

Introducing RCSLT Research Champion Alys Mathers, a highly specialist speech and language therapist and former NIHR intern, who has been running the Language Enrichment Project in mainstream reception classes in Folkestone, East Kent for the last two years.

### Why I decided to do this project

Two schools each receive half a day a week SLT support over a whole academic year. I was keen to look at how to measure the efficacy of the project, as I'm enthusiastic about the benefits that SLT support at the Universal and Targeted levels can bring, but evidence at this level is limited.

### What I found out

Language Link scores didn't improve more over the Language Enrichment project year (compared to the year before the schools accessed the project, used as a control). This was despite school staff anecdotally reporting many benefits.

If you're interested in finding out more about the project, e-mail [alys.mathers@nhs.net](mailto:alys.mathers@nhs.net)

### How I carried it out

Teaching assistants carry out Language Link assessment on all children once they have 'settled in'

Language enrichment project support: whole class, small group and staff coaching

Teaching assistants reassess on Language Link at beginning of Year 1

## Challenges

When the results didn't show what I'd hoped for, I had to consider the limitations of being both researcher and clinician, and the bias to look for 'success' rather than be objective.

Balancing what was practical for my own and school's workload, with what would be more robust and meaningful in terms of the research was a challenge when identifying a measurement tool



## Successes

- Language Link assessment not an extra time burden for schools – they were doing this anyway
- Majority of the data was returned by schools without needing to pester
- Reflection with the teaching staff, academic and clinical supervisors (from the NIHR internship) helped me identify for future years what outcomes may be more meaningful, and whether Language Link is an appropriate tool. I will build on this next year.

## Top tips for carrying out a practice-based project

### Keep questioning

In the early stages, keep questioning 'what am I trying to measure?', 'why?', 'what would success look like for the children, families, school staff?', 'is this the right way to measure success?'

### Get started!

Start somewhere. Better to measure in some way, reflect, and change.