

Project Report

Health & Wellbeing in Schools - Clacks Language Intervention Project

*A collaborative initiative to enhance
language and communication skills
of children in the early years
of primary school*



Hazel McKellar, *Specialist Speech and Language Therapist*
Wendy Harrison, *Inclusion Support Teacher*

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1 Background

National Project

In response to the *Equally Well* Report¹, the Scottish Government funded a two year project, 'Health & Wellbeing in Schools', which aimed to address the health and wellbeing needs of children and young people by increasing healthcare capacity in schools. The project was implemented in communities that have a high number of vulnerable children and young people and linked well with the philosophies of *Getting It Right for Every Child*² and *Curriculum for Excellence*³.

It was intended that this project would provide an opportunity to redesign services by utilising existing skills and knowledge, while at the same time developing new roles i.e. not more of the same. Some key aims included:

- Delivering high quality evidence based interventions
- Developing new roles within the workforce, including the opportunity to develop joint appointments across Health, Education and Social Services
- Developing an integrated approach to service delivery
- Involving children, young people and their families and other key stakeholders in the redesign

Four demonstration sites participated in the project –NHS Ayrshire & Arran, NHS Forth Valley, NHS Grampian and NHS Lothian. The project was overseen by the National Steering Group which had broad representation from partners in Health, Education, Nurse Directors from Demonstration Sites, Scottish Government, Senior Managers, Project Officers and Voluntary Organisations.

Local Project

The NHS Forth Valley project focused on the geographical area of Clackmannanshire. It targeted local priorities and had four main strands: substance misuse; healthy eating; sexual health; communication. There was a strong focus on: developing partnerships; supporting children and young people through transition; supporting parents.

The Clackmannanshire Health & Wellbeing in Schools Team (HWB) consisted of:

- Lead Nurse for Primary Care
- Public Health Nurse
- Staff Nurses
- Health Care Assistant
- Speech & Language Therapist
- Inclusion Support Teacher
- Primary Mental Health Worker
- Family Support Workers

A variety of new initiatives were implemented by the wider HWB team, including:

- 'Health Spot' in Alloa Academy and Lornhill Academy to provide pupils with:
 - Information, support and advice
 - Access to health professionals on a weekly basis
- Counselling Service for:
 - Parents of children with additional support needs
 - Identified pupils
- Supporting families identified by schools/health visitors/other services with:
 - Budgeting
 - Managing children's behaviour
 - Healthy eating

2 Communication Strand

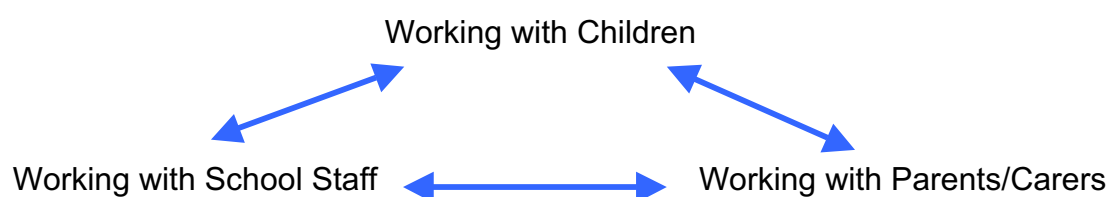
Clacks Language Intervention Project

Research shows that the language and communication skills of vulnerable children in areas of socio-economic deprivation are depressed, more even than cognitive skills might suggest⁴. It is widely recognised that depressed language and communication skills have a negative impact on health and wellbeing. Current initiatives in Health and Education, including Curriculum for Excellence, place greater emphasis on children's health and wellbeing and recognise that it is an essential pre-cursor for effective learning. Therefore in order to ensure successful learners, responsible citizens, effective contributors and confident individuals⁵ we must endeavour to improve the language and communication skills of these vulnerable children.

"Nothing is more important to a child's future wellbeing than confident communication." Baroness Warnock⁶

As **collaborative** projects have been shown to be very effective in developing children's language skills in areas of social disadvantage⁷, a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) and Teacher were recruited to work jointly on the communication strand of the project. The Clacks Language Intervention Project (CLIP) was established in August 2009, as part of the wider Health and Wellbeing in Schools Project, to enhance the language and communication skills of children in the early years of three identified primary schools and their associated nurseries. There was also additional provision made by Education of a Supervisory Assistant from August 2009 to June 2010.

As partnership working has been shown to produce the best outcomes for children⁸, the team decided to adopt the following framework:



The team began by meeting with each Headteacher to establish the role of CLIP and the requirements and expectations of the schools. The team was then able to devise a set of more specific aims:

1. In partnership with parents, schools and nurseries, the Project will develop a coordinated approach to developing the language and communication skills of children from Nursery through to Primary 2.
2. The discrepancy between chronological age and performance age scores will decrease in at least 75% of a sample of participating children.
3. Staff will have increased access to training, consultation and advice to support the development of children's language and communication skills.
4. With support from the inter-agency team, staff in the 3 pilot schools will be able to identify and deliver at least 2 new language and communication interventions appropriate to the needs of children.
5. Parents/carers of children from the 3 pilot schools will have increased opportunities to access information, advice and/or activities related to the development of children's language and communication skills.

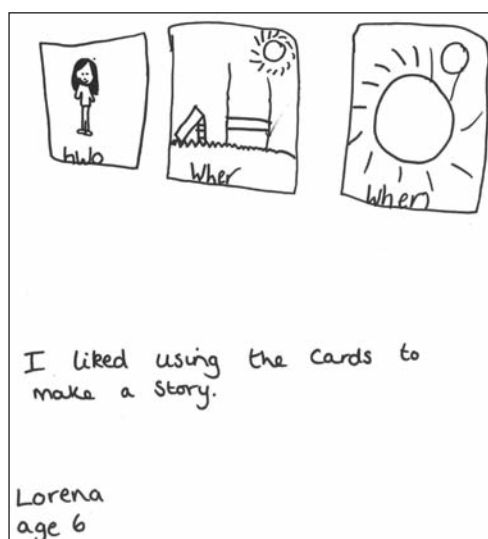
Working with Children

In partnership with parents, schools and nurseries, the Project will develop a coordinated approach to developing the language and communication skills of children from Nursery through to Primary 2.



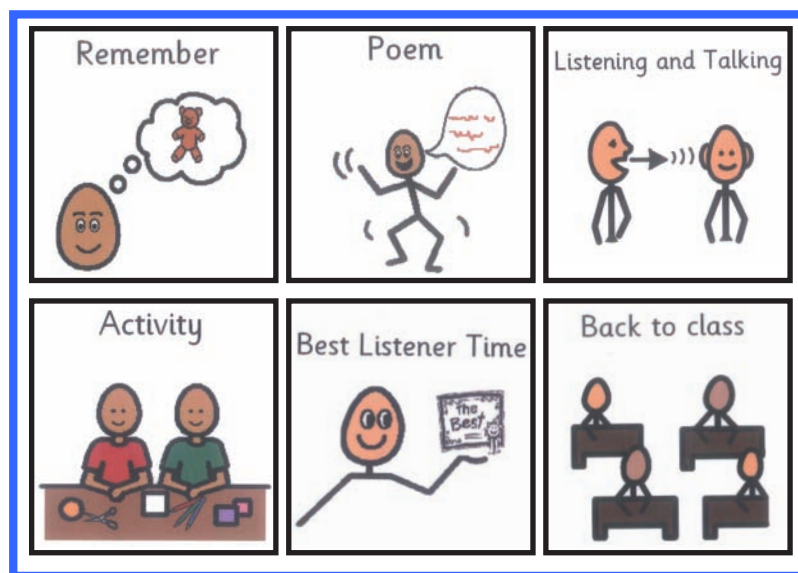
A series of meetings took place with Class Teachers and Home School Liaison Officers to identify the particular language and communication needs of class groups. As there were already services in place to support identified children, CLIP would be working with whole class/group populations rather than individual. Concerns around listening skills, expressive language skills and the social use of language were common across the three schools. However, individual class teachers were also able to identify priorities for their own particular class.

The team researched the effectiveness of a variety of language and communication resources appropriate for use with groups and classes of children and were able to use this research, and the priorities identified by teachers, to compile a continuum of resources (Appendix 1). Wherever possible the continuum was linked to key early years programmes used by the schools e.g. Narrative programmes were selected to link with North Lanark Writing. Staff could select a programme from the continuum appropriate to the needs of their own class.



The team delivered a variety of programmes in the 3 project schools, which focused on developing children's listening skills, expressive language skills and social use of language skills. The classes were split into groups consisting of between 6 and 8 children, who were usually grouped randomly, and the programmes were delivered on a weekly basis for between 6 and 10 weeks. Although published programmes were used, they were adapted to suit each school e.g. linking with class topics. Across the variety of programmes, the team used a consistent structure to support the children's participation. Key features of this included:

- 'Hello' and 'Goodbye' routine
- Use of a visual timetable
- Use of Makaton signs to support comprehension
- Use of visual group rules
- Compliments given and received by the children
- Use of sticker rewards



The team adopted a 'coaching in context' approach, with class teachers expected to join the group sessions where possible. This provided opportunities for class teachers to: observe children in small groups and discuss these observations with the CLIP team; see new activities modelled before using them in their own classroom setting; and put what they had learned in training into a meaningful context. Weekly evaluations with suggested follow-up activities were provided and class teachers used these in a variety of ways e.g. using the group session as a focus for class writing lessons or providing specific follow-up for the whole class, groups or individuals. This approach has proved extremely successful and popular with school staff.

"The sessions were great at enabling me to see 'experts' at work and giving me a practical insight into the material (much better than just reading a pamphlet or teachers notes)."

Class Teacher P1

In using the continuum of resources, there has been better coordination by the project schools in their use of resources to support the language and communication development of children as they move through the early years of education. For example:

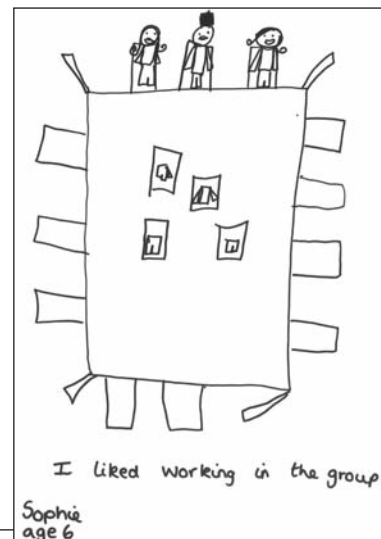
Time To Talk⁹ – was introduced to children in Sauchie Nursery (on the nursery floor and during summer groups) and has been used by Deerpark staff with these same children in Primary 1.

Reception Narrative¹⁰ – was introduced to children in Primary 1 at Banchory and continued with these children in Primary 2.

Nursery Narrative¹¹ – was delivered to all children in Primary 1 at Park before Reception Narrative was delivered to these children in Primary 2.

The framework provided by the continuum has enabled the project schools to use effective, evidence-based resources to develop the language and communication skills of all children, including those with difficulties. It has allowed for flexibility across schools and year groups as it follows a developmental sequence of skills. Whole classes, groups and/or individuals were therefore able to move along the continuum at their own rate.

The children were also asked to evaluate their CLIP groups. The anecdotal evidence indicates that the groups were popular with the children and something that was 'looked forward' to.

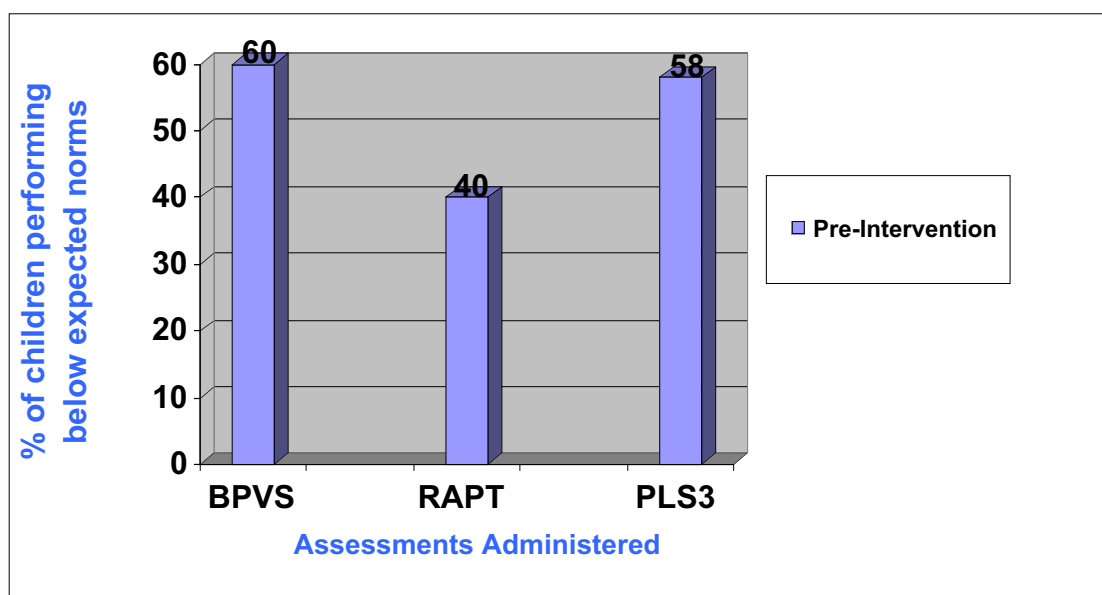


The discrepancy between chronological age and performance age scores will decrease in at least 75% of a sample of participating children.

At the start of the project, the team recorded a range of baseline measurements for the target classes. Some of these initial measurements were taken from the individual project schools' own baseline information. Each school had already used a variety of assessments to suit their individual needs, including the British Picture Vocabulary Scale¹² and the Renfrew Action Picture Test¹³. To avoid over-testing the children, it was decided to use existing measures where appropriate i.e. if relevant to skills targeted in the selected intervention. The two assessments cited measure **either** receptive **or** expressive language, but as some of the interventions targeted **both** receptive **and** expressive language the team wanted to measure performance across both these skills. Therefore it was decided to administer the Preschool Language Scale-3¹⁴ on a random sample of children before and after intervention.

1. The British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS) measures receptive vocabulary. 55 children were tested, of which 33 performed at a level lower than their chronological age.
2. The Renfrew Action Picture Test (RAPT) measures expressive vocabulary and grammar. 40 children were tested, of which 16 performed at a level lower than their chronological age.
3. The Pre-School Language Scale (PLS-3) measures receptive and expressive language skills in children up to the age of 7 years. A randomly selected sample of 12 children were tested using the PLS, of which 7 performed at a level lower than their chronological age.

Percentage of children performing below expected norms pre-intervention



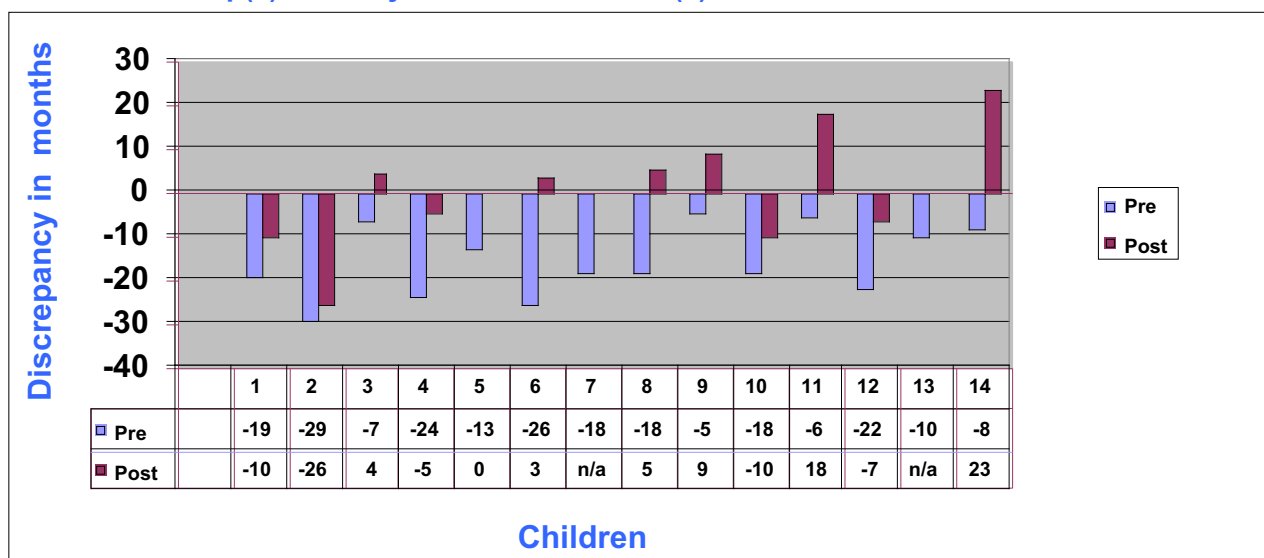
The discrepancy between chronological age and performance age indicated by these results is consistent with the research cited earlier in this report. It also reflects the anecdotal concerns of teachers that a significant number of children are entering school without the language and communication skills necessary to fully access the curriculum and become successful learners.

The baseline measures were repeated after a 12 month interval, with positive results recorded in all three assessments. Those results relating to direct interventions delivered by the team are reported below.

1. Discrepancy between chronological age and performance age (BPVS)

Year Group(s): Primary 1

Intervention(s): Time to Talk

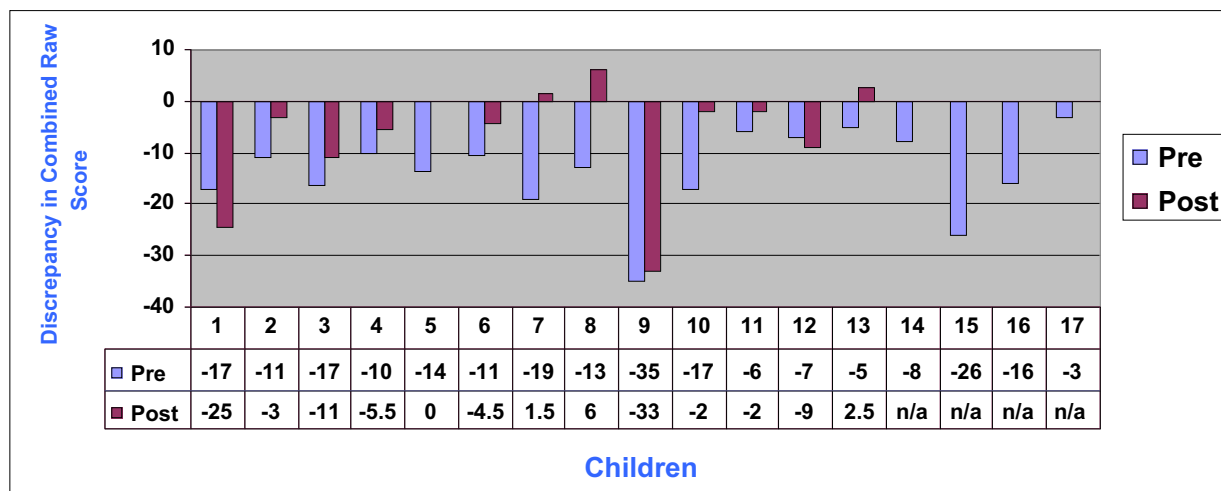


Of the 14 children in this group with a negative discrepancy between their chronological age and performance age, 12 were available for re-test. Of these 12 children, 100% had a decrease in the discrepancy between chronological age and performance age. In fact, 7 children are now performing at or above their chronological age.

2. Discrepancy between expected scores and actual scores (RAPT)

Year Group(s): Primary 1
Primary 2

Intervention(s): Language through Listening
Reception Narrative

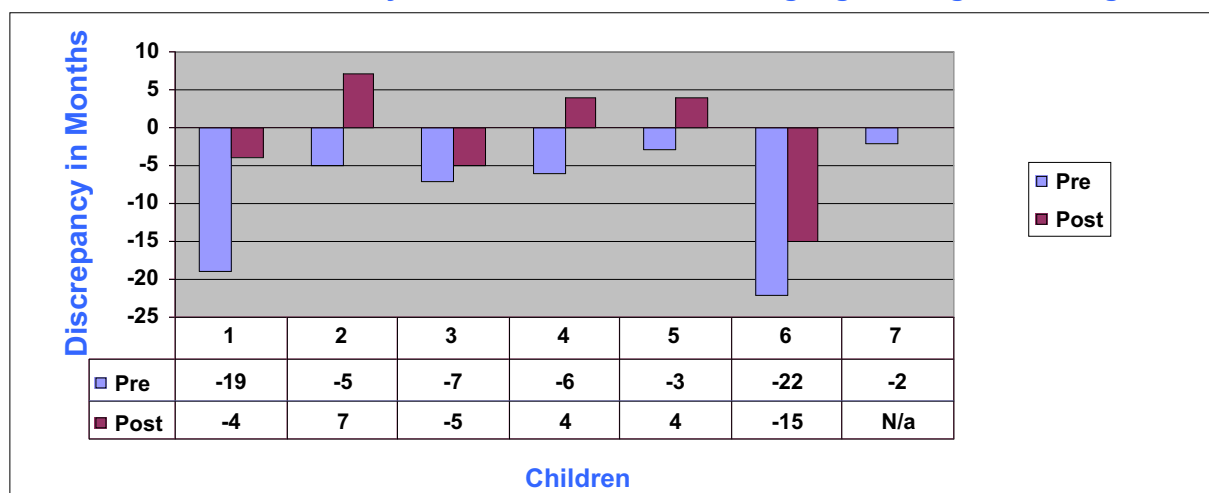


Of the 17 children in this group with a negative discrepancy between their expected raw score and actual raw score, 13 were available for re-test. Of these 13 children, 85% had a decrease in the discrepancy between expected score and actual score. In fact, 3 children are now performing at or above their chronological age.

3. Discrepancy between chronological age and performance age (PLS-3)

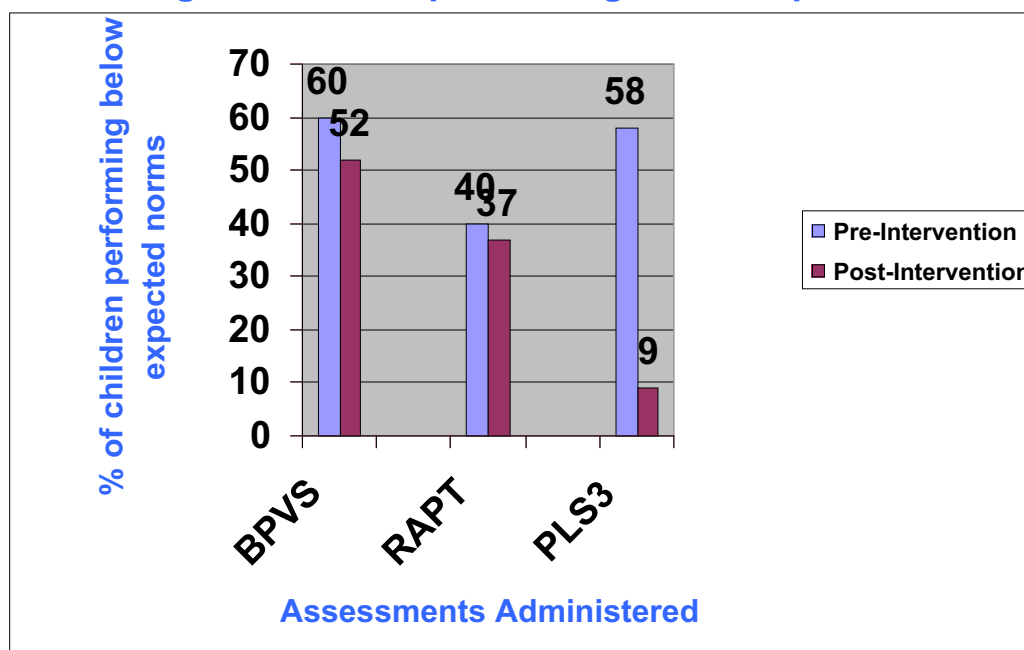
Year Group(s): Primary 1
Primary 1

Intervention(s): Time to Talk
Language through Listening



Of the 7 children in this group with a negative discrepancy between their chronological age and performance age, 6 were available for re-test. Of these 6 children, 100% had a decrease in the discrepancy between chronological age and performance age. In fact, 3 children are now performing at or above their chronological age.

Percentage of children performing below expected norms



There have undoubtedly been significant gains for individual children and the project target of a decrease in the negative discrepancy between chronological and performance age has been achieved. Across the three assessments used, a lower percentage of children who participated in specific programmes of intervention now display a negative discrepancy between performance age and chronological age. Although we cannot determine the precise reasons for these improvements, it can be assumed that the interventions delivered were a factor.

However, it is of concern to the authors that despite additional input there are still a significant number of children performing below expected norms. This will impact on learning and future health and wellbeing.

Working with School Staff

Staff will have increased access to training, consultation and advice to support the development of children's language and communication skills.

At the beginning of the project, the team asked key staff in the project schools to complete a questionnaire (Appendix 2) to ascertain their skills, knowledge and confidence levels in the area of language and communication. Staff generally reported that they were unaware of resources and interventions available to support whole class and/or individual children's language and communication development. They also reported a lack of opportunities for professional development related to children's language and communication.

The team undertook Elklan¹⁵ training to enable the planning and delivery of a series of trainings for school staff as licensed Tutor and Co-Tutor. Elklan training is jointly delivered by a Speech & Language Therapist and Teacher to model the importance of collaborative working between agencies to ensure the best outcomes possible for children. It teaches staff to understand and use strategies, which can be applied to all the children they work with. It enables staff to be more flexible and adaptable in their classroom practice to support children's language and communication skills.

The team has delivered a comprehensive training package based on the Elklan materials. The training 'Speech & Language Support in the Classroom' is interactive with a mix of theory and practical activities using the authors' adaptation of the Language Development Pyramid¹⁶ as a framework (Appendix 3). The package began for the three project schools with a full day's training for teachers in the early years classes. In line with best practice, this was followed up with a series of twilight sessions over a period of nine months, allowing staff to embed new practices in their own classroom settings¹⁷.

The training package evaluated extremely positively and feedback suggests that increased access to training has had a positive impact on staff's ability to support the language and communication skills of the children in their classes.

"useful notes and information and I am sure I shall continue to use these as points of reference to improve the listening and attention of children in my class"

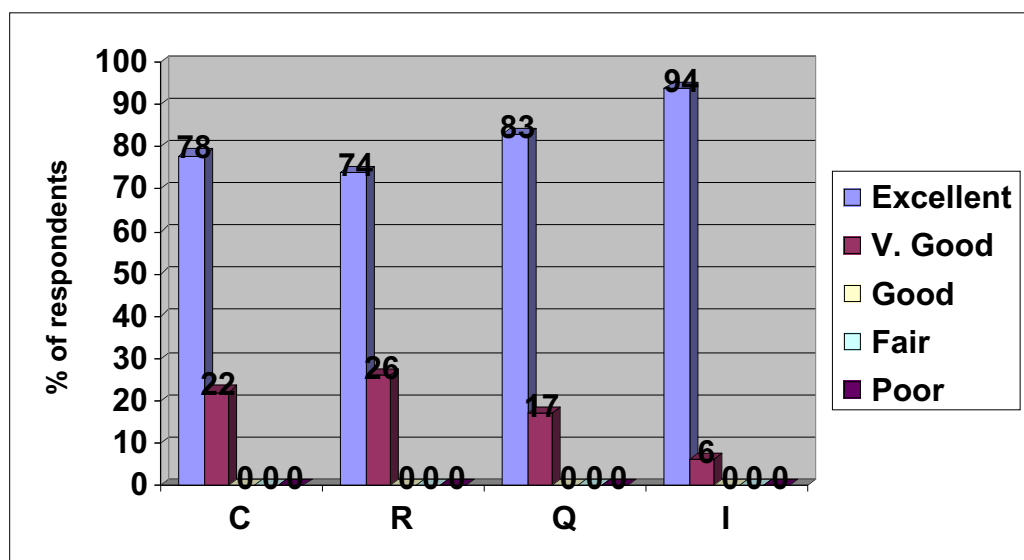
"The 1 day inset was super – made a lot of things very clear and I have used information from the handouts when completing referrals or to talk with parents."

"I have found this course very useful and it's been one of the few I have recently attended that I feel has helped with my own development."

"Now doing more rhyming activities at the start of P1 – definite benefits!"

Class Teachers, Project Schools

Project Schools Training Evaluations



C – Content of course R – Relevance to practice Q – Quality of teaching
I – Impact on ability to promote language and communication skills

Access to advice and consultation for staff in the three project schools has been built in to complement the formal training package through:

- coaching in context
- weekly evaluations
- regular planned meetings between CLIP and school staff
- opportunities for informal discussion as/when required

The positive impact of this additional advice and consultation has been reflected in the post-project questionnaires completed by staff.

“Very approachable CLIP team who are easy to talk things through with.”

“... good for consultation and support for staff and children.”

There has also been anecdotal evidence of the training having an impact beyond the classroom.

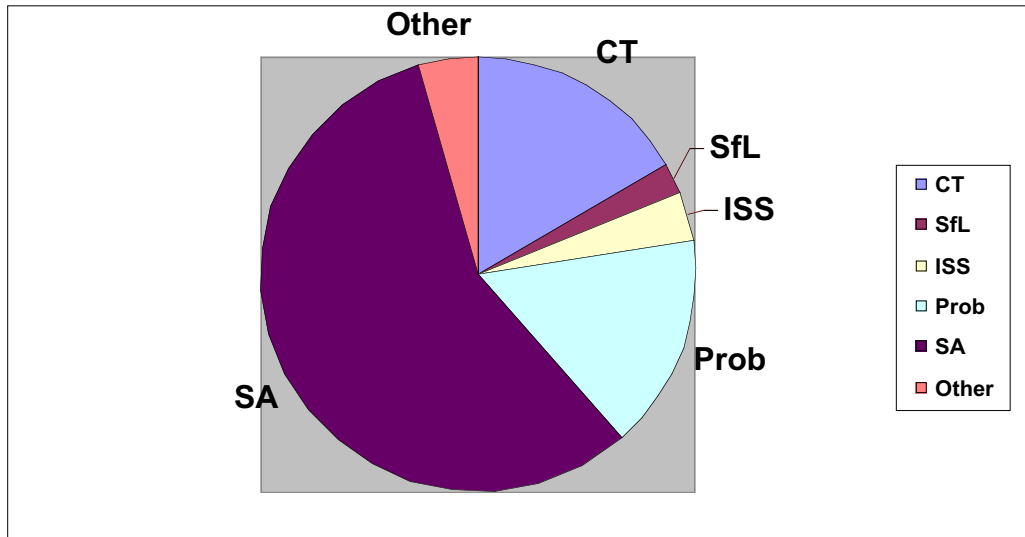
The Depute in one of the primary schools commented that two of her class teachers had referred to the CLIP training when setting Individual Education Plan targets for children with additional support needs in their classes.

An Inclusion Support Teacher and class teacher worked together, using the Language Development Pyramid as a framework when completing a referral to Speech & Language Therapy. This resulted in more specific information being included about all aspects of the child’s language and communication.

The Elklan based training has evaluated so positively that it has now been made available to all primary schools across the Local Authority. The sessions have been tailored to meet the differing needs of the participants e.g. probationers' training has differed slightly to training for experienced teaching staff. Two stand-alone workshops have been provided for Supervisory Assistants at Local Authority training days and an additional training session has been provided for Supervisory Assistants in two of the project schools.

In total 137 staff have participated in training delivered by the CLIP team.

Categories of Staff Trained



CT – Class Teacher

Sfl – Support for Learning

ISS – Inclusion Support Service

Prob – Probationer

SA – Supervisory Assistants

Other – Home School Liaison, Students etc

With support from the inter-agency team, staff in the 3 pilot schools will be able to identify and deliver at least 2, new language and communication interventions appropriate to the needs of children.

In order to build capacity within each school, it was essential that staff be able to appropriately identify and confidently deliver a variety of language and communication programmes after the project ended. Teachers were asked to prioritise which particular early years class would benefit most from the CLIP project. Then, in discussion with the team, each teacher selected a language and communication programme from the continuum of resources which best met the needs of their class. Initially there were 7 programmes/interventions from which they could select (this was added to as the project progressed). These included:

- Time to Talk¹⁸
- Language through Listening¹⁹
- Nursery Narrative²⁰
- Reception Narrative²¹
- Social Use of Language Programme²²
- Circle Time²³
- LanguageLand²⁴

The selected programmes were delivered by the CLIP team using coaching in context to provide effective collaborative²⁵ Continuing Professional Development for the teachers. There were opportunities for the teachers to participate in the groups as well as to observe the children. As the project progressed, the team continued to deliver a variety of programmes in consultation with the teachers, ensuring that each project school experienced at least two new interventions.



Feedback has been very positive and staff now have increased knowledge and confidence about materials available. Many have also been keen to use and adapt the materials to follow-up the group work delivered by the team.

“Better idea of resources packs available to support language and communication.”

“Reception Narrative has improved children’s understanding of questioning, prediction and using who/where/when in their writing.”

“I now have more resources available in class to develop language and communication.”

One project school requested support from the team in developing a language and communication resource that they already had, but which was under-utilised. The team were asked to develop the school’s story bags stock into a more useable resource. The team reviewed the content of the story bags then produced prompt cards (Appendix 4) with suggested activities for each level of the Language Development Pyramid. Together with school staff the story bags were re-branded as ‘Park Play & Share Bags’ and launched in March 2011.

Although these ‘Play & Share’ bags were developed primarily for use by parents, the team has trained Supervisory Assistants to use the bags in a variety of ways. The team also provided an additional Big Buddy training workshop to enable Primary 7 pupils in the school to use the contents of the bags to support their Wee Buddies (Primary 1 pupils).

This alternative approach to developing the language and communication skills of children in the early years has the added benefit of developing the language and communication skills of the older children, helping them to become responsible citizens.



In order to ensure sustainability after the project, the Nurture Class Teacher supported one of these training sessions with the intention of replicating the training in future years.

Working with Parents/Carers

Parents/carers of children from the 3 pilot schools will have increased opportunities to access information, advice and/or activities related to the development of children's language and communication skills.

Initially, the team gauged the interest of parents through focus groups and information sharing sessions. The intention was to obtain measurable baseline information. However, each parents' session evolved into a more informal discussion than had been planned. The team found that the parents were more comfortable and willing to engage at this informal level. It was decided that it was more important to follow the parents' lead and gather qualitative rather than quantitative data. Parents/carers were interested and receptive to the information that was shared. However, a majority felt that school was best placed to support their children's language and communication development.

*"... you are the ones that know best what they need."
Parent of a P2 pupil*

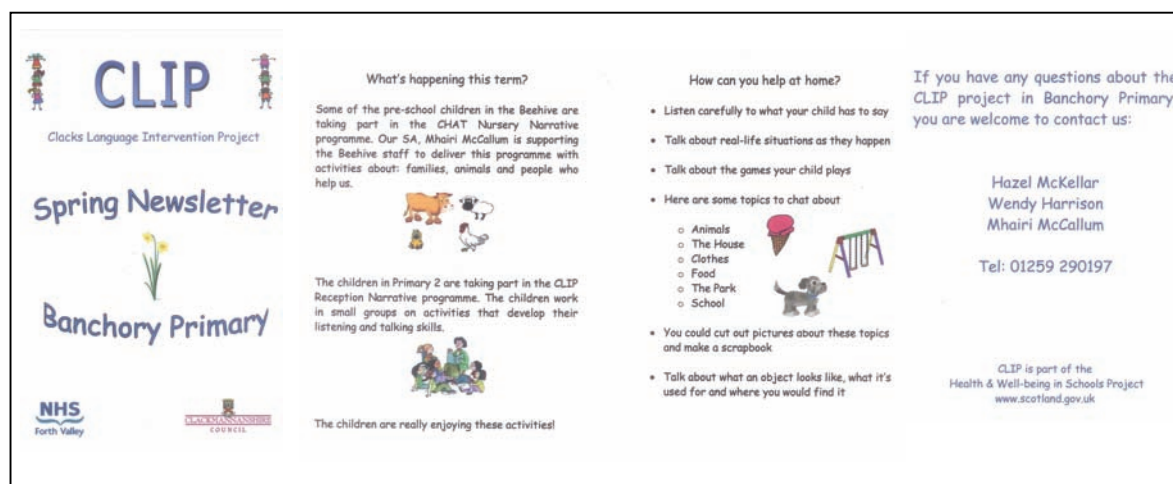
Working with parents differed across the three schools, illustrated by the examples below.

In Deerpark, CLIP was invited to join a workshop routinely provided for parents by school. There was some discussion around what parents felt they could do to support their children's language and communication development. The team explained the work that would be done with the children in school and that home link materials would be provided to encourage parents to follow-up some of the session work at home.



In Banchory and Park, parents were invited to 'join in' their child's CLIP group. On the advice of school staff, the children made their own invitations to take home to parents/carers. Some parents took part in the group activities whilst others observed. When the groups finished there were opportunities for parents/carers to chat with the CLIP team and each other over 'a coffee'.

The team produced follow-up CLIP newsletters for all parents, which provided information about what was happening in school and also suggested activities that could be done at home. These were kept informal.



The examples above demonstrate that CLIP has been able to provide parents/carers with increased opportunities to access information and advice using a variety of formats. It has been difficult to measure the impact of these increased opportunities; however, there was some evidence from the children of their parents/carers using suggested activities with them at home.

The uptake of these opportunities to access information and advice has been variable, but it is clear that parents/carers are more willing to engage when they are given the opportunity to 'see what it's all about' rather than simply hear or read about it.

The team were invited to attend Parents' Evening at Banchory Primary. The parents were informed that we would be present and available to 'chat' about the CLIP project. However, on the evening no parents approached the team, even with some reminding of our presence by the class teachers.

In the same school, parents/carers were invited to 'join in' their child's CLIP group. This was planned so that parents/carers could come into school as they dropped their children at school and stay for tea/coffee after the groups. On this occasion 12 parents/carers attended.

Feedback from parents/carers has been informal and always positive. Some parents have appreciated the opportunity to discuss particular concerns, which on occasion has resulted in further discussions between the CLIP team and professional colleagues. All parents/carers have reported enjoying seeing their child 'at work' and several were surprised at how well their child performed in the groups. Research indicates that when parents are involved as partners²⁶ the outcomes for children are better, so any evidence such as this is encouraging.

Supporting Transition

The team were keen to contribute to the transition processes already in place for children in the three project school communities, as this was essential to ensuring the continuity and progression in learning required at all points of transition²⁷. In consultation with Headteachers, three different approaches were planned.

In Park, the focus was on children moving from nursery into Primary 1. The team provided additional resources to be distributed with the transition packs at Tower Nursery and modelled how to use these activities with parents on the nursery floor. This was extremely successful, with 23 out of 24 children being represented and parents/carers showing enthusiasm and keenness to 'have a go'.



In Banchory, the focus was on children moving from the Beehive (combined Nursery and Primary 1 provision) into Primary 2 as this was a more significant transition for the children. The team provided support to deliver the initial sessions of a language programme in the final term of Primary 1 and returned to complete the sessions with the children when they started Primary 2. This was successful as it provided an element of continuity for the children.



In Deerpark, the focus was on children moving from Sauchie Nursery into Primary 1. The team spent a morning in the nursery engaging with the children in language activities and introducing them to materials that they would see in their CLIP group in Primary 1. A series of 'Ready for School' groups was also offered during the summer holidays. These were held at the Clackmannanshire Community Healthcare Centre. The project SLT was supported by the HWB project Family Support Workers in delivering these groups. These were offered to all children who would move into Primary 1 at Deerpark. However, the team targeted those children identified as being most vulnerable. These groups evaluated very well by the children and parents/carers who attended. The project SLT was shadowed by the CHAT (Communication Help and Awareness Team) therapist during some of these groups to ensure potential for sustainability after the project finished.

Parents' Evaluations of the 'Ready for School' Group

Venue	Convenient Central Easy to access Ideal
Staff	Very friendly Considerate Child friendly Made children happy and comfortable
Timing of group	Could be longer (2 hours) Excellent August better than July for the kids
Number of sessions	Would be better being a full week I think it should be 5 Would have benefitted from more sessions
Group activities	A has enjoyed them all Excellent All marvellous A loved this group and the staff were brilliant
Any improvements needed?	Excellent group but it should last longer Maybe we could pay a small amount of money for healthy snack and drink

Children's Evaluations of the 'Ready for School' Group

Activity	No. of thumbs up	No. of thumbs down
Hello song	4	0
Timetable and rules	3	1
Story	4	0
Listening game	4	0
Craft	4	0
Circle time	4	0
Compliments & sticker	4	0

Links with Others

In the initial stages the team met with the CHAT therapist for Clackmannanshire nurseries and arranged that the CLIP team SA, would shadow the CHAT therapist. This developed into the SA delivering some Nursery Narrative groups. This enabled the team to establish what language and communication programmes the children had accessed before moving into Primary 1. This supported the development of a coordinated approach from nursery through to Primary 2. It also provided an invaluable training opportunity for the SA to develop her knowledge, skills and experience in delivering language groups.

One of the team's roles was to link with colleagues in the Speech & Language Therapy department and the Inclusion Support Service. This informed them of CLIP activity, provided feedback on individual children known to the SLT/ISS Services and provided a link between the wider HWB team and the respective services. This resulted in increased information sharing between SLT, ISS and School Nursing Services and increased awareness by all services of each other's roles. Although CLIP has been a discrete element of the project, the team have benefitted greatly from being part of the wider HWB team and have been able to share each other's perspectives around particular situations relating to the children/families we support and, where appropriate, seek and/or provide advice.

"I've had loads of invaluable advice from the CLIP team which has helped me to support parents and children and I'm always 'stealing' their resources"

Family Support Worker (HWB)

"Working in the same office as health professionals has enabled me to access new resources to support a child with additional support needs."

Teacher (CLIP)

The CLIP team were involved in several pieces of joint work within the broader HWB team, including:

- Boardmaker Training
 - To enable School Nurses to make Health Assessments more communication friendly
 - To enable Family Support Workers to produce materials to support children's behaviour
- Language & Communication Training
 - To provide the wider HWB team with better knowledge and understanding of how communication develops
- Active Listening Skills Training
 - To enable Family Support Workers in their communication with families
- Summer Transition Group
 - FSWs supporting the SLT deliver groups to prepare children for school

For some of these the Teacher took the lead, for some of them the SLT took the lead and some were led jointly, emphasising the benefits of the collaborative nature of CLIP.

3 Summary

What was different about CLIP?

A unique feature of the CLIP project has been the appointment of a multi-disciplinary team consisting of a Speech & Language Therapist and a Teacher. This has resulted in increased credibility for the project within the identified schools, who have commented on the benefits of combined expertise and the ability of the team to approach issues from their own unique perspectives but with a shared goal. The flexibility of a pilot project allowed CLIP to be responsive to need beyond the conventional roles of teacher and therapist.

With services already established to support identified children in need of speech and language therapy and/or inclusion support, CLIP has provided services at universal and targeted levels for the 3 identified schools. The impact of delivering programmes to whole populations rather than identified children has ensured access to support for more children than would previously have been available. By developing a continuum of resources from nursery to primary for the 3 schools, children in these schools now have access to a more consistent approach to the development of language and communication skills. The continuum of resources has also provided teachers in the three project schools with a framework of reference for assessment of and intervention for pupils.

This project has enabled the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists accredited training package *Elklan* to be delivered for the first time in Clackmannanshire. This has led to increased opportunities for staff to access CPD relating to language and communication development, including a training package tailored to the needs of probationary teachers. The impact of this has been an increase in the capacity of those already working to support the language and communication skills of all children. The benefits of the collaborative approach the CLIP team took to the planning and delivery of training have been reflected in extremely positive evaluations.

Engaging with parents/carers was a key aim of this project. CLIP has been able to offer a range of opportunities for the parents/carers of a wider group of children than usual to access support and advice relating to their children's language and communication development. This has been most successful when parents/carers were given opportunities to be actively involved alongside their children. Again, the flexibility of a pilot project has allowed the team to adapt the approaches used as required.

Prioritising the needs of the many stakeholders involved whilst maintaining the integrity of the project aims was challenging at times. The biggest challenge for the team was to ensure that any work done had the potential for sustainability and lasting impact. However, the shared knowledge, understanding and vision that developed through this integrated approach to the delivery of services meant that any challenges were overcome. CLIP has been an example of collaborative advantage in action for the children who have accessed the project. The concept of collaborative advantage asserts that there will be an outcome for the young person which is more than what would be gained by services being provided separately²⁸.

Conclusions

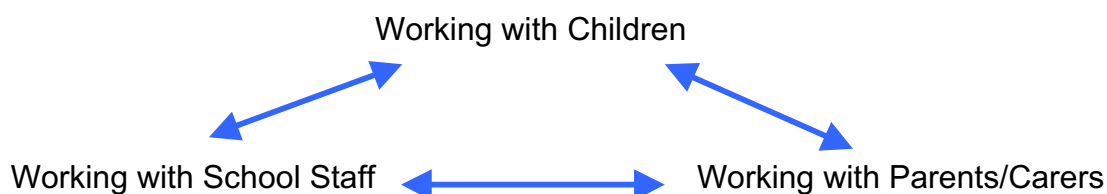
There is a growing body of evidence that recognises the limiting factors of poor language and communication skills on future life opportunities for children and young people. Children living in areas of socio-economic deprivation are at greater risk of poor language and communication skills. This impacts on inclusion, attainment and health and well being. It is essential, therefore, that Services develop new models of integrated working to meet the needs of these at risk populations.

The Health and Wellbeing in Schools Project has provided an opportunity to utilise existing skills and knowledge in new ways to support children and young people. To enhance the language and communication skills of all children in the early years of the 3 project primary schools, the model developed by CLIP has taken elements of best practice already used by services to support identified children and adapted them to meet the needs of 'whole populations' in the project schools. Speech and Language Therapy and Education staff have worked together to provide a new service with a shared vision and goals. The benefits gained have been greatly enhanced when the two services have planned, delivered and evaluated jointly. This has undoubtedly led to collaborative advantage for all those involved with the project.

A huge factor in the success of this work has been the flexibility that can be afforded to a 'project'. This flexibility has allowed staff to utilise their specialist skills and knowledge without being restricted by conventional roles. The result has been a project that has looked very different in each of the project schools, but that has fulfilled the key CLIP aims.

If children and young people are to become effective contributors, successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens, it is essential that they are **all** given the best possible opportunities to develop strong language and communication skills.

It has been evident throughout the project that in order to best meet the needs of children at risk of language and communication difficulties, it is essential to develop a model of working that is collaborative in nature and offers a framework for intervention that includes:



The framework for intervention above, adopted by the CLIP project, has resulted in positive results for children in the three project schools. It is hoped that elements of the project will be sustained and developed in the future.

4. Recommendations

Training

It is essential that education staff have access to comprehensive and ongoing training related to language and communication development, as there is an increasing amount of evidence of the links between language and learning. Further opportunities for training will increase schools' capacity to meet the language and communication needs of children and young people, increasing their potential to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. There have been clear and evidenced benefits from the Elklan based training package. The authors therefore recommend the following programme of training:

1. Language and Communication training, jointly delivered by a Speech and Language Therapist and Teacher, using a model similar to the Elklan model delivered by CLIP becomes a core component of the Probationers' Training Schedule
2. Language and Communication training, jointly delivered by a Speech and Language therapist and Teacher, using a model similar to the Elklan model delivered by CLIP becomes embedded in the CPD catalogue for teachers
3. Language and Communication training workshops using a model similar to Elklan are routinely offered for Support Staff

The Elklan model provided the CLIP team with an effective training programme which evaluated well. As this joint delivery of training has been evidenced to be particularly effective, it is recommended that training continues to be delivered based on a model of collaborative practice.

Parents as Partners

This project has shown that for parents/carers of children in the project school communities, they are most likely to engage with professionals when they are actively involved **alongside** their child. In order for this to be most successful, it is essential that good relationships are formed between parents/carers and the professionals working with their child²⁹. In order for parents/carers to best support their child's inclusion and wellbeing, they need to be equipped with knowledge, skills and experience to develop their child's language and communication skills. The authors recommend that:

1. 'Let's Talk' (Elklan)³⁰ Parents Groups be offered to parents of children with additional support needs transitioning from Nursery to Primary 1
2. 'Let's Talk' Parents Groups be offered to parents of children at greater risk of language and communication difficulties e.g.
 - in areas of socio-economic deprivation
 - at risk of discharge from community SLT due to failure to attend

3. Increased opportunities be offered to parents/carers to engage with the professionals working with their child, e.g.
 - 'Ready for School' group to continue and be offered to a wider group of children
 - Parents invited to 'join in' groups/activities in the classroom setting

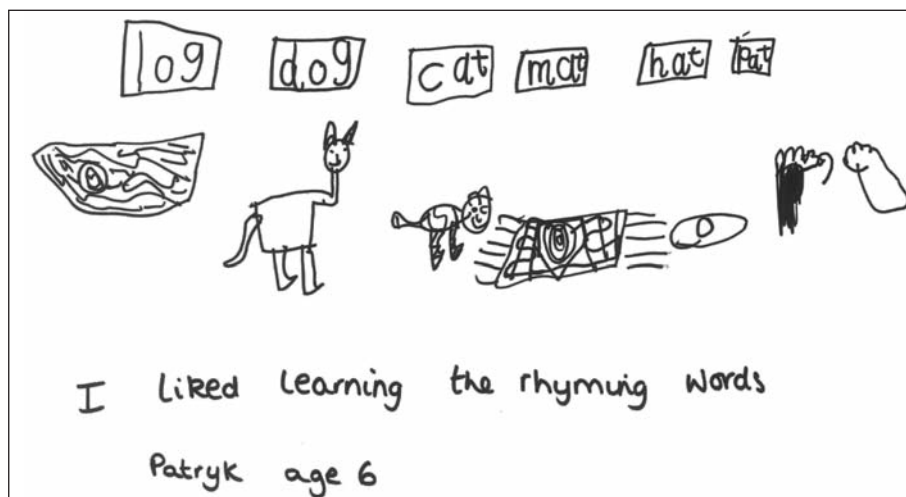
Phonological Awareness

An unexpected element of the team's work in the last phase of the project has been around phonological awareness. This came about as a result of the training session 'Links to Literacy' which rang alarm bells for many of the teachers who participated in the session. The general feeling was that many of the children coming in to Primary 1 did not have the phonological awareness skills expected for their chronological age.

The CLIP team undertook a phonological awareness screening programme for 2 of the project schools and the evidence gathered has shown that more than 50% of the children involved in the screening programme showed delayed phonological awareness skills. This places them at an increased risk of experiencing literacy difficulties, and these are children who have already been identified as at risk of language and communication difficulties. This has been highlighted as an area of concern for many of the staff who have participated in the training, even those not in the project schools. Phonological awareness skills are a precursor to literacy acquisition³¹ and, alongside language skills, will predict later literacy difficulties³². This has implications for the current practice of introducing synthetic phonics early in Primary 1 for those children who have not yet acquired these pre-literacy skills. The authors would therefore recommend:

1. Training in Phonological Awareness be provided for all Nursery and Primary Staff.
2. A Phonological Awareness Screening Programme be considered for children entering Primary 1.
3. Phonological Awareness activities become embedded in the planning of Early Years staff in Nurseries and Primary Schools.

The authors recommend that a greater emphasis be placed on the screening of children and early intervention to teach these skills prior to teaching phonics. This could be done through training of: Learning Support teachers, Inclusion Support teachers and Early Years teachers in Phonological Awareness and the use of a screening resource such as the Preschool and Primary Inventory of Phonological Awareness (PIPA)³³.



Resources

A variety of resources were used by the CLIP team during the project. The project has now funded the licensing of these resources to each of the project schools. At the time of reporting, these resources are still being well utilised by school staff. In order to continue to make best use of them, it is recommended that additional funding is made available to maintain and develop the resources further. This will ensure that the good practice that has been evidenced in the project schools can be sustained.

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Appendix 1

Continuum of Resources

CLIP Continuum of Language and Communication Resources

<i>Language & Communication Focus</i>	<i>Nursery</i>	<i>Primary 1</i>	<i>Primary 2</i>
<i>General Communication Skills</i>	Time To Talk Circle Sessions (Marion Nash) Languageland	→ → →	→ →
<i>Emotional Literacy Skills</i>	SULP R – time (S.E.A.L.)	→ →	
<i>Listening Skills</i>	Language Through Listening	→	
<i>Narrative Skills</i>	Language Through Listening Nursery Narrative Pack	→ →	Reception Narrative Pack →
<i>Phonological Awareness Skills</i>	Syllables PA1 Phonological Awareness PA2	→ →	→ →

Appendix 2

Pre-Intervention Questionnaire

Pre-Intervention

CLIP – School Staff Questionnaire

1=Strongly disagree 2= Disagree 3=Neither agree nor disagree 4=Agree 5=Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I feel that I have knowledge and understanding of the typical development of children's language and communication skills.					
2. I can recognise the differing language and communication needs of children in my class.					
3. I use a variety of strategies to meet the language and communication needs of children in my class.					
4. I am aware of resources/interventions to support whole class language and communication development.					
5. I am aware of resources/interventions to support children with specific language and communication difficulties.					
6. I feel confident that I am meeting the language and communication needs of the children in my class.					
7. I understand the role of a Speech and Language Therapist.					
8. I feel confident in making an appropriate referral to Speech and Language Therapy.					
9. I feel that there is effective collaboration between school and other agencies that supports the language and communication needs of children within my class.					
10. I feel that I have access to professional development opportunities relating to children's language and communication.					

What do you hope will have changed as a result of this project?

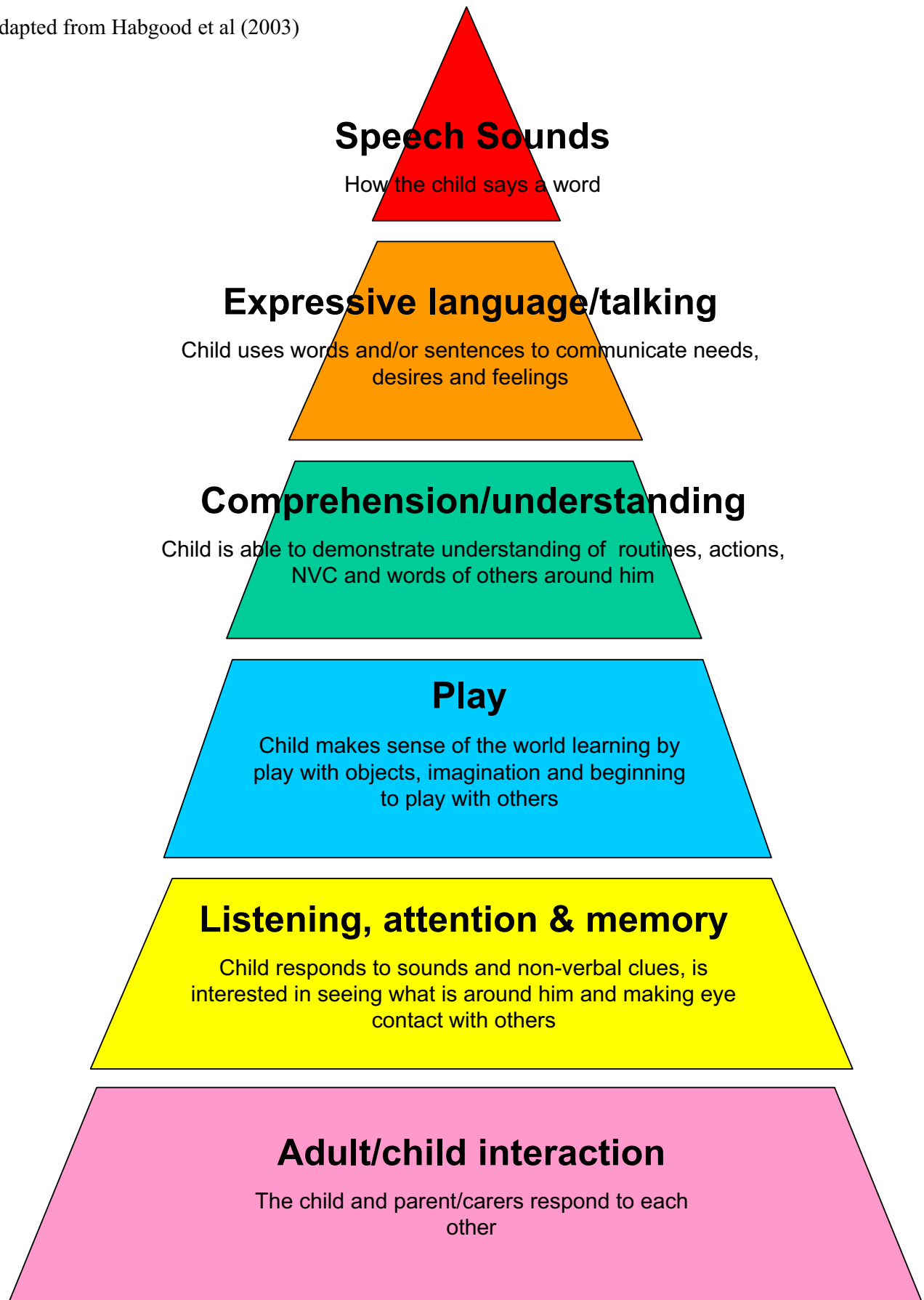
Any other comments?

*Please return in the SAE by
Many Thanks - CLIP*

Appendix 3

Language Development Pyramid




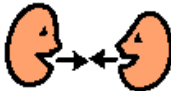
Adapted from Habgood et al (2003)



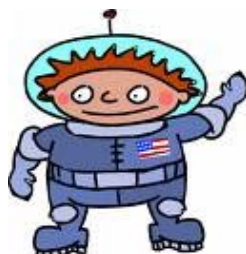
Appendix 4

Play & Share Bag - Prompt Card

PARK SHARE & PLAY BAG 'Alien'

	<p><u>Playing & sharing together</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take turns to play the game 'Out in Space'. • Use junk materials to make a spacecraft/rocket with your child.
	<p><u>Listening</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen for the rhyming words in the story 'Here Come the Aliens'. • Share the story book 'Daddy on the Moon'. Can your child use the pictures to re-tell the story in their own words?
	<p><u>Understanding new words</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the book 'Here Come the Aliens'. Can your child point to the correct alien if you describe it to them? • Help your child to complete the word search and talk about any new words.
	<p><u>Talking together</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about any 'Alien' books you have read or films you have seen e.g. Monsters v Aliens. • Help your child to make up a story about an alien who lands in your back garden.

3 Little men in a flying saucer



3 little men in a flying saucer,
Flew 'round the world one day,
They looked left and right,
But they didn't like the sight,
So one man flew away.

Whoosh!

2 little men in a flying saucer,
Flew 'round the world one day,
They looked left and right,
But they didn't like the sight,
So one man flew away.

Whoosh!

1 little man in a flying saucer,
Flew 'round the world one day,
He looked left and right,
But he didn't like the sight,
So that man flew away.

Whoosh!

The authors will be pleased to provide further information regarding the CLIP project.

Hazel McKellar: h.mckellar@nhs.net

Wendy Harrison: wharrison@edu.clacks.gov.uk