“Talk of the Town is a powerful approach for improving speech, language and communication amongst children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This in turn offers encouraging possibilities for improving educational outcomes more generally and, in the longer term, the life chances of young people.”

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What is Talk of the Town?

An integrated, community led approach to supporting speech, language and communication in children and young people

Aiming to:

1. Ensure early identification of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs.
2. Enable joint working between parents and practitioners working with children.
3. Ensure positive outcomes for children and young people with improved speech, language and communication skills.
4. Ensure a sustainable approach, so that policy and practice continues to support positive outcomes.

With very positive initial outcomes:

“The evidence presented in our report provides strong indications that Talk of the Town is a powerful approach for improving speech, language and communication amongst children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This in turn offers encouraging possibilities for improving educational outcomes more generally and, in the longer term, the life chances of young people.”

Ainscow et al, (2012)
Executive Summary

Talk of the Town (TOTT) is an integrated, community led approach to supporting speech, language and communication in children and young people. It was piloted in an area of social deprivation in Manchester from April 2011- September 2012 with 4 key aims:

1. Early identification of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).
2. Joint working between parents and practitioners across health and education.
3. Positive outcomes for children and young people with improved speech, language and communication skills.
4. A sustainable approach, so that policy and practice continues to support positive outcomes.

The Talk of the Town Model

TOTT offers a systematic approach to supporting speech, language and communication. Alongside key principles of practice, TOTT follows a systematic process to embed strategies and achieve measurable positive outcomes.

Key points: Baseline measurements

An initial needs analysis was undertaken to provide baseline measurements against each of the aims and to offer insight into the breadth of SLCN across the locality, shaping the content of the programme:

- More than a quarter of 3-4 year olds in the schools’ nursery classes had standardised scores below 70 – a level which would meet the criteria for a Statement of Special Educational Needs in many local authorities.
- 27% of children sampled in Key Stage 1 tested at this 'severely delayed' level.
- There was a similar picture in Key Stage 2, with poor vocabulary emerging as a particular issue and half the children tested having significant difficulties.
- At secondary level, the incidence of difficulties was even higher; a staggering 50% of thirteen year olds assessed had significant language difficulties.
- Despite good practise, staff from across the Federation, were under identifying children’s SLCN at between 31-50%.

Key points: Outcomes

Evaluation, compiled from a series of sources including pre and post standardised assessments and an independent academic report by Manchester University, showed positive outcomes across all key aims.
1. Early Identification

TOTT is successful in ensuring the early identification of children and young people with SLCN. This is evidenced by:

- Increased skills and knowledge in identifying children’s SLCN with under identification falling from between 31-50% at the beginning of the project to 5-15% at the end.
- Policies and procedures embedded into practice enabling identification and support for pupils, including the use of identification tools, working with parents and continued staff training.

2. Joint working

TOTT is successful in supporting joint working between practitioners across health and education and parents ensuring better outcomes for children and young people. This is evidenced by:

- Changes in practice resulting in a widening of partners embedding speech, language and communication (SLC) into practice both new and old including; early years settings, museums and galleries, local parent forums, national organisations such as O2 Think Big and National Literacy Trust.
- Parents who became engaged in their child’s communication development, taking part in ambassador projects and communication supportive sessions run across the Federation.
- Widespread support and impact of the partnership with the local NHS speech and language therapist seconded to the schools as part of the project.

3. Outcomes for children

TOTT resulted in positive outcomes for children and young people with improved speech, language and communication skills evidenced by a range of qualitative and quantitative data:

- Re-assessments undertaken by an independent specialist showed substantial increases in standardised scores on a range of language tests after just one year.
- Children’s language levels improved across both nurseries; with a 15% overall increase across both schools in children no longer scoring below the expected levels.
- In Key Stage 2 improvements could be seen in language with average scores for each element of language now falling into expected national levels.
- In Key Stage 3, average scores in two of the subtests fell into expected national levels.
- Both primary schools improved in Ofsted inspections, achieving ‘good with outstanding features’.
- An increase of 16% of staff in each school who now felt very confident with providing positive strategies to support the speech, language and communication development of children.
4. Sustainability

TOTT is successful in ensuring a sustainable approach, so that policy and practice continues to support positive outcomes as evidenced by:

- Schools' indication that strategies introduced by TOTT were easily embedded into daily-life by building on current practice and enhanced by specialist expertise.
- Joint commissioning of a Band 6 Speech and Language Therapist.
- An embedded speech, language and communication 16 year plan sustaining the strategies initiated with responsibility for speech and language given to senior staff.
- Continued support commissioned from The Communication Trust with 26 learners on course to complete the Level 3 Qualification in communication by March 2013 developing a core of champions for communication that will remain with the federation.

“...A considerable strength of the TOTT approach is that it has built on existing good practice, showing how, with just a subtle change in focus, speech, language and communication can be made central to a school’s practices, and owned and driven by schools themselves...Overall TOTT led to significant changes in the thinking and practices of practitioners.” Ainscow et al, (2012)

Summary

TOTT ensures changes in policy and practice, implementing and embedding a community wide approach to supporting all children's communication. TOTT has immediate impact, improving children’s speech, language and communication as well as staff confidence, skills and knowledge in identifying SLCN and supporting children’s communication development through sustainable interventions.

The uniqueness of TOTT is in its ability to permeate positive practice in speech, language and communication, by building on and adapting current practice and utilising existing resource. It empowers settings to initiate, lead and implement strategies that are suitable to their community, based on a robust needs analysis, expert guidance, support and evidenced based interventions. TOTT is a true community, supportive approach to children’s communication development.

“Talk of the Town is a powerful approach for improving speech, language and communication amongst children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This in turn offers encouraging possibilities for improving educational outcomes more generally and, in the longer term, the life chances of young people.” Ainscow et al, (2012)

Next steps: The TOTT model has been refined in light of key learning from the pilot. Funding and partnership is now being sought to implement the model in new areas and across different settings.
Why do we need Talk of the Town?

Language has critical importance for learning and wider development, however, many children are starting school already behind, with evidence to suggest that without the right support, they don’t catch up. Falling behind really does matter to children’s attainment; it can affect self-esteem, behaviour and engagement with education.

Robust evidence of need

Breadth and depth of communication needs:
For more than 10 years, shocking data has been emerging around the number of children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in areas of social deprivation:

- More than 50% of children start school with poor language.
- 5 year olds in poor families are more than a year behind their wealthier peers.
- Evidenced continuation of language difficulties if not supported from primary, into secondary and beyond.

Poor language impacts on attainment, well being and long term prospects:

- 90% of children with SLCN have poor reading skills.
- 60% of 7-14 year olds with behaviour difficulties have SLCN.
- 50% of pupils at risk of school exclusion have high levels of language need.
- 75% of pupils in inner city secondary schools have language needs hampering learning.
- 60% of youngsters in young offender institutions have SLCN.
- 15% of children with SLCN achieve 5 A-C GCSEs compared to 57% of all young people.

Good language makes a difference

- Competent language skills have been found to moderate the effects of social disadvantage, with children more likely to succeed in their education and employment.
- Children from poorer backgrounds who develop good language skills are more likely to ‘buck the trend’ and become more affluent in later life.

Needs not being met

Analysis has shown that there continues to be an inequity of service provision. Children’s language development is not being adequately supported. Children are entering school with poor language, not catching up with their peers and falling behind in school and beyond.

Alternative approaches to effectively support the language and communication of children in these communities is paramount in order to break the poverty cycle and ensure social mobility. TOTT provides a solution to this need.
How does Talk of the Town work?

TOTT offers a systematic approach to supporting speech, language and communication in a small community, following key principles of practice and a systematic process.

TOTT is underpinned by the following key principles:

1. building on current practice
2. ensuring workforce development around speech, language and communication
3. embedding evidenced interventions and approaches
4. evaluating outcomes
5. local leadership owning and driving change
6. sharing universal good practice, targeted and specialist support

Alongside key principles, TOTT follows a systematic process to embed strategies and achieve measurable positive outcomes.
Testing it out - the Talk of the Town Pilot

TOTT was piloted as one of the three strategic programmes of *Hello*, the national year of communication across a small federation of schools (one high school and two primaries) in Wythenshawe, South Manchester.

An area with a history of high social deprivation, the leadership team were aware of the challenges many of their pupils faced as they entered school and continued their educational journey, and were keen to become “Communication Supportive” across the 3-16 provision.

As well as the three schools in the federation, intrinsic to the project were:

- Newall Green Primary School, who joined the project part way through
- the local NHS Speech and Language department
- the Specialist Schools Academies Trust (previously known as The Schools Network)
- numerous independent consultants, including experts in education and health
- the research department at Manchester University
- The Communication Trust and its Consortium members
- a range of other local and national agencies

Through consultation with key partners listed above, a shared vision was established calling for better outcomes for children, taking account of and building into daily practice the importance of speech, language and communication.

### The Talk of the Town vision: bespoke to Wythenshawe

1. A communication supportive federation.
2. Staff confident in supporting speech, language and communication in the classroom.
3. Staff confident in identifying pupils with SLCN.
4. “Catch up” programmes running for pupils with delayed language.
5. Interventions and strategies embedded across all stages at universal and targeted level.
6. Embedding speech, language and communication in day to day practice.
7. School led communication champions.
8. Working with parents, children's centres and other partners to support communication development across the community.
9. Senior leadership team building sustainability.
10. Long term planning and implementation plans for SLCN.
Baselines – analysing the need

Communities, schools and settings are not heterogeneous. Therefore a baseline analysis was vital to develop a bespoke TOTT approach for Wythenshawe.

There was excellent practice across the federation, but baseline measures indicated a high level of SLCN across the Federation. TOTT aimed to build on current good practice, enabling shifts of policy and practice to embed speech, language and communication into the curriculum and every day practice, in a sustainable way.

Through a range of qualitative and quantitative measures, alongside a social change model of evaluation, information was gathered around current practice and policy against each of the aims.

1. Qualitative analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Baseline analysis: A range of analytical methods evidenced the following</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Ensure early identification of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs.</td>
<td>Concern from school staff about children's communication skills mixed levels of confidence to identify and support SLCN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enable joint working across sectors, services and between practitioners and parents working with children.</td>
<td>Speech and language therapy support viewed as limited, delayed and over burdened lack of understanding of speech, language and communication from families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure positive outcomes for children and young people.</td>
<td>Few strategies implemented to directly support speech and language at universal, targeted and specialist levels. No overall strategy or systematic approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure a sustainable approach, so that policy and practice continues to support positive outcomes.</td>
<td>Dedicated commitment from the leadership team to support speech, language and communication in the long term.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Quantitative analysis

Quantitative data was also collected to identify the SLCN needs of the community across the following three elements:

- children’s language levels
- early identification of SLCN
- confidence of staff in identifying and supporting children’s speech, language and communication
2.1 **Children’s language levels**

**Nursery:**
Standardised language assessments were completed on all the children that entered the Primary Schools at nursery age (105 in total). The results were charted against the UK standard sample. The results were shocking:

Interpreting the graph:
- The average national score is 100 and scores falling between 85 and 115 demonstrate typical development.
- The average score for the children attending the primary schools was 82.1; which is below the normal range and a cause for concern.
- Nationally only 2.5% of children would be expected to score less than 70. Within the TOTT sample 26% fell in this range.

Overall:
- 26% of children across the nurseries had such poor speech, language and communication skills that in many areas they would qualify for a statement of SEN.
- In total over 50% would be deemed in need of extra support.
- Only 3 children out of 105 had above average speech, language and communication skills.
Do these children catch up?

Further sampling of around 130 children through Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 showed levels of language difficulties continued to be high.

Key stage 2

Children were assessed in their understanding of language, inference and vocabulary:
- Around half of the pupils assessed would need additional support to develop their language skills.
- Vocabulary scores were very poor; 46% had significant difficulties\textsuperscript{xv} and a total of 70% of the children were in need of support.
- The scores for inferential comprehension were spread very widely with a higher than expected percentage scoring both above normal (30%) and below normal (34%); an area schools had focused on in teaching and learning, reflecting good practice in this area.

Key stage 3\textsuperscript{xvi}

Children were assessed in both their understanding and their spoken language:
- The average score of pupils at the high school fell below the normal range in all areas.
- Based on language levels, more than half the pupils assessed would qualify for a statement of SEN.
- Whilst the majority of students (around 68%) would be expected to obtain scores within the normal range, less than a quarter of students fell in this category. In one subtest over two thirds fell in to the range below normal.
- Data from the school Cognitive Ability Tests (CAT) showed a 73% difference between children’s non-verbal and verbal scores, suggesting these children had particular difficulties with verbal aspects of the test, despite having good scores on non-verbal cognitive measures.\textsuperscript{xvii}

In conclusion:
Sampling across the federation, from 5 to 14 year olds showed real difficulties with a number of areas of language that would hamper learning, social success and attainment. These included:
- limited vocabulary
- difficulties constructing longer and complex sentences
- difficulties with grammar and narrative skills
- poor comprehension
- pupils who fell within the average range tended on the whole to be at the lower edge of average
2.2 Early identification

To check how well children were being identified, we sampled 130 children through Key stages 1, 2 and 3 using the following process.

Teachers were asked to “RAG rate” the students according to their language ability:

- **Red** – students with SLCN who needed specialist support.
- **Amber** - students with SLCN who were considered to be delayed and who needed a targeted intervention or extra support.
- **Green** – students whose language skills were considered to be within normal limits for their age who did not need any additional support.

Once RAG rating was completed, 3 x Green, 3 x Amber, 1 x Red were randomly selected in each year group across the primary and within each class in Year 8 at Newall Green High School.

These children were assessed on nationally standardised language assessments and comparisons made between the outcome of the assessments and the RAG rating.

**Outcomes of this analysis:**

- Despite highly committed staff to supporting speech, language and communication, this process uncovered systematic weakness in teachers’ ability to identify children and young people’s SLCN.
- Across the Federation these results suggest that there may be a significant number of students with SLCN that are not being identified; on average around 40% overall.

**Highest levels of under-identification:**

- older students
- students who had difficulties:
  - with vocabulary (45% not identified)
  - formulating sentences (52% not identified)
  - understanding (29% primary, 48% KS3 not identified)
  - nursery children (50% not identified)

On average, around 40% of children’s language needs were not being accurately identified, despite a very committed staff team.
Talk of the Town in practice: What we did

Based on the outcomes of the context analysis in relation to original aims and building on current practice, a wide range of strategies were put in place. Where possible strategies chosen were robustly evidenced or, where this was not possible, had a strong theoretical foundation. Strategies focused on:

- **Local leadership** leading and developing changes to policy and practice.
- **Workforce development** including training, coaching, modelling and supporting staff to achieve qualifications; building a staff team with Communication Champions at all levels.
- **Interventions** in the classroom, with targeted interventions where needed and working in collaboration with local services around specialist support.
- **Partnerships** with existing and new stakeholders.

A local **speech and language therapist** (SLT) was employed as part of the project which enabled provision of bespoke support and ensured joint working and sharing of expertise across the Federation. Working to an educational model of practice and via ongoing coaching and mentoring for staff, interventions were embedded at all levels across all phases.

Regular **steering and working group meetings** throughout the project ensured joined up leadership and implementation of the project aims, with careful and systematic monitoring of approaches. Colleagues from the **Manchester University research team** attended all meetings supporting both development and evaluation of the project.

A “**menu**” of options was presented to the steering and working groups, with federation staff making the final decision around choice of interventions, workforce development and partnerships most relevant to their children and setting.
The project impact

Success was measured by comparing outcome measures against the baseline data.\textsuperscript{xviii}

1. Early identification

Both qualitative and quantitative data collected showed success against the baseline.

The same process to gain quantitative data was undertaken gathering teacher RAG rating and testing against standardised assessments. The results can be seen in the below graph:

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{change-in-under-identification.png}
\caption{Change in levels of under-identification}
\end{figure}

In addition, quantitative data from staff completion of the competences audit (the speech, language and communication framework SLCF) showed positive results with staff more confident in identifying children with SLCN and a marked increase in the universal competence: “\textit{Be aware of what to look for to help identify children and young people in your workplace who may have SLCN}.”

This quantitative data was supported with qualitative data from a range of sources, with examples of positive changes in terms of early identification from early years through to sixth form:

- \textit{Small Talk}\textsuperscript{xix} booklets are now used as a basis for discussions with parents of children due to start school in September, enabling teachers to identify children at risk before they enter reception preparing for their individual needs.
- Joint working between schools and children’s centres focused on early identification and the importance of speech, language and communication
with positive outcomes for parents who now indicated they had greater engagement and understanding of their child’s communication.

- Communication Ambassadors™ project showed positive outcomes for parents in the early years with 99% of Communication Ambassadors reporting that they were confident in passing on information about children learning to talk, also indicating that the programme had an impact on their own children's language development.
- Progression tools have been developed and are now used to support schools identifying not only SLCN broadly, but the component elements of difficulties for pupils from 3-19, enabling monitoring of progress as well as identification.
- Policies and procedures have been embedded to enable identification and support of pupils across the federation.
- All schools have put in place strategies to enable ongoing early identification of pupils with SLCN.

“One of TOTT’s particularly striking impacts is in the shift seen over time of early identification in schools, to teachers leading this and incorporating it into school processes.” Ainscow et al, (2012)
2. Joint working
Changes in practice around joint working were evidenced to show both a widening of partners and a deeper understanding of speech, language and communication embedded into partnerships both new and old. The qualitative data represents positive changes in partnership working against the baseline.

Below are just some of the examples of joint working in practice:

**Early years:**
Joint working was widened in the early years, with projects such as Communication Ambassadors and links with children’s centres providing positive feedback from parents:

- The speech and language therapist (SLT) attended transition meetings with staff.
- Joint play and stay sessions were established between children’s centres, the SLT and Federation school nurseries.
- Sure start sessions for ‘hard to reach families’ were delivered with positive feedback from parents.
- The Communication Ambassadors project engaged 40 parents across the local community so they understood how to support children’s communication skills, acting as advocates amongst their networks and peers.

**Primary schools:**
There was evidence of close working across and between schools:

- Best practice was shared in the foundation stage to support engagement of parents.
- Links with local museums enabled a visit with a communication focus for children and their parents for the first time.
- The Manchester University team supported “coaching threes” to embed speech, language and communication and enhance already good practice through continued professional development.
- Inspired by Makaton training, schools are training their own staff as Makaton tutors.

**Secondary school:**

- Staff and pupils worked in partnership with The Communication Trust (TCT) developed “communication boards” in every classroom to support communication across the curriculum.
- Partnership with the SSAT enabled changes to school PLEATS approach, ensuring clear understanding for pupils and embedding vocabulary teaching.
Partnership with O2 and the Think Big project enabled a number of young people to develop and implement their own communication projects.

**Partnership with NHS speech and language department**

One of the most impactful partnerships was the relationship with the NHS secondment of a local speech and language therapist (SLT) to the project. The Communication Trust supported best practice of SLT support within the educational context alongside support to commission the therapist from the local NHS SLT department, enabling more successful ongoing liaison between the department and at grass roots with link therapists.

“A massive thing is the high-quality expertise the project has brought and the advantages of a speech therapist who is able to work with staff in a consultative / coaching role.”

*Primary head*

“The SLT is excellent with our parents, very gentle but very very persistent... she's in the playground gently reminding them what they need to be doing, making sure they follow up and they respond really well to her because they don’t feel threatened.”

*Primary co-ordinator*

Extremely positive outcomes were evidenced through the external evaluation:

“The successful implementation of the project was achieved as a result of strong leadership within the schools, combined with effective external support. The schools recognised the potential of collaborating with other professionals in order to strengthen children's Speech, Language and Communication.”

*Ainscow et al, (2012)*
3. Outcomes for children

Qualitative and quantitative data was collected, both in terms of evidencing positive outcomes for children's communication development, and in evidencing positive outcomes for staff in relation to their current practice in supporting speech, language and communication and SLCN. In both respects, data has shown success against baseline measures.

3.1 Workforce development

There was a strong focus on building knowledge, expertise and confidence in the staff team across the whole federation through a range of evidence based strategies, facilitating changes in practice.

“Over a relatively short period, TOTT stimulated a considerable amount of activity in all schools....The Trust staff training and workforce development, as one teacher reflects, ‘introduced something useable, staff then had a chance to discuss and unpick it. It was practical, quick and they can see the immediate use’. Formal training delivered by communication specialists was important. They were seen as a way to develop awareness and understandings of SLC issues across all staff, not just those directly engaged in leading TOTT in their school. Overall TOTT led to significant changes in the thinking and practices of practitioners.”

Ainscow et al, (2012)

Alongside the qualitative evaluation, data was collected via the SLCF, which showed a significant shift in confidence, skills and knowledge.

There was an increase on average of 16% of staff in each school who now state they “feel very confident with providing positive strategies to support the speech, language and communication development of children and young people.”

In addition, 26 learners are on course to complete the Level 3 Qualification in speech, language and communication by March 2013 building up expertise across the federation and developing a core of champions for communication that will remain with the federation.

3.2 Speech and language therapy

The seconded SLT supported the project and feedback in relation to this provision was incredibly positive as outlined above. The SLT supported the CPD of staff across the Federation, modeling good practice and supporting the implementation of interventions. Qualitative data showed the vital importance of the SLT provision;

“Having an SLT in school was widely regarded as invaluable, allowing the schools to have, as one primary school teacher put it, ‘specialist knowledge on tap’, while another explained the benefits as ‘teachers can ask questions and she can model approaches.”

Ainscow et al, (2012)
These sentiments were reinforced by one of the primary head teachers who reflected: “A massive thing is the high-quality expertise the project has brought and the advantages of a speech therapist who is able to work with staff in a consultative coaching role.”

The impact felt by staff and leadership was so great that they have now jointly commissioned a Band 6 SLT for the next 3 years.

3.3 Improved speech, language and communication skills
A wide range of strategies were put in place across the Federation including the early years. Strategies focused on either universal practice or targeted interventions delivered by school staff. Strategies aimed to facilitate changes in behaviour and practice in the classroom and support shifts in school policy with the aim of sustainability.

Both qualitative and quantitative data showed very positive outcomes for children against original baselines.

Nursery aged children:
Children’s language was reassessed using the same measures as those taken in the baseline. Results showed positive results for children across the board. In the nursery, both understanding of language and expressive language showed positive movements towards the national average.

The graph below shows a combination of outcomes across both nursery schools:

Interpreting the graphs:
- Performance improved in all areas at both schools.
- The average score for auditory comprehension increased from 82 in 2011 to 88.5 in 2012.
- The average score for expressive communication increased from 83.9 in 2011 to 91.8 in 2012.
- The average Total Language score increased from 82.1 in 2011 to 89.4 in 2012.
However, there were differences between the way in which the nurseries implemented the strategies, with one starting earlier and being much more consistent in their approaches:

- The children in this nursery made much more progress than the other with the overall group showing results much closer to the national average.
- This suggests that a more consistent approach results in better outcomes for children.

The below graph evidences the impact the focused approach had on children’s speech, language and communication:

![Baguley Total Language comparison of 2011 and 2012 and UK standard sample](image)

**Primary age children:**
Primary age children were exposed to universal and targeted interventions delivered by school staff.

Pre and post data was collected on a targeted intervention *Talk Boost* that was carried out in reception and Key Stage 1. Results from assessments were positive showing an average improvement of approximately 12–14 months after the 10 week intervention.

![Pre and post test scores](image)
Key stage 2

Again Key stage 2 pupils were exposed to universal and targeted interventions delivered by school staff. Improvements could be seen in language levels across all measures. Average scores for each element of language assessed (sentence comprehension, inferential comprehension and naming) now fell into expected national levels.

The table below shows real improvement:

- For two of the subtests no pupils scored in the lowest bracket.
- In all tests there was an increase in the number of pupils scoring in the UK average and above average range.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACE assessment</th>
<th>significant difficulties</th>
<th>delayed</th>
<th>average</th>
<th>above average</th>
<th>significant abilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Comprehension Score</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferential Comprehension Score</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naming Score</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Stage 3

Pupils also made good progress across Key Stage 3, with average scores in two of the subtests (formulating sentences and spoken paragraphs) now falling into expected national levels, though one area (recalling sentences) showing less change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>significant difficulties</th>
<th>delayed</th>
<th>average</th>
<th>above average</th>
<th>significant abilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formulated Sentences Scaled Score</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding spoken Paragraphs Scaled Score</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recalling Sentences Scaled Score</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative data:

In addition to the formalised assessments above, many individual interventions were implemented across the federation, with pre and post measures of impact collated. Staff feedback was also gathered on tangible impact that was evidence through their day to day interaction with children and young people.
Staff feedback was very positive. For instance “Talk Boxes” were implemented in each primary school classroom with supporting training for staff on how to use the resources contained within them. One member of staff commented:

“The general feedback on the talk boxes is brilliant and staff are feeling that the improved ‘talk’ is already being seen in improved writing.’ They have been so well received because ‘they link to what we had already been doing but they give staff a useful way of approaching things’.”

The external research team summarised their findings. Interventions were credited with a wide range of positive outcomes, including increases in:

- The volume of talk
- Children’s ability to initiate talk
- Children’s confidence to speak
- Their vocabulary

“...a considerable strength of the TOTT approach is that it has built on existing good practice, showing how, with just a subtle change in focus, SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION can be made central to a school’s practices, and owned and driven by schools themselves.”

“Overall TOTT led to significant changes in the thinking and practices of practitioners.”

Ainscow et al, (2012)
**Sustainability**
Sustainability was built into the programme from the beginning, with senior leaders completing a sustainability plan for each of their schools and agreeing to place communication at the heart of their work in the longer term. From the outset TOTT aimed to complement existing good practice and enhance current structures and process. In doing so the model is sustainable.

Most encouragingly, schools’ sustainability planning has shown shifts in school policy with a commitment to:

- Support early identification, including using the tools provided by the project and an investigation of current data.
- Embed early identification strategies and training into school policy and planning.
- Integrate on-going work into existing systems for target setting, planning, and review.
- Build on staff CPD and good practice; for instance staff are taking part in ‘learning walks’ around the school, using the audit tool developed by the project to explore the environment and inform action.
- Embed a range of strategies and interventions run across the pilot year.
- Ensure speech, language and communication is ‘non negotiable’ for the schools.
- Continue the working and steering groups with one of the head teachers taking on the role of chairing the working group, ensuring a close connection between TOTT’s operational and strategic levels.
- Continue leadership across the schools with teaching and learning responsibility for speech and language being given to senior staff members.
- Focus on speech and language in the high school teaching and learning community group.
- Employ their own speech and language therapist.
- Commission The Communication Trust to do follow up work in spring of next year.

“Those who were closely involved in the project were optimistic about TOTT’s on-going reinforcement and development and had put in place some practical mechanisms to support this.” Ainscow et al, (2012)
Lessons learned

Many lessons have been learnt throughout the pilot. Below is a list of the challenges faced during the pilot, followed by strategies and recommendations to shape the model moving forward.

Challenges faced:

- Different levels of commitment from staff to the programme.
- Difficulties in sharing sensitive data and information with partners, including parents.
- Few interventions put in place to support children moving from one setting to another, through transition stages.
- Tight deadlines resulting in planning and delivery taking place simultaneously and a sense of implementing too many interventions to closely together.
- Tight budget preventing extension of the project into early years and transition stages, as well as limited time to develop relationships with wider partners, especially parents.
- Challenges working across the NHS during the process of seconding the SLT—mainly around managerial support and contract processes.
- Inconsistent communication across partners.

Suggested strategies:

- **Staff awareness:** The baseline measurements proved to be the ‘light bulb’ moment for staff across the Federation. This made it clear that a robust analysis over a longer period of time would be beneficial to ensure ‘buy in’ from staff, alongside clear guidelines and time to feedback results to staff and parents.
- **Planning and Development:** Longer planning time and a phased approach to programme interventions ensuring:
  - A clearer guide around the tactics to engage parents embedded across the programme, with impact measurement functions.
  - A model of working in partnership with local SLT services.
  - A commissioning guideline for schools.
  - A clearer process of timely delivery of the range of interventions, ensuring a more systematic and graduated programme.
  - Processes and tactics to ensure sign up from all members of leadership.
  - Momentum is kept across the programme via a graduated model, ensuring less pressure points for staff.
- **Communications:** A segmentation analysis of the different audiences and an integrated communication plan for all stages, with a named communication lead.
- **Evidenced based resources:** Through research it became apparent that there are limited evidenced based models of intervention for SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION across all ages. An analysis of how TOTT can meet this need will be addressed to ensure there is effective provision at every wave.
Next steps:
The TOTT team is working to develop the model to meet demand from other settings. In order to initiate further developments The Communication Trust is:

- Analysing and actioning key learning’s to shape plans for TOTT moving forward.
- Developing proposals to deliver TOTT in 4 other areas of social deprivation, piloting a 3 year programme of work.
- Completing an environmental analysis on the appetite and market readiness for the programme.
- Developing other elements of the approach such as a communication leaders project for young people in the high school.
- Testing and piloting resources developed through the project for further use.
- Working with an advisory panel to support the development of the approach and future viability.
Conclusion

Although at a very early stage regarding long term impact, the outcomes of the project have been extremely positive. As the independent review team report:

“The evidence presented in our report provides strong indications that TOTT is a powerful approach for improving speech, language and communication amongst children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This in turn offers encouraging possibilities for improving educational outcomes more generally and, in the longer term, the life chances of young people.” Ainscow et al, (2012)

More specifically this report indicates that in the participating schools:

- TOTT stimulated considerable activity aimed at improving learners’ speech, language and communication skills.
- These activities led to significant changes in the thinking and practice of practitioners.
- Whilst TOTT’s short timescale made it difficult to measure the full extent of the project’s impact on children and young people, the evidence so far is encouraging.
- TOTT’s successful implementation was achieved as a result of strong leadership within the schools, combined with effective external support.

TOTT supports settings to change their practice, complementing and building on existing processes and leadership. As described by one teacher, it provides ‘a filter of communication’, developing and inspiring new ways of working.

The following direct feedback from staff and partners across the programme indicates that the TOTT framework allowed for individuals and settings to embed speech, language and communication into all elements of the community, from practice to leadership.

‘It’s raising awareness about what teachers already do. It’s enhancing what we’re doing all the time. It makes it an explicit focus which allows us to really unpick it.’ Senior leader

‘We’re learning how to tweak our daily practice’. Teacher

As Neil Wilson, Executive Head of the SMILE Trust and Manchester Federation of Schools reflects: “To me the work we are doing is life changing. I know that to change a community takes a decade. The speech, language and communication aspect is the holy grail of transforming our community. We need to produce upwardly mobile people. The work we are doing is truly wonderful. I am so glad I discovered your organisation.”


xi Dockrell, J., Bakopoulou, I., Law, J., Spencer, S., Lindsay, G., (2012) Better Communication Research Programme, Developing a communication supporting classrooms observation tool

xii The national year of communication 2011 delivered by The Communication Trust in partnership with Jean Gross, the government appointed Communication Champion


xv More than 2 standard deviations below the mean


xvii For more information on CAT tests, see http://www.satsguide.co.uk/help_other_exams_and_subjects/cats_cognitive_abilities_tests.htm

xviii Friedman, M (2005) Trying Hard is Not Good Enough: How to Produce Measurable Improvements for Customers and Communities. Trafford on Demand Pub www.resultsaccountability.com

xix The Communication Trust, Small Talk, available at www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/resources/resources/resources-for-parents/small-talk.aspx

xx I CAN’s, Communication ambassadors project, for more information see www.ican.org.uk/communicationambassadors