

Working in partnership with



## Delivery and Impact Report: 2021 to 2022

### Early Intervention Speech and Language Team, working in partnership with Small Steps Big Changes



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**Need a helping hand  
with your child's speaking  
and listening skills?**

“ We offer **free\***, friendly communication and language support for children aged 9 months - 4 years ”

## About us: The Early Intervention Speech and Language Team

We are a team of early years practitioners, early years speech and language therapists and an administrator. Our team has worked for many years providing services in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. We believe learning to communicate is a crucial life skill. You might have seen our [Language for Life](#) website or social media.

Our aim is to help all children develop their best possible communication skills to help them learn and be happy. We believe in:

- **Working in partnership with parents, carers and other professionals.** We respect other people's expertise and ideas, and like to be curious and learn from everyone we meet
- **Reaching all families who need our support.** We work hard to make our services as easy to access and flexible as possible
- **Being both evidence-based and innovative.** We make sure we know what works, and we develop, try, and evaluate new things that might work even better



The team: Mark, Hazel, Dave, Diane, Julia, Alison, Charlotte and Penny

In the last few years, the Early Intervention Speech and Language team has been recognised for our outstanding work by

- the [What Works](#) database of evidence-based speech and language interventions (2015)
- the [Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists](#) (2017)
- the [Early Intervention Foundation](#) for our partnership working, information for families and local strategy (2018)
- the Bercow 10 Years On [national review](#) for the accessibility of our Home Talk service (2018)
- the [National Literacy Trust](#), who invited us as keynote speakers at their national Talk to Your Baby conference (2018)
- the Institute of Health Visiting, who asked us to help with the development and delivery of their [national training programme](#) for health visiting teams (2019)
- the [World Health Organisation and Public Health England](#) for how we adapted to keep delivering face-to-face services during the Covid-19 pandemic as much as possible (2020)
- the Sutton Trust, University of Oxford and Institute of Employment Studies, who we worked with on a [randomised controlled trial](#) of one of our training courses (2019 to 2022)

## Background

### Why is early language and communication important?

Language and communication skills help children and young people make friends, achieve and learn. They are key skills for life. However, many children and young people with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCNs) can find it hard to join in and learn when they start school, and to manage their friendships and emotions.

The good news is that the right support – especially early in life – can improve children’s communication skills and reduce these wider difficulties.

### National context

SLCNs are common. In fact, they are the most common type of Special Educational Need identified by schools.

However, the most recent [national review](#) of services showed that too many children and young people do not have their SLCNs identified. And - when their needs are identified - the right support is not always available and accessible.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a further light on this problem. The impact of Covid-19 has increased the demand on children’s services: nationally, children are now waiting longer for [speech and language support](#). A [national survey](#) shows that 100% of reception teachers are worried about children’s language and communication development after Covid-19 lockdowns.

### Local context

This means that early intervention speech and language services are now more important than ever.

This is particularly true in Nottingham. Because of its demographic profile, Nottingham has a higher than average number of children and young people with SLCNs.

But, compared to the national average, Nottingham has [lower funding](#) and [fewer staff](#) to deliver [speech and language services](#), including services for the youngest children. Many children and young people with SLCNs in Nottingham have found it [hard to reach](#) services.

One of SSBC’s key aims is to improve children’s early language and communication outcomes by providing speech and language support and services for more children. During the SSBC consultation in 2020, parents and carers asked for more play and language activities to do at home, especially for children under 2 years.

The early intervention speech and language services we deliver in partnership with SSBC aim to meet some of the need for high quality speech and language services. We offer these services during the important, earliest years of life.

This report describes the delivery and impact of these services since 2021.

## Our speech and language services in partnership with SSBC

In January 2021, we were commissioned by Small Steps Big Changes to set up some new services:

**SPLATT: Sing Play Listen and Talk Together:** for children aged between 9 and 15 months who need some help with their early communication development.

SPLATT involves “learning through play” sessions designed to help parents and carers support their child’s communication development. They are delivered in the family home by an early years practitioner with enhanced communication training.

We offer three or four visits for each family. Caregivers pick low-cost / no-cost play sessions from a “menu”. A session might be about sensory and messy play, play without toys (people play), songs and rhymes, or book sharing.

We then offer a 3 month follow-up appointment at home to help families access more support if they need it.

We predict we should receive referrals for **42 children** for the service each year. We plan to evaluate this brand new service as we deliver it.



**This session is amazing! I have learnt so much which has resulted in Billy speaking more. You're both fantastic. Thank you so much! He's speaking so much more!**

**I loved every class. I love it. I wish it continued.**

**Tiny Steps to Talking:** a 6-week group for parents and caregivers with children aged 12 to 23 months.

Tiny Steps to Talking sessions are relaxed play sessions with a maximum of 4 children in each group. They are delivered by our early years practitioners and speech and language therapists. Everyone who lives in an SSBC ward is welcome to the group.

In each session, parents and carers try out different play ideas and strategies to help early communication skills. We come back next time and share how these things have worked out at home during the week.

Like the SPLATT service, we offer a 3 month follow up appointment for all families.

We aim to run Tiny Steps to Talking groups for **40 families** each year.

**We have included some quotes from parents, carers and partner services throughout this report.**

**We have changed the names of any children mentioned to make sure they are anonymous.**

Hi, I just have to text as we're so excited! We've just been singing with Hira, and she has been copying us doing the sign and sound for duck! We're looking forward to seeing what else she will learn over the coming weeks

Mark has communicated well with Oscar and given us some good pointers. The Home Talk service is excellent.

**Let's Talk with Under Fives:** a course for parents / carers of children aged between 2 ½ years and their 4<sup>th</sup> birthday

This adult learning course for caregivers runs once a week for 6 or 7 weeks. It leads to a Level 1 qualification for any learner who would like it. The course is open to all families who live in SSBC wards.

We learn about a different topic related to children's communication each week. We might focus on play, attention and listening skills, or vocabulary. Learners take home a play activity each week, and work towards a target for their child's communication skills during the course.

We aim to run the Let's Talk with Under Fives course for **40 parent/carers** each year.



**Home Talk:** our nationally-recognised home visiting service for children aged 2 to 2 ½ years who need some help with their spoken language development.

We offer up to 6 home visits, where we support children by working closely with parents and carers. Home Talk might involve trying out new play ideas or strategies at home. It is flexible: the aims we agree with each family are very different, based on what that family needs. During the programme, we help families access community resources and services, or specialist support if they need it.

Again, we offer a 3 month review at home.

We expect **up to 200 two-years-olds** to be referred to our Home Talk team in the SSBC wards each year.

I am so grateful to David for his dedication and patience. You were easy to talk to and I learnt a great deal from all our sessions, from me and my kids, thank you very much. It made a huge difference to me

Fantastic course very excellent. Thank you Julia amazing work from the bottom of my heart.

You can read more about all our services on the SSBC website here:

[Speech, Language & Communication | SSBC \(smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk\)](https://smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk)

And you can read stories from parents and carers about their experiences here:

Tiny Steps to Talking and Home Talk: [Kathryn, Chris & Rose | SSBC \(smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk\)](https://smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk)

Let's Talk with Under Fives: [Debra & Kaveera | SSBC \(smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk\)](https://smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk)

## Home Talk – Lenny’s story

Lenny was referred to Home Talk by the 0 to 19 team from his two year review as his communication and language skills were delayed for his age.

The family were eligible for the two year offer. His mum Sandra had not arranged to take up a place at nursery because of her social anxiety. Sandra has dyslexia and needs support with reading and writing.

### **The service delivered**

Six Home Talk sessions were delivered in the home. Sessions were focussed around supporting language development through

- increasing face to face play times
- coaching Sandra in using language-modelling and language-extending strategies
- reducing screen time

As well as the usual Home Talk sessions, two extra appointments were completed to

- make a referral to the Behaviour, Emotional and Mental Health service to request a paediatrician appointment for Lenny
- visit a local nursery together and apply for a place via the 2 year offer

### **The impact of the service**

By the sixth home visit, Lenny progressed from saying single words and some two word phrases to using a wider vocabulary and linking up to 3 words together.

At his 3 month review, Lenny was saying four word sentences, and had begun to talk about past events, use descriptive language, and language to talk about his feelings and experiences.

Sandra is now using more language-modelling and language-extending to support Lenny’s language and has made changes to the home learning environment through reducing screen time.

The family are now accessing more services and have support through Healthy Start vouchers, and support from the Behavioural, Emotional and Mental Health team. Lenny was due to take up his nursery place as part of the 2 year offer.

Feedback from Sandra is on the next page.



**It's nice to have the one to one support as it's individual to my child. Every child has different needs and in a group that isn't always something that can be met.**

**It's great the service delivers one to one support in the home, especially as I have mental health needs and having it in the home makes me feel at ease.**

**When you have complex needs- whether that's myself as a parent or my child- it makes you both feel more at ease and comfortable being in your own surroundings.**

**My child has really benefited from learning through play and has been more focussed and less distracted as it is in the home. I've seen how much he's enjoyed playing and learning through play. It's made me think that he would benefit from going to nursery and with the help of my Home Talk Worker we have now applied for the two year offer and are going to look at the nursery together. My Home Talk Worker has also helped me apply for the Healthy Start vouchers which I have started to receive, this will help towards buying fruit and vegetables.**

**My Home Talk Worker has been really kind, caring and supportive which has made me feel at ease. I didn't feel judged and learnt some new ideas on play to help support my child. Having someone sit down, play and show me has been a big help as I learn through doing things. I use what we do in the sessions to talk and play with my child and we have a go at using these ideas together after the sessions. My child has gone from saying single words to saying little sentences. The one to one interaction has really helped him a lot and helped him really take it all in.**



## Our impact in numbers

### Tiny Steps to Talking

In 2021/2022, 20 families came to a Tiny Steps to Talking group.

**100%**  
said the group was  
“good” or “excellent”

The impact of Covid-19 meant we were not able to run as many groups as we would have liked:

- In spring and summer 2021, NHS restrictions meant we could run groups with a maximum of two children (instead of four children)
- In January 2022, some of our team were re-deployed to help with Covid-19 vaccinations in schools during the omicron wave. This meant we had to postpone some Tiny Steps to Talking groups we had planned

We hope in the future that Covid-19 restrictions will not affect how we run our groups. In 2022/2023, we have been able to run more groups:

- In September, **12 families** have booked to attend Tiny Steps to Talking groups. We expect a similar number to come to groups starting after half-term in November.
- In 2022/23, we think this means the expected number of families – **40 per year** – will attend Tiny Steps to Talking groups.

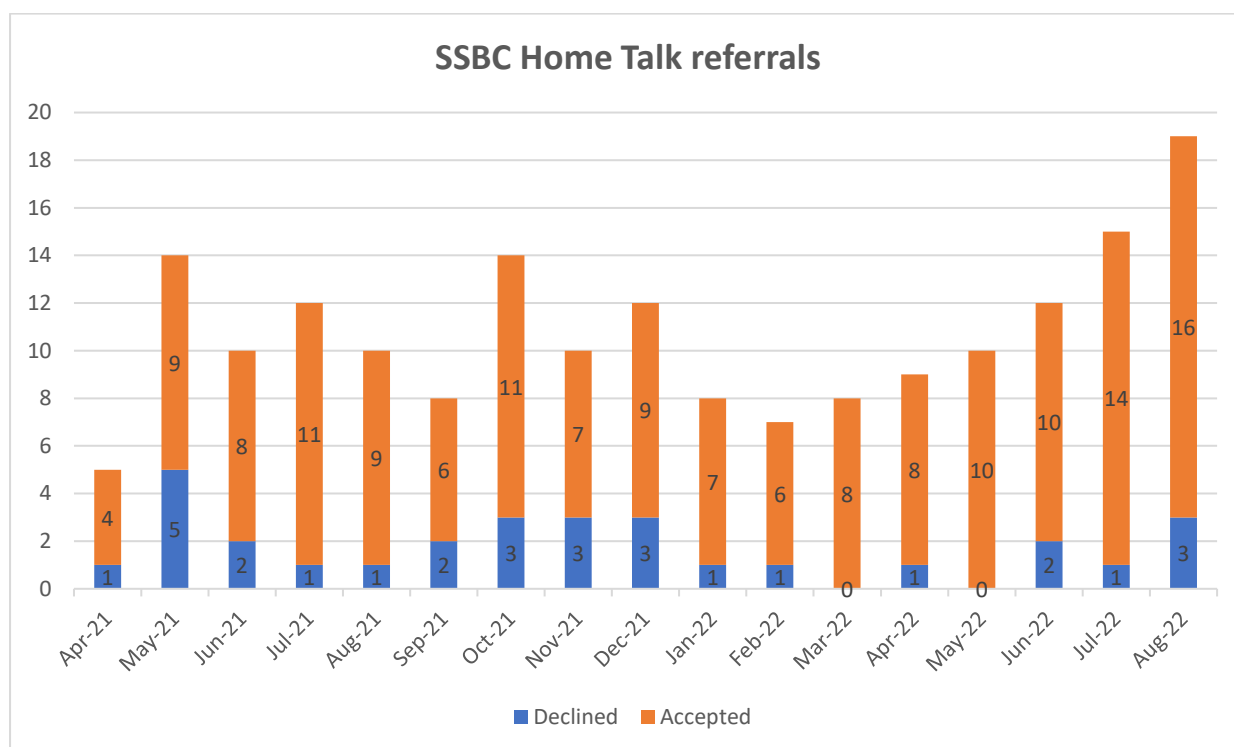


Penny and Diane have been amazing. The course has been a great experience for us and Daniel. We have seen some big improvements in Daniel's communication.

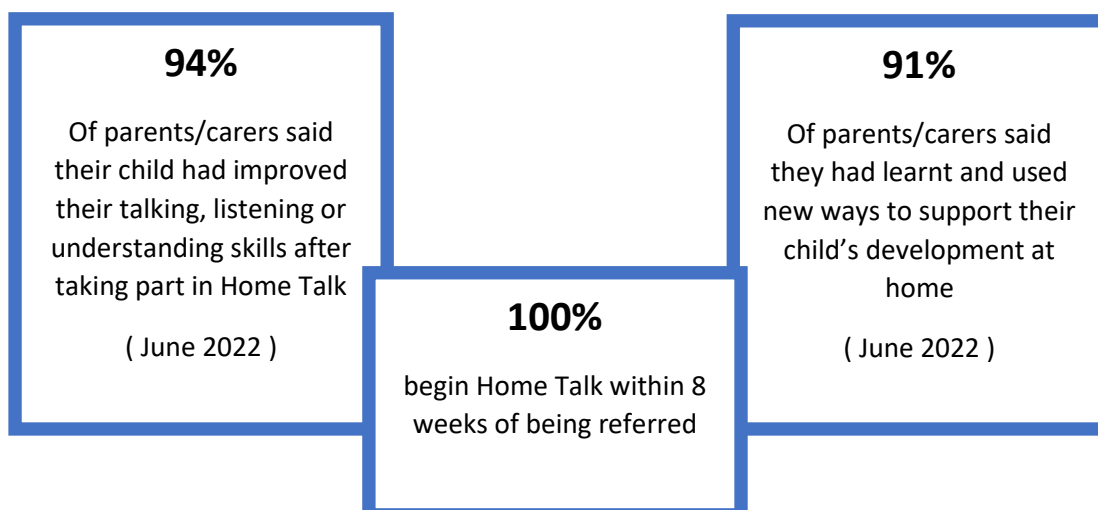
## Home Talk

We expect around 16 two-year-olds to be referred to Home Talk each month. The graph below shows the referrals we have received each month.

We have seen a steady increase through 2022. By August, we received as many referrals as we expect, and a few more. As we are becoming better and better known in the SSBC wards, we expect this to continue.



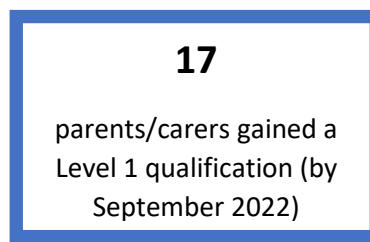
Sometimes we decline referrals to Home Talk. This is usually because the child needs Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) instead. We have set up a system with our colleagues in other SLT teams to 'move' the referral to the right SLT team, without having to go back to the referrer and asking them to fill in a new referral form.



## Let's Talk with Under Fives

In 2021/2022, 21 parents and carers completed the Let's Talk with Under Fives adult learning course.

Every parent/carer who wanted to complete a Level 1 qualification as part of the course achieved the accreditation.



While the feedback to the course has been very positive, fewer parents and carers have attended than we would have liked. Some have told us that it is difficult to find someone to care for their child or children while they attend the 2 hour sessions during the day.

In response, we ran Let's Talk with Under Fives in the evening at a community venue over the summer. A larger group completed the course, and we will plan to run evening courses again during the spring and summer to help people attend.

We are also planning to run a course for Arabic speakers with an interpreter. Two Arabic-speaking parents/carers have asked to attend Let's Talk with Under Five. We are planning for how we can let more Arabic speakers know about it, and we will run a course in Arabic in St Ann's in winter 2022.



## Accessible services

It is important to us that our services and resources are as accessible as possible. This matters because it means everyone who needs our services has a better chance to benefit from them. This section describes some ways we have worked to make our services more accessible.

### 1) Communication Access UK – accreditation

In 2021, we were accredited as a Communication Accessible team. The national Communication Accessible training scheme is led by charities and organisations that share a vision to improve the lives of people with communication difficulties.

As a team, we completed training and agreed to meet the Communication Access standards. This means we are now able to display the Communication Access UK symbol.



We learnt about ways to make communication as easy as possible for everyone – including face-to-face conversation, on the phone and by video call. The ideas are simple but very powerful.

We recommend the training for all teams and organisations who work with people – even if you think you know a lot about communication, you will learn something new.

You can read more about the Communication Access UK scheme at the links below:

[Accreditation awarded to SSBC Speech & Language services | SSBC \(smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk\)](https://smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk)

[Communication Access UK – Inclusive communication for all \(communication-access.co.uk\)](https://communication-access.co.uk)

## 2) Working with families who speak other languages

### Interpreters and bilingual co-workers

We routinely work with interpreters for our appointments, both to interpret for parents/carers who do not speak English fluently, and to help us support children's development in all their languages.

For this SSBC project, we have also set up a working partnership with two bilingual co-workers, Naseem and Skeenia, who are part of the wider city speech and language therapy service.

Naseem and Skeenia each speak five languages, and are both very experienced speech and language therapy practitioners who have worked with young children and their families for many years. They have worked closely with our Home Talk team to jointly deliver sessions for families who speak Mirpuri, Hindi, Urdu or Punjabi.

Naseem said

**Working with the SSBC Home Talk team and promoting the importance of families' home languages at the same time is great. Families are benefiting from Home Talk sessions. Having the support and advice in their home language makes it easier for families to follow. Working with Home Talk as part of a team reaching children who otherwise would not have language support is wonderful.**

Along with Amy from the SSBC team, Naseem and our speech and language therapist Julia gave a presentation about the magic of bilingualism at the Better Start conference in November 2021.

It was a fantastic opportunity to reach a national audience and to showcase the work going on in the SSBC wards. In the session, we shared evidence-based information about the importance and benefits of hearing and learning the home language, and busted some common myths about bilingualism.

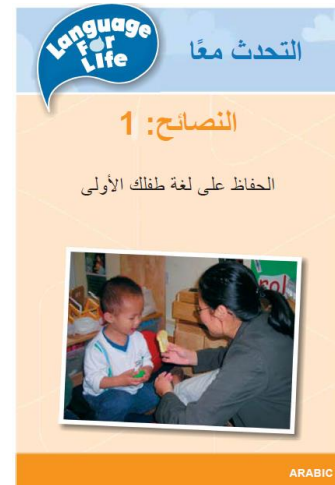
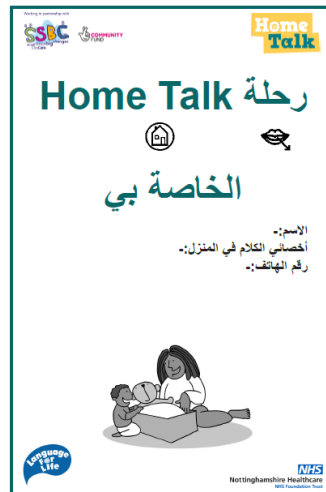
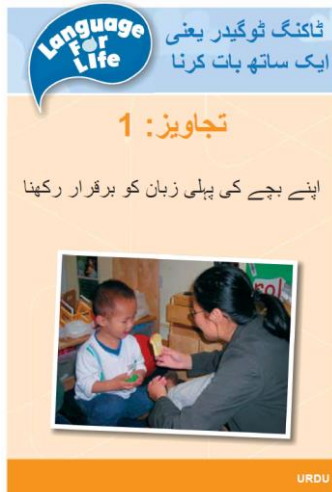
You can read what one person thought about the session here: [Our first words: language development and bilingualism | The National Lottery Community Fund \(tnlcommunityfund.org.uk\)](https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/our-first-words-language-development-and-bilingualism)



### 3) Translated resources

To make sure our information was available in more languages, we translated some of our most used leaflets and resources into the four most commonly spoken languages in the SSBC wards: Romanian, Polish, Urdu and Arabic.

We have shared these with partner services like the Family Mentor and 0 to 19 teams and made them freely available on our website so anyone can download them.



## Partnership working

We believe things are better if you work with other people. This section explains some of the ways we have collaborated with other people and services since our team formed in January 2021.

### 1) Working with Parent Champions

We have worked with SSBC Parent Champions in setting up and delivering new services. This has really helped us improve what we do and how we do it.

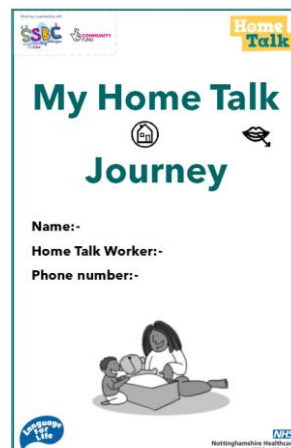
Parent Champions have

- **been part of interview panels for roles in our team.** This has really helped us choose people who have the right skills and knowledge, but - even more importantly - the personal qualities to match SSBC's "parents in the lead" way of working

Thank you for all your support.  
You all are doing an amazing job.

You have definitely  
picked the right  
people to do Home  
Talk and SSBC

- **helped to improve our therapy resources.** Every family uses our Home Talk Learning Journey as a guide for the service. With the help of Parent Champions, we made some big changes to the content and format of the Learning Journey to make it clearer and more useful.



- **helped decide how we run our services.** When we were not able to deliver our Let's Talk with Under Fives course because of Covid-19 lockdowns, we talked with Parent Champions about an option to run the course online by video-call. They told us that many parents and carers had had enough of online services, and didn't want to attend a course on-line.

We agreed it was better to wait until we could deliver the course face-to-face, even if that meant we had to run smaller group sizes because of Covid-19 safety measures. The small groups ran successfully later in the year, with positive feedback from parents who came.

## 2) Training for Early Years Professionals

To introduce our new services, we ran online webinars in spring and autumn 2021. We offered sessions at a range of times throughout the day to make it as easy as possible for people to attend.

In total, 78 practitioners attended. They were from a range of services, including Early Help, city council early years teams, childminders, early years settings, and schools.

### Learning objectives

The aims of the session were to learn about

- speech language and communication services now available in the SSBC wards
- other local early years speech, language and communication services
- useful resources, such as local Language for Life leaflets and posters, and national resources such as Tiny Happy People, and the new Nottingham SLC pathway website
- typical speech language and communication development in 0 to 3 year olds
- bilingual language development
- key strategies and activities which support speech, language and communication development

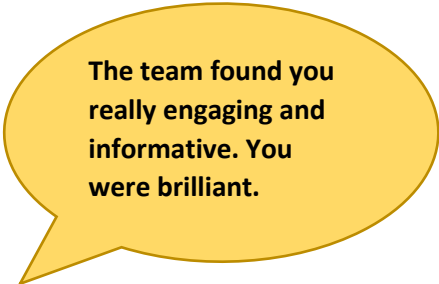
### Impact

50 people completed a feedback form. Practitioners reported gaining new knowledge, especially about services and resources to help children's language development and bilingual language development.

	<b>I learnt a lot</b>	<b>I learnt something</b>	<b>I didn't learn anything new</b>
Services and resources to help children's language and communication	<b>35 (70%)</b>	15 (30%)	0
Typical speech and language development	23 (46%)	25 (50%)	2 (4%)
Bilingual language development	<b>34 (78%)</b>	16 (32%)	0

Practitioners said the training would impact on their practice in a range of ways, especially by

- increasing their knowledge of Home Talk and how children access it
- giving them tools and resources to use and share with parents/carers
- giving them new knowledge about language development, bilingualism, and speech, language and communication needs



**The team found you really engaging and informative. You were brilliant.**



### 3) Training for the 0-19 team

In autumn 2021, we ran face to face training for new starters with the 0-19 team. The training was for members of staff who meet many families when they complete universal development reviews, and some 0 to 19 team managers.

15 staff attended the sessions. The learning objectives were similar to the training sessions for early years teams.

#### Impact of the training

To find out about the impact of the course, we spoke 6 months later to people who had attended. We managed to contact 9 of the 15 learners.

- 5 of 9 had gone on to make referrals to some of our services. When people had not made referrals, it was because the families they work with live outside SSBC wards. One said they could refer two children a month if the services were available in those wards too. One person said they did not know about the Let's Talk with Under Fives course, and we reminded them about it.
- 5 of 9 had used our leaflets, social media and website

Learners also said:

What you are doing is great

Language for Life Ages and Stages leaflets are really useful for universal reviews - used a lot

Really useful training. Use L4L website a lot with families - how to help yourself. Tiny Happy People. Signpost to self-refer to SLT. Really need this type of services in Clifton and Meadows and other areas - even tips sheets would be great

Advised lots of families to speak their own language. Lots of families have been really positive and excited. Sometimes families don't know they are "allowed" to speak their mother tongue. Could this be targeted in the 0-19 birth visit? Maybe a crib sheet with key messages to empower families

Learnt about the importance of speaking the home language early on

Found it helpful and continuing support would be beneficial

Bilingualism comes up the most. Not received the translated leaflets.

Bilingualism comes up the most - parents worry that children are behind that they speak 2 languages. Try to reassure that we want them to learn the home language. Not received the translated leaflets.

really enjoyed the course, very informative. The leaflets were great

Use L4L all the time and Tiny Happy People. A lot of people learnt that often children might not understand when we think they do.

#### 4) Early Years working group

In Nottingham, there are many different services available to support children's early speech and language development. A local consultation showed that only around half of families know who to contact if they have concerns about their child's speech language and communication. Practitioners can also find it difficult to navigate the local system and find the right service for a family.

The Speech Language and Communication Group Implementation Group run by SSBC discussed this problem. Together, we decided to put together a working group to create resources to make it easier for children to reach the right early intervention service.



The Early Intervention Speech and Language team have volunteered to organise the group. The working group includes a wide range of people, including an SSBC parent champion, and representatives from many services, including the autism service, early years settings, city council early years teams, the 0 to 19 team, Family Mentors, Early Help, and the library service.

In autumn 2022, the group will work together to produce some simple documents to help families and professionals find the services they need. These might include posters, short booklets, or other useful documents people can keep in their bag, diary or drawer.

The group is aiming to share these new resources around the city from November 2022.

## Tiny Steps to Talking – Aamira’s story

Aamira was referred to Tiny Steps to Talking by her Mum Amina, after she had met one of the Early Intervention Speech and Language team at a community play group. Aamira was aged 20 months.

### **The service delivered:**

Aamira and Amina attended all six Tiny Steps to Talking sessions at a local community venue. The family’s main language is Arabic, so we arranged for the family to attend with an interpreter.

### **Assessment:**

Aamira was very active and interested in the toys in the group. Adults had to work hard to engage her in interaction. Aamira did not clearly communicate what she wanted or needed, and did not say any words. She did not show understanding of what adults said, such as short instructions.

We worked with Amina to adapt the strategies learnt in the group to make them as useful as possible for Aamira. For example, when we learnt about “follow your child’s lead”, we coached Amina to adapt this strategy to make sure she was very close by and face-to-face with Aamira, and gave her lots of time to think and act before responding to her.

### **Next steps:**

After the group finished, we visited Aamira at home with an interpreter to complete Behavioural Emotional and Mental Health (BEMH) and speech and language therapy (SLT) referrals for Aamira, and provide some more support and coaching for Amina.

We kept in close touch with Aamira’s Family Mentor throughout. After the BEMH team received our referral, they wrote in English to ask the family to fill in another form. After discussion with the Family Mentor, she visited the family to help them understand and complete the form, as Amina does not read English.

### **The impact of the service:**

Amina reported she had found the group very helpful and had learnt new strategies to help Aamira’s communication. We saw her using these strategies skilfully in the group and at home.

Aamira now interacts for longer with adults, shows more understanding of some everyday words like body parts, and uses non-verbal ways to communicate what she wants. For example, she might now look at an adult or physically show you when she wants you to do something.

It was helpful to see Aamira at home as well as in the group. During the visit, Aamira was distracted from play with adults when the television was on in the background. We discussed information and advice about screen time with Amina, and she planned to make some changes to reduce screen time during play times at home.

Aamira accessed early intervention with us before she was 2 years old, and has been referred on for more support with the specialist autism SLT team, and the BEMH pathway.

### **System working:**

Working with Aamira and her family helped us build some links with the BEMH service. We gave the BEMH team some feedback about the accessibility of their letter to the family, and they are reviewing what they write in letters to make it clear exactly what parents/carers need to do. We have also agreed to work together as services to share ideas on how we translate letters for families.

## Improvement plans

### **Visibility and collaboration**

Part of the role of our team member who delivers the SPLATT service is to attend local community groups and events to provide speech, language and communication information, and increase awareness of our services. We have already seen the positive effect of this. In August 2022, we received more referrals than for our services.

A key aim for us is to increase our visibility and integration with other people in the city, and we are working hard on getting to know people. We are trying different ways of doing this, such as arranging to drop in to Family Mentor bases during the day so we can get to know each other better.

### **Tiny Steps to Talking evaluation**

We have worked with Professor Sarah Redsell from the University of Nottingham to plan an evaluation of our Tiny Steps to Talking group.

We would like to understand more about the experience of talking part in the group. We plan to invite parents/carers who have completed the group to talk part in an interview to tell us about their experience.

By listening to the experiences and ideas of parents and carers, we aim to improve the Tiny Steps to Talking group.

