Working with Mainstream Primary School Staff to Support Pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

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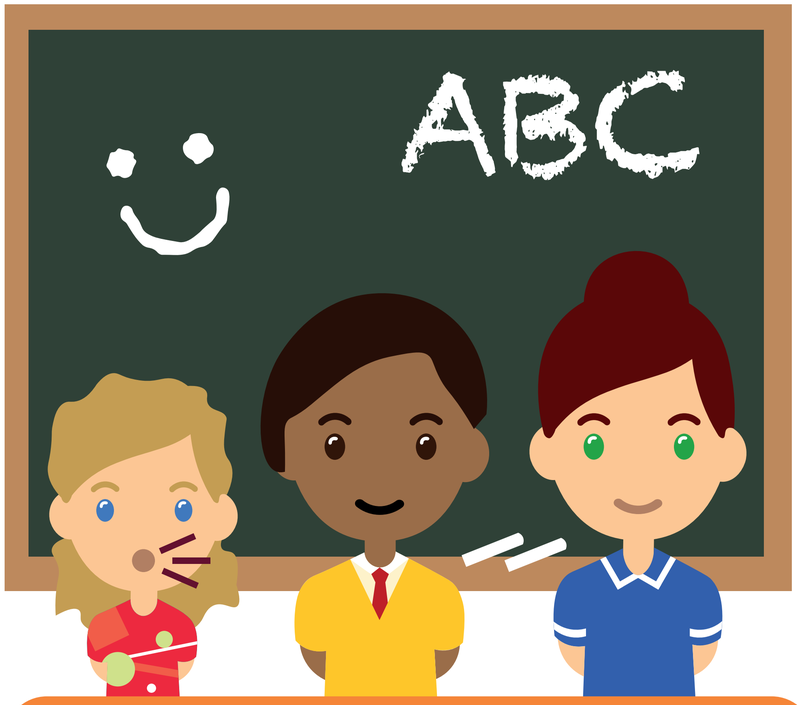


Introduction

I lead a team of 2.1 WTE Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) working in Trafford Mainstream Primary Schools supporting children with a wide range of SLCN (Speech, Language and Communication Needs). We aim to skill up parents/carers and school staff to manage the needs of the children.

There are 66 state funded primary schools in Trafford with 23033 pupils on roll (2020/21 census). Norbury[1] (2016) indicates over 7% of children have Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) therefore 1612.31 children in Trafford primary schools are likely to have DLD, rising to 10% or 2303.3 children when other SLCN are included.

This service transformation began in 2017 to establish universal, targeted, specialist and intensive care pathways (Ebbels[2] 2019), and upskill school staff and parents/carers to manage mild-moderate, SLCN enabling my team to focus on children with more severe SLCN.

Aims

- To skill up the wider workforce.
- To establish pre-referral, school-led targeted intervention.
- To increase the appropriacy of referrals.

References

1. Norbury et al. The impact of nonverbal ability on prevalence and clinical presentation of language disorder: evidence from a population study. The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry 2016;57:1247-1257.

2. Ebbels et al. Evidence-based pathways to intervention for children with language disorders. International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders. 2019;54: 3-19

Methods

The team reviewed case notes and allocated children to a pathway.

We recommended intervention packages based on the area of need and launched 12 face-to-face training packages for school staff. In 2020, we put this training online – it has grown to an offer of 28 training packages.

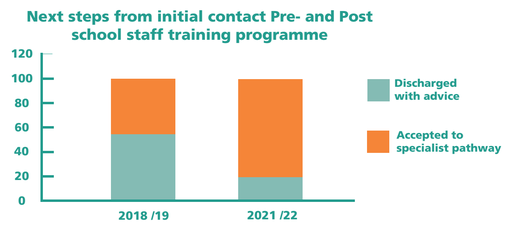
We reviewed and trialled language screening tools for school staff to use. We secured funding to purchase the WellComm Primary screening tool, and the roll out of this in Trafford started in March 2021.

Primary schools use the Primary WellComm to identify SLCN, choose which of our intervention packages to use, to measure progress and to decide when to refer.

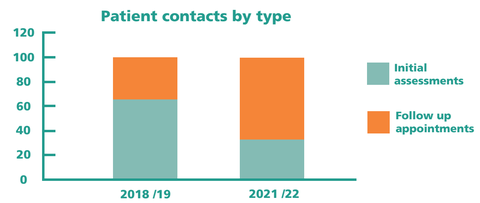
There is an expectation that schools carry out pre-referral intervention using these tools.

Results

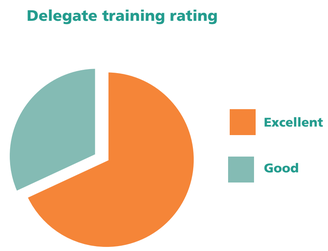
Children referred to the School Support Service have more significant needs and overall referrals have reduced:



The reduction in referrals has increased capacity for follow up appointments:



We have received positive feedback about our training offer:



65% of delegates stated their confidence with delivering the intervention improved 'a lot ' following our training.

Feedback from Schools

'I think your videos and training sessions with resources are incredibly helpful and really do make a difference in supporting children's speech and language. I intend to use these more next year with our staff and parents/carers to continue to up-skill our staff and hopefully parents/carers too'

'We have found that the SALT programmes have enhanced our SLCN provision across the school. TAs are able to run these programmes throughout the week for those children with identified targets or for those children we feel need additional support as part of our graduated approach'

'Wait times have been significantly reduced'

'Collaboration between education and health continues to be difficult to achieve in other service areas but I feel the SALT service manages this very well'

Conclusion and Next Steps

- We continue to build our online training offer.
- Our referrals and therefore wait times are reduced.
- The workforce in schools have increased knowledge and tools to manage SLCN.
- In the future, we would like to expand the coaching offer to school staff and work more intensively with the pupils with more severe needs. This is made possible by the wider workforce meeting the needs of children with less severe SLCN.