

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES SCRUTINY BRIEFING PAPER

REPORT FROM: Education

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SUBJECT: Speech, Language and Communication Initiative

2. BACKGROUND:

Last September 2022, a borough wide initiative was launched to improve Children's Speech, Language and Communication outcomes as we know that this is the biggest barrier to securing strong children's development and academic outcomes. This was evidenced In 2022, our school readiness data suggested that just 26% of our children were ready for school.

The initiative included:

- An Early Years Speech and Language Audit Tool – this was developed to support Quality First Teaching within schools and settings. The LA and Speech and Language Therapy teams paired up to support ten schools and settings with completing this audit, as part of a pilot. Feedback from this pilot has been excellent and the decision has been made to continue this joint LA / Speech and Language Therapy support into the academic year 2023-2024, where another ten schools and settings will be supported.
- WellComm Toolkit: a Speech and Language screening toolkit has been provided universally to all Primary Schools and Early Years settings within the borough. External training was commissioned by the Local Authority via 'Communicate SLT' and data has been collected from the Local Authority via the WellComm wizard throughout the academic year. This project reflects a full system led approach to addressing early Speech, Language and Communication difficulties and clearly identifies the difference between lack of experiences/learning/development and/or SEND.

3. KEY ISSUES AND RISKS:

WellComm data analysis across the LA:

Progress data from October 2022- May 2023

There has been a significant improvement in the number of children achieving green (age-appropriate language levels) in the most recent assessment.

Progress over 2022-2023:

1. **Low level of Speech, Language and Communication across the LA:**

IMPACT: significant progress has been made across the LA from October 2022 to May 2023, with the number of children achieving green (age-appropriate language levels) rising from 33% to 58%.

2. **English as an Additional Language**

IMPACT - significant progress has been made for children with English as an Additional Language, with the number of children achieving green (age-appropriate language levels) rising from 17% in October 2022 to 40% in May 2023.

3. **Children's Centres**

Two Children's Centres are part of the pilot Speech and Language audit tool project and can share their best practice across our network.

IMPACT – progress has been made by the children with the highest level of need within our Children's Centres, with the number of children achieving green rising from 14% in October 2022 to 17% in May 2023.

4. Financial Implications

This was funded via the Monitoring and Brokering Grant for 2022-23 in accordance with the grant stipulations. All settings now have the resources they need to deliver the Wellcomm intervention, and the Audit is an LA produced resource, but the licences run on a 12 month subscription and need renewing annually.

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5. Next Steps

- Continue to support settings to improve Speech, Language and Communication provision.
- Support settings to deliver the high-quality Language Interventions.
- Deliver WellComm refresher training on a rolling programme to keep settings upskilled.
- Continue to collect, share, track, monitor and challenge settings.