



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Speech and Language Therapy Team

For the purpose of this evaluation I met with Chelsea, Lewis, Jack and Eve who access the Speech and Language service at Hadrian's school in Newcastle. I spoke to Mary who is a Speech and Language Therapist about the changes that have taken place over last year and about how these were led by children and young people.

The Speech and Language team is part of the (Community Team Learning Disability) which provides a range of specialist health care services to children and adults. The team have 10 Speech and Language Therapists who work throughout Newcastle in different schools and community settings.

The teams within the Speech and Language service team enter into dialogue with children and young people. They are committed to ensuring children and young people's views are taken into account and that they are involved in decision making. This includes making decisions around their own support and also around decisions as to how the service is delivered through the positive relationship the Speech and Language Therapists have with children and young people who access this service.

Opportunities for Dialogue and Change

Individual Speech and Language Equipment

Children and young people are encouraged to try out different equipment, working alongside staff, and identify which equipment they enjoy using and why. Jack, a young person at Hadrian's school has had the opportunity to trial three different aids and has been using the aids at both school and home. The team asked Jack to attend a meeting with members of the team to discuss which aid he liked best, giving Jack the opportunity to engage in decision making. The staff, through Jack's own experiences got a better understanding about what aid best meets Jack's needs. Some of the issues Jack identified were that he liked large bottoms to press and he preferred symbols going into the message window, which would help when creating a sentence. The staff identified DynaVox 4 as a communication aid that Jack might like to use.

The DynaVox Series 4 gives children and young people access to a variety of topics allowing children and young people the opportunity to participate in discussions on a wide-range of topics.

When I met Jack, He was using this aid. I asked Jack if he liked meeting with Mary, he replied "Yes **I like coming here**", he also asked me, "**Do you have any pets?** ", and, "**Do you have any children?**".

Lewis, another young person I met at the school, has identified some particular phrases that he would like adding to his communication aid. Lewis, through his communication aid told me what they were, "**It's canny**", "**Chill**" and, "**Talk to the hand because the face is not listening**".

Core Vocabulary Stages

This been a major development in the team which has lead to change. The team researched core vocabulary young people used every day. They believed some of the methods frequently used by many Speech and Language Therapists could be developed further. The team has designed a three stage programme to encourage children to be more involved in conversations when spending time with family and friends.

- Stage 1 of the new programme has been developed so young people can gain attention such as 'You' 'Me' 'Gone' 'Stop' Bye.
- Stage 2 of the programme is for children and young people to express their needs like 'want' instead of 'I want'.
- Stage 3 is for children and young people to expand general conversation and other things they would like to discuss.

The developments are based on increasing the amount of words children and young people use on a daily bases.

Session Planning and Individual Support

Mary explained, "We are involved with children and young people on a personal level and at a small group level but most of our support is so children and young people can be more inclusively involved in their every day life". She went on to explain, "We try to find out a lot about what the children and young people we work with like, such as what their favourite things are and what they like to do".

An example of how children and young people make choices and decisions is how Eva has been supported in interacting with the other pupils in her class. When I visited the school I was given the opportunity to observe Eva during a break. Children are given the opportunity to have a drink during the break and a choice of fruit or a biscuit. Eva, using a communication aid, chose what type of drink she wanted and whether she wanted a piece of fruit or biscuit. It was clear from my observations that Eva was enjoying interacting with the class. The aims and values of the team are mostly based on working with each child as an individual, to allow them to take charge of their choices and activities to develop Speech and Language.

The Speech and Language Team must be applauded for the way they respond to individual children and young people they work with. This is based largely on the positive relationship both children and young people have with the Speech and Language Therapists, which allows the service to develop and change. For these reasons I would like to recommend that the Speech and Language Team become an Investing In Children Member.

This report has been agreed by the young people, who are Jack and Chelsea.

Rob Johnson
Investing in Children
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