

## Local authority and health initiatives

- [Barnet - Small Circles Language Group Project](#)
- [Barnsley PCT - Early Communication Screening Tool](#)
- [Bebington and West Wirral PCT - Target Word programme](#)
- [Birmingham's Tune into babies - Talk Together](#)
- [Brighton - Talking and Learning Together](#)
- [Canterbury - Baby Explorers; six-week training course for parents](#)
- [Coventry - Talk Now](#)
- [Forth Valley - CHAT \(Communication Help and Awareness Team\)](#)
- [Hackney - Baby Room 'Buddy' Initiative](#)
- [Hampshire – Songs and Rhymes Transition Programme](#)
- [Hillingdon - Play and Learning to Socialise \(PALS\)](#)
- [Lancashire - Firbank Children's Centre](#)
- [Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland - Specialist Community Child Health Services](#)
- [Liverpool - Language Training Curriculum](#)
- [Manchester - Education Partnership; multidisciplinary group](#)
- [Middlesbrough - BLAST, SPARC and Baby SPARC](#)
- [Plymouth - It's good to talk with babies and children in](#)
- [Portsmouth - Play Development Project; Babytalk visits](#)
- [Sandwell - Time To Talk](#)
- [Sandwell – WellComm toolkit](#)
- [Solihull Approach - an integrated model](#)
- [Southwark - Getting the message across: three different campaigns](#)
- [Southwark - Keep Your Language Alive; bilingual initiatives](#)
- [Southwark - Empowering parents; Courses for bilingual families at the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education \(CLPE\),](#)
- [Staffordshire - Story Time public health project and Sing and Play Every day](#)
- [Stoke – Stoke speaks out; addressing poor language and communication skills](#)
- [Sunderland – Early Screening and Primary Prevention: the Sunderland Infant Programme](#)
- [Worcestershire - Good Practice Guidelines; Developing every child's speech, language and communication](#)
- [Young Children's Voice Networks Within Local Authorities](#)

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### **Barnet - Small Circles Language Group Project**

A project that provides training which aims to improve children's language skills, help prevent speech and language difficulties from developing and identify children with communication difficulties. The training shows how using targeted, small groups for circle time can help children develop the communication skills they need.

The training models joint working between SLTs, early years staff and special educational needs coordinators. The project began in 2005 in Barnet for early years settings.

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### **Barnsley PCT - Early Communication Screening Tool**

Margaret Pratt and Nicola Maddy, both SLTs reported for the *RCSLT bulletin* that Barnsley PCT has developed significant changes to the way it educates referrers in

making timely and appropriate referrals and has devised an early communication tool for referrers' use.

They reported that an audit in 2002 of referrals to Barnsley SLT highlighted the need to inform referrers about whom to refer and when. They worked jointly with health visitors who made the most referrals, to devise a screening tool. Nursery nurses also became involved at a later stage of the development.

Several refinements were made to the material following a pilot of the tool, and a training day was also devised which involved teamwork including the speech and language therapy department's special needs team and the fluency service.

The Early Communication Tool is available as a complete package and consists of three components. Assessment forms coincide with the ages at which the health visiting team visit children for developmental assessments and contains questions with "yes/no" responses supported by written guidelines as to whether to refer to SLT or audiology. A guideline for referral booklet gives examples of normal development and also contains a chart representing the normal development of speech sounds. Advice sheets, which can be given to families, contain useful advice and strategies to promote speech, language and communication development.

The report also highlights that over 99% of children are referred appropriately at the point of identification of needs, and that none should be missed. As referrals for children with fluency difficulties have increased, it is suggested that before the tool's use, some children with fluency difficulties were not being referred.

The Early Communication Screening Tool is now an integral part of Barnsley's PCT service, with Health Visitors and nursery nurses reporting how useful it is, in making appropriate referrals.

*(RCSLT bulletin February 2007)*

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### **Bebington and West Wirral PCT - Target Word programme**

BWWPCT ran the Target Word programme, which was developed by the Hanen Centre in Canada. The programme supports parents to develop a family-centred approach to young children's communication development. It targets the parents of late talkers rather than the children themselves.

Parents attend workshops run by Hanen-trained SLTs on a fortnightly basis to help them with techniques and communication strategies. This helps them to support their children to acquire 'target words'.

The Hanen Centre in the UK arranged for the training to be delivered in the UK through the BWWPCT. The University of Chester undertook an independent evaluation. The findings included parents developing better communication styles and using strategies and also an increase in children's vocabulary scores.

*(Extracted from RCSLT bulletin, May 2008)*

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### **Birmingham's Tune into babies - Talk Together**

Birmingham City Council and the Health Service have joined forces to produce a series of leaflets called 'Talking Together', which give parents and carers ideas to help their child listen and talk.

The leaflets were devised by a multi-agency group of practitioners working with families, to give parents universal messages to ensure that all children have the best opportunity to develop language and communication from birth. They have been extensively used, supporting the city targets of improving the language skills of children before entering school; also developing parents' understanding of the important role they play in their child's learning to talk skills. This in turn enables access to services and early intervention to support children with identified speech and language needs.

Funding was accessed through children's centres for a city-wide publicity campaign called 'Tune into Babies - Talk Together' which supports the importance of communicating with babies using the 'Talking Together' leaflets and other promotional material.

The promotional campaign launched on 6 March 2006 with advertisements on buses for three months which consisted of plasma screens and adverts inside and on the rear of buses. Roadside posters were displayed in high profile locations across the city for two weeks, and adverts were aired on BRMB and Galaxy radio stations. In addition, each children's centre received approximately 200 branded products - children's bowls, bibs and mugs - with the message enjoy listening and talking together, along with a DVD/CD to be given out to parents. The promotional activity was to help promote the message 'Tune into babies - Talk Together' and make parents aware of the importance of talking and listening to babies and children.

#### **News update**

'Chatterbags' developed by 'Tune into Babies, Children and Families' Partnership launched six sets of resources bags for settings to loan to families. These bags have been designed for children who are being supervised by their parents. Bags are differentiated by colour: 'Getting Started' is yellow, 'Moving Towards Words' is orange, etc. Each 'Chatterbag' comes with a set of leaflets focused on communications, speaking and listening.

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#### **Brighton - Talking and Learning Together**

In 2004, the Speech and Language Therapy department at South Downs Health in Brighton were asked to find staff for a two year project called 'Talking and Learning Together'. This EB4U (East Brighton For You) funded project came out of the success of the NDC (New Deals for Communities) project 'Talk to Learn, Learn to Talk' which came to an end in 2003.

The 'Talking and Learning Together' Project (TLTP) vision was to develop a local, accessible and integrated service empowering parents/carers and early years staff to help all children learn to talk. The aims of the TLTP were to increase the number of children entering Key Stage 1 with age-appropriate language skills, and secondly, to decrease the number of referrals made to the Speech and Language Therapy Service at age three. The TLTP employed 17 staff across four initiatives which operated solely in East Brighton: 'BabyTalk', Toddler Groups, 'Talk! Play! Learn!' and Foundation Stage staff training.

The results show that there was a huge rise in the number of children entering Key Stage 1 with age appropriate language skills, and a significant decline in the number of referrals made to the Speech and Language Therapy service at age three. The project's funding expired in March 2006. However its success helped in highlighting the continued need for early intervention, and some of the key initiatives have now been integrated into the city's new Children's Centres.

**Update:** Brighton and Hove's City Reading Strategy, published May 2009, includes a section on Early Years (birth - five years) in which the council explains where they are currently in terms of reading and where they will go in the future.

Early Years Foundation Stage profile data for 2008 indicates that standards are rising in Communication, Language and Literacy across the city. The city's team of EY consultants helped practitioners manage the implications of the Rose Report.

Their priorities for the future:

- Train and support all practitioners and teachers working across the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Raise the percentage of children living in areas of deprivation achieving 6+ in Communication, Language and Literacy in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
- Promote and support parents and carers reading with their children

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### **Canterbury - Baby Explorers: six-week training course for parents**

A new course has been set up by the Canterbury and District Early Years Project which looks at different ways in which parents can help their babies form skills for life. The six-week course explores topics such as 'How your baby's brain develops' and 'why love matters' and also includes practical hands-on classes to teach parents skills such as baby massage.

The course was set up with funding from Sure Start and the Chances4Change programme, and was designed as an intervention and support programme, with the focus on laying good foundations for a child's health and wellbeing – at the point at which it can make the most difference.

Free to attend, the course is held in the local village hall and gives parents the opportunity to pick up a variety of practical tips, as well as offering them a chance to socialise with like-minded parents. But the course also offers benefits to early years practitioners who gain an increase knowledge of the parents' relationships with their children and a chance to interact with specialists and learn extra skills such as baby massage. This helps them put EYFS principles into practice – by understanding more about the importance of attachment, the crucial role of positive interactions for physical and emotional development, and the huge importance of the key person role.

*(Early Years magazine, winter 2009)*

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### **Coventry - Talk Now**

Coventry Talk Now 'creating confident communicators for life' is a city-wide, inter-agency initiative supporting the development of children's language and communication skills. Led by Coventry City Council and Coventry Healthcare NHS Trust, the project has received funding from PPEL.

With aims to support parents and carers, develop a skilled workforce and create a communication environment, the project has included a city wide promotional campaign and featured in the local press. Courses have been set up and delivered to children's centre staff, as well as specific projects targeting parents.

A website has also been developed providing information for parents and practitioners. Visit [www.coventrytalknow.co.uk](http://www.coventrytalknow.co.uk).

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### **Forth Valley - CHAT (Communication Help and Awareness Team)**

CHAT (Communication Help and Awareness Team) consists of three Speech and Language Therapists working within the wider NHS Forth Valley SLT department. The team is temporarily funded by each of the Local Authorities in Forth Valley, to work in partnership with education, health, parents and the voluntary sector. The project began in January 2003.

CHAT is able to provide a holistic approach to Speech & Language Therapy delivery for children and families living in areas of disadvantage. They concentrate on the birth to five years population. CHAT is enabling those involved with children in the early years to work together to maximise children's language and social development. CHAT therapists work closely with parents to raise awareness of speech and language development, encouraging them to take an active part in their child's progress.

CHAT therapists provide training to a range of different professionals, enhancing their knowledge of normal speech and language development, in turn increasing their confidence to pinpoint children at risk of speech and language difficulties. A new model of service delivery has evolved, with CHAT therapists working within nurseries in collaboration with Early Childhood Educators to deliver the 'Whole Nursery Narrative Approach'. The team has devised weekly session plans appropriate for 12-18 month-old children, two-three year old children and preschool children.

For preschool children, CHAT use a 10 week narrative programme during which CHAT SLT staff visit nurseries for one day each week to run language groups. Groups run for between 30 and 45 minutes each. These groups are adapted from those in the 'nursery narrative pack' available from Black Sheep Press. CHAT have evaluated the successes of these groups and were able to show increases in children's language attainment which were greater than would be expected from maturation alone, therefore displaying evidence of just how valuable the narrative approach is.

For more information please contact CHAT therapists on 01786 434078.

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### **Hackney - Baby Room 'Buddy' Initiative**

The Hackney Baby Room 'Buddy' project came about as part of a 'buddying' initiative' which aimed to bring together settings from across a local area. Its goal was to raise the quality of out-of-home provision for the under twos and the profile and knowledge base of staff working with this age group. The project focused on: PSED/supporting the wellbeing of babies; early language development; exploratory skills (heuristic play); and motor skills.

The project aimed to develop a 'Community of Learning' by providing all participants with access to a wide range of high quality learning experiences over a 6 month period. These experiences included:

- six central sessions on baby rooms based on the Northamptonshire Baby Room project programme (this included specific training in aspects of baby brain development, observation and environments for learning).
- training sessions in music delivered at the settings.
- visits to observe good practice in other baby rooms.

- visits to settings within the network.
- a training session focusing on heuristic play.

Practitioners reported having developed greater confidence in interacting with babies and sharing information with parents. Three settings have carried out workshops with parents linked to things they have learned from the project. Positive changes have been made to baby room practice, the learning environment, and the development of appropriate and stimulating resources for babies in the rooms of participants.

Practitioners participating reported increased understanding of their role in supporting a baby's emotional needs, helping them to practise containing emotions and their role in children's development and positive interactions. Parents have become more involved in observing their children and sharing information about them with practitioners.

Two of the settings involved had Ofsted inspections shortly after the project ended. Both of these settings gained 'Outstanding' judgements and the inspectors recognised the setting's focus on continual improvement.

Due to the success of the project a consultant team will be looking at creating further opportunities to offer similar projects. The Hackney Baby Room Project plans to run again next year. For further information and a full case study contact: [Caroline.Hart@learningtrust.co.uk](mailto:Caroline.Hart@learningtrust.co.uk).

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## **Hampshire – Songs and Rhymes Transition Programme**

Hampshire County Council has been running the Songs and Rhymes Transition Programme for over five years to much success. The programme initially started as a two-year project but the overwhelming successful feedback has meant the council has turned it into a central programme in transitioning children into school.

Schools and pre-schools work together on the programme which brings children and parents into schools for a series of six to eight sessions to help introduce them to the child's new school. The sessions take place before the child's first day and include activities, nursery rhymes and songs. Parents are sent home with a CD and booklet to encourage them to continue to learn at home what they started to learn in the sessions.

The programme was originally intended to ease transitions and improve speech and language skills but has had a much wider impact, helping to forge better relationships between families and schools.

For more information please see the Songs and Rhymes Transition programme website: <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/childcare/providers/childcarepublications/foundationstagejournal/fsj-summer-2008/songs-and-rhymes-transition-programme.htm>

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## **Hillingdon - Play and Learning to Socialise (PALS)**

Hillingdon Council has introduced a programme to help children develop key social skills. Developed in Australia, 'Play and Learning to Socialise' (PALS) uses puppets to help children learn about turn-taking, sharing, listening and helping them manage their feelings of fear, anger or sadness, boosting confidence. The programme works by setting the puppets in social situations, and also uses video scenes, role play

activities and songs. It runs over ten sessions and covers social skills and emotional literacy. .

Originally piloted in nine early settings, the evaluation showed 98% of children who participated showed a significant difference to those who didn't. The programme now runs across the boroughs in half of the schools and a quarter of the nurseries.

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### **Lancashire - Firbank Children's Centre**

Firbank Children's Centre in Lancashire joined a scheme to consider the benefits of backward facing buggies, *Nursery World* reports. Following on the back of TTYB's Buggy research, the centre swapped its existing pushchairs for 'pusher-facing' buggies.

Sarah Hargreaves, Firbank manager, said: "It seemed like common sense when we heard the initial findings that children who had most face-to-face contact had the best speech and sense of well-being." Through their initiative, Firbank will be looking at the effect when buggies are pushed by another carer (rather than parents), in particular the extent to which it impacts on the key-person/child relationship.

Ms Hargreaves has also sent leaflets to parents on the advantages of the centre's new buggies, which were on display at one point along with the information about Talk To Your Baby's research. Parents can even take a buggy for a trial run. Staff have also been briefed on the Talk To Your Baby information to pass on to parents. In this way, the centre is also aiming to raise awareness about the adverse effects of away-facing buggies.

Early results of the initiative were positive. Sarah Hargreaves said: "The prams are nicer to use and the babies seem happier. Staff also think it's really nice to be able to look at the babies, and seeing their reactions it's difficult not to respond in a positive way."  
(*Nursery World*, 4 December 2008)

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### **Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland - Specialist Community Child Health Services**

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Specialist Community Child Health Services provides a range of services including those focusing on early years communication such as speech and language therapy. Resources for parents are also available from their website. Visit [www.leicschildhealth.nhs.uk](http://www.leicschildhealth.nhs.uk).

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### **Liverpool - Language Training Curriculum**

Two consultant speech and language therapists for the 10 **Liverpool** Sure Start Programmes have devised a Language Training Curriculum for a range of early years workers, supporting the sharing of best practice between projects and rolling out these ideas to the new children's centres. In addition the early years support worker from Netherley Valley Sure Start has a programme addressing the language needs of the children and families within the area, which includes the 'Chatterbox Language' project. This project closed in March 2006.

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### **Manchester - Education Partnership: multidisciplinary group**

In 2004 Manchester Education Partnership established a Speaking and Listening Strategy Group. This is a multi-agency group, bringing together professionals who are responsible for commissioning and monitoring developmental strategies aimed at improving language skills in babies and young children (birth - five), so that all children and their families have full support and access to good quality, effective services wherever they live in Manchester.

The group is designed to look specifically at issues relating to language development and early communication, for all staff working with children in the birth - five age range. One of the key elements is the planning for all newly created Sure Start Children's Centres to have central social space for eating, where adults can sit with children to enhance language development.

The strategy includes a focus on the importance of continuous professional development for early years practitioners. In 2006, two pilot programmes were developed to be delivered throughout the following academic year. These programmes combined aspects of previous successful professional development modules developed for Manchester practitioners, with the incorporation of key elements of the new 'Communicating Matters' materials from Sure Start.

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### **Middlesbrough - BLAST, SPARC and Baby SPARC**

Middlesbrough has developed BLAST – 'Boosting Language, Auditory Skills and Talking' - a six-week programme for nursery staff to deliver to all nursery school children aged three which teaches listening, memory, turn-taking and group work skills. Visit [www.blastprogramme.co.uk](http://www.blastprogramme.co.uk) to read more on BLAST.

Middlesbrough has also developed SPARC (Supporting Positive Attention and Reciprocal Communication) which looks at the social and emotional aspects of communication. It is designed to be used by professionals working with children aged birth - six in whatever way is appropriate for each individual family. Baby SPARC, written by a physiotherapist, has been introduced to expand the physical aspects for the young baby, encouraging movement in the first six months and helping balancing and positioning. All parents will receive the pack from Children's Centre staff who will do one-to-one visits.

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### **Plymouth - It's good to talk with babies and children**

It's Good to Talk with Babies and Children...in Plymouth **is** a multi-professional, multi-agency project across education, health, social care, the voluntary and independent sector. It was initiated in December 2004 in response to Every Child Matters, the National Service Framework for Children, and Change for Children. The key objective is to 'enhance the early interaction and communication skills of parents and children aged 0 to 3-years across the city of Plymouth'.

A single message stressing the importance of face-to-face communication in the future development of babies and children has been adopted by the universal services and is supported by the Talking Tips leaflets. Health visitors are distributing the leaflets and discussing the content with parents at the first post-birth hearing check. There are approximately 2,500 births per year in Plymouth. The printing cost

of the leaflets was jointly funded by Early Years Education and Speech and Language Services (Health).

The key triggers for the project were:

- Poor communication and interaction skills at pre-school and school entry
- Perpetuating poor models of parent and child interaction
- High referral rates to the Children's Speech & Language Service.

**News update:** 'It's good to talk with Babies and Children...in Plymouth' won a national award at the NHS Alliance Acorn Awards in September 2006, in the category of 'Clinical Engagement' for having redesigned the way the service is delivered.

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### **Portsmouth - Play Development Project: Babytalk visits**

Babytalk visits in Portsmouth are offered to all families with a baby six months old. During the home visit advice is given on normal language development, reasons why it is good to think about and support a child's language development, and ways in which parents/carers can facilitate language development. The home visit is delivered by a trained speech and language therapy assistant, and normally lasts just under one hour, giving lots of strategies to talk to babies. Parents are given a free nursery rhyme CD and they are invited to come along to nursery rhyme groups and 'come and sing' groups. Speech and Language therapists work jointly with the Health Visiting service to provide a universal service within certain areas of Portsmouth.

The service has been evaluated both subjectively through feedback questionnaires and objectively using the Sure Start Language Measure (SSLM) with additional questions at two years old. Results from both types of evaluation have been positive, with a high percentage of parents being satisfied with the service, and indicating that they have learnt more about language development, and also then at two years with the children having more reported words on the SSLM, and with parents responding with more ideas to the question "what can you do to encourage language development".

### **Update**

*The Guardian* reported on a project in Portsmouth that encourages parents to spend time having pure and simple fun with their children to improve learning. The Portsmouth Play Development Project, founded by the Pre-school Learning Alliance and Sure Start, is run by a team of play workers who visit families in their home and lead play sessions, aiming to encourage parents to bond with their children through play and thus improve early learning and social mobility. Referrals come from health visitors, pre-schools and nurseries, as well as social services, behavioural specialists and parents and carers. Since the project was launched five years ago, the team has worked with around 450 families. As well as working in families' homes, it supports those living in hostels, temporary accommodation, and even prisons. Resources are focused on some of the most deprived areas of Portsmouth, but the long-term aim is to offer the service to all families in the area.

*(The Guardian, 27 November 2009)*

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### **Sandwell - Time To Talk**

A 'Time To Talk' programme is being run by Sandwell Children and Young People's Trust Partnership to help improve speech and language skills. It aims to boost the language skills and confidence of under-fives in Sandwell with workshops, fun art

and craft activities and additional support. £2.75m is being invested in the initiative and the Government's Neighbourhood Renewal fund is providing the funding.

In February 2009, a celebration conference was held to pull together all the achievements of the three-year project. Among other initiatives is *The Daddy Longlegs Project*, in association with Murray Hall Community Trust, which provides dads groups and dad-friendly playgroups across the area – for dads, granddads, uncles, step-dads and other males making a positive contribution to a family. At weekly, fortnightly or monthly sessions across the area, a variety of services is offered: baby massage, stay and plays, dad groups, and story time sessions.

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### **Sandwell – WellComm toolkit**

The WellComm toolkit is a system which uses observation, discussion with parents and carers, and direct screening to establish a child's language level. The child is then classified as green, amber or red. Green is indicative of the child having reached appropriate levels of communication for their age; amber indicates that more work needs to be done and red indicates that the child requires specialist intervention. Once classified a child can receive immediate help as the toolkit offers suggestions and specific activities to start to improve areas of weakness. The nature of the system means that targets can be easily identified and progress measured and quantified.

The WellComm system makes parent involvement key, by talking to parents during the evaluation and providing them with a book full of ideas on simple ways they can work with their child. The Big Book of Ideas that comes with the WellComm kit tells parents and professionals what activities to undertake with children when language delay is an identified issue.

The system has had a significant impact in Sandwell; the number of children whose language and communication skills gave cause for concern dropped from 32% to 21%. The council's Time to Talk programme, which highlights the importance of communication skills in early years and tries to get parents and carers to talk to children more, has used WellComm.

For more information on this initiative please see the [WellComm website](#).

*(Nursery World 3 June 2010)*

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### **Solihull Approach - an integrated model**

The Solihull Approach is an integrated working model for professionals who work with families with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It brings together three well-developed concepts - Containment from Psychoanalytic Theory, Reciprocity from Child Development, and Behaviour Management from Learning Theory.

It is a theoretical framework and a practical, comprehensive resource pack developed by practitioners for practitioners. It was originally created to support practitioners managing children with sleep difficulties and has since been expanded for use with children in primary care settings with feeding, toileting and behavioural problems.

The Solihull Approach encompasses a resource pack for professionals in early years settings, a school years pack, a trainers pack, training modules for professionals and trainers, and a parenting course. For more information or to book training contact

Fiona Duggan on telephone 0121 7883787 or email [fiona.duggan@solihull-pct.nhs.uk](mailto:fiona.duggan@solihull-pct.nhs.uk).

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### **Southwark - Getting the message across: three different campaigns**

Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) in Southwark have recently completed three successful borough-wide health promotion campaigns run in SureStart Children's Centres. Their aim was "to provide information to parents/carers that would empower them to make informed decisions and potential changes to their children's communicative environments."

The team used a variety of new approaches to implementing their campaigns, including whole team creative days, dividing the team into three separate working groups to focus on research, resources and evaluation and targeting parents in different ways – directly via visits to Early Years settings, antenatal groups and indirectly via the cascade of information and resources.

A summary of the three campaigns and their respective outcomes follows:

**1) Keep Your Language Alive (KYLA)** - providing information about multilingualism and promoting the use of the strongest home language/s. KYLA was launched because multilingualism was the most asked-about topic at their drop-in sessions. As part of the campaign, presentations were given at practitioner settings and pre-existing meeting forums, with accompanying handouts and free resources. These presentations focused on three key messages: talk to your child in your most fluent language(s); learning more than one language is good for general learning; and enjoy your language – it is important for your social and cultural identity. As a result of the campaign "participants reported confidence in giving parents advice on this topic area."

**2) Watch Less Talk More (WLTM)** – recommending reduced TV viewing and alternatives. WLTM developed as a result of staff reflections of the high incidences of TV use on home visits – backed up by research indicating the high prevalence of TV watching and its potential detrimental effects on language learning (Close, 2004). To help achieve this campaign, practitioners developed an up-to-date knowledge about the influence of TV on language learning and provided parents with recommended speech and language therapy advice about the use of TVs with under-fives. The team also split into three working groups focusing on content, resources and evaluation and delivered the campaign through group presentation and delivery of advice booklets. Evaluation of WLTM found that parents' narrative feedback showed that they had "accessed and taken on board the key messages and information, and nursery staff reported changes, such as if children watched TV an adult would facilitate and discuss what was being viewed."

**3) Sing and Rhyme Anytime (SARA)** – providing information about the benefits of songs and rhymes. The SARA campaign was a means of distributing quality resources, while providing the research basis underlying the benefits of songs and rhymes to language and literacy skills (Rock, Trainor and Addison, 1999). As part of this campaign, Southwark trialled having a whole team creative day on health promotion to get the team focused, begin the research and decide the aims/objectives and potential resources for the campaign. These resources included booklets with a song choice board; cut-out hand puppet and song words; and a laminated placemat with songs about food in a range of languages. The SLTs then took a two-pronged approach to getting the message across, targeting both parents and practitioners. Following the SARA campaign, parents and childminders showed

that they had “an increased awareness of the specific benefits of songs and rhymes for language development.”

The campaigns “provide a clear, memorable message and a high standard of easily accessible resources,” enabling the team to “easily disseminate information on each chosen topic with minimal effort, and resources developed from each campaign are now available for the whole department and other practitioners.” The team describes how these resources are used as “the basis for introducing our service to new settings, which has proved very successful.”

*[Original article written by Anita Goveas and Erika Thomas (nee Hales), SLTs for Sure Start Children’s Centres in the November bulletin of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists]*

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### **Southwark - Keep Your Language Alive: bilingual initiatives**

Health and Social Care has launched a dedicated section on its website called *Keep Your Language Alive*. It is part of a wider health promotion in Southwark to promote bilingualism in children and make good advice available. For more information go to [www.southwarkpct.nhs.uk/keepyourlanguagealive](http://www.southwarkpct.nhs.uk/keepyourlanguagealive).

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### **Southwark - Empowering parents: Courses for bilingual families at the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE)**

The CLPE worked with parents on an exciting project in 2009 to develop children's early language. After their first four 10-week courses ended, the centre was able to assess and reflect on the positive impact.

Funded by Southwark LA as part of the Parents as Partners in Early Learning (PPEL) programme, the ten week courses are designed for bilingual families where the parents are at an early stage of language acquisition. During each session parents meet together, are introduced to a wonderful range of children's books and begin to share activities to encourage and support interaction with their children. Meanwhile, the children are cared for in a crèche.

Each course boosts confidence, forms friendships and develops family interactions. One parent said: “The course has given me the confidence to talk to other parents in the library. It has helped me to speak English and make new friends”.

High quality sessions, while being enjoyable, creative and interactive, also give parents the skills to try out ideas for themselves in ways that make it easy for them to take them home and try them with their children, in their own language and in their own time.

[Visit the CLPE website](#)

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### **Staffordshire - Story Time public health project and Sing and Play Every day**

Story Time is a public health project that enables every child in mid and south Staffordshire to receive a story CD around the time of their second birthday. The aim of the project is to equip parents with the skills to make and share stories and to introduce the art of storytelling into the family unit, in order to enhance speech, language and literacy skills during the preschool years. The CD includes stories that have been created and inspired by the children and parents of John Wheeldon

Primary School storytelling group. There is an accompanying colour illustrated booklet containing ideas for parents to help make the most of creating stories together. For more information contact health visitors Alex Dudley on 01785 226967 or Anne Hobbs on 01785 223099.

**Update:** *Sing and Play Every Day* is a CD of nursery rhymes and shares the same objectives as Story Time to encourage speech and language development, promote child-carer interaction and enhance literacy skills. Both projects were based on teachers' perceptions that children's language skills on entry to education had deteriorated. These findings came from a survey undertaken by two health visitors and an SLT, with permission from the BSA (Wales) to replicate their 2002 study.

The *Sing and Play Every Day* CD rhymes were chosen by local parents at a Hanen speech and language group and were performed by a local secondary school choir. The involvement of the secondary age children was also an opportunity to raise the importance of nursery rhymes for a baby's language development amongst potential future parents. The CD is distributed to all newborn babies within six to eight weeks of birth. Surveys with parents were undertaken for both CDs, to find out if they were well received and useful. Findings included parents singing to their child at an earlier age, that rhymes helped to calm babies and 90 per cent of parents played more with their baby.

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### **Stoke – Stoke speaks out: addressing poor language and communication skills**

Stoke Speaks Out is a multi-agency project, funded by Neighbourhood Renewal Funds, set up in 2004 to tackle the high incidence of speech and language difficulties in Stoke-on-Trent. It aims to support attachment, parenting and speech and language issues through training support and advice. It developed from local Sure Start initiatives which identified that between 60% and 80% of children assessed in Stoke age three to four years had a language delay. The majority of these delays did not require speech and language therapy input and could be dealt with by parents or other practitioners.

In Phase One (April 2004 to March 2006), Stoke Speaks Out developed a multi-agency training framework for all practitioners working in the city with children birth to seven years or their families. The training has five levels, ranging from awareness raising to detailed theoretical levels. This has been jointly written by the project team who comprise of speech and language therapists, a clinical psychologist, a midwife, play workers, teachers, a bilingual worker and admin staff. All levels have an expectation that the practitioner will create change in their working environment. In addition the project has developed resources for parents including setting up a model for toddler groups to follow which enhances language development.

The project has launched a new website offering a wide range of useful and practical information for parents and practitioners to help with children's language development. It includes activities for children, handouts and advice for parents and shares good practice for practitioners.

The project is now in its second phase with a brief to develop a staged pathway for attachment and communication which has an inter-agency, city-wide sign up. There are also plans to develop a menu of resources and training for parents. For more information on the 'Stoke Speaks Out' project visit the website [www.stokespeaksout.org](http://www.stokespeaksout.org) which offers a wide range of useful and practical information for parents and practitioners to help with children's language development. It includes activities for children, rhymes and songs for different age groups, a section with advice and tips for parents, an area for practitioners that

includes research, training materials and information, and an area dedicated to Speech and Language Therapy advice. 'Meet the Potters' is a fictional family from Stoke on Trent, whose family members are used on the site to show how families can work together to improve the language development of their children.

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### **Sunderland – Early Screening and Primary Prevention: the Sunderland Infant Programme**

Early Screening and Primary Prevention – the Sunderland Infant Programme is a collaboration between health visitors and clinical psychologists to identify and attempt to remedy situations in which this development may be at risk.

Sensitive responsiveness on the part of parents is highly associated with a secure attachment in infants. Parents are invited to participate and learn more about their babies' unique ways of communicating, which are captured through a three-four minute video clip when babies are 8 - 12 weeks old. The clips are then analysed using Crittenden's CARE-Index methodology and formulations derived. Depending on the nature of the interaction, tailor-made interventions are devised, which may vary from behaviourally-focused video-based guidance by health visitors to parent-infant psychotherapy with clinical psychologists.

*Per O Svanberg, PhD at the Enriching Early Parent-Infant Relationships Conference, organised by the Brazelton Centre, March 2004.*

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### **Worcestershire - Good Practice Guidelines: Developing every child's speech, language and communication**

This guidance aims to identify and inform good practice in the development of communication but also, in order to make a real difference, to challenge and promote improved delivery across the country. It is designed for all professionals, families, carers - in fact, anyone and everyone who has a role in supporting children and young people in this area of development. This guidance was created in order to enable the local authorities to deliver on the Every Child Matters and works under the principal that communication underpins all learning and social relationships - "it is a foundation life skill".

Worcestershire is already making a difference with a series of other good practice initiatives including (but not limited to) the following:

- **Nursery Talk:** a 'whole nursery' training package, delivered in the nursery setting over half term, using principles of adult-child interaction. Its aim is to give nursery staff and parents practical ideas for developing children's language skills.
- **Talking Matters Workshops:** workshops delivered by speech and language therapists, providing practical training for teaching assistants, teachers and nursery staff in order to give nursery and school staff the skills to work directly on a variety of communication difficulties - individually, in groups or in circle time.
- **Language for Learning:** a county-wide Health and Children's Services training project, delivered jointly by speech and language therapists and specialist teachers, aiming to provide collaborative training for everyone working with children with speech, language or communication difficulties (including parents).

For more information visit the [Worcestershire website](#) and look in Children's Services.

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**Young Children's Voice Networks Within Local Authorities**

Young Children's Voices Network Within Local Authorities is a project led by the Early Childhood Unit at the National Children's Bureau and funded by the DCSF. Focusing on the concept of listening to children in a strategic way, following directives such as Every Child Matters and the Childcare Act 2006, the project aims to provide support and advice to local authorities on the topic with a report due in March 2009. For more information visit [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk).