

# Working Together to...

Improve uptake of eligible 2 year old ELC places within the Garnock Valley Area

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Strengthening partnerships and processes to facilitate 2 year olds to access Early Learning and Childcare has been a focused priority within North Ayrshire since 2014. As a result, nearly 1400 children since inception have accessed their eligible 2 year place across North Ayrshire as a whole. Local data however shows uptake is variable, with some communities experiencing a particularly low uptake compared to others. In order to ensure an equitable approach to promotion and access to opportunities for children and families afforded by high quality early learning and childcare, we decided to work to increase uptake in these communities namely the Garnock Valley incorporating Beith, Dalry, Kilbirnie & Glengarnock.

**Aim:** To increase uptake of eligible 2 year old places within the Garnock Valley area of North Ayrshire by 75% by August 2019.

## Method

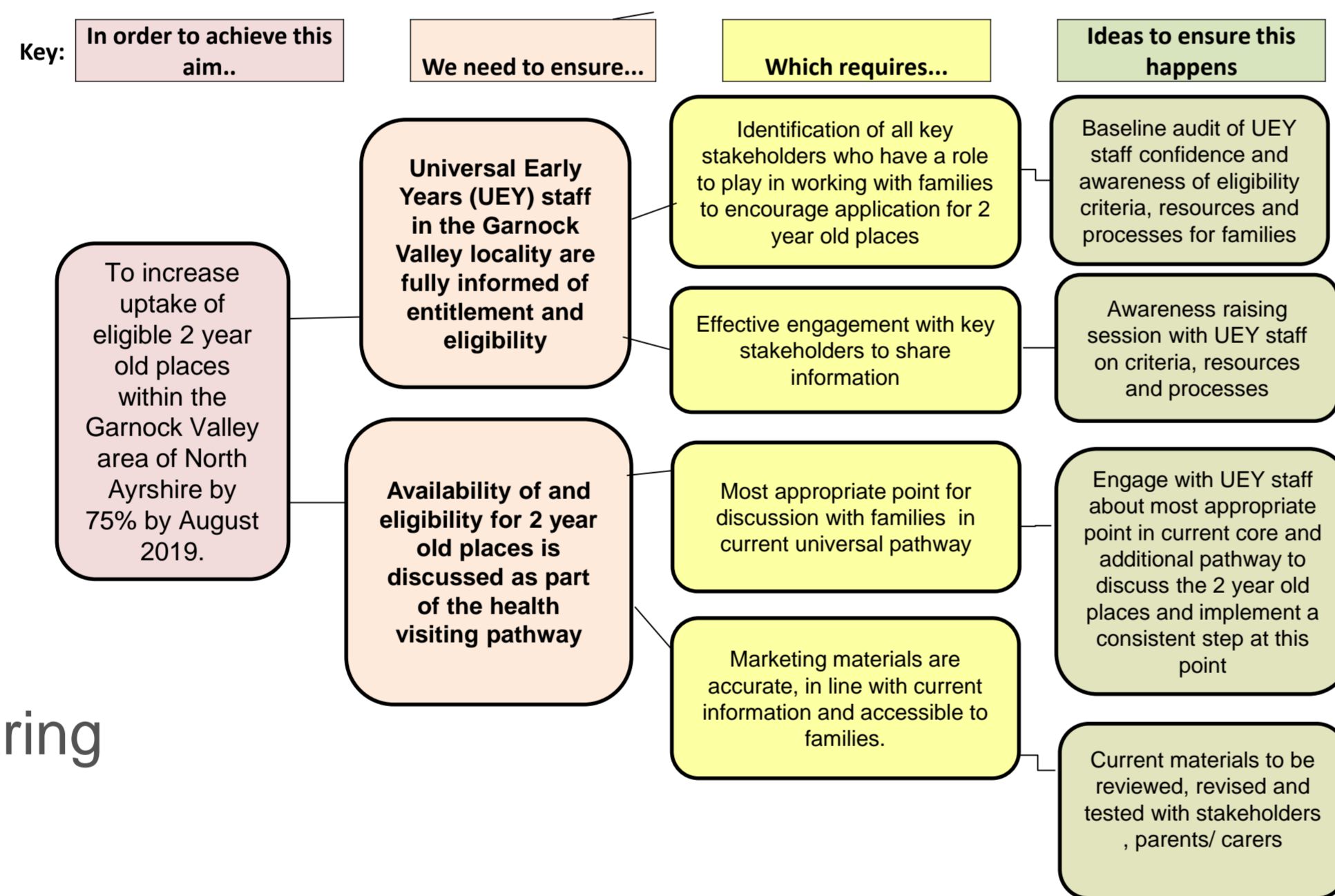
Baseline data on 2 year old places already held by North Ayrshire Council informed the current up-take in the area of focus sitting at 9.3% of the whole. We process mapped the application procedure and invited Early Years Universal staff to be involved in assisting efforts in understanding opportunities for improvement in our system. Through this we generated an increasing appreciation that challenged assumption as practitioners were expressing a knowledge gap in their understanding of the details of the entitlement offer. We then carried out a baseline audit of awareness and confidence of Universal Early Years staff (health visiting) working within the Garnock Valley area and the qualitative data from this informed our theory of change.

## Process Change

Universal Early Years (UEY) staff are well placed to engage families in conversations about the availability of 2 year places in their community enabling understanding of potential benefits on a personalised and individual family level. Our change ideas were informed by a recognition of the significant role UEY staff have as a key point of contact to support early intervention and support for families. A primary driver within our theory of change was therefore awareness and confidence about eligibility and entitlement within this staff group.

Tests of Change included:

- A staff questionnaire developed for use with UEY staff.
- Staff awareness sessions
- A practitioner resource to support awareness.
- Check-in with UEY staff through focus groups and audits
- Information leaflet for promoting awareness/sharing with families



## Achievements

- We achieved our aim of 75% increase and exceeded this
- We further developed relationships between Universal Early Years staff and education staff
- We tested something which can be scaled up with relative ease
- We developed an improved resource through testing which clearly sets out eligibility criteria and the process for applying
- We developed our data collections system to incorporate more detail about source of family initiated enquiries. This will inform ongoing improvement across our system

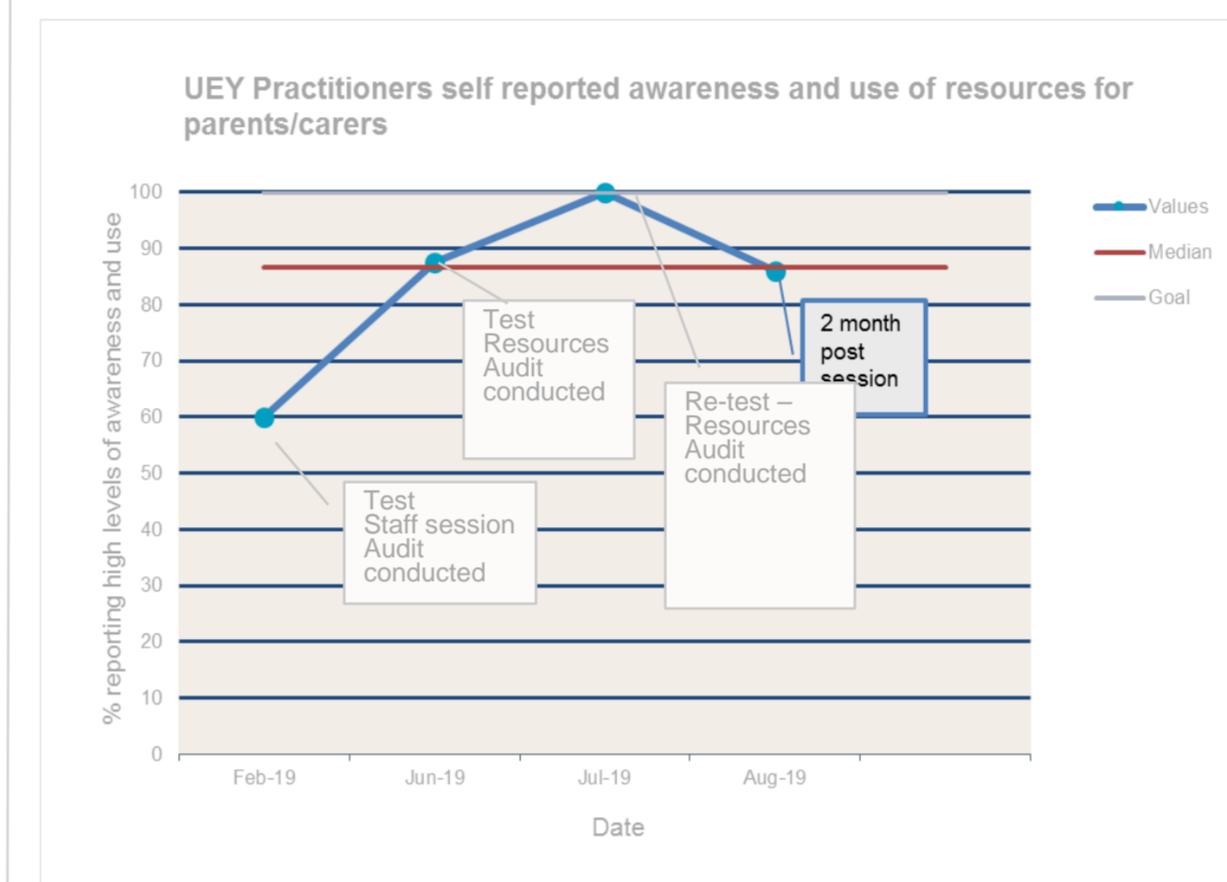
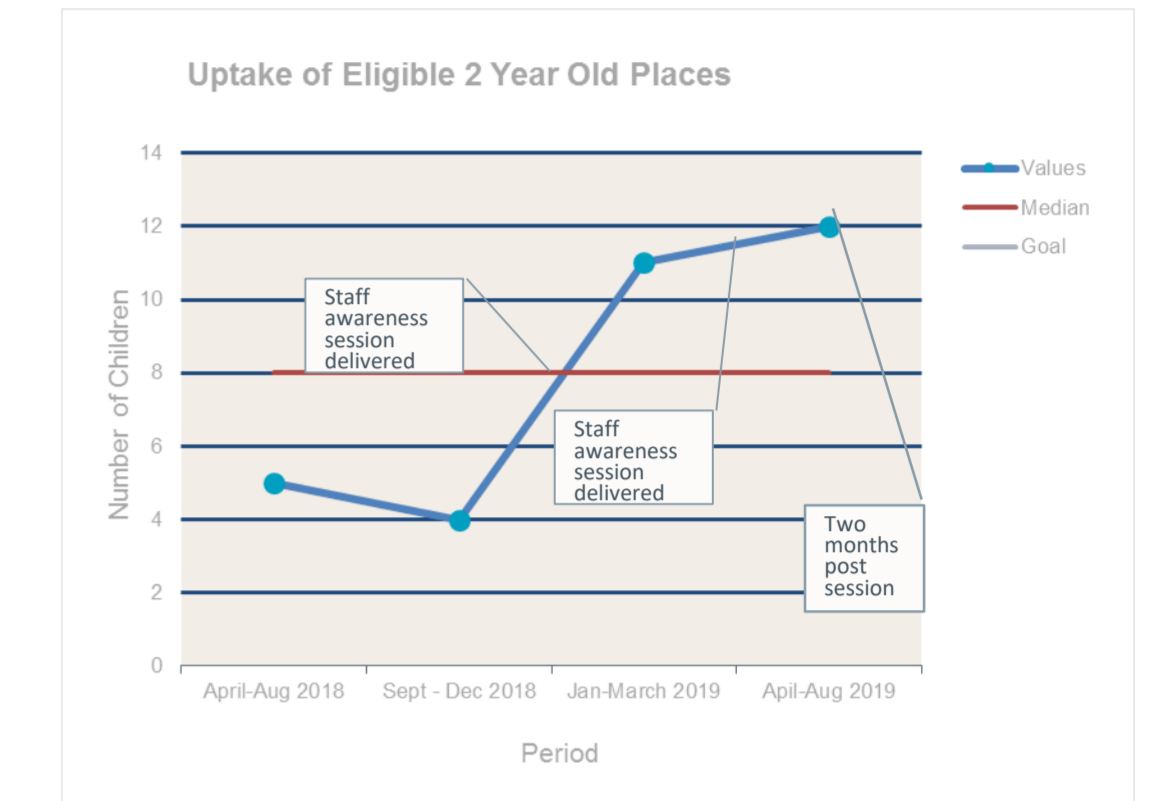


## Key Learning Points

- **Ownership** – buy-in from and involvement of UEY staff was crucial to progressing the work and generating ideas that ‘stick’;
- **Integration** – ensuring the process could be added in easily to the Universal HV Pathway so as not to create additional work;
- **Collaboration** – only by working together, could we take forward the change ideas and see results;
- **Knowledge** - Using the “Lens of Profound Knowledge” and applying this to identifying areas for improvement.

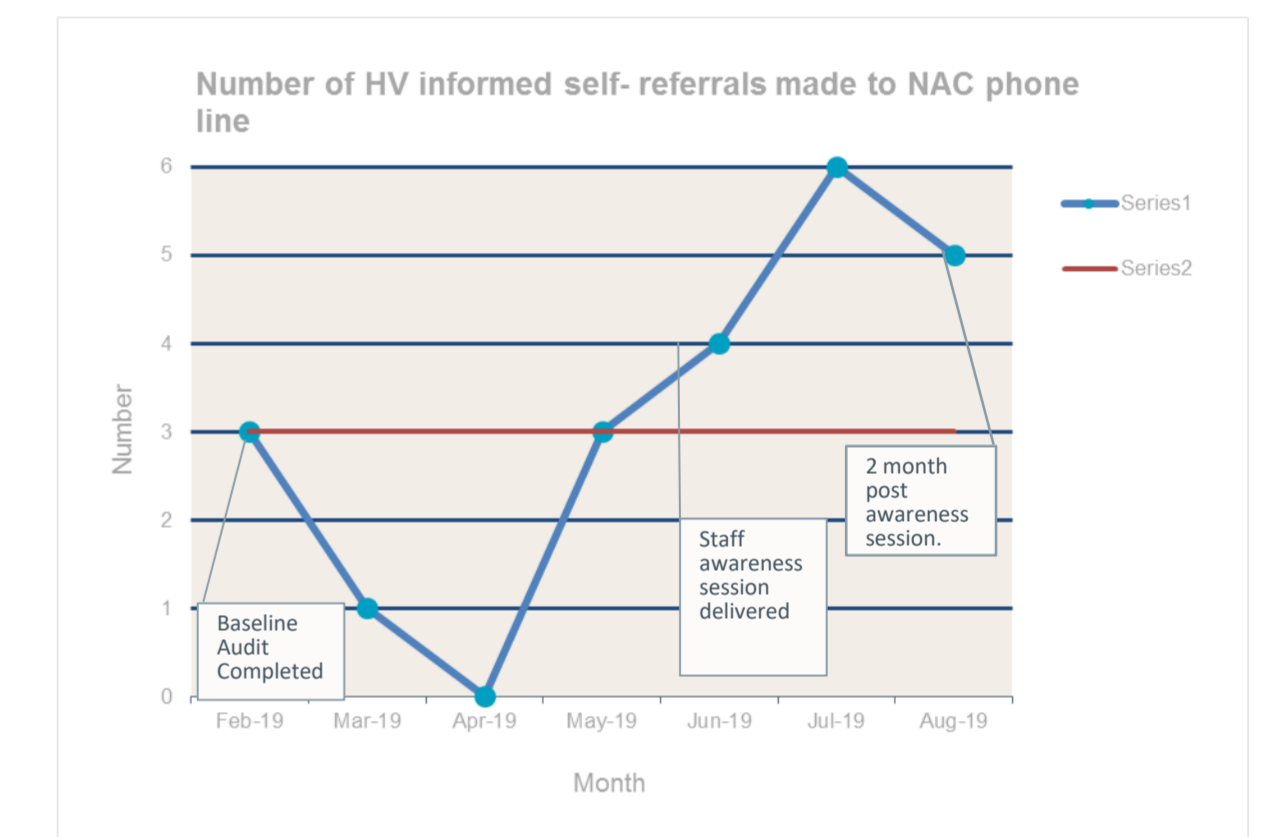
## Results

Outcomes measure – This graph shows the aim of 75% (N=8 .75) increase. Uptake was exceeded with increased uptake within the Garnock Valley Area of 140% (N= 12)



Universal EY Staff (HV) awareness sessions saw a marked increase in confidence in knowledge of eligibility criteria

This confidence and knowledge directly increased the number of HV Informed self-referrals made to the NAC phone line



## Conclusions

The outcome achieved in this project far exceeded our expectations and has stimulated our enthusiasm for what can be achieved with a focus on *the right people at the right time*. We feel that this project has delivered high impact for relatively low effort which is an important consideration when services are working in circumstances of constant demand. Tracking sufficient data over time in order to understand sustainable improvement is a recognised limitation of this project. This is in part due to the reliance on a quarterly data extract which will continue to be monitored. We are already planning for how we carry the key learning forward to other areas within North Ayrshire to ensure staff are aware of the eligibility criteria and the process for families to apply.

**Parent:** It's meant that I can have time for me, and that my son has time to play with others and to help him learn

**Health visitor:** Children are optimising their brain development with this early intervention and parents are keen to access parenting groups which enhances and complements the Daycare/nursery service provision

**Parent:** My little girl joined the acorn room at the beginning of the year and the staff made her joining a very easy process. She was happy to come every morning from the beginning and the staff at Garnock Community Campus couldn't have been more helpful

## Next Steps

As an Early Years partnership, we plan to use the learning from the project to roll out to other areas across North Ayrshire.

The revised leaflet will be shared broadly across services and communities to promote 2 year old Early Learning & Childcare places.

We will spread eligibility criteria awareness with other Universal Early Years Teams and partners across the Local Authority.

We will continue to test and monitor data pertaining to up-take