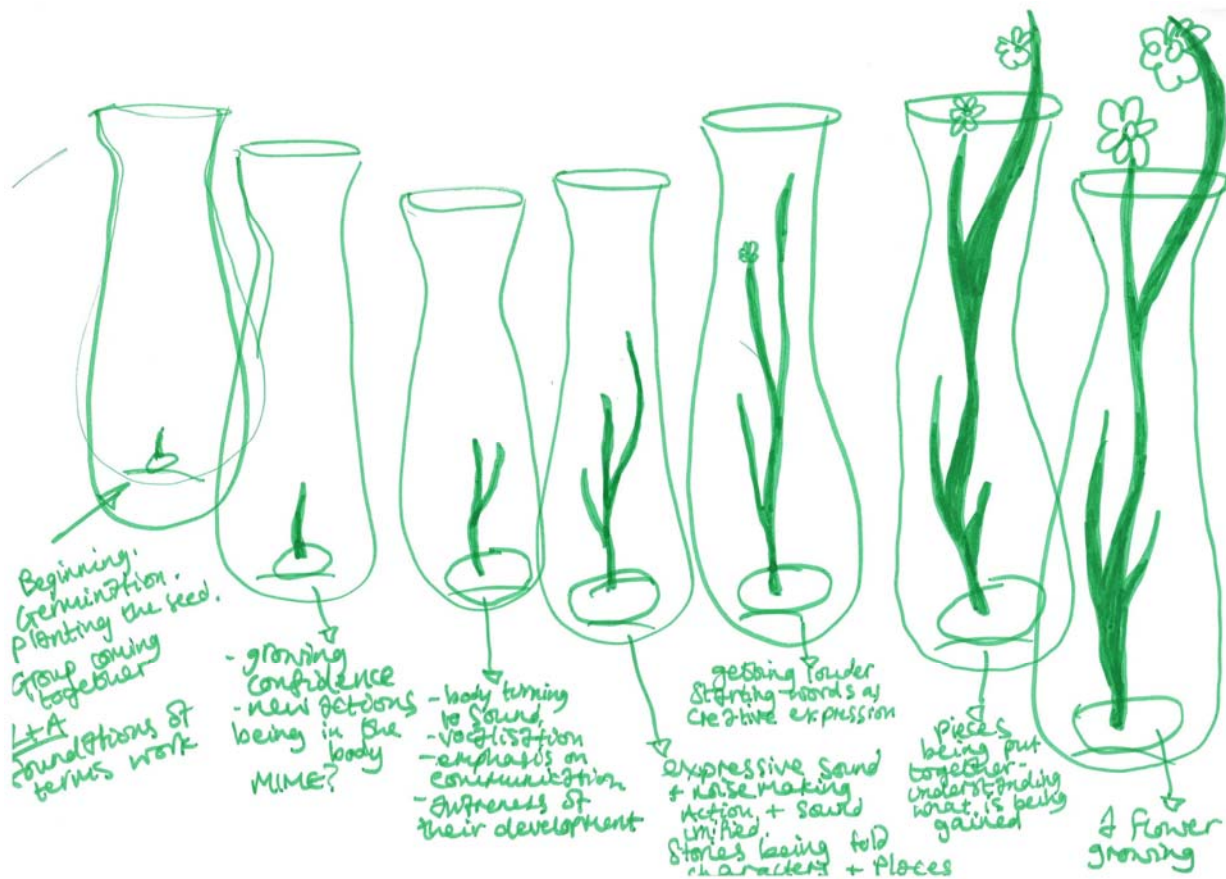


Evaluation of Speak Out

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Pattern of a typical Speak Out term: Marigold Hughes, Maria Thomas and Alex Evans

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Introduction

'Communication is the key life skill for every child – if they are to achieve at school, make friends and be successful in later life.'¹

Speak Out was a project which targeted children identified by their schools as having difficulties with speech and language. It was delivered in partnership between schools, drama practitioners and speech and language therapists (SLTs). Drama practitioners and SLTs delivered weekly sessions with 20 children over a year to engage with them and encourage and develop their speech and language. The project worked with three cohorts of primary schools (in total 18 schools) over a two and a half year period. The key partners were Lewisham Education Arts Network (LEAN) which managed the programme, Lewisham Extended Services, Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's Theatre (GLYPT), London Bubble, Lewisham Primary Care Trust's Speech and Language department and the 18 primary schools.

This evaluation assesses the impact of the project on the children involved and the impact on the key partners in terms of their professional development and the collaboration itself. The evaluation draws conclusions as to the success and challenges of this type of project and makes recommendations for future collaborations between arts, health and education. The evaluation has a particular focus on partnership working as this was the emphasis required by the main funder, Arts Council England (ACE), London.

For the purposes of this evaluation, I will refer to the cohorts of schools as Cohort 1, 2 and 3. Cohort 1 denotes the first group of schools to participate in Speak Out, Cohort 2 indicates the second and Cohort 3 indicates the third group of schools to participate.

Background to Speak Out

Lewisham Extended Services is split up into cohorts of schools in designated areas across the borough. One cohort of six schools identified that they had increasing numbers of pupils with speech and language development needs and wanted to find a way to address this through collaboration. This concern mirrored Enderby and Pickstone's (2005) finding that inner cities and areas with disadvantaged communities (such as Lewisham) have a high prevalence of speech and language difficulties (between 18-31%) compared to the national average of 7.4% in school-aged children (Tomblin et al, as cited in Law et al 2002). The need to address this collaboratively also came about because of the reduced speech and language therapist provision for children.

The extended services coordinator had worked on an arts and health project previously and approached Lewisham Primary Care Trust's Speech and Language department and LEAN to develop a plan that could address the schools' needs using a partnership between arts and health. GLYPT and London Bubble were approached and both were keen to get involved in the collaboration. Extended Services, supported by LEAN, put forward the application to ACE, London. LEAN

¹ The Bercow Review Of Services For Children And Young People (0-19) With Speech, Language And Communication Needs (2008)

acted as the overall manager of Speak Out in partnership with Extended Services. The aim was to work with these six schools first and then roll out the programme to two other cohorts in the west of the borough. The nature of the funding meant that there would be an overlap between the school cohorts.

The project was innovative and had potential to create a new approach to addressing children's speech and language difficulties combining arts and health. It brought together the skills and expertise of different professionals with the intention that this should impact on their own practice. This was an important outcome of the project.

Therefore, the aims of Speak Out were:

- to address the speech and language needs of the children referred by the schools
- to develop partnership working between arts and health
- to create new models of working
- to create and promote a positive attitude to the arts within the schools and across Lewisham.

Evaluation methodology

Evidence collected to inform the evaluation included questionnaires, interviews, workshops, observations of sessions and Lewisham Speech and Language Therapy unit's assessment of a sample of children. Due to the limited time for the evaluation and the extent of the project, this approach was the most expedient. Except for the SLT assessment, most of the evidence is qualitative in order to gain a deeper understanding of the successes and challenges of the work.

There were nine evaluation workshops in total, three per cohort of schools, attended by the drama practitioners, SLTs and school inclusion managers or learning support assistants. These did provide useful evidence of the project's progress, but they mainly facilitated an opportunity for the partners to discuss the work across the schools, identify challenges and seek to address them as a whole. This was valuable, particularly at the start of the project.

The following identifies the methods of evidence collection:

- Speech and Language Report: the results and analysis from a sample of children assessed from the 18 primary schools
- Interviews with managers/head teachers from LEAN, GLYPT, London Bubble, Lewisham SLT unit, Horniman, Dalmain, Fairlawn schools
- Interviews with children in two schools
- Pre and post assessment questionnaire to classroom teachers in the final cohort of schools
- Questionnaire directed at speech and language therapists, drama practitioners, head teachers and the school inclusion managers and learning support assistants (LSAs) present in the sessions from the school
- Children's evaluation conducted by the school
- Outcomes from nine summative evaluation workshops
- The interim report sent to Arts Council England, London
- Meetings and informal conversations with partners involved in the programme
- Observations of the workshops

- Parents' evaluation
- Attendance at SLT training and drama practice sharing

Limitations of the evaluation

The evaluation was limited by time allocated for gathering evidence. It was also limited to the data received from the partner organisations and those that participated in the evaluation workshops. Out of the 18 schools participating, nine completed all the evaluation questionnaires, the children's evaluation and attended the workshops (significantly this included the five schools in the final cohort). Five schools contributed to some of the evaluation. Four schools did attend at least one evaluation workshop but did not contribute to the paperwork evaluation. The SLTs and all except three drama practitioners completed questionnaires. All SLTs and drama practitioners attended the evaluation workshops.

A particular challenge throughout was to gain the classroom teachers perspective of the children's development. In the original information sent out by LEAN to inclusion managers (formerly known as Special Educational Needs Coordinators), there was an expectation that classroom teachers would write a short supporting statement about the impact of the project for all those children participating. However, this has not been brought to the attention of the evaluator if it has taken place and it did not seem clear who was supposed to instigate this type of assessment from the beginning.

Speak Out spanned two academic years in the first two cohorts which would have made assessment difficult for teachers as they would not be able to observe children consistently across an academic year. However, in an attempt to gain classroom teachers' views of Speak Out's impact, teachers from the last five schools were asked to complete an assessment of the children attending Speak Out before and after the project.

Finally, the data received from the parents' workshops is patchy, which makes it difficult to draw any overall conclusion from these workshops.

The project

The 18 schools selected twenty children each based on referral criteria created by the key partners. The schools completed a referral form for each child and notified their parents that they would be participating in the programme.

The aim was to deliver a weekly ninety minute session per school for eight weeks each term for a year. These were to be delivered in partnership by drama practitioners and speech and language therapists accompanied by a teacher, teaching assistant or inclusion manager. Workshops with parents were also delivered to explain the project.

LEAN and Extended Services set up Speak Out with the schools (which each had to make a £2K financial commitment) and brokered any agreements. There were no INSETs prior to the work starting.

London Bubble and GLYPT were responsible for populating Speak Out with drama practitioners and managing them. Lewisham SLT unit did the same with speech and language therapists. Two drama practitioners were commissioned for each session because this was the modus operandi of both drama organisations and was needed as the SLT could not attend every session. It was up to the school to determine which staff member participated in the sessions but this was often a learning support assistant.

The aim of the sessions was to combine the SLTs knowledge of speech and language with the creativity and imagination of the drama practitioners to create an environment where the children's speaking, listening and confidence would increase. The sessions focused on listening and attention, memory and sequencing, vocabulary, verbal understanding, expressive language, and social skills. The practitioners and SLTs used a wide variety of visual cues (e.g. story cards, visual timetable), drama (e.g. play what you say, story square), sharing (e.g. news sharing), games (e.g. SPLAT!), group listening games and stories (retelling stories, modelling story making, turn taking). They also kept to a structure which was repeated for each session ('ritual process'). Songs, puppets, role play, 'magic carpet' all enhanced the children's experiences of multisensory learning.

After each session the practitioners, SLTs and LSAs would evaluate the session and plan for the next. Occasionally, classroom teachers and the inclusion managers came to observe sessions particularly in later cohorts.

The lead SLT offered two half day training sessions on speech and language for the drama practitioners to develop their knowledge. These were instrumental to the development of the project: 'Equipped with this understanding and with the expertise of the therapist, the planning of sessions became more rigorous, tailored to the needs of individuals and once we had the aims and objectives in place, the use of drama exercises became more considered and placed within the overall structure of the project.' (Drama practitioner) The SLTs and drama practitioners also built in two practice sharing sessions.

There were two parents' workshops per term in each school to explain Speak Out and demonstrate what took place in a session. The children also attended these sessions and led the exercises in some cases.

There was an expectation of equal partnership between the SLTs and drama practitioners. As the SLTs could not attend all workshops it was up to the drama practitioners to continue the planned work and update the SLTs on their return.

The evaluation workshops provided an opportunity to share the challenges and successes of the project and identify ways of overcoming obstacles. They also facilitated sharing of what was taking place across the schools and provided information for the inclusion managers to share with the rest of the school about the project.

Speak Out – the journey

From the beginning, all the partners involved felt that this was an exciting and innovative idea and were prepared to make it work. However, some of the decisions made at the beginning had an impact further down the line. These

included the timing of the project and the recruitment of the speech and language therapist and the availability of the SLTs throughout. As with any new and pioneering work, lessons were also learned throughout the project which benefitted those joining it at a later stage. These included the criteria for referring children, the style of session, commitment of schools and the relationship between the partners.



Pattern of a typical Speak Out year: Evan Placey, Fiona Whitelaw

The project was significantly marred at the beginning, because it started without a speech and language therapist. Although the recruitment process had begun, other partners were keen to start the project and had not accounted for the length of time recruitment would take. As a result, the drama practitioners delivered the sessions. These sessions were highly regarded by the schools and drama practitioners were praised for their work, but they were not fulfilling the agreed Speak Out aims. Schools felt that the programme had become a drama project rather than a partnership with SLT. Drama organisations felt at times the poor relation to the SLT partner because of this view and the expectation from some schools that the work should be SLT led.

When the SLT was recruited, there were often timetable clashes: double bookings and not enough time allowed for assessment of children. SLTs were not expected to be at every session, but the clash of terms and conditions between the two partners (SLTs allocated three days a week, drama practitioners were sessional) meant that SLTs were not as available as had been expected.

Once the SLT had been recruited to the project, the partnership began to develop and the SLTs tied in their theoretical approach to the creative and imaginative approaches adopted by the drama practitioners. As both partners began to develop their relationship and explore the potential of this collaboration the aims

of Speak Out were starting to be achieved. SLT unavailability in Cohort 2 did impact on the sessions, even though the drama practitioners were by now implementing a clear structure to the work that had been developed: 'The challenge was that we didn't have the SLT there much and we lost focus in terms of speech and language aims because of this.' (Drama practitioner) By Cohort 3, the SLTs were present at nearly all sessions. The skills and experience of both partners had increased and this impacted on the results for the children (see the impact section below). 'By this point (Cohort 3) the project was at its peak of knowledge and practice and therefore these schools probably benefitted the most.' (SLT)

The desire to start the project rather than wait for the SLT also meant that the project began at the beginning of the summer term and continued for two terms into the next academic year. This affected the opportunity to assess the impact of Speak Out with classroom teachers as the project spanned two academic years. It was also challenging for the children who often forgot what had taken place before the summer break and the practitioners had to revisit the work they had already achieved in the summer term. This continued with Cohort 2. Cohort 3 started at the beginning of the academic year and this was a contributing factor to the success of the programme with these schools and their ability to assess the children's progress across the year.

One of the key factors in meeting the aims was the selection of children. In the first cohort, the head teachers were keen that schools determined the criteria and inclusion managers met to agree criteria across the schools. To what extent this criteria was used is unknown. In some schools SLTs and the drama practitioners felt that the selection of children by schools was too broad and it resulted in challenging sessions trying to meet all children's needs. The evidence from the SLT assessment of the first cohort identifies that the assessed children with:

- Confidence difficulties and language within normal limits
 - Language delay
 - English as an Additional Language
 - Language delay and attention and listening difficulties
- were most likely to benefit.

This was then used with the following schools as criteria for referring children to the project. Although some schools still referred children with social skills and language disorders even though they were made aware that not such a huge improvement would probably be made. When children were chosen who had behavioural difficulties or with severe language difficulties this impacted negatively on the sessions and the overall success of the project for those children.

Drama and SLT practitioners also felt the mix of ages (key stage one and two) inhibited the learning as did the length of time for each session (90mins). As a result, four schools in the first cohort split the ages and formed two groups of 45mins. According to partners' observations this improved the experience for all stakeholders. This was then applied to the following two cohorts.

Commitment from the school was also considered a big factor determining the success of the project. Where there was commitment from the head, regular communication with the inclusion manager and an engaged LSA throughout, all partners agreed that Speak Out was a useful and productive piece of work. In some schools the inclusion manager enabled all class teachers to observe the sessions which helped them to understand the work and identify the children's progress. Speak Out's impact on children's speech and language was most significant when a teacher or the Inclusion manager participated in the sessions (see results below).

When there were communication difficulties with the school, swapping of TAs or lack of engagement, absent inclusion managers, swapping of children and inappropriate spaces (rooms with constant interruptions), the experience was considered less beneficial by SLTs and drama practitioners.

As the project continued, the partners were clearer about what Speak Out could achieve and were able to communicate this more effectively to the new schools and also identify what was necessary from the schools to make it successful. Managers from the drama organisations went into each school to introduce Speak Out and secure commitment via partnership agreements.

Learning from the first cohort of schools and the speech and language assessment identified that the following factors were likely to increase the success of Speak Out. These were then used as criteria for the following two cohorts to follow as much as possible:

- SLT consistent for majority of sessions
- Planning to include SLT, drama practitioners and school
- Observations made by inclusion managers and class teachers
- Children with similar difficulties in a group
- Children referred based on previously identified areas of difficulty: confidence, EAL, Language Delay, Language Delay and Attention and Listening difficulties
- Groups of 10 for 45 minutes sessions
- Key Stages separated
- School representative in session consistent and feeding back to the teachers
- Session content structured and to follow a distinct model
- A drama practitioner, SLT and school representative in each session.²

Where this learning was implemented in the following cohort of schools, the project achieved its aims to a greater extent.

Meeting the overall aims

'An excellent experience that was both educational and inspiring.' (Teacher)

School representatives present in the sessions, drama practitioners and SLTs were asked whether they thought the aims of Speak Out had been met:

- 77% of cohort 1 respondents said a mixture of yes and no
- 70% of cohort 2 respondents said probably yes

² Taken from Jodi Lea's Speak Out Speech and Language Report 2007-2008 Lewisham PCT SLT Services

- 54% of cohort 3 respondents said definitely yes and 36% said probably yes

This demonstrates that according to the partners, Speak Out strengthened as it progressed and the partners implemented the learning along the way which benefitted the schools joining at a later date: 'An excellent programme that has now flourished following evaluations and constant modifications and discussions.' (SLT) However, the degree of commitment by the school to the project continued to be an important factor in its success.

Impact on children

'Each child had a wonderful opportunity to develop their communication skills in a safe, but exciting environment.' (Teacher)

There were concerns from schools and SLTs from the beginning about the ability to measure the change in children's speech and language as a result of the project. 'Formative assessments conducted at the end of each session would have brought more rigour to the process.' (Head) There was a desire in some schools to carry out one to one assessment with all children. The project did not have the capacity to measure every child, however, SLT carried out an assessment with 50% of the children involved in the first cohort and 40%³ in Cohort 2 and 3 (which were assessed together).

Classroom teachers in the final cohort of schools assessed the children against the speech and language areas explored in the sessions and identified in the session plans. This assessment was introduced by the evaluator because Speak Out took place across an academic year. It would have been too problematic to seek this information from teachers across two academic years from the first two cohorts. The results are shown below. The other evidence has come from anecdotal evidence given by partners, children and parents.

Speech and language assessment

The SLT assessment measured the impact of the Speak Out project on children's language skills⁴. Children were assessed on a one to one basis before and after the project using the Assessment of Comprehension and Expression (6-11yrs) assessment. Sentence comprehension, naming vocabulary, narrative propositions, and narrative syntax/discourse were measured.⁵ The impact of the project was analysed in three different areas:

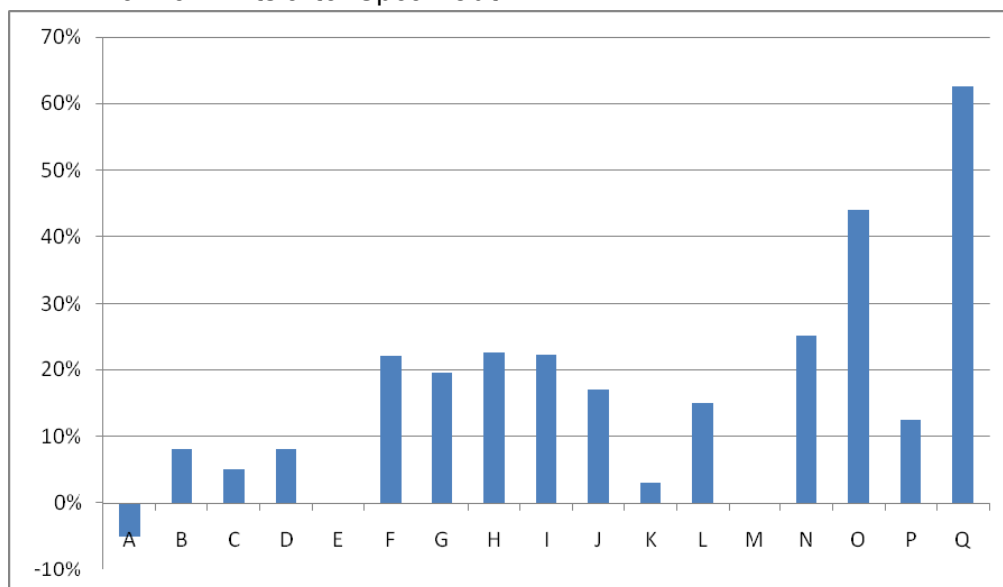
1. Schools – does the percentage of children whose language is within normal limits increase?
2. Areas showing significant change – can areas of language/confidence that benefit from the project be identified?
3. Children – can particular populations be identified that benefit significantly?

³ Speak Out worked with a special school for children with complex needs and autism, results obtained from these children could not be included as part of the overall score analysis as their needs are very specific and severe and would not have been a representative example of the population of children involved.

⁴ Unless indicated, all the results in this section of the report are taken from Jodi Lea's Speak Out Speech and Language Report 2007-2009, Lewisham PCT, SLT Services. See Appendix A and B for the whole report.

⁵ Confidence was only measured comprehensively with the first cohort of schools and so is not included here.

1. Percentage increase of children' scores moving from language within normal limits after Speak Out



SCHOOL		
A	-5%	Cohort 1
B	8%	
C	5%	
D	8%	
E	0%	
F	22%	Cohort 2
G	19.5%	
H	22.5%	
I	22.2%	
J	17%	
K	3%	
L	15%	Cohort 3
M	0%	
N	25%	
O	44%	
P	12.5%	
Q	62.5%	

These results demonstrate that in all but three schools, within the assessed sample, the number of children whose language is within normal limits has increased following Speak Out. Of course, as outlined in the assessment, there are many variables which need to be taken into account when making evaluative judgements about this progress (for example, selection criteria, age, gender, school year, attendance, size of group, practitioners and school staff and their consistency, ability to self assess, time in session, diagnosis, school commitment, maturation), however, this is a very positive result.

Significantly, the impact in this area increased as the project developed with the highest scores achieved by the final cohort. This is probably due to the project's growth and development. Also, in the final cohort, SLTs were present in nearly all sessions and most classroom teachers observed a session. The biggest scores took place in Schools O (44%) and Q (65.5%). In these schools a teacher was the participant partner in school O and the inclusion manager in Q. It can be concluded, given the other variables, that this factor considerably increased their scores.

2. Areas showing significant change – can areas of language/confidence that benefit from the project be identified?

Language/confidence	% of children assessed showing increased scores in this area	
	Cohort 1	Cohort 2 & 3
Sentence comprehension	50	67.5
Naming of vocabulary	17	40.5
Narrative propositions	50	70.2
Narrative syntax/discourse	67	48.6
Confidence	47	Not measured

These language areas were particularly targeted by Speak Out. It is clear that in all these language areas the children assessed have increased their scores significantly, particularly in the later cohorts where the structure and agreed objectives between SLT and drama became more clearly defined. It is not known why narrative syntax/discourse reduced in later cohorts.

3. Children – can particular populations be identified that benefit significantly? The results showed that Speak Out had most impact on children with the following diagnosis for referral⁶:

- Children with confidence issues (with majority of language skills within normal limits)
- Children with language delay
- Children with English as an additional language.

Children with confidence issues whose language is within normal limits significantly increased their sentence comprehension which demonstrates that Speak Out can also have an impact on speaking and listening with children whose language is within normal limits.

The biggest significant increase in standard score across all four language areas was among children with language delay⁷. 'Language delay can result in language disorder if it is not addressed early. This score demonstrates that Speak Out has

⁶ In the assessment the score for children with social skills as their primary need was higher, but the sample was very small (4 children) and somewhat biased and so not a true representation of children with social skills as a need. Children with confidence issues were a huge sample and so the results are slightly diluted – therefore it can be assumed generally and with the results from the first assessment these children benefit more. (Jodi Lea, Lewisham PCT, SLT)

⁷ A significant increase in standard score for this analysis is an increase of at least one whole standard score. The mean increase for children with language delay was two standard scores.

had a massive impact for children with language delay. This kind of input has produced a surge of language enrichment and increased their language skills. Speak Out could be a preventative programme for children with language delay.' (Jodi Lea, SLT)

Children with English as an additional language (EAL) also developed significantly in the four language areas assessed. It demonstrates the impact Speak Out could have with EAL children who struggle in a large classroom setting to understand or speak. As a result of their language improvements these children will have increased their confidence back in the classroom.

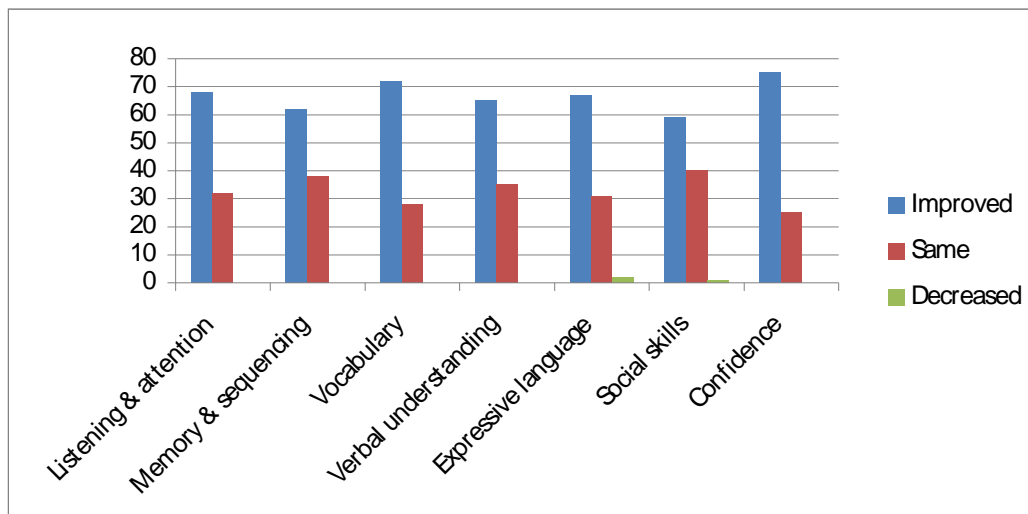
The judgement made pre and post Speak Out carried out by classroom teachers in Cohort 3 schools would concur with these findings. Children in other criteria are also shown to benefit, just less significantly.

'These three populations are reflective of Lewisham, which as identified as a deprived borough, will have 30% of children with some degree of communication impairment.' (Jodi Lea, SLT) The results demonstrate that Speak Out, given the variables already identified, could have a significant impact on these children's speech and language.

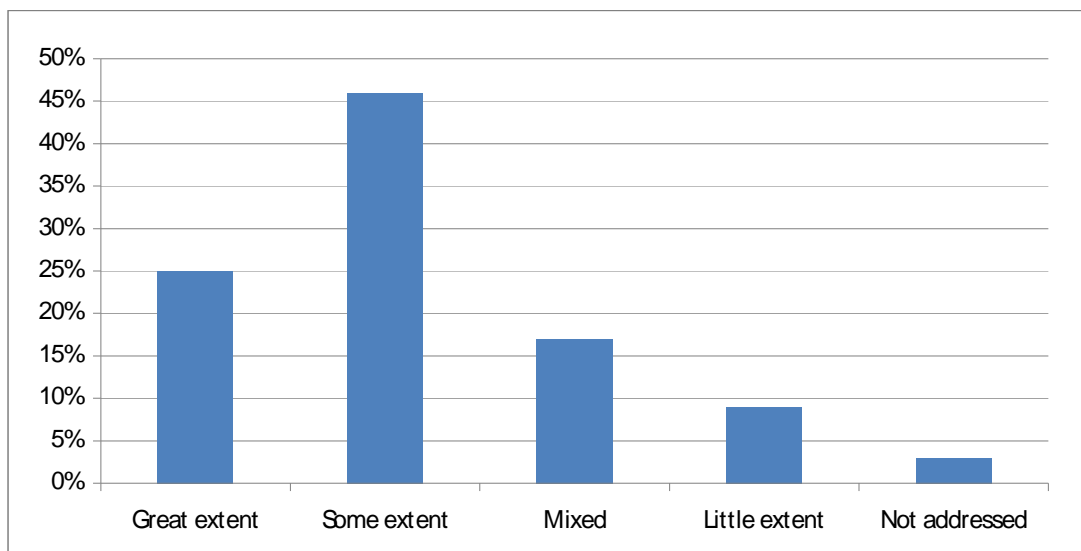
Classroom teachers' assessment

Classroom teachers from schools in the final cohort completed a pre and post judgement about the children they had referred to Speak Out. All five schools completed the questionnaire. They were asked to assess the children against the language areas explored in the sessions and to what extent the referral had been addressed in their opinion and to what extent they believed Speak Out had an impact on the child's speech and language. Not all the children were assessed as some left the school or Speak Out and in one set of teacher's assessments, the baseline assessment was not completed and so a comparison could not be obtained. The numbers of children assessed for each question is given in the results.

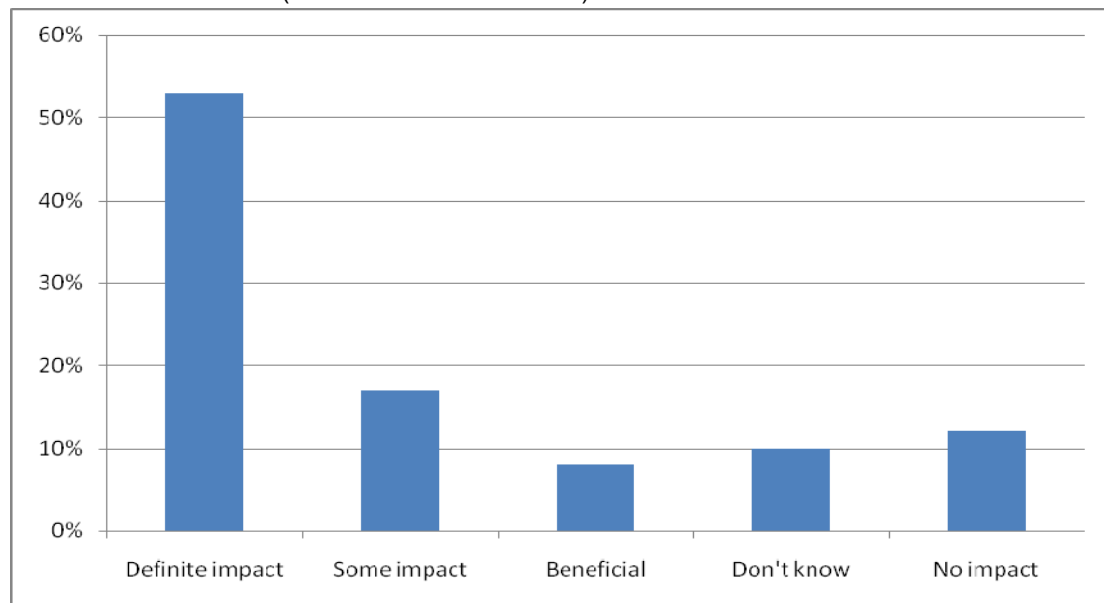
Percentage of improvement within each language area according to the classroom teachers' assessment of children before and after Speak Out (based on 82 children assessed)



The extent to which the reason for the referral has been addressed, according to classroom teachers (based on 81 answers)



The extent to which children's developments are due to Speak Out according to classroom teachers (based on 77 answers)



These results demonstrate the positive impact Speak Out has had on the cohort of children assessed according to the classroom teachers in these schools: 'The class teachers' evaluations show improvement on all the criteria. The only thing that muddies the water is maturation. But we can have a best guess and Speak Out has had significant input. On the hard core data they have improved significantly.' (Head teacher)

Anecdotal evidence

Anecdotal evidence from schools, SLT and drama partners indicate that:

- expressive language and storytelling improved with some children
- attention and listening improved in many children
- confidence in most children had grown

In addition, children had increased engagement with the work. Turn taking had improved, they shared work where they didn't before, writing came out of speaking, they chose to hold back instead of speaking over people and demonstrated empathy.

Their ability to tell stories, ask questions, listen more effectively and speak in a variety of ways in front of the class and at assemblies were all cited as a positive impact on these children's speech and language. Teachers' feedback in one school from the first cohort identified that 34% of children improved their speaking, 17% improved their listening and 40% gained in confidence. 'The greatest impact has been on children's confidence - which in turn affects their willingness to speak out in class.' (Inclusion manager) In another the head commented that 'overall, pupils have gained a lot from the project and made good progress'. One inclusion manager felt the sessions were highly motivating and the children had risen to the challenge and accepted increased levels of responsibility, while quiet children were speaking more. 'All the children have become increasingly comfortable with performing and discussing their ideas in

front of each other. This has led to a marked increase in personal confidence.'
(LSA, School)

Some teachers identified that children had improved their end of year assessments in reading and writing and attributed this partly to Speak Out.

Head teachers also spoke about the importance of making the right referrals to get the best out of the project and also the need to prioritise so that it has a high status in the school. They felt that this reduced the challenges for them which other schools may have experienced. 'From the start it has been well organised and the skills of the people running it means that we have benefited and so have the children. But it is important to prioritise it and we did that.' (Head teacher for final cohort)

An important role was that of the inclusion manager who was able to bridge the communication gap between Speak Out and the classroom teachers. They also enabled teachers to observe by covering their classes, which meant that the teachers began to see how the children operated within Speak Out compared to the classroom. For some teachers this also enabled them to take a different approach with a child and use some of the techniques they observed.

According to SLT, some schools have now decided not to refer children to SLT as their language has moved up to within normal limits. How much is maturation and how much Speak Out is unknown but it is a positive outcome.

Teachers' comments on children's progress following Speak Out

'Good to hear about the positive contribution he's made to the group and feedback about this has helped me recognise and praise this aspect in class working too.'

'Each child was recommended to Speak Out for a specific communication issue and almost all of them improved this area of communication.'

'[Speak Out] has had a definite influence on this child's development in all mentioned areas. Improved end of year assessments in reading and writing.'

'Improved end of year writing scores - Speak Out use of story cards influential.'

'He has had support in many areas this year, but Speak Out seems to have had the most impact - he always comes back buzzing.'

'JM's ability to be involved in class discussions has greatly improved.'

Prior to Speak Out: 'May play alone at times, won't speak out in class that much.'

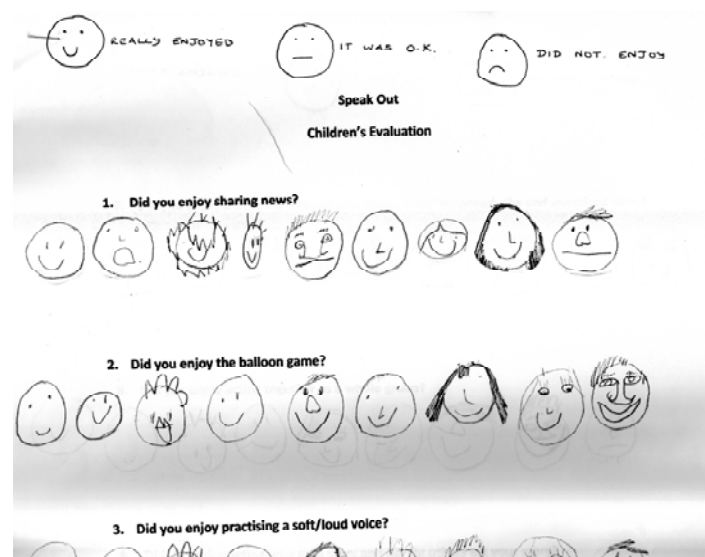
Post Speak Out: 'Very good at working in groups and sharing her ideas. Has begun volunteering during whole class work all the time.'

'Prior to Speak Out: 'Loses concentration during whole class work.' Post Speak Out: 'Will now listen to whole class work and can follow instructions to complete tasks more independently.'

'J has so much more confidence now. She is so keen now to share stories and work with others. She is like a different child.'

Children's evaluation

Nine schools carried out evaluations with the children and the evaluator interviewed children from two schools. Overall, the children enjoyed Speak Out especially the games and acting out the stories. They were less keen on sharing news and singing and some wanted a wider variety of games. They were unhappy about attending the sessions if they were missing out on activities such as PE, samba and classroom games. For some children, they felt a year was too long and were happy Speak Out was finishing. For others they wanted it to continue. Some 57% of the children interviewed said Speak Out had helped with their speaking and listening. 'I do listen, but I get confused and do the wrong things in my mind. Speak Out helps me to do more.' (Student)



Children's evaluation at Horniman School

The children did make decisions within the workshops about what games to do and how they contributed to the session. They were not involved in planning the sessions, nor making any decisions about the structure of the sessions. There may have been some evaluation with the children at the end of the session but this has not been captured.

Children identified that Speak Out had helped them with their confidence: 'Basically, I was shy and scared but when you do something regularly it helps with your confidence' (Student), asking questions in class, listening in class, putting up their hands, speaking in front of people and acting. 'Each time I go the lesson gets better. I learn better cos they teach me how to learn.' (Student) 'It's helped me

with my learning and [made me realise] it really, really matters about it. I feel much better when I come here.' (Student)

It was difficult to determine from the children's evaluation whether they understood why they had been chosen to attend Speak Out. The older children thought it was a drama group which helped their learning with regard to confidence and speaking and listening, the younger children thought it was a drama session where they played games and acted out stories.

According to the inclusion managers, many of the children shared their Speak Out experiences with classroom teachers and their peers: 'My friends were jealous.' (Student)

Parents' workshops

Two parents' workshops took place per school and were used to assess parents' understanding of Speak Out, to demonstrate the processes used in the sessions with the children and answer questions on speech and language issues. They were well attended in most schools and according to the evaluation the parents found them valuable for understanding why their child had been referred to participate in Speak Out. They were also keen for more advice on how to support their child's speech and language development at home. The schools were also impressed with the parents' support of the project: 'We have had really positive feedback from parents and they have also commented on the children's confidence and enjoyment.' Some parents enjoyed the opportunity of participating in a session with their child. 'It was really nice to work in this way with my child – we don't really get an opportunity in daily life.' (Parent)

However, the presence of the parents did change the dynamics of the group for some children who became anxious and embarrassed. Some schools felt it may have been better to have a separate parents' meeting and even show a DVD of the work. According to one school there was also no evidence elicited about what was happening at home and not enough information given to parents about activities they could do to promote their child's speech and language.

For some children their parents' attendance and interest raised their self esteem. 'Nice to see parents and they see you perform, but you feel embarrassed but when they think it's funny they laugh and you laugh too.' (Student)

It also gave practitioners the opportunity to hear feedback on children's progress. Most parents said their children talked about Speak Out and some had noticed real changes in their child's behaviour. They talked about increased confidence, enjoyment in learning and improvement in speaking. 'I have seen a very big change in my daughter's confidence, and am grateful to all those involved in Speak Out.' (Parent) 'My child is developing confidence in her learning, reading, writing and friendships – well done everyone.'

One parent whose child was involved in the first cohort in 2007 bumped into a practitioner and commented how his child was much more confident and able to speak up for herself as a result of Speak Out.

Partnership working

'The triangular relationship between Bubble, school and SLT ensured that the work was rich, engaging, and imaginative to both our groups. Inspiration and drive came from all three parties contributing and exchanging ideas; a thorough process, which ensured the aims were constantly met.' (Drama practitioner)

Partnership between arts and health

One of the aims of Speak Out was to enable two different disciplines to work together: speech and language, with its clinical base; and drama with a base in creative practice. Evidence from these partners, their organisations and schools is that this combination has provided a fruitful partnership that has contributed significantly to the partners' own professional practice and the children's learning.

Using two drama organisations meant that there was a great wealth of creative approaches used and the desire for drama practitioners to share ideas added value to the project. At the beginning GLYPT and Bubble approached the work differently (for example, separate planning and evaluation forms). However, as opportunities to share ideas and evaluate collectively took place, and the partnership with SLT developed, a consistent approach to Speak Out was put in place whilst enabling different creative responses to the needs of the children.

The partnership had a difficult beginning due to starting the project without an SLT. This impacted on both professions: 'Originally, my anticipation was seeing SLT more of an outside observer, rather than engaging in what felt like a predominantly drama-based session.' (Drama practitioner) 'I found the relationships very difficult to begin with – nobody really knew where the project was going and how we were supposed to work together. Opinions were different and strong.' (SLT)

Due to the speech and language therapists' timetable it was beneficial to have two drama practitioners at the beginning, but as the project developed all partners questioned whether one drama practitioner would have been preferential in order to equalise the partnership. The SLTs highlighted that it was difficult at times to have an input into the work when there was strong lead from one profession. 'SLTs had to find a way of shaping their input once the groups had started but this improved by the second cohort.' (SLT manager)

SLTs and drama practitioners would have liked an opportunity to explore their practice before the project began: 'The drama had already started working with the schools before SLT came and so there was adjustment to be made in terms of getting a common understanding. In an ideal world there would have been more time to build the model and more opportunity to look at how we work.' (SLT Manager)

The partnership took time to develop. Partners from different professional backgrounds needed to build trust and understanding about each others' approach to the work and what they could contribute. 'I think we have had to sit down and do lots of talking... to make sure we are all collaborating equally in sessions.' (Drama practitioner)

As a result of talking and practicing together, the learning began to develop with both professions: 'A lot of our stuff is paper based and the drama captured the imagination in a way the SLTs do not traditionally do. It is taking something very structured and using it in an imaginative free way. We do lots of stuff on emotions but you can take that on to another level with a drama practitioner.' (SLT Manager)

'We have really built up an excellent relationship. The drama techniques have come from us, but the SLT's feedback about the children has guided our choices. Her input is quite subtle but absolutely essential. Some technical suggestions (pictorial menu) for the session have stuck all the way through.' (Drama practitioner)

'Working alongside a speech therapist has provided me with an insight into speech and language development and enabled me to understand how the use of specific drama techniques can make a contribution to a young person's progress in regard to speaking and listening.' (Drama practitioner)

The partnership between organisations at a management level was challenging at times. Managers were trying to forge new ways of working between organisations which had different terms and conditions and expectations of themselves and others. Partners had to find the capacity to deliver a large scale project within an intensive time period. This meant that logistics such as timetabling and managing a large freelance cohort of drama practitioners, recruiting SLTs and managing the expectations of schools was a challenge. Both drama organisations also felt that more funding was needed to be put into core management time.

Bubble and GLYPT acknowledged that LEAN played an important role early on negotiating with Lewisham SLT and as a useful neutral role when managing the different partner expectations. LEAN was able to communicate the 'story of Speak Out' to new personnel who joined the project. LEAN also felt it was an important role in terms of managing and brokering relationships between all partners and ensuring that effective documentation and monitoring and evaluation systems were in place.

Both partners began to see the potential of the collaboration when the SLTs increased their presence and confidence to input their expertise into the sessions. A benefit of the SLTs working in different schools with different drama practitioners meant that they were cross fertilising the programme and this strengthened the model and increased its consistency. From some schools' perspective the combination of arts and SLT was a 'perfect entry point. We know that children make the best progress when the curriculum is creative and the lesson starts from where they are and builds on previous experience to take them forward. Speak Out did that and there is research to build on that'. (Head teacher)

SLT and the drama organisations welcomed the opportunity to develop a model over a reasonable period of time. The three year programme enabled them to test out different approaches and create a model that has had a direct impact on children's speech and language. Both partners felt that now they had got to this

stage it would have been useful to continue to put this model into practice with new schools.

The positive effect on the children's speech and language demonstrates that two very different professions can work effectively together to achieve a quantitative and qualitative impact.

Partnership with schools

The partnership with the school depended on how well the SLT, GLYPT, Bubble and LEAN were able to articulate the aims of Speak Out and to what extent the school was willing to invest the time and resources (particularly staff) that was needed to make it a success. Those schools that provided consistent staff, opportunities to communicate with class teachers, observations by class teachers and demonstrated an understanding of what Speak Out was trying to achieve definitely contributed to the improvement of children's speech and language.

'We had a great relationship with each partner. With a teacher as our staff partner and the opportunity to have informal chats with some of the teachers whose children were involved, it meant the project was really about each child and how the work was carrying on through the rest of their work in school.' (Drama practitioner) Whilst recognising that this would not have been possible in all schools, it does indicate the potential of this model when appropriate processes are put in place. 'We were 100% behind the collaboration and it fulfils the aim to integrate services for the benefit of children – it's a great model for that.' (Head teacher)

Although both drama organisations were very experienced at working with schools Speak Out was challenging because it had so many interested parties. 'There was muddiness around who was responsible for setting up the partnership, the rules and process, and so we weren't as militant – maybe there was an assumption that at a universal level this had been agreed.' (GLPYT) The schools had also made a financial contribution which put them in a position of 'customer'. This made it difficult at times for GLYPT and Bubble to navigate their way around the varied expectations of the schools.

Once LEAN, GLYPT and Bubble had a clearer idea of the Speak Out framework it meant that they could approach schools with a clearer idea of what they could expect from Speak Out and also what was needed by the school (appropriate referrals, appropriately staffed, regular space, feedback to classroom teachers) to make it successful.

A key outcome of the first cohort's aim for this project was to increase the presence of SLTs in the schools: 'Getting speech and language therapists in the door has been great.' (Inclusion manager) It gave teachers the opportunity to talk to SLTs informally about other children in the school as well as those within Speak Out. It also helped to challenge the SLTs' reputation in some schools as being 'standoffish' and 'invisible'. One inclusion manager said she learned a great deal from the conversations following the sessions about speech and language: 'It sort of became staff training.' (Inclusion manager) Another school observed it was more effective to have interventions with health in schools rather than children

being taken off site. Speak Out was a 'great leap' in some schools' relationship with SLT and it gave staff a deeper understanding of how SLT works.

The need to involve classroom teachers was seen as vital to determine the effectiveness of the project, but did not take place across the piece due to time constraints and other curriculum commitments. Also the start of the project in the summer term meant that classroom teachers' contributions would also be difficult as it had to span two academic years. By having a summer break in between compounded communication problems and meant that some momentum for the project was lost. Speak Out running within an academic year in the final cohort of schools meant that teacher involvement was more achievable. The consistency in practice and the involvement of classroom teachers was a positive move forward for Speak Out, however there was still a need to be strategic about how the impact of Speak Out was disseminated across the school.

Professional learning

'It made me the speech and language therapist I always wanted to be.'

Professional development has been a positive outcome for all partners. However, this took time to grow. The drama practitioners had a much more open and exploratory way of working which was opposite to the SLTs' more structured, outcomes driven methods. Bringing these two approaches together was challenging and risky at the beginning. Both professions had to learn to trust each other's expertise, and try out ideas to create a new way of working that benefitted the children.

One SLT has described the impact as 'freeing up my practice to enable children to develop imagination'. Role playing and storytelling as well as other drama techniques have been used in therapy delivery as a result. Drama practitioners have brought their learning about speech and language needs to other groups they work with. Skills in structuring lessons, 'saying less', 'careful explanation of activities', progression routes in sessions, and children taking turns and listening have been developed by them as a result of the collaboration. They found that they had the opportunity to explore each others' practice through delivery and analysis of the process. 'Some of the most interesting conversations have been at the end of sessions in terms of talking about practice.' (GLYPT)

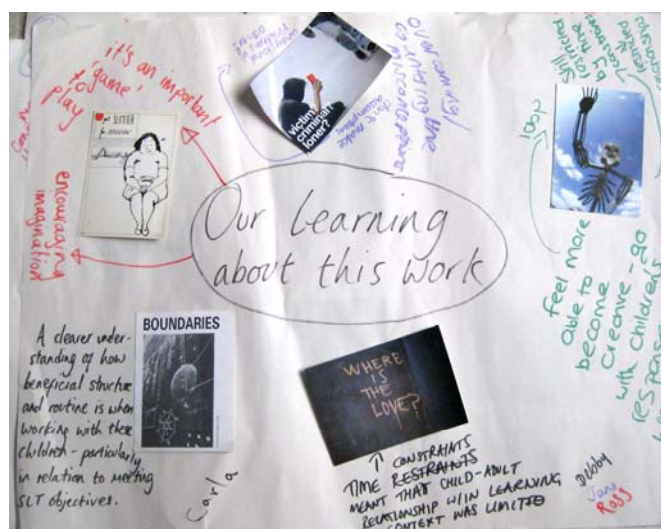
All the drama practitioners said that Speak Out had developed their professional practice and they had implemented their learning within their other work. 'I have incorporated SLT work and exercises into youth theatres I run to get participants focussed and give them awareness of how they communicate with one another on and off stage.' (Drama practitioner) This 'pebble in the pond' effect demonstrates the success of Speak Out beyond the project itself in terms of raising the understanding of speech and language approaches and how they can improve the experiences of other children and young people who are working with these drama practitioners: 'There has been direct learning about what are the normal limits of speech and language for children. Speak Out has also returned them (drama practitioners) to the knowledge of how much security you give to participants when you have a clear structure.' (Bubble manager)

The drama organisations would have liked more opportunity to explore creative practice as part of the process. The practitioners have met to share practice twice but would have liked this to be incorporated into the project. However, much of the learning took place during the project: 'I have learned that what I do in these sessions has a bigger relevance to learning (speech and language) than I ever realised.' (Drama practitioner)

According to the SLT manager Speak Out has provided a unique opportunity to revitalise their traditional ways of working and has fired them up to do things differently. 'It has brought a wealth of creative opportunities to the way in which we do things... We are redesigning our core service and the learning from Speak Out will influence what we are offering. For example, using a much more creative approach to therapy.' (SLT Manager)

The relationship between the partners became so strong that one SLT commented: 'I believe if a session was observed now – the observer would not be able to distinctly tell who was the practitioner and who was the therapist. I believe that is true collaboration.' This type of collaboration may not suit everyone and it takes openness about your profession to be able to get to this point. 'You have to be an open person and be able to both take the lead and be led. You have to be able to compromise and willing to learn from others.' (SLT)

LSAs (learning support assistants), inclusion managers and classroom teachers all cited that they learned from Speak Out. This included more knowledge about speech and language processes, techniques to promote listening and increase vocabulary. Disseminating this learning across the school continued to be a challenge throughout Speak Out due to the model created but this was an aspiration among all schools and partners. Schools indicated that they would facilitate more training and observation with teachers if Speak Out continued. 'It's been fun and educational for me as a class teacher... It's broadened my understanding... I will incorporate more drama, more consistent use of the visual timetable, use of specific activities, increased emphasis on giving children ownership of the outcome of tasks.' (Teacher)



Partners identifying their learning at an evaluation workshop

Professional learning: drama practitioners

Drama practitioners identified that they had learned:

- How to programme and lead a team
- How to incorporate SLT work into general drama work
- 'The exercises we have used and the 'story square' will play a big part in future workshops'
- Take groups back to basics of listening, turn taking, learning cards
- 'I will deal with questions or inappropriate comments in a more explanatory way'
- How to collaborate with other professionals not involved in arts
- 'We have worked on the ritual of the session in quite a thoughtful way and I will take this into my future practice.'
- Speak less and have a better choice of words
- Repeat the question in exactly the same way
- Give children time and space to answer
- Repeat instructions in exactly the same way
- Scaffold learning
- Modelling sentences and so correct grammar
- Explain exercises with fewer words and more demonstration
- 'I will take into account the possibility of distracted children having a communication difficulty rather than just an attention problem.'
- Sharpened consideration of what exercises achieve what and how to use them in a more focussed way.

Professional learning: speech and language therapists

SLTs identified that they had learned:

- 'Collaboration is how we hope to work in future – it's how we HAVE to work in a borough with such need to achieve success'
- 'Opportunity to practice collaboration – we have developed our skills greatly in this area. Identified that our role is changeable depending on where/ who we work with. However recognise that this cannot be achieved without the same combination of collaboration'
- Time and trust helped to build equal partnership
- Greater ability to create a hybrid of ideas and roles
- It would have been better if there had been more equal training from both education and drama
- It took until the last year to clarify roles and really understand the project
- 'Made us think about how you can reach children through different mediums – that sometimes scrambling things up makes sense in the end. Also, there is always more going on, on the inside than it looks'
- 'I will now be far more aware of tapping the imaginative strengths of the child'
- 'I recognise that the range of activities used can support a child's understanding and elicit a higher level of ability from a child than formal assessment might indicate'
- 'More practical and imaginative in my practice'
- More confident to use trial and error, collaboration and working with larger groups of children
- Increased range of intervention methods to include activities that come under the ethos of drama and which specifically tap into the imagination

- 'It has been my biggest learning curve to date.'

Beyond Speak Out

The key partners are looking at how they can extend Speak Out and this had led to discussions about how much it can be replicated without all the key professions present. However, it has started to impact future work in the following ways:

- Lewisham SLT Unit intends to implement further training on the learning that has come from Speak Out. The lead SLT on Speak Out has delivered a session on what she had learned to all the SLTs in the team
- Speak Out has been important for the drama organisations' reputations within Lewisham and the schools. 'On an immeasurable level, it's been good.'
(GLYPT)
- GLYPT are looking at developing a project around mental health
- London Bubble is developing a programme with schools and educational psychologists about communication in the classroom. The Speak Out experience has helped them to structure the programme more quickly and set up the partnership more effectively ensuring that agreements are reached from the beginning
- Speak Out has also had an impact on the reputation of the partners. Outside organisations have been quicker to buy into arts and health projects set up by London Bubble on the back of Speak Out
- London Bubble set up a youth theatre in Lewisham which is populated by some Speak Out participants
- Fairlawn School are working with London Bubble to develop a speaking and listening programme of work as a result of Speak Out
- Horniman school used the experience of Speak Out to lever in a successful application to A New Direction to work on an international project with dyslexic children
- Speak Out was a pilot for Arts Council England, London's Creative Services programme and was presented at a summit with 30 local authorities as an example of good practice and written up in an accompanying document
- One speech and language therapist has started narrative/drama sessions in a special school using techniques learned from Speak Out. Sessions are more practical and based on moving around rather than sitting with pictures
- 'Children who may have been referred to the service (SLT) may now not need to be seen as they have moved within the range expected of their peers. An intervention package has been trialled with a group of children which may feed into service redesign.' (SLT)
- Partners have planned an event to disseminate the project.

Conclusion

From the qualitative and quantitative results, it is clear that Speak Out has been a successful project in terms of the impact it has had on the children involved and the professional practice and the dissemination of new ways of working by the partners delivering it. It did have its challenges from the beginning and not all of the expectations partners had hoped to achieve were met. However, the improvement in some children's speech and language and the professional

learning which took place made those challenges worthwhile. 'If we hadn't had the challenges, then the learning wouldn't have been so great.' (LEAN manager)

Both drama organisations feel that it has strengthened their reputation with the arts sector as strong developers of innovative arts education models. They have welcomed the opportunity to gain some evidence based material (from the SLT assessment and evaluation) which they can use when setting up new projects: 'Most arts projects do not come in with a brief for monitoring their impact. Speak Out got its baseline right and was clear about its outcome. We would use an arts and health project again.' (Head teacher) The drama organisations feel the project has also put them in a good position to lever future partnership work with health organisations and offer collaborative projects which can have a measurable impact on children and young people.

According to speech and language therapists, collaborative working is vital to tackle the complex needs of children in deprived areas such as Lewisham where 30% of children are in need of SLT. 'The biggest learning experience has to be at service level. Good collaboration is the secret to raising achievement especially in deprived communities such as Lewisham. However, good collaboration requires investment in expertise and other factors. Up front this looks expensive, but in fact is the only effective method to tackle underachievement and raise equality.' (SLT)

John Bercow's review of services for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs in 2008⁸ identified that whilst there were pockets of excellent provision, the overall picture for tackling speech and language difficulties in children was unsatisfactory. He made 40 recommendations to improve this situation which identified that communication is crucial, early identification and intervention is essential, there needs to be joint working and a continuum of services to reduce high variability and a lack of equity. As a result the government has set out a £12 million Better Communication action plan.

Speak Out is not the answer to all the problems identified in the review, but it has demonstrated that it could certainly tackle some of the recommendations to some extent such as joint working, a continuum of service and early identification and intervention. The Speak Out model has arrived at a pertinent time for it to be developed and disseminated.

Recommendations for future collaborations

Speak Out recommendations

1. INSET for schools from the start.
2. Monitoring and evaluation which can measure progress including confidence in individual children.
3. One session per term to review children's progress with teachers.
4. Parents' only sessions with a hand out on techniques to try at home.
5. Link Speak Out themes to the curriculum.
6. One drama practitioner with one SLT and school representative.

⁸ Ibid, p3

7. The budget for a project like Speak Out needs to include a realistic amount for its management.
8. More investment needs to be given to projects like Speak Out once the model has been developed (it has taken nearly three years to develop an effective model but it now lacks the funds to implement that model to a wider market). 'I do not understand the point of putting that much money into a project without a clear forward plan.' (Bubble manager)

Partnership working

1. Professions have different terms and conditions and this needs to be taken into account when setting up a joint working arrangement.
2. Professions need to come together at the beginning to explore their practice and learn how each operates. Do not underestimate the time it take for partners to work effectively together and the support they need to do that.
3. No matter how much start up time you give to a partnership project, there needs to be recognition that the model will only really start to develop once the professionals are working together.
4. Ensure there is equal weighting between the professionals.
5. Regular monitoring of the contracts between partners.
6. Communication within partner organisations has to be robust to ensure there is buy in from the whole organisation. It has to happen at a strategic and operational level.

Arts organisations

9. Arts organisations are in an excellent position to work with health organisations and Speak Out has demonstrated both quantitatively and qualitatively that this is a fruitful partnership. More work needs to be done to promote the use of drama within a health setting for interactive, educative purposes.
10. Arts organisations would do well to position themselves within the local authority commissioning process as effective partners to contribute to local authority health and education priorities.
11. Arts organisations need to continue to improve their ability to identify the impact they can have on educational and health priorities.
12. Arts organisations need the infrastructure to promote and market themselves as partners within educational and health settings.

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Our Lady and St Philip Neri Primary School

Christchurch Primary School

Kilmorie Primary School

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