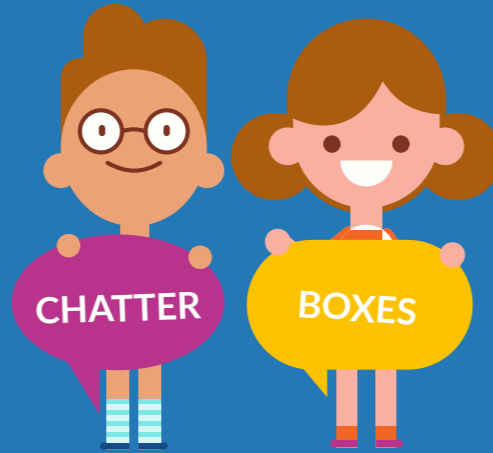


Chatterboxes's mission:

To collaborate with significant others in children's lives and communities to provide quality speech and language therapy supports so that all children are able to reach their full potential.



Recommendations

- 1 Continue to work towards a mainstream approach to prevention and early intervention response to SLCN underpinned by collaboration.
- 2 Focus on universal and targeted services for oral language development to compliment clinical focused supports.
- 3 Develop and deliver training to empower EYSs/schools to screen for language development difficulties and refer to the appropriate service, supporting an effective prevention and early intervention approach to SLCN.
- 4 Consider a drop-in SLT clinic in local community centres, schools or early years services.
- 5 Prioritise strengthening capacities in parents who are the best resource for developing language in children.
- 6 Continue with developing innovative approaches utilising parenting programmes that focus on positive communication and language development strategies within their overall approach.
- 7 Explore ways to enhance the sharing of information with parents about what SLT programmes are being run in their children's schools and communities and measure the impact of these supports.
- 8 Enhance the transfer of skills from SLTs to early years educators and schools including ongoing access to supervision, mentoring and coaching for staff who have been trained in language development programmes.
- 9 Provide a platform for sharing and pooling knowledge, experience, resources and evidence on oral language development.
- 10 Ongoing screening assessments and quality provision measurement must be inbuilt within each area of the Chatterboxes initiative.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sustainability Through Collaboration

An Interim report of the Chatterboxes Initiative, a Prevention and Early Intervention approach to Speech, Language and Communication Needs in the Bray area

The primary aim of this report is to explore how a collaborative approach can be an effective way of identifying and responding to needs in a community.

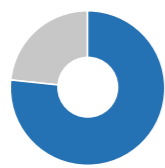
This report explores the set up and impact of the Chatterboxes Initiative, co funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Bray Area Partnership's Supporting Parents and Early Childhood Services (SPECS) Initiative. By pooling resources and through building on research and evidence of previous local, national and international reports on speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), SPECS and the HSE Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) team have successfully intensified efforts to support children's language and communication needs in Bray. The report highlights how working collaboratively has positively impacted on practitioner confidence by improving language and vocabulary levels of preschool and school children. Further it has helped to normalise speech and language therapy at community level to provide prevention and early intervention supports to parents from an early stage, with particular hard to reach parents.

The common understanding of desired outcomes enabled SPECS and the SLT team to devise a person centred model of service delivery that would use evidence based programmes and reflect the shared goals of each service and demonstrate value for money. The report documents the process of collaboration, qualitative reflections from practitioners and quantitative language development screenings to illustrate the experience and outcomes of the programme moving SLT from clinical focused practice to a more universal and target preventative approach.



46.5%

of children tested in Bray's community EYS had a language delay



76.7%

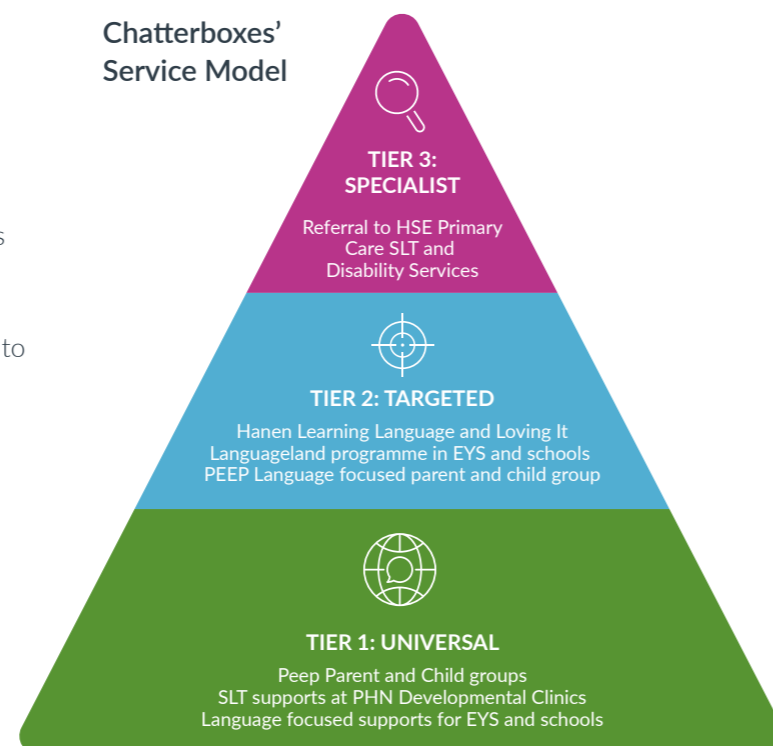
of children tested in Bray's community EYS were below average for vocabulary

Model of Practice

In 2017 HSE SLT team in Bray and the BAP SPECS team began exploring a prevention and early intervention approach utilising a collaborative model to promote a system wide change of practice in addressing SLCN. Within this systems change model a HSE Primary Care Speech and Language Therapist was placed with SPECS four days a week to deliver on a locally agreed plan of action, alongside support from SPECS staff and a match funding approach was agreed by both agencies. The buy-in at management level to support a new approach to meeting needs locally was an essential element in progressing a more innovative approach to SLCN.

Alongside this a screening process to assess the specific needs within the children attending local community based Early Years Services (EYS) also took place highlighting a specific need around vocabulary levels. Through evidencing of need and collaboration the SLT Team and SPECS jointly planned for a new way of working locally to address SLCN. Based on the recommendations from the Rafferty report (2014) alongside evidence of local needs it was agreed that the plan for the area needed to focus at 3 levels of interventions:

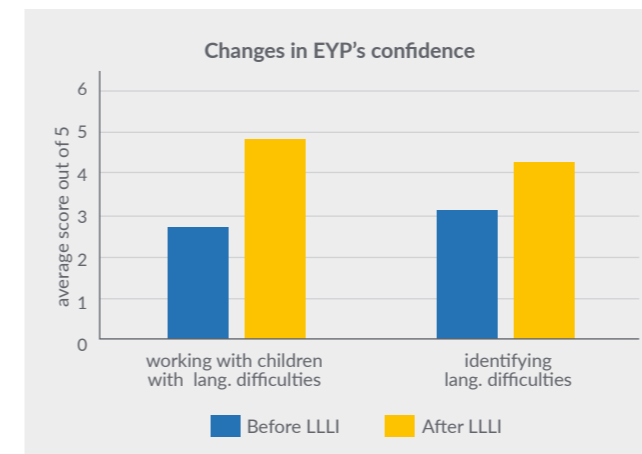
Chatterboxes' Service Model



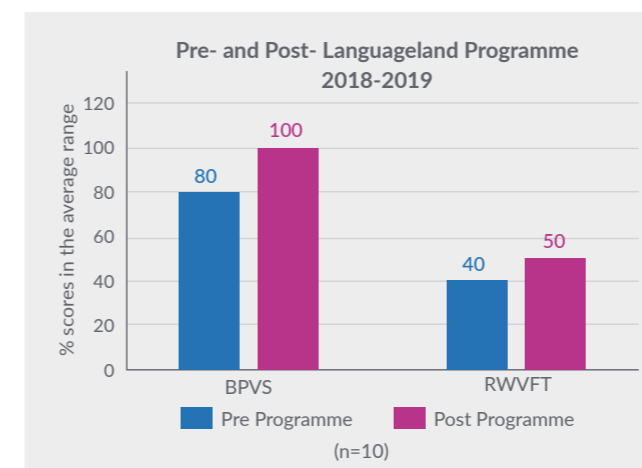
Findings Summary



The initiative has illustrated impact and outcomes in a number of areas:



Levels of EYP confidence pre- and post-Hanan Learning Language and Loving It training.



Screening assessment results pre- and post-Langugeland, 2018-2019.

Outcomes

- Staff reported an increase in confidence when working with children with language difficulties
- Staff reported an increased awareness of language development
- Children's scores on standardised assessments improved
- Children who participated in language focused programmes were observed to be more interactive and talkative by teachers

Learning Experiences from the Chatterbox Initiative

A number of critical factors have been identified which have promoted the success of the collaborative approach to addressing SLCN in the Bray Area:

1. Buy-in from management is essential to innovative collaborative models of practice.
2. Evidencing needs locally can lead to a more targeted response.
3. Collaboration can lead to enriched engagement of harder to reach families.
4. Set up of language development supports which focus on parents as the key educators in the community are essential, particularly where SLCN are identified early.
5. Providing language development supports in the community is important in normalising Speech and Language Therapy and encouraging early onward referrals if needs are identified.
6. The availability of ongoing mentoring and coaching is critical in sustaining programmes in early years and school settings.

While generally the progress and impact has been very positive, some challenges were identified in the set up and implementation of the programme

1. A flexible approach is necessary in meeting individual needs of services/schools.
2. Understanding a new way of working can be a challenge at times.
3. Time constraints of services and schools to implement new programmes and approaches is sometimes a barrier.
4. Staff availability for training especially if funded non contact hours are limited.