

Background/ Rationale: In August 2016 Treetop Family Nurture Centre transformed into a 52 week ELC service, with the service opening a new playroom for 2 year old children in addition to the existing 3 playrooms for 3 – 5 year old children. This change to service delivery brought about significant staff changes, with many new practitioners joining the service along with the appointment of a new senior leadership team. Through self evaluation, the new team identified the need to develop practitioner skills in supporting children’s early language and communication, and in particular how daily interactions could help build and extend children’s speech and language skills.

Aim: By June 2020 80% (n=23/29) of all 4 & 5-year-olds will be within expected early language and communication developmental milestones.

Innovation to date

Practitioners adopted a model of professional learning which builds capacity and encourages children’s early language and communication development as well as promoting collaborative practices. This model of learning empowers practitioners to enable them to meet the needs of all learners. In partnership with Speech and Language Therapists this professional learning forms the “Treetop Top 5 Communication Strategies”.

Summary of Learning

Impact on Pedagogy

- Practitioners implement their enhanced skills to extend learners’ use of language by using the Treetop Top 5 Communication strategies.
- Practitioners adopt a range of peer and self-evaluation techniques, including video analysis, peer observations and centre exchange visits to reflect upon and improve interaction skills with learners.
- Practitioners use signing and the use of symbols to support developing communication.
- Practitioners use literacy benchmarks and developmental skills pathways to better assess and plan for children’s next steps in learning.

Impact on Learners and Families

- Learners show increasing confidence in communication skills with adults and each other.
- Parents have taken part in Language and Communication Open Days, Stay and Play Sessions and Parent Workshops. These family learning activities and parental workshops allow parents to gain an insight into how to develop language and communication skills in everyday situations.

Key Achievements to Date

- ✓ Practitioners have a shared understanding of language and communication milestones for learners and how to best enrich this.
- ✓ All learners are supported with universal strategies which assist support language and communication development
- ✓ Practitioners embrace a culture of collaborative learning rooted in an ethos of trusting relationships and mutual respect.
- ✓ The language and communication development and needs of learners are better understood, planned for and moderated.
- ✓ Partnership working with Speech and Language Therapy professionals has been strengthened.



Supporting Evidence

After initial language and communication development training, all practitioners were supported by speech and language therapists who modelled the use of interaction strategies with learners and coaching practitioners on their use. Practitioners used self evaluation and peer observation to identify individual professional learning goals which were subsequently reviewed. Video clips of language interactions with children were gathered and collegiately analysed. Practitioners completed learning rounds in different playrooms to observe interactions and the quality of communication environments. The progress of learners was monitored in personal learning journals and through the use of an early language in play observation schedule and appropriate interventions made.

Professional learning should be:

- Challenging, and develop thinking, knowledge, skills and understanding
- Underpinned by developing skills of enquiry and criticality
- Interactive, reflective and involve learning with and from others.

“National Model of Professional Learning”, Education Scotland



Next Steps

As the service continues to expand and new practitioners join the team, we will continue to embed the Treetop Top 5 Communication Strategies.

Further change ideas continue to be tested and our professional peer coaching approach to professional learning further developed.

