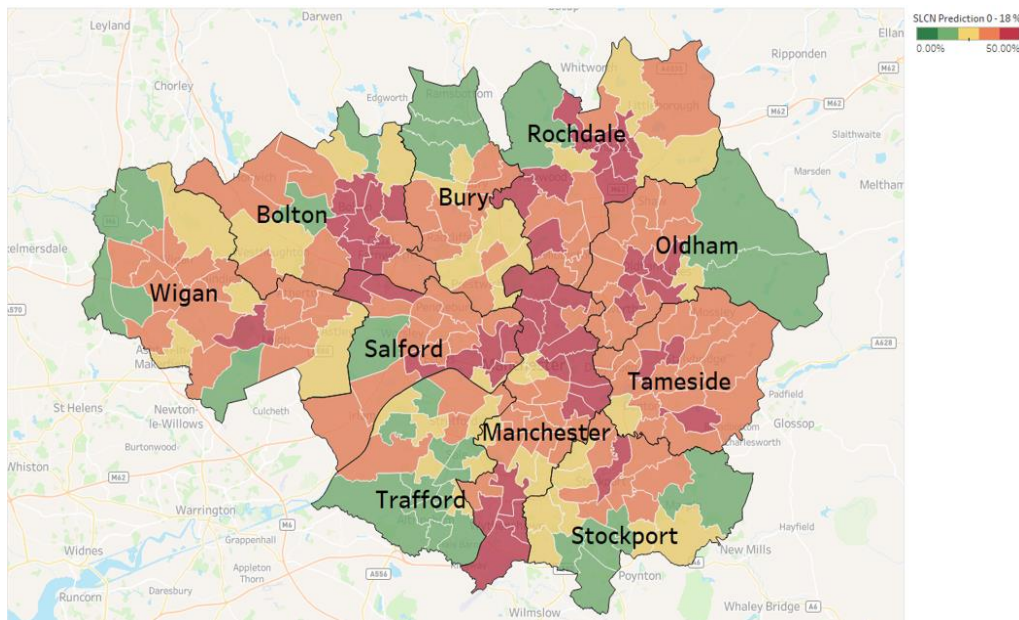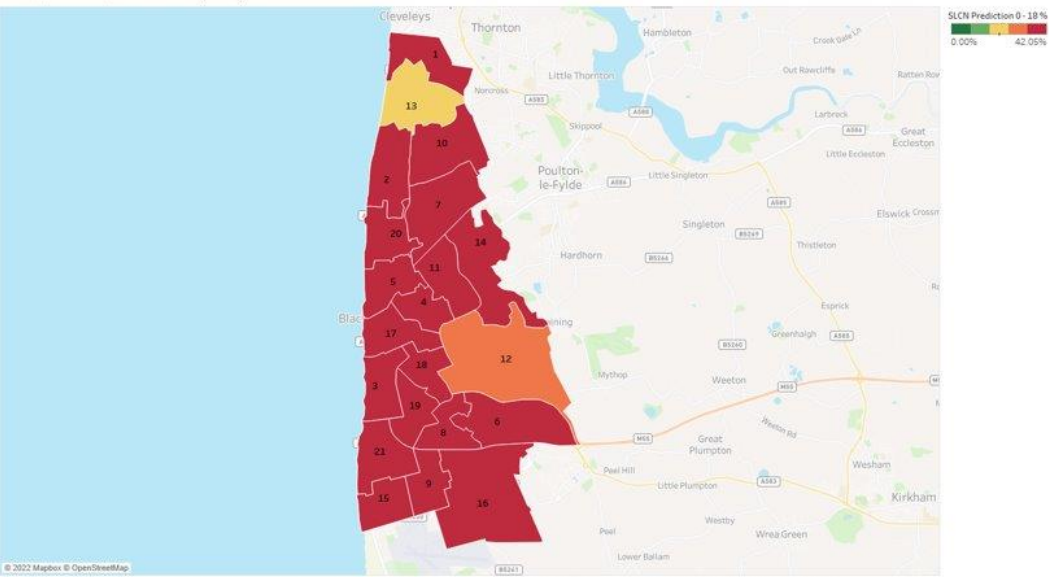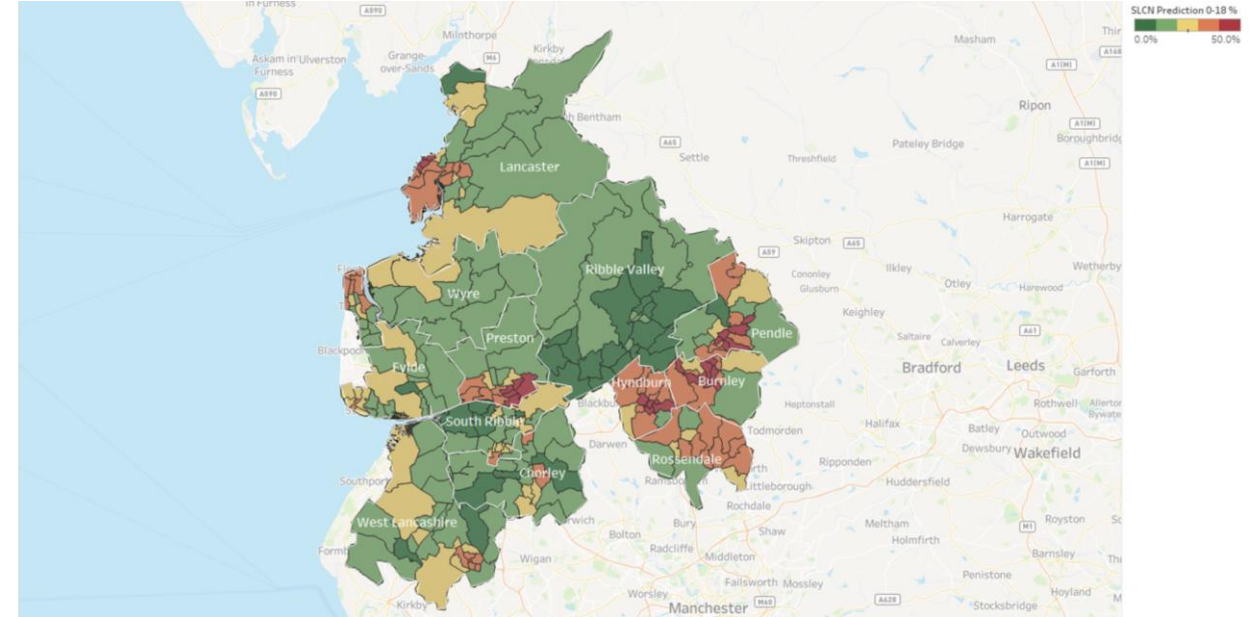# The Balanced System®
Understanding need and measuring impact

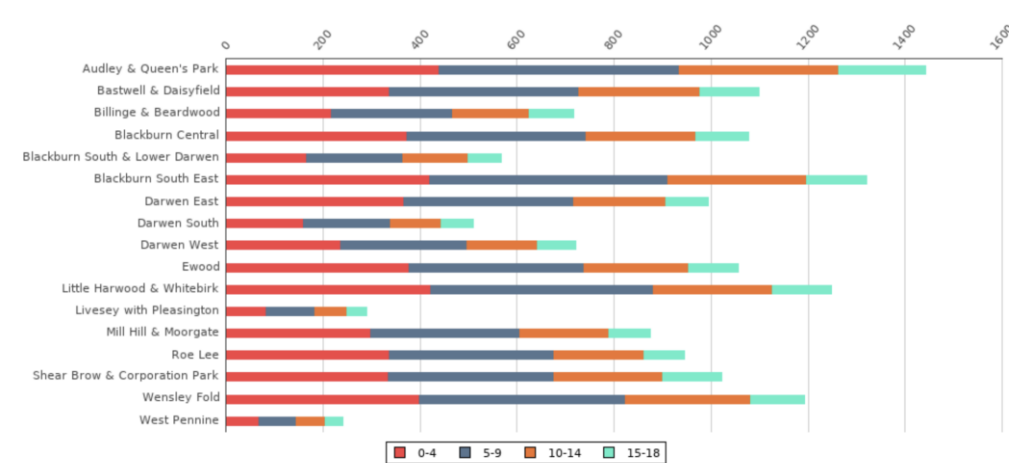Marie Gascoigne

North West Network
21st June, 2024

supporting change

Blackpool SLCN prediction % (0-18)

Predicted SLCN Need (0-18 years)

supporting change

What is the statement a measure of?

Join at
slido.com
#7118 685

What is the Balanced System®

- 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](#).

supporting change

2003 - 2023

https://www.thebalancedsystem.org/downloads/balanced-system-information-for-commissioners/

Latest publication

PAEDIATRICS AND CHILD HEALTH xxx:xxx 1   2024

Please cite this article as: Gascoigne M, Meeting speech, language and communication needs: a whole-systems, population-based approach, Paediatrics and Child Health, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paed.2024.04.001

THE BALANCED SYSTEM ®

SCAN ME

supporting change

Why?

A population based approach?

supporting change

Talking About a Generation

CURRENT POLICY, EVIDENCE AND PRACTICE FOR SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION
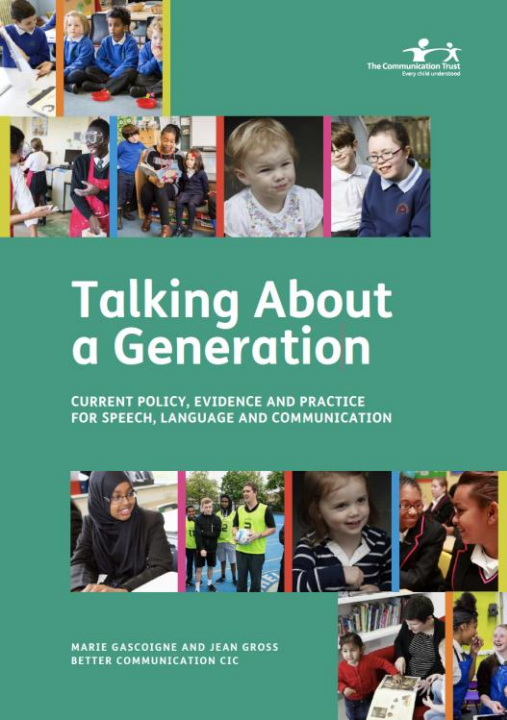
MARIE GASCOIGNE AND JEAN GROSS
BETTER COMMUNICATION CIC

https://www.thebalancedsystem.org/tct_talkingaboutageneration_report_online.pdf

FIGURE 3: IMPACT ON LIFE CHANCES OF POOR EARLY LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS THAT CAN HELP
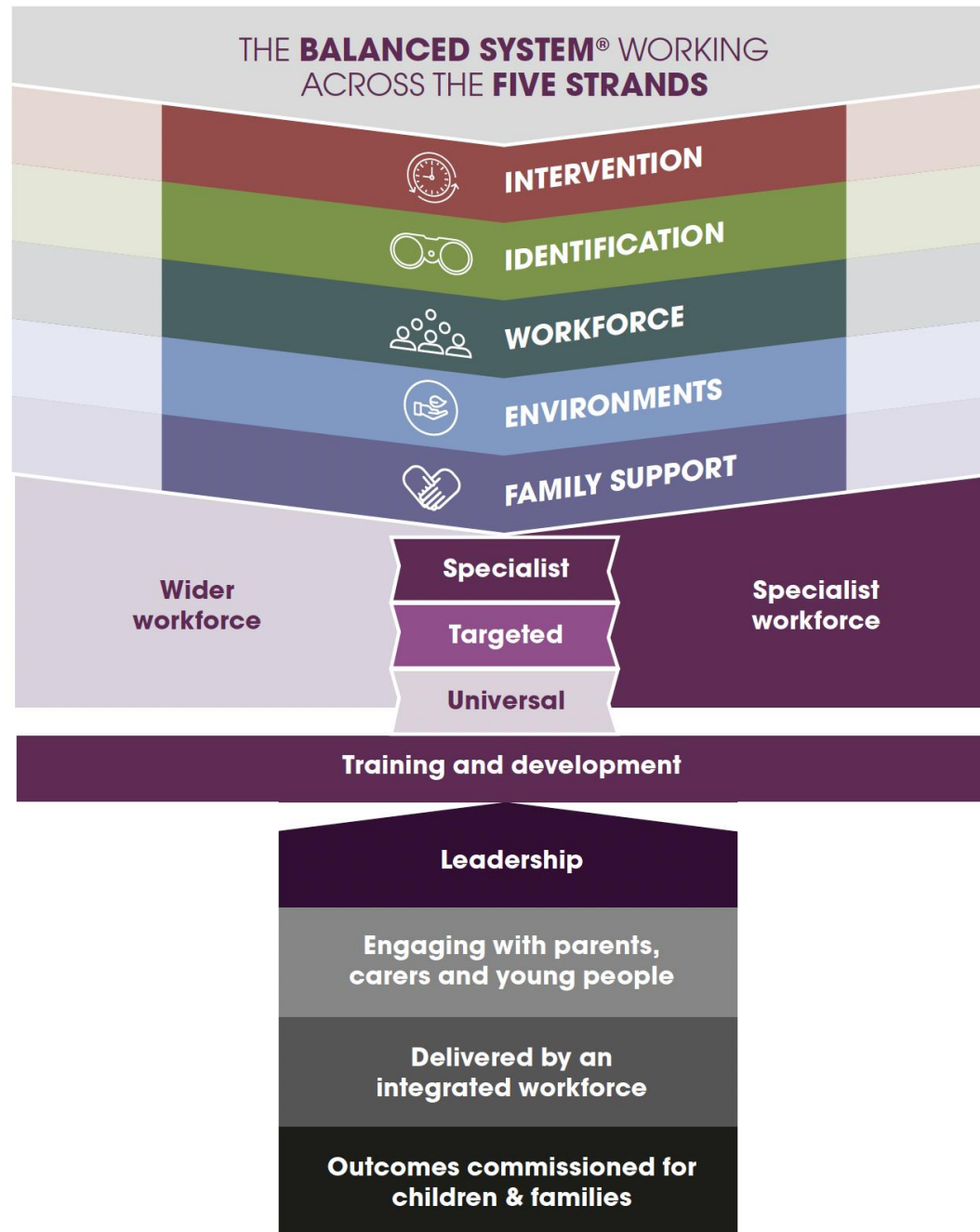
IF I HAVE POOR COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE SKILLS WHEN I'M FIVE, THEN BY THE TIME I'M 11 I'M SIX TIMES LESS LIKELY TO DO WELL IN ENGLISH AND TEN TIMES LESS LIKELY TO DO WELL IN MATHS TESTS THAN MY MORE CHATTY FRIENDS.[14]

IF MY FAMILY IS SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED I HAVE A HIGHER RISK OF NOT DEVELOPING GOOD SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS.[10]

IF I HAVE A LIMITED VOCABULARY AT TWO, BY THE TIME I'M SIX I'M LIKELY TO BE DOING MUCH LESS WELL ACADEMICALLY AND SOCIALLY THAN OTHER CHILDREN. BY THE TIME I'M SEVEN I WILL BE READING MUCH LESS WELL THAN THEY ARE.[11]

IF I'M LATE TALKING AND COME FROM A HOME WITH NOT MUCH MONEY, I'M MUCH MORE LIKELY TO BE BEHIND MY FRIENDS IN READING AND WRITING AT FIVE THAN MY FRIENDS FROM BETTER-OFF FAMILIES WHO ARE ALSO LATE WITH THEIR LANGUAGE AT THREE.[12]

IF I HAVE POOR COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE SKILLS AT FIVE, BY THE END OF KEY STAGE 1, WHEN I'M SEVEN, I'M LIKELY TO ENJOY SCHOOL LESS.[13]

IF I HAVE A POOR VOCABULARY WHEN I'M FIVE, I'M MORE THAN TWICE AS LIKELY TO BE UNEMPLOYED IN MY THIRTIES AS A SIMILAR CHILD WITH A GOOD VOCABULARY. I'M ONE AND A HALF TIMES MORE LIKELY TO HAVE MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS.[15]

IF I STRUGGLE TO UNDERSTAND LANGUAGE WHEN I'M SIX, I MAY START TO BE REJECTED BY MY PEERS AND AS A RESULT SHOW BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS WHEN I'M TEN.[16]

| I'M A NEWBORN | I'M 2 | I'M 3 | I'M 4 | I'M 5 | I'M 6 |

MY PARENTS LEARNED FROM ANTENATAL CLASSES HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO TALK, SING AND READ TO ME, RIGHT FROM THE START.

AT MY 2-YEAR CHECK A HEALTH VISITOR NOTICED I NEEDED SOME HELP WITH MY TALKING. MY MUM AND DAD COULD DROP IN AT A CHILDREN'S CENTRE TO GET ADVICE AND A REFERRAL FOR MORE DETAILED ASSESSMENT IF NEEDED.

WE GO TO SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY PARENT-CHILD INTERACTION SESSIONS WHERE MY PARENTS CAN GET LOTS OF IDEAS TO HELP MY TALKING AND LISTENING.

I GET A FREE PLACE AT A NURSERY WHERE STAFF HAVE HAD LOTS OF TRAINING AND KNOW HOW TO HELP ME.

I TAKE PART IN SPECIAL SMALL-GROUP SESSIONS IN MY NURSERY, TO HELP MY LISTENING AND TALKING. A CHILDREN'S CENTRE WORKER VISITS MY MUM AND DAD AT HOME TO SHOW THEM GOOD WAYS OF SHARING BOOKS WITH ME.

MY RECEPTION CLASS TEACHER KEEPS A RECORD OF MY PROGRESS IN IMPORTANT AREAS OF LEARNING INCLUDING COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE. THIS MEANS THAT THEY KNOW IF I NEED SOME EXTRA HELP.

I WORK WITH A SPECIALLY TRAINED TEACHING ASSISTANT ON A PROGRAMME SET UP AND SUPPORTED BY A SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPIST.

IN CLASS I HAVE LOTS OF CHANCES TO LEARN NEW WORDS. MY TEACHER KNOWS ALL ABOUT TEACHING TALKING.

From Gascoigne & Gross, (2017) Talking about a Generation   https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/540327/tct_talkingaboutageneration_report_online.pdf

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

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

IF I HAVE POOR COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE SKILLS WHEN I'M FIVE, THEN BY THE TIME I'M 11 I'M SIX TIMES LESS LIKELY TO DO WELL IN ENGLISH AND TEN TIMES LESS LIKELY TO DO WELL IN MATHS TESTS THAN MY MORE CHATTY FRIENDS.[14]

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

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

I'M 4

I'M 5

THE **BALANCED SYSTEM**® WORKING ACROSS THE **FIVE STRANDS**

- INTERVENTION
- IDENTIFICATION
- WORKFORCE
- ENVIRONMENTS
- FAMILY SUPPORT

Wider workforce

Specialist
Targeted
Universal

Specialist workforce

Training and development

Leadership

Engaging with parents, carers and young people

Delivered by an integrated workforce

Outcomes commissioned for children & families

THE
BALANCED
SYSTEM®
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 i**ncluding 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
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.	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.	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.	ID3. Specialist - Children with specialist SLCN have their needs identified effectively and quickly. This includes multidisciplinary assessment where appropriate.	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.
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.	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.	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.	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.	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.
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.	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.	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.	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.	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.

Whole Systems Approach

All component parts have an essential role to play   **Pick and mix does not work!**
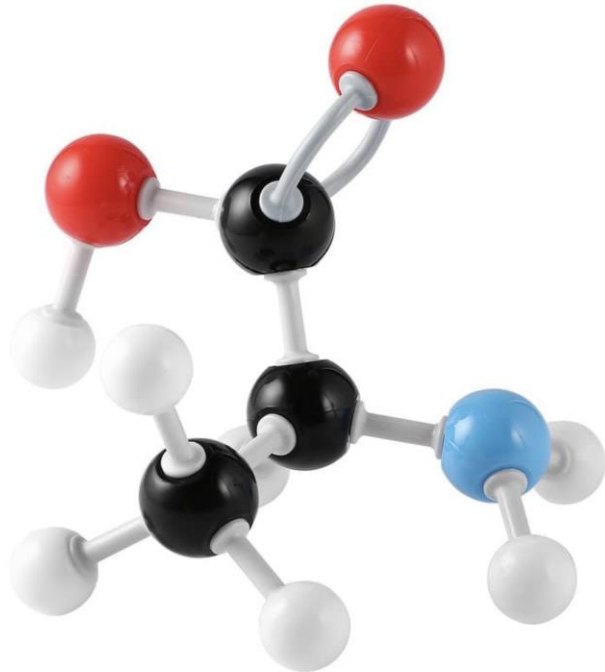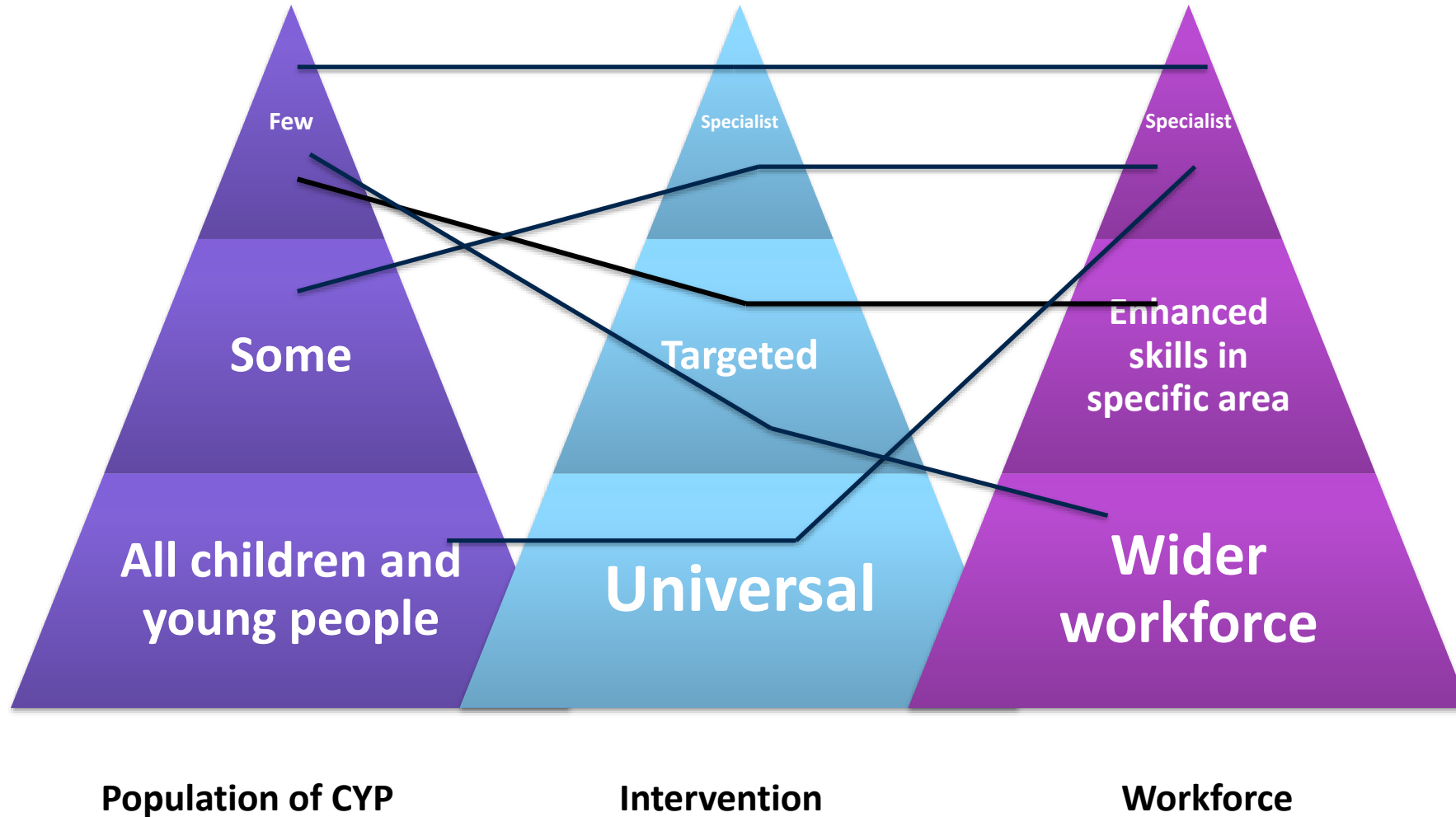
Outcome

B

A

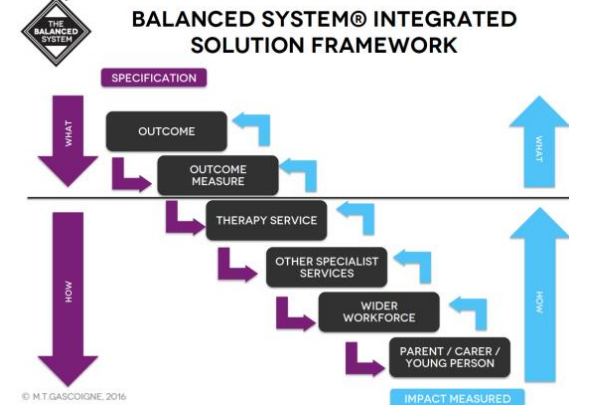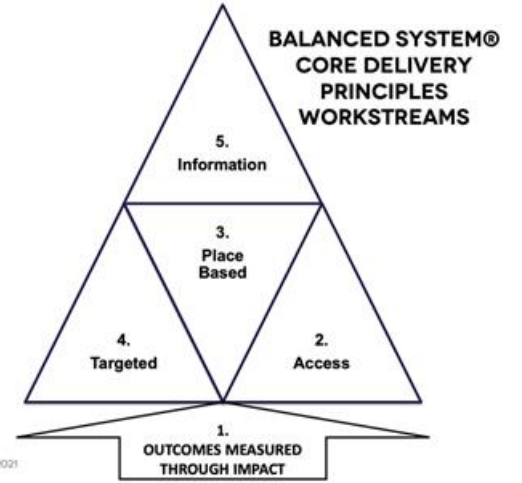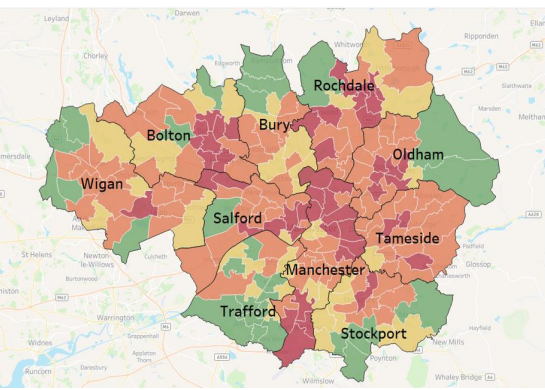# Impact not Input
EQUITY VS Equality

DIFFERENT INPUTS REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE
SIMILAR OUTCOMES

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POPULATION, INTERVENTION AND WORKFORCE

Few

Specialist

Specialist
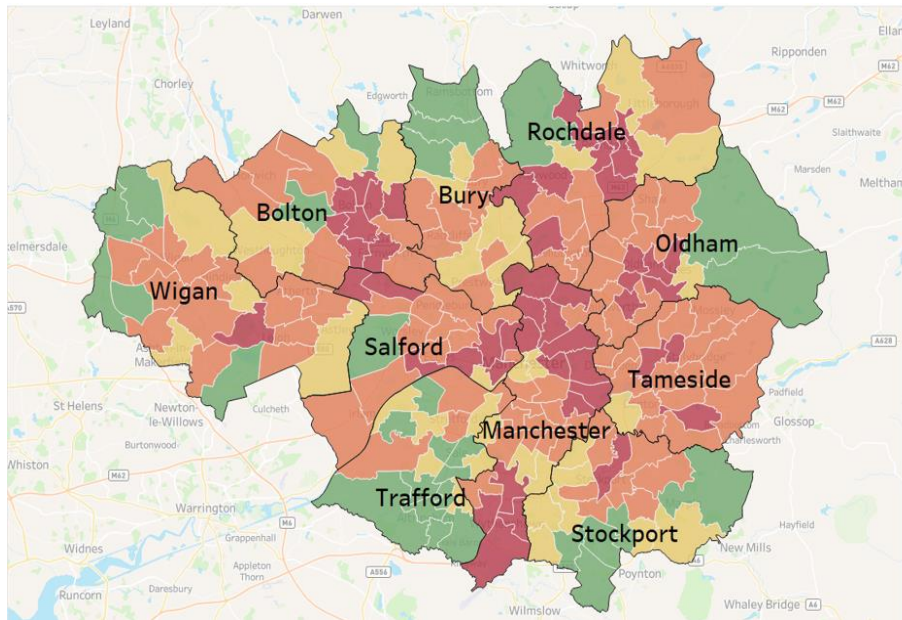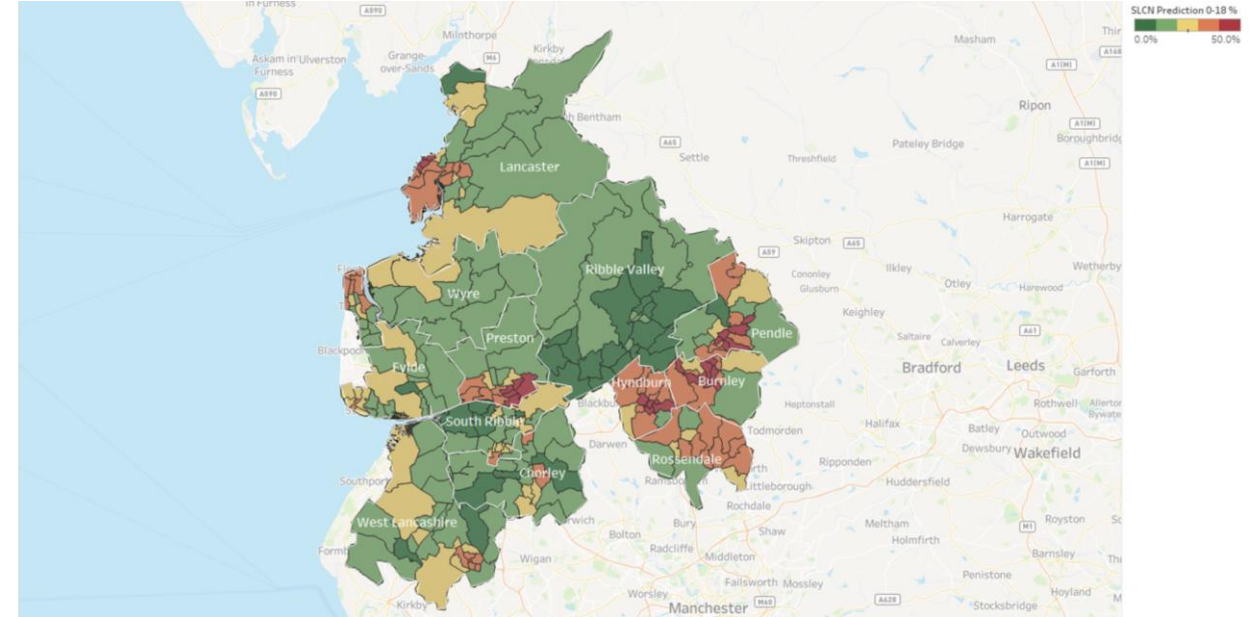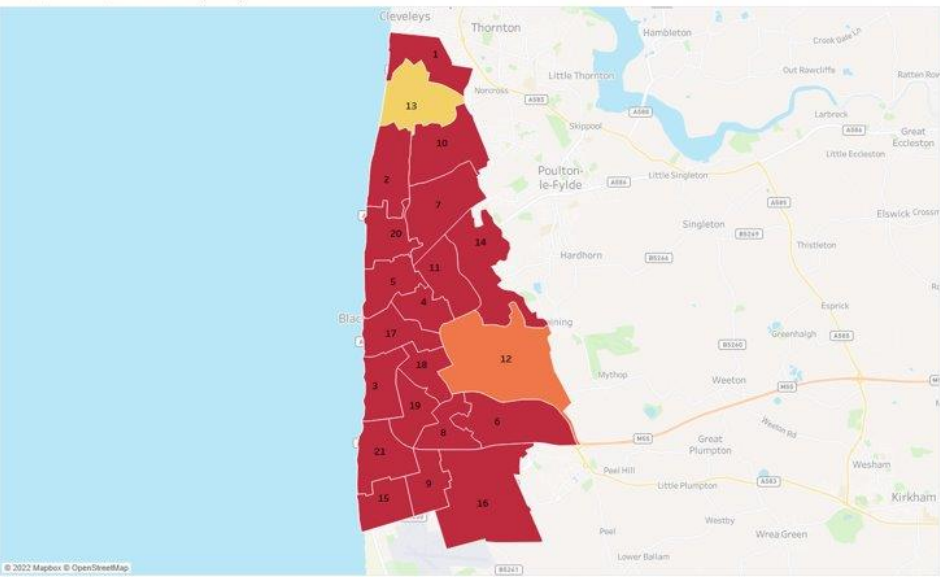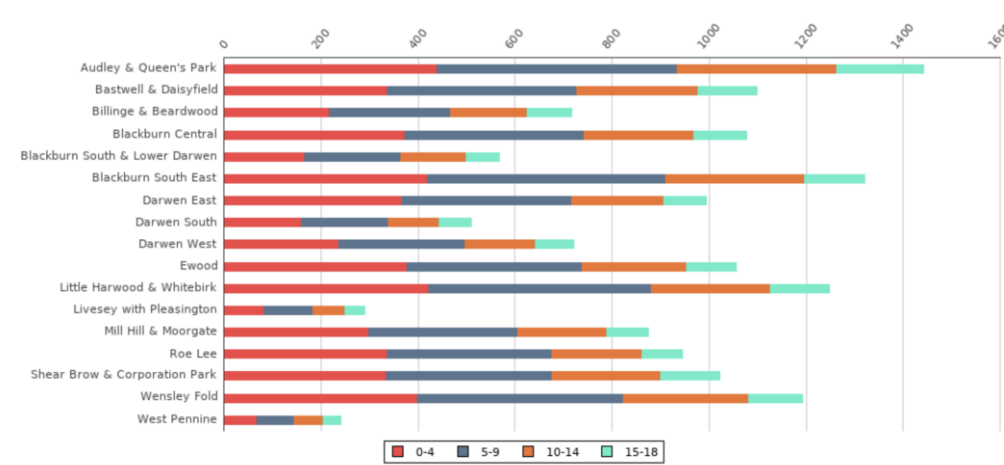
Some

Targeted

Enhanced skills in specific area

All children and young people

Universal

Wider workforce

Population of CYP

Intervention

Workforce

THE BALANCED SYSTEM®

Blackpool SLCN prediction % (0-18)

SLCN Prediction 0 - 18 %
0.00%   42.05%

Map based on Longitude (generated) and Latitude (generated). Colour shows details about Slcn 0 - 18 %. The marks are labelled by Ward Ref (for key). The data is filtered on Lad19Nm, which keeps Blackpool.

SLCN Prediction 0-18 %
0.0%   50.0%

SLCN Prediction 0 - 18 %
0.00%   50.00%

Predicted SLCN Need (0-18 years)

Core Principles of Delivery Model

Core Delivery Principles

Accessible high-quality information and resources from across the system
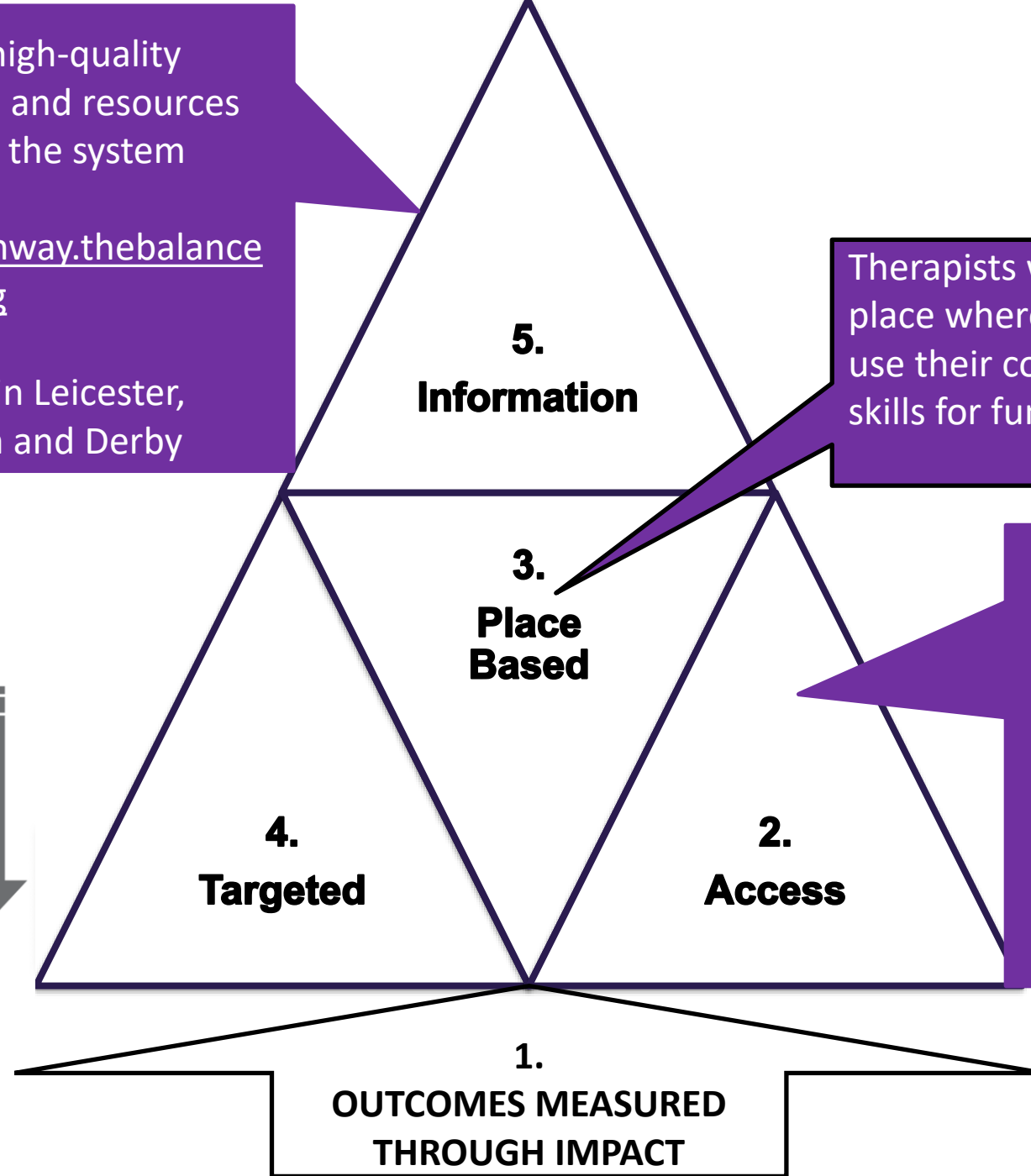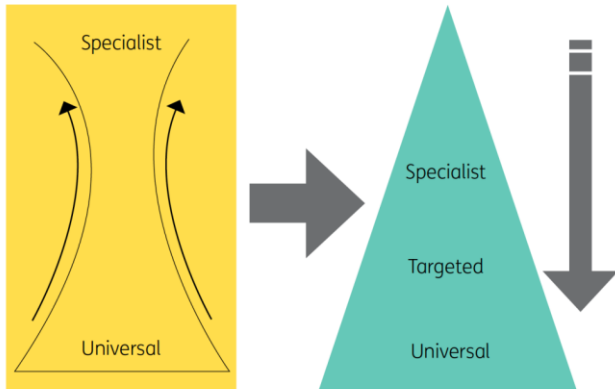Eg
https://pathway.thebalancedsystem.org

Developed in Leicester, Nottingham and Derby

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

Specialist

Universal

Specialist

Targeted

Universal

5. Information

3. Place Based

4. Targeted

2. Access

1. OUTCOMES MEASURED THROUGH IMPACT

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

TIME

THE
BALANCED
SYSTEM®

OUTCOME MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

QUANTITY   QUALITY

EFFORT

Level 1 Input	Level 3 Implementation
How much did we do?	How well did we do it?
Traditional measures of activity and inputs	Measuring whether the inputs were of a high quality

EFFECT

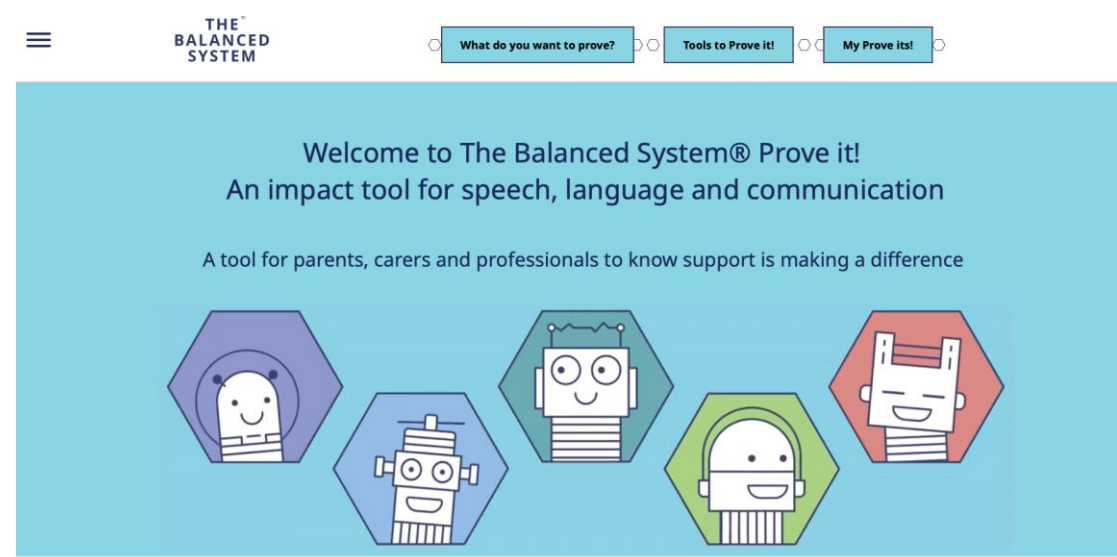| Level 2 Reach	Level 4 Impact
Is anyone better off?	Did it make a difference?
Measuring access to the inputs delivered	For the individual? For a group? For a population

After Feldman, 2005 and "Turning the Curve" (DCSF, 2008)
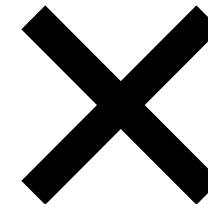
Join at

slido.com

#7118 685

Prove It!

What changed?

What helped?

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

https://proveit.thebalancedsystem.org

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.
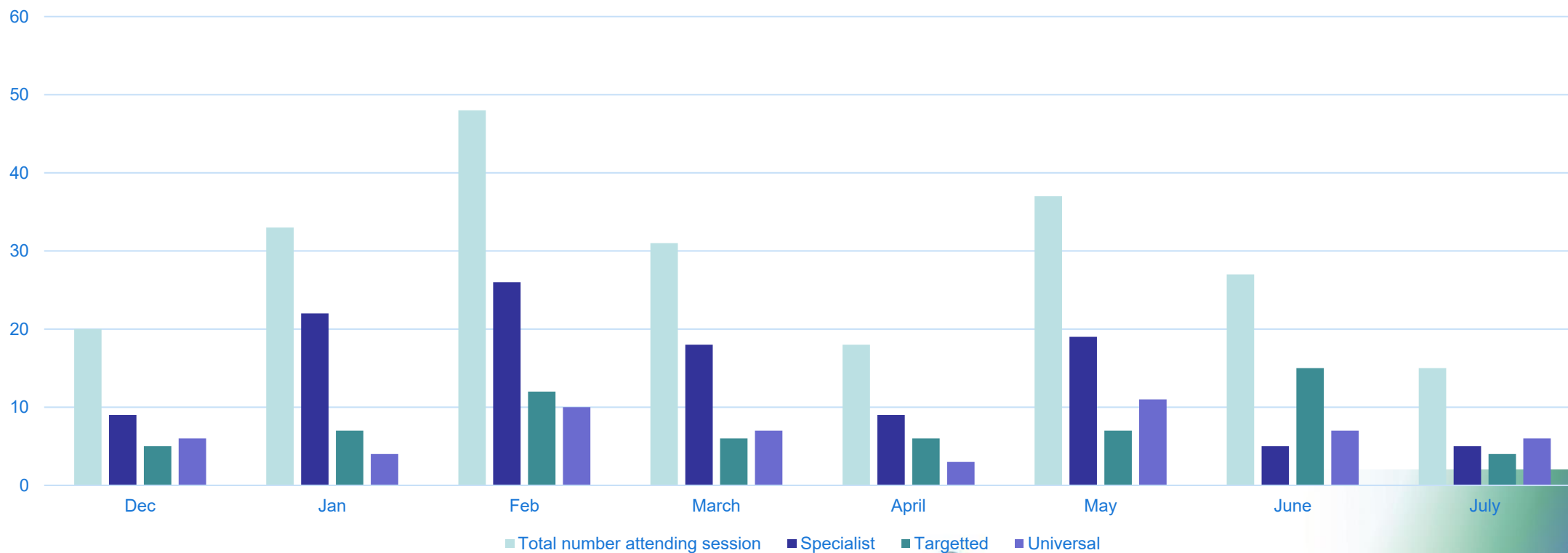
supporting change

Length of wait for children in weeks
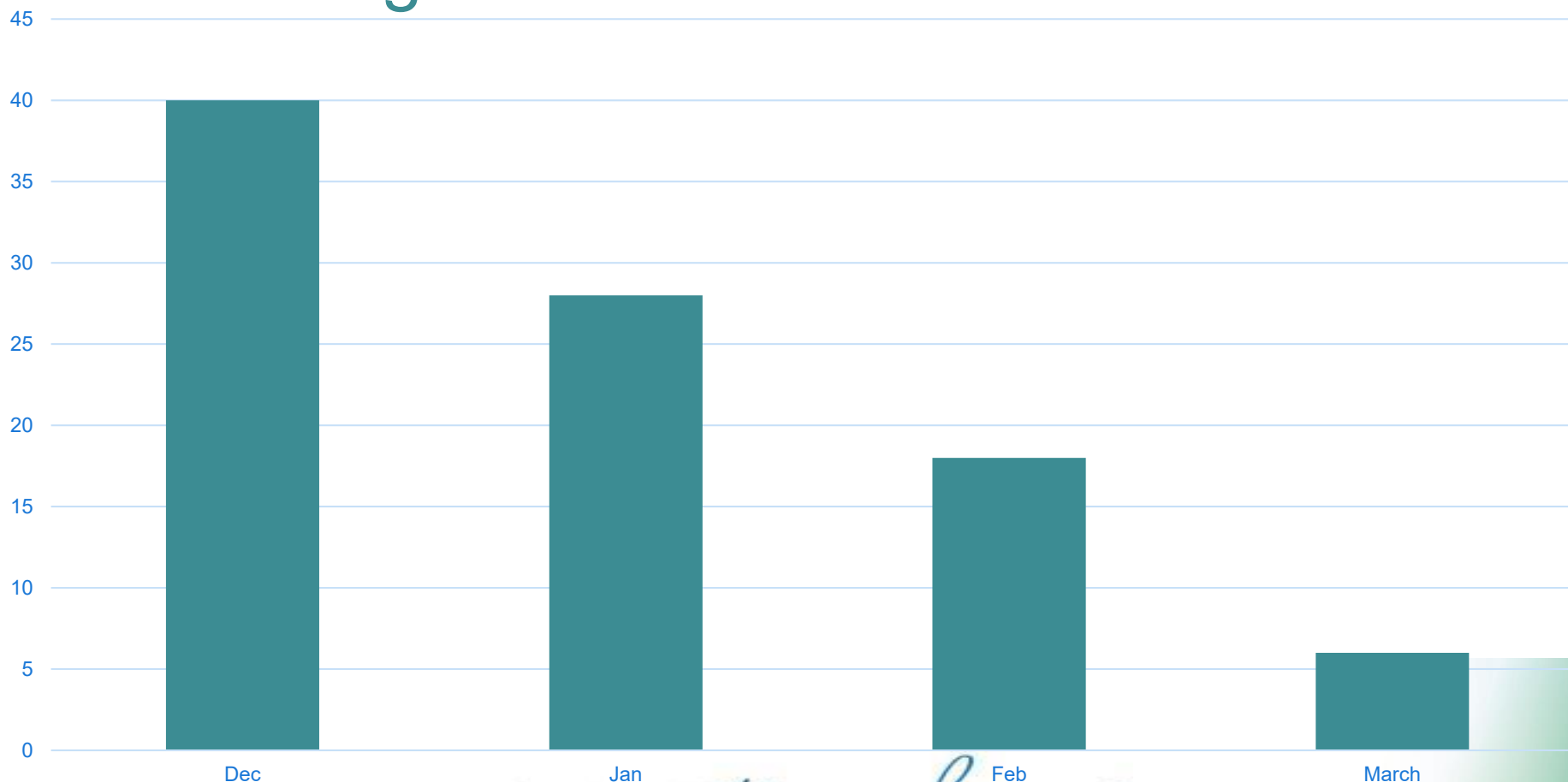
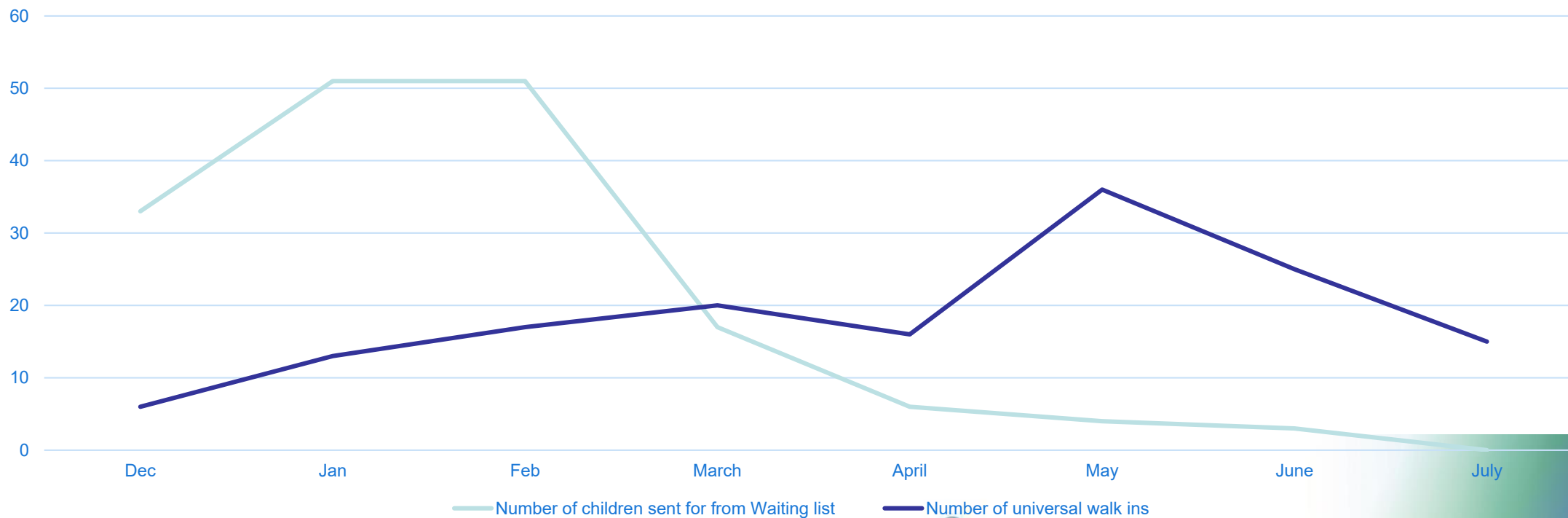Proportion of waiting list children and open access drop in families over time

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

supporting change
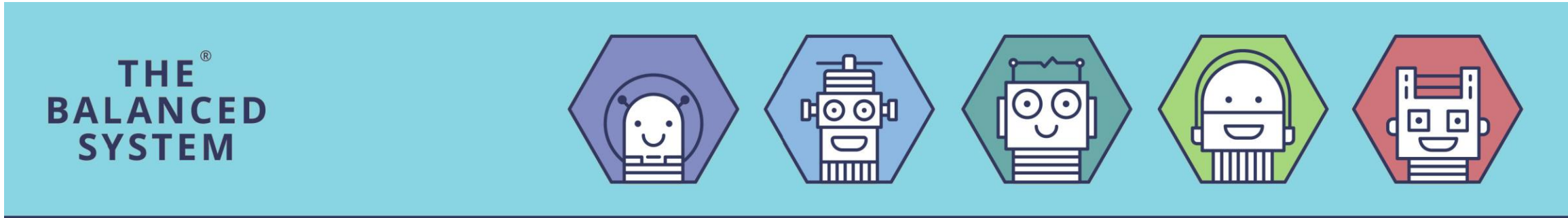
Lancashire - Drop In Evaluation

209 responses

Lancashire - Drop In Evaluation

supporting change

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

Very hard | | | | | Very easy

(0%) | (0%) | 2 (1%) | 12 (6%) | 195 (93%)
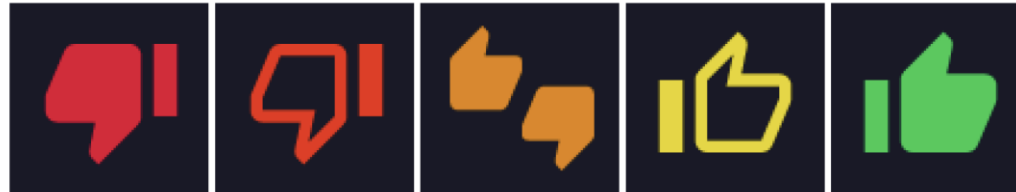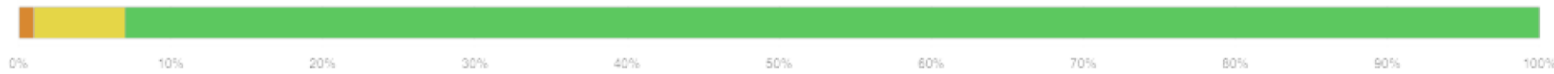
Graph data

supporting change

How helpful was the advice you have been given today?

Not very helpful   Very helpful

(0%)   (0%)   1 (0%)   12 (6%)   196 (94%)

Graph data

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

supporting change

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?
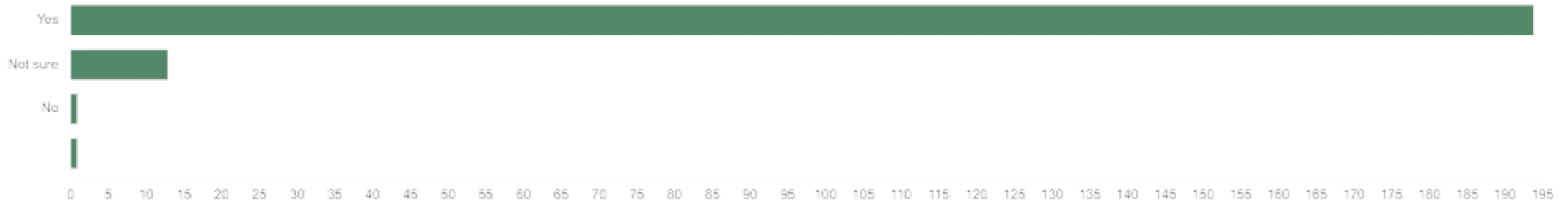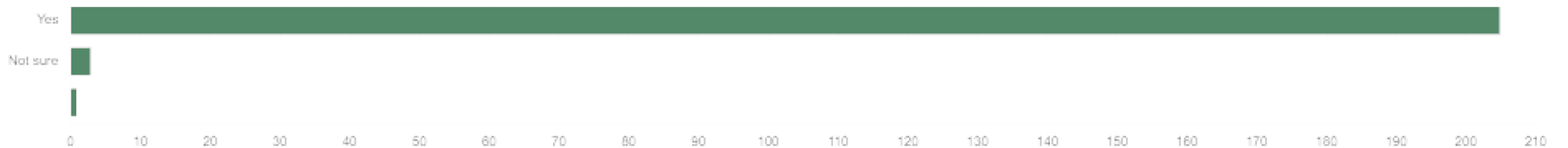
The most frequent theme found in these user responses involved various strategies for enhancing communication. This includes "speaking with him", making him "make choices", "mirroring communication", "playing on his level", "using more gestures", and "repeating correct sounds". These strategies were 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

supporting change

© Better Communication CIC, 2023

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

supporting change

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
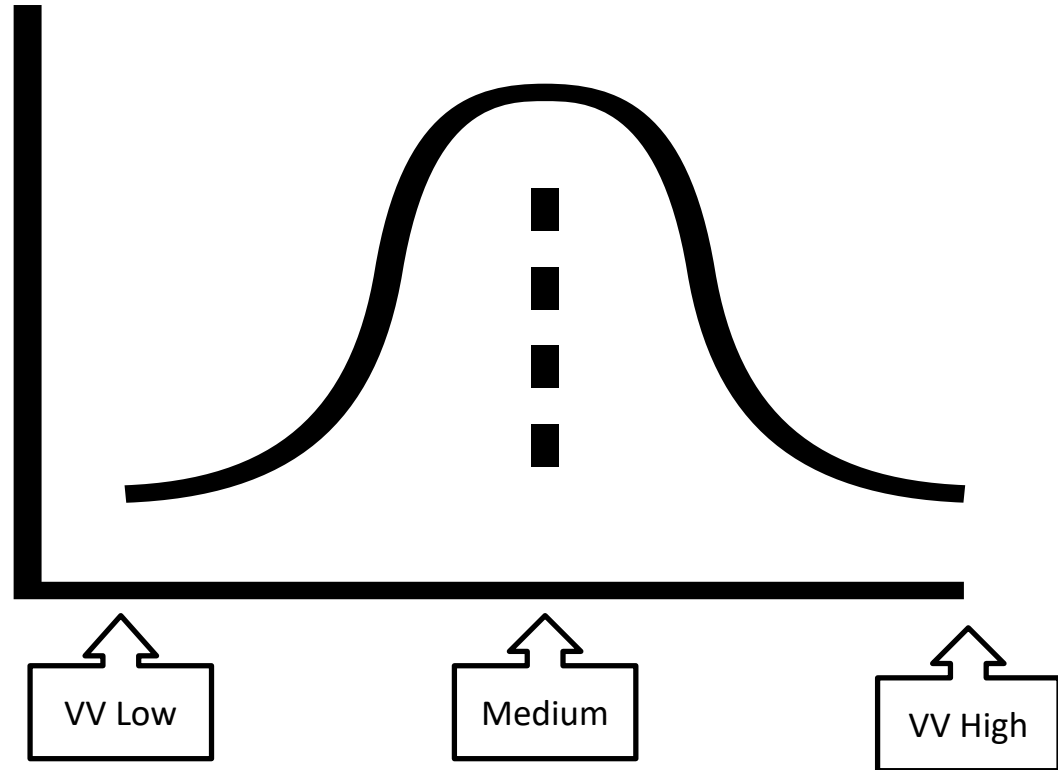
https://youtu.be/E_zc3w31urw

Primary School Example - Worcestershire

	FAMILY SUPPORT	ENVIRONMENT	WORKFORCE	IDENTIFICATION	INTERVENTION
SPECIALIST	Parent Evenings with SLT and SENCO		SLTA on the job training for TAs	Multi-agency assessments e.g. ASD diagnosis	Specialist interventions for a few children
TARGETED	Intervention Fayre		COMMUNICATION TAs	SLT assessments at school / Liaison meetings with SENCO	Rolling programme of targeted interventions throughout the key stages
UNIVERSAL	Get Worcestershire Talking / Concept of the Week or Word of the Week	Worcestershire SLCN Pathway	Language for Learning supporting pupils with communication difficulties / Every Child a Talker Worcestershire	Worcestershire SLCN Pathway / Language for Learning supporting pupils with communication difficulties	Teaching vocabulary across the day, across the curriculum / Teaching Children to Listen in Primary Schools / Language for Learning supporting pupils with communication difficulties

BALANCED SYSTEM SCHOOLS AND SETTINGS®

THE BALANCED SYSTEM®

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®.

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/

THE BALANCED SYSTEM®

FAMILY SUPPORT	Families are supported with appropriate information to make informed choices and have 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
IDENTIFICATION	Is efficient and accessible including training of others to identify and provision of pre-referral advice
INTERVENTION	Is appropriate and timely, may include direct or indirect, individual and group interventions delivered in a functional context

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NAPLIC | Better Communication CIC supporting change | Afasic voice for life

How Balanced System Schools and Settings® is different?

THE BALANCED SYSTEM®

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.
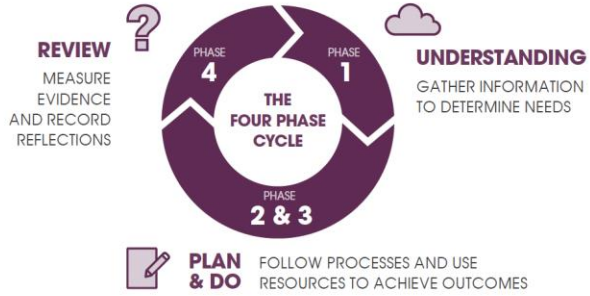
Feedback on Balanced System Schools and Settings®

"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 BALANCE SYSTEM® SCHOOLS AND SETTINGS

REVIEW — MEASURE EVIDENCE AND RECORD REFLECTIONS — PHASE 4
UNDERSTANDING — GATHER INFORMATION TO DETERMINE NEEDS — PHASE 1
THE FOUR PHASE CYCLE
PHASE 2 & 3
PLAN & DO — FOLLOW PROCESSES AND USE RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE OUTCOMES

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

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

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
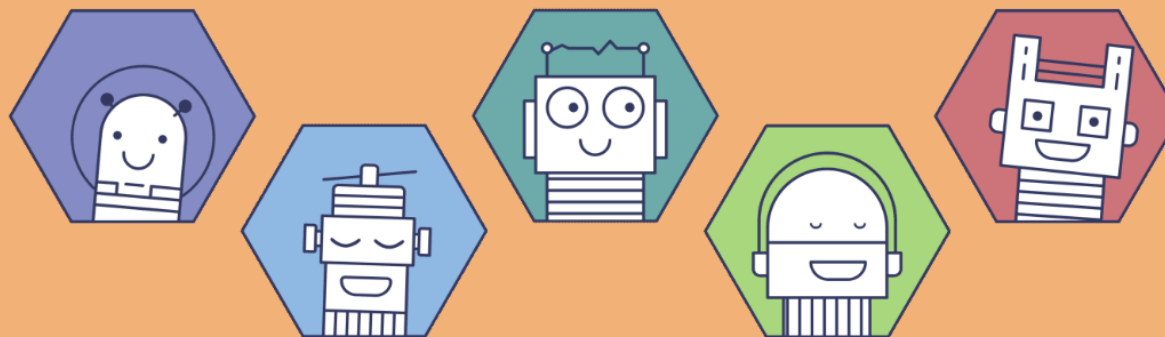
Delivery Principle 5: Information

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

https://pathway.thebalancedsystem.org

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supporting change