**Background**

Family Learning Centres are situated in areas of social disadvantage. The link between social disadvantage and delayed language is well documented. In some centres over half (56%) of children were accessing specialist Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) interventions in community clinics. High non-attendance rates were recorded in these clinics as well as long waiting times for appointments.

**Aims**

There was recognition that we need to consider effective use of resources to improve engagement with the most vulnerable families and seek to work more collaboratively in order to provide a full range of universal, targeted and specialist supports for children. We set an aim that in one year each Family Learning Centre in North Lanarkshire would have a co-located Speech and Language Therapy service using existing resources.

**What did we do?**

Following a successful pilot site, a scale and spread plan was created. Using existing resources, 16 SLTs were co-located to Family Learning Centres one day per week in North Lanarkshire over one year. SLTs were integrated into Family Learning Centre teams with all appointments being offered on site, as well as drop in sessions for families and a programme of training for Early Years staff. Each centre identified a communication champion who would work alongside the SLT to support language and communication in their setting.

**Outcomes and results**

Co-location of SLT services has promoted collaboration with partners in education and resulted in increased quality of service for families by using resources more effectively.

- Improved access for families with a reduction in non-attendance rates. Parents are waiting less time for appointments and reporting a preference for a co-located service.
- Improvement in confidence in the Early Years Workforce to support Speech, Language and Communication development and early identification of needs.
- Greater access to universal and targeted approaches for children resulting in improvements in children’s speech, language and communication development and less children requiring specialist SLT input.

**Interventions**

- Universal
- Targeted
- Specialised
- Delivered on site by key SLT
- Joint planning and delivery

**Environment**

- Audit of communication environment
- Enhancing adult-child interaction

**Families**

- Improved access to services
- Continuity of care
- Building parent confidence in supporting early language development

**Workforce**

- Collaborative working
- Training and support
- Development of ‘communication champions’ network

**Children**

- Least intrusive interventions
- Consistent approach

**Co-located Speech and Language Therapist**

- Improved early identification
- Delivery of universal, targeted and specialist SLT services
- Building relationships for effective collaborative working
- Engaging families, improved access to SLT services
- Creating communication friendly environments
- Developing a skilled Early Years workforce

**Outcomes and results**

- 8% 2017
- 87% 2018
- 212 Early Years staff who have participated in training to support early language development
- 59% 2017
- 81% 2018

**Number of children requiring specialist SLT input**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>03/17</th>
<th>12/17</th>
<th>03/18</th>
<th>12/18</th>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
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<td>150</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>250</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>450</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Number of weeks waiting for 1st appointment**

- Average reduction in waiting time for first appointment.

**Number of children reaching communication milestones in Forgewood FLC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Apr-17</th>
<th>May-17</th>
<th>Jun-17</th>
<th>Jul-17</th>
<th>Aug-17</th>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
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**Acknowledgements and Thanks to North Lanarkshire Council**