



A Speech, Language and Communication Strategy

1. Context:

1.1 Derby Opportunity Area

Derby was one of the first six areas identified by government as an Opportunity Area, in 2016. The Opportunity Area (OA) programme aimed to improve social mobility. In Derby three priorities were identified for achieving this:

- Priority 1: Increase the number of children achieving a good level of development in the early years.
- Priority 2: Raise attainment in our primary and secondary schools.
- Priority 3: Ensure that all our children benefit from a broad range of experiences throughout their school lives.

Improving young children's speech, language and communication skills was recognised to be key to achieving the first two priorities, and *Talk Derby* was conceived as an 18-month programme of work which would impact on this.

Talk Derby had the following objectives:

- 1) To increase the speech, language and communication (SLC) knowledge, understanding and skills of Early Years practitioners who work 'at the front line' with children on a daily basis.
- 2) To ensure that teachers and leaders who create the learning environments and policies in Derby schools and settings are highly knowledgeable about communication-friendly approaches.
- 3) To ensure that schools and settings have effective improvement plans to address SLC.
- 4) To improve the recognition of children's SLC needs through consistent, effective screening.

- 5) To increase the competence and capability of schools and settings to respond effectively to identified SLC needs with evidenced approaches and interventions.
- 6) To increase the quality and quantity of effective engagement between families and schools/ settings to support their children's SLC development.
- 7) To ensure that other professionals who support children and families, e.g. health visitors, children's centre staff, have good awareness of SLC developmental milestones
- 8) To create a clear city-wide pathway of support for children with identified SLC needs.
- 9) To improve the transfer of information about children's SLC development between schools and settings at points of transition

Talk Derby was put out to tender in November 2018, in four Lots, to be delivered from March 2019 to August 2020.:

- Lot 1: Lead Co-ordinating Organisation for *TALK Derby*
- Lot 2: Family Engagement Provider
- Lot 3: Speech, Language and Communication Training Provider
- Lot 4: *TALK Derby* Evaluation

1.2 Elklan

Elklan Training Ltd was established in 1999 by two experienced speech and language therapists, Liz Elks and Henrietta McLachlan, in response to a demand for training to be delivered by speech and language therapists to education staff to enable them to be more effective in their support of children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

Elklan specialises in providing accredited training and professional development to staff in early years, primary and secondary education settings, to enable them to more effectively support the speech, language and communication development of all children, including those with speech, language and communication needs. Elklan trains and licences speech and language therapists and highly specialist teachers to be Elklan Tutors, delivering training in their own areas. Elklan provides the Tutors with the resources and support they need to train other practitioners and parents and to enable the practitioners to implement and embed changes in practice in their settings. Elklan also enables whole settings to achieve *Communication Friendly Setting* (CFS_e) accreditation, supporting the communication development of all children, including those with additional speech, language and communication needs.

Since 2001 Elklan has been responsible for training provided to over 70,000 staff in educational settings. Elklan also provides training to parents and carers, both directly, and through the staff working regularly in early years settings and schools.

In addition to working with individual settings Elklan has extensive experience of working on an area, or authority wide, basis, implementing time limited programmes to meet the specifications of tenders and grants. This involves on-going monitoring, reporting and communication with local authorities and local speech and language therapy services as well as extensive evaluation activities.

Elklan works across England, within most local authorities, as well as working at national level with partners including universities, government departments and national funders including the Education Endowment Fund and the Nuffield Foundation, meaning the personnel put forward for this tender were aware of current and emerging practice on the ground.

2. Elklan's Proposal

Elklan successfully submitted proposals to deliver Lots 2 and 3 of *Talk Derby*. These included the following key elements, to be delivered within 80 target settings in 7 priority wards of Derby:

Lot 2:

- Delivery of 7 *Let's Talk with Under 5s* courses, each of 7 sessions, to a total of up to 105 early years practitioners (EYPs).
- Delivery of 7 *Let's Talk at Home* courses, each of 6 sessions, to a total of up to 80 practitioners (the Practitioner Tutors) and 80 parents (Parent Tutors).
- Support of 80 Practitioner Tutors to deliver *Let's Talk at Home* to up to 5 parents each in their own settings.
- Delivery of 7 workshops for up to 80 Parent Tutors to enable them to co-deliver *Let's Talk at Home*.
- Support of Practitioner Tutors and Parent Tutors co-deliver *Let's Talk at Home* to groups of 5 in each of 80 settings.
- Support of Practitioner Tutors and Parent Tutors to co-deliver follow on training to groups of parents who have attended *Let's Talk at Home*.

Lot 3:

- Delivery of Level 3 training for 140 EYPs and Leaders and managers through provision of 2 courses:
 - *Speech and Language Support for 0-3s*
 - *Speech and Language Support for 3-5s*
- Delivery of Level 4 training, for 80 *Lead Communication Practitioners* (LCPs), including support to cascade lighter touch training, *Communication Counts*, to all staff in their settings and to gain *Communication Friendly Setting* status for their settings.
- Training in using the screening tool identified by Lot 1 providers, and in choosing and using evidence-based interventions, for up to 160 members of the early years workforce.
- Training for up to 100 members of the wider workforce, including Health Visitors, Family Visitors and Children's Centre staff in identifying speech, language and communication difficulties, advising parents and accessing local pathways of support.

2.1 Implementation Plan

The principal activities planned by Elklan and their initial planned phasing are set out below:

Lot 2:

	2019										2020						
	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
Liaise Lot 1: Comms; Reimbursement for backfill; Role of experts; Timeline and outputs from practice and training audits																	
Workshop with Lot 1 SLC experts																	
Lot 1 have identified and engaged settings																	
Let's Talk with Under 5s courses																	
Practitioners deliver Let's Talk in settings																	
Workshops for Parent Tutors																	
Co-delivery of Let's Talk at Home																	
Let's Talk at Home follow up sessions																	

Lot 3:

	2019										2020						
	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
Liaise Lot 1: Comms; Agree settings; Reimbursement for backfill; Role of experts; Timeline and outputs from practice and training audits																	
Workshop with Lot 1 SLC experts																	
Lot 1 have identified and engaged settings																	
SLS Practitioner courses																	
Development of leaders (CFS workshop)																	
Setting development: Cascade training																	
Screening and Intervention courses																	
Training the wider workforce courses																	

2.2 Targets

Initial activity targets were agreed as follows:

Lot 2:

Activity	Target
Practitioner training to deliver courses to parents (Let's Talk with Under 5s or Let's Talk at Home)	80 practitioners
Parents receiving training/attending groups	800
Parent Tutors training to work with groups of other parents	80

Lot 3:

Activity	Target
Practitioner training (Speech and Language Support Courses, Level 3)	180 practitioners
Lead Communication Practitioner Training, Level 4	105 leaders
Communication Friendly Settings	80 settings
Screening and intervention workshop	96 practitioners
Wider workforce training	60 members of wider workforce

The intention was to offer all the above activities to 80 targeted settings identified by the holders of Lot 1.

The holders of Lot 1 were also responsible for promoting Elklan's offer, engaging settings, engaging practitioners and managing enrolment on courses. In effect this meant that Elklan was only able to offer places on courses in line with targets and to ensure high quality training and support for learners.

2.3 The remaining Lots

Talk Derby was intended as an integrated programme, delivered through 4 Lots, each dependent on the activity of the others.

Elklan's relationship with the holders of Lot 4, was relatively straight forward, requiring agreement of the data sets and practitioner, tutor and parent contacts to be collected and shared.

The relationship between the organisation awarded the Lot 1 work and holders of other Lots was more complex.

The holders of the Lot 1 remit had, amongst their responsibilities, the following tasks on which Elklan was dependent in order to successfully complete its own activity.

- Delivering, and analysing the results of both a setting practice audit and a training needs audit, which would guide the workforce and setting development offer.

- Engagement of, and communication with schools, settings and practitioners, including promoting and filling training courses.
- Providing speech, language and communication experts to work with settings as they developed their practice.
- Working with external partners to identify a recommended screening tool for 2-year-olds, key to delivery of the training in identification of speech, language and communication needs within Lot 3.
- Working with external partners to define a consistent pathway for children with, or at risk of, additional speech, language and communication needs, to inform both the work with parents within Lot 2 and the workforce development in Lot 3 and to provide most of the content for the wider workforce training.

3. The requirement for revisions to plans and targets

The original plans and targets were changed during the programme's lifetime, because of the external context, beyond the control of the partners; the recruitment and performance of the Lot 1 providers and the availability of a new Elklan programme which was offered to *Talk Derby*.

3.1 The procurement timescale

Elklan was awarded the tenders for Lots 2 and 3 according to the set procurement timetable and put a mobilisation plan in place in order to start delivery in March 2019.

Confirmation of the Lot 1 providers, Hemsalls, was delayed such that Elklan's first contact with them was in April 2019. This necessarily prevented Elklan from delivering in line with the plans outlined above.

Elklan was dependent on Lot 1 to undertake audits to identify needs, engage target settings, promote the programme, engage practitioners, agree the roles of speech, language and communication experts and agree reimbursement for EYPs before delivering either the parent or workforce offers.

In response to the delay Elklan adjusted its own delivery plans, whilst retaining the original end date of the tender of August 2020. This involved delaying for training both the workforce and parents/carers by approximately 2 months (adjusted as necessary to ensure training was delivered in term times) in the period to December 2019 and condensing activity into shorter time periods in 2020

3.2 The external context

In March 2020 the whole of the UK was placed under 'Lockdown' in response to the Covid-19 pandemic; many children and practitioners were unable to attend settings and it was not possible to convene groups of families or practitioners for programme activities. Some early years settings in Derby closed completely with staff being placed on furlough. Government restrictions on the terms and conditions of furlough resulted in some staff being unable to continue training. In general, the workforce was under stress and priorities for services and

individuals were changed. The Covid-19 pandemic therefore affected every part of the programme.

Elklan already had resources, infrastructure and experience which enabled a rapid move from face to face to remote delivery of training and setting support, with both e-learning modules and live training sessions and webinars available. As a result, although significant changes were necessary *Talk Derby* was able to continue.

Lot 2

The *Talk Derby* Contract Group, which Elklan has been a part of agreed that parents and carers would struggle to access and benefit from group online sessions; those parts of the programme which required either setting staff to deliver courses to groups of parents or parents to be trained, by Elklan, to support other parents were necessarily suspended.

As practitioners who had been, or were in the process of being, trained to work with parents were unable to undertake this work on the scale envisaged Elklan extended their licenses into 2021 to enable them to deliver Elklan courses once social distancing restrictions were lifted.

Some practitioners, dependent on their roles and their capacity during the pandemic were able to deliver *Let's Talk* courses to families on a one-to one- basis, either remotely or face-to face, and Elklan continued to support these courses.

Lot 3

- Setting and practitioner engagement:
Hempsalls were required to change from face to face to remote delivery of promotional and network activities in order to engage settings and practitioners. This understandably impacted on recruitment.
Practitioners themselves were impacted by changed responsibilities in their settings, furlough and personal circumstances, including health issues, self-isolation and care of their own children; a number of settings closed permanently. As a result it was more difficult to maintain engagement of settings and individuals previously committed to the programme.
- Training delivery:
As face-to-face delivery was no longer possible Elklan introduced an on-line offer including live webinars and e-learning modules for all future courses.
- Practitioners working towards gaining level 3 accredited awards whilst completing *Speech and Language Support Courses*:
Learners, who had attended training, needed to undertake activities in their settings and include these in Learning Logs so that Accreditation could be awarded. Some settings were not open, or had limited numbers of children in attendance, many practitioners were not working within settings. Elklan agreed, with the awarding organisation, that

assignments based on historical experience or hypothetical situations would be accepted.

- Tutor visits to settings:
It was not possible for Tutors to visit early years settings or childminders to provide support or to conduct audits. Video conferencing facilities were used to support practitioners and a format for conducting audits virtually was developed.
- Gaining of Communication Friendly Setting (CFSe) Awards
It was acknowledged that settings and practitioners might not be able to prioritise further work in this area at the current time.

3.3 Working with Partners

As described above Elklan was dependent on Lot 1 contractors identifying and engaging settings and practitioners, for informing content for part of the training offer and for promoting training and enrolling learners to fill the courses that Elklan was contracted to offer.

Unfortunately, Hemsalls were not able to secure the necessary levels of engagement from 80 settings in the original 7 priority wards and therefore adjustments were made for the project catchment areas to be extended. Similarly, enrolling practitioners on courses was problematic, even prior to the pandemic, and Elklan needed to cancel, or run courses with empty places, throughout the project.

The original specification for *Talk Derby* stated, in regard to the providers of Lot 1:

They will encourage all of these providers to undertake an audit of SLC practice (using a tool that they will agree with the Council), a workforce SLC training needs analysis and will then support them to engage through a designated leader (TALK Derby Champion) with the opportunities that are made available to them through the programme to meet their identified needs.

Further details within the specification included requirements to:

- *Deliver a SLC practice audit process that each school and setting will follow.*
- *Deliver a SLC training needs analysis that schools and settings will undertake.*
- *Provide an analysis of SLC practice audits and training needs analysis to inform on-going provision and planning.*
- *Broker appropriate support from the providers of Lots 2 and 3 to meet the needs identified through the audit and analysis*

Unfortunately, this activity was not shared with Elklan to inform our provision.

At a systems level the tender specification required Lot 1 providers to:

- *Work with the relevant organisations to establish consistency of practice in 2-year screening and the expectation of joint reviews, all using the same tools and processes and organise city-wide data collection/analysis.*
- *Work with key organisations to develop a city-wide pathway for children who have SLC delays or disorders, with protocols agreed by all partner organisations (including Speech and Language Therapy and Public Health) for roles and responsibilities for meeting additional and specialist SLC needs.*
- *Develop some agreed SLC practice standards for the transition into school from Early Years settings.*

These strands of work were intended to form the basis of the training in identification and the wider workforce offer that Elklan developed. Unfortunately, final outputs of this work were not shared with Elklan and, after a number of delays, the related training was developed by Elklan with little reference to them in order to meet final programme deadlines.

Elklan has not had sight of the proposal for which Hemsalls was awarded the Lot 1 contract and it is possible that some of the above elements were not part of their offer. However, without knowledge of this Elklan proceeded according to the original specification.

Whilst *Talk Derby's* time frame was extended, beyond the original completion date of August 2020 as a response to the impact of Covid-19, Hemsalls's declined the opportunity to continue its contract and ended involvement at that time. Coordinating, monitoring, and promoting the programme was then taken on by Derby Council.

3.4 Elklan's Programmes

During 2019/20 Elklan developed a programme through which childminders could progress to a *Communication Friendly Home Learning Environment* (CFHLE) award. This was open to childminders who had already undertaken, or were undertaking, one of Elklan's *Speech and Language Support* training courses. This offer is more appropriate to the childminder context than the CFSe award available to early years settings. The CFHLE programme was offered and publicised within Derby in autumn 2019.

4. Revisions to plans and targets

4.1 July 2020

In July 2020 Elklan was asked, by the contract monitoring group to make proposals for revisions to the targets and timescales for delivering Lot 2 and 3 services, as a consequence of the above factors. The parameters of these revisions were set as follows:

- Direct training of practitioners to be complete by the end of December 2020.
- Support for work within settings and with parents to be available until the end of March 2021.
- The work to be carried out within the original tender prices but with phasing of budget claims as appropriate.

The following proposed revisions were put forward and accepted:

Target within original tender submission	Progress to date (underway or completed to July 2020)	Comments	Proposed target:	Rationale
LOT 2				
Early Years Settings equipped to deliver sustainable family engagement programme/s				
80	66	Lot 1 providers, were unable to engage settings, EYPs and managers within expected timescales	80	Elklan will work towards original target, by offering further training opportunities but this is dependent on engagement of EYPs from additional 14 settings by end September 2020. (Providers of Lot 1 services until end August, then DCC)
EYPs trained as parent tutors to deliver to families				
80	118	As above: Over 360 training places offered to EYPs to date Where applicable EYP licenses, to deliver Elklan courses to parents, have been extended by one year.	132	Restrictions on face to face meetings make it likely that delivery will be web based, effective online learning requires small, interactive groups. 2 further courses for 7 EYPs each appears realistic given that these should be undertaken by Dec 2020 in order that EYPs can be supported to deliver to their first groups of parents the following term. Increasing this target will enable increased reach to parents in difficult circumstances.
Parents trained as co tutors to deliver with EYPs to further families				
80	0	This activity requires EYPs to be trained first, and then to deliver to parents. Parents then undertake additional training. The late start has meant this has	0	Parents, their children and EYPs need to attend face to face to enable this, we consider it unlikely that such gatherings will be permitted/advised within project timescales. EYPs trained as Parent tutors will, however, be encouraged to support parents to become co-tutors outside of <i>TALK Derby</i> time frame.

Target within original tender submission	Progress to date (underway or completed to July 2020)	Comments	Proposed target:	Rationale
		not been possible to date		
Deliver the family engagement programme to families				
800 families	76 parents engaged with 24 courses (16 settings) but most groups postponed	Original target was dependent on recruitment, by Lot 1 providers, of Practitioner Tutors and Parent Tutors- not achieved. Mechanisms and process for remote delivery agreed. Elklan providing support. Children's centres have identified 62 families for this delivery model to date.	Up to 400 parents	Number of parents reached will be highly dependent on Covid 19 related restrictions in place (settings may not be able to host groups of parents/children). If no groups are possible this target will need further reduction and Elklan will support by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offering webinar support to EYPs providing programmes remotely and or 1 to 1 with families (work now underway with Children's Centres). Providing FOC resources to EYPs to deliver the programme outside of the <i>TALK Derby</i> timeframe. Reaching the adjusted target is dependent on release of trained EYPs to deliver, and on recruitment of parents.
Lot 3				
Speech and Language Support (Level 3) Practitioner (EYP) Training				
140	158	255 places offered.	140	Some attrition post lock down anticipated. This may result in not all EYPs currently engaged completing their learning. Target has not, therefore, been increased.
Leaders and managers from 80 settings complete Level 4 training and lead their settings to achieve Communication Friendly Setting Status				
80	42	120 places offered. Lot 1 providers have failed to maintain engagement of	50	Lead time is such that new learners must be engaged early autumn (Lot 1 providers until end August, then DCC) . Completion requires learners to cascade their learning to all setting

Target within original tender submission	Progress to date (underway or completed to July 2020)	Comments	Proposed target:	Rationale
		sufficient learners who have undertaken the L3 course		staff and to embed changes in operational settings. We anticipate that Covid19 related restrictions and other pressures on settings may restrict this. Achievement of targets is therefore dependent on maintaining and extending engagement of EYPs who have completed L3 training.
Training in Screening and Evidence-based Intervention (for EYPs)				
160	54	Courses were delayed by the requirement for the holders of Lot 1 to identify appropriate screening tool/s first. 192 places have been offered to date. 5 courses offered over summer 2020 term, 2 courses planned for autumn term.	120	Plan was for 5 X 1 day courses. Virtual delivery requires smaller groups and division of each course into 3 webinars. Whilst Elklan can provide places for further 66 learners achievement of target is dependent on recruitment of learners.
Training for the Wider Workforce				
100	52	Courses were delayed by the requirement for Lot 1 providers to identify a city-wide pathway first. 5 courses offered over summer 2020 term, 2 courses	75	Plan was for 5 X 1 day courses. Virtual delivery requires smaller groups and division of each course into 3 webinars. Whilst Elklan can provide places for further 23 learners achievement of target is dependent on recruitment of learners.

Target within original tender submission	Progress to date (underway or completed to July 2020)	Comments	Proposed target:	Rationale
		planned for autumn term. 80 places have been offered to date.		

4.2 March 2021

After Derby Council assumed responsibility for engagement and enrolment of settings and learners the programme, to some extent, changed gear and the Contract Management Group expressed regret that the initial period of tender had not been exploited to its potential. At the same time, unfortunately, the impact of the pandemic continued with social distancing restrictions having ongoing impact on activity and settings struggling to stabilise their staffing. A limited extension to Elklan's involvement in *Talk Derby* was therefore agreed to the end of August 2021.

	Additional Activity	Potential impact/comments
Communication Friendly Settings/ L4 practitioners	Up to 4 hours additional support, from Elklan Tutor per setting (group and/or individual) to complete	Increase likelihood of achieving accredited status
	Continued access to online Communication Counts sessions for setting staff	Facilitate Lead Practitioners in settings in reaching all staff with cascaded training
Let's Talk parent training	Extending licenses for Let's Talk tutors for further year, for those Tutors whose licenses would expire by end 2021	Enable practitioners trained as Tutors to continue to deliver to at least December 2021
	Continued support to parent groups run by practitioners (6 started prior to 01.04.2021 and 20 new groups in summer term)	Increased reach to families.
Identification Training	Up to 3 additional courses for those who had not completed courses, should	Enable practitioners who have undertaken partial training to complete and allowing a minimum of 37

	Additional Activity	Potential impact/comments
	demand warrant it (1 course run)	new learners to undertake the course at a less pressured time
Wider Workforce training	Up to 3 additional courses for those who had not completed courses should demand warrant it (1 course run)	Enable practitioners who have undertaken partial training to complete and allowing a minimum of 37 new learners to undertake the course at a less pressured time

The extension was to be the subject of additional resources of £12,180. However, payment was linked to activity and was invoiced for £ 11,310.

5. Programme resources

The programme has been delivered to the budget set through the original tender process with the addition of funding for the 2021 extension described in section 4.2 above.

6. Activity

6.1 Courses offered to Derby learners by Elklan

	Programme Plan		Actual delivery	
	Courses offered	Learner places: Initial targets (Revised targets in blue)	Courses offered	Learner places
Lot 2				
Working with parents (for Practitioners) (Let's Talk)	7	80 (132)	34 (26 courses delivered and 8 cancelled due to booking numbers or Covid)	510
Parent Tutor workshops	7	80 (0)	0	0
Lot 3				
Speech and Language Support (0-3s or 3-5s)	15	180 (140)	18 (15 courses delivered and 3 cancelled due to booking numbers or Covid)	270
Level 4, leaders training	4	105 (50)	12 (6 courses delivered and 6 cancelled due to booking numbers or Covid)	180
Communication Friendly Settings	N/A	80 settings (50)		180 settings
Communication Friendly Home Learning environments	0	0 Childminders (to be included in CFSe settings)	2 (none cancelled)	30
Identification and intervention courses	5	96 (120)	13 (7 courses delivered and 6 cancelled due to booking numbers or Covid)	195
Wider Workforce courses	5	60 (75)	8 (5 courses delivered and 3	120

	Programme Plan		Actual delivery	
	Courses offered	Learner places: Initial targets (Revised targets in blue)	Courses offered	Learner places
			cancelled due to booking numbers or Covid)	

The numbers of learners who could be accepted on each type of course was adjusted as appropriate for remote delivery.

6.2 Courses offered to Parents

Unfortunately, it was not possible to train parents to deliver to other parents. The initial plan for the programme required the following sequence of activity:

- Practitioners trained by Elklan to deliver courses to parents
- Practitioners deliver to groups of parents in their own settings
- During training practitioners identify parents appropriate to train to work with other parents
- Elklan trains identified parents to work with other parents

The slow start to the programme put completion of this activity at risk. It then faced further challenges when social distancing restrictions, imposed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, prohibited convening groups of parents to receive training from either practitioners or Elklan.

Despite restrictions a number of the practitioners trained by Elklan managed to deliver to parents, either on a one to one basis or remotely to groups. 94 such groups were registered on the Elklan website and notification of cancellation was received for only 12 of these.

7. Programme Outputs

Talk Derby has been an unusual programme for Elklan to deliver in that the division between tender lots resulted in Elklan being responsible for providing high quality and effective courses in response to demand stimulated and identified by the providers of Lot 1. Engagement of settings and recruitment of learners for courses was outside of Elklan's remit and beyond Elklan's control, beyond ensuring that Lot 1 had relevant course details with which to publicise the workforce development offers.

In as much as Elklan provided courses in excess of planned numbers or learner demand, and responded to feedback regarding training venues, preferred days of the week and times of the day for training, Elklan training exceeded the planned outputs for the programme, even where the numbers of individuals completing training did not meet targets.

Talk Derby was also challenging as consequence of the worldwide pandemic which impacted from spring 2020; activities had to be changed from face to face to remote delivery and settings, practitioners and parents faced increased difficulties with accessing training. Elklan has continually worked with its partners within *Talk Derby* to be flexible and constructive in adapting the programme to this context.

7.1 Settings engaged:

125 settings have engaged with the programme, including 19 childminders and 4 foster carers.

7.2 Parent Tutors and Work with Parents

120 practitioners, from settings and Childrens Centres were trained to deliver either *Let's Talk with Under 5s* or *Let's Talk at Home*, a more practical play-based course which children attend alongside their parents, a number of these practitioners trained to deliver multiple courses.

Due to the impact of the pandemic and the delayed start to the programme (as described above) it was not possible to train parents to act as tutors for other groups of parents. As the original target for families receiving training (800) was predicated on both Practitioner Tutors and Parent Tutors delivering courses to them, this necessarily impacted on the number of families reached and the target was halved (to 400).

The model required that each setting-based course for families was attended by 5 parents or carers, 80 groups would therefore be required to meet the necessary numbers. However, in the face of the pandemic delivery had to be either virtual or, if face to face, on a one to one basis. Despite this, 337 parents did attend training courses during the timeframe of *Talk Derby*.

7.3 Accredited Learners at Levels 2 and 3

Learners have been able to participate in either *Speech and Language Support for 0-3s* or *Speech and Language Support for 3-5s*. Through attendance at a minimum of 80% of the training sessions making up their course, and completion of an on-line Learning Log, marked by their Elklan Tutor, they have been able to gain an accredited award through OCN. Learners most usually gain this award at Level 3. However, where learners are struggling with the academic demands of their course, they can complete a level 2 Learning Log and achieve accreditation at this level.

Level of Award	2	3	Total
Number of Learners	8	95	103

7.4 Other Learners

A significant number of early years practitioners have enrolled on and participated in the *Speech and Language Support* courses offered as part of the project but have not progressed to gaining an accredited award. For most of these learners the barrier to gaining accreditation has been the need to fully complete a Learning Log, to the required standard, outside of the formal course sessions, often in their own time. Informal feedback has indicated that the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on this, with practitioners being under increased pressure at home and at work, compared with that which they anticipated when enrolling on courses. In addition, because of the closure of settings due to Covid-19 the practical element of the Log in embedding strategies with children was challenging to complete.

Whilst this group of learners have not gained accredited awards they have undertaken valuable training in supporting children's speech, language and communication needs.

The number of learners who have participated in *Speech and Language Support* courses, who have not gained an accredited award is 40.

This brings the total number of learners who participated in *Speech and Language Support* courses to 143, which is in excess of the revised target of 140.

7.5 Accredited Learners at Level 4

Learners who achieved an award at Level 3, and who were based in settings, were offered the opportunity to undertake further activities to become Lead Communication Practitioners (LCPs) for their settings.

- Additional training course
- Completion of a Level 4 Learning Log
- Cascading *Communication Counts*, a 5 X 1 hour training course, to all staff in their setting
- Participation in an audit of their own, and one other, setting

Successful completion of these activities led to a Level 4 award, accredited by OCN.

Number of Level 4 Awards: 24 (revised target 50).

A further 12 Learners worked towards, but did not complete, level 4 awards,

7.6 Communication Friendly Settings

A Communication Friendly Setting (CFSe) Award is made to settings which have:

- A Lead Communication Practitioner in place.
- A minimum of 80% of staff who have received Communication Counts Training.
- Demonstrated that they have adopted and embedded strategies for supporting children's speech, language and communication development.
- Successfully undergone an audit undertaken by an Ekklan Tutor or peer.

CFSe status initially lasts for 3 years and can then be renewed.

The number of settings who achieved CFSe status **was 27**.

Elklan engaged with many more settings to undertake this work. Unfortunately, 12 settings made significant progress through the process but were unable to complete in the time frame, in the majority of cases this was indirectly or directly due to the impact of Covid-19 which caused staffing issues, difficulties in grouping staff for training, challenges of embedding changes in a setting when the setting was closed and some redeployment of key staff.

7.7 Communication Friendly Home Learning Environments

The Communication Friendly Home Learning Environment (CFHLE) programme has been developed specifically for childminders, although it is considered to have wider applications with, for example, foster parents.

In order to gain CFHLE status. for their childminding setting a learner is required to:

- Complete a *Speech and Language Support* course, at either level 2 or level 3 (including satisfactory completion of the Learning Log)
- Complete a check list regarding the physical environment, resources, interactions, and strategies used to support children's speech, language and communication
- Host a visit from an Elklan Tutor so they can observe practice and support the learner to develop it.

CFHLe status initially lasts for 3 years and can then be renewed.

The number of childminding settings which achieved CFHLe status was 6. Bringing the total number of communication friendly environment awards (CFSe plus CFHLE) to 33, against a revised target of 50.

7.8 Training in identification of, and intervention with, children with speech, language and communication needs

This training was designed to equip practitioners to implement a city-wide screening tool for two-year-olds. However, as explained above, such a tool was not available in time to inform the development of the course, even after delivery had been delayed.

There was an additional challenge to this element of the training programme posed by a training programme regarding speech and language which had recently been delivered to health visitors through another initiative.

The need for training to be delivered remotely required the course to be delivered in 3 shorter sessions, rather than a single day and this impacted on attrition with some practitioners failing to attend all sessions. Therefore, whilst 98 enrolled (against a revised target of 120) only 80 completed the course.

7.9 Training the Wider Workforce

In common with the training in identification the wider workforce training offer was intended to be informed by the work of Lot 1 providers, this time in identifying and sharing

a city-wide pathway for children with speech, language and communication needs. This work did not materialise, so the training was delayed and redesigned to provide an introduction to speech, language and communication needs.

Again, the requirement for remote delivery resulted in courses being delivered over 3 sessions rather than a single day. 87 members of the wider workforce enrolled on this course (revised target 75) and 68 completed.

8. The Programme Outcomes

The programme is being evaluated by the providers of Lot 4, who in accordance with the tender specification, are assessing the impact and effectiveness of the programme overall, and the individual projects, against the intended outcomes.

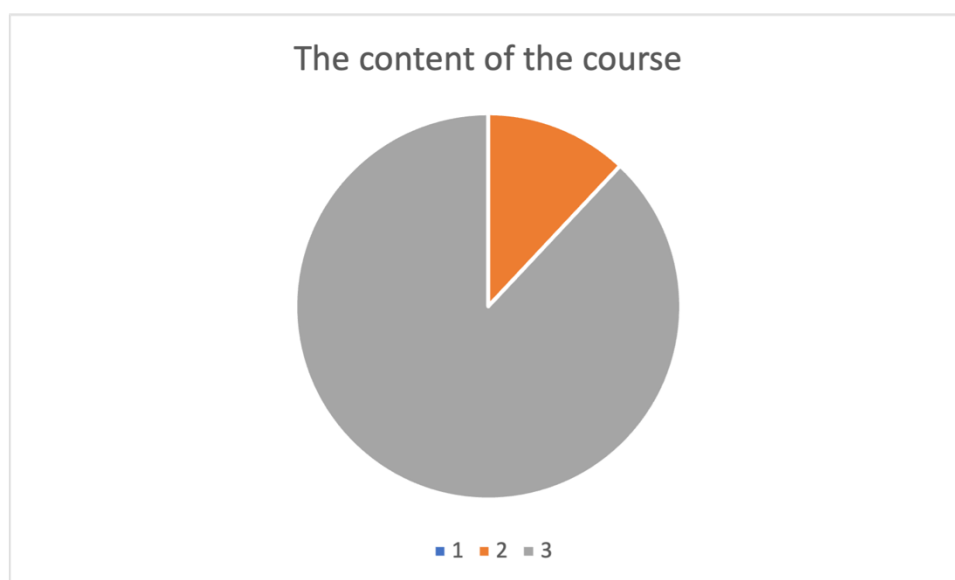
Elklan, however, collects feedback from training participants on the majority of its courses as a matter of good practice and provides this below.

8.1 Feedback on Speech and Language Support courses

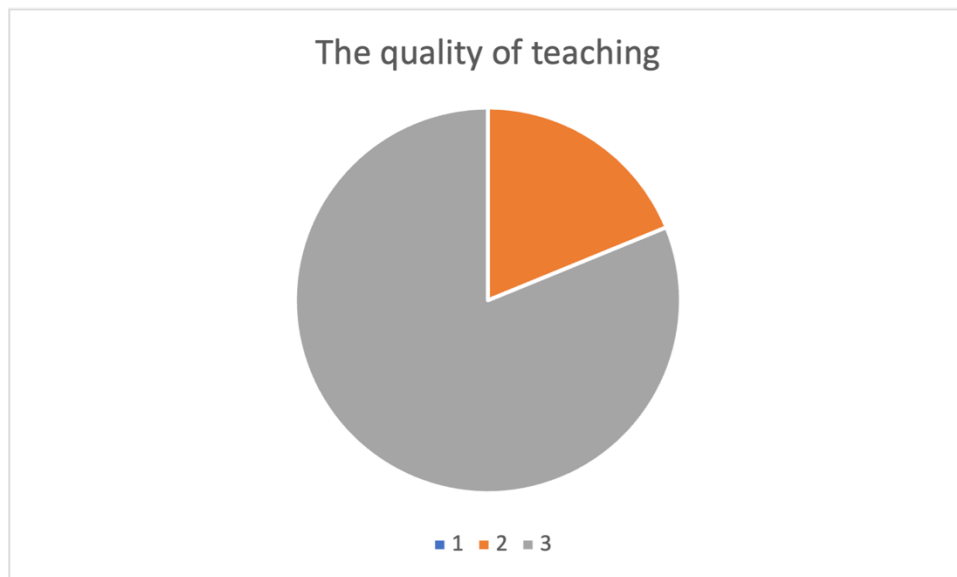
Full feedback from participants on the 15 courses is included in Appendix 1.

The quality of training

Participants were asked to rate the course content and quality of teaching on a scale of 1 (low) to 3 (high).



88% of 100 learners gave the maximum rating for content.



81.2% of 101 learners gave the maximum rating for quality of teaching.

It can be seen that training was highly regarded by learners, in terms of both content and delivery.

Sample comments from learners:

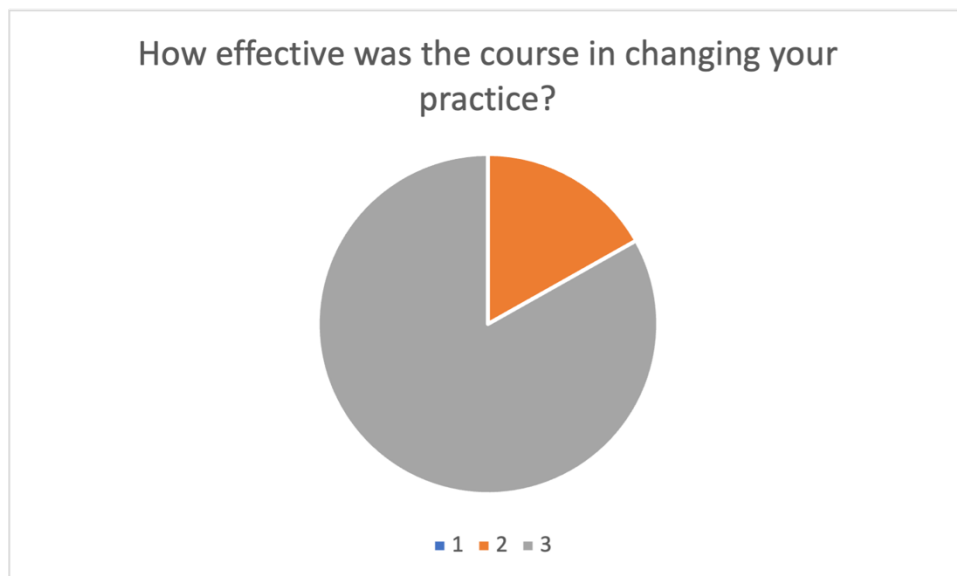
- This course was delivered very well and the tutor went above and beyond to give support throughout. The course has given me so many ideas and strategies as well as improved my knowledge of supporting and developing communication skills. This course has given me the knowledge to support children, staff and parents.*
- I thoroughly enjoyed the training and I have learnt a lot. XX, the tutor explained everything well and shows great passion in her work.*
- Very informative course. XX the tutor was very good with the information she needed to get across each session and gave good examples in her work to support what she was saying to help us understand further. The course itself was good gave me things to think about to try with the children in my setting to support speech, language and communication needs and to support staff in their roles as key people to children*
- The course was good, I learnt a lot. The tutor delivery was good and knowledge about different websites/books etc... the tutor also understood different roles that we had within the group and would give examples to match the info e.g. for nursery staff she knew they will do 1-2-1 session and for fv they do outreach and how they can encouraged S/L through play/home visit etc..*
- The course was very informative and the tutor is very passionate and obviously has lots of experience in the field.*
- Very enjoyable, interactive and beneficial to all involved.*

Learning new skills and changing practice

After completion of training learners responded to several questions regarding changes in their knowledge, skills and practice on a scale of 1 (low) to 3 (high). responses were as follows:

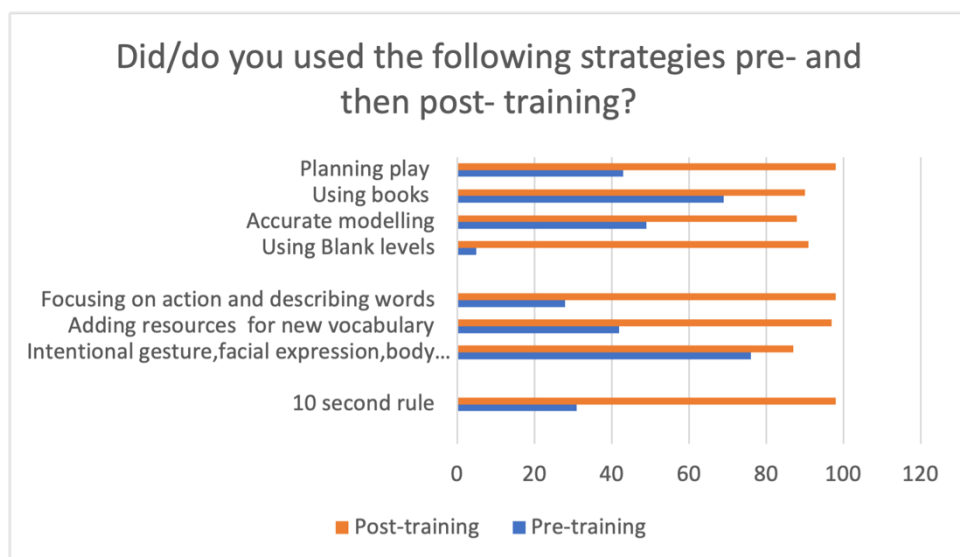


81.2% of 101 learners gave the maximum rating.



83.2% of 101 learners gave the maximum rating.

Learners were specifically asked about some of the strategies they used pre and post training. Evaluation formats changed over the period of the programme, only those questions included in the majority of evaluations are included in the following analysis.



It is extremely positive that learners not only considered that the training had taught them new skills but that they stated this had changed their practice and were able to be specific about changes they had made.

Sample comments from learners:

- *I liked that we did the theory and then went away to implement this in practice and reflect upon its impact.*
- *The course has helped me to reflect on my practice and make improvements to better support the children/families I work with.*
- *The course has taught me several new ideas that I have started to embed in my line of work - 10 second rule, limiting questions and we have started to use a vocabulary flower in planning/ evaluation within groups.*
- *This course has been very useful to attend as it has helped me to develop my understanding around using strategies to support children's learning and development.*
- *I enjoyed learning new strategies to implement when working with children to support the development of their speech and language.*

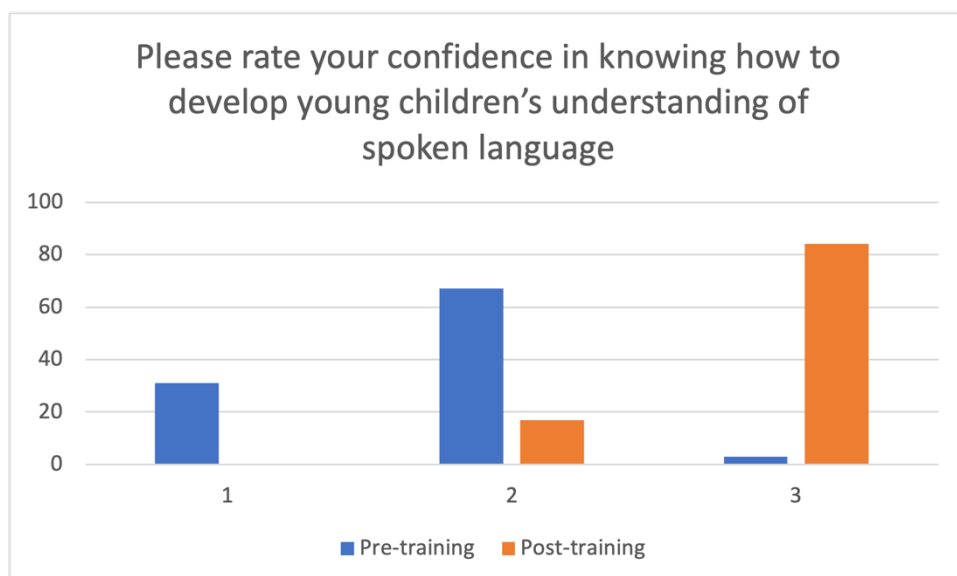
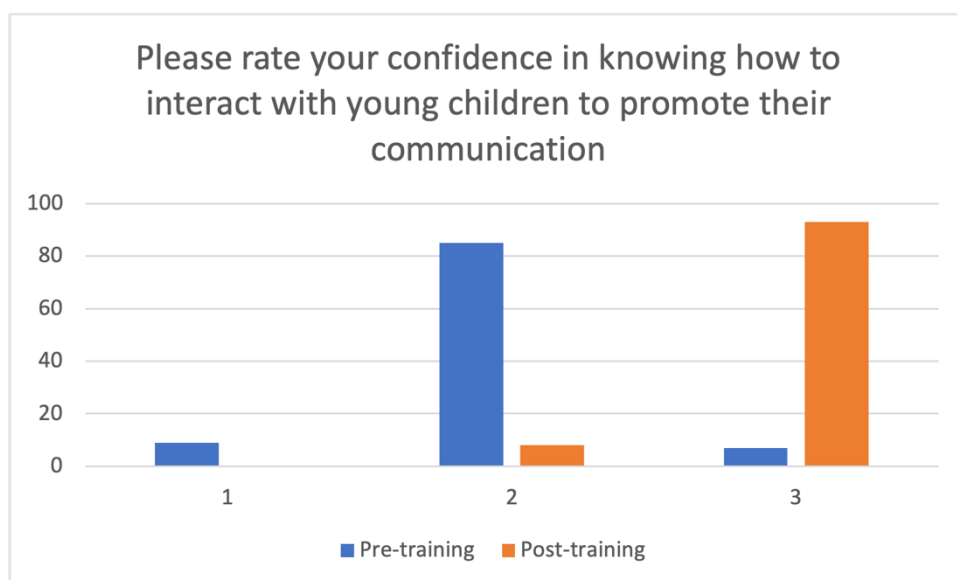
Practitioner confidence

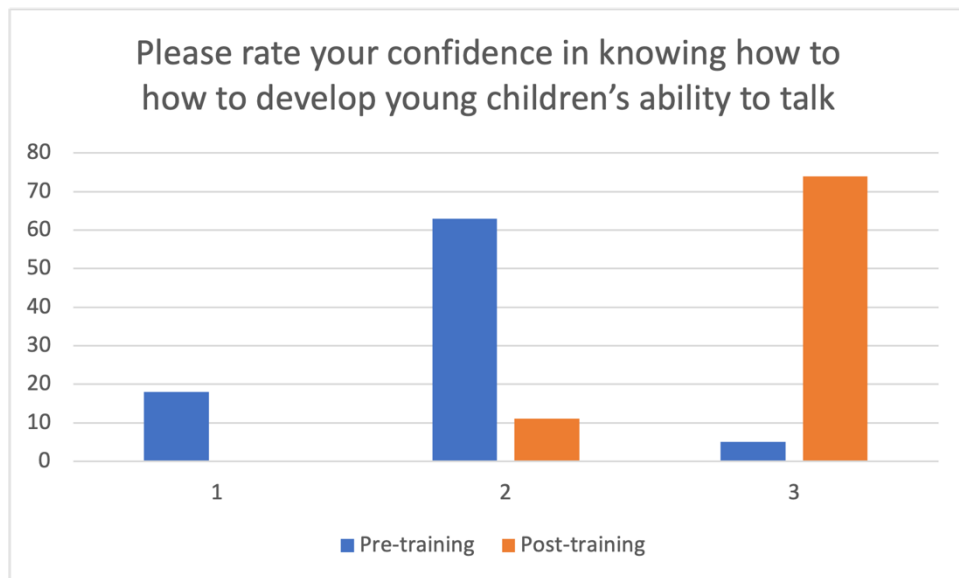
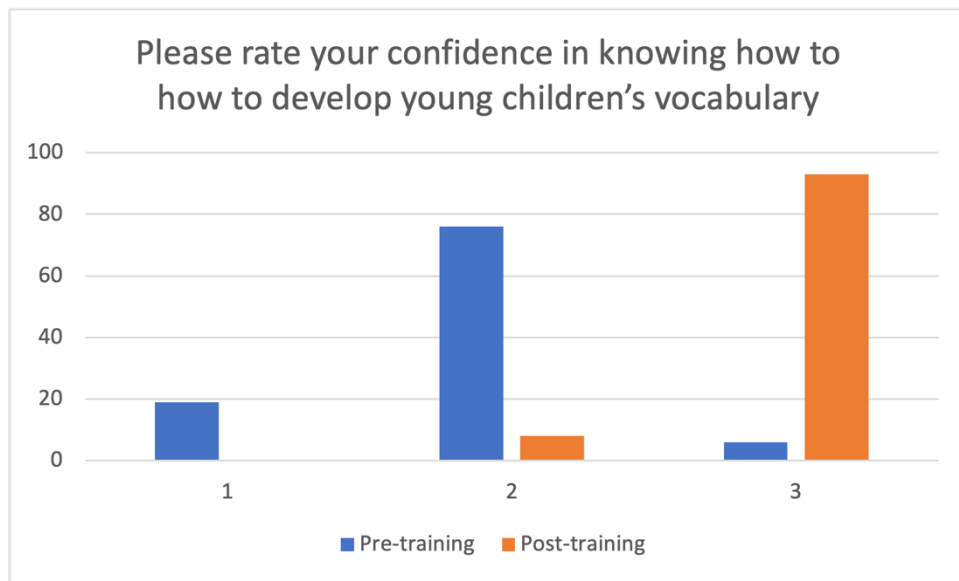
Learners rated their confidence on a scale of 1(low) to 3 (high), pre and post training:
Total numbers of respondents are shown in brackets*.

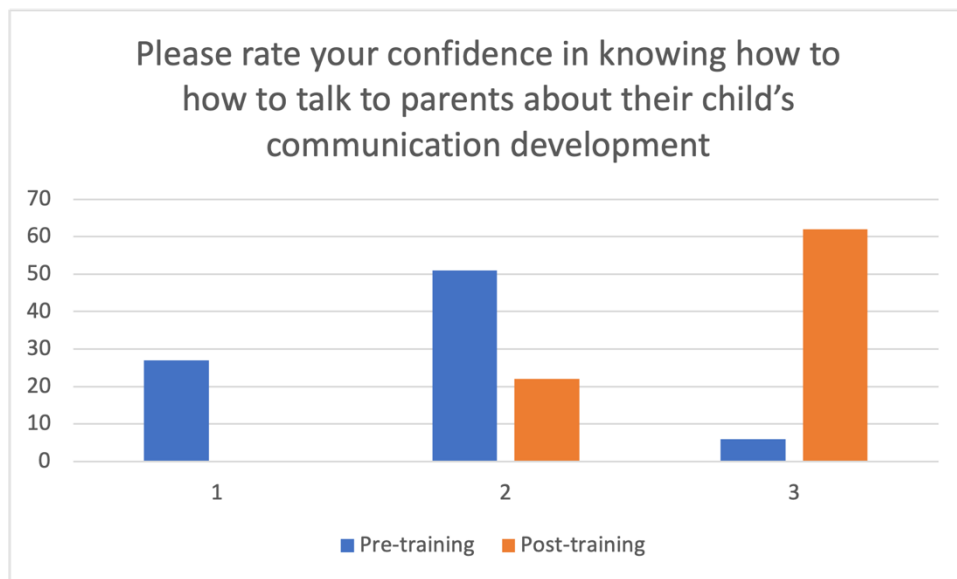
	Average confidence rating pre training	Average confidence rating post training
Please rate your confidence in knowing how to interact with young children to promote their communication	2.0 (101)*	2.9 (101)*

Please rate your confidence in knowing how to develop young children's understanding of spoken language	1.7 (101)*	2.8 (101)*
Please rate your confidence in knowing how to develop young children's vocabulary	1.9 (101)*	2.9 (101)*
Please rate your confidence in knowing how to develop young children's ability to talk	1.8 (86)*	2.9 (85)*
Please rate your confidence in knowing how to talk to parents about their child's communication development	1.8 (84)*	2.7 (84)*

These confidence ratings are presented graphically below:







It is very pleasing that the range of responses, as well as the average ratings, decreased post training; no respondents gave a rating of 1 (low confidence) in response to any of the questions post training, in contrast there were 104 ratings of '1' pre training.

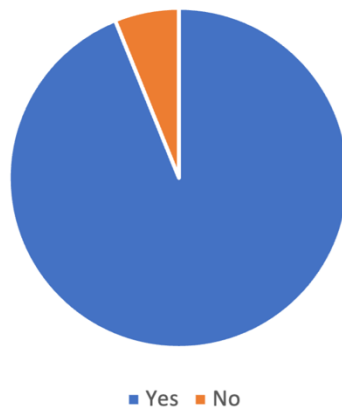
Sample comments from learners:

- *I found the course really good and it has given me more confidence within the setting and opportunities to be able to support other staff.*
- *I have really enjoyed completing this course and gaining the knowledge and confidence to support the children in our setting.*
- *It has been incredibly useful and I feel that I know and understand much more about how to support early communication and language.*
- *This training has really made me aware of the little changes that can be made to support children's communication and language development. The training was full of activities for us to work through as a team and reflect upon our current practice and share new ideas/strategies. I have felt confident to share this information with parents and colleagues. I have enjoyed implementing the changes and witnessing progress made.*

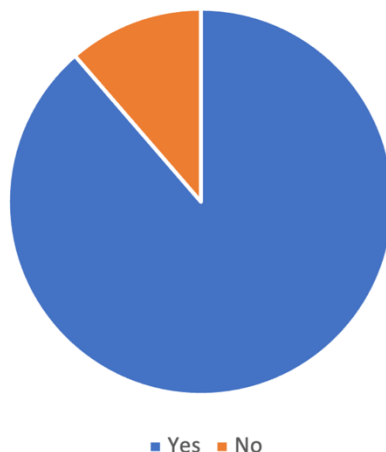
Sharing the knowledge!

93.9% of respondents (number: 98) stated that they had shared information from training with another colleague, and 88.7% reported that the colleague was now using this knowledge. This marks a very significant sharing of good practice.

Have you shared the information with another colleague?



Is your colleague now using it?



Sample comments from learners:

- I found the course really useful in breaking down varieties of areas of communication and how we as a setting can put various plans in place to be able to help encourage communication skills of the children in our care. Now the course has been completed, I would like to be able to inform all staff in the setting of what we can implement and put in place to help them, and find areas we can improve constantly to be able to achieve this.*
- I am keen to pass this knowledge on and to use it in my everyday practice to support the children and their families when working with them in group or one to one settings*
- The course has been excellent! I have gained so much knowledge that I am now able to pass on to staff within the nursery.*

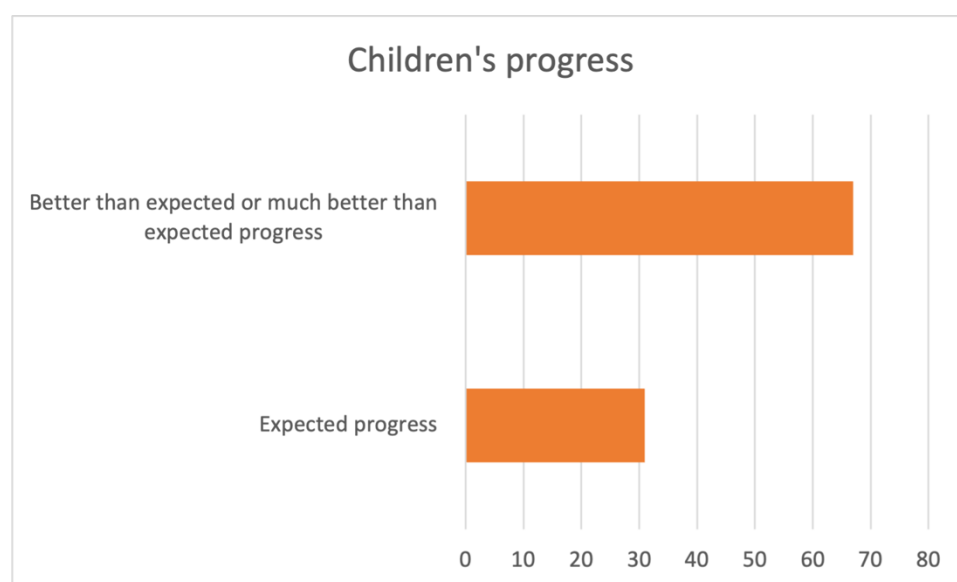
- *I am planning to work with colleagues to implement the strategies learnt at the beginning of the new school year.*

Outcomes for children

Learners were asked:

Following the course, do you consider the progress of the child or children you support to be as expected, better than expected or much better than expected. Responses were as follows:

	As expected	Better than expected	Much better than expected
No of responses	31	58	9
% of responses	31.6	59.2	9.2



A number of respondents commented that they were anticipating accelerated progress in children after a longer lapse between training and assessment.

Unfortunately, only 5 out of 100 respondents reported that they could provide numerical data about children's progress, citing end of year tracking.

Learners were clearer on providing examples of things children said before and after they implemented strategies learnt on their courses, examples included:

- *The children are talking more to adults and each other.*
- *Single words have progressed onto joining words together.*
- *Children have been asking questions*
- *A child talks through what they can see at an activity and uses expressive language.*

- *Child who was pointing and using single words - since using the 10 second rule strategy and giving the child time to process the information being said ,the child is copying single words more and trying to link 2-3 words together eg baby ,child now says "where's baby " "there's baby".*
- *Since implementing strategies all the children have extended vocab*
- *The child only said "hiya" out of context when I began observing her. She now uses at least six single words and can put two words together "All gone" and "more bricks."*

Learners made comments in course evaluations regarding the impact the training had on children they worked with, for example:

- *I have found the course very interesting and has been amazing to see how putting it in to practice has helped the children, I have had comments from parents and other employees about the difference in some of the children.*
- *I enjoyed seeing how much just changing small things within my day had a really positive effect on the children I work with.*
- *I have noticed children in my care - at home and at my work place- are benefiting from these changes already.*

8.2 Feedback from Communication Friendly Settings

Communication Counts

The Lead Communication Practitioner in each setting working towards CFSe status was required to deliver *Communication Counts*, a lighter touch course, to a minimum of 80% of the staff in the setting. Each of the 5 sessions of *Communication Counts* has a written challenge that staff take part in individually, with a final additional evaluation at the end of the course.

Over the duration of *Talk Derby* completion rates for the challenges were as follows:

Communication Counts Challenges	Number of responses
Challenge 1	134
Challenges 2A and B	130
Challenge 3	112
Challenge 4	112
Challenge 5	109
Challenge CFSe Evaluation	105

The collated reports of each Challenge are contained in Appendix 2. The results are overwhelmingly positive with setting staff reporting learning new information which enabled them to increase their effectiveness in supporting children's speech, language and communication.

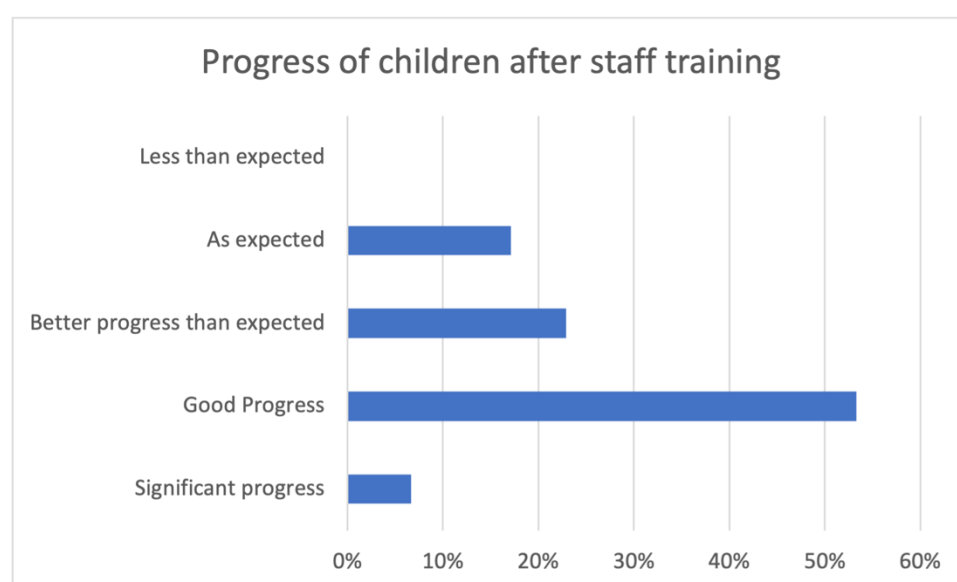
In completing the final questionnaire, the Communication Counts Challenge CFSe Evaluation:

- 89.5% of respondents indicated that the course was effective or very effective in helping them learn new ideas about supporting children's language and communication skills.
- 87.6% of respondents said that the course was effective or very effective in changing the way they talked to and supported children to develop their language and communication.
- 98.1% of respondents reported their setting having changed to make it more communication friendly, including 56.2% who considered this change to be 'considerable' or 'significant'.
- 100% of respondents would recommend the course to others.

The Communication Counts participants were also asked about the progress of children in their setting which they thought was connected to the knowledge and skills they had gained from the course.

Progress was rated as:

Less than expected	0%
As expected	17.1%
Better progress than expected	22.9%
Good progress	53.3%
Significant progress	6.7%



Sample comments from participants:

- *A great course which is especially effective when all practitioners have good knowledge now.*
- *I feel I have learnt a lot and put this into action in the workplace. I have noticed that children are communicating better through the different techniques we have all been using.*

- *This course has been particularly valuable because it has involved all staff working with the children, including those at our breakfast and after school clubs as well as midday playworkers. It is essential that we all support children's communication in a consistent way, thus encouraging and enabling them to communicate throughout the school day and week.*
- *A fantastic training opportunity for all staff. Despite being delivered during a pandemic we have been able to train, deliver, show impact and develop our school practice effectively and appropriately for the benefit of both children and staff.*
- *I am looking forward to putting into practice everything I have learnt when things are back to normal. Our children will have missed out on so many opportunities to develop their language.*
- *The course has been great at giving ideas about how to create a language rich environment and a communication friendly setting but also has helped me to understand why certain things are important and how effective certain things are. The vocabulary flowers are amazing at letting all staff know the target vocabulary and if you listen to the classroom you can hear children using the target vocabulary all around you which again proves how effective it is. After completing this course I feel confident in myself and the team that we are great facilitators of language and that we have created communication friendly environments*
- *The communication counts course has been extremely beneficial to myself, others and the children which I can see demonstrated through working practice and also through the children's play and activities. The handouts are still being continuously used by myself and members of my team when supporting children's SLC which are very helpful to refer back to and help identify needs of children's in relation to their SLC skills. The handouts are also still referred to when discussing with parents about their child's communication and language and we are seeing better outcomes for the children at the setting and at home*

9 Sustainability and the future

As the programme focus has been on developing the knowledge and skills of the workforce, so they are better able to support the children they work with, longer term impact is built in; all cohorts of children that the trained practitioners work with going forward can potentially benefit from their enhanced knowledge, skills and confidence.

9.1 For individual practitioners engaged in training within the programme

The practitioners who have gained accredited awards for their Elklan training (at level 2, 3 or 4) have been required not just to attend training sessions or undertake e-learning modules and to take part in webinars, but also to complete Learning Logs. Doing this requires them to reflect on their practice. Outside of the pandemic context and, where possible within it, practitioners have needed to try the strategies they have been taught with the children they work with and record the outcomes of this. In the exceptional circumstances that the TALK Derby learners have encountered they have been permitted to utilise historical experience, their own children, or hypothetical situations. This

implementation of learning, reflection, recording, and the subsequent discussion with peers at future course sessions serves to increase the likelihood of learning being remembered and embedded in practice.

Those learners who have not progressed in the *Speech and Language Support* courses to the level of gaining accreditation will still have undertaken part of this work and could, reasonably, be predicted to have benefitted from it. Should these practitioners have, for example, been unable to complete their work due to pressures resulting from the pandemic, Elklan will be able to credit them for their learning to date if they want to complete their courses after the *Talk Derby* programme ends, and within two years. They will be able to access e-learning modules and attend webinars remotely with groups of early years practitioners drawn from across the UK.

9.2 For other practitioners

All staff in settings which have been accredited as *Communication Friendly* will have received a 5-session training course *Communication Counts*, delivered by their Lead Communication Practitioner. This person is trained and equipped to deliver to further cohorts of staff as required. It is recommended that settings programme this delivery annually so that any new starters or staff who missed the original course due, for example, to maternity leave, can benefit.

Elklan is mindful of the high turnover rates of staff in the early years sector and would recommend consideration is given to an annual budget to train replacements for LCPs who leave their settings and to enable the programme to reach settings who were unable to take part or complete their involvement as a consequence of Covid-19.

9.3 For Settings engaged in the programme

The process for settings gaining Communication Friendly status ensures that learning is shared across all setting staff and that it is embedded into practice, increasing the likelihood of long-term change.

Those early years settings and childminders who have achieved *Communication Friendly Setting* or *Communication Friendly Home Learning environment* awards will have needed to reflect on the outcomes of their audits and develop future action plans during their training. With support and monitoring to ensure these are implemented these settings should undergo further development.

Accreditation, for settings and home environments lasts for three years, after which it is renewable. Renewing acts as a refresher for the LCP and requires:

- All staff to have had further training (initial training for new starters) in *Communication Counts*.
- Submission of a report regarding the actions the setting has taken in order to continue to be Communication Friendly.
- Reciprocal audit visits to another setting.

- The payment of a fee to Elklan (currently £175 plus an additional audit fee if this is required).

9.4 For other settings

Several practitioners in Derby have completed accredited training at Level 3 but not progressed to Level 4 awards and their setting being awarded Communication Friendly status. Similarly, a few childminders who have gained awards through the Speech and Language Support courses have not progressed to the Communication Friendly Home Learning Environment award. These practitioners and childminders can still take this next step, initially by engaging with online webinars, outside of the programme timeline and funding and should be encouraged to do so, subject to resources being made available by the Council, their setting or by the practitioners themselves.

Elklan would also anticipate that staff from those settings and childminders which have achieved Communication Friendly awards would act as ambassadors for the programme to settings which have not been involved to date.

One of the outcomes, for Elklan, of Covid-19 has been the development of remote learning opportunities; e-learning modules, live training sessions, live webinars and remote Tutor support. This makes the training more accessible for individual practitioners who no longer need to identify a group of learners locally to train with, and have a greater choice over the times and days when they wish to undertake training. Costs for travel and backfill are also reduced.

9.5 For Work with Parents

The practitioners who have been trained to work with parents have been trained and equipped to deliver *Let's Talk with Under 5s* and/or *Let's Talk at Home* indefinitely, subject to an annual payment of an Elklan Tutor License fee. Given the difficulties in implementing the parent work during the programme timeframe Elklan has already funded the extension of licenses for a year or until January 2022, whichever is later.

During the Covid-19 pandemic a number of Children's Centre staff have delivered *Let's Talk at Home* remotely, Elklan would propose that such staff are provided with a platform to encourage other practitioners to do the same.

9.6 Resources for sustainability

Key to all the above sustainability and continuation activity is the identification of a key person to coordinate activity and link speech and language support to current issues and priorities.

10 Conclusion

As part of its work programme as an Opportunity Area Derby Council published a tender in 2018 for providers to develop the capacity of early years services to support children's speech, language and communication development.

Elklan was successful in being awarded two Lots within this tender, *Talk Derby*:

- Lot 2: Family Engagement Provider
- Lot 3: Speech, Language and Communication Training Provider

Planned activity for Lot 2 comprised of training and supporting both early years practitioners and parents to act as Parent tutors delivering one of two Elklan courses for families.

Planned activity for Lot 3 included delivery of accredited courses for practitioners and leaders, supporting settings to gain awards as communication friendly status and providing shorter courses for practitioners (on identifying and providing intervention for children with additional speech and language needs) and the wider workforce for young children.

Both Lots were intended to be provided to 80 settings, identified by the holders of Lot 1.

Considerable revisions to the original targets and planned timescales were needed as a result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and, to a lesser extent, late procurement of Lot 1 providers. Elklan's delivery was also significantly impacted by Lot 1 providers failing to recruit learners to the scheduled courses and to identify both a screening tool and city-wide pathway for children with speech, language and communication needs within the forecast timeframe.

The revisions included an extension *Talk Derby*, originally set as March 2019 to August 2020, so it would continue until March 2021. Changes to planned activities included:

- Cancelling the training of parents as tutors, as social distancing restrictions prohibited them from coming together in groups.
- A reduction in the numbers of families able to receive direct support, recognising that group work would not be possible for a significant period of the programme.
- An increase in the number of practitioners to be trained to work with parents, enabling one to one work with parents and group work after social distancing restrictions were lifted.
- A reduction in the number of settings expected to achieve Communication Friendly Setting status and in the numbers of practitioners to receive the shorter, identification and intervention and wider workforce, courses, acknowledging the pressure and stress the settings and services have been under since March 2020.

Talk Derby granted a further extension, with some additional funding, to Elklan, from March to August 2021 to complete some remaining parts of activity.

Elklan far exceeded targets for the number of courses run, and learner places offered, in all 7 types of practitioner training offered. However, the numbers successfully completing courses were, unfortunately, lower than target in all areas. In most cases the shortfall was marginal and has chiefly been attributed to the workplace and emotional stresses of the pandemic context.

Outcomes for the training delivered by Elklan to practitioners, both directly and through a training cascade, have been extremely positive with learners expressing high rates of satisfaction with course content and delivery. Learners have also indicated that training has been effective in changing practice at both an individual and setting level and have identified the strategies they have learned and introduced in achieving this. They have rated themselves at having increased confidence in supporting children's speech and language needs and have been able to identify progress in children that they attribute to their new knowledge and skills.

Elklan considers that the work undertaken through *Talk Derby* has been extremely successful in improving support for children's speech, language and communication in the early years and recommends that early consideration is given to sustaining the developments made through a relatively small, longer term investment.