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Supporting early years practitioners to facilitate children's language and communication: An independent study evaluating the effectiveness of the Elklan Talking Matters Programme

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Today

- Background
- Evaluation and Findings
- Challenges
- Moving forward

Evidence Base for Practitioner Training

- Practitioner training is an everyday intervention
- What are/should be the outcomes of practitioner training?
- Evidence base is very limited
- Studies to date
- Challenges

Speech, language and communication in 2 to 3 year olds....



Evaluation of a Practitioner Training programme

- Training programme aimed at staff who work with pre-school children in early years settings
- Content and delivery of the Eklan Talking Matters (TM) programme
- Training delivered to Key Communication Practitioners (KCPs) and/or Lead Communication Practitioners (LCPs)
- KCPs are staff within the setting and LCPs are staff who work across settings and cascade training

Evaluation Design

- A collaborative design with Elklan
- A pragmatic evaluation
- Overall aim:

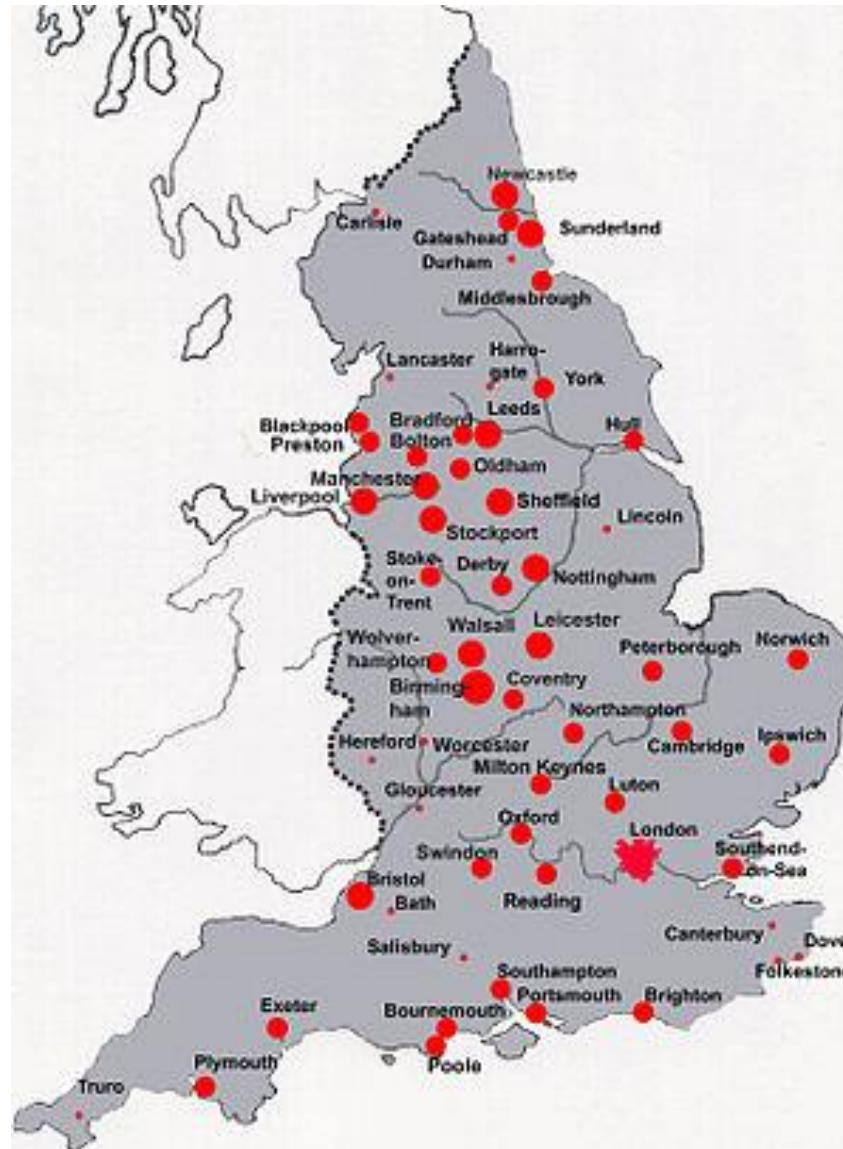
To determine the impact of the TM programme on the receptive and expressive language abilities of pre-school children

Evaluation of TM

- Repeated measures
- Children from a range of early years settings across four LAs
- Inclusion/exclusion criteria
- Age from 1:06 to 2:06 years
- Each setting: a KCP setting, a LCP setting and one control setting
- Over recruitment of 126 children at time 1 (43 children in the KCP group; 40 children in the LCP group; 43 children in the control group)

Settings

- 4 control settings
- 5 KCP settings
- 4 LCP settings



Evaluation of TM

- Pre-school Language Scales 5th Edition (PLS-5) (Zimmerman et al., 2014)
- Baseline assessment/Time 1: n=126 children completed the PLS-5
- TM implemented in KCP and LCP settings and not control settings
- Post-intervention assessment/Time 2; n=87 children completed the PLS-5
- Approximately 6 months between Time 1 and 2

Findings

	Control (N=37)		KCP (n=32)		LCP (n=18)	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
Mean	95.30	91.76 (-3.54)	89.87	97.59 (+7.72)	86.46	87.33 (+0.87)
SD	18.33	11.08	26.06	12.93	15.62	11.13
Range	57-127	73-113	66-133	75-130	60-117	64-104

Table 1 Comparison of T1 and T2 receptive standardised language scores for the control KCP and LCP groups (+/- change from T1 to T2 score)

	Control (N=37)		KCP (n=32)		LCP (n=18)	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
Mean	92.43	93.30 (+0.87)	93.50	98.87 (+5.37)	88.61	90.33 (+1.72)
SD	16.94	11.59	13.37	14.26	15.67	12.60
Range	61-126	71-116	66-125	77-143	71-129	69-113

Table 2 Comparison of T1 and T2 expressive standardised scores for the control, KCP and LCP groups (+/- change from T1 to T2 score)

	Control (N=37)		KCP (n=32)		LCP (n=18)	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
Mean	60.97	68.76 (+7.79)	55.84	71.28 (+15.44)	56.72	67.56 (+10.84)
SD	10.48	8.76	12.06	9.78	13.94	9.78
Range	34-81	52-92	33-79	44-85	32-66	44-85

Table 3 Comparison of T1 and T2 total language raw scores for the control, KCP and LCP groups (+/- change from T1 to T2 score)

Analyses

- KCP vs control vs LCP
- KCP/LCP combined vs control
- KCP vs control



Analyses



Findings: KCP vs Control

- For **receptive language**, there was no significant interaction between group and time ($F(1,67) = 3.19, p=.079$, partial eta squared = .045). There was a significant main effect of time ($F(1, 67) = 183.862, p<0.001$, partial eta squared = .733). The main effect of group was significant ($F(1,67) = 16.88, p<0.01$. partial eta squared = .08). The children in the **KCP settings made more progress in receptive language than the children in the control settings.**
- For **expressive language**, there was no significant interaction between group and time ($F(1,67) = 1.921, p=.170$, partial eta squared = .028). There was a significant main effect of time ($F(1, 67) = 134.171, p<0.001$, partial eta squared = .667). The main effect of group was significant ($F(1,67) = 12.42, p<0.03$. partial eta squared = .03). The children in the **KCP settings made more progress in expressive language than the children in the control settings.**
- For the **total PLS-5 score**, there was no significant interaction between group and time ($F(1,67) = 4.176, p=.065$, partial eta squared = .02). There was a significant main effect of time ($F(1, 67) = 221.867, p<0.001$, partial eta squared = .768). The main effect of group was significant ($F(1,67) = 15.37, p<0.04$. partial eta squared = .091). The children in the **KCP settings made more progress in total language scores than the children in the control settings.**



Findings

	Chronological age at T1	Chronological age at T2	Language age equivalent score at T1	Language age equivalent score at T2	Difference in age equivalent score from T1 to T2
Control	2 years and 3 months	2 years and 9 months	2 years	2 years and 2 months	2 months
KCP/LCP	2 years and 2 months	2 years and 8 months	2 years	2 years and 7 months	5 months

Table 4 T1 and T2 mean chronological and language age equivalent scores for control and KCP/LCP children

In summary

- Children in LCP and KCP settings made more progress than control settings
- Children in KCP settings made the most progress
- Evidence in support of TM/Practitioner Training being effective in facilitating children's language development

Limitations and Challenges

- Variation
- Differing levels of intervention/training
- Matching/control measures
- Attrition
- Design
- Timing

Moving Forward

- Much more evaluation of practitioner training needed
- Outcomes to be measured
- Careful delivery and design
- Full report available:
<https://elklantraining.worldsecuresystems.com/reviews/talking-matters>