



## Early Language Development Programme (ELDP) provides evidence of success

The Early Language Development Programme has already had an impact on a variety of groups of people. Read below to find out more about ELDP's critical success factors, alongside details of how the impacts on parents, practitioners and children have been observed in specific geographical case study areas (Cheshire East, Bolton and Northampton).

### Impact on parents

- Across ELDP, the resources have been very useful when engaging with children and parents and carers. In Cheshire East, we found especially useful the Stages of Speech & Language Development poster; Babbling Babies and Toddler Talk activity packs; Chatter Matters DVD and the Ready Steady Talk activity book.

One set of parents who had taken home the 'Chatter Matters' leaflet and DVD resources found them particularly helpful: "It really came to light for us as parents when the nursery gave us the Chatter Matters DVD – they had it on display as you came in the entrance... they gave us a booklet and DVD to take away so we watched that one weekend, and after watching that it really brought it home to us how he was behind and what we as parents maybe should have been doing... it just highlighted a lot of different things in the DVD... We did become aware that maybe we were all talking too fast with his older sibling and he just got lost in it all..." (Parent of 2 ¾ year old with Speech, Language and Communication needs, Cheshire East)

- Another set of parents reported changing their behaviour to ensure that they spent more one to one time with their child and talking to their child when they go shopping. Other parents also reported behaviour changes as a result of their increased knowledge about Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) development.
- Particular projects with parents have arisen from ELDP work, one example is the creation of a 'lend a book library' where parents have to check out resources when they borrow them. In Cheshire East, this enabled the nursery to identify which parents they could follow up with further support in developing their child's SLC.
- In some areas (such as Northampton), staff feel that it is too early to see impacts on parents. However, one Northampton parent interviewed said *"The support was really good, it has really helped him, his language has got much better. The thing about using the dummy less, simple things, I wouldn't have known that reading to your child helps them to talk and that it is hearing words constantly which helps. Instead of saying, what's this, what's this? Now I say words related to what he is saying to extend his language."*
- In the Northampton hub, staff did feel that, as a result of the ELDP, they are now more able to identify issues of language delay in the children they work with. They are also more confident when supporting and advising parents about children's SLC development.

## Impact on practitioners

- In all the case study areas, staff report improvement in confidence in their skills and knowledge:

In Cheshire East, staff specified this by reporting feeling more confident initiating conversations with parents in sensitive ways, with the 'back up' provided by the ELDP resources, and feeling empowered that their previous knowledge and experience were reinforced by the training. One lead practitioner said *'All the staff feel confident at their own level, it's just boosted the whole ego of the setting because everyone knows, if you see this sign or you think things aren't quite right, this is where you go. The postcards and the leaflets, anything we've managed to have on a wall, to me it has had an impact because every day you can see it. That's why the Toddler Talk cards are out. Since that course, when we came back here on the Monday it was a whole different atmosphere, [with different] approaches to things like the dummies and to working with the parents on things.'* (Lead practitioner, Nursery Setting, Cheshire East)

- Another practitioner in Cheshire East used 'Chatter Matters' to inform the development of Individual Education Plans for two children with SLC needs.
- In Bolton, practitioners report that the programme has enhanced their knowledge and awareness of key stages of child SLC development; provides valuable activities for interacting with children; and has boosted their confidence in engaging with parents and making referrals to support agencies.
- One lead practitioner from Bolton added *"I think I've progressed in my own career and I hope I've been able to impact on other people's careers as well... it's been lovely to share the passion of other practitioners ...some people have said it's been a real refresher and others have said it's given them a taste to go on and do further study, which is really important because that's what we want: the better trained we can make the practitioners the better we can support the children.'*
- Practitioners in Bolton also stated that in the longer term, they will focus on networking and encouraging joint support between settings, and on parental involvement in promoting early SLC development in the home environment. There are also plans to further embed the learning through continued support to settings.

## Impact on children

- Cheshire East report a 'changed atmosphere' in the nursery, with ELDP inspired practices in operation. Examples of 'quick wins' actioned include: switching off the radio; limiting dummy use; enhancing communication friendly spaces, and maximising one-to-one interactions with children. The nursery also recently renovated the use of indoor and outdoor space to include more interactive spaces.
- A summary of the case studies by the Office of Public Management identifies:
  - ✓ Evidence of children making greater progress with SLC development than anticipated (practitioner monitoring)
  - ✓ Parental anecdotal evidence of improvements in children's SLC development (e.g. children with SLC needs or English as an additional language)

- ✓ Children anecdotally reported to be more outgoing, confident in communicating, and using SLC more frequently than prior to the ELDP being cascaded
- Practitioners report *'We're seeing a dramatic change in the children as well, I mean just looking through one of the learning journeys you'd be able to see [the difference in] where a child was when they came in compared to where they are today... With one child they've only been with us since October...that child wouldn't have made eye contact, they were communicating using one word and now they are asking simple questions and linking a lot of words to objects too.'* (Bolton) and *'As a result of the ELDP, staff are now more able to identify issues of language delay in the children they work with. They are also more confident when supporting and advising parents about children's SLC development.'* (Northampton)

## Critical success factors

### Cheshire East

The nursery manager considered key strengths of the programme to be:

- The timing, in terms of **linking with the launch of the two year progress check**
- That all practitioners in nursery and other settings (local authorities health visitors and SLTs) are receiving the same training, and are linked through the **local Lead Setting with cluster and networking** and support from the Cheshire East team. This was perceived as a good way of joining up messages and sources of support across different agencies for practitioners and parents.
- Having to make **pledges** following the training was viewed as helping to initiate changes in practice.
 

*'I thought it was a really good idea to have the pledges because you very often leave training saying 'yes yes I'm going to do that', but it was actually written down!'* (Nursery Manager)
- The **in-house whole setting approach** to training has ensured that all the practitioners receive the same messages and can support each other once back in the setting. This is credited with leading to growing local demand, interest and momentum behind the programme.

### Bolton

- Overall the programme is viewed as very successful, and critical to this has been the **support from the local authority** in embedding the programme and promoting early SLC development across the area.
- Working in partnership with the Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) team has also given the programme momentum and contributed to the roll out of the training. It has also helped to align the work with other training – for example the SLT is able to support practitioners to access the Elkan Enhanced Communication Practitioner training if they want to pursue additional qualifications.
- Adopting a **'whole setting' approach**, involving all staff and providing training at different levels, has also contributed to the programme's success in Bolton. It has provided settings with the core principles of early language development and created a positive environment for Communications Champions to further embed the learning.

## Northamptonshire

- The previous **experience** of the lead practitioners in delivering training and familiarity with SLC development helped them to feel confident and prepared to deliver this training, after receiving the initial I CAN ELDP training. This indicates the importance of recruiting Lead Practitioners with relevant skills and experience.
- Cascading to a **mix of staff**, and enabling staff to share ideas with colleagues from their **own setting**, helped to embed the principles and adopt a 'whole setting' approach to supporting SLC development.
- Practitioners who received the cascaded training felt the messages in the training were **easy to understand** and apply and this is demonstrated by examples of how they have been better able to support parents since the training, e.g. the Chatterbox group. This suggests a success factor of the ELDP is the simplicity of the training and that the messages are **easy to transfer** to the work of the practitioners.
- The lead practitioners felt that **childminders** were a key target group for the ELDP training because they have a lack of personal development opportunities. Childminders were keen to attend the training and their attendance was facilitated by sessions being held on a Saturday, a day when they typically don't have childcare responsibilities.

With thanks to the Office of Public Management who provided these case studies.

