

Speech and Language Therapy Service DRAFT

Key Achievements

- Staff training and consultation proving successful and a system for modelling speech and language support being developed
- Information Pack for Family Link Workers, Health Visitors and parents developed
- Successful national conference entitled “Language for Learning” organised

Description

The Delivery plan specified that the Speech and Language therapy role should be to *‘deliver training to other workers regarding the promotion of successful language acquisition and to support parents in their interactions with their young children to encourage communication and language development’*

Some activities have been targeted at staff e.g. training and consultation. Twice monthly training mornings for staff from all agencies were held for staff over several months. This also allowed the exchange of ideas between workers from different backgrounds. An ongoing programme of training for the Childminders is in place.

During the more formal training, it became evident that staff would value advice about specific children. As a result, the therapists visited playgroups to model ways of working with children (e.g. how an adult can adjust their level of input according to the child’s needs).

A Speech & Language Information Pack for Family Link Workers and Health Visitors has been completed and was published in November 2003. The Pack contains information for both staff and families, geared to children’s age and ability levels and is designed to provide knowledge and practical ideas to enhance speech and language development.

Most of the activities that have been targeted at parents/carers and families have been group based. “Family Talk” Groups are a ten week programme which aims to give parents practical and targeted ways of supporting their child’s language development. A group at Barnardo’s Fulford Family Centre appealed to parents who had concerns about their child’s speech and language development and aimed to provide parents with strategies that would support their children’s language development.

Parent Talks have happened in both a formal and an informal way. Talks have been given to Childminder groups and to the various Health Visitor groups for parents with babies. They have been practical in nature and have aimed to provide parents with some background information on the development of speech and language and to suggest ways they can support their child. On a

more informal basis attendance at Drop-ins (eg Fulford and Gay Elms) has provided the opportunity for more casual conversations.

As part of the South West Support group for Speech and Language therapists working in Sure Start, HHWSS therapists helped organise a national conference entitled “Language for Learning”. The conference aimed to share good practice from Sure Start projects throughout the country.

The Speech and Language therapists have been responsible for coordinating the introduction of PEEP groups into the HHWSS project.

Data was collected using the Sure Start Language Measure on the language levels of ten two year olds in the area. This data was fed back to the National Sure Start Office as part of a national audit project.

Costs and Staffing

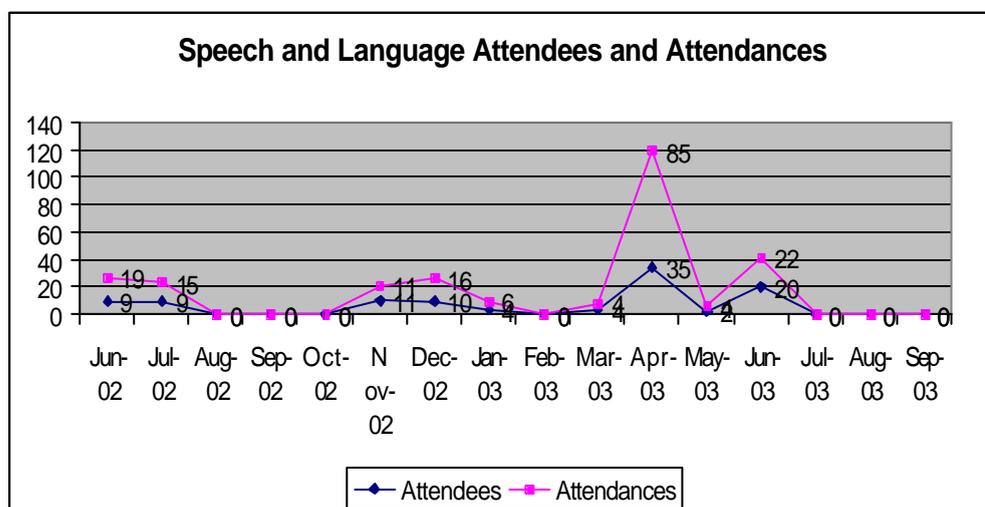
Two part-time Speech and Language therapists have been in post. Total Speech and Language therapy time is 4.5 days a week (ie 0.9 whole time equivalent).

Having two therapists in the project has been valuable because of the flexibility it has afforded in terms of service delivery. It has made it possible to stage “Family Talk” groups and facilitate training in a more creative way.

Projected costs 2003/04: £31,480

Reach

The model developed for speech and language work within the Programme was an integrated one, with speech and language staff working firstly to increase the understanding of all staff of the issues. Because of this integrated model, the data monitoring figures on reach do not accurately reflect the level of activity. Much of it happens with staff groups or in groups that are defined as ‘Drop ins or PEEPS.



Many of the activities provided have not been reflected in the data returns because they do not involve direct contact with Sure Start registered children (as in the case of staff training) or because, contacts made at groups which were hosted by other members of the Sure Start team were not separately monitored.

The two 'Family Talk' groups were attended by a total of twelve families. Attendance varied from week to week.

Training was well attended by playworkers, health visitors , nursery staff and "Family Unit" staff.

Nearly 250 delegates attended the conference and included Speech and Language Therapists employed in Sure Start projects from around England as well as Psychologists, Portage Workers, Project Managers, Nursery nurses, Play Development Workers, Family Support Workers and Audiologists.

Achievements and Outcomes

- A major achievement has been the development of the handbook for staff and parents, which has been much praised for its clarity and usefulness.
- Feedback on staff training was good (see below). The exchange of ideas between workers from different areas was very positive. It would seem that a combination of "on the job" training and more formal training works best. This helps with the transfer of skills and helps staff to see how to apply ideas that may be discussed in a training session.

Examples of feedback from the staff training:

"We've changed the way we deal with her now"

"Sometimes I get very engrossed and would like more training"

"Useful to share experiences with others , different approaches"

"The role play was good and watching how you react when playing with children"

- Early Years Workers at the Four Acres playgroup have said that they found it useful to watch speech and language staff working with children, *“makes us realise what you’re there for, not just for children with severe difficulties.”*
- Families who attended the whole ‘Family Talk’ programme reported noticeable changes in their child’s language skills. Families took home a play bag each week and these proved to be very popular.
- Two of the children from the group were followed up six months later. In both cases parents were implementing strategies that had been discussed at the group (e.g. asking less questions, making more comments).
- Some comments about “Family Talk” were:

“At the beginning of this group I didn’t quite feel it would work for me and honestly I thought it was a load of rubbish but putting the ideas into practice it has helped me and my son develop tremendously”

The Health Visitors have reported positive feedback from families who have attended PEEP groups and “Family Talk” groups.

“The best one I have ever been to” was a common response from the 270 delegates who attending the “Language For Learning Conference” held at Exeter University in July 2003.

Challenges

- Speech and Language staff feel that they are accessing a particular segment of the Sure Start population and that those families who have attended groups are likely to have been more motivated and organised than some others. The challenge is to broaden the service to access those families for whom group work is not the preferred choice without losing the value of the current approach.
- Speech and Language staff have found it difficult to provide meaningful advice in the Drop in situation - the main value of Drop ins seems to lie in the building of relationships and as a way of introducing parents to other services.
- Speech and Language staff share a team room with other Sure Start staff. Nevertheless it has been a challenge for them and for other team members fully to understand each others’ roles and arrive at clear and realisable expectations and consistent working relationships.

Next Steps

- Develop a more effective approach to data monitoring.
- Support the work of Family Link Workers, occasionally by doing joint visits with them if a family would find this useful. While hopefully being of direct benefit to the particular family, it will also be a way of sharing skills with the Link Worker team.
- Ongoing support and training for staff groups, especially Early Years Workers. One way of doing this would be to encourage early years workers to follow an “Early Childhood Educators programme”. Workers would select a child to work with and follow a ten week programme, lead by the speech and language therapist, to increase their knowledge and awareness of how to develop language skills. The aim is to have one Early Years Worker in each centre trained as a Speech and Language Therapy Assistant.