



Area Based Childhood Programme

Oral Language Services within the Area Based Childhood Programme

ABC Oral Language Subgroup
Area Based Childhood Programme

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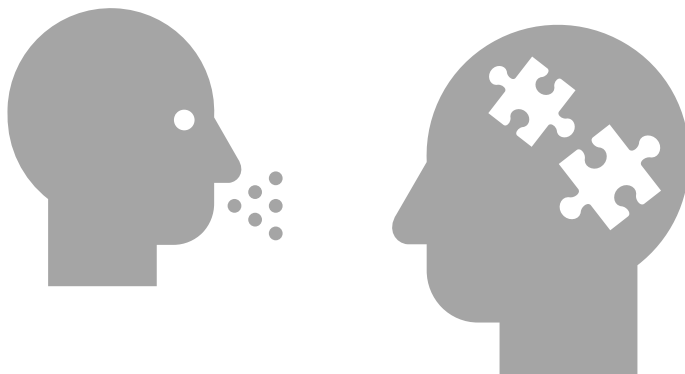
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1. Introduction

Oral language refers to a child's ability to express themselves and understand what others are saying. Oral language permeates all aspects of child development, including social relationships with peers, emotional regulation, literacy development and academic achievement.

This document provides an overview of oral language service delivery, programmes, and supports within the national Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme. It is intended to be used to further inform planning and delivery of oral language support services in Ireland. Key policy recommendations are outlined for oral language service development and delivery across the pre-birth to six-year period of childhood.

This document includes information collected from representatives from nine of the twelve ABC Programme sites (see Appendix A for the survey template circulated to all sites) on current oral language services offered; the role of the speech and language therapist in promotion, prevention, and early intervention; programmes and supports provided within ABC programme; reflections on the learning from implementation to date; and recommendations for the future.



*For the purpose of this paper, the term 'parent', refers to parent(s), legal guardian(s) or other primary care giver(s)

2. About the Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme

The ABC Programme is a national Prevention and Early Intervention Programme funded by the Department of Children, Disability, Equality, and Integration (DCDEI), delivered through the Prevention Partnership and Family Support Programme (PPFS) within Tusla. The ABC Programme commenced in 2013 and was built on the emerging learning from the Prevention and Early Intervention programme which was co-funded by Atlantic Philanthropies and the Department of Children & Youth Affairs from 2007-2013 (see Appendix B for further background information).

The vision of the ABC Programme is **“an Ireland where no child is impacted by poverty and all children are supported to reach their potential”**.

Through evidence-based prevention and early intervention approaches, the ABC programme aims to work in partnership with families, practitioners, communities and national stakeholders to deliver better outcomes for children and families living in areas where poverty is most deeply entrenched.

The ABC Programme operates at 3 levels of change:

- **Frontline delivery** of prevention and early intervention services for children and families which support early child development.
- **Capacity building**, facilitation, and support to other service providers to implement evidence-based ways of working.
- **Systems change** efforts with managers and decision makers at local, regional and national level.

The ABC Programme is currently operational in twelve sites nationally and implements a range of services specific to the identified needs of that community and informed by a local area logic model. The ABC Programme works with children and young people up to 24 years but the focus of the work primarily concentrates on the childhood developmental stages pre-birth up to 6 years.

This aligns with the evidence that early experiences can last a lifetime:

"Virtually every aspect of early human development, from the brain's evolving circuitry to the child's capacity for empathy, is affected by the environments and experiences that are encountered in a cumulative fashion, beginning early in the prenatal period and extending throughout the early childhood years."

(Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

3. Policy Context

ABC Programmes implement a model of promotion, prevention, and early intervention services to support and enhance early speech, language, communication, and literacy development across the pre-birth to 6-year period. The oral language service design within ABC Programmes is consistent with overarching national frameworks for promoting health and well-being.

"Child health and well-being services in Ireland are being delivered in the context of an evolving policy environment which includes:

- *Healthy Ireland 2013 - 2025 - A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing*
- *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures 2014 - 2020 - National Policy Framework for Children and Young People*
- *Creating a Better Future Together - National Maternity Strategy 2016 - 2026*
- *Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare (Sláintecare) Report - May 2017*
- *First 5: The Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and Their Families 2019-2028 - November 2018.*
- *The Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Programme Collaborative leadership for better outcomes*
- *The Nurture Programme – Infant Health and Wellbeing*
- *Sharing the Vision – A Mental Health Policy for Everyone (2020)"*
The Prevention and Early Intervention Network PEIN (2018)

Further relevant and evolving policies include:

- *A Framework for Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health. (The Infant Mental Health Subgroup, ABC Programme, 2022)*
- *National Model of Parenting Supports. (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2022)*
- *Túsla Parenting Support Strategy 2022 – 2027 (Túsla, 2022)*
- *Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone 2020-2030 (Health Service Executive, 2020)*
- *Stronger Together: The HSE National Mental Health Promotion Plan 2022-2027 (Health Service Executive, 2022)*

4. The Rationale for Oral Language Services and Supports within the ABC Programme

Oral language is the “primary mediator of culture, the way in which children locate themselves in the world, and define themselves with it and within it” (Cregan, 1998). Bowen and Snow (2017, p. 175) consider children's use of language to be their most human characteristic and describe oral language as:

“a learned code that lets us think about our world; generate, remember, share and understand information; appreciate knowledge, ideas, literature, science and the arts; enjoy leisure pastimes; express political and religious convictions, humour and emotion; reveal our personalities and needs; and survive in today's society”

At its most basic level, oral language is about communicating with other people; the ability to speak and listen effectively. Oral language ability also underpins the ability to contribute to class discussions, and understand teacher talk and educational content (Nagy & Townsend, 2012). The relationship between oral language and written language ability is intertwined. Oral language difficulties can result in literacy difficulties and poorer educational outcomes (Spencer et al., 2017). For example, underdeveloped vocabulary skills are linked with limited reading comprehension skills, as children who struggle to understand the meanings of words in a book may also find it difficult to comprehend the text (Lyons et al., 2013). Oral language difficulties are also correlated with long term social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Paradice et al., 2007; Tomblin & Nippold, 2014).

However, through prevention and early intervention, we can prevent possible negative outcomes and children with the right supports can reach their potential and achieve positive oral language, learning and well-being outcomes (Snowling et al., 2006). These supports can be delivered by key people in a child's life such as parents*, early years educators, teachers and speech and language therapists. The role of the speech and language therapist in promotion, prevention and early intervention is to support communication and interaction development from the earliest possible opportunity.

Since the inception of ABC, oral language services and supports have been a cornerstone of the ABC Programme. While approaches and service offerings may vary across each ABC Programme site (See Appendix C), common goals and rationales for prioritising a focus on supporting children's oral language development are shared amongst all:

- There is international consensus that speech, language, literacy, and communication development are **essential skills** that underpin all aspects of a child's life, including their social, emotional, and educational development (Bercow, 2018). Deficits in these areas can subsequently have a long-term and detrimental impact on children's lives and increase the risk of difficulties with cognitive development, literacy attainment, social interaction, attention skills, and learning achievement.
- **Timely identification of need** and **early intervention** will lessen the long-term negative consequences for children. We know that up to 50% of children in areas of social disadvantage may start school with language difficulties, resulting in language that may not be adequate for the next stage of learning, for thinking, reasoning and communicating effectively with adults and peers (Law et al., 2011; Locke et al., 2002). Promotion, prevention, early identification, and early intervention approaches are essential to minimise these risks.
- Existing national supports for oral language development are frequently impairment-based for children with identified needs and not always focused on preventative or universal programmes. The Health Services Executive (HSE) primary

care model of speech and language therapy is the most widely available service for children and families in Ireland to support oral language needs. Through this national model, children presenting with possible speech, language and communication needs can be referred to the HSE for assessment and subsequent intervention. The need for **earlier prevention and universal models to support children's oral language development starting in the pre-birth period, in addition to the traditional impairment-based model** is clear. These two approaches are complementary in nature, and work to increase the accessibility of services for parents who are most in need or where barriers exist, to support optimal communication development for children as *"research findings support the provision of high-quality supports to parents and families before children start to talk, rather than waiting until a delay or disorder emerges"* (Rafferty, 2014).

Guided by evidence-based practice and a review by Rafferty (2014), the ABC programme provides a community-based social model of care, whereby speech and language therapists work within the community in partnership with babies, toddlers, children, parents, families, and diverse community and statutory services to support children's oral language development. The oral language services and supports in the ABC Programme offer a variety of evidence-based interventions with a primary focus on promotion, prevention, and early intervention. These services begin in the pre-birth period of development and continue across childhood to contribute to optimal oral language and communication development for young children.

5. Types of Oral Language Services, Supports and Interventions delivered by ABC Programmes

A recent review (Quigley, Smith & Hayes, 2022) of all the published research reports of ABC programmes that implemented oral language service delivery and supports categorised these oral language interventions into four key groups:

(i) Oral Language interventions where parents are the key support.



It is recognised that *'the development of early communication skills is firmly rooted within an infant's primary relationship'* (McGlenn, 2020). To improve oral language skills ABC Programmes frequently support and enhance the quality of baby-parent interactions which occur and develop within the context of these integral first relationships. This relational and strengths-based approach from the earliest possible opportunity supports speech, language, literacy, and communication development from the beginning. For example, through ABC programmes providing parent and child programmes, parent information sessions, and parenting programmes.

(ii) Oral Language interventions where early years educators are the key support.



It is recognised that every adult involved in a young child's life plays a significant role in the development of the child's social, emotional, and overall well-being, including oral language development (Wechsler & Woodlock, 2006). Early educators play a particularly key role, positively influencing children's acquisition of language and literacy through frequent, high-quality, responsive interactions (Girolametto, Weitzman & Greenberg, 2007). Therefore, in addition to working closely with parents, capacity building approaches for these critical communication partners for children are an integral component of the oral language service delivery model in the ABC Programme. ABC Programmes often provide these supports in local community settings to ensure accessibility and inclusivity, such as professional development for early years educators, modelling and coaching of oral language development strategies, and oral language intervention programmes for children that take place in the early years setting.

(iii) Oral Language interventions where primary school teachers are the key support.



Rafferty (2014) recommended that *"communication development supports are best provided in naturally occurring environments and throughout the activities of the child's life at home, preschool or school"*. *'Taking the service to the client'* (e.g., to the child's classroom and educational setting) is considered to be a strong contributor to the positive outcomes for children (Fuller, 2010). ABC Programmes deliver information sessions for all school staff, professional development courses, and modelling and coaching of oral language strategies within the classroom setting.

(iv) Oral Language interventions where speech and language therapists are the key support.



Speech and language therapists have unique and specialist knowledge and expertise in supporting children's oral development (Ebbels et al., 2019). The involvement of SLTs in supporting children's oral language development has been demonstrated to result in improved outcomes for children (Boyle et al. 2009; McCartney et al. 2011; Mecrow et al. 2010). SLTs are employed by many of the ABC Programmes to deliver professional

development, provide guidance on evidence-based approaches, and implement interventions to support children's oral language development.

6. Outcomes of Oral Language Services, Supports and Interventions delivered by ABC Programmes

Oral language services and supports have an impact across multiple levels, from child to parent to practitioner. Many ABC programmes have completed independent evaluations of the outcomes of their oral language interventions. These outcomes for children, parents, and practitioners, are summarised below.

Child outcomes

- Measurable improvements in children's oral language skills based on robust, standardised assessment results.
- Improvements documented in children's receptive and expressive oral language skills, including vocabulary, syntax, narrative and language memory.
- Improvements in children's listening and turn-taking skills.
- A reduction in the number of children classified as having mild-severe language difficulties.



Parent outcomes

- Increased parental understanding of their child's oral language development
- Increased parental competence and confidence in supporting their children's oral language development.
- Enhancements of practices in the home to support oral language development.
- More parents using a range of reading interaction techniques as modelled by SLTs. Modelling reading and storytelling techniques was seen as particularly valuable
- Using a flexible and family-focused approach was successful in increasing parental engagement.



Practitioner outcomes

- Increased professional capacity in understanding how best to support language and communication in their settings.
- Increased awareness of the importance of oral language development for other child outcomes, such as peer interactions.
- Evidence of changes in practitioners' teaching approaches to supporting oral language development and high rates of practitioner satisfaction with professional development received.
- Increased confidence in identifying when children had language difficulties, and awareness of when to make a referral to relevant services.
- Increased awareness of typical speech development and an understanding of the difference between speech delay and disorder.
- Increased capacity to communicate and collaborate effectively with families and other professionals



7. The 'Ecosystem' Approach of ABCs

Bronfenbrenner's ecosystems framework most clearly captures the wide variety of oral language promotion, prevention, and early intervention services and supports provided by ABC programmes, since 2013. In addition to the health centre-based HSE national SLT service delivery model, more speech and language therapy services in Ireland including ABC programmes are shifting towards the ecosystem model by delivering programmes in school and community-based settings, e.g., NICHE Project Cork, In School Therapy Project, School Inclusion Model Project, Happy Talk, and North East Inner City Multidisciplinary Team.

Extract from The Infant Mental Health Subgroup, ABC Programme, 2022:

Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem theory marked a change in how child development is viewed. Developed in the 1970s, Bronfenbrenner described the many layers of environmental influences on the growing child. Represented visually, it demonstrates how the political, socio-cultural, and immediate home environment interact, shaping the growing child. At times, this 'shaping' is done in a very explicit way (e.g., a designed education system), but it also accounts for more implicit influences (e.g., the impact of socio-economic policies on a child's day-to-day life).

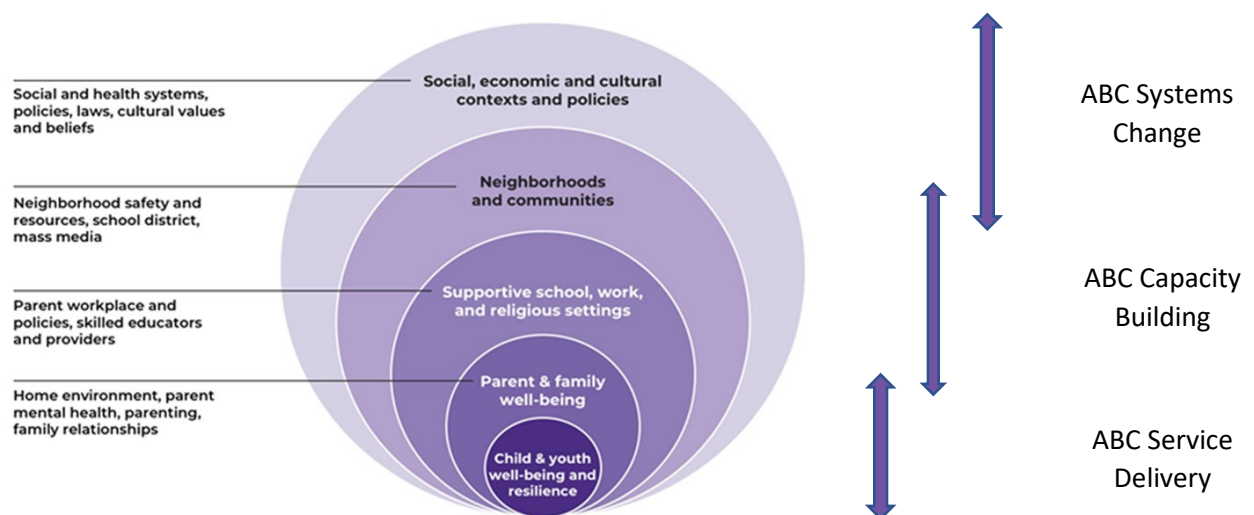


Figure 1 Visual representation of Ecosystems Theory and ABC area-based approach adapted from Bioecological Approach (Center for Child and Family Well-Being, University of Washington, (2022).

As outlined in the introduction and above in Figure 1, ABCs have a 3 pillared delivery approach:

Service Delivery: *Frontline delivery of PEI services for children and families which support early child development.*

ABCs work at the nuclear level targeting the immediate environment of the family home by influencing the parent-child relationship or working directly with parent and child, building confidence and enhancing knowledge and capacity.

Capacity Building: *Training, facilitation, and support to other service providers to implement evidence-based ways of working.*

In this way, ABCs bring together local interagency partners to explore new learning and best practice evidence to enhance:

- interagency working to promote integrated service delivery
- outcomes-based working
- evidence-based programmes and practice
- co-development of new evidence-informed materials and interventions

Interagency capacity-building actions can also create a systemic change in service provision for children and their families.

Systems Change

Engaging management and decision-makers at local, regional, and national levels to effect change which could include:

- changes in organisational culture
- enhanced interagency working because of structural changes
- development of new services or changes in existing service offerings to increase PEI
- changes in funding, resources, or services because of research findings
- changes in national policy and strategy.

8. ABC Oral Language Services in Action

The following two case studies describe the unique ABC oral language services in practice, outlining how children and parents are fully supported within their ecosystem.

Case Study 1 – Oral Language Service Delivery in the ABC Programme

Jack was 2 weeks old when his Public Health Nurse (PHN) registered him and his mother with Let's Grow Together! Initially Jack's mother was offered a Newborn Behavioural Observation (NBO) session with one of the ABC SLTs during a 45-minute home visit. The NBO system is an observational tool which supports parents and practitioners to observe a baby's behaviour, which is their language and method of communicating. This was an opportunity for the ABC SLT to support Jack's caregivers to observe and understand the many ways that Jack was communicating with them, including through subtle nonverbal and behavioural cues. This facilitated a discussion on how Jack's parents and caregivers can support his communication development within the parent- baby relationship in the new-born period of development, through their responses and observations, with increased awareness and attunement as to how Jack is letting them know what he likes and dislikes. The ABC SLT informed Jack's mother about Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Cork which they and Jack could participate in. This enabled Jack to receive a developmentally appropriate book every month in the post until his 5th birthday to start to build his own home library. The ABC SLT shared the benefits of early exposure to books with Jack's parents and modelled ways that they might explore books with their new-born baby to support oral language development.

“This facilitated a discussion on how Jack’s parents and caregivers can support his communication development”

When Jack was 11 months old, he attended his routine PHN developmental check-up. After this check-up, Jack and his mother were offered an opportunity to meet an ABC SLT for a baby communication session - 'Babbling Babies'. During this session, the ABC SLT and Jack's mother spoke about how Jack's speech, language, communication, and interaction skills are developing and can be further supported through attuned responses at this developmental stage. Jack was observed to play with some toys and explored books together with his mother, the ABC SLT used these opportunities to model specific strategies to support Jack's communication development.

When Jack was 15 months old his mother requested some individual ABC SLT home visiting as she was concerned about Jack's speech and language development. An ABC SLT provided a consultation to the family via weekly home visiting for 6 weeks. During these sessions the ABC SLT provided specific developmental guidance regarding speech, language and communication and modelled supportive strategies, for example getting down to Jack's level, following his lead, serve and return interactions, commenting and labelling. Jack's mother also attended a Circle of Security Parenting Programme that was facilitated by two of the ABC SLTs, to enhance the quality of their relationship and interactions.

When Jack was 3.5 years old, he attended a local pre-school. Louise and Rachel were the Early Years Educators working in Jack's room. Rachel had previously completed the Hanen 'Learning Language and Loving It' Program (LLLI) for Early Childhood

Educators that was facilitated by ABC SLTs. Louise requested a consultation with an ABC SLT as she was concerned that Jack was finding it difficult to socialise with his peers. During this 45-minute consultation, the ABC SLT provided specific developmental guidance on supporting Jack's communication and interaction development within the Early Years setting. Louise was also supported to continue sharing her observations with Jack's parents with the option of connecting in with the PHN regarding making a referral to the HSE Primary Care Speech and Language Therapy service if needed. After this consultation Louise was signed up to attend Hanen LLLI with the ABC SLTs. Jack's home environment was supported to become communication friendly (through NBO, Babbling Babies, and ABC SLT home visiting with Jack, his parents', and caregivers) and in addition Jack's early years learning environment had a similar approach which focused on supporting high quality interactions within this language rich environment.

Jack's Mom contacted one of the ABC SLTs to share with them that she was expecting a second child and would like to engage with the ABC antenatal services. As part of the antenatal home visiting programme, an ABC SLT shared with Jack's parents how they can support communication development and a healthy attachment relationship from pregnancy through touch and by talking, singing, and reading with her bump.

The ABC SLT supported Jack's communication development in partnerships with Jack, his parents, caregivers, and other services, through a home and community-based prevention, promotion, and early intervention approach.

Case Study 2 – Oral Language Service Delivery in the ABC Programme

Luke was a 4-year-old boy who started Junior Infants class in his local school. He lived in temporary accommodation with his father and older brother. His teacher described him as a quiet child who was settled in well in class. All the primary schools in Ballyfermot attended training delivered by Family Matters in how to complete Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) Screeners universally with all children in Junior Infants classes to ensure early identification of oral language difficulties. This ensures that children are consistently identified for early supports, if needed. Luke's screener identified that he had several unclear sounds, difficulties following instructions and a limited vocabulary for his age.

“The SLT and Luke’s father also identified achievable ways he could promote Luke’s language development through fun, accessible activities, games, and daily

When the ABC SLT received Luke's referral, she cross-checked his referral with the local HSE Primary Care SLT Team to avoid any duplication. The HSE Primary Care SLT confirmed Luke had previously been referred to their service but did not attend any appointments offered. As the team could not contact Luke's father, his case was discharged. Luke started to receive support from the SLT service of the Family Matters ABC Programme. The onsite nature of the ABC Programme in Luke's school, with appointments arranged at times to suit Luke's father and support from the Home School Community Liaison Teacher,

made it easier for Luke's father to attend and engage in regular speech and language therapy appointments with Luke.

Luke's father explained that he found it difficult to practice the speech homework between appointments and to support Luke to complete this work. Being located in the school, facilitated a conversation with Luke's teacher to find alternative and supplementary ways to practice Luke's speech goals and work with him regularly and as a result he made good progress. The SLT and Luke's father also identified achievable ways he could promote Luke's language development through fun, accessible activities, games, and daily routines at home.

In Senior Infant's, Luke's speech sounds had progressed well, but he continued to have oral language difficulties. Luke's school had recently been trained by ABC SLTs in Talk Boost Key Stage 1, an evidenced based oral language intervention programme for children. Luke attended the intervention group delivered by a trained teacher 3 times a week for 10 weeks and made great progress. His ability to follow instructions improved and his vocabulary increased.

In First Class, Luke's speech and oral language skills were assessed again and all difficulties had fully resolved. Most importantly, both his teachers and father are delighted that he is more confident speaking and learning in school. Without teachers completing SLCN screeners, enhanced supports for engagement with therapy and ABC SLTs in schools, Luke may not have accessed speech and language therapy. With the ABC Programme, Luke received supports at targeted and specialist levels within his community; resulting in achieved communication goals and Luke now has a greater opportunity of improved academic, emotional, social, and overall life outcomes.

9. Future Vision and Recommendations

1. There is a need for **promotion, prevention, and early intervention community based universal oral language services**, in addition to existing national clinical impairment-based models of speech and language therapy service provision, in **low socioeconomic areas due to the potential impact of poverty, adversity and vulnerability on children's oral language and communication outcomes**.



2. **The planning and provision of young children's services must incorporate an inter-agency collaborative approach to ensure holistic and joined-up care planning in responding to the individual oral language needs of young children, parents and families.** There is a need to shift from uni-disciplinary practices that can be silo-based, to an integrated, collaborative system of services that place the baby/child and their family at the centre of all decision making and service planning. This involves interagency, partnership-based working with local community, voluntary, statutory groups, and education settings to identify needs within the area and deliver programmes and professional development. It is critical that health services and children's services, including schools, work together to support children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (Bercow, 2018).



3. All practitioners must adopt a **relational and strengths-based framework** when working with parents/caregivers and their young children to support their oral language **to build relationships, identify ports of entry and support engagement in the context of early adversity, poverty and trauma.**



- Ensure a strengths-based, non-judgemental, and holistic approach to build relationships with families and communities within cultural and area-based contexts.
- Use simple, accessible language and avoid jargon.
- Use multiple methods of communication to support optimal engagement, e.g., phone calls, text messages, WhatsApp messages, voice note messaging, Facetime/video call, supportive verbal reminders from school or family support workers.
- Show empathy and understanding for families' individual experiences. Recognise when families may need additional support to facilitate engagement. Listen to families' needs, start where they are at and dedicate time to foster the development of relationships with families.
- Reflective practice supervision plays a key role in supporting this approach of "being with rather than doing" (Pawl & St. John, 1998).

4. **To support and nurture young children's oral language and communication development and well-being, capacity building is required for all important adults in a baby/toddler/young child's life. Coaching is integral to ensure generalisation and embedding of skills and knowledge within the natural environment (Joyce & Showers, 2002).**



- Parents are children's most important communication partners, therefore it is necessary to provide coaching and modelling opportunities to support

and enhance the quality of parent-child interactions within their most natural environments (i.e. home and school).

- Allocation of dedicated hours/time for continuing professional development within funded working hours of Early Childhood Educators is required as a central quality enhancement initiative to support access to training, modelling, and coaching programmes.

5. **The principles and practice of infant mental health including the science of early brain development needs to be accessible to all practitioners supporting children’s oral language development and embedded into interdisciplinary practices.**

Speech and language therapists play a vital role in supporting and enhancing infant mental health development, as all child development, including communication, happens in the context of early relationships.



Infant Mental Health

6. Oral language services, supports and interventions must be **rooted in evidence-based practices** that have a proven track record of effectiveness to ensure optimal outcomes for children and families.

This will require a **robust evaluation framework** that assesses the impact of oral language interventions implemented, including a focus on improvements in child outcomes and changes to parent behaviours and practitioners’ practices. The impact of oral language interventions must be consistently evaluated across all ABC programmes delivering such interventions. This will require providing all ABC programmes with the resources and training necessary for continuous and rigorous data collection and analysis at a local level that is consistent across ABC programmes.



Evidence-Based Practises



Robust Evaluation Framework

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11. Appendix A: Survey of Speech and Language Therapy Intervention/ Supports provided under the Area Based Childhood Programme

Part 1-Programme Information

ABC Site	
ABC Manager/ CEO	
ABC Address	
Name of Oral Language Programme	
Number of SLT's/ Oral Language Officers	
Grade of SLT's/ Oral Language Officers	
Contact Details of SLT's / Oral Language Officers	
Programme start date/ intervention start date	
Programme end date (if applicable)	
Reason for programme cessation	
External evaluation (Please cite reports and insert links to reports)	
Target age group of Oral Language Programme	
Number of primary schools your programme works with	
Number of Early years services your programme works with	
Clinical Supervision	

Part 2- Programme description

Q1: Please describe your model of service delivery, referring to your work at universal level, targeted and specialist level.

Q2: Please outline the evidence and theory underpinning your model of service delivery.

Q3: Please outline any research that been carried out on your model, summarise the key learnings / enablers and barriers identified within the research.

Q4: Please outline the key recommendations of your programme.

12. Appendix B. Background of the ABC Programme

(Extract from The Infant Mental Health Subgroup, ABC Programme. 2022. A Framework for Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health)

The Area Based Childhood (ABC) 2013 – 2017 Programme evolved from predecessor Programmes, the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme (PEIP) 2007 – 2013 Programme, all-Ireland Prevention and Early Intervention Initiatives (PEIIs) and the National Early Years Access Initiative (NEYAI) 2011 - 2014.

Today the ABC Programme is funded by the Department of Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth (DCDEIY). It is delivered through the Prevention Partnership and Family Support Programme (PPFS) within Tusla.

The Programme vision, mission and objectives are reflected below.



Figure 1: Locations of ABC Programmes across Ireland

Vision An Ireland where no child is impacted by poverty and all children are supported to reach their full potential.

Mission Through prevention and early intervention approaches, the national ABC Programme aims to work in partnership with families, practitioners, communities, and national stakeholders to deliver better outcomes for Children and Families living in areas where poverty is most deeply entrenched.

Objectives

- Support children at critical stages of their development and wellbeing and through key transitions, with a particular focus on pre-birth to six years of age.
- Translate the science of early childhood development and evidence-informed practice into locally appropriate programmes and approaches.
- Mitigate the impact of intergenerational poverty and improve outcomes for children and families.
- Take a progressive universal approach to address child poverty.
- Actively support and work in partnership with parents as the primary carers and educators in their Children's lives.
- Enhance the provision of quality prevention and early intervention approaches by developing workforce capacity (education, training, coaching, mentoring and reflection) across Children's services.
- Utilise and enable whole-systems, multi-stage processes to enhance children's services and practice at local and national levels to improve outcomes for children.
- Use monitoring and evaluation systems to inform our practice and measure impact.
- Share the learning and work to embed effective practices in all Children's services.

- Inform policy development at local and national levels where ABC areas are utilised to test, evaluate and disseminate intervention processes and outcomes. (ABC Programme, 2020)

List of 12 National ABC Programmes

ABC Programme	Location	CEO/ Manager
The Childhood Development Initiative	Tallaght West, Dublin	Marian Quinn, CEO Marian@cdi.ie
Family Matters	Ballyfermot, Dublin	Liz O'Sullivan, Manager losullivan@bcpartnership.ie
Let's Grow Together! Infant & Childhood Partnerships CLG. (formerly Young Knocknaheeny ABC)	Cork, Northside	Katherine Harford, Manager katherine@letsgrowtogether.ie
Early Learning Initiative	Dublin Docklands & East Inner City	Lana Cummins Lana.Cummins@ncirl.ie
Blue Skies	Clondalkin	Karen Costello KCostello@archways.ie
ABC Start Right Limerick	Limerick City	Maya Dafinova, ABC Start Right Programme Manager mdafinova@paulpartnership.ie
Preparing for Life	Dublin 15 & 17	Niall Sexton, Programme Manager Niall.Sexton@nspartnership.ie
Supporting Parents and Early Childhood Services SPECS	Bray	Maryrose Costello maryrose@brayareapartnership.ie
Young Ballymun	Ballymun	Fiona Gallagher, Manager Fiona@youngballymun.org
The Genesis Programme	Louth	Hugh Doogan, Programme Manager Hugh@genesislouth.ie
Better Finglas	Finglas, Dublin	Rebecca Moore, Project Leader rebecca.moore@barnardos.ie

Grangegorman ABC	Grangegorman	Rebecca Grogan , ABC Coordinator abc@tudublin.ie
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13. Appendix C: ABC Programme Oral Language Services

ABC Programme	Oral Language Services
<p>Chit Chat The Childhood Development Initiative Tallaght West</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:1 Therapy Schools • Group Therapy Schools • 1:1 Therapy ELC's • Group Therapy ELC's • Languageland • Teacher Talk- Learning Language and Loving It • Creating a language rich environment in the classroom • Elklan Speech and Language Support for 3-5s • Elklan 0-3's • Doodle Den - Doodle Families • Parent Information Sessions • Dolly Parton Imagination Library • Communication Champions • SLCN screeners • Oral Language Consultations • Drop in Sessions for Staff/ Parents • Helpline for staff / parents – • Weekly Social media posts • Solihull • Interagency Work • Oral Language Forum • National ABC SLT Working Groups
<p>Family Matters (Ballyfermot, Dublin)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Information Sessions • Drop in Sessions for Professionals/ Parents • PEEP Learning Together • Up to 2 and Infant Parent Programme • Speech and language therapy sessions • Elklan Speech and Language Support for 3-5s • Elklan 5-11's • ICAN Early TalkBoost • ICAN Talkboost KS1 • Posters on typical development for parents/ educators • Typical Communication Development and Strategies • Educator Training Sessions • Communication Champion Networks • SLCN screeners • Speech, language, and communication policy for educational settings • Parent Child + Home Visiting -Caregiver and Child Sessions • Solihull • Linking families with other community, voluntary and statutory supports • Interagency Work • Infant Mental Health Networks • Oral Language Forum • National ABC SLT Working Groups

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergraduate training and placements
<p>Let's Grow Together! Infant & Childhood Partnerships CLG. (formerly Young Knocknaheeny ABC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dolly Parton's Imagination Library • Newborn Behavioural Observations • Infant Massage • Babbling Babies • Elklan 'Let's Talk With Your Baby' Group • Peep Learning Together Group • Circle of Security Parenting® • Communication Information Sessions • Oral Language Consultations • Storytime at the Library • Interdisciplinary Infant Mental Health Home Visiting Service • Facilitation of Infant Mental Health Network Groups • Learning Language and Loving It™ The Hanen Program® for Early Childhood Educators • ABC and Beyond™ The Hanen Program® for Building Emergent Literacy in Early Childhood Settings • Kidscope Paediatric Clinic • Undergraduate training and education for Speech and Language Therapy Students University College Cork • Oral Language Forum • Social Media • Guiding and Informing Prevention and Early Intervention Policy • Public Health Awareness
<p>Early Learning Initiative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Child + • Doodle Den, • My Place to Play (0-2) • Parent Toddler groups (Story time, song time, messy play), • Social media posts, • ABC 0-2 Home Visiting Programme, • Early Numeracy Programme, • Zoom Ahead with Books
<p>Blue Skies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elklan Speech and Language Support for 3-5s • Languageland EY • Languageland NS • Up to 2- Infant Massage • Communication Champions(CC)-Trained CC in assessing language environment using Communication Supporting Classroom Observation Tool • Oral language pack for each setting • SLCN Screeners-Drop In Sessions for staff/ parents • Posters on typical development for parents/ educators • Parent Information Sessions • Typical Communication Development and strategies • JI Screeners • Typical S&L development-Information/ Training Sessions • Creating a Language rich environment • Speech, language and communication policy

<p>ABC Start Right Limerick-Little Voices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation of onward referrals Liason with Primary Care SLT with consent • ICAN Early TalkBoost • Talkboost KS1 • Hanen:Learning Language and Loving it/ Teacher Talk series Word Aware EY and primary. • Communication and the growing brain, • The baby room project with IMH • Encouraging Language Development in Early Childhood Settings, • Parent/ Child Sessions • Babbling Babies • Wobbler Words • Talking Toddlers • Bringing Stories to Life • SLT and Literacy • Rhyme time fun/ StoryTime Fun • Loving Language • Family Reading in schools • SLT at Developmental clinics (7-9 months) • Bump to Baby • PEEP sessions • Drop in EY sessions. • Borrow a book in all EY setting, book gifting in other settings.
<p>Preparing for Life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hanen Learning Language and Loving It • Hanen ABC and Beyond • Communication Champions • PEEPS • Play on Words • Strengthening Foundations of Learning • Home Visiting programme, • Baby massage, • The growing brain, • PEEP • Storytime.
<p>SPECS Bray</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hanen Learning Language and Loving It • LanguageLand NS • PEEP • SLT at Developmental clinics (7-9 months) • Drop In Sessions for staff/ parents • Book Gifting/ Borrowing
<p>Young Ballymun</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story Stacks in all 11 primary schools.- Parent information sessions by HSE SLT at each Story Sacks programme. • Breakfast Buddies - five times a year, SLT present. • Hug your book programme -integrated into five programmes: • Infant massage, • Incredible Years,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk and Play, • You Make the Difference, • Young Mothers programme. • Twice weekly social media posts supporting children's language and literacy development. SLT post once a week. • Schools out programme in partnership with family resource centre four times a year. language and literacy activities with parents and children. • Talk Time workshops with parents delivered in eleven primary schools. • Parent information leaflets and posters on supporting Childrens language development . • Talk & Play with parents and Toddlers ongoing programme weekly. Visits from HSE SLT to T&P to support parents with language development. • Oral Language Forum: The Oral Language Forum has been facilitated by Youngballymun since 2010. Youngballymun initiated this inter-agency and multi-disciplinary forum to collaborate on oral language development in prevention and early intervention areas. Since then there has been approximately two-three Oral Language Forum meetings per year. The Oral Language Forum supports a community of professionals to: Share experiences of the challenges of best practice in relation to oral language development; Capture the benefits of integrated service delivery; Inform local and national policy; Promote future innovation and learning across the lifecycle.
<p>The Genesis Project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ParentChild+ Home Visiting Programme • Incredible Years Parent and Baby Programme • Baby Massage • Hanen – Learning Language and Loving it for Early Years Educators and Junior Infant Teachers.
<p>Better Finglas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wizards of Words WOW literacy programme. • Hanen 'Learning Language and Loving it' for professionals. • Transition to Pre-School/Primary School EY Programme • Literacy focus within Early Years mentoring programme • Speech & Language Q&A Inputs at parent & child/baby groups • PEEP P&T Groups with a focus on early lieteracy and communication • Book Club- Giveaway & Read along time • PFL Home Visiting Programme - focus on language development & literacy. Referrals when necessary to SLT. • Infant Massage • Promoting Language/Literacy via Facebook programmes.

