The Challenge

In Dundee, the number of people living in areas of high deprivation is double the national average, with the lowest employment rate in Scotland.1 Social deprivation is associated with poor levels of language and vocabulary.2

The Scottish Attainment Challenge is about giving every child the same opportunity to succeed in education, with particular focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Dundee City Council identified Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) support at a universal level in early years settings as one of the spending priorities within Dundee’s Attainment Challenge project.3

Aims and Objectives:

- To improve children’s communication skills through:
  - increasing staff and families’ awareness of children’s language development.
  - training staff in using evidenced based programmes to promote speech and language development.

- To increase staff knowledge and confidence in:
  - providing effective language interactions.
  - adapting the environment to ensure ‘Communication friendly environments’4
  - sharing early communication strategies with families.

Method

A package of evidence-based programmes was introduced in nurseries and “Top Tips” training was provided. A coaching model was used to build staff confidence in running the programmes:

- Teaching Children to Listen5
- Word Aware6
- Nursery Narrative7
- Chattertots8

Conclusions thus far and Next Steps

- Programmes and strategies have been positively received and are being embedded in nurseries.
- Networks have been established to provide nursery staff with ongoing peer support and sharing of implementation ideas.
- Data will continue to be gathered to determine future practice and implementation into other early years settings across Dundee.

Midway Outcomes

- The programmes and strategies have been well received and are being embedded in nurseries.
- Data shows targeted skills in children are improving and staff confidence has increased.
- Parental engagement has worked best when nurseries have been creative and flexible to meet individual needs.
- SLTs are developing a new range of skills for universal working (coaching/mentoring).8

Image 3: http://www.jen.b.ncl.ac.uk/wikis/articles/article/766225/jen-library-hosts-presentation-american-sign-language-class/

Image 1: http://www.getB.jn.ed.ac.uk/wikis/articles/article/766225/jen-library-hosts-presentation-american-sign-language-class/

References

(4) Hooper X, Flack S, Boyd O, Clark S, Lavelle J, Houston K, et al. Dundee City Council identified Speech and Language Therapy at a universal level in early years settings as one of the spending priorities within Dundee’s Attainment Challenge project. 3
(5) Parental engagement has worked best when nurseries have been creative and flexible to meet individual needs.
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Teaching Children to Listen

“Mallet - that’s a new word. I think I’ll clap it.” 3 year old nursery child

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Saul’s mum – “I’ve noticed so much progress with Saul’s speech since starting Chattertots. Giving choices works for him so I’ve been trying to do that and I’m thinking much more about the words I’m using. Maybe I could use more actions though.”

Nursery Narrative

“I’ll mention the name of the new word Saul learned in pre-school. I notice Saul using the words I’m using. Maybe I could use more actions though.”

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- Parental engagement has worked best when nursery