

Hanen 'Learning Language and Loving It' Programme for Early Childhood Educators delivered to Bloomfield Community Association Playgroup Staff Team

Pilot: Sept – Nov 2023

Early Learning Community High Level Outcome

- improved Speech, Language and Communication

Early Learning Community Domain (Primary)

- strengthen knowledge skills and behaviour within the early years workforce

Early Learning Community Domains (Secondary)

- promote attuned and responsive adult child interaction
- promote opportunities for playful learning within the home and in the community

Introduction

To deliver the outcomes identified above, the Early Learning Community aims to develop a Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) Learning Journey for Practitioners. Delivery of the Hanen 'Learning Language and Loving It' Programme followed by some practice sessions with the Sure Start SLT to support embedding is part of the proposed Learning Journey. This is the training model used within Sure Start and has been very effective there. The Pilot aimed to test the effectiveness of this model with a setting outside Sure Start.

The Pilot was funded by Save the Children.

The Hanen 'Learning Language and Loving It' Programme

Hanen 'Learning Language and Loving It' Programme consists of 6 teaching sessions (2.5 hours per session) and 4 video coaching sessions.

Practitioners are introduced to strategies that will promote positive adult - child interactions and therefore language development of children within the Playgroup. They also are given a framework within which they consider their own interaction style, the conversational styles of the children and the communication stage of each child.

Hanen state that Practitioners will learn skills that enable them to:

- Promote every child's language development using natural everyday activities, routines and play
- Become attuned to children's interests so they can follow the child's lead, which is known to foster language development
- Adjust the way they talk to help children develop more advanced language skills
- Promote interaction among the children themselves

The video sessions provide the opportunity to practice the interaction strategies and observe the impact of these on the children. Staff also are able to discuss their goals for each child and so theory quickly becomes embedded into practice.

6 Playgroup staff attended the Programme.

Attendance –

Session 1 (morning) – 6 staff

Session 2 (morning) – 6 staff

Session 3 (morning) – 6 staff

Session 4 (evening) – 5 staff

Session 5 (evening) – 6 staff

Session 6 (evening) – 5 staff

Video Session 1 – 6 staff

Video Session 2 – 6 staff

Video Session 3 – 5 staff

Video Session 4 – 6 staff

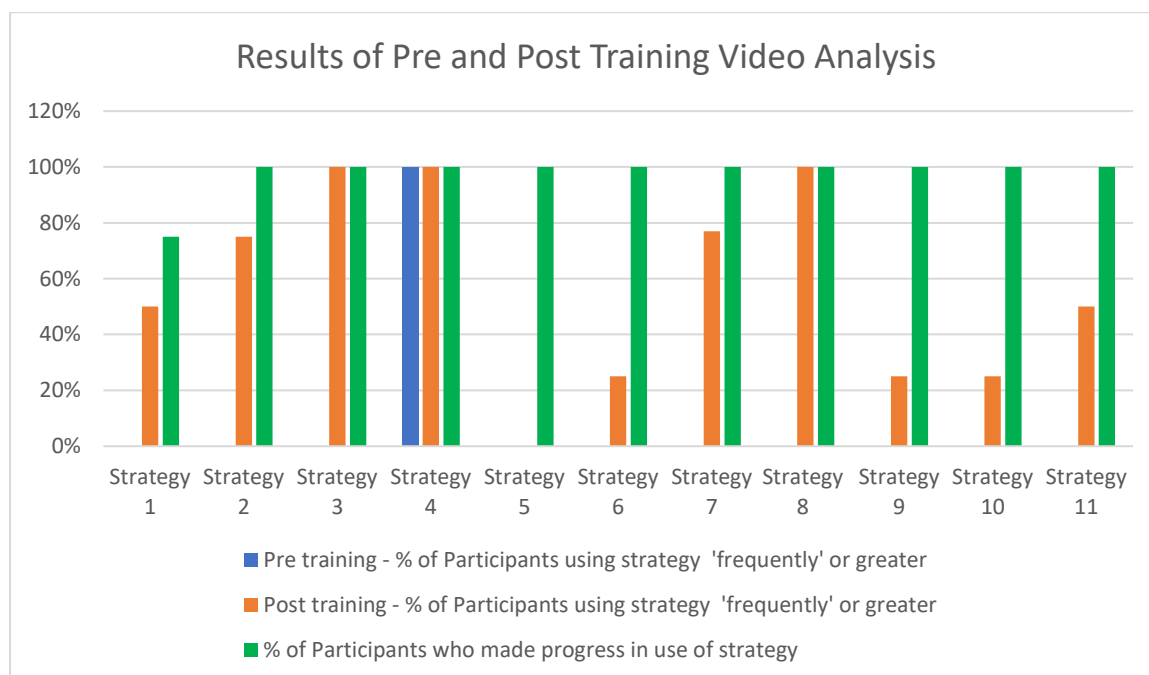
Impact of Programme

The impact of the training was captured in several different ways:

1. Pre and Post Programme rating of Practitioner/Child interactions.
2. Staff feedback questionnaires and discussion with Tutor
3. Case study of one of the Learners
4. Playgroup Leader feedback
5. Observations by Sure Start SLT and Course Tutor (SLT)
6. Progress monitoring of children’s progress in speech, language and communication

1. Pre and Post Programme rating of Practitioner/Child interactions (completed for 4 Practitioners)

- 11 different skills/strategies were considered. Not all were applicable in every video. The strategies were rated as being used a) seldom, b) some of the time, c) frequently and d) consistently
- Before the Programme began, 10 strategies were used either seldom or some of the time. Only one strategy was used frequently (shown in blue column below)
- All Practitioners made progress in at least 90% of relevant strategies (shown in green columns below)
- For 7 of the strategies, 50% of Practitioners were now using them ‘frequently’ (shown in orange columns below) and all Practitioners had improved in the amount they used the strategies (shown in green columns below) .



Notes re graph:

- Except for strategy 4, there were no Practitioners using the strategies frequently or more before the training
- See Appendix 1 for a list of the 11 strategies rated

2. Information from Practitioner Feedback Questionnaires (6 responses) and discussions with Tutor

- 100% of Participants felt their practice had changed as a result of the training
- 100% of Participants reported that the video feedback sessions helped them to implement the strategies but several mentioned that they were initially very stressed about being videoed
- When asked what strategies really stood out for them,
 - 4 Practitioners mentioned Observe, Wait and Listen
 - 2 Practitioners mentioned the importance of getting the connection (interaction) first
 - 2 Practitioners mentioned the strategies relating to small groups and particularly being aware of the reluctant communicators
 - 2 Practitioners mentioned the strategies to help increase the number of conversational turns
 - 1 Practitioner mentioned the power of Imitation as a way of getting the interaction going and developing conversational turns
 - 1 Practitioner mentioned 'Say less and stress, go slow and show'
- Most Practitioners were able to give concrete examples of the impact on children when they used the strategies
- When asked what specific changes they had made, Practitioners mentioned the following:
 - Wait and then follow the child's lead
 - Imitate
 - Add language the child can learn from
 - Match their language to the language stage of the child
- When asked about the impact on the children, Practitioners mentioned the following observations:
 - Richer exchanges/ children more engaged in interactions
 - Vocabulary of the children is developing, particularly the children who are learning English as an additional language
 - The environment is quieter and calmer – staff are more engaged in 2 way interactions rather than being 'The Entertainer' or doing most of the talking.

3. Focus on a Practitioner's Story – Participant 2 (P2)

P2 reported significant changes in their practice as a result of the training. This was very evident in the 4 video feedback sessions where P2 was intentionally implementing the strategies and was able to identify these when reviewing the videos. P2 was also able to identify the difference this was making to the quality of the interactions with the children. At the outset, P2 identified as taking on The Entertainer role in interactions with the children and worked very hard to observe, wait and listen to notice what the child's focus of attention was and then follow the child's lead. This led to P2 talking less and the children taking more turns in the interactions.

P2 noticed that when the 'imitation' strategy was used, this quickly led to a back and forth interaction being established. P2 was then able to use further strategies to increase the number of conversational turns the children were taking.

Some quotes from P2 illustrate the change in practice:

"I always think of what language I can add"

"I ensure that all children are able to participate and interact"

"I always observe, wait and listen before beginning conversations"

"Imitation has really helped with one of our newcomer children and then I have been able to add language"

"I have seen some of our Newcomer children's vocabulary really improving by me adding language using the Hanen strategies"

4. Feedback from Manager of Playgroup

The Manager of Bloomfield Community Association has observed and reported the following

- The Hanen Learning Language and Loving It Programme has given a framework to help observe the children's language development and set goals for each individual child. This has made the planning process much more specific – goals for each child are considered.
- Staff now have a shared vocabulary that helps them discuss the speech, language and communication development of the children in a much more specific way.
- Consideration of language goals is now a central part of the planning process
- Interactions between Practitioners and children are changing – the room is quieter/calmer because Practitioners are using their language in a more intentional way and are taking up the roles of Director or Entertainer much less.

5. Observations by SLTs

- Significant increase in the 'join in and play' strategy. In previous years they were always involved with the children but perhaps in a more 'managing the room' and directing the children way. Now they are down at their level and getting stuck into the activities too
- The room is a lot calmer which could be attributed to the way the staff now interact with the children but also some changes to the environment
- Staff are talking less as they are observing and waiting and then being much more intentional about the way they interact with the children
- Staff are now simplifying their language with certain children and there is evidence of staff using the 'say less and stress, go slow and show' strategy, particularly for children at the earlier language stages
- Staff are using more comments instead of questions
- Staff have a shared language when they are discussing the children and seem to have more understanding about the children's communication when discussing their observations with SLT

6. Progress Monitoring of the Speech, Language and Communication development of the children

Staff have identified the Communication and Language Stage of each child at end of October. This will be repeated in June 2024 to capture progress. Staff have also completed the Wellcomm Language Screening in Sept/Oct 2023 and this will also be completed in June 2024.

Learning from the Pilot

- The Pilot Site was selected because of the existing effective close working relationship between Bloomfield Playgroup and Sure Start, in particular the Sure Start Speech and Language Therapist (SLT). This existing relationship of trust and respect provided a positive context for the training.
- The Playgroup staff were extremely committed to attending the training and were prepared to attend evening sessions which made timetabling much easier.
- The existing culture of openness to learn and reflective practice within the staff team contributed greatly to the positive context for the training and the outcomes achieved.

Eastside Early Learning Community



- The Tutor had quite a bit of flexibility when it came to timetabling and so sessions could be rescheduled when necessary. This resulted in very good attendance.
- To facilitate video sessions, staff were very flexible and came in on days that were not their normal working day. This reduced Programme costs (Tutor time).
- Practitioners needed a lot of reassurance about the Video Feedback sessions as some felt extremely anxious about this aspect of the course. The Tutor needed to ensure that this was as positive an experience as possible for the Practitioners.
- Despite Practitioner anxiety, all agreed that the Video Feedback Sessions were a very important part of the learning process.
- The training was delivered to Bloomfield staff on their own. This enabled the Tutor to use very specific practice examples about the setting and the children. Practitioners found this beneficial and felt it helped their learning.
- Part of the Pilot is that the Sure Start SLT will provide follow up practice support sessions in the Playgroup. This is felt to be an important component of the training to help achieve maximum impact.
- During the training it became apparent that staff were looking for additional training around how children regulate and process information. Training on 'the Neurodevelopmental Foundations of Speech, Language and Communication' will be delivered in January 2024.
- It was not felt to be essential that each Learner had a copy of the handbook. 2 or 3 copies for the setting may have been sufficient and would reduce cost slightly.

Summary

This Pilot showed significant skill development across the whole Playgroup staff team. The skills learned are being embedded and are having an impact on how staff plan their play invitations, interact with the children and these in turn support each child's development. The format of the course supports embedding of learning and so even though the cost per learner is high, there is an immediate impact on practice.

It was a pleasure to work with this highly skilled and committed staff team.

Anne McKee SLT
Hanen Learning Language and Loving It Tutor

24 November 2023

Appendix A – Skills in the Teacher Interaction Rating Scale (Hanen)

1. Wait and Listen
2. Follow the Children's lead
3. Join in and play
4. Be face to face
5. Use a variety of questions to encourage conversation
6. Encourage verbal turn-taking
7. Scan all children in group activities
8. Imitate
9. Use a variety of vocabulary
10. Expand on what the child says
11. Provide language the child can learn from by extending the topic