

Developing a toolbox for early years practitioners who assess toddlers' speech, language and communication needs

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Ambition:

Better use of information on child vulnerabilities and social-risk factors when assessing early speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)

Focus:

Focus on the voice of parents and practitioners, and the rich qualitative insights gained in processes of collaboration between parents and practitioners

Context:

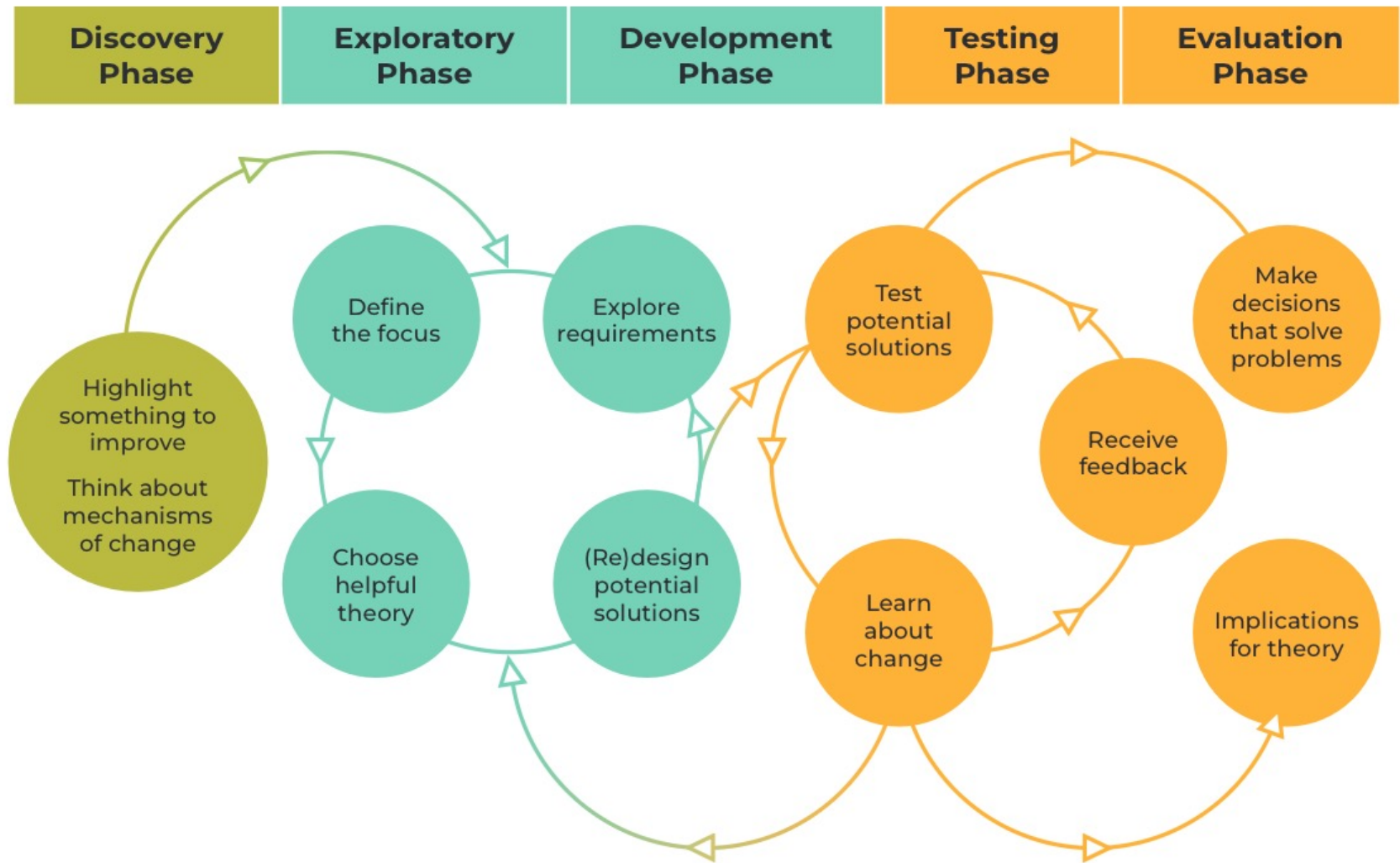
Integrated early years services
Development reviews and language screening, often carried out during home visits by health visitors or child and family practitioners



Methodology: Design-based research

Research cycles of design, test, evaluation and reflection in collaboration

(adapted from Fraefel, 2014; Sayre 2023)



Key documents and processes informing the toolbox development

1 Application of the My World Triangle Framework

- How I grow and develop
- What I need from people who look after me
- My family's wider world

Application of the framework to the Assessment of early Speech, Language and Communication Needs

2 Early Language Identification Measure- Intervention Resources

C. McKean, J. Law et al. | Newcastle University

Developed for practitioners to follow up on the assessment of SLC (ELIM-I) and provide tailored support to families.

3 Consultation and co-design with parents and practitioners

- Which information is important
- What's helpful
- What's meaningful
- What should this look like in practice?



We developed materials to enhance early screening for SLCN

CONVERSATION AND
OBSERVATION GUIDE

during
the screening

for practitioners, to have
helpful conversations with
parents to learn about the
child's language needs

for practitioners to observe
how the child interacts with
adults, including the parent

SUGGESTIONS FOR
WORDING AND
PHRASING

at the end of
the screening

for practitioners, to share
their views on the child's
SLCN with parents

DECISION-MAKING GUIDE
and
TEMPLATE FOR
DOCUMENTATION

following the
screening

for practitioners, to make
decisions about how to best
support the family and child

for practitioners, to
summarise what they
learned, in their case notes
and in tables and numbers

Conversation guide:

- informal, open-ended questions, follow-up questions and prompts
- sensitive language
- structure, yet flexibility to allow for conversational flow
- questions that address the three sides of the assessment triangle
- questions about the parent perspective

Observation checklist:

- suggestions on how to set up the situation so that natural interaction between the parent and child can be observed
- 8 items which mainly relate to the communication between the child and the adult (e.g. communicative intent, turn-taking)

Suggestions for wording and phrasing:

- examples of what to say when sharing views on the child's SLCN and how to support these
- suggestions for follow-up actions

Template for writing up case notes

- headings (e.g. family activities at home)
- prompts with examples (e.g. describe activities the family does at home (e.g. time for conversations, play activities, book sharing etc))

Template for documentation to support aggregate analysis

- mainly yes/no questions
- parent concerns
- practitioner views on the need for communication and language support
- type of support offered
- agreed follow-up actions

Decision-making guide

- in line with the SLC pathway

Considers

- WellComm score
- parent concerns
- practitioner observations and insights
- decisions on level of support
- decisions on type of support
- results of follow-up review

Toolbox Materials

- first draft ready:



Next Steps

- Testing the toolbox:
Practitioners using the developed materials when they meet families for a WellComm screening
- Evaluating the toolbox use:
 - Carrying out interviews with parents who experienced the enhanced screening of SLCN
 - Asking practitioners to complete diary sheets to provide feedback
 - Organising a practitioner focus group discussion on the feasibility, acceptability and usefulness of the toolbox
- Exploring the potential:
for the enhanced documentation of SLCN to be used for aggregate analysis that supports the monitoring of needs and demands, and the planning of services

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