

Every Child a Talker: Guidance for Consultants

Foreword

Michael Rosen – Children's Laureate

It may seem an obvious thing to say, but one of the best things we can do with young children is to have interesting and enjoyable conversations with them. What this means is that as we go about our activities whether at home or at nursery, playgroups, playgrounds, the childminding situation, or out and about, we should make a special effort to answer children's questions, point out things that interest us, involve children in helping and planning what to do next, whether that's putting out things to play, tidying up, where to visit or whatever. When we read a book with children, make a special effort to read slowly, with lots of fun and expression. Don't worry about stopping if the children ask you questions. Encourage them to join in with the sounds and rhythms of the story.

We should also think carefully about how we speak to children - do we spend too much of the day issuing commands, do this, do that? Do we ever say things that make children seem small by telling them that they're slow or not good enough? We all need to think how we can keep being positive, encouraging them as they try to say things.

And we can find ways of showing them how the things they say can end up as writing, by writing what they say and displaying it. When we do this, this has to include everyone. No one can be missed out.

All this is crucial for how young children develop their powers of thinking and understanding. At the same time, it's how they get to feel good about themselves. The two things are intertwined - feeling good about yourself, feeling confident enough to develop your thinking and understanding.

I wholeheartedly support Every Child a Talker, and I 'm sure it'll help all of us working with young children to focus on what will help every single child develop.

Michael Rosen

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An Overview

Every Child a Talker (ECAT) is designed to improve the skills and expertise of the early years workforce in early language. It will increase practitioners' knowledge and understanding of early language development and support best practice, leading to improvements in children's language acquisition. It will raise the understanding and expertise of early years practitioners across the whole setting and equip them with the (different) skills and knowledge needed to work with both children and with parents. As well as creating an enriched language environment within settings, the programme will increase the involvement of parents in their children's learning and will help to develop stronger home learning environments.

ECAT aims to

- raise children's achievement in early language so that, against a baseline of 2008 Early Years Foundation Stage Profile* (EYFSP) data, the proportion of children aged 5 achieving 6 or more scale points in Language for Communication and Thinking improves in Local Authorities (LAs) by 2010.

The outcomes will be

- improved early language development, initially for children in targeted settings, but eventually across the whole LA
- established early Language Lead Practitioners in 20 targeted providers providing expertise and support to other practitioners in their own and linked settings, and to parents to develop their skills in the development of early language
- increased practitioner knowledge and understanding of children's early language development and how to support it
- increased parental understanding of and involvement in their children's language development

N.B. all * points are explained in more detail in Appendix 1 Additional Information

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Why is a focused programme such as this necessary?

Good early language development is a key factor for a child's future success both academically and socially. Although there are many good programmes and materials already in existence, the 2007 FSP results show that over half of all children are still not achieving a good level of development in the communication and language skills.

In 2006 an ICAN Talk paper- 'The Cost to the Nation of Children's Poor Communication' reviewed some current research and noted that

- up to 10% of all children have a long term persistent communication difficulty
- upwards of 50% of children on school entry have more transient difficulties and with the right support are likely to catch up(in Stoke on Trent a city wide survey of language skills at school entry showed this to be as high as 84% in some areas)

Research and other evidence tells us that some children, particularly those from low income and disadvantaged homes, do not experience the rich, well planned communication and language provision in their settings that is necessary to support their development. These children also have fewer opportunities to talk with their parents than children from well-educated middle-class homes, and are already behind their more affluent peers in their acquisition of vocabulary by the age of three (Hart and Risley, 1995).

Children who have limited language experience may also choose to spend relatively little time at pre-school engaging in conversation. Dickinson and Tabors (2001) audiotaped four-year-olds, and found that of their free-play activity time:

- 17% was spent in meaningful conversation with the teacher
- 18% was spent in meaningful conversation with peers
- 59% was spent not talking at all.

Following a review of current evidence, Dockrell, Stuart and King (2004) suggested that, on the whole, pre-school settings are not sensitive language learning environments. Practitioners dominate the conversations in settings and the language that they use has been criticised as being overly directive and unresponsive. In many settings there are children who choose not to and are not required to participate in the kinds of play activities which offer the most opportunities for language development.

Parents' interactions with their children in the early years obviously play a major role in the development of speech, language and communication skills. Research, e.g. Biemiller (2003), tells us that, particularly before the age of seven, children's vocabulary growth is largely determined by parental practices. Children mainly use

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the words that parents and other adults use with them in their conversations. Every Child a Talker targeted settings will be supported to work more closely with parents to ensure that they are aware of the important role that they play in the development of their children's language.

Reviews undertaken by the Department For Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) have found that practitioners working in early years settings need to take a more focused and pedagogical approach to supporting children's early speaking and listening skills. Every Child a Talker aims to respond to these findings. It provides resources, materials and guidance to support practitioners to establish a good basic understanding of how children develop language skills and sign posts them to existing, high quality programmes and materials so that they can continue to build on their knowledge and expertise.

The Communication, Language and Literacy Development (CLLD) programme demonstrated that a focused programme can be successful – local authorities (LAs) taking part in this programme improved twice as fast in the Communication Language and Literacy scales in the 2007 FSP results as other LAs.

Every Child a Talker is another focussed programme that will equip practitioners to work with both children and with their parents to ensure that children experience a language rich environment both at home and in settings.

How will ECAT be delivered?

The first wave of LAs will begin in September 2008. Each LA will be funded to participate for two years and it will be rolled out in three waves over a three year period so that ultimately it becomes part of the universal offer.

Each LA in the programme will identify 20 settings to work with in an intensive way. The settings will be identified using set criteria (see below) and will represent the private, voluntary and independent sector (PVI) as well as the maintained sector. It is critical that ECAT serves children from disadvantaged areas.

Each LA will be required to recruit an Early Language Consultant (ELC) and each of the 20 identified settings will receive additional funding to develop a member of staff to become the Early Language Lead Practitioner (ELLP). There will also be further additional funding provided for each target setting to work with a linked setting in order to improve the language provision in line with the overall objectives of ECAT.

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What will the roles of the Early Language Consultant and the Early Language Lead Practitioner be?

Early Language Consultant (ELC)

The Early Language Consultant will have specialist knowledge and experience relating to children's early language development and a thorough understanding of early years pedagogy.

The ELC's time will be allocated on the following basis

- 0.8 of the time will be allocated to improving the practice and provision for supporting young children's language development in twenty identified early years settings, this will include enhancing the leadership and management of those settings
- 0.2 of the time will be allocated to working with key partners working in the field of early language in the LA, Primary Care Trust (PCT) and with other providers in the private and voluntary sector

The central aim should be to create sustainable improvements, build on existing effective practice and enhance capacity for early language expertise.

A key function of the ELC's role is to promote alignment within the LA and between the LA and other service providers. Initially, the ELC will facilitate an audit of existing provision in the LA. All relevant organisations e.g. the Primary Care Trust (PCT), Speech and Language Therapy Service, Children's Centre Strategic Leaders and organisations providing training should be involved in this audit. This will ensure that relevant information is collected in each LA and that services are not duplicated.

The ELC will regularly visit each setting to model effective practice, demonstrate specific activities, advise on developing the environment, support planning and programme implementation and facilitate continuous professional development. Their role will be to work alongside the ELLP to improve the skills of the workforce in supporting children's early language development.

This will include

- supporting twenty targeted settings to audit their existing language provision and to identify their training needs
- auditing existing practitioner competence in supporting children's speech, language and communication
- working intensively with the twenty targeted settings to provide training and support, particularly to the Early Language Lead Practitioners
- mentoring the Early Language Lead Practitioner in the targeted settings
- supporting settings to ensure effective implementation of Every Child a Talker

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- providing a range of on-going professional development such as training, modelling, peer coaching which is tailored to the settings' development needs
- sign-posting to other professional development opportunities
- supporting practitioners to involve parents in promoting children's language development
- providing training and advice to settings across the LA, including cluster meetings for Early Language Lead Practitioners
- ensuring a cohesive approach to continuous professional development for practitioners in the targeted settings and across the LA
- working in partnership with other LA officers such as Early Years Consultants who may already be supporting a setting
- facilitating cluster meetings so that good practice is shared and fully embedded in the LA
- tracking progress at child and setting level and reporting on progress to the National Strategies (details of monitoring processes will be provided)
- attending regular National Strategies ECAT events and meetings in the LA.

Early Language Lead Practitioners (ELLP)

Each of the settings will receive additional funding to develop the role of Early Language Lead Practitioner and to support training for other members of staff within the setting as well as disseminating and supporting learning in linked settings.

All parts of the early years sector (private, voluntary, independent and maintained) should be considered when selecting the targeted settings. Children's Centres should also be taken into account when providing training and support, particularly as they provide a useful route to accessing Childminder Networks.

The ELLP's role will be to act as an ambassador for Every Child a Talker and to promote the development of expertise amongst the staff within their setting and the linked setting.

This will include

- improving the quality of language provision within the setting, by adopting the principles and practices as outlined in the ECAT materials

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- supporting the professional development of colleagues within the setting and in other local settings, ensuring that it is appropriate and tailored to needs.
- sharing best practice with colleagues in the setting and beyond
- gathering information on children's progress in collaboration with the ELC
- undertaking audits of practice and provision in collaboration with the ELC
- involving parents in promoting children's language development at home
- participating in development activities within the LA and beyond
- attending regional National Strategies events as and when appropriate

What materials will be provided?

This is the first instalment of the ELC File; there will be further instalments provided as ECAT evolves and rolls out. This instalment will support ELCs in the early implementation. It includes

- the rationale and context
- criteria for the selection of settings
- a calendar setting out the timescale and key actions for the consultant to undertake during the course of the year/programme. This outlines the expectations for visiting settings and for providing the cycle of CPD at cluster meetings.
- an audit of the training that is currently available within the area
- an audit of practitioner competence in supporting children's speech, language and communication
- the agenda and content of a local launch event
- a programme of cluster meetings and an outline of the first meeting

The second instalment will be available in November and will include

- facilitating peer coaching
- reviewing progress at child and setting level
- making the most of everyday activities and implementing specific
- the agenda and content of subsequent cluster meetings

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Material will also be produced for Early Language Lead Practitioners that will include advice and guidance on:

- auditing the current language provision and identifying priorities and training needs
- effective communicative behaviours
- features of communication friendly settings
- examples of activities to support vocabulary development, narrative and story sharing
- how to encourage and support parents to develop their children's communication skills
- guidance on how to make the most of everyday activities for developing language
- case studies and models of effective practice.

The materials will be supported with training and on-going support from the National Strategies for both the Early Language Consultants and the Early Language Lead Practitioners. In addition to National Strategies support, consultants and practitioners will be encouraged to use existing high quality materials according to their local needs and contexts.

What materials are already available?

The development of children's early language is a national priority. The National Strategies and other agencies have developed resources and materials to support settings and practitioners. Targets* for improvement have been agreed with LAs. (Details of these targets can be found in Appendix 1).

Some existing relevant National Strategies resources are detailed below. However, ELCs need to be aware of the wealth of training and materials already available in the LA and one of the key tasks in the early stages will be to determine the extent and impact of these within the LA.

Title	Focus	Construction	Delivery channel	Reference and availability
Communicating Matters Trainers Pack	Development of language, practitioner behaviour, English as an Additional Language and Speech Language and Communication needs. Focus is generally on work	3 modules comprising 2 days training each	Mediated and delivered through LAs	DCSF Publications Reference 02026-2006PCL-EN Copies should be available in LA's

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	with 3-5 year olds			
Inclusion Development Programme. Supporting Children With Speech, Language and Communication Needs	Developing quality first provision for children with SLCN. Focus on Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) early years providers	e-learning material and booklet for use by groups or individuals	Mediated through LAs but could be accessed by individual practitioners and settings	DCSF Publications Reference 00215-2008BKT-EN
Letters and Sounds Phase One	Developing listening skills and phonological awareness	DVD and booklet Provides activities for children 0-5. LAs have constructed their own training pack to support materials	Mediated through LAs but materials could be accessed by individual practitioners and settings	DCSF Publications Reference 00113-2008PCK-EN
Communication, Language and Literacy Development (CLLD) Programme	A National Strategy initiative, consultants employed by LAs to deliver cluster meetings and support settings	National events for CLLD consultants, Literacy consultants and EYFS consultants LAs adapt the generic cluster meetings provided by NS	Delivered by LA CLLD consultant	Materials distributed to consultants at events
Confident, capable and creative; supporting boys achievements Guidance for practitioners in the EYFS	Covers all aspects of EYFS practice	Booklet	Disseminated by LAs; also available to all practitioners and settings	DCSF Publications Reference DCSF-00682-2007
Supporting children learning English as an additional language; Guidance for practitioners in the EYFS	Covers all aspects of EYFS practice	Booklet	Disseminated by LAs; also available to all practitioners and settings	DCSF Publications Reference 00683-2007BKT-EN

DCSF Publications available from dcsf@prolog.uk.com
Telephone 0845 60 222 60

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Other Websites	Provides:
www.ican.org.uk	Information on all aspects of speech, language and communication and details of publications and DVD's, including Chatter Matters a resource for parents
www.talkingpoint.org.uk	Useful tips that apply to all children but particularly those with speech, language and communication needs
www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk	Information for parents and practitioners working with under 3's
www.nationalliteracytrust.org.uk	Information on all aspects of literacy, research, details some LA and health initiatives in language development
www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk	Aims to raise awareness of the importance speech, language and communication across the children's workforce, will promote available training and development programmes

How should the targeted settings be selected?

The LA will work intensively with 20 early years settings including Children's Centres and accredited childminders.

To do this the LA will need to

- identify the areas and schools where the FS Profile results for CLL are causing concern taking particular account of those with a large proportion of children in the bottom 20% of the Communication, Language and Literacy scales. This information should already be available as part of the Early Years Outcome Duty* (EYOD) Action Plan
- identify the settings within that area or in other areas that 'feed' those schools. This will include the full range of settings such as day nurseries, nursery classes, children's centres, childminders
- liaise with Speech and Language Therapists (SLT) to identify the areas where there are high numbers of referrals to SLT services and map referral rates against EY provision

Based on that information

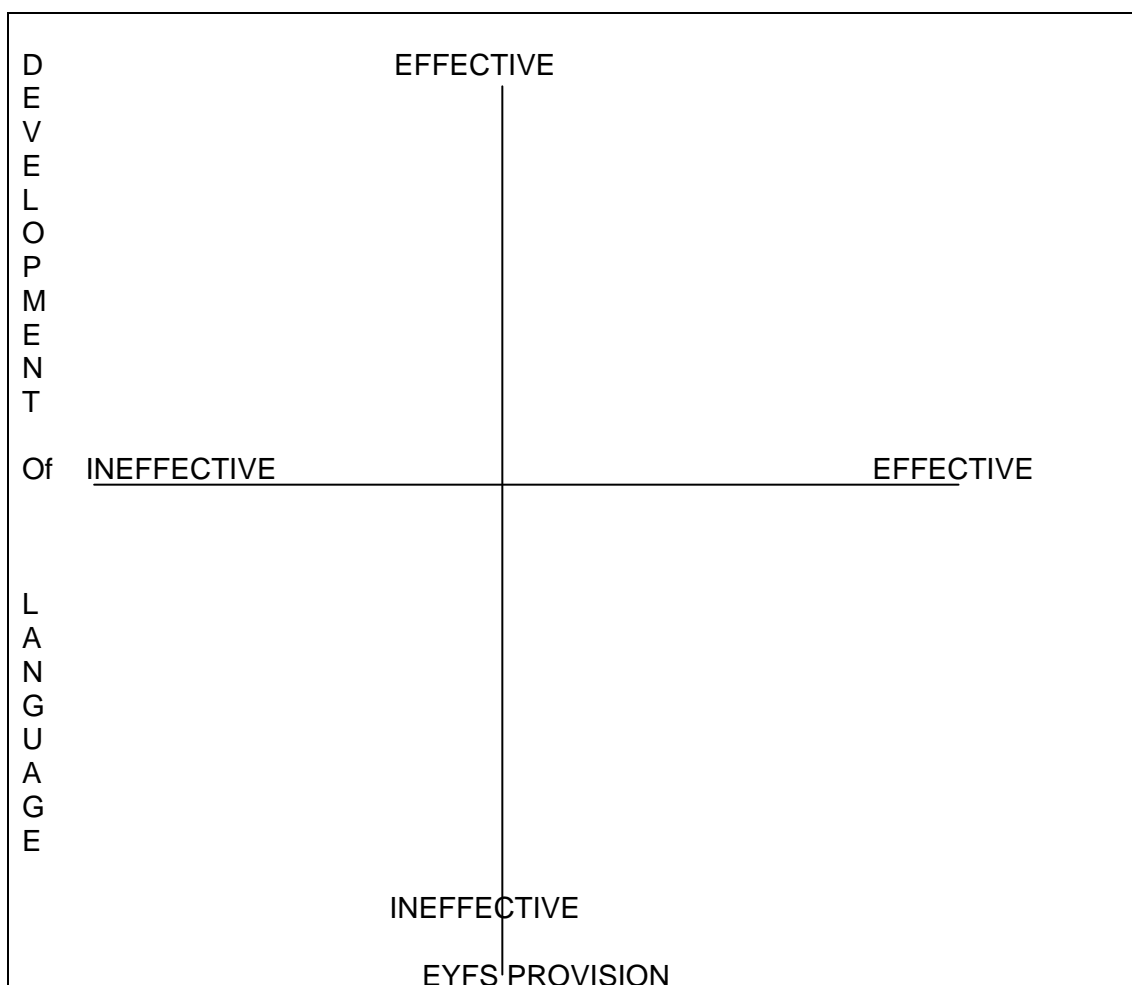
- make a longlist of the settings or geographical areas that should receive support in this first year
- gather information on those settings such as Ofsted inspection reports, reports from LA officers, Advisory Teachers, Inclusion Support teams or other agencies that support the settings and identify the strengths and weaknesses in the provision
- take into account information from professionals supporting the settings for example, whether there is a practitioner who seems suitable and may be willing to become a lead practitioner, the settings' effectiveness in implementing the EYFS and their approach to the development of language

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- prioritise and Invite twenty to thirty settings to the launch event so that the settings can opt in to ECAT. You may find it helpful to draw up an agreement between the LA and the leader/manager which specifies the commitment of all parties.

It may help to plot the settings on a chart such as the one below, which demonstrates the effective management of both the EYFS and the settings effectiveness in developing children's early language. Include some high quality settings in your selection so that there is a core from which to strengthen and share good practice.



As you confirm your final twenty, ensure that you have a balance of settings with strengths and areas for development across both early language development and EYFS provision and across all the range of EYFS settings – accredited childminders, children's centres, maintained, private and voluntary providers.

Involve representatives from the LA and other organisations that provide support to settings in the discussions as you make the selection from the shortlist of settings. They will have valuable information to share about the settings. Also consider the settings' involvement in other projects to ensure that they are not overloaded with initiatives.

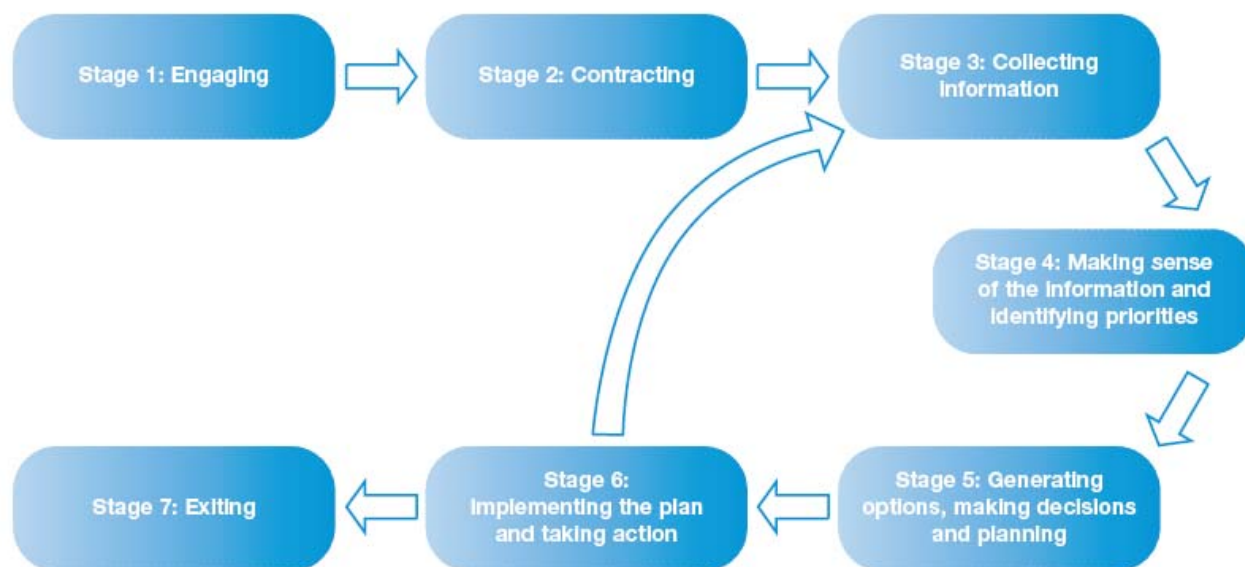
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How should the consultant work?

As an ELC consultant you need to consider the model of consultancy that you will adopt. There are differing models of consultancy, however the following seven stage model outlined below has proved to be a successful one in a wide range of situations.

The seven stages are illustrated and exemplified below in relation to this programme. The ELC Calendar reflects this model.



Cockman, Evans, & Reynolds (1998)

Stage 1: Engaging

This first stage of the cycle is about making initial contact and establishing a working relationship with

- Key partners within the LA. As a minimum these will include Early Years Consultants and Speech and Language therapists; other partners will depend on your local contexts.
- the leaders and managers and key staff in the chosen settings.

Key Partners within the LA

At this stage the ELC will be finding out who the Key Partners in the LA are and collating background knowledge about settings in the LA. (See the ELC Calendar and Audit)

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Settings

It is important that leaders and managers support the programme and understand the commitment that they are making. The key member of staff will be the Early Language Lead Practitioner. Initial contact will be made on visit one to the settings and at the first cluster meeting. In order to engage the settings it will be essential at this stage that ELCs are fully conversant with the aims of the programme and demonstrate a great deal of enthusiasm and high expectations.

Stage 2: Contracting

This is the stage when broad general agreements can be made. This will not necessarily be a formal contract but an agreement about the differing roles and responsibilities. Key Partners and settings will be agreeing to be involved in the programme and will be committing time and personnel to support it. Details of the in depth work that needs to be completed will come later when information has been collated and priorities set.

Key Partners

At this stage Key Partners will be identified and will be invited to a launch meeting and the Audit of existing provision will begin. Agreement will be reached about who should be involved in selecting settings for inclusion in the programme.

Settings

This stage will begin once settings have been selected and have agreed to be involved in the programme.

In this stage of the cycle the ELC will need to establish their role and that of the ELLP. At the first cluster meeting and setting visit, ELCs will need to ensure that ELLPs understand their role, the type of support that will be given to them and what they will be expected to do in their settings. It will be important to remember that the majority of ELLPs will be anxious about their new role and will need to be supported to develop their confidence as the lead practitioner in their setting.

Stage 3: Collecting information

This part of the cycle is about collecting further information to identify the key priorities in more detail.

Key Partners

Key Partners will be contributing to your audit of existing provision

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Settings

The ELC will support the settings to complete the audit of the existing language provision and practitioner competence within the setting. The ELLP should be responsible for collecting the data within the setting. This process will begin at the first cluster meeting, when ELLPs are introduced to the audit. It is important that the practitioners understand the importance of this initial information and have ownership of it.

Stage 4: Making sense of the information and identifying priorities

Key Partners

Key Partners will share information from the audit and a full picture of the current training and support within the LA will be available. Any gaps in provision or duplication of provision will need to be considered.

Settings

At this stage the ELC will be helping the ELLP to make sense of the data and ensuring that they understand the issues and are beginning to identify the areas that need improvement. The ELC will work with the ELLP to identify the priorities for the setting. At this stage it may become apparent that issues such as setting organisation or leadership are interrelated with issues around the development of early language. Priorities such as these will need to be identified and the ELC will need to work in partnership with other professionals, such as Early Years Consultants, to support the setting to overcome potential barriers to children's achievement. At this stage the key people to take forward those priorities should be identified.

Stage 5: Generating options, making decisions and planning

Key Partners

Using the results of the audits, priorities and responsibilities will need to be more formally recorded. An Action Plan should be completed so that all partners are aware of their agreed responsibilities and the time scales for completion. Funding issues will also need to be discussed and agreements reached.

Settings

Once the priorities have been accurately identified, the ELC will support the ELLP to consider the solutions. The ELC's role will be to simplify, clarify and restructure the information so that options emerge. This will involve discussing the issues and the ways forward and compiling an action plan. The ELLP should be leading the discussions on the issues identified in the setting and all practitioners should feel that they have been involved in planning the solutions and have contributed to the action plan. If the programme is to be successful the setting needs to have ownership of their plan of action, all practitioners need to feel that they have an important role to play.

(Further details of how to prepare an action plan can be found in [Appendix 2](#))

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Both plans should consider an exit strategy; the programme needs to be sustainable once the two year funding ends.

Stage 6: Implementing the plan and taking action

The success of the action plans depends on four factors

Ownership
Leadership
Capability
Organisation

Key Partners

1. Ownership. All the Key Partners will need to be committed to the plan as they will be taking it forward within their organisations.
2. Leadership. The ELC will be responsible for facilitating the audit and reviewing and presenting the findings. The Key Partners group may decide that one organisation will then lead the developments, or that the ELC will continue to coordinate the plan. This should be decided at a Key Partners meeting as each LA will have different systems for developing provision and allocating funding.
3. Capability. Each Key Partner should send a representative who is either able to influence change and make some strategic decisions or who can report back to a manager who can take recommendations forward.
4. Organisation. The Action Plan needs to be clear. All Key Partners need to be aware of their roles and responsibilities, the time frames need to be clear and progress needs to be regularly reviewed.

Settings

1. Ownership: Do all the people responsible for implementing the plan own it and are they committed to it? Both the ELC and the ELLP need to be committed to the plan, the ELC will need to provide appropriate support and challenge and the ELLP will be taking the plan forward within the setting.
2. Leadership: The ELLP will be leading the changes in the setting, the ELC will need to ensure that the leaders, managers and owners of the provision are supporting the programme.
3. Capability: Do all practitioners have the necessary skills to carry out the plan? This will need to be identified as part of the planning process as competent practitioners play a vital role in the development of early language. The ELC will also need to ensure that the ELLP has the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence to implement the plan.
4. Organisation: How is the plan organised? Is it clear to and shared with all the practitioners in the setting? Are all practitioners comfortable with their roles and responsibilities? Does it include dates when the plan will be reviewed?

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The ELC will need to think about the balance of their involvement, they need to support the ELLP without taking over, suggest modifications and ensure that they are implemented.

Throughout Stage 6 it is important to be flexible, recognising that any changes made may not be the end of the process as you will need to evaluate the effectiveness of change. This may mean returning to Stage 3 of the consultant cycle, generating either confirmation of success or the need to develop further actions.

Stage 7: Exiting

Key Partners

An exit strategy should be an integral part of the Action Plan. Key Partners should be committed to continuing their support.

Settings

Throughout the consultancy period the ELC should be considering the sustainability of any changes or progress that has been made. It is important that an exit strategy is established at an early stage; the ELLP needs to be prepared to continue the progress made once the ELC's support ends.

At the exiting stage the ELC will need to include a review and evaluation of the work that was identified through the action plan, paying specific attention to how well the success criteria have been met and any further areas for development.

Getting started with ECAT

To support you to implement the programme included in this file are:

- the agenda and content of a local launch event. This has been written with key partners as an audience but can easily be adapted for use with other groups. A powerpoint presentation will be available.
- the audit of current training and development opportunities within the LA that should be completed by all key partners
- an audit of practitioner competence using the Speech, Language and Communication Framework (SLCF)
- an outline programme of cluster meetings for Early Language Lead Practitioners
- the agenda and outline of the first visit and first cluster meeting
- an ELC Calendar to guide you through the implementation process and to help you plan your work

Local Launch Event

A suggested Agenda and a powerpoint presentation have been provided to support you to launch ECAT within your LA. It is recommended that, in the early stages of implementation, all key partners within the LA, PCT and voluntary organisations are invited to attend a launch event which provides the rationale, aims and approaches of ECAT. The powerpoint is provided as a separate handout and the content can easily be adapted for different audiences.

Outline Agenda for ECAT LA Launch Event

ECAT Launch Event
ECAT Aims and Outcomes
Why do we need ECAT?
The ECAT Programme
First Steps The Audit

What is already happening in the LA?

LA Audit of existing training and support

An audit of existing training and support for the development of early language skills should be undertaken by the ELC in collaboration with the strategic lead for Early Years, representatives of specialist services for speech and language and speech and language therapy services. The following 3 stage audit should be completed.

Stage 1. First you need to determine what is already available across the whole LA. Then you should establish whether or not the targeted settings are able to access the training and support that they need and what the barriers might be. You will probably find that different training and support is being provided by a multitude of agencies. Find out whether or not the training/ support has been evaluated. Using the results of this audit complete Stage 2.

Stage 2. What kinds of evaluation have been undertaken to ensure that training and support has impacted on practice and promoted children's early language? The LA

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will need to investigate the successful programmes/ training/ support in more depth so that it can be replicated or extended for use in ECAT. This best practice will be shared with other LAs through, for example, case studies, at NS events or on a website.

Stage 3. Setting-based audit. You will need to work with each setting to complete the audit of the training/ support that the practitioners in the selected settings have received and any qualifications that they have gained in this area. Ask the practitioners which of the training/ support was particularly useful or changed their practice. This will help you as the Early Learning Consultant to plan their development programme.

The audit can be found in Appendix 3.

The Speech, Language and Communication Framework (SLCF)

The Speech, Language and Communication Framework, developed by the Communication Trust¹, is a tool which will audit and map training at a more detailed level. It can be found at communicationhelppoint.org.uk. Guidance for using it can be found in Appendix 4.

What is the practitioner competence in each setting?

The SLCF can also be used to help you assess practitioner competence. It provides a clear, comprehensive framework to audit the skills and knowledge about speech, language and communication needed by anyone who works with children and young people.

It defines competences around speech, language and communication at four stages: **Universal, Enhanced, Specialist** and **Extension**. These stages range from the skills and knowledge that *everyone* working with children should have to successfully support communication development (Universal stage) all the way through to specialised learning in speech, language and communication at a post graduate level (Extension).

Competences in the first three stages are grouped into eight strands, reflecting key areas of knowledge and practice, such as: **typical speech, language and communication development and use, identification and assessment of speech, language and communication needs and positive practice.**²

¹ The Communication Trust (TCT) www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk is funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and founded by BT Better World, Afasic and Council for Disabled Children and ICAN. TCT is also working closely with a number of lead bodies in the field of workforce development including the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and with professional groups in the field of speech, language and communication including the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) and the National Association of professionals concerned with Language Impairment in Children (NAPLIC)

² Extension stage follows a slightly different structure due to its academic level of study

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The SLCF reflects the levels and language of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)³ Full guidance is available as Appendix 4.

Cluster Meetings

In order to support the implementation and monitoring of ECAT, ELCs will arrange a series of cluster meetings with ELLPs. This will be an opportunity to provide training to ELLPs, but it will also give ELLPs the opportunity to build a support network and share their expertise.

Agendas and the content of the meetings will be provided to ELCs as a framework which should be adapted and tailored to local needs. Remember that cluster meetings will only be a very small part of the support that is provided. The majority of the ELC's work will be focused on developing the expertise of the individual ELLPs and improving the practice and provision for children's language development within the settings.

Programme of Cluster Meetings

Early Autumn 08	Late Autumn 08	Early Spring 09	Late Spring 09
Cluster Meeting 1	Cluster Meeting 2	Cluster Meeting 3	Cluster Meeting 4
Introducing the programme Role of the ELLP and ELC Working with parents Managing change in a setting Introducing the setting based audit of existing language provision and audit of practitioner competence using SLCF.	Audit -Review Priorities and training needs, Introducing features of communication friendly settings Effective communicative behaviours Peer Coaching Working with Parents	Making the most of everyday activities Suggested Daily Activities EAL Parents and children working together	Dialogic Book Reading Sharing effective Practice

Cluster Meeting 1

This meeting should take place early in the autumn term. Settings will have been selected and the introductory visit will have been made by the ELC. Prior to the cluster meeting the ELC should aim to have visited all the settings.

³ http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_8150.aspx

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Visit 1

The visits outlined in the Consultant's Calendar link to the cluster meetings. ELCs will be visiting settings to offer support in addition to these visits.

This first visit will enable the ELC to have an initial introduction to the setting and to briefly explain their role to the leader or manager of the setting and the ELLP. It will give ELCs the opportunity to look at the existing practice and to get to know how the setting functions. The importance of cluster meetings can be explained and ELCs can ensure that the ELLP is able to attend. Before the visit, it will be important to speak to the Early Years Consultant, or other professionals that support the setting, to find out what development plans are already in place and the support that the setting has already received.

Cluster Meeting 1 Outline of Content

Cluster Meeting 1	
Introducing the programme	Aims and outcomes of ECAT. Why is such a focused approach needed? The importance of raising children's achievements. EYFS Profile results in the LA, working in partnership with parents.
Role of the ELLP and ELC	An explanation of the role of the ELC and the ELLP
Working with parents	The importance of working in partnership with parents. Reflecting on current practice
Managing change in a setting	How ELLPs introduce ECAT in their settings. Effecting real changes in practice.
Setting based audit of existing language provision and audit of practitioner competence using SLCF	Introducing and completing Stage 3 of the initial audit of training. Introduction to the SLCF - the audit of practitioner competence.
	Arrangements for Visit 2

An outline powerpoint presentation will be provided for Cluster Meeting 1

Visit 2

This visit can be arranged at the first cluster meeting. It will give ELCs an opportunity to review each setting's progress with the initial audits and to provide support to the ELLP.

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Consultant Calendar

With Key Partners		With Settings	
September 2008		September 2008	
<p>Research Key partners and Existing Practice</p>	<p>Find out who the key partners are, e.g. PCT, LA, and voluntary organisations. Organise launch meeting.</p> <p>Collate some details of existing training and development opportunities, e.g. training directories, past training opportunities.</p> <p>Familiarise yourself with existing training and development opportunities and materials</p> <p>Raise awareness of programme within LA early years and childcare team e.g Early Years Consultants, SEN teams etc and find out what they already provide to support settings.</p> <p>Arrange small Working Group to be involved in selecting settings</p>	<p>Research Settings</p>	<p>Find out about the settings in your LA.</p> <p>e.g. where are the areas/settings most likely to need support? Where are the children's centres and childminders? Which are the settings with excellent practice?</p> <p>Visit some settings to observe practice or shadow existing support teams.</p>

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Local Launch Meeting with Key Partners	Present details of the programme. Introduce Audit of current training (Stages 1 and 2) and set deadline for completion and date for review meeting.		Select settings for inclusion in programme	Collate information from LA and other Key Providers and select settings.
ELC Review Audit results	Collate and review audit results (Stage1 and 2)		Contact selected settings	Contact settings and arrange cluster meetings Visit 1 Leaders and Managers-ELLP Invite to cluster meeting Initial observation of practice
October 2008			October 2008	
Key Partners Audit Review Meeting	Review and Planning Meeting Present Audit results and identify areas for development		Cluster Meeting 1	Introducing the programme Working with parents Managing change in a setting Introducing the setting based audit of existing language provision and

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				audit of practitioner competence using SLCF (Stage 3)
ELC TO REVIEW PROGRESS TO DATE			OF ECAT PROGRAMME	
November 2008			November 2008	
	Development work with key partners		Visit 2 and on-going support	Review audit progress
December 2008			December 2008	
	Development work with key partners		Cluster Meeting 2	Audit -Review Priorities and training needs Introducing features of communication friendly settings Effective communicative behaviours Peer Coaching Working with Parents
January 2009			January 2009	
	Development work with key partners		Cluster Meeting 3	Making the most of everyday activities Suggested Daily Activities EAL Parents and children working together

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February 2009	ELC	TO REVIEW	OVERALL		PROGRESS OF	ECAT	PROGRAMME
March 2009					March 2009		
		Development work with key partners			Cluster Meeting 4		Dialogic Book Reading Sharing effective Practice

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Appendix 1: Additional Information

Early Language Consultants should ensure that they are familiar with the following plans and targets and understand how their LA plans to address these:

The Children's Plan (2007) sets out a vision for making this country the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up in. It tells us that:

- improving the quality of early years provision is at the heart of that vision, this includes developing the skills and qualifications of practitioners
- achieving world class standards and closing the gaps in achievement for children from disadvantaged families will require system reform so that all providers are consistently achieving at the level of the best

The Childcare Act introduced to all LAs a statutory duty to raise achievement at the end of the EYFS. There are 2 Public Service Delivery Agreements in place that relate specifically to the early years

- PSA Delivery Agreement 10 is to raise the educational achievement of all children and young people
- PSA Delivery Agreement 11 is to narrow the gap in educational achievement between children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers

Early Years Outcome Duty

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In the early years educational achievement is measured by the EYFS Profile Assessment and LAs have been asked to set targets which will help to improve children's achievements across all areas of learning but to specifically improve achievements in Communication, Language and Literacy, (CLL) and Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED). They should also aim to narrow the gap between the 20% of lowest achieving children and the rest. This is called the Early Years Outcome Duty (EYOD).

Local Authority targets do not measure progress of individual children, but compare one cohort with the next.

National Early Years Outcomes Duty Targets

LAs should

- Increase the proportion of young children achieving a total points score of at least 78 across all EYFSP scales with at least 6 points in each of the 7 scales of PSED and CLL by 4% from 2008-2011
- Improve the average score of the lowest 20% of EYFSP results so that the gap is reduced by 3% from 2008-2011

Local Authority Targets

LAs will have set local targets and completed an EYOD Action Plan, which will be instrumental in improving achievements within the LA.

When compiling an action plan LAs will have considered the analysis of the characteristics of the lowest achieving 20% of children. This has revealed that:

- around 63% of the bottom 20% are boys
- 1 in 3 of children whose first language is other than English are in the bottom 20%
- children living in the most deprived areas make up over half (52%) of the children in the lowest achieving 20%
- children born in August are 3 times as likely to be in the bottom 20% than those born in September
- nearly 60% of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) are in the lowest achieving 20%

These characteristics need to be considered when supporting a setting to plan a programme of support for a setting, are the needs of boys, children with English as an additional language (EAL) and the youngest children in the group being met? Are children with special educational needs being identified and supported within the setting?

Communication, Language and Literacy Development (CLLD) programme

The CLLD programme is an important opportunity for the range of settings and practitioners in the EYFS to implement the recommendations of the Rose Review .

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The programme provides focused support for early reading and writing, and speaking and listening – the four interdependent skills identified in the Rose recommendations for early reading.

In the funded CLLD LAs, leaders of schools and key linked settings, practitioners and teachers work together with LA colleagues, including the CLLD consultant and the National Strategies, to develop an approach based on the process of identifying barriers to children's learning, devising, implementing and evaluating solutions and modifying practice.

The Inclusion Development Programme (IDP)

The IDP is part of the Government's strategy for SEN outlined in *Removing Barriers to Achievement* (The Government's Strategy for SEN; Ref: DfES/0117/2004). The focus of the first year of this four-year programme (2007–2011) is supporting children with speech, language and communication needs.

Local Authorities have been invited to order sufficient copies for all schools and Early Years settings. To order additional copies call 0845 60 222 60 and quote Ref 00215-2008 BKT-EN.

The Bercow Review

The Bercow Review's full title is: *Bercow review of services for children and young people (0-19) with speech, language and communication needs*.

The review was commissioned in August 2007 by the Secretary of State for health. It aims to improve speech, language and communication services for children and young people. It can be found at www.dcsf.gov.uk/bercowreview

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Appendix 2: Action Planning

This section aims to provide you with background information about the action planning process that can underpin any work with settings to improve quality. It gives examples of action planning forms that can be used for a range of purposes and with a range of settings.

The action planning process

Action plans are to goals what signposts are to travellers. They are not the end of the journey, but provide the direction. They signpost the road to success. Action plans are fundamental to goals-based planning and improvement. In preparing your action plan, keep in mind that effective goals and targets meet the criteria in the SMARTER acronym. (Note: the choice of terminology may vary.)

SMARTER goals/objectives are:

S	<p>Specific</p> <p>Objectives are clear and detailed. You clearly record what it is you want to achieve, and have specific standards for that achievement. The more specific the goal, the more likely you are to succeed.</p>
M	<p>Measurable</p> <p>Set out specific criteria that will evaluate the success of the actions. Avoid vague criteria that identify the actions taking place or the completion of tasks rather than the impact on the quality of the outcomes. There is no need to set success criteria for each individual action. Often, criteria may be set for a group of actions to pinpoint specific improvements</p>
A	<p>Achievable</p> <p>This does not mean that the lower you aim the more likely you are to reach success. Goals that work best have challenge in them. They are as ambitious as possible, but still reachable. Prioritise your goals – start with actions with high priority status.</p>
R	<p>Realistic</p> <p>Break goals into attainable steps. Determine what constraints/challenges you may have</p>
T	<p>Time-specific</p> <p>The ultimate goal has a specific time limit. However, deadlines for ensuring progress in actions at interim stages should be set.</p>
E	<p>Extending</p> <p>The goal and action taken extend capabilities within the setting.</p>
R	<p>Rewarding</p> <p>The effort leads to improved outcomes for children in the EYFS.</p>

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Using the action plan

Action plans are living documents. Objectives and their timelines are guidelines, not rules set in stone. Therefore they can be adjusted, but deviations should be understood, explained and recorded. It is important to monitor the progress of the plan to be aware of and accommodate unexpected obstacles or challenges. Some can be anticipated by asking 'what if' questions while developing the action plan, but you should accept that revisions may be needed.

In preparing the action plan you may want to ask:

- have we identified all the practical steps we need to take to achieve the goals?
- are the actions clear and specific? Do we know exactly what we intend to do and who will do it?
- how will the steps lead to the required outcomes?

A timeline is a useful appendix to the action plan. Although the format may differ, think carefully about what unit of time will be used. For example, you could use weeks, months or terms. The more regularly you monitor, the greater the chance of success.

Monitoring and evaluating the action plan

Monitoring is the ongoing assessment of how you are performing against your action plan(s). You check that actions have taken place as planned and on time. It gives the opportunity to accommodate unexpected outcomes or challenges.

Evaluation is more complex. It is about measuring the effects of the actions. For example, if you set actions to improve the quality and quantity of adult-child interactions, and interactions between children, you need to evaluate what progress has or has not been made. This involves looking for measurable evidence that demonstrates how well you have done in terms of what you planned to achieve. However, it is important not to waste time and effort on collecting random information. As the action plan is being developed think about issues such as:

- the sort of information you will need to monitor progress
- how you will use the information
- how you will collect the information
- who will collect it
- who will analyse it
- identifying the baseline for judging progress.

Part of your action planning must include how you will identify the baseline and include the process for collecting evidence of progress between successive stages of the plan and against the milestones.

The monitoring and evaluation of the action plan should include questions such as:

- are we doing what we said we would do?
- if not, why not? For example, are we using resources efficiently and effectively to achieve objectives?
- are we achieving outcomes within the set time frames?
- are we taking corrective action to achieve our objectives?
- are we making progress against the baseline and interim stages?

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When you analyse the information, look for the unexpected, and try to learn from any deviations (differences from the expected) so you can improve future actions.

Finally, it may be helpful to review your action plan against the SMARTER criteria below.

Our action plan is:

- specific: includes clear and sufficient detail and makes it absolutely clear who has responsibility and authority for making sure that all the steps get done
- measurable: includes success criteria for actions that enable us to pinpoint specific improvements
- achievable: starts with actions with high priority status, is challenging and aspirational while remaining reachable
- realistic: is set out in attainable steps, takes rigorous account of resource implications and possible barriers and challenges
- time-specific: includes sequencing and scheduling that makes sense and takes account of interim and end stages
- extending: includes goals/objectives that extend capabilities
- rewarding: helps us achieve our targets and goals.

Exit Strategy

Settings

Throughout the consultancy period the ELC should be considering the sustainability of any changes or progress that has been made. It is important that an exit strategy is established at an early stage; the ELLP needs to be prepared to continue the progress made once the ELCs support ends.

When compiling an action plan for improvements an exit strategy should be included, In the ECAT programme this needs to include how the ELC will gradually withdraw their support to the settings once the programme has been embedded. The Early Years Consultant will be providing ongoing support to the setting and should ensure that progress is maintained.

Key Partners

The Action Plan should detail how changes to provision will be embedded in existing practice and how ongoing funding and support will be provided.

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Appendix 3

Auditing training and support across the LA

Stage 1:

What is already available across the whole LA and readily accessible to the selected 20 settings? Use the headings below to ensure that you consider every possible provider in your LA. You may or may not have all of these on offer locally. This is not an exhaustive list. Enter each available course once only.

What training courses are already available?	How, where and when?	Is it accessible to the targeted settings?	Do you have evidence of impact?
Communicating Matters			
Inclusion Development Programme. Supporting Children With Speech, Language and Communication Needs			
Letters and Sounds			

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Communication, Language and Literacy Development (CLLD)			
Other Local Authority courses (e.g courses run by EPs, Specialist services including EAL)			
Courses provided by PCT			

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Other courses eg. Early Talk, ELKLAN, HANEN or locally developed			
What other kinds of support and development opportunities are available to promote early language?			
Support Provided in settings by Advisory Teachers, Area Senco's, the English As An Additional Language (EAL) team and other development officers			
Coaching and Mentoring			

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Network meetings			
Exchange visits or shadowing			
Other			

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<p>Courses/ support provided for parents (e.g by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's centres • Voluntary organisations, such as Preschool Learning Alliance, Barnados, Home Start etc • Speech and Language Therapy services • Parents' groups • Basic skills agencies • FE colleges/ adult and community Education providers • PCT 			

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Other			
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Stage 2.

What kinds of evaluation have been undertaken to ensure that training and support has impacted on practice and promoted children's early language?

Training/support provided	Where and when?	How has it been evaluated? Describe the successes and impact on practitioners' skills and children's achievements

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Stage 3.

The 20 selected settings. Complete an audit of the training/ support that the practitioners in the selected settings have received and any qualifications that they have gained in this area. Ask the practitioners which of the training/ support was particularly useful or changed their practice. To complete this first ask the Early Language Lead Practitioner to complete the table 3.1 in their setting (More details of this are included in the first cluster meeting material.)

3.1 Name of Setting		
Training / support received. When?	Who attended/ received this support?	Was the course useful? What impact did the training/ support have on practitioner skills and children's achievements?
EXAMPLE 3 day Communicating Matters	Jane and	Jane- I enjoyed the course, I think more about giving children opportunities to speak, I don't know how it helped children's achievements

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Course Spring Term 2006	Fiona	<p>Fiona- we tried the story chair idea for a while and some of the children did speak quite a lot, but we don't seem to do it any more now, it's quite hard work to fit everything in.</p> <p>Overall- Jane and Fiona did a session for the rest of the staff after the course and we tried some of the ideas, we did plan some opportunities for children to speak more, We do not have detailed records of children's progress and so can't say whether or not it helped their language development</p>
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Appendix 4 – Guidance on using the SLCF

(See separate section)

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