

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Relevant Officer:</b>	Paul Turner – Assistant Director – Education, SEND and Early Years
<b>Meeting</b>	22 September 2022

## THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON EARLY LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

### 1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To inform members of the impact of the pandemic on early language acquisition.

### 2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To consider the impact of the pandemic on early language acquisition and identify any additional areas from scrutiny, where appropriate.

### 3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

To allow Members to be fully informed of the impact of the pandemic on early language acquisition.

3.1 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council’s approved budget? Yes

### 4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 None.

### 5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is:

- Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience

### 6.0 Background

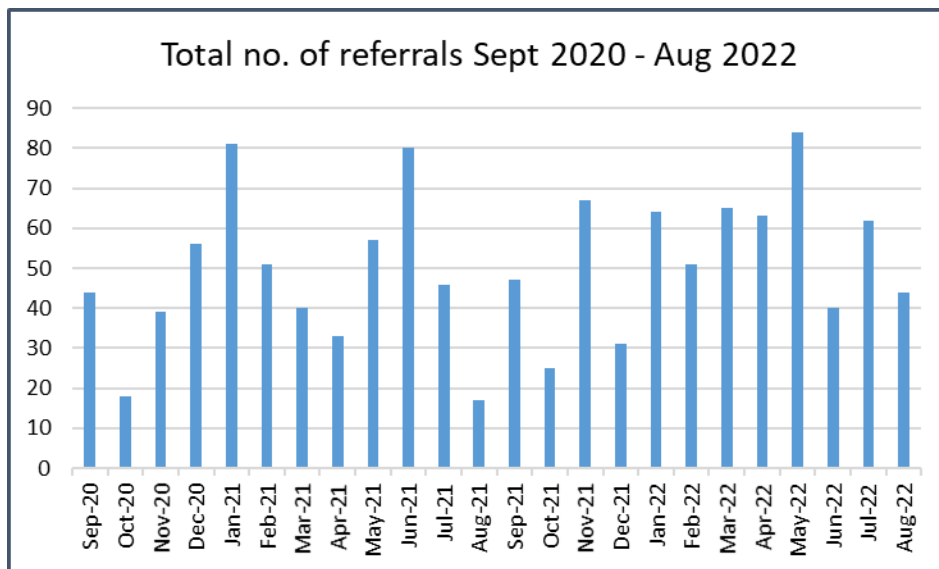
Developmental gaps between disadvantaged children and their peers are particularly pronounced in early language, these gaps have a profound impact later in life. High quality early education (DfE 2019) and intervention can have an impact on social mobility and improve children’s life chances (EPPE 2004). Evidence also suggests that children who start school with poor vocabulary are twice as likely to be unemployed as an adult. (Bercow 2008). NAEYC (2019) research on the ‘Word Gap’ details how children from less advantaged backgrounds may here 30 million fewer words spoken to them by the age of four, these children with language difficulties are then: four times more likely to have reading difficulties in adulthood; three times more likely to have mental health problems; and twice as likely to be unemployed when they reach adulthood.

This paper documents some of the work to date the under 5 Speech, Language, Communication landscape, and aligns with the Better Start pledge regarding children, families and the workforce reaching their potential, families having the right support at the right time and babies and children being offered high quality Early Years education and experiences.

### **Triage Panel and Identified Interventions**

The vast majority of children aged 0 – 5 who need support with their speech and language development are referred in to the Post WellComm Speech Language and Communication Triage Panel (The Panel). (There are some children referred directly to the NHS by GP’s and Paediatricians).

6.1



### **Numbers referred to panel Sept 2020 – August 2022**

Month	Total no. of referrals
Sep-20	44
Oct-20	18
Nov-20	39
Dec-20	56
Jan-21	81
Feb-21	51
Mar-21	40
Apr-21	33
May-21	57

Jun-21	80
Jul-21	46
Aug-21	17
Sep-21	47
Oct-21	25
Nov-21	67
Dec-21	31
Jan-22	64
Feb-22	51
Mar-22	65
Apr-22	63
May-22	84
Jun-22	40
Jul-22	62
Aug-22	44

Looking at the data we can predict spikes in January and May. January could be due to settings having a term of quality first teaching to explore the route of the SLCN, then making a referral for additional support after that term. The May/June spike could be a more reactive response from settings for children going to school that September (we are encouraging settings to get referrals in before April each year for those leaving for school). Referrals from health colleagues are consistent across the months.

**Interventions referred to for those children discussed at triage**

Month	ITT TT	Setting Support	Target Word	Home Visiting	NHS Drop In	NHS Com Clinic	NHS Early Years
Sep-20	14	12	0	1	4	25	1
Oct-20	6	7	0	3	2	12	0
Nov-20	13	21	1	5	1	31	0
Dec-20	16	39	2	6	0	35	8
Jan-21	10	50	5	24	0	26	7
Feb-21	13	30	3	15	4	4	18
Mar-21	9	22	2	13	2	8	8
Apr-21	11	19	2	6	5	3	6
May-21	13	25	6	15	2	10	9
Jun-21	28	30	7	11	6	11	10
Jul-21	9	22	5	15	4	9	9
Aug-21	8	9	0	2	1	0	2
Sep-21	9	24	5	13	5	3	12
Oct-21	3	12	1	9	2	3	7
Nov-21	19	35	3	11	4	11	11
Dec-21	6	13	1	9	1	6	7
Jan-22	21	38	0	15	5	2	20
Feb-22	17	33	2	7	7	10	9
Mar-22	21	31	1	13	7	5	13
Apr-22	24	38	1	10	5	7	9
May-22	28	44	1	16	9	9	16
Jun-22	13	17	1	12	2	7	12
Jul-22	20	19	1	6	7	6	10
Aug-22	9	12	1	3	2	1	10

**Triage Panel and Identified Interventions**

The following table indicates the WellComm score for individual children being referred into panel from March 2020 to September 2022. The WellComm Assessment score children out of ten based on a set of ten developmental milestones (five regarding speech/communication, and five regarding understanding). This score out of ten determines whether children fall into the red, amber or green category, red being the greatest need, amber being moderate need and green indicating there is no Speech language and Communicate need. Usually children with a red score, and their families/early years setting are offered targeted intervention in their homes or setting whilst they await NHS Specialist intervention. Children who have an amber score are offered targeted intervention as above.

A percentage column has been added to the table below which identifies the difference between the number of children presenting to panel with a red score and those with an amber score.

## 6.3

Month	Red	% of referrals	Amber	% of referrals	No WellComm	% of referrals	TOTAL
Mar-20	19	63	10	33	1	3	30
Apr-20	21	58	6	17	7	20	34
May-20	3	15	3	15	13	69	19
Jun-20	10	33	5	16	15	50	30
Jul-20	8	28	8	28	12	42	28
Aug-20	12	42	8	28	8	28	28
Sep-20	12	25	2	4	33	70	47
Oct-20	7	38	3	16	8	44	18
Nov-20	3	21	2	14	9	64	14
Jan-21	37	46	24	30	19	23	80
Feb-21	25	49	6	11	20	39	51
Mar-21	25	62	3	7	12	30	40
Apr-21	14	43	4	12	14	43	32
May-21	31	55	13	23	12	21	56
Jun-21	46	59	15	19	16	20	77
Jul-21	29	64	5	11	11	24	45
Aug-21	12	70	0	0	5	30	17
Sep-21	27	57	9	19	11	23	47
Oct-21	14	58	6	25	4	16	24
Nov-21	40	60	11	16	15	22	66
Dec-21	20	66	6	10	4	13	3
Jan-22	42	65	12	18	10	15	64
Feb-22	36	70	8	15	7	13	51
Mar-22	40	62	10	15	14	21	64
Apr-22	44	70	8	12	10	15	62
May-22	56	70	12	15	11	13	79
Jun-22	26	68	5	13	7	18	38
Jul-22	34	55	15	24	12	19	61
Aug-22	27	62	7	16	9	20	43
Sep-22	30	68	8	18	6	13	44
Average	25	53%	8	17%	11	28%	43

This table indicates that there has been no significant rise in the number of children presenting with a red score for the time this data has been collected, with the average number of children being referred into triage each month being 43, and 53% of those with a red score, 17% with an amber score and 28% with no WellComm score.

## 6.4

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

**7.0 List of Appendices:**

7.1 None.

**8.0 Financial considerations:**

8.1 None.

**9.0 Legal considerations:**

9.1 None.

**10.0 Risk management considerations:**

10.1 None.

**11.0 Equalities considerations:**

11.1 None.

**12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:**

12.1 None.

**13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:**

13.1 None.

**14.0 Background papers:**

14.1 None.