

## Speech and Language Therapy Evaluation

### **'Elklan – Let's Talk with Under 5's' –Mansfield Woodhouse and Titchfield and Oakham Children's Centres Mansfield District – Oct – Nov 2013**

This work relates to the Speech and Language Therapy Services commissioned outcome of "Improved Parental Confidence and Effectiveness"

#### **Aims**

The aim of this course is to provide training for targeted parents and volunteers to further their knowledge around language development. Elklan provides OCN accredited courses for parents and practitioners. The 'Let's Talk with Under 5's' course is accredited at OCN Level 1. It gives theoretical information on language development, as well as practical ideas for parents to try at home with their children. The Community Involvement Workers in Titchfield and Oakham, and Mansfield Woodhouse Children's centres identified parents/carers who they thought would benefit from the programme. Some of the parents had children who were known to the Speech and Language Therapy department or who were on the Home Talk programme. Volunteers at the Children's Centre were also invited so the learning could have a positive impact on their work in the centre as well as with their own children.

#### **Input**

2 courses were carried out:

Titchfield and Oakham Children's Centre – 11 participants

Mansfield Woodhouse Children's Centre – 9 participants

For each course there were 7 training sessions, each lasting 2 hours. The learner had to complete a workbook in order to achieve the accreditation. The course was carried out by the Children's Centre Speech and Language Therapist.

Time involved for the SLT, per course, was 14 hours teaching time, and additional preparation time for the sessions. In addition for this the SLT spent approximately a further 12 hours marking the workbooks and meeting individually with participants who needed extra support to complete their booklets to the Level 1 standard.

The costs for the course were as follows:

Elklan Let's Talk Tutor Pack (£100). This had been purchased for a previous course so was not needed for this course.

Learner Workbooks - £15 each

OCN accreditation - £30 each

Total for Titchfield and Oakham (11 learners) £495

Total for Mansfield Woodhouse (9 learners) £405

These costs were met by Notts CC ACLS (Adult and Community Learning Service). In addition the Children's Centre also received funding from ACLS to cover the costs of providing a crèche, and other costs such as refreshments, postage etc.

Any registered Speech and Language Therapist can become an Etklan accredited tutor. This entails attending a 2 day training course at a cost of £425. This money was not necessary to run the course as the centre SLT was already an Etklan Tutor.

### **Impact for Titchfield and Oakham Children's Centre**

11 participants started the course. 9 of the participants completed the workbook. 1 dropped out after 3 sessions. She engaged well in the first 3 sessions but then we were unable to contact her further. Other services are involved with the family.

Another parent completed the course, but even with support, her learning needs meant that she struggled to complete the portfolio. However for this parent the 'Let's Talk' course had a really positive effect. On another parenting course that she is now attending she has referred to her own 'learning disabilities' and said that when she had her son she was given lessons on basic baby care, but nobody had told her how to play. Since the 'Let's Talk' course she has come to the Children's Centre asking for ideas on how to play. She has also talked about the fact that she had started to look at books with her son. She did not do this before the course as she thought that she would have to read the words, which she struggled to do. The tutor of the course that she is currently on feels that her self esteem has grown significantly since trying some of the ideas suggested on the Let's Talk course. For this parent, therefore, despite not reaching the level for the accreditation there has been a significant impact on her play and interaction with her son.

For the 9 participants who completed the course, some of the impact is below.

On the second week the learners looked at how their interaction with their children could affect their child's language development. They identified good interaction strategies from a video and were asked to pick one of the strategies to practice at home with their child.

Out of the 10 possible strategies all the parents picked one of 3 strategies:

Ask only a few questions – 4 parents

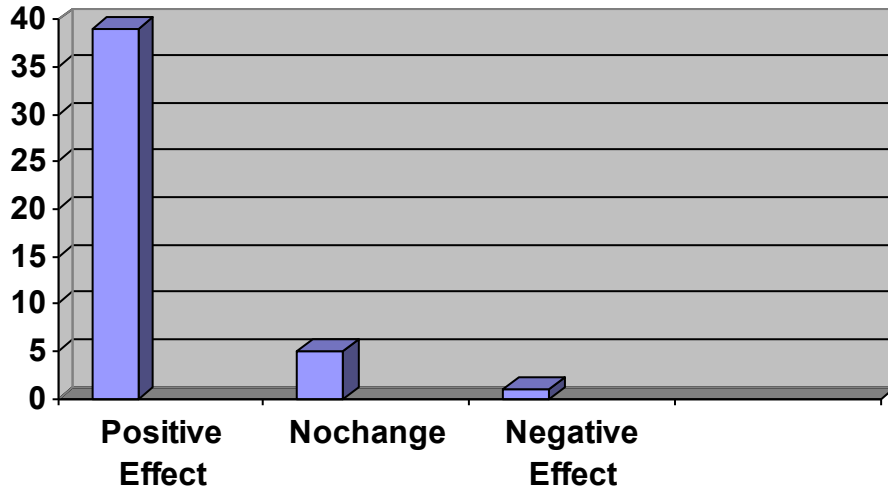
Wait for my child to talk – 4 parents

Talk about what my child is doing -2 parents

(1 parent picked 2 targets)

Parents were asked to record 5 times during the week how this had affected their interactions with their children.

The parents gave their responses as to what had happened in the interactions as follows. Out of the 45 interactions reported, 35 showed a positive effect and only 1 negative.



The 39 positive effects participants reported came mainly into the following categories:

- The child leading the play more
- The child using more imagination
- The child being more vocal and making more sounds and noises
- The child talked more about what they were doing
- The child asked the parents questions
- The child talked more during play
- The child copied and repeated the adult

Some of the responses from the parents are below:

*“He read out the whole story all by himself and tried to act it out. Usually I do all the acting but it was different.”*

*“With each day he got less frustrated with me not butting in and he grew more confident”*

*“She used her imagination a lot more and told me what she wanted me to do”*

The ‘no change’ and ‘negative effect’ were what happened the first time some parents used the strategy and then they found more positive results as they kept going with it. As one participant commented:

*“The 10 second rule helps, but is very hard at first until you get used to it”*

At the end of the course all the participants were asked what the most useful thing that they had learnt in the course. All of the parents picked one of the things from this session regarding their own interaction. This is very important

as it shows that the parents are aware that ultimately it is their interaction that can make the biggest difference in developing their child's language.

Another session looked at supporting a child's understanding of language. A number of the parents felt that their child did not listen to them. The session helps give the participants strategies to encourage their child to listen; as well as looking at the question of whether the child actually understands what is being said.

Again the participants had to choose from a list of strategies and practice with their child at home. Participants selected a wide range of strategies including:

- Use short simple sentences
- Get his attention by stopping what he is doing first
- Point to what you are talking about.
- Remove distractions so that he can concentrate on what you are saying.

This session promoted much discussion and one participant in particular commented that getting her child's attention before talking to him had made a huge difference in his listening and she didn't feel all the time that she had to shout to make him listen to her. Some of the parent's comments are below:

*"She chose a book and went and sat down next to me. She was engrossed in the book. Normally there is a form of distraction in the room and she doesn't want to sit down and wanders off but not his time".*

*"She pays more attention to me when I am speaking now. It is easier to get her attention and hold it for longer."*

*"Normally I would lead the play. Now I look, listen and respond, pause between his sentences and this way I got more out of him."*

During the final session the participants were asked to evaluate the course. One participant said that, as a grandparent, she had found the course really interesting but would only recommend it to other grandparents who saw their grandchildren everyday. She had struggled to fill in the workbook as she only saw her grandchild once a week. Some of the other comments follow:

*"I've learnt the only way for children to learn is through play and having fun. I've also learned not to push my child to learn, he'll do it in his own time, just to practice and model.....Going on this was the best thing ever"*

*"I have found the course really useful. I am now having more structured play with X, we are also chatting about everyday things much more. I found modelling works well for both my children. The course is great"*

*"The course is very good and informative, it has really helped me and given me more confidence in helping my daughter to learn to talk"*

At the start of the course the participants filled in a chart which shows the stages of language development between the ages of 0-5. They were asked to shade in what their child was currently doing, and highlight an area that they would like to target during the course. At the end of the course the participants were asked if they were still concerned about their targeted skill. 6 parents said that they were no longer concerned and that their child had now achieved that skill. Of the 3 who said that they were still concerned they all were able to give strategies that they had learned from the course of how they were going to continue to work with their child to achieve that skill.

It is expected that all 9 of the participants who completed their workbooks will achieve the level 1 accreditation, although this has not yet been confirmed by the awarding body.

### **Impact for Mansfield Woodhouse Children's Centre**

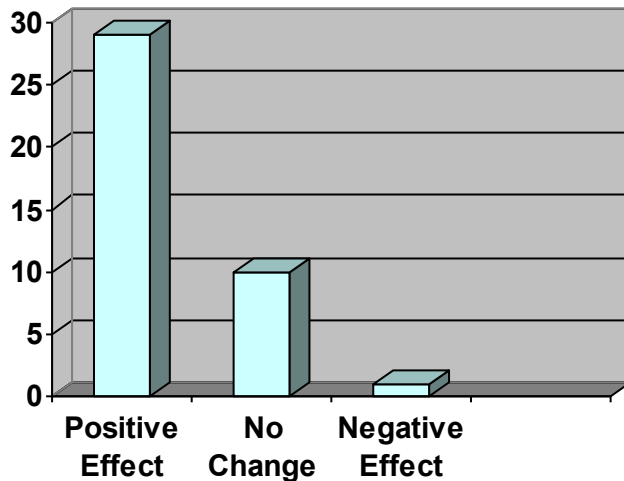
8 participants started and completed the course and some of the impact is below.

On the second week the learners looked at how their interaction with their children could affect their child's language development. They identified good interaction strategies from a video and were asked to pick one of the strategies to practice at home with their child. Out of the 10 strategies all the participants chose one of the following 4.

- Wait for your child to talk
- Let your child chose the toy or activity
- Use short simple sentences
- Talk about what they're doing

Parents were asked to record 5 times during the week how this had affected their interactions with their children.

The parents gave their responses as to what had happened in the interactions as follows. Out of the 40 interactions reported, 29 showed a positive effect having implemented the strategy, and only 1 negative.



10 responses said that there had been no change after the strategy was implemented. 5 of these were from one participant who commented that there was no change because she was currently carrying out all of the strategies all of the time already with her child. This participant was encouraged to video herself interacting with her child to reflect further on her interaction with her child and look for any areas of improvement.

The positive responses could be split into key themes:

- The child using more words
- The child asking more questions
- The child using more imagination
- The child talked more about what they were playing with
- The child played with the activity for a longer period of time.

Some of the parents' comments were as follows:

*"He pointed to objects and tried to tell me what they were"*

*"I was aware of keeping quiet and giving her more time to talk"*

*"She told me what the picture was in her own time rather than me asking"*

*"She told me about the picture instead of me asking her"*

5 out of the 8 parents referred to this session when asked at the end of the course what had been the most useful thing that they had learnt.

Another session looked at supporting a child's understanding of language. A number of the parent's felt that their child did not listen to them. The session helps give the participant's strategies to encourage their child to listen; as well as looking at the question of whether the child actually understands what is being said.

Again the participants had to choose from a list of strategies and practice with their child at home. Participants selected a wide range of strategies including:

- Leave long pauses between instruction
- Don't ask too complicated sentences
- Use short simple sentences
- Use body language to point to what you're talking about
- Turn off background noise

The participants noticed that using these strategies did have a significant impact on their child's ability to listen to and understand. Some of the comments are below:

*"Seemed more concentrated more on his activities and started trying to speak more"*

*"My child seemed happy that they knew what to do and how to do it. She did not become confused"*

*"As soon as all the background noise was off she was able to concentrate and was interested in playing the game"*

At the end of the course all the participants were asked to evaluate the course and say what the most useful thing that they had learned was. All of the responses were positive and some are below:

*"I learnt that spending time playing with my children is extremely important in developing speech and language"*

*"I have learnt to give my child more time to respond, never tell them they're wrong and take an interest in what they are doing"*

*"I have found the course really useful and have changed the way I speak to my children, listen more and make them take the lead"*

At the start of the course the participants filled in a chart which shows the stages of language development between the ages of 0-5. They were asked to shade in what their child was currently doing, and highlight an area that they would like to target during the course. At the end of the course the participants were asked if they were still concerned about their targeted skill. 7 out of 8 of the parents said that their child had now achieved the skill that they had identified at the start of the course.

At the time of writing it is anticipated that all 8 of the participants who attended the MWH course will achieve the Level 1 accreditation although this has not yet been confirmed by the awarding body.

### Summary

Let's Talk was extremely well received by all the participants. As well as the vast majority being on track to attain the accreditation, the activities that were carried out at home proved to be extremely valuable and lead to lots of discussion within the group. Some members of the groups commented that just being on the course meant that they had to spend time with their child every day to practice the activities. Some said that this was time that they would not normally have spent with their child, and they realized how valuable it was.

If more members of the SLT team were Etklan trained then this course could be available to more parents. It would be interesting to see how it links with Home Talk, and if some parents would benefit from taking this course while receiving the practical support of the Home Talk package.

**Jane Marr-Speech and Language Therapist  
31.01.14**