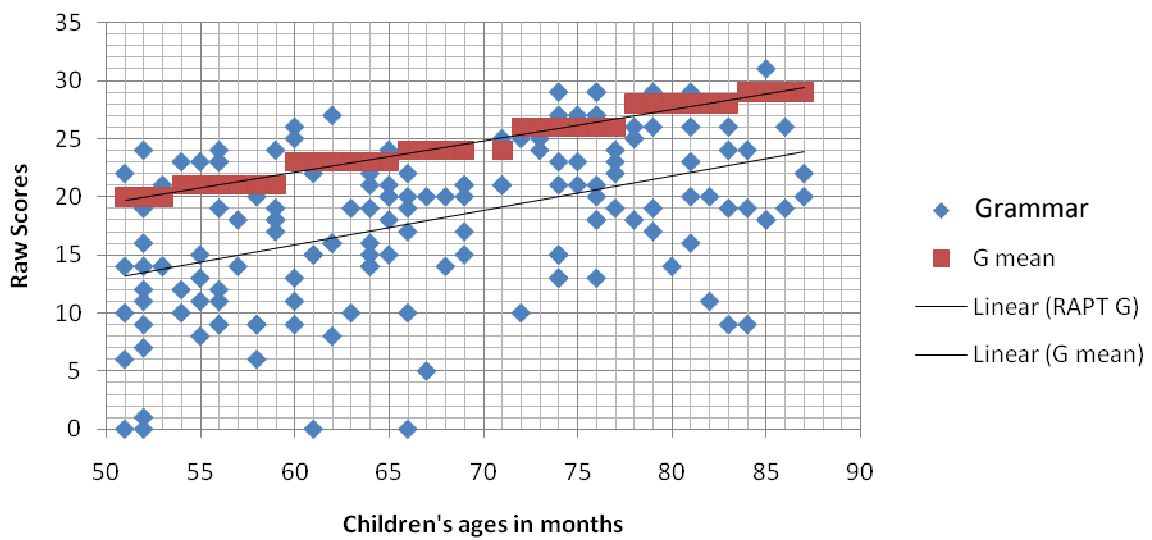
²⁴ Renfrew Action Picture Test

²⁵ Bus Story (Renfrew)

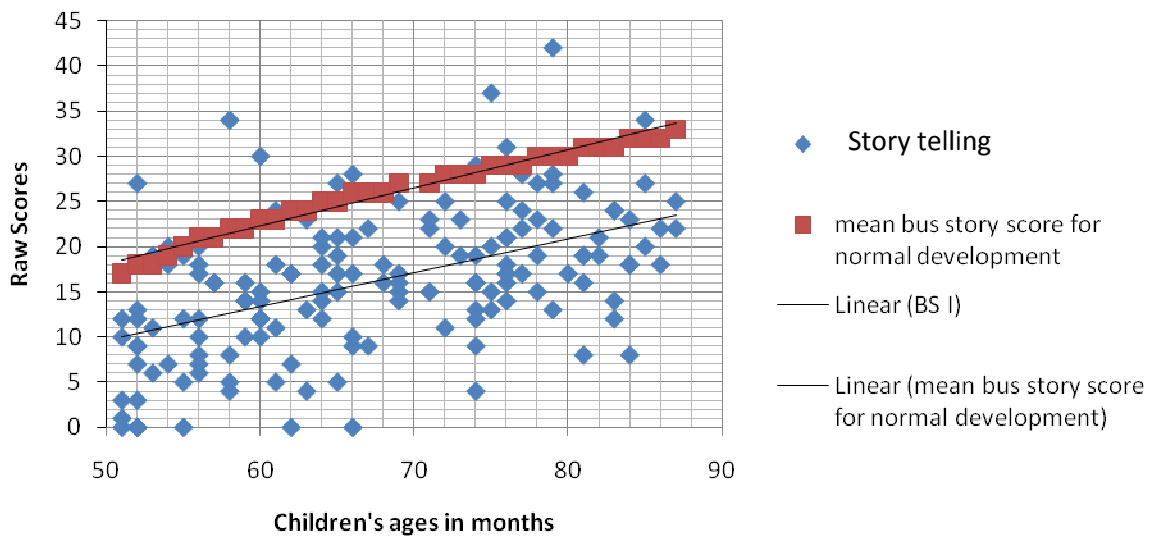
Information - Baseline Raw Scores



Grammar - Baseline Raw Scores



Story telling - Baseline Raw Scores



The graphs show clearly that the majority of children assessed fall below the mean. Although some scores are above the mean, this does not represent the overall performance of these children. Some children scored age appropriately on one score, but well below the mean on others.

The graphs also show that a large number of children have scores well below those expected for their age. These children would be described as having severe language delay. Although the programme aims to support children with delayed language to “close the gap” with peers, it is unrealistic to expect children with such significant delays to catch up with a 10 week programme of intervention. Further analysis of these results in conjunction with ones gained from the national pilot will aim to identify the children who gain most from the programme.

7.0 What we learnt about the children after the intervention - reassessment data (T2)

Children in the control and intervention groups were reassessed in April 2010. One school had pulled out of the project and therefore these children were not reassessed (12 children). The numbers were further reduced by children having left the school, gone abroad or due to sickness (11 children).

This brought the number of children having two assessments down to 137. There were 73 children in the control group and 64 children in the intervention group.

It is important to acknowledge that language and communication is extremely complex. Because of this we have tried to ensure a holistic view of children's language through informal assessment by speech and language therapists and teacher report. The formal assessments take a snapshot; they look at different components of language but by no means cover all aspects of language and communication development and cannot take into account functional impact of underlying language skills and needs.

It is also worth noting that the different components of language work together and interact to impact on functional communication. So, although we have assessed children across three different measures, we have remained mindful that individual children will all be very different in their language and communication profiles, which is reflected in assessment outcomes.

The children referred into the project varied greatly; a significant number of children were very delayed and they fell below the standardisation of the test; 17% of children on the bus story, 28% on grammar, 25% on information.

%	Information	Grammar	Bus story
Children falling below test minimum age score	25%	28%	17%



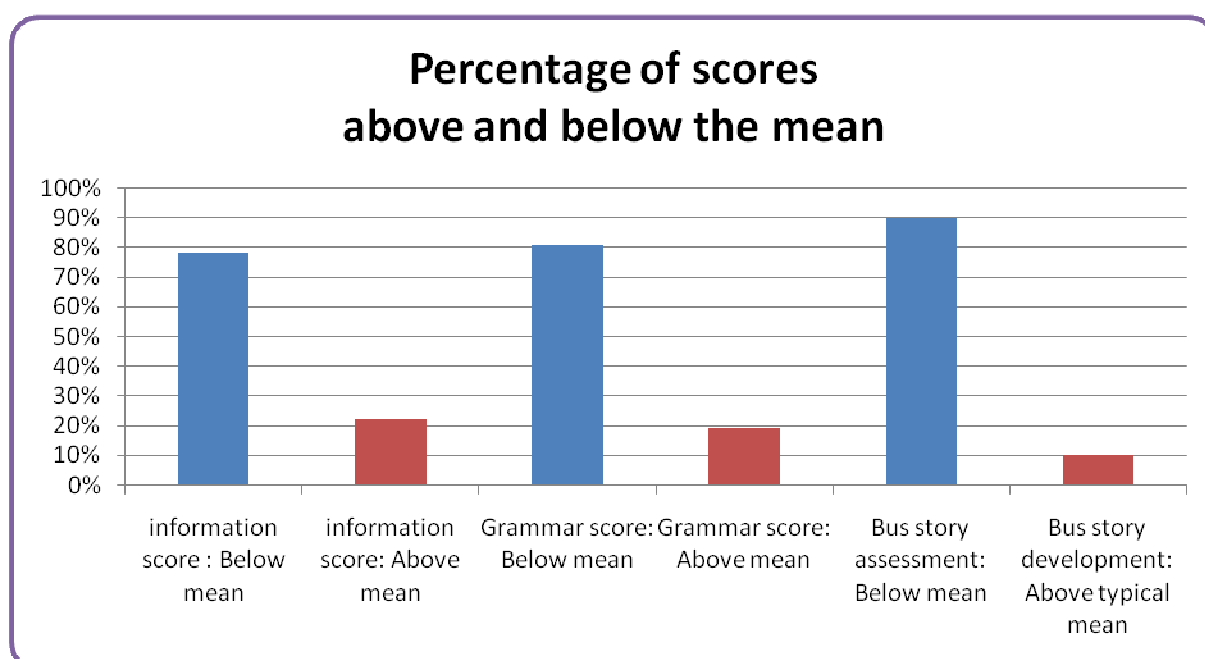
They were functioning below the level of a child aged 3 years 6 months (the bottom end of the scale).

Some children had a delay across all three measures, where for others there was a more “spiky” profile. This means that though they may have scored at an age appropriate level in one assessment, they had significant delays in others. On the whole, the speech and language therapy informal assessments reinforced that these children presented with delayed language and communication skills.

An average of around 17% of children were scoring above the mean on **at least one assessment**, however very few children demonstrated typical language development across all three scores; **less than 3% of children had scores on or above the mean for all three assessments**.

For some of the children who had scores above the mean, speech and language therapists expressed concern about their ability to use their language to interact, possibly suggesting a more specific underlying language difficulty. Comprehension levels were not assessed formally, though we have informal data from speech and language therapy assessments expressing concerns, particularly for those children with more significant delays.

The graph below shows percentages of all children with test scores for each measure above and below the mean that would be expected for their age.



We can summarise from this that the majority of children were below the mean for their age, although they may have scored age appropriately on one of the language measures. According to supporting data from teachers and therapists, the delay in the other measures was enough to impact on their communication overall.

8.0 Impact of *Talk Boost*

8.1 Language assessment

The children were assessed by speech and language therapists / speech and language therapy assistants before the intervention and again afterwards (December 2009 and April 2010).

The assessors were not involved in the programme and the assessments were “blind” (i.e. they were not aware of whether the children they were assessing were in the intervention or control group).

Due to limited availability of local speech and language therapists, they carried out the assessments but did not complete the analysis. This was carried out by a range of therapists, volunteers and student speech and language therapists, and then moderated – again this was blind.

Children from the intervention and control group were assessed during the same time period and schools were randomly assigned to a control or intervention group.

Ideally, intervention and control groups would be matched; however, this was not possible. Socio-economic area was taken into account, though children with EAL were not. One of the schools in the project was three times bigger than most of the others and had a very large proportion of children with EAL, many of whom were the most delayed in the project.

This has meant the intervention group scores started off much lower than the control group scores. This was taken into account when analysing the data.

8.2 Formal assessment

The Renfrew Bus story and Action picture test were used to assess children’s language; these are standardised assessments testing for information, grammar and verbal story telling skills. These assessments were chosen as they are relatively quick and easy to administer, are standardised and have been used in similar research projects.²⁶ It allows an objective formal assessment of the progress children have made in these areas of language.

²⁶Davies, et al (2004) Improving Narrative Skills in Young Children with Delayed Language Development Educational Review, Vol. 56, No. 3, November 2004

²⁶ Kotler, A., Wegerif, R., and Le Voi, M., (2002) Oracy and the educational achievement of pupils with English as an additional Language: The Impact of bringing ‘Talking Partners’ into Bradford Schools. *Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. Vol 4, issue 6

8.3 Informal assessment

At the time of each assessment, an informal assessment was carried out by the speech and language therapists / speech and language therapy assistants. This looked at how children performed informally during the assessment and in conversation with the assessor.

Therapists judged children on a range of language skills including listening skills and social interaction. They were also asked to make a judgement about whether they felt the child had an overall delay and whether they fit the criteria for the programme.²⁷

8.4 The children's profile

Language results have been complex, they included:

- Children falling below the test minimum score, therefore it was difficult to accurately place their levels and progress made
- Mixed profiles for many children
- Wide ranges of language ability
- Children who scored well on assessments, though therapists expressed concern about other areas of language not covered in the test (e.g. social language skills).
- Children who did poorly on tests, though teachers and therapists have commented positively on their progress in the groups and the classroom and informal assessment
- Children who started the programme with language skills above the norm in some areas; teaching staff have commented very positively about how much the programme has impacted on these children in terms of confidence and readiness to learn, though this is not represented in the formal results
- Some children who have not benefited from the programme

²⁷ Informal assessment profile in appendices

9.0 Data analysis

The total number of children in control and intervention groups who had two assessments was 137. Despite complexities of language profiles and a wide range of children involved in the project, the decision was taken to analyse the data including all children in the first instance, with more detailed analysis to follow.

9.1 Statistical analysis of data

The random assignment of schools to the intervention and control groups led to an unequal distribution of children with EAL in the two groups. There were very few EAL children in the control group—too few for any meaningful comparison with those in the intervention schools.

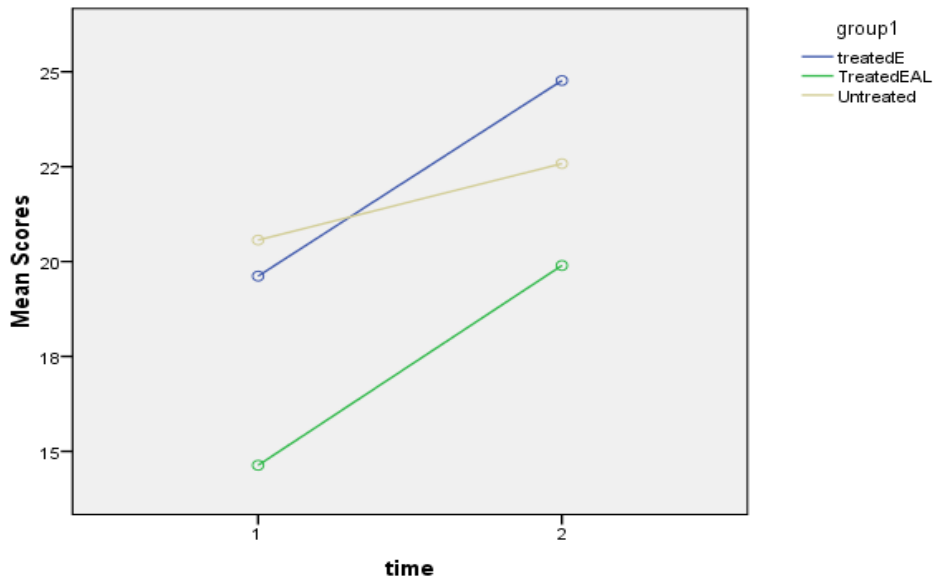
In the following, therefore, we compare the two intervention groups (English first language and EAL) with the control English first language children. We also report only the results from the first stage, i.e. comparisons of children receiving intervention with those who did not. Further analysis is needed on subsequent data gathered which will be reported in a future report.

The following table gives the average scores of the three groups on each of the assessments, with standardised scores in brackets:

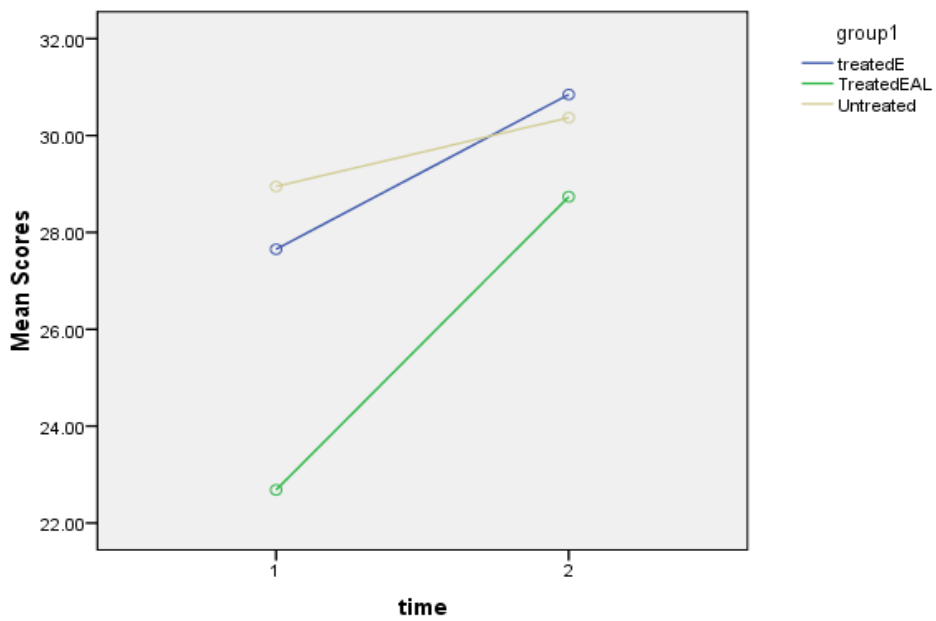
	n	RAPT grammar		RAPT Information		Bus Story	
		before	After	before	after	before	after
Treated Children	26	19.61 (5.53)	24.77 (4.46)	27.65 (5.45)	30.84 (3.56)	17.61 (8.53)	27.61 (3.55)
Treated EAL Children	38	14.63 (6.76)	19.89 (6.05)	22.68 (7.03)	28.73 (4.14)	12.44 (6.82)	19.27 (8.40)
Untreated Children	69	20.56 (5.91)	22.57 (5.14)	28.94 (4.96)	30.36 (4.48)	18.83 (7.99)	23.44 (9.03)

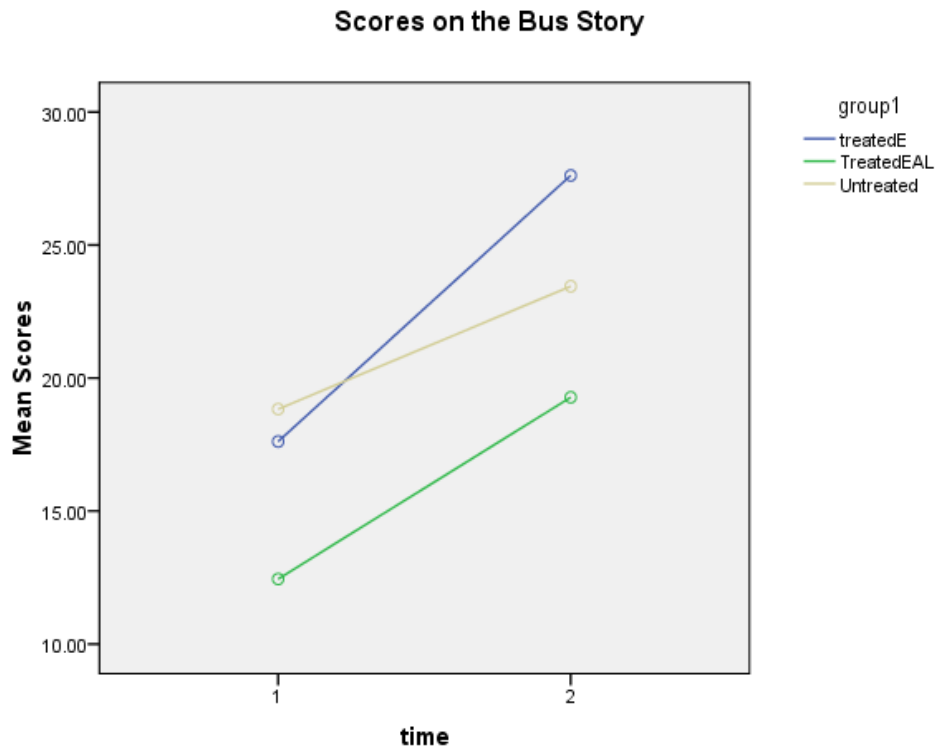


RAPT Grammar Scores



RAPT Information Scores





Two factor mixed Analyses of Variance were used to compare the progress made by the two treated groups with that made by the untreated group. A *significant interaction* between group and time in these analyses will indicate that the treated group improved more than the untreated group.

Children with English as a first language

The comparison of treated and untreated English first language groups gave significant interactions for the RAPT grammar scores ($F(1, 93) = 6.62, p = .01$) and for the Bus Story ($F(1, 93) = 11.78, p = .001$). For the RAPT information scores the interaction was not significant ($p = .09$).

The comparison of the treated and untreated English first language groups gives strong support for the effectiveness of the treatment. Two of the assessments gave highly significant advantages for the treated group and the third approached significance. Moreover, the groups were at similar levels before intervention on each of the assessments so the greater improvement made by the treated group cannot be due to any difference in their severity.

Children with English as an additional language

The comparison of the treated EAL and untreated English first language children gave significant interactions for the RAPT grammar ($F(1, 105) = 9.22, p < .01$) and RAPT information scores ($F(1, 105) = 21.91, p < .001$). The result for the Bus Story was not significant ($p = .12$).

Greater caution is needed in interpreting the results for the EAL language group. This group had significantly lower scores than the untreated English first language group on each assessment.

Their improvement was significantly stronger on two of the three measures but might be due to their greater scope for improvement due to starting at a lower level.

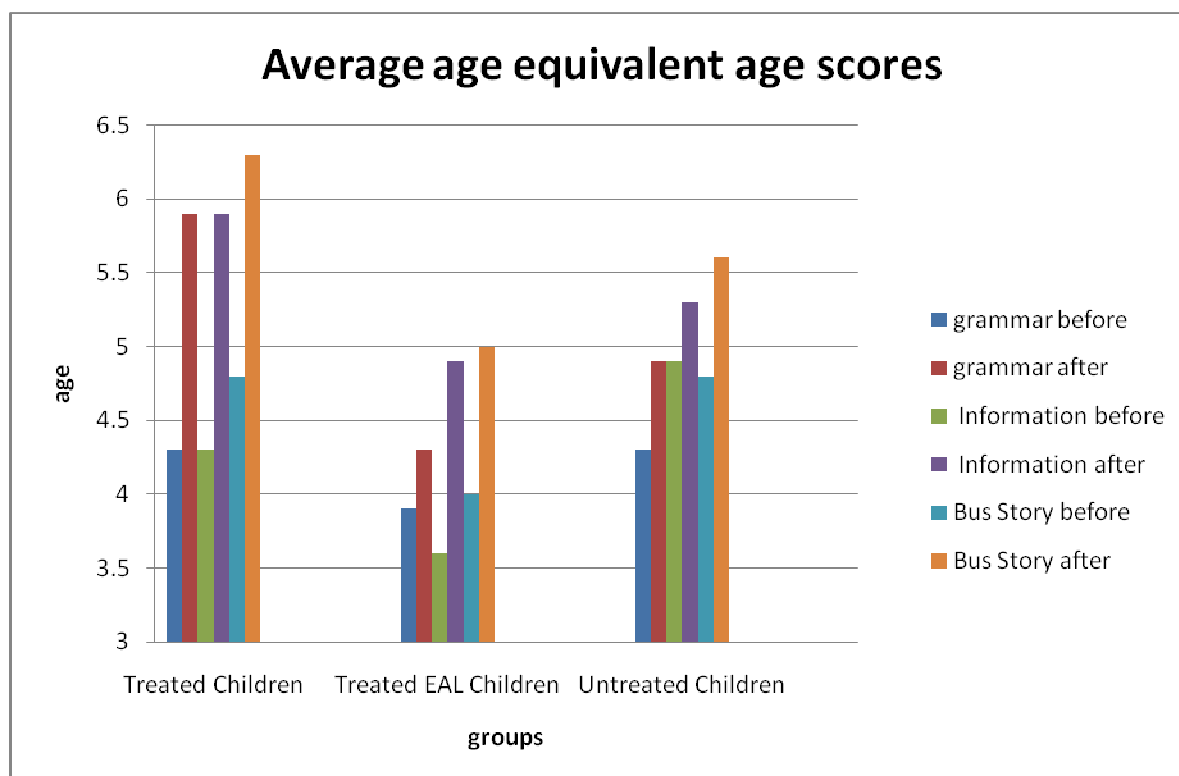
Although it seems probable that the progress made by children with EAL is as a result of the intervention, we would need data on an untreated EAL group to make a direct comparison and to resolve this issue.

9.2 Children’s progress

Raw scores were used to determine an age equivalent band within which the children were functioning, with the midpoint of the band used in order to gain an equivalent age score.

A number of children fell below the lowest age equivalent score and their ages were taken to be the lowest age on the test as it was not possible to determine an accurate score below this point.

These children may therefore have made more progress, though what is represented is the minimum progress made, i.e. from the lowest age equivalent score upwards. The same principle was used for children at the upper end of the scale, with months’ progress stopping at the ceiling of the test, although children were scoring higher.



Children were tested in December 2009 and again in April 2010 - a 4 month period. The graph shows average age equivalent scores before and after the intervention for each of the three groups. It can be seen therefore that average scores for children with English as a first language have increased by 18 months for information and grammar and by 19 months for the verbal story telling task.

Children with EAL progressed by 15 months for information, 6 months for grammar and 12 months for verbal story telling. Importantly, many of these children fell below the baseline of the test, so their true progress would begin from an unknown point below the age of 3 years 6 months.

Children not receiving intervention progressed by 6 months for information and grammar and by 10 months for verbal story telling.

9.3 Factors affecting progress

Further analysis of data took place, tracking some individual children in terms of formal language scores, gathering and collating details of informal language assessments made by SLTs and rating scales completed by teachers. Some examples of this can be found in section 11.0.

In addition to these language assessments, detailed information was collated through weekly monitoring sheets which enabled a closer look at attendance, content of sessions and where sessions had not run due to other factors in school. More detailed analysis of this data is needed, though it has shed some light on additional factors that may influence progress.

Factors related to children:

- Some children scored age appropriate scores on one assessment, therefore did not make progress in this area
- Some children missed a high proportion of lessons which may have affected progress
- Where children were very delayed in language skills, progress in the bus story assessment (story telling) was more limited
- It is felt that some children have a more significant communication impairment needing specialist / wave 3 support

Factors related to delivery:

- In some sessions, activities were omitted, with sessions being reduced in time because of timetabling / accommodation issues
- Children did particularly well when schools planned for the intervention across the school and where class teachers were engaged in the programme
- Some staff were more skilled or confident working with children's language skills, which may have affected progress

9.4 Results for different groups

With a relatively small sample, subgroups will be very small and therefore any outcomes should be viewed with that in mind, though will provide some useful information for further investigation in the national pilot.

More detailed analysis is needed to clearly identify patterns within the data, for example:

- Accuracy of identification across the age ranges
- Accuracy of identification across schools
- Patterns for subgroups of children; e.g. children learning English as an additional language, summer born children, gender differences

An initial look at the data is suggesting that children with more significant delays are making more progress than those with mild delays and younger children are progressing more than older. This was reinforced through discussions with staff in focus groups who felt the programme was more effective for children aged in reception and year 1 classes (age 4-6).

The assessment of children's language allows their strengths and needs to be highlighted across different aspects of language. Impact on areas of learning, based on research evidence can be highlighted to education staff. For example, impact of:

- Speech immaturities on acquisition of literacy skills
- Comprehension of language on understanding of text
- Disorganised narrative skills on writing targets
- Delayed vocabulary on learning and attainment

There will also be recommendations made to schools in relation to some children who will need further specialist assessment of language and communication skills.

9.5 Focus group feedback from teachers / teaching assistants and discussions with Head teachers

Focus groups and interviews were carried out in schools with teachers and teaching assistants and have been transcribed for key themes to be identified. The focus groups had two main aims:

1. To gather feedback on the programme content and structure to support improvements, which would form the basis of a rewrite of materials. This process is now completed.
2. To gather information about any impact the programme had on children, both within the small group sessions and in the classroom.

Discussions with head teachers were around next steps for the programme and to feedback details of children's progress and those who might benefit from more detailed assessment from speech and language therapy.

9.6 Confidence and attitudes to learning

The most notable responses throughout all focus groups were how much children enjoyed the sessions, how engaged they were and the positive impact on children's self esteem, confidence and readiness to learn.

Common themes in the focus group data were:

- Children in the intervention talking more in the group and in class
- Specific aspects of language were highlighted
 - children having more vocabulary
 - narratives were more organised
 - better grammar and language structure
 - children knew how to listen and take part in discussions
- Children were much more confident, both in the group and in class
- Contributions both to the teacher and in conversations with peers were more appropriate

In addition, there have been positive comments from class teachers about the impact on learning, particularly on literacy skills. Class teachers and senior managers have commented on how much more confident children were following the intervention.

Anecdotally, it was interesting to note both support staff and teachers using terminology from within the programme to describe different aspects of children's language, which they were not doing prior to the intervention.

10.0 Impact – What people say

10.1 What head teachers say

“It has made a real difference – this is just what our children need”

“We are definitely carrying on with the programme this year. The children have really benefited.

“The change in them has been amazing – their self esteem and confidence, they are just happier in school – all of that is so important, but we just can’t measure it”



Comments about the training:

“When I think back at it, it’s one of the best trainings I’ve ever done”

“Thank you for your excellent training...”

“It inspired me; it made me want to do it [the intervention]”

Comments about impact on the children:

“Confidence, talking to each other more, putting their hands up in class to answer questions, joining into discussions.....

“The children are so much more confident – every one of them” - Teacher

“They are having a conversation; they didn’t know how to do conversations before!”

“This is a very useful programme for developing speaking and listening skills – you can see it working” - Teacher

Comparison to other programmes:

“[Talk Boost is] ...so much more structured and organised. It just makes more sense. When I used to do [another programme] with them I didn’t see much improvement, whereas I can see the improvement with the children here, I just felt as though I was doing more, and I really feel this had made a difference. But we need to change it now at the end from ACTT to a chance to be quiet! They are talking too much now! I never felt that with the other programme..

Impact across the school:

The whole school has taken on board the recipe for good listening.

What next:

Of the schools involved in the programme, all bar one plan to carry on the programme. Some of the schools are planning to use it with just reception and year one children as they felt this is where there was the most benefit. In other schools, the plan is to carry on across all year groups.

The one school who are not continuing with the programme commented that they felt the programme had a very positive impact on the children in school, however, due to a reduction in staffing and funding for an alternative programme (Every Child a Talker), this will be their focus going forward

11.0 The children – examples of language before and after the intervention

Nadeem scored below the bottom level of the test for information and grammar in the first assessment and though he made progress, the scores in the second assessment still fell below the minimum for information and grammar.

In the bus story his score was below the minimum score (45 months), though increased beyond the minimum to 55 months, representing an increase of **at least** 11 months progress.

From the scripts below, it is clear that the story in particular is more organised and flows more readily with a wider range of grammar and vocabulary. The speech and language therapy report also highlights changes that cannot be represented by the formal assessment. Positive comments about Nadeem's listening and attitude to communication were made. Both class teachers and teaching assistants commented on the positive impact on language skills and on confidence to contribute in the classroom and join in with discussions in a meaningful way.



This is Nadeem; he is 4 years and 8 months and in reception class. He is learning English as an additional language.

Speech and language therapy report	Before intervention	After intervention
	Speech and language therapy report distractible Delayed Very poor expressive language skills, delayed understanding Rarely initiating conversation	Needed refocusing a few times Happy talking, initiating lots of conversation, confident
Response to pictures	1. His falling the steps he's glasses broken 2. Climbing the ladder catching that black cat 3. He's crying . (Prompted)The dog eaten his shoe. Information Score 19.5 Grammar score 9	1. She falled off the stairs and glasses broke 2. Going up the ladder and he's going to get the cat on the house 3. He's crying and the dog is eating the shoe Information Score 23.5 Grammar score 19
Bus story	Naughty bus. Going. They having a race Policeman The bus driving Bus jumped The cow moo He's going in the water Now he can't go up Someone help him Driving in the road Bus story score	The naughty bus was running away The train having a race and he said "stop bus" and the... The police whistle and everybody run away And bus went to the country Bus went over the gate Cow said "look at my ears" The bus saw the water, bus break Bus went in the water and the bus driven

There were other children with similar profiles to Nadeem, some who did score on the test and others like Nadeem who made good progress but still have some way to go.

This child was described by his teacher as having a moderate language delay at the beginning of the project and informal assessments by the speech and language therapist showed him to be delayed across all language measures. He has made good progress and has caught up to his age equivalent score. His grammar and information show more appropriate and fuller responses and his story has more detail. The speech and language informal assessment described Jack as being age appropriate across all elements of language.



This is Jack; he is 5 years and 6 months and in Year 1.

	Before intervention	After intervention
Speech and language therapy report	Needed prompts to focus on the task. Delayed language. Shy – no initiation of conversation	Listening good
Response to pictures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. She's broke her glasses cos she's fall down the stairs 2. Crying 3. He's getting the cat from up there <p>Information equivalent age 4;6-4;11 Grammar equivalent age score 4;6-4;11</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. She's fallen down stairs and broke her glasses 2. Crying because the dog has taken off his shoes 3. Going up the ladder to get the cat on the roof <p>Information equivalent age 6;6-6;11 Grammar equivalent age score 7;0-7;5</p>
Bus story	<p>The driver was in his bus. He was trying to fix his bus, but he decided to run away.</p> <p>He was beside a bus and a train, they had races, he saw a policeman, he blowed his whistle, but he no attention. He drived...he got fed up on the road, so he jumped over the fence. The cow said "I can't believe my eyes"</p> <p>He..he tried to drive through the water but he got stuck in a mud.</p> <p>Equivalent age 4;3</p>	<p>Once upon... there was a naughty bus. One day the driver tried to fix him. He started to run away.</p> <p>He met a train, they pulled funny faces. They raced each other. The train came under a bridge, the bus couldn't find him. He gone past a policeman and blowed his whistle and said "quick a bus is coming"</p> <p>The bus didn't pay any attention, he just rode into the countryside. The bus said I am fed up, I want to go off the road, so he jumped over the fence on the hill. He met a cow who said "moo, I can't believe my eyes"</p> <p>The bus tried to stop. He was looking at the water. He didn't know where the brake was, so he fell right into the water. The bus driver said "what a naughty bus"</p> <p>Equivalent age 7;7-7;9</p>

Some children, such as Alan made excellent progress across all assessments. He made significant progress easily catching up with expected norms for his age. The responses show a more structured and informative response to all questions. The bus story responses were longer, more detailed and the story had greater structure and contained more relevant information.

The speech and language therapy assessment also commented that although he needed refocusing he was confident in initiating communication and felt that language levels not captured in the assessment were age appropriate.

In the initial teacher assessment, Alan's teacher judged his language to be "mildly delayed" across all measures of the rating scale, though he was delayed by around 2 years on all three assessments.



This is Alan; he is 6 years and 7 months old and in Year 2.
He is learning English as an additional language.

	Before intervention	After intervention
Speech and language therapy report	Speech and language therapy reported difficulties with maintaining topic of conversation. Poor eye contact	Needed refocusing a few times Happy talking, initiating lots of conversation, confident
Response to pictures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. She broke her glasses 2. He's put a ladder on a building, he climbed up it and rescuing a cat 3. He is crying because the dog has took his shoe <p>Information equivalent age Score 4;0-4;5 Grammar equivalent age score 3;5-3;10</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The girl has fallen down the steps and broken her glasses 2. The man climbed up a ladder to rescue a kitten 3. Crying because the dog took his shoe <p>Information equivalent age Score 7;0-7;05 Grammar equivalent age score >8.5</p>
Bus story	equivalent age 4;8 – 4;9	equivalent age 8;3

The scores given above are the age ranges that children are functioning within according to their test results.

12.0 Evaluation - lessons learnt

12.1 Recruitment

Comments / Lessons learnt

Although not all schools were able to take part as planned, 4 of the 5 schools that were unable to run the programme are doing so from September 2010. Two of the schools did run part of the programme with some children. These children could not be included in the final analysis as they fell between an intervention and control group – they did neither all or none of the intervention.

A recommendation to schools and for the pilot would be that schools should run the programme as a whole if children are to see gains.

Recruitment for volunteers needs to begin early to allow for Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks to be completed.

12.2 Research timings

Comments / Lessons learnt

Due to severe weather at the beginning of the spring term, the project was significantly delayed. This meant that the 10 week programme no longer fit neatly into the spring term and had to be extended into the summer term. This also meant that assessments of children happened in the summer term (weeks 2 and 3), rather than the end of spring.

It therefore delayed the beginning of the intervention in the summer term, meaning there was only one week available at the end of the summer term to reassess all the children. The impact of this meant there was no contingency for availability of assessors and the children were being assessed during the last week of the school year, which was not ideal.

A recommendation to schools and for the pilot is that where possible the intervention is delivered within a school term, which staff felt would be easier and more efficient use of time.

12.3 Identification of children

Comments / Lessons learnt

Many teachers reported that identifying appropriate children was challenging, more so when children were learning English as an additional language. It is important to stress the difference between children learning English as an additional language and children with language delay. Arguably the former group will have a good home language on which to build English learning, therefore bilingual learners per se are not the target group for this intervention.

However, we know that some children with an additional language have a delayed home language; the aim was to include those children who had a weak home language – i.e. those who were language delayed. This was determined through discussion with bilingual support staff who judged whether home languages were delayed. Ideally support for these children would be in their home language. Bilingual support staff were involved in the project and where appropriate did use both home language and English during the sessions.

A recommendation for the national pilot is that teachers are supported to identify children more confidently. Materials are being developed as part of the national pilot which will support teachers in identifying appropriate children more accurately.

12.4 Training

Feedback from the training sessions has been excellent; some specific points were made by staff:

- It is essential to include context and understanding of the issue as well as practical details of the intervention. Staff were able to link this to their own context.
- They valued the practical nature of the training and demonstration of activities. Some staff requested further modelling of activities and discussion in school once they had been running the programme.
- Staff valued having both teachers and teaching assistants involved in training. In some schools senior management teams were involved in training, which had a positive impact on how the programme was timetabled and prioritised in the school.

Recommendations

- **To have teachers and teaching assistants trained together**
- **To encourage close working between teaching assistants and teachers where possible**
- **To build in modelling of activities / video material modelling activities**

12.5 The intervention

Staff taking part in the programme completed two monitoring sheets to support evaluation of the programme, taking account of aspects relating to delivery and content of the programme and accessibility and impact on the children.

Although monitoring sheets were not completed by all schools, they gave enough information to support evaluation.

The programme has been rewritten after the pilot taking account of comments from staff in focus groups and from monitoring documentation. On the whole comments about the structure, content and format of the programme and materials were very positive.

One of the challenges developing materials was to make them fit for purpose across a relatively wide age range. Simplification and extension activities are included in the programme, however, this process may place more demands from support staff delivering the programme.

A recommendation would be that further thought is needed to ensure the programme effectively supports children equally at all ages, for example:

- **To either provide additional guidance / training for teaching assistants working with older / more able children**
- **To include more extension activities in the programme for more able children and those in Year 2 (6 and 7 year olds)**
- **To provide more classroom based activities for reception class teachers**
- **To build on the current structure and framework, but have different programmes for each year group**

Changes have been made to take account of feedback from school staff. Most challenges in running the programme were around:

- Timetabling the programme on top of other priorities
- Ensuring whole class activities take place and that children are given opportunities to feedback to the class teacher

Timing – at the beginning of the programme, staff were finding it difficult to fit all 4 activities into the 30 40 minute time allocation. This became easier as they became familiar with the programme.

- Completing monitoring each session was seen as being overly time consuming by some staff

Recommendations

- **Encouraging staff to use planning time to timetable sessions into each week and to build into this feedback time for the children.** This is now included in the training, and could be reinforced further locally.
- **To inform staff that as they get to know the programme, timing may be an issue and suggest which elements of the programme could be left out if this is the case.**
- **To complete monitoring activity with the children at least weekly**

12.6 The assessment process

Comments / lessons learnt

There was little contingency in place to allow for schools to be revisited; this was due to delay in the project start date in January 2010 because of severe weather disruption and capacity at local level to complete the assessments.

Again, due to limited availability of speech and language therapists, assessments were carried out with the children, but no scoring was done. Carrying out assessments, subsequent scoring, recording and moderating of assessments was extremely time consuming.

Ideally, in the longer term, tools being developed as part of the national programme would support teachers to identify children and monitor progress.

For data collection in the national pilot, a recommendation would be to build in contingency time to ensure all targeted children are included in the assessment process. These children still went through the programme, though we have no clear indication of progress made.

A further recommendation would be to learn lessons from the pilot in terms of how much specialist support is needed to administer, score, record and moderate assessments. Decisions will need to be taken about whether all children in the national pilot are assessed in this way and if so how to ensure moderation across all sites.

12.7 Evaluation

Statistical analysis of data from our academic partner has been invaluable in providing an objective measure of outcomes for the project.

Lessons have been learned in terms of ensuring a more matched control and intervention group for any further testing. In addition there are many layers of further analysis which would be useful in determining exactly which elements of the project work better than others and for which children.

The monitoring sheets have been useful in looking at how the project ran. In reality many children missed sessions due to sickness or visits abroad. Sessions were changed to include more of the activities children liked and in some cases, some children were moved in and out of groups and others added in extra children they felt would benefit.

Much more detailed analysis is needed to determine the impact of these issues on children's outcome, though there is no capacity within the current phase. Further discussions will be important in prioritising next steps.

12.8 Parental involvement

Although we were keen to involve parents and carers, there has been no direct contact with parents by ACTT staff. More time was needed during the pilot to really ensure effective engagement with parents.

A number of options were discussed and plans were in place for family network days in schools, though these were all cancelled due to poor weather in the spring term and were not possible to rearrange due to capacity.

Information was sent home, though it is unclear at this point how well it was used. Parental involvement will be key to consider as part of the national pilot.

12.9 Quality assurance

This needs to be set up more carefully. There were issues about staff confidence in some schools and level of expertise for some support staff. In some schools, children were moved in and out of the groups, more children than planned were involved and elements of the sessions were missed. A school based lead and support from teachers is essential for teaching assistants running the programme; this worked much better in some schools than others.

12.10 Logistics

There have been unavoidable issues – lots of snow in the spring term which put the whole programme back by around three weeks, which meant it did not fit into a half term.

Capacity was an issue in some schools; one decided to run the programme with 5 groups simultaneously, though this was not planned for. Another school stopped an alternative programme to fit in ACTT. Timetabling and space were issues in other schools, meaning some sessions were cut short.

Consistency of approach / leadership needs to be ensured within schools.

Consideration around adjusting the programme so that there is a more tailored approach for the specific age range; particularly for reception age children to embed more of the activities within the classroom and for year 2 pupils to ensure these children are suitably challenged through the activities in order to make good progress.

13.0 Conclusion

Talk Boost was initially designed, developed and evaluated through an initial trial of almost 140 children across 12 primary schools. A randomised control trial saw the children taking part in the intervention make an average of 18 months progress compared with just 6 months progress made by the control group.

Feedback from teachers and teaching assistants has been positive, recognising changes in children's language, social interaction, confidence, engagement and readiness to learn within the classroom.

It has been shown from statistical analysis of data, feedback from class teachers and data from informal speech and language therapy assessments that the majority of children have made significant progress with language and communication skills following *Talk Boost*. For many this has meant a significant increase in language and communication skills and subsequent growth in confidence and self esteem.

13.1 Caveats to the analysis

Analysis of larger numbers of children would enhance the data further, giving opportunities to analyse in detail progress made for children of different ages and backgrounds. A control group for children with English as an additional language would enable more robust analysis of this group.

The programme's aim is to support children with moderately delayed language to close the language gap between them and their peers; in reality a much wider range of children were referred into the project.

To fully meet the original criteria, more analysis of current data is needed to determine which children make best progress. The national pilot will allow us to do this with around 350 children having taken part in *Talk Boost* during the first year of the national programme with additional data from year two to follow.

However, both soft and hard data gathered throughout the project would suggest a wider group of children need support. This includes children with significant language delay, those children who score well on assessments, but function less well in the classroom and the "invisible children" as one teacher described them, who are reticent in using their language in school for learning or socialising with peers.

The major challenges in running the programme are around schools being able to prioritise language and communication development as part of their pedagogical approaches both within the classroom and in targeted interventions.

In many cases teaching staff understand and have a willingness to prioritise language learning within the constraints in which they are working and are skilled in making links between verbal and written language mediums.

In others, the impact of SLCN on literacy, learning, behaviour and social interaction is less well understood and therefore is a very low priority; this seems to be the case especially with older children where maybe it is more difficult for teachers to judge just how delayed these children are and the impact of difficulties on learning.

Results from this programme and evidence around prevalence of SLCN and impact across the curriculum would strongly suggest the need for a curriculum which gave appropriate focus on language and communication to support this area in its own right and as access to other areas of learning.

A further challenge is supporting teachers to effectively identify children with language delays across the age range. Although some school staff were skilled in identifying appropriate children, others continue to need much more support. A profiling tool to enable teachers to accurately and objectively assess component elements of language is needed.

Current educational tools, though extremely useful for typically developing children, do not break down language into its component parts and therefore do not give enough detail to identify and monitor progress or see specific links between language and literacy, particularly for those children with language delay.

The content, though well received by teaching staff would benefit from further development, considered in the light of further analysis; this would mean more classroom activities for reception age children and more specific extension activities for children in year 2.

13.2 *Talk Boost* roll out

Following this initial phase of development and evaluation, the programme is being rolled out through a national pilot across 4 regions, with over 350 children taking part in the intervention during the first year. Academic support has enabled us to determine that once again, children have made statistically significant progress across all measures of language as a result of the intervention.

Talk Boost has been rolled out in 4 local authorities across clusters of 8 schools in each as part of a wider programme, *A Chance to Talk*, which supports speech, language and communication in children across the 3 waves of intervention, including those with typically developing language and children with more significant long term SLCN.

Around 350 children completed the *Talk Boost* programme between September 2010 and July 2011. Their results have been analysed by an academic partner who has found them to be statistically significant across the age range.

Year 2 of the national pilot has seen more children taking part in the *Talk Boost* intervention during 2011 – 2012. A final report on all the data will be produced in September 2012.

14.0 *Talk Boost*

Talk Boost is available now for purchase on its own or as part of the *A Chance to Talk* programme. It contains the following elements:

Training Day and Teachers Pack

- Interactive training day run by an expert Speech and Language Therapist or specialist teacher for reception, KS1 and KS2 Teachers and Teaching Assistants.
- During this training day, attendees will learn the principles of good practice for supporting language and communication in the classroom and learn practical application by working through the teachers pack, intervention manual, progression tool and children’s activity book.
- Teacher Pack with support materials to embed principles of good practice and integrate small group work into the wider classroom environment. Pupils taking part in the group work are profiled as ‘experts’ boosting their confidence with their peers.

Progression Tool

- The SLC Progression Tool, developed by The Communication Trust, helps teachers identify children who are struggling with different aspects of language who would benefit from *Talk Boost*.
- This tool measures the oral language ability of children at the start and end of the programme and can highlight those children who need further specialist help.

Intervention Manual

- Detailed activities and guidance to enable Teaching Assistants to deliver 30 minute small group sessions each week for children who are identified with language delay.
- Includes 120 activities in total which break down the key components of language - Listening and Attention, Vocabulary, Sentence Building, Storytelling and Conversations.

Children’s Activity Book

- For schools to send home to parents with accessible and fun activities for children to do.
- It includes exercises, stickers and simple games that encourages parents / carers and their child to interact together to improve their language skills.
- It also involves parents and carers in their child’s progress.

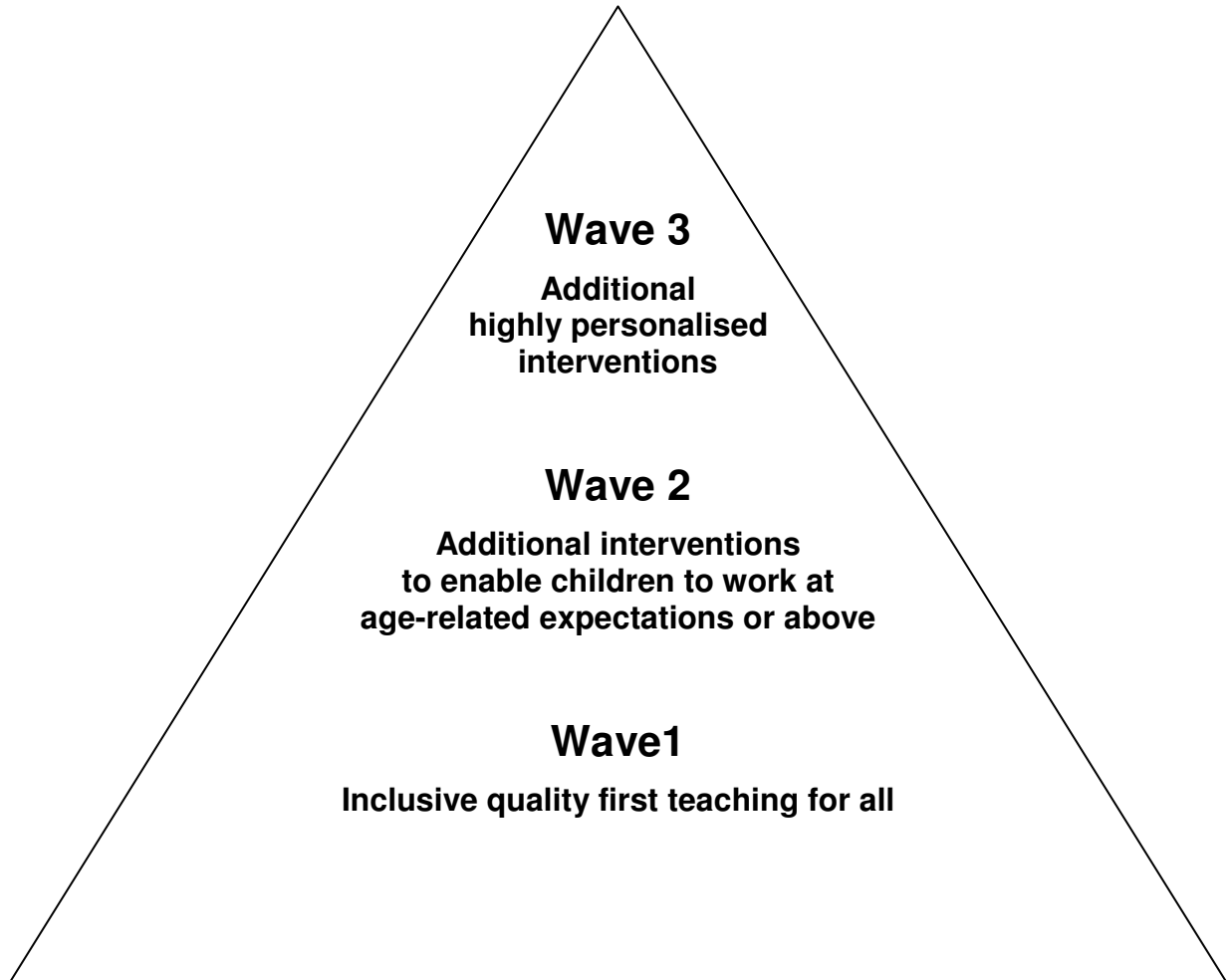
Care Service

- An email and helpline service delivered by I CAN will support all *Talk Boost* -trained and registered school staff throughout the process .

To find out more at:

- @ talkboost@ican.org.uk
- ☎ 020 7843 2515
- □ www.talkboost.org.uk

Appendix 1: The wave model



Appendix 2: Meeting some of the children

What does language look like in Reception classes: Four and five year olds?²⁹



This is Sarah; she is in reception and has **typically developing language at an age appropriate level**

Sarah's bus story

The driver was trying to fix the bus, but the bus ran away from the driver...they made funny faces.

He saw a police officer and he blowed the whistle and said "stop"

He jumped over a fence and he saw a cow

He saw some water and he fell in it

He couldn't stop and then the driver saw the bus and pulled him out

Sarah's responses

Picture:

1. She's fallen down the stairs and broked her glasses
2. Climbing up the ladder to get the cat
3. He's crying cos the doggie's got his shoe

Jamal's responses

Picture:

1. slipping off
2. What doing? Up! cat.
3. cry



This is Jamal; he is also in reception. His first language is delayed as is his English. **He couldn't manage any of the bus story.**

²⁹ NTS ; MPSA :FLSB



This is Jack; he is also in reception class with **delayed language**

Jack's bus story

That man falled over. He got off he wanting no
He wanting river
He went the moo
Man in the river
Got him out
He in river
He go on the road now

Jack's responses

Picture:

1. Fall down ...he them there broken them glasses
2. Climbing up a ladder..
3. He looking after dog

In Year one: Five and six year olds



This is Lucy; she is in year one and has **age appropriate language**

Lucy's responses

Picture:

1. She's falled down the stairs and broke her glasses
2. He's climbing up the chimney to get the cat
3. Crying because the dog has got his

Alice's responses

Picture:

4. She broked her glasses
5. Get a cat
6. That..the dog got his shoe ...and that boy is crying



This is Alice; she is in year 1 and has **delayed language**. Her language is more like a **4 year olds**



Shona's responses

Picture:

1. he fell down the steps
2. trying to get the cat down
3. crying cos it ate his shoe

This is Shona; she is in year 1 and has **delayed language**. Her language is more like a 4 year olds

And Year two: Six and seven year olds



Alex's responses

Picture:

1. She's fallen down the stairs and her glasses have broke
2. He's climbing up the ladder to get the cat off the roof
3. Crying because the dog's took his shoe

This is Alex; he is in year two and has **age appropriate information scores**, though grammar scores are mildly delayed



James's responses

Picture:

4. he fell off the..fell down and he break his glasses
5. him want to get the cat
6. that dog is take him shoe and him cry now

This is James; he is in year two and has **delayed language**. His language is more like a 3 and a half year old child



Amar's responses

Picture:

1. She fell down and her glasses broke
2. He's climbing up the ladder and there's a cat on the roof
3. He's hurt himself

This is Amar; he is in year two and has **delayed language**. His **first language is delayed as is his English** His language is more like a 4 year old child

Appendix 3: What happens in a session

Programme structure

The programme breaks language down into **5 simple areas**

4 of the 5 areas are worked on **each session**.

Each week there is a particular **focus on one** of the 5 areas

This focus introduces a **key activity** to teach the skill and

Ensures **links with the classroom**.

In week one for example, the focus is on teaching children how to listen

Language and Communication 5 a day

- **Attention and listening**
- **Vocabulary**
- **Sentence building**
- **Story telling**
- **Conversations**



5 key principles for the programme

- Focus on understanding and talking
- Children build an awareness of their skills
- Adults make learning explicit
- Flexibility and links with the classroom
- Strong evidence base



Appendix 4: Key Principles for activities

Key to *Talk Boost* is the principles behind all the activities. These principles are reinforced with teaching staff and volunteers during training, embedded in all activities and made explicit to the children.

Principles for teaching

Attention and listening

- Making listening an active and explicit process
- Providing children with strategies for good listening

Principles for teaching Vocabulary

- Repetition in different ways and contexts
- Link to current knowledge and made meaningful

Principles for teaching children how to Build Sentences

- Building solid understanding as well as talking
- Targeting appropriate levels

Principles for teaching verbal Story telling

- Clear explicit structures
- We tell each other our stories all the time

Principles for teaching conversations

- Verbal and non verbal elements
- Purpose and power of conversations
- Practice and consolidation of all other areas

Appendix 5: Session structure

Example of a session plan:

- Each session follows a “**plan, do, review**” structure
- **4 of the 5 areas** of language are taught each session
- Sessions last **30-40 minutes**
- Activities are **interactive and fun**
- **Minimal “teacher talk”** is encouraged
- **Children reflect on their learning**

Week 6 – focus on vocabulary – action words	
Session 1	
Small group – session plan	
Intro – plan	This week we will be learning lots about action words
Activity	
Listening - Fruit salad	
<p>Tell the children - <i>this game helps us listen</i> Each child chooses the name of a fruit. Alan decides to be a grapefruit. Miya decides to be an apple, and so on. The group leader (initially, you) says the names of two fruits and these children have to swap places. When you say: ‘<i>Fruit salad</i>’, all the children must swap places. Once children are familiar with the game, get them to take turns at being the leader</p> <p>We had to listen to play the fruit salad game</p>	
Vocabulary - What do you do with it?	
<p>Tell the children – we are learning about doing words.</p> <p>Take turns to turn over the pictures. Each child names the picture as it is turned over then says what you can do with it. Use it as an opportunity to talk about the pictures and build up the children’s knowledge of what the word</p> <p>We thought of lots of action words today</p>	
Building sentences - Barrier game - Jazzy eggs	
<p>Tell the children – we are practising talking in sentences</p> <p>Give each child a copy of the same drawing and identical sets of coloured pencils. Give precise instructions so everyone colours the picture in the same way. At the end, the children check the pictures and decide whether they are the same. Help them to understand the idea of clarification. Encourage the children to ask questions if unsure</p> <p>We need give clear information and ask questions if we are not sure</p>	
Telling stories	
Conversations - True or false	
<p>Tell the children – we are finding out more about each other</p> <p>The adult starts by saying something that is true or false – eg “I have blue eyes.” The other people in the group need to decide if it is true or not true – thumbs up for yes, thumbs down for no. Go round the circle and say something about each of the children. The group decide whether it is true or not true.</p> <p>We can work out what is true and what is not true</p>	
Review	
<p>Talk through what games you have played, remind children of why you played them</p> <p>Encourage them to fill in the blanks and remember for themselves</p>	

Appendix 6: Feedback from staff

The following comments were made by teachers and support staff who carried out the intervention:



... you know X, well it's the first time I ever heard her talk



I really feel that this has made a difference...



The children are so much more confident – they are talking to each other more



...they are actually having a conversation now; they didn't know how to have a conversation before

She did start talking in class, putting her hand up and joining in, which to me was a massive step for her



They are now relating their contribution to what the rest of the class are talking about

Their vocabulary as well – they just know more words





Listening has vastly improved – they know how to do it now

It was lovely – the children in the group got to know each other really well



They have a better order of sentences and better spoken grammar

I much prefer this programme – it is so much more structured and organised



In class when they are really not listening, the teacher says “what is good listening”...they all get it, they all know what to do

Appendix 7: Children inclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria In both first language and English, if learning English as an additional language	Exclusion criteria
<p>Delayed language; so language developing in the same way as typically developing children, though slower.</p> <p>Difficulties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening / paying attention • Understanding language • Organising and using language • Explaining or describing events, information, instructions • Socialising / interacting with peers • Listening • “repairing” conversations • Poor vocabulary • Immature sentences <p>Difficulties using language to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe, direct others, negotiate, engage in play activities, converse with adults / peers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These difficulties may well be impacting on other areas of learning or socialising • May be due to a lack of opportunity or experience in the early years • Potential to “catch up” <p>Children learning English as an additional language with delay in both first and additional languages <u>should</u> be included</p>	<p>They should not have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolated speech difficulties / very unclear speech • Long term speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) • Specific language impairment • Autistic Spectrum Disorder • Long term learning difficulties / Special Educational Needs • Complex needs <p>Children learning EAL who are age appropriate in their home language <u>should not</u> be included</p>

Appendix 8: Teacher Rating scale

	0 Unusual patterns of development	1 Severe delay 18m+	2 Moderate delay 9-18m	3 Mild delay 0-9m	4 Age appropriate
Attention and Listening					
Can listen on a 121					
Can listen in a small group					
Can listen to whole class instructions					
Vocabulary					
Understands and uses names of familiar objects					
Understands and uses names of school vocabulary					
Picks up new vocabulary easily					
Building and understanding sentences					
Can understand sentences					
Can combine words into short sentences					
Can combine words to make longer sentences					
Narrative – telling verbal stories					
Can retell a simple event					
Sequence events in the correct order					
Organise and tell a simple story					
Conversations / Social					
Taking turns					
Interacting with peers					
Making and keeping friends					
Uses language to describe, direct others, engage in play activities, converse with adults / peers					
Summary – overall level					

Appendix 9: Guidance for rating pupils

The rating scale above serves two purposes:

1. To support teachers in identifying children who would be most appropriate for the project. Many children will benefit from this type of intervention, though we are aiming to identify those ***who will get most from it***
 - a. the children who are significantly delayed,
 - b. have potential to catch up,
 - c. though need that extra support to do so.
2. To act as a baseline measure for the project – it will be completed at points along the life of the project to look at whether if so, in which areas children are progressing

Please complete the rating scale for the children in your class you feel would benefit from the intervention.

We need to identify 4 pupils per class.

It may be that you feel more children would benefit, so the rating scale will support you in identifying which would be most appropriate. If when the therapists assess the children, they do not feel they fit the criteria, it might be useful to have a couple more in mind that would benefit.

We anticipate children will have moderate delay in most areas, though may have areas that are more severe or mildly delayed, which is fine. We would steer away from including children with either age appropriate skills or those who have atypical or unusual patterns of language development.

To support decision making, you can refer to additional guidelines and developmental norms.

Appendix 10: Speech and language therapy Informal assessment

Name of child

Date

Age

Assessors name

School

Please use the beginning of the session while settling the child to make Informal observation / language assessment, through conversation. Please comment, with examples where available of any observations made:

Attention / Listening

Comment on ability to maintain attention throughout the assessment and level of prompting needed. If possible, make the following judgement with examples

Age appropriate

Delay

Language and communication

Comment on the following...

Area of language	Age appropriate	Delay	Need further info..
Vocabulary			
Comprehension			
Sentence use			
Response to questions			
Social interaction			

Comments / examples....

Child's initiation of communication

Never

Rarely

Often

Please comment on:

Speech

Fluency

Other

Final comments

How would you describe the child's language / communication:

Age appropriate	Delayed	Disorder / SEN	Further assessment needed
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In your opinion do they fit the criteria for inclusion in the project?

Yes

No

The final decision will be made by combining this info with formal ax results and teacher reports

Complete

If not possible to complete either, please comment below

RAPT

Bus story

Final scores (to be scored up separately)

RAPT

Bus story

Appendix 11: Bus story results



Sarah's bus story

The driver was trying to fix the bus, but the bus ran away from the driver...they made funny faces.

He saw a police officer and he blew the whistle and said "stop"

He jumped over a fence and he saw a cow

He saw some water and he fell in it

He couldn't stop and then the driver saw the bus and pulled him out

The
rec
langua
her age

Alice and Shona are a year older than Sarah. They are in a year one class. Although both are using more words in their stories, the structure is not as clear, grammar not as well developed, vocabulary lacking and the stories do not flow as well or make as much sense.

The links between language and literacy are well evidenced. These children will struggle to write cohesive stories and sentences as they struggle to do it verbally.

Alice's bus story – Alice has language delay

The bus driving..along and that bus say the man and he run faster and faster

And the bus saw a train and the train go in the tunnel and the bus saw a man and the man whistled

Um...bus runs faster and the bus jump and the bus saw a cow

Bus have seen a water, bus saw the man he is running on the ground and he's trying to help the bus

Shona's bus story – Shona has language delay

Once upon a time...he's driving, the naughty bus driver, he's mending it, he's running to the bus to get it.

The bus was at the side of the train, they were doing nasty faces. The bus was going up the hill. The train went into a tunnel. One time, the bus, the policeman just told him to stip.

He was driving along. He went over a bench. He saw a cow and went "moo".

How could he stop his brakes. He fell into the water.

Then he pulled it out and then got in it.

Appendix 12: Example of week one activity - listening

Week 1 – focus on listening			
Small group			
We are learning to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand group rules • Know how to listen • learn new words • Talk in longer sentences • Put things in the right order • Take turns talking 	Session 1 Plan: Set group rules Introduce all areas Teach good listening strategy <i>In brief – minimal teacher talk</i>	Session 2 Plan: Review group rules Review all areas Reinforce good listening <i>In brief – minimal teacher talk</i>	Session 3 Plan: Review group rules Review all areas Reinforce good listening <i>In brief – minimal teacher talk</i>
Intro / plan	Intro – group rules We are learning to...	Intro Review we are learning to...	Intro Review we are learning to...
Listening Introduction to listening (detailed)	Good listening activity Teaching children how to listen	Matching musical instruments	Listen for...
Vocabulary Introduction to vocabulary (brief)	Sorting game	Word bingo	Matching pairs
Building sentences Introduction to sentences (brief)	Add an adjective		Tell me what to do
Telling stories Introduction to stories (brief)		Picture sequencing activity	
Conversations Intro to conversations (brief)	Finding out	Finding out	Special person
Review	What do we know... How did we do... Choose 1 game Report back to class	What do we know... How did we do... Choose 1 game Report back to class	What do we know... How did we do... SP – chose favourite game Report back to class
Whole class			
Classroom activity Listening week	Mandatory activity Good listening – every day Children’s reviews	Possible activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening walk • Listening scrapbook • Listening walk on line game • A rhyme a day • Listening poster/displays 	5 minute activities:

Appendix 13: Information for parents

Your child has been taking part in *Talk Boost*. They have been having fun and learning about

- **Listening**
- **Words**
- **Sentences**
- **Stories**
- **Conversations**

These skills are really important for learning and making friends. Here is a game you can play at home to help with learning words.

We would really like you to practice using describing words at home – practising describing things really helps children with their talking

You can do this by having fun playing these simple games:

When you are at home, tell your child you are going to describe something and they need to guess what it is.

Play this when you are in the supermarket – I need something we spread on our toast – can you find it?

Walking to school – I can see something shining in the sky, can you guess what it is

Waiting for the bus – I am looking for something that I keep my money in – guess what I am looking for

If you have access to the internet, there is a sorting game you can play here www.communicationcookbook.org.uk you need to register first – just a name and password, then you can play all the games

Words

This exercise helps children practise describing words

Describing words

- Find any object in your house to describe e.g. a ball.
- Then add a word that describes it – this is a yellow ball
- Give the ball to your child and ask him to add another word, eg 'It's a round ball.'
- Take turns and keep going as long as you can. 'It's a big ball'. 'It's a bouncy ball.'
- See how many words you can think of
- Give loads of praise – we thought of 5 words – how cool is that!
- Help your child to think of other words to describe it

