

Elklan Speech and Language Support for Under 5's Course Evaluation

July 2008

The course Elklan Speech and Language Support for Under Fives took place between November 2007 and February 2008 at Strabane SureStart.

It was facilitated by Breege Gormley from Strabane SureStart. This Therapist has been trained by Elklan and is certified to facilitate this programme.

This is an intensive ten week course aimed at staff who work with children under five. In the SureStart setting it is particularly suitable for nursery teachers/leaders and teaching assistants. Twelve staff completed this course. A combination of teachers and assistants attended from each setting.

School	Number of staff
BeechesPlaygroup(StrabaneSureStart)	3
Artigarvan Nursery	2
Cloughcor Nursery	3
St Mary's Nursery/ Primary One	4

The following information provides a brief summary of the course and staff opinions of it.

What is the Elklan S&L Support Course?

This course provides information to help promote the communication skills of pre-school children.

Participants on the course are also eligible to gain Open College Network(OCN) accreditation at level two and three but this optional.

The aims of the course are:

- To share information about normal speech and language development.
- To discuss ideas to help children learn to listen , understand and talk.
- To understand more about the communication difficulties that some children can experience.

The core topics covered in the course are:

- What is communication?

- Adult – child interaction and non verbal communication
- Listening attention and play skills.
- Understanding first words and using visual strategies
- Understanding beyond simple sentences
- Modifying adult’s speech to help a child understand
- Encouraging expressive language development
- Promoting effective communication and social skills
- Supporting children with unclear speech
- Management of Stammering and other issues raised during the course.

Programme Requirements

To receive their certificates staff were required to:

- Attend a minimum of eight sessions
- Submit weekly homeworks.
- If staff wished to apply for OCN accreditation they were required to complete additional weekly tasks to compile a portfolio.

How the course was evaluated?

Staff were asked to complete weekly evaluations and a general evaluation form at the end. Staff were required to return all of these at the end of the course. Eleven staff returned their final evaluation forms.

The grid attached provides a summary of comments received from the final evaluation.

Summary and recommendations.

This course was very successful. The staff handbooks books and OCN fees were funded by the schools participating. In general individual schools/groups decide how they wish to fund this course.

Training for staff in educational settings is very important. The Bercow review(2008) suggested that ‘the whole of the children’s workforce needs to have the skills and knowledge to understand the importance and support the development of SLC(speech language and communication) in all children.’

This course provides early childhood educators with very practical information which will help them support the communication skills of all children in their class. It will also help them to identify children in their class who may benefit from speech and language therapy and also how they can access this service. For children already attending S< the course provides staff with a shared knowledge of a variety of SLT topics

which then helps with liason with the local therapist. The SureStart SLT does not provide S< but informs the local Health Trust which schools have accessed training.

Due to the success of this course the SLT plans to offer this course to further schools in the 2008/09 school year.

Breege Gormley
Speech and Language Therapist
Strabane SureStart

Appendix

Final Evaluation

Twelve staff completed the course and eleven final evaluations were returned.

The grid below displays a sample of comments received.

Question	Sample of comments
What is your overall impression of the course?	" ...the main difficulty we as adults have is understanding some of the children's language. This course provided useful strategies and activities to help me support the children with language problems in setting." "so useful in everyday work situations , which is what I had hoped for" The course content is excellent. Teaching methods appeal to all kinds of learners"
Which aspects did you like?	The majority of staff commented on the benefit of group discussions and how they learned from sharing ideas with other pre-school staff. " I enjoyed group activities , hands on to exchange information and ideas with fellow students" "The book is practical and very relevant"
Which aspects did you dislike or find irrelevant?	Only 4/11 staff made comments in this area. These comments related to the fact that the course was very detailed "I found the course content very relevant....but I had too much to take in over quite a short period" " A lot of written work involved(re portfolio)" 2 staff didn't like having to do the presentation" I found it daunting"
Could you recommend any changes?	3/11 staff would prefer the course to be extended to allow more time to complete tasks and gain a greater understanding of topics. " perhaps if a longer time were given to study the more formative sessions" 2/11 staff would like more practical activities in the sessions.