



# The Balanced System®

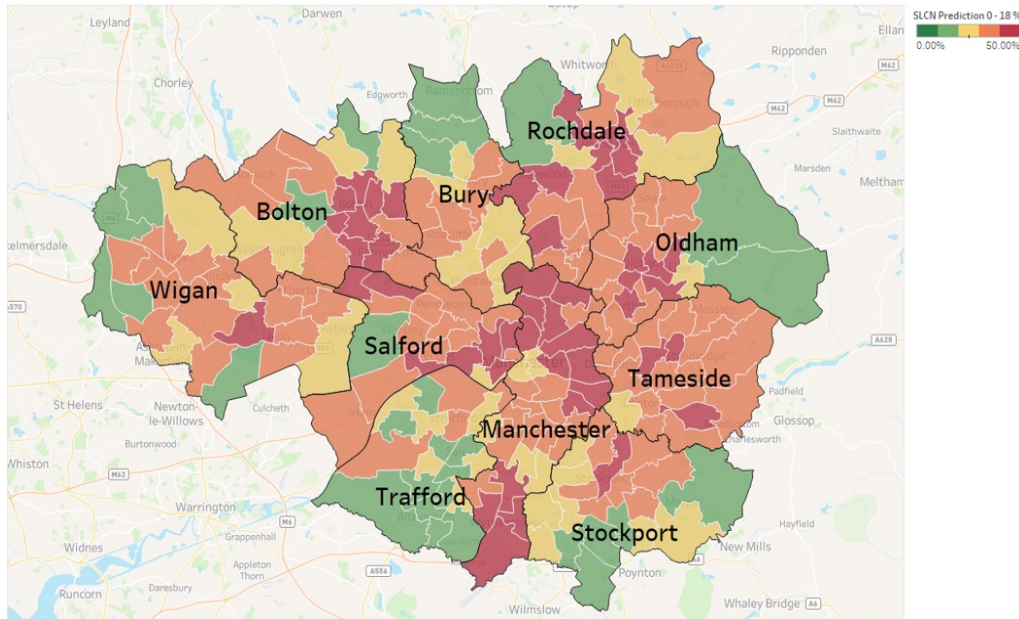
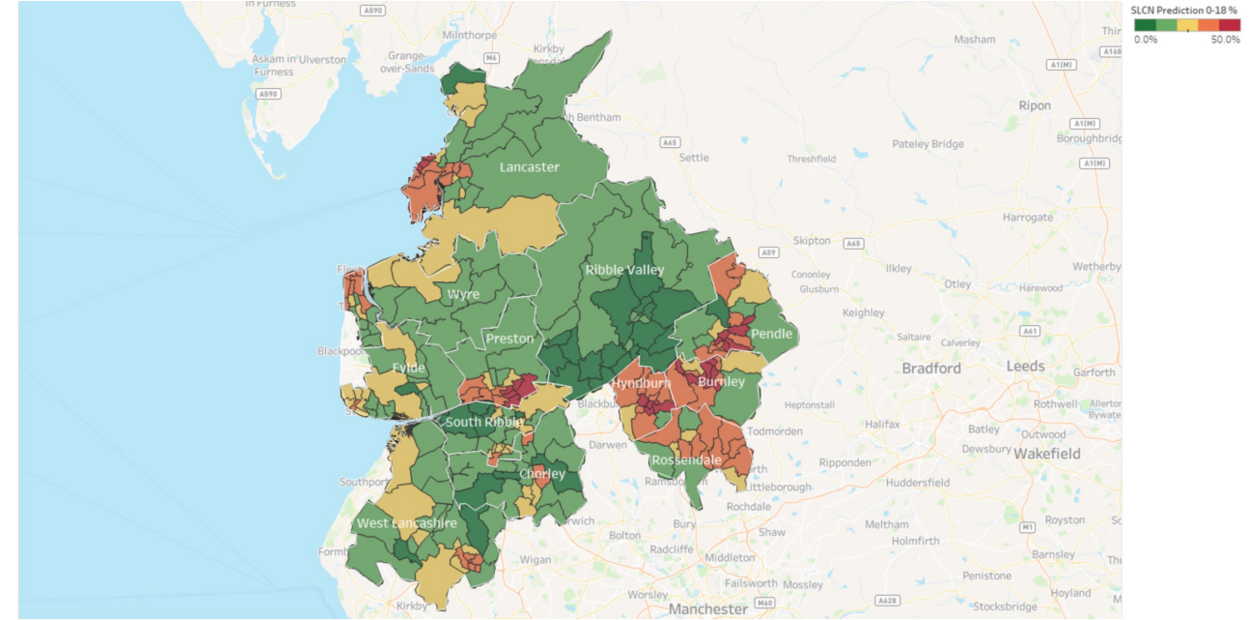
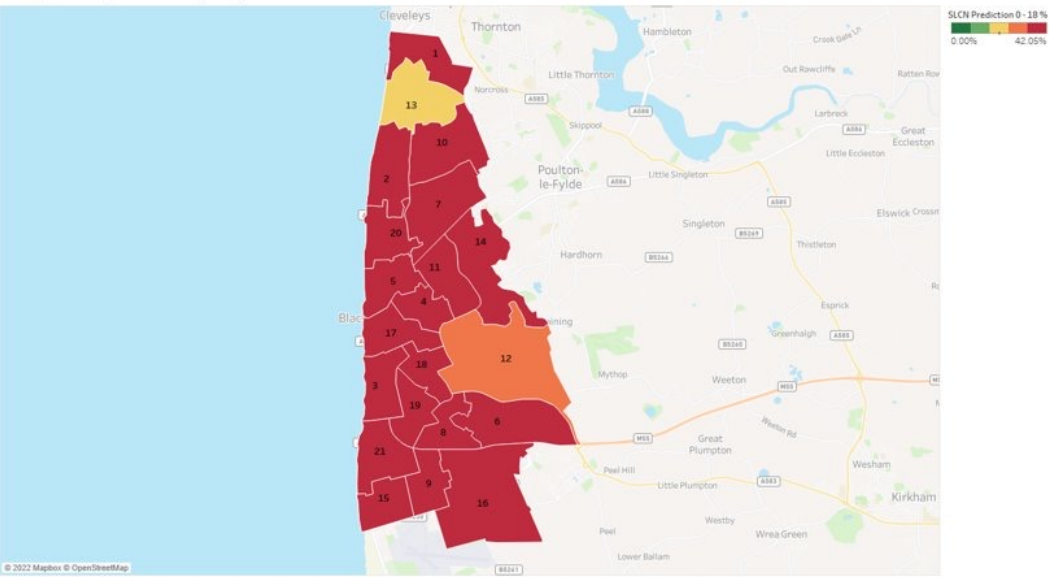
## Understanding need and measuring impact

Marie Gascoigne

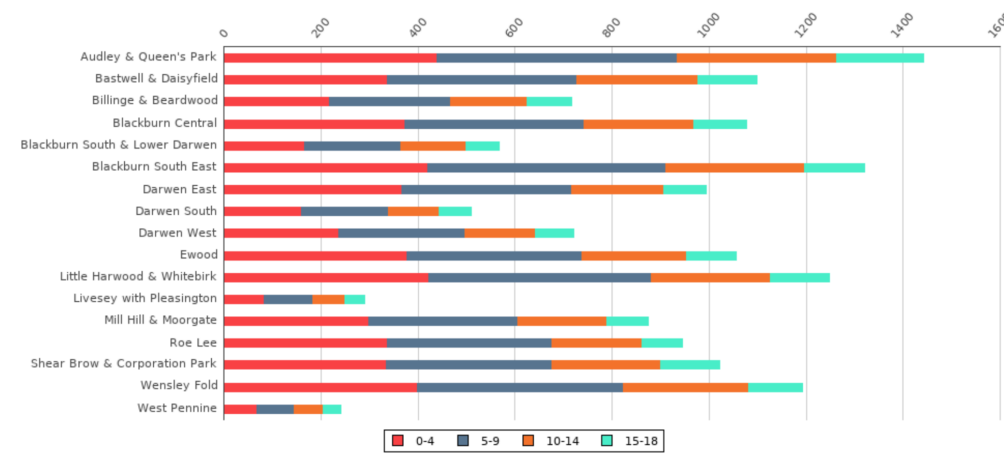
North West Network  
21<sup>st</sup> June, 2024

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Blackpool SLCN prediction % (0-18)



Predicted SLCN Need (0-18 years)





What is the statement a measure of?



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# What is the Balanced System<sup>®</sup>



- A **strategic framework** for **understanding the need** for a specific population and **developing services** to meet that need.
- **Population based** approach to identifying and meeting need - **not diagnostic** category led
- **Focuses** on measures of **impact** and **not input**
- **High level, system outcomes** across **Five Strands** and **Three Levels** are central and provide the structure for system design
- **Five key delivery principles** at the core to redesign at an operational level
- More detailed information regarding the framework can be found [here](#).

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# 2003 – 2023

Supporting children with speech, language and communication needs within integrated children's services

Position Paper  
Marie Gascoigne  
January 2006



**The Bercow Report**

A Review of Services for Children and Young People (0-19) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs

March 2018  
www.bercowfoundation.com

Speech, language and communication needs

Tools for commissioning better outcomes: introduction

Commissioning Support Programme

**Better Communication:**  
Shaping speech, language and communication services for children and young people

Public Health England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

**Implementing the SEND reforms**

Joint commissioning for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs

**COMMISSIONING FOR SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS (SLCN): USING THE EVIDENCE FROM THE BETTER COMMUNICATION RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

MARIE GASCOIGNE

HTTP://WWW.BETTERCOMMUNICATION.ORG.UK/SUPPORT-FOR-COMMISSIONERS/

**Talking About a Generation**

CURRENT POLICY, EVIDENCE AND PRACTICE FOR SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

MARIE GASCOIGNE AND JEAN CROSS  
BETTER COMMUNICATION CIC

**Bercow: Ten Years On**

Public Health England

Education Endowment Foundation

**Early Language Development:**  
Needs, provision, and intervention for preschool children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds

A Report for the Education Endowment Foundation  
October 2017

Law, J.  
Charlton, J.  
Dockrell, J.  
Gascoigne, M.  
McKean, C.  
Theakston, A.

Contact: James Law PhD  
Professor of Speech and Language Science  
Newcastle University E: james.law@nd.ac.uk

**Best start in speech, language and communication:**

Guidance to support local commissioners and service leads

Department of Health & Social Care

Department for Education

Scottish Government  
Riaghaidh na h-Alba  
gov.scot

**EQUITY FOR ALL: CHILDREN'S SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY SERVICES IN SCOTLAND**

Marie Gascoigne

© Better Communication CIC, 2021

December, 2021



# Latest publication



Gascoigne, Marie. "Meeting Speech, Language and Communication Needs: A Whole-Systems, Population-Based Approach." *Paediatrics and Child Health* 34, no. 7 (2024/07/01/ 2024): 201-10.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paed.2024.04.001>.  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1751722224000519>.

Paediatrics and Child Health

MP Portal Articles Publish About Contact

SYMPOSIUM: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY | VOLUME 34, ISSUE 7, P201-210, JULY 2024 [Download Full Issue](#)

< Meeting speech, language and communication needs: a whole-systems, population-based approach

Marie Gascoigne

Published: April 23, 2024 • DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paed.2024.04.001>

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# Why?

## A population based approach?

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# Talking About a Generation

CURRENT POLICY, EVIDENCE AND PRACTICE FOR SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

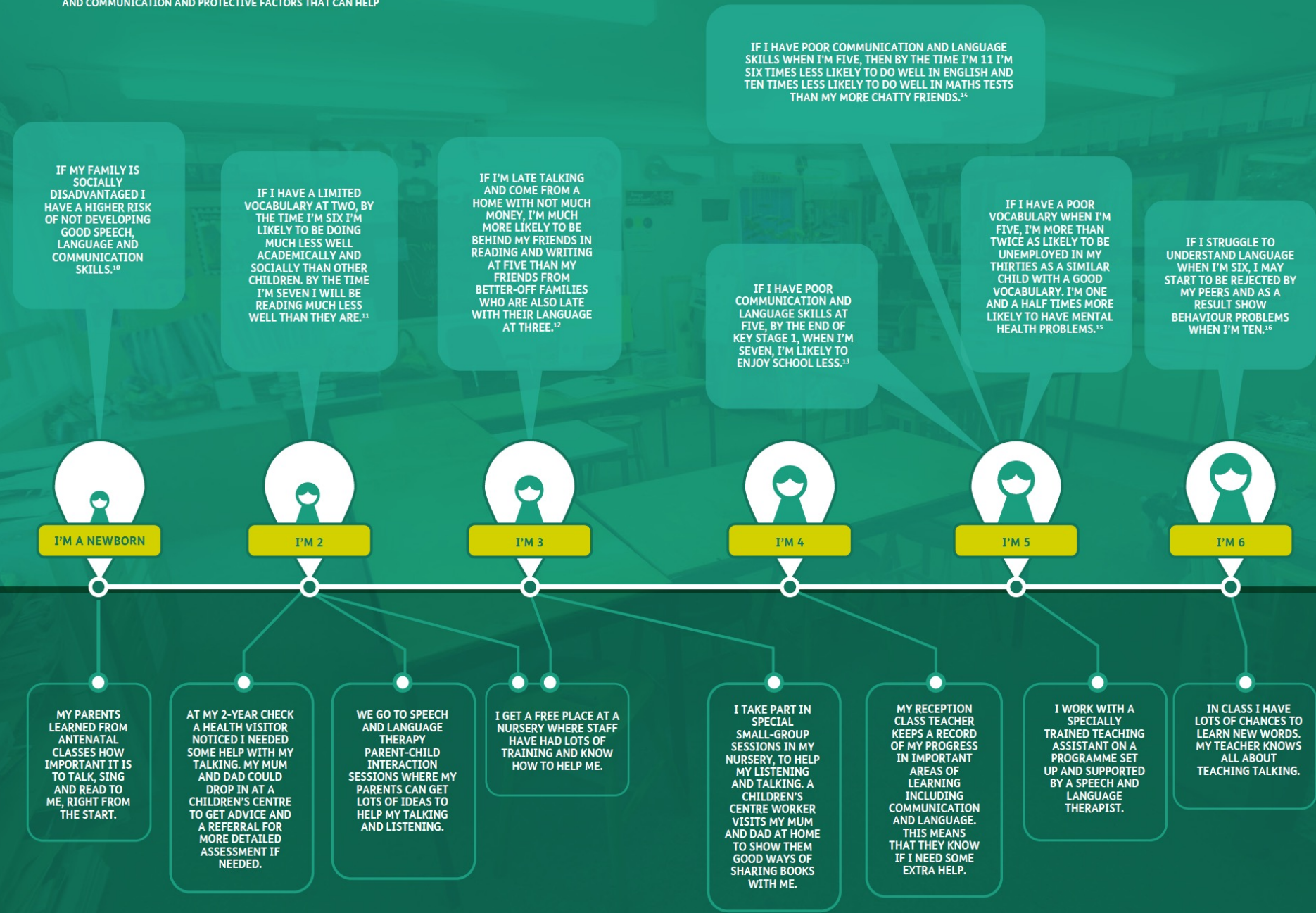


MARIE GASCOIGNE AND JEAN GROSS  
BETTER COMMUNICATION CIC

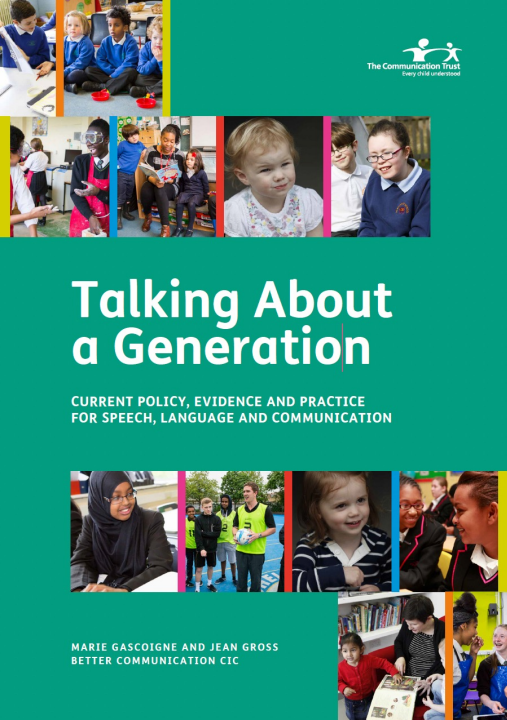


[https://www.thebalancedsystem.org/tct\\_talkingaboutageneration\\_report\\_online.pdf](https://www.thebalancedsystem.org/tct_talkingaboutageneration_report_online.pdf)

FIGURE 3: IMPACT ON LIFE CHANCES OF POOR EARLY LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS THAT CAN HELP







# Talking About a Generation

CURRENT POLICY, EVIDENCE AND PRACTICE FOR SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION



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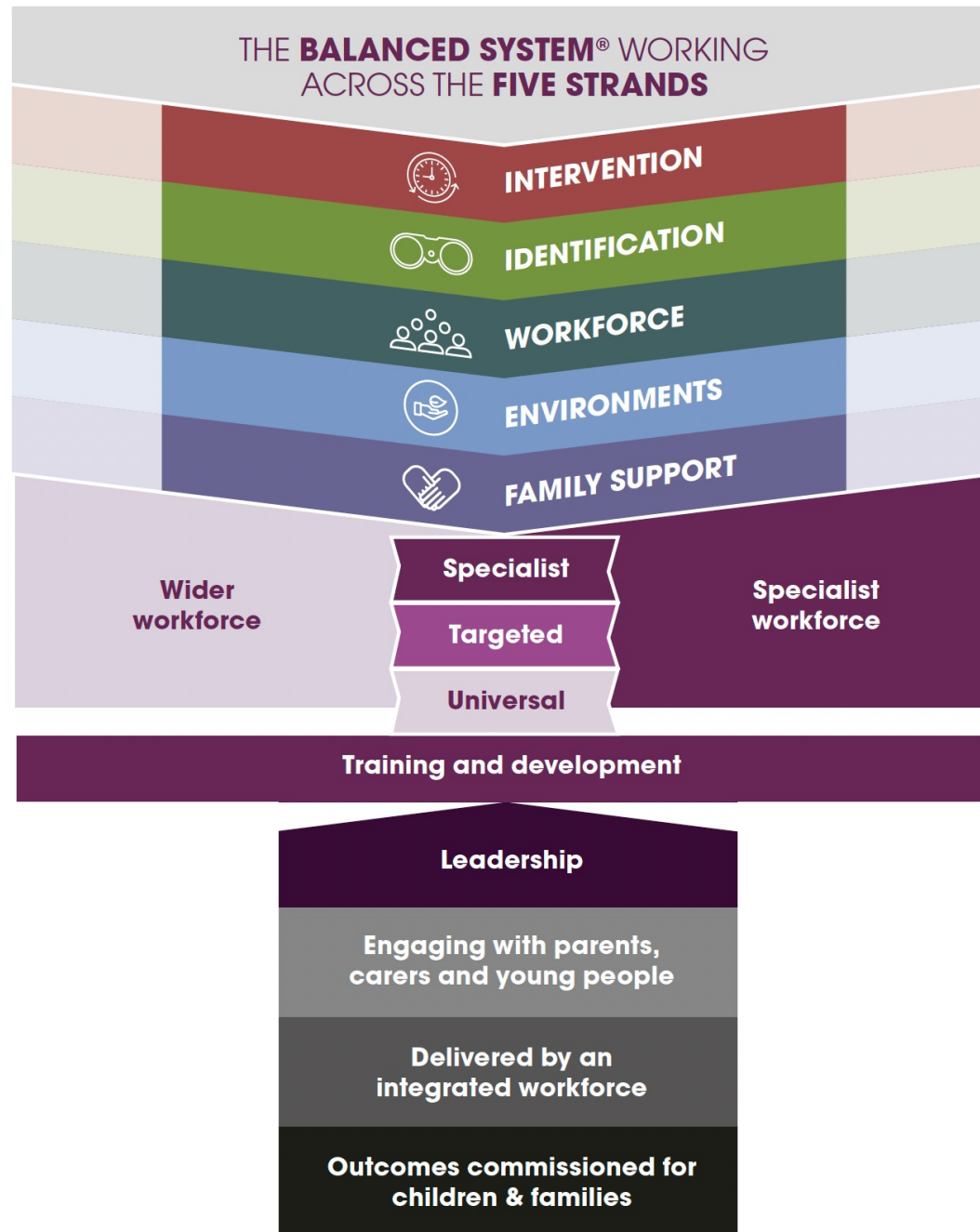
[https://www.thebalancedsystem.org/tct\\_talkingaboutageneration\\_report\\_online.pdf](https://www.thebalancedsystem.org/tct_talkingaboutageneration_report_online.pdf)

Moss, G and Washbrook, E (2016) The Gender Gap in Language and literacy Development. Bristol: Uni of Bristol



Save the Children (2016) Early Language development and children's primary school attainment in English and maths: new research findings. London: Save the Children

Law, J. et al (2010) Modelling developmental language difficulties from school entry into adulthood. Journal of speech, language and hearing research, 52, 1401-1416





# THE BALANCED SYSTEM<sup>®</sup>

## FIVE STRANDS

### FAMILY SUPPORT

- Are supported with appropriate **information** to make informed choices and **skills** to **support** development

### ENVIRONMENTS

- Are audited, **adapted** and **enhanced** to maximise **participation**

### WORKFORCE

- **Specialist knowledge** and skills are used to **build capacity** in the wider workforce to support across universal, targeted and specialist levels of provision

### IDENTIFICATION

- Is efficient and **accessible** including training of others to identify and provision of pre-referral advice in community settings

### INTERVENTION

- Is **appropriate and timely**, and may include direct or indirect, individual and group interventions delivered in a **functional** context

# THE BALANCED SYSTEM® HIGH LEVEL OUTCOMES FOR SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS



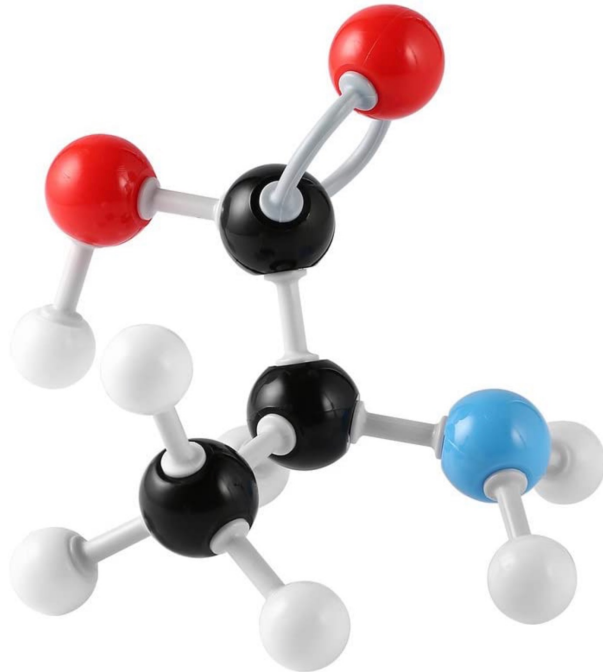
FAMILY SUPPORT	ENVIRONMENT	WORKFORCE	IDENTIFICATION	INTERVENTION
<p>FS3. Specialist - Parents and carers of children with specialist SLCN receive specific specialist support to ensure confidence in their role as a key communication partner for their child and to increase their understanding of the specific communication challenges associated with their child's needs. Young people with SLCN are enabled to be active participants decisions about their support.</p>	<p>EE3. Specialist - Places where children and young people with specialist and complex SLCN spend their time for learning and leisure are communication friendly. The necessary adaptations are in place to maximise access in addition to the enhancements expected at a universal and targeted levels.</p>	<p>WW3. Specialist - Knowledge skills and expertise are developed in identified members of the wider workforce in order to ensure that, working with specialist support, there are staff that are confident and competent to support the delivery of specialist interventions including individual and small group work, support parents, adapt the environment and identify children who need specialist support.</p>	<p>ID3. Specialist - Children with specialist SLCN have their needs identified effectively and quickly. This includes multidisciplinary assessment where appropriate.</p>	<p>IN3. Specialist - Children and young people needing specialist intervention for their SLCN receive appropriate and timely provision in the most functionally appropriate context for their needs. Progress measures will include activity, participation and well-being goals in addition to goals relating to their core SLC impairment.</p>
<p>FS2. Targeted - Parents and carers of children with identified speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) access additional specific support to ensure confidence in their role as a key communication partner and educational support for their child. Families and young people with SLCN are supported to make choices and access services.</p>	<p>EE2. Targeted - Places where children and young people with identified SLCN spend their time for learning and leisure are communication friendly. Appropriate additional enhancements are made that enable children and young people with identified SLCN to more easily understand and to express themselves.</p>	<p>WW2. Targeted - The wider workforce is supported to develop specific knowledge and skills to support children and young people with identified SLCN. Setting and school staff are confident and competent to deliver targeted interventions, support parents, adapt the environment and identify children who need additional support.</p>	<p>ID2. Targeted - Efficient and accessible processes are in place that support the identification of more specific SLCN. The wider workforce, setting and school staff are supported to be confident and competent to identify children and young people who may require targeted support and/or referral to specialist services for their SLCN.</p>	<p>IN2. Targeted - Children and young people benefiting from targeted interventions will have access to evidence based targeted interventions to develop core speech, language and communication skills delivered in the most appropriate functional context. These might include 1:1 and / or small group interventions that are typically designed by specialist practitioners and delivered by those with appropriate training.</p>
<p>FS1. Universal - All parents and carers are supported with information and resources to encourage their role as effective primary communicative partners for their children. Families and young people are able to make proactive choices with respect to their child's or own needs.</p>	<p>EE1. Universal - Places where children and young people spend their time for learning and leisure are communication friendly. Environments have appropriate enhancements that make it easier for all children and young people to understand and express themselves.</p>	<p>WW1. Universal - The wider workforce is supported to have a good basic understanding of speech, language and communication including supportive strategies. Setting and school staff are confident in their role as facilitators of communication. The wider workforce has access to appropriate training around speech, language and communication.</p>	<p>ID1. Universal - Early identification of children and young people whose speech, language and communication needs may require targeted or specialist support is as efficient and accessible as possible. Preidentification information and advice is available in a given area, school or setting.</p>	<p>IN1. Universal - Homes, settings and schools are supported to develop the language and communication skills of all children and young people through language enrichment and supportive activities.</p>



# WHOLE SYSTEMS APPROACH

All component parts have an essential role to play

Pick and mix does not work!





# PATHWAYS, TRAIN TRACKS AND STEPPING STONES



Outcome

B



A



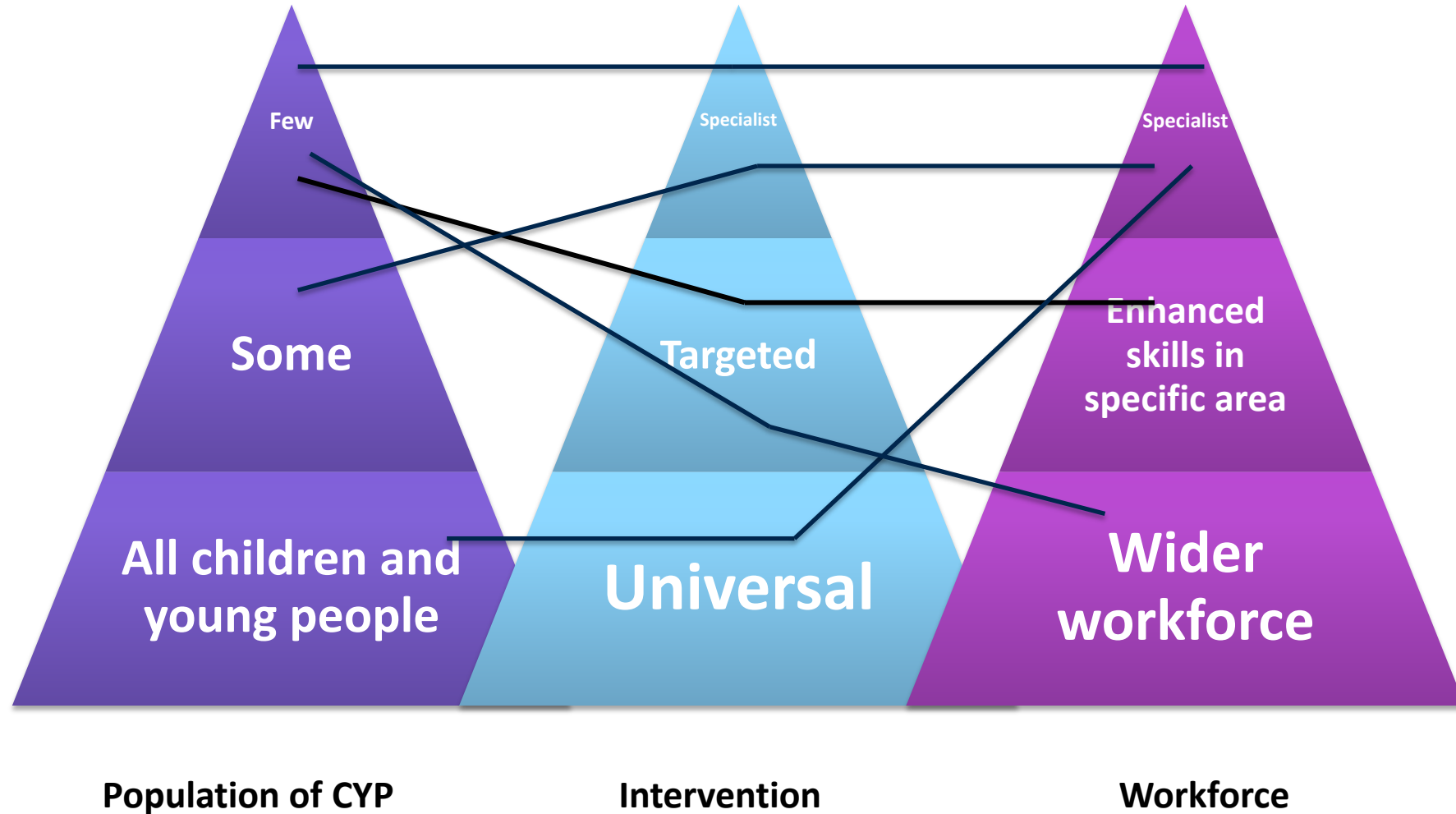
# IMPACT NOT INPUT EQUITY VS EQUALITY



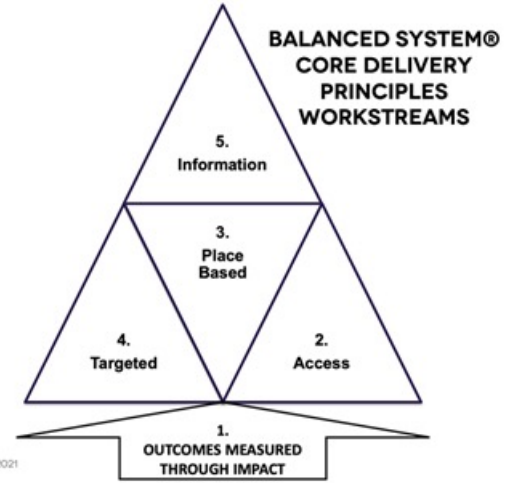
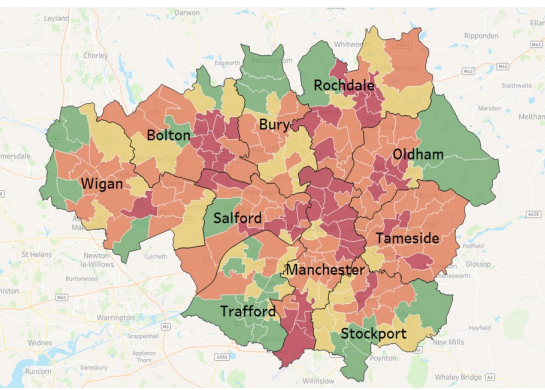
DIFFERENT INPUTS REQUIRED TO  
ACHIEVE SIMILAR OUTCOMES



# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POPULATION, INTERVENTION AND WORKFORCE



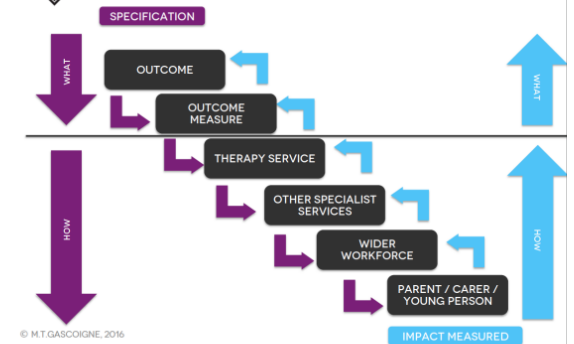




GASCOIGNE, 2021



**BALANCED SYSTEM® INTEGRATED SOLUTION FRAMEWORK**

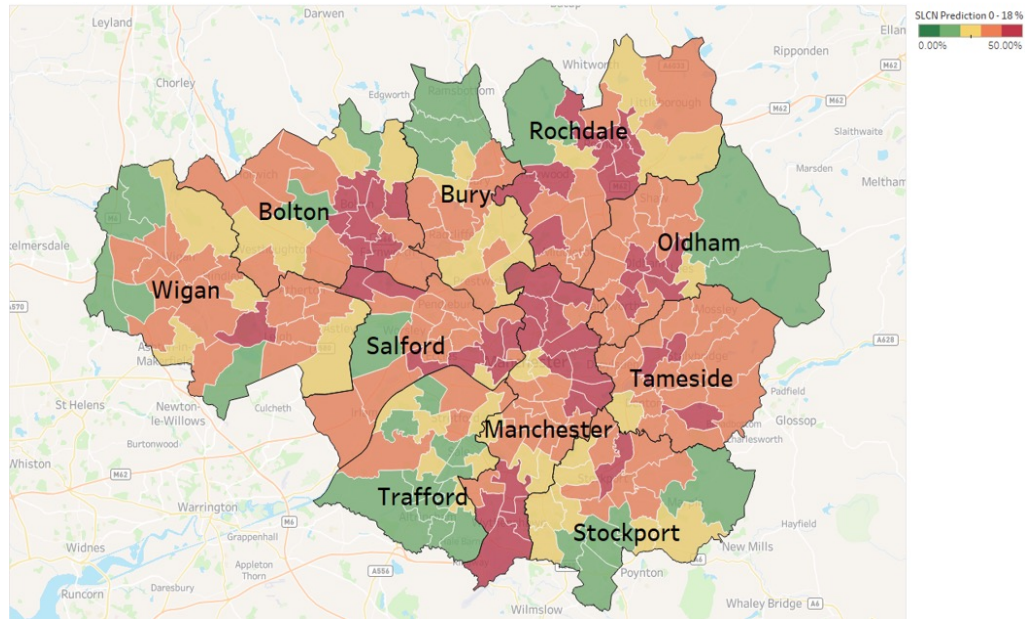
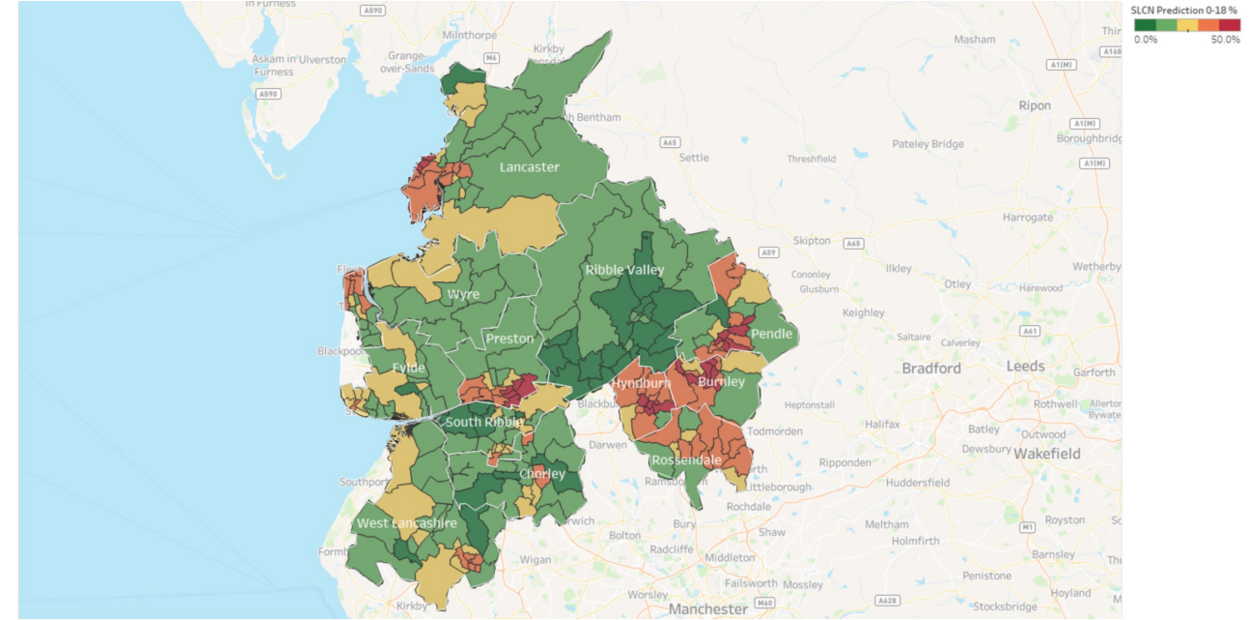
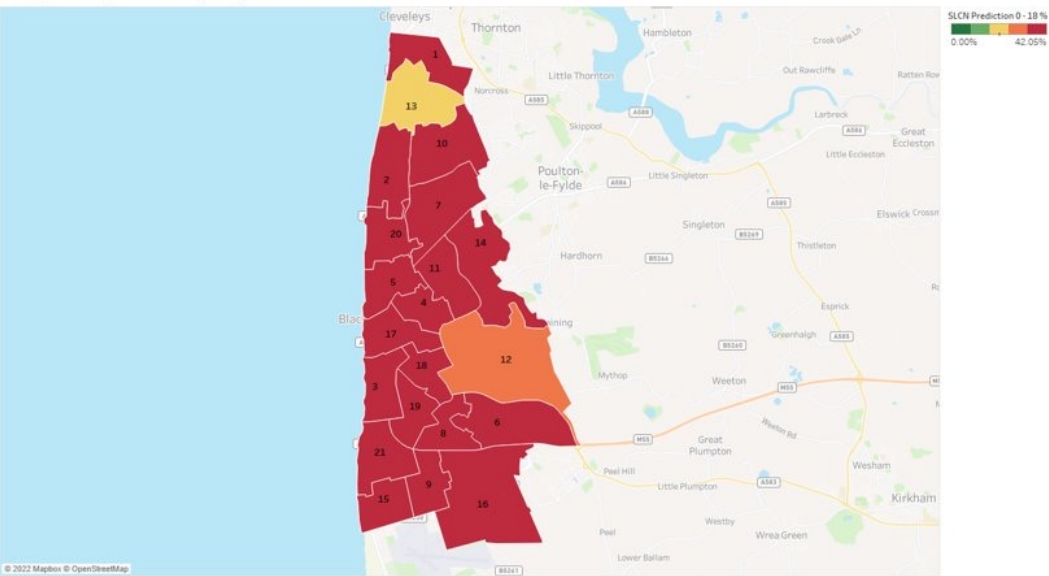


© M.T.GASCOIGNE, 2016

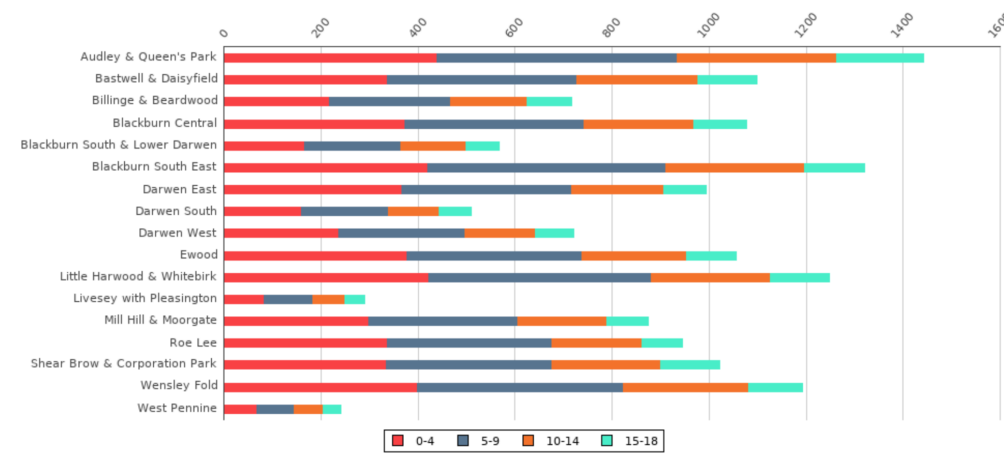
Welcome to The Balanced System® Prove it!  
An impact tool for speech, language and communication

A tool for parents, carers and professionals to know support is making a difference

Blackpool SLCN prediction % (0-18)



Predicted SLCN Need (0-18 years)





# CORE PRINCIPLES OF DELIVERY MODEL



Accessible high-quality information and resources from across the system

Eg <https://pathway.thebalancedsystem.org>

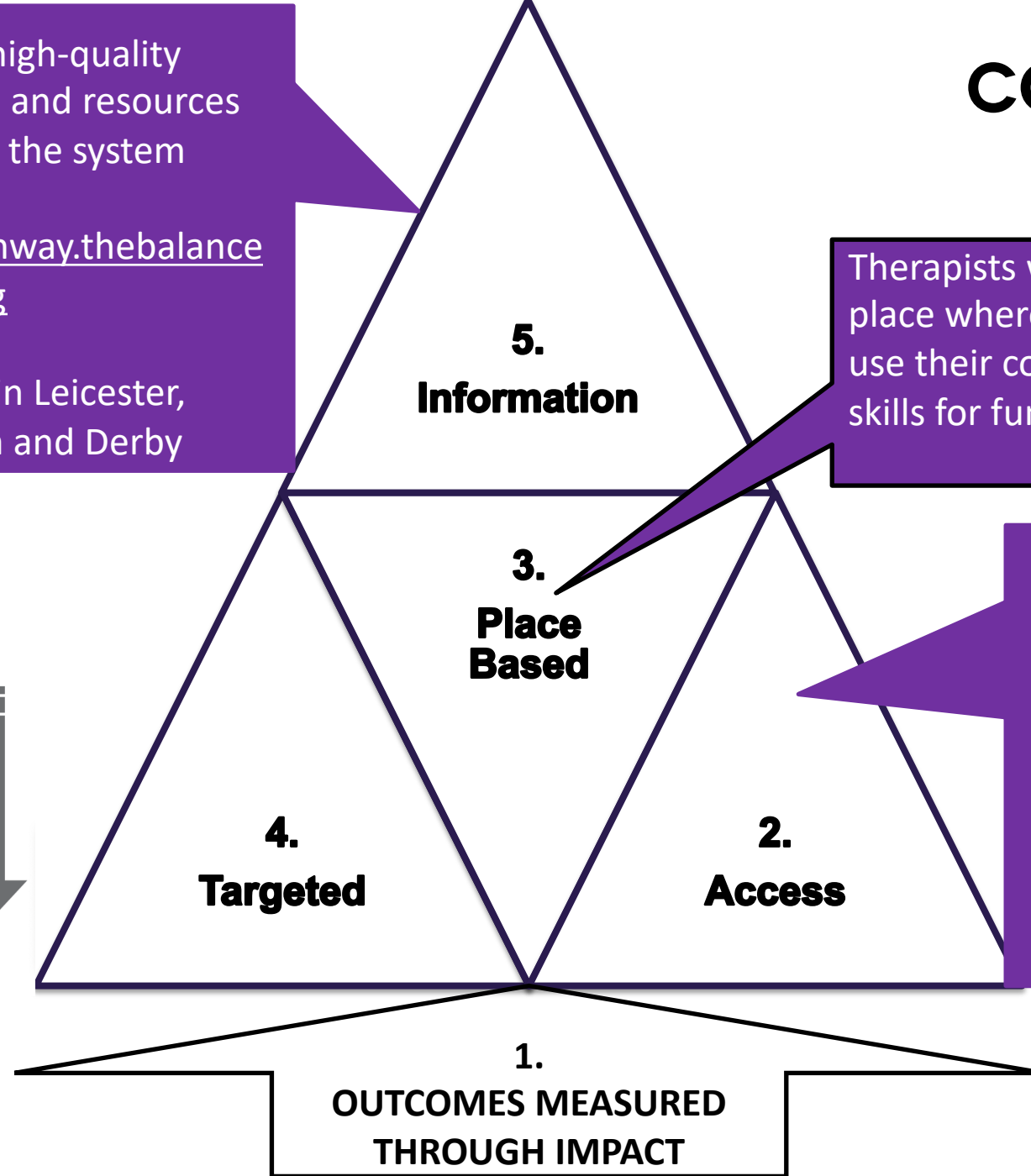
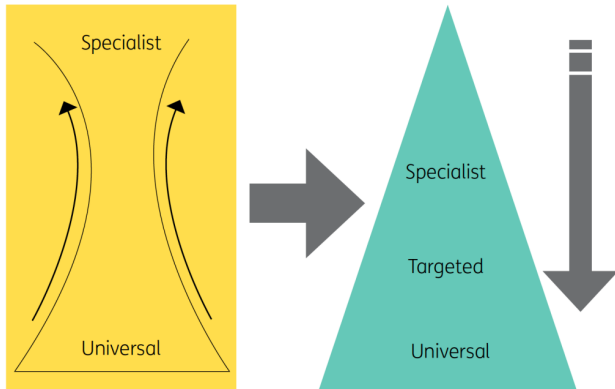
Developed in Leicester, Nottingham and Derby

# CORE DELIVERY PRINCIPLES

Therapists working at place where CYP need to use their communication skills for functional impact

Moving away from the 'refer – assess – treat' paradigm towards easy access to the most immediate support even if more specific intervention may also be indicated

Figure two: The vortex effect – the implication of underinvestment in targeted provision





# DELIVERING THE BALANCED SYSTEM® PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

Delivery Principle 1: Focus on **functional outcomes** and **measures of impact**

The whole delivery model is underpinned by a focus on delivering **functional outcomes** – the ‘so what?’ and measuring **impact not inputs** rising to the ‘**Prove It!**’ challenge

- Child and young person outcomes
- Family outcomes
- School, setting, class or group outcomes
- Area cohort outcomes
- Population outcomes





# THE BALANCED SYSTEM®

## OUTCOME MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

	QUANTITY	QUALITY
EFFORT	<p><b>LEVEL 1 INPUT</b></p> <p>HOW MUCH DID WE DO? TRADITIONAL MEASURES OF ACTIVITY AND INPUTS</p>	<p><b>LEVEL 3 IMPLEMENTATION</b></p> <p>HOW WELL DID WE DO IT? MEASURING WHETHER THE INPUTS WERE OF A HIGH QUALITY</p>
EFFECT	<p><b>LEVEL 2 REACH</b></p> <p>IS ANYONE BETTER OFF? MEASURING ACCESS TO THE INPUTS DELIVERED</p>	<p><b>LEVEL 4 IMPACT</b></p> <p>DID IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE? FOR THE INDIVIDUAL? FOR A GROUP? FOR A POPULATION</p>



Outcome: A statement of the functional outcome  
My mother is happy because  
I made her a cake



Input

Best quality  
80% cocoa  
chocolate



Reach

I made it in  
time for her  
birthday and  
there was  
enough to go  
around



Quality

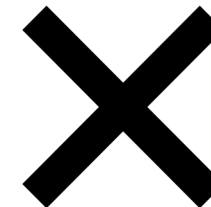
I followed the  
recipe and it  
worked  
beautifully - it  
was a good  
cake!!



**Prove  
it!**

Impact

I didn't realise that  
she has given up  
chocolate so she  
would have  
preferred a victoria  
sandwich!!





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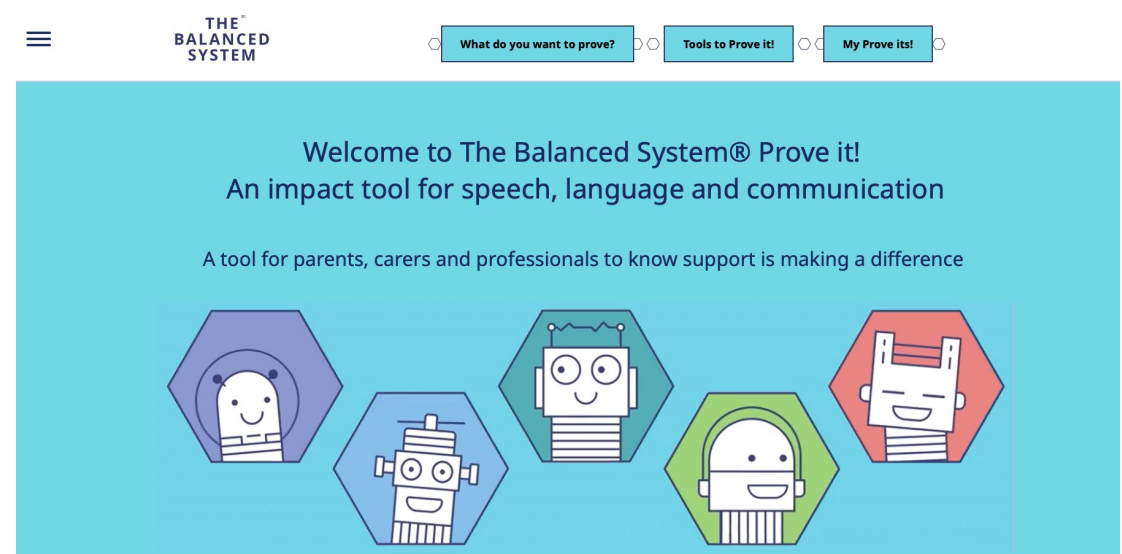






# PROVE IT!

What changed?



What helped?

What do you see that is different?  
What is the evidence?



# DELIVERING THE BALANCED SYSTEM® PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

## Delivery Principle 2: Access

**Simple and easy** access to the right **information**, **assessment** and **support** for children, young people and their families



- Early identification – meaning not only early in life but early in the emergence of need at any age
- Easy access – simplest route to support at the lowest level even if further progression through the system required



- Appropriate assessment - enquiry based process, not standard 'battery', with the option to signpost to appropriate support that may be part of the whole even if further assessment becomes indicated

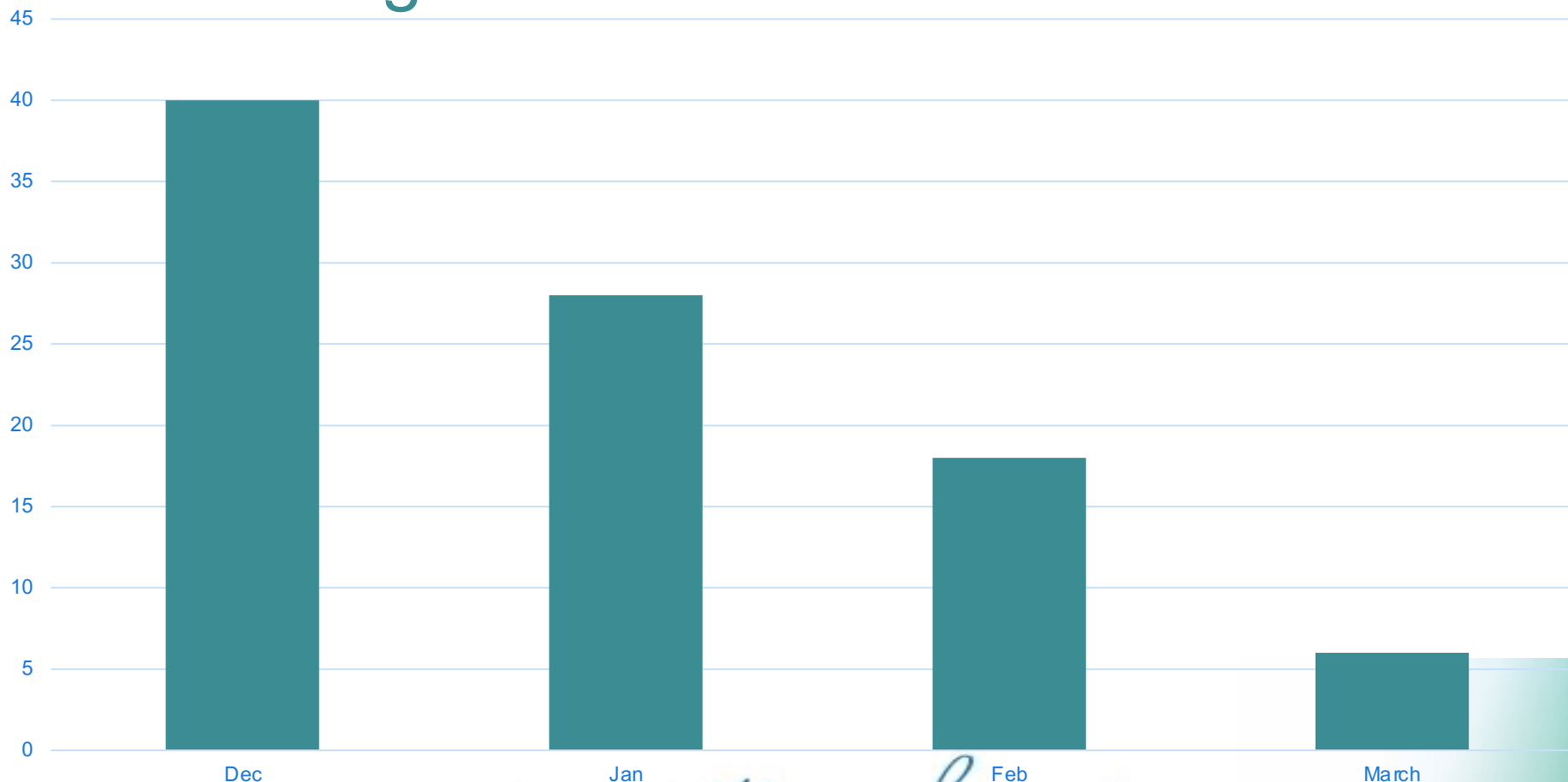


- Multi-agency drop in, with involvement and attendance from colleagues from the Local Authority, health visiting as well as the speech and language therapy team.
- Public Health leads key to driving change in the system
- Launched drop ins in December 22
- First site was identified through the Balanced System® needs analysis suggesting up 55% of children 0-4 may have or be vulnerable for SLCN
- Example of provision following need
- The sessions were held weekly
- Initially, 12-14 children from the waiting list were invited weekly as well as the morning having an open drop in element.

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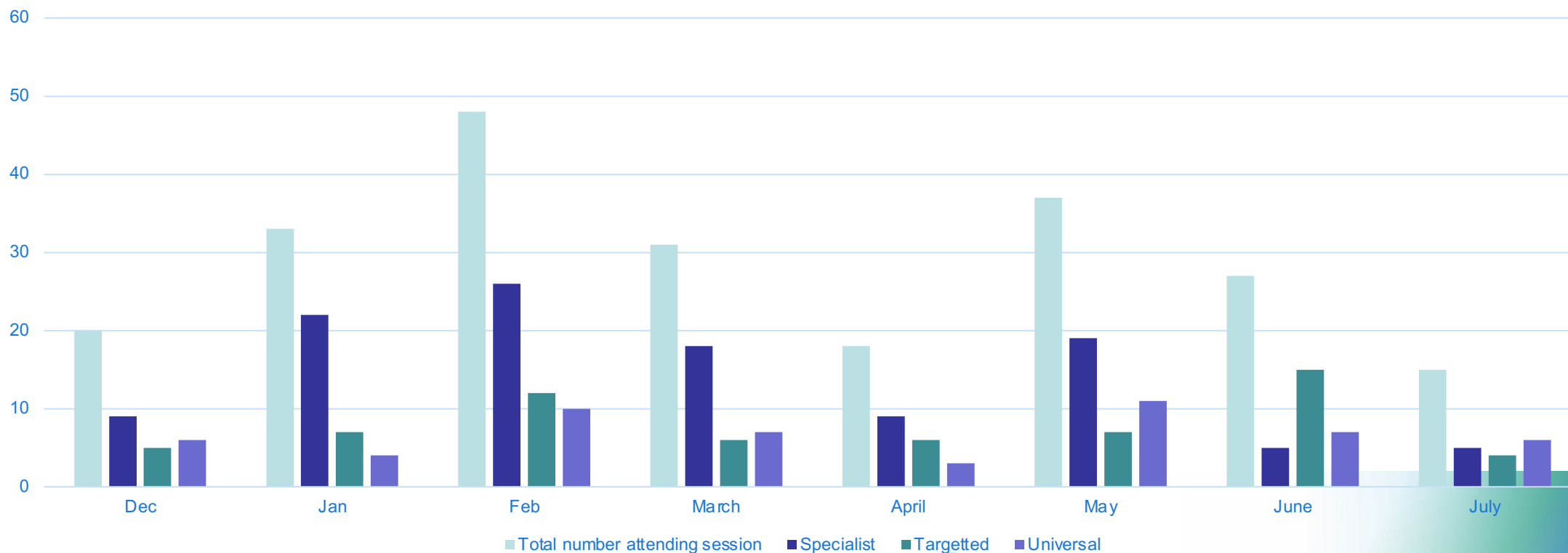
# Length of wait for children in weeks



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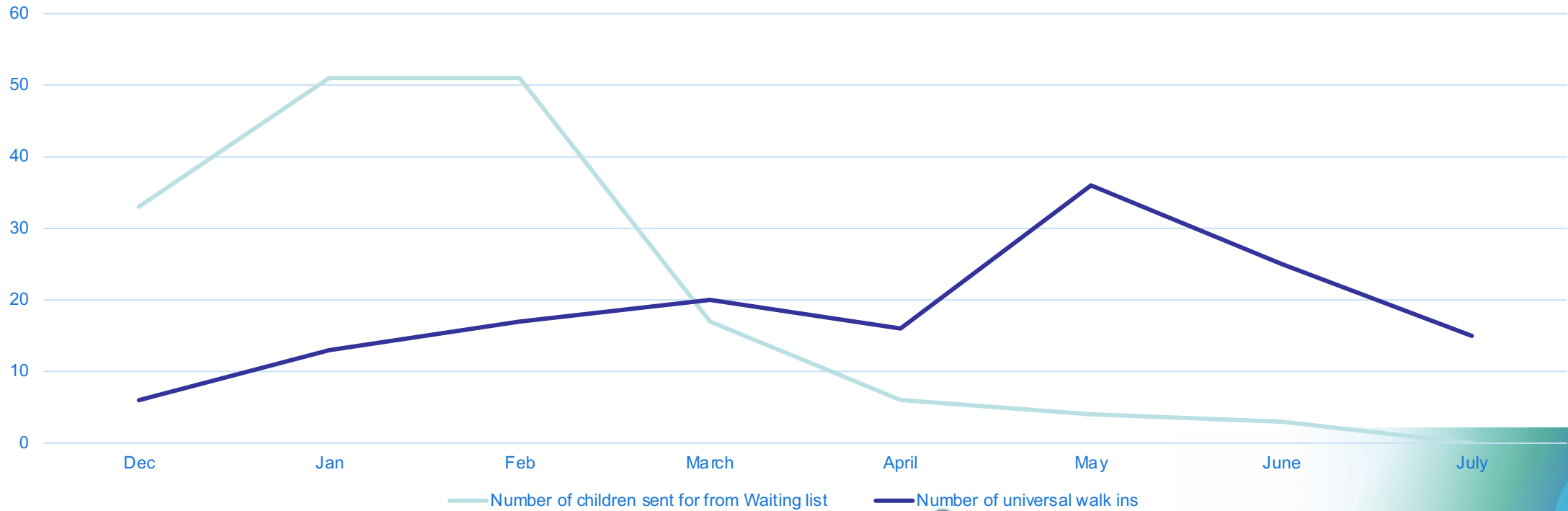
# Recommended provision following walk in



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## Proportion of waiting list children and open access drop in families over time



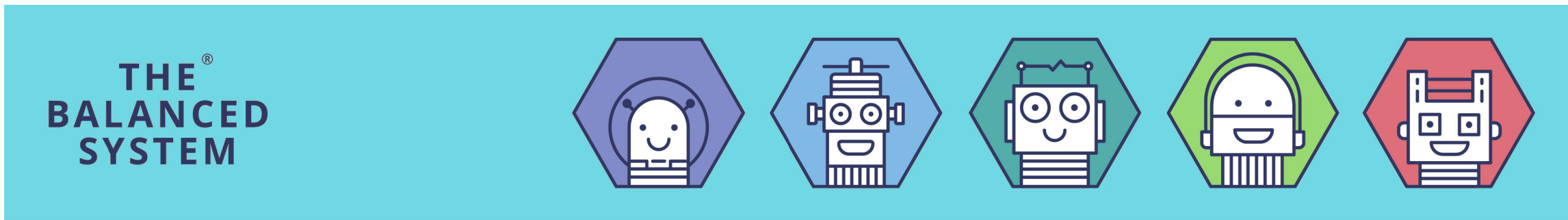
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## Outcomes

- We measured parental evaluations which looked at their satisfaction around advice, setting, ease of access as well as asking them to identify what they had been advised to do differently with their children. Parental satisfaction was very high
- Attendance from children on the waiting list was at 55%.
- Waiting lists for pre school children in this area were at 0 weeks from Feb end. There is now no waiting list.
- Parents went away with advice from the Speech and Language Therapist as well as holistic support from the Child and Family Wellbeing service around other support available. This might include info on free nursery placements, support around domestic violence etc.
- Children received an SLT assessment, further appointments with the SLT if indicated, a free book and info about local libraries and sessions in the community to support Speech and Language development

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# Lancashire - Drop In Evaluation

**209 responses**

Lancashire - Drop In Evaluation

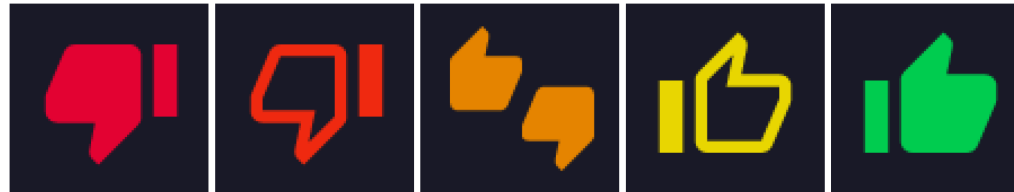
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### How easy has it been to get advice about your child's speech and language today?

Very hard



Very easy

Graph data

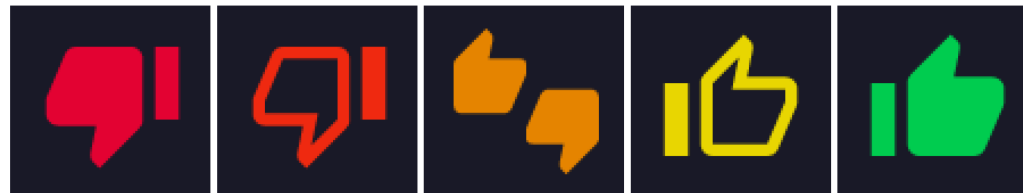


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### How helpful was the advice you have been given today?

Not very helpful



Very helpful

Graph data

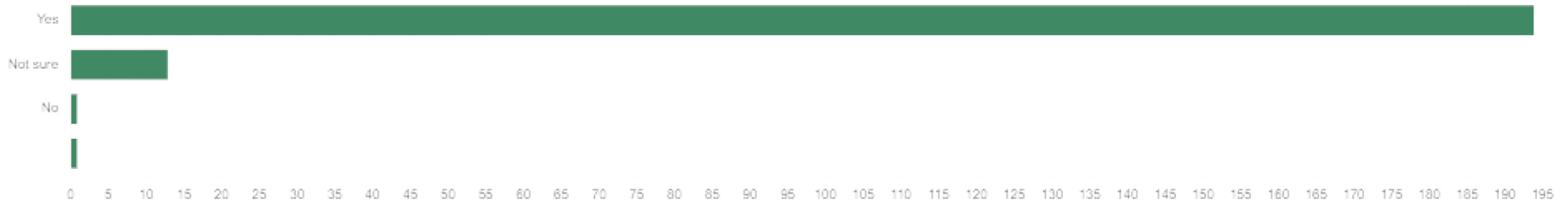


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## Do you feel confident that the advice you have been given today will help your child's speech and language to improve?

Graph data



## Do you understand the next steps for your child?





## What will you try with your child after the session today to support their communication?

The most frequent theme found in these user responses involved various strategies for enhancing communication. This includes "speaking with him", making him "make choices", "mirroring communication", "playing on his level", "using more gestures", and "repeating correct sounds". These strategies were mentioned numerous times throughout the responses indicating a primary focus on consistent interactive communication towards improving children's speech and language

### Core themes

- Use strategies, advice and resources
- Seek opportunities for group activities and intervention
- Implement tools and techniques
- Encouraging and praising

Several users mentioned their plans to "attend group sessions" or "chat groups". These parents are keen to use community resources, indicating satisfaction with groups as a valuable tool to aid their child's communication development.

Core Themes from 209 qualitative responses analysed through the Balanced System® Prove It! Tool using AI

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## What could we do to make the Walk-In sessions better? Any other comments?

The general sentiment expressed by users is overwhelmingly positive, indicating they're pleased with the current state of the service.

Phrases such as "Nothing, it was brilliant", "Everything was fair", "Fantastic and Friendly", "Nothing, thank you", "Everything was explained fully", "A great idea" and other affirmations were frequent, suggesting strong approval of the service. Additionally, the helpful and welcoming nature of the staff was extolled by multiple users.

The service is seen as being very helpful, useful, polite and welcoming, with one user describing it as an 'excellent service'. It is being used for advice/support, as per the comments, "Really glad we came", "I feel I got the best advice", "Lots of helpful information and lovely to speak to someone who understands".

In summary, the feedback indicates that users are broadly very satisfied with the service as it stands, with minimal suggestions for improvement or specific enhancements. This suggests the service is well-regarded and effectively meets the needs of its users.

Core Themes from 209 qualitative responses analysed through the Balanced System® Prove It! Tool using AI

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# DELIVERING THE BALANCED SYSTEM® PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

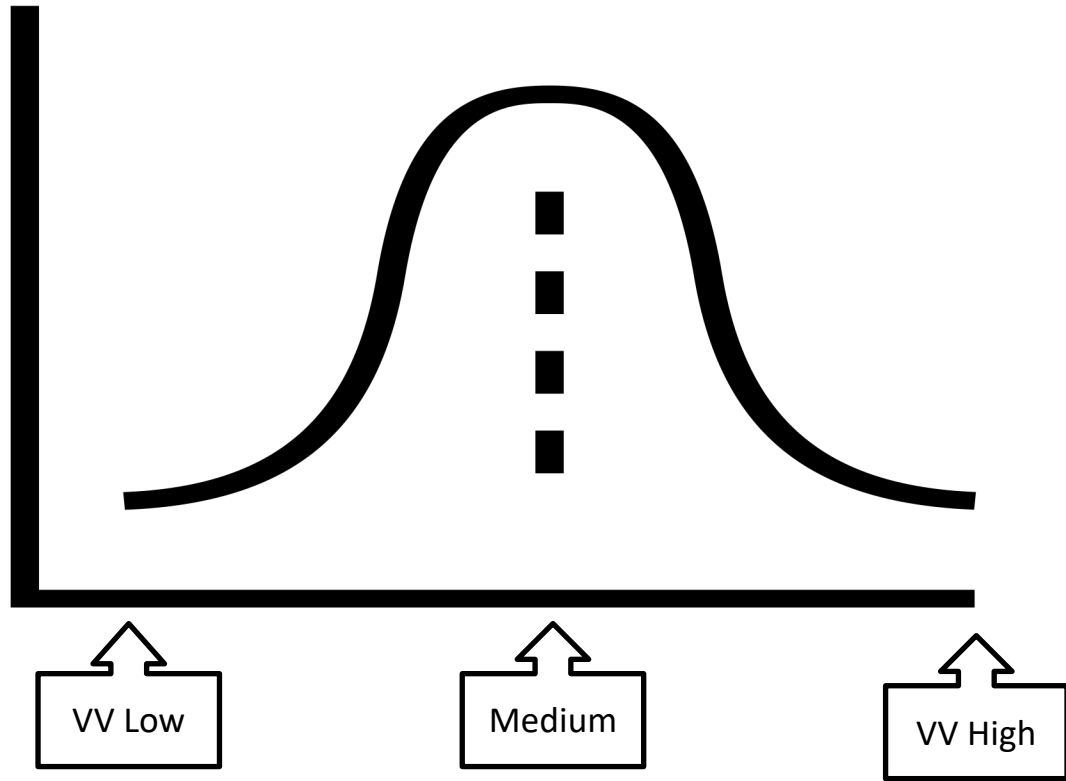
## Delivery Principle 3: Placed based support

Support is delivered in the most **functionally appropriate** and **relevant place** for the child or young person, their development and learning.

- Resources are allocated based on **need – differential** in either or both the **nature of the offer** or the **volume of the offer** based on evidence of need
- **Link therapist** – meaning a **school or setting** based key therapist whose **time is consolidated** into their schools and settings and who work regularly as **part of the school or setting team**
- Intervention focused on **functional outcomes** – the therapeutic offer must be focused on functional, ideally child and family or young person led, outcomes



# SCHOOL ALLOCATION



[https://youtu.be/E\\_zc3w31urw](https://youtu.be/E_zc3w31urw)

# Primary School Example - Worcestershire



	FAMILY SUPPORT	ENVIRONMENT	WORKFORCE	IDENTIFICATION	INTERVENTION
SPECIALIST	<p>Parent Evenings with SLT and SENCO</p>		<p>SLTA on the job training for TAs</p>	<p>Multi-agency assessments e.g. ASD diagnosis</p>	<p>Specialist interventions for a few children</p>
TARGETED	<p>Intervention Fayre</p>			<p>SLT assessments at school</p> <p>Liaison meetings with SENCO</p>	<p>Rolling programme of targeted interventions throughout the key stages</p>
UNIVERSAL	<p>Concept of the Week or Word of the Week</p>				



# BALANCED SYSTEM SCHOOLS AND SETTINGS®



## Balanced System Schools and Settings®

The Balanced System Schools and Settings® is a whole system approach to improving outcomes for children and young people across the range of speech, language and communication needs (www.thebalancedsystem.org). The scheme has been created in response to schools' demand for a strategic approach to understanding their role in commissioning and providing support for speech, language and communication needs.

The Balanced System for Schools and Settings® provides an overarching set of outcomes, processes and outcome measures across the core Five Strands of the Balanced System®.

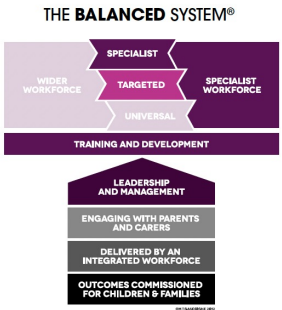
	<b>FAMILY SUPPORT</b>	Families are supported with appropriate information to make informed choices and have skills to support development
	<b>ENVIRONMENTS</b>	Are audited, adapted and enhanced to maximise participation
	<b>WORKFORCE</b>	Specialist knowledge and skills are used to build capacity in the wider workforce
	<b>IDENTIFICATION</b>	Is efficient and accessible including training of others to identify and provision of pre-referral advice
	<b>INTERVENTION</b>	Is appropriate and timely, may include direct or indirect, individual and group interventions delivered in a functional context

The Balanced System Schools and Settings® takes a strategic approach to understanding need, mapping existing provision and gaps, and supporting decision making by school to enhance provision. Better Communication CIC has developed the accredited award scheme with partners NAPLIC and Afasic. The accreditation has two levels and provides quality assurance of provision that will enhance speech, language and communication outcomes for children and young people.

The Balanced System Schools and Settings® meets level 3 requirements for the Communication Commitment for schools and early years providers:

<https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/projects/communication-commitment/>

<https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/projects/early-years-commitment/about-the-early-years-commitment/>



## How Balanced System Schools and Settings® is different?



### The journey

The Balanced System Schools and Settings® provides a school or cluster of schools with the tools, mentor support and peer support over a 18 month period using the four phase cycle of understand, plan, do and review. This helps schools to ensure that they are making the best use of resources available to support speech, language and communication across the school or setting for all children as well as those with specific needs. Good speech, language and communication skills underpin attainment across the curriculum.

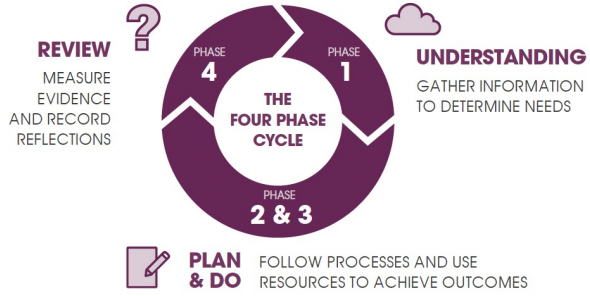
### Feedback on Balanced System Schools and Settings®

It enabled us to identify good practice; identify what the school already has in place in a very systematic way. Also supported the identification of gaps in the provision. Also highlighted specific areas that we needed to work on.

Without this I feel that (the school) would not have been as motivated and focussed in ensuring that the provision was continuing to improve and certain aspects such as family support would not have been completed.

Useful to see all the SLCN support in one place - the framework of levels and strands means it gave a comprehensive picture. Made us think about the impact of what we were already doing and how to measure it.

### THE BALANCED SYSTEM® SCHOOLS AND SETTINGS



<https://www.thebalancedsystem.org/schools/what-is-scheme-for-schools/>

FAMILY SUPPORT	ENVIRONMENTS	WORKFORCE	IDENTIFICATION	INTERVENTION
		Level 3 Award		
	Communication friendly school scheme	Targeted level training for TAs		Targeted language interventions
Information signposting			Whole cohort screening	



# DELIVERING THE BALANCED SYSTEM® PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE



Delivery Principle 4: Build the targeted offer



Development of strong **universal and targeted** provision is key to facilitating access to **specialist** support as and when **needed** for a **finite** time



- Targeted offer – building a **robust targeted offer** across **all five strands** is key activity for all: therapy teams and wider workforce





# DELIVERING THE BALANCED SYSTEM® PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE



Delivery Principle 5: Information



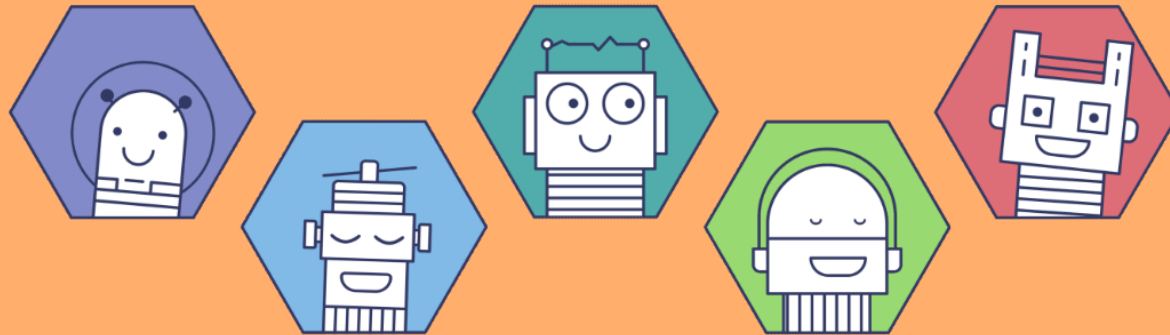
**High quality, accessible and consistent** information and advice are available in a **range of media** and **culturally appropriate** forms to **enable** parents and carers and professionals to be **well informed**. These typically have been **quality assured** by the appropriate therapy professionals





# Welcome to The Balanced System<sup>®</sup> speech, language and communication pathway

A journey to support children and young people for parents, carers and professionals



<https://pathway.thebalancedsystem.org>

*supporting change*





## To conclude



**Do our resources  
follow need?**

**Why do we do  
what we do?**

**So what?**

**Can we evidence  
impact?**

**Prove It!**



# Contacts



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