

## Introduction

Help Kids Talk is a partnership project based in Northern Ireland that prioritises early intervention to support children's speech, language and communication development.

In Help Kids Talk partners from the community, voluntary, statutory and private sectors work together to collectively plan and improve outcomes for children and young people in our local community.

## Background and research

Help Kids Talk was co-designed following the Best for Every Child report (Courtney, 2012) which indicated 74% of young people in Lisburn were leaving post primary without 5+ GCSE's (including English and Maths).

A further prevalence study indicated 32% of children starting primary school had speech, language, and communication (SLC) difficulties, of which, 77% were boys from disadvantaged areas (Jordan & Coulter, 2016).

Help Kids Talk aims to ensure everyone who has any responsibility for a child prioritises SLC development whether they are a parent, grandparent or working within the childcare workforce. This will lead to positive benefits across a child's life including; educational attainment, health and wellbeing, relationships and employment later in life.

## Help Kids Talk Package of Support

**The Help Kids Talk package is comprised of universal (available across N.Ireland) and targeted elements (available within Lisburn, Belfast and Derry).**

### Universal:

12 key monthly messages developed as guidance for parents and practitioners to support children's SLC development

- **Basic Awareness Training** aims to raise awareness of the importance of SLC for everyone who has any responsibility for a child. Our key messages are linked with Kate Cairns Associates five to-thrive building blocks to highlight the connection between infant mental health, brain development and communication development.

- **Level 1 Training** explains SLC developmental milestones and how to support children at different ages and stages. A Level 1 training manual is also available.
- **Bitesize sessions** on specific topics including key facts, dispelling myths and top tips for supporting a child. Dummy Bitesize available now, other sessions in development.



### Targeted:

Investment and training in the evidence-based Speech and Language UK programmes, Early Talk Boost and Talkboost for our nurseries and schools.

## Help Kids Talk

a community wide project to raise awareness of the importance of prioritising speech, language and communication development in children



HSC South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Believe in children  
Barnardo's Northern Ireland

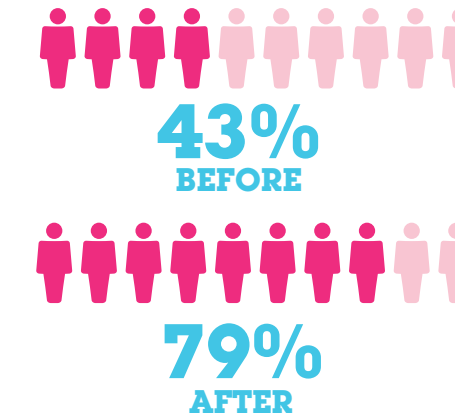


LCCC  
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

## Outcomes

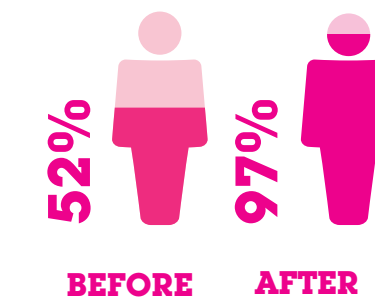
**1374** individuals completed Basic Awareness Training since January 2020.

After training, **79%** participants rated themselves as mostly confident/confident supporting SLC (compared to **43%** before)



**287** individuals completed Level 1 training since August 2021.

After training **97%** participants self-reported good/very good understanding of SLC developmental milestones (compared to **52%** before)



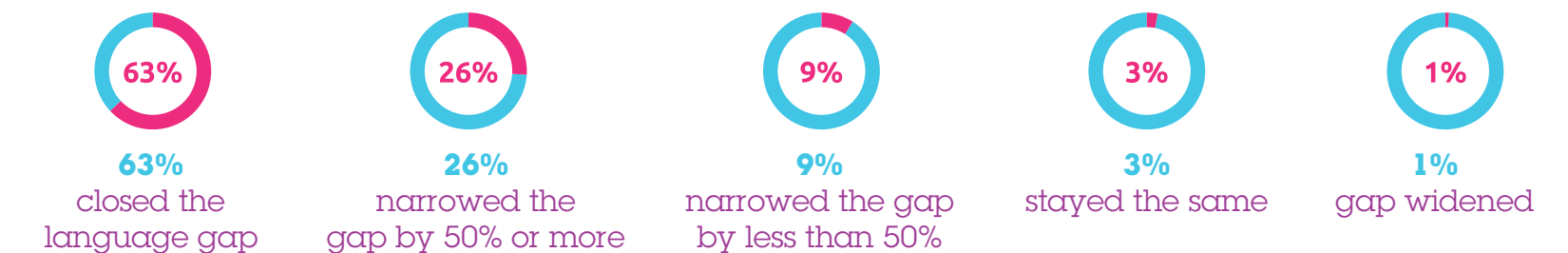
Over **4.6k** social media followers



Since 2016, **779** children completed targeted interventions (ETB and TB)



% Children narrowing the gap towards expected levels following Early TalkBoost and TalkBoost



## Conclusion and next steps

Help Kids Talk project demonstrates the important role of speech and language therapy within public health and the strength of a partnership approach to tackling health inequalities and giving our children the best start in life. Investment in training and resources to our partners ensures children receive intervention as early as possible and reduces potential future education or healthcare costs.

Measuring outcomes at population level for early intervention is difficult however there is a commitment across all sectors to provide sustainable support to ensure children have the best chance in life.

### Next steps:

- Additional bitesize sessions and a website
- Planning for further evidence and research
- Regional roll out of Help Kids Talk
- Keeping people engaged and growing our community

**References** Courtney, R. (2012) The Best For Every Child Report.

Jordan, J.A. & Coulter, L. (2016) Individual Differences in Speech and Language Ability Profiles in Areas of High Deprivation. <https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/talk-boost/>