



Speech and Language Baseline Measures  
Longton Sure Start

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## 1) Executive Summary

The second assessment of the speech and language ability of children in the Longton Sure Start area has demonstrated that the target of a 5 percentage point reduction in children requiring specialist intervention has not been achieved.

The key findings are:

- An improvement, by 4 percentage points, of children with comprehension and word finding delay within normal limits has been achieved.
- 37% of children in 2005 have language ability within normal limits, compared to 33% in 2002.
- The first language spoken by children has a direct influence on the levels of comprehension and word finding delay found.
- 63% of children who speak English as their first language in 2005 have language ability within normal limits, compared to 45% in 2002.
- Contact with Sure Start can help to reduce the incidence of comprehension and word finding delay in children.
- A lower incidence of comprehension and word finding delay is found amongst children who have had contact with Sure Start.

Longton Sure Start has made improvements in the speech and language ability of children and should continue to work towards further reducing the incidence of comprehension and word finding delay in children.

## 2) Introduction

In the year 2000 Sure Start set a national target to reduce, by 5 percentage points, by 2004, the number of children with speech and language problems requiring specialist intervention.

The drive behind reducing the number of children requiring specialist intervention from Speech and Language Therapists is to raise educational and social aspirations and abilities of children.

In Stoke-on-Trent the initial survey was carried out in the Stoke North Sure Start Area in 2001. This survey was used as a model for all those in Stoke-on-Trent which took place after it. The first Speech and Language Baseline Measures Survey in the Longton Sure Start area was conducted in 2002. In 2005 this was repeated to establish if there had been a reduction in the number of children requiring specialist intervention.

It had been recognised, by 2000, that there was an underlying 10% of children who had a need for speech and language therapy (Law, 2000) due to genetic or medical issues. This is significant as it establishes a minimum level of children who would be requiring specialist intervention.

Also of concern in Stoke-on-Trent is the high level of deprivation. That is, Locke and Peers (2002) demonstrated that children from an economically deprived background could be at considerable risk of language delay. This is significant for Stoke-on-Trent which, in 2004, was ranked as the 18<sup>th</sup> most deprived local authority out of 354, nationally (Office for National Statistics).

The consequences of Law's and Locke and Peers' work for the Longton Sure Start Speech and Language Baseline Measure are enormous. That is, the closer the number of children who are within normal limits is to 90% the better the support and assistance given to children is. This is important given that the 2002 figure for children who were within normal limits for comprehension and word finding ability was 33%. This means that if an improvement to 38% of children within normal limits for either comprehension or word finding delay in the Longton Sure Start area is gained then the programme has achieved a 5 percentage point improvement.

The 2005 survey was carried out in four settings: Westfield Nursery School, St. Gregory's Catholic Primary School, Alexandra Infants' School, and Belgrave CE (C) Primary School. Edensor CE (C) Primary School took part in the 2002 assessment but not in the 2005 survey. This was because the parental consent forms for children from this setting were not received.

### 3) Assessment Methods

The assessment methodology was consistent in each of the four settings.

All assessments were carried out on children aged no younger than three years and six months and no older than four years. The assessments were carried out on children who:

- Lived in the Longton Sure Start Programme geographical area, and
- Attended a nursery setting that fell in the geographical footprint of the Longton Sure Start Programme.

Parental permission was gained for all children who took part in the surveys.

The surveys were all carried out in the first term of the academic year. This is because it is suspected that spending time in a nursery setting helps a child to develop speech and language ability (Cooper, 2002).

Two tests were used to assess the language ability of children:

- The Reynell Developmental Language Scales 3 Comprehension scale was used to assess comprehension levels.
- The Renfrew Word Finding Vocabulary Scale was used to assess vocabulary levels.

These tests are able to assess a child's ability to understand language and look at expressive vocabulary.

The Reynell Developmental Language Scales 3 Comprehension scale and Renfrew Word Finding Vocabulary Scale were used in the initial baseline study in 2002. This means that the results of the two studies are comparable.

## 4) Results and Analysis

### 4.1) Results of 2005 Survey

#### 4.1.1) Anonymity

The results show the findings from each of the four settings without reference to either the school name or children's name. This is to conserve confidentiality.

#### 4.1.2) Setting 1

Setting 1 had an intake of 38 children, of whom twelve fitted the criteria for assessment. However, only six children were assessed. The six children who were not assessed were absent on the assessment days. Of the six children assessed, five were boys and one was a girl. Translators, where needed, to aid the assessments were provided by the Setting. The results of the assessment are held in Table 1.

Child	Actual Age	Reynell Comprehension Age equivalent	Renfrew Word Finding Age equivalent	Delay identified	1 <sup>st</sup> Language
M1	3;10	3;00	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	English
M2	3;11	4;06 – 4;07	3;10	WNL	English
M3	3;08	2;04	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	Punjabi
M4	3;07	2;11	3;06	Comprehension	English
M5	3;08	4;08 – 4;10	3;09	WNL	English
F6	3;07	3;09	3;06	WNL	English

Table 1 – 2005 Survey results from Setting 1

NB

WNL = Within Normal Limits

M = Boy

F = Girl

The results from Setting 1 are summarised in Table 2.

	Number	Percent
Intake assessed	6	16%
Boys	5	83%
Girls	1	17%
Comprehension delay	3	50%
Word Finding delay	2	33%
Comprehension or Word Finding delay	3	50%

Table 2 – Summary of results from Setting 1

#### 4.1.3) Setting 2

Setting 2 had eleven eligible children from an intake of 45. Seven of the eleven children were assessed. The five who were not were absent on the assessment days. Of the seven children assessed four were boys and three

were girls. No translators were required at Setting 3 as all children spoke English. Table 3 holds the results from Setting 2.

Child	Actual Age	Reynell Comprehension Age equivalent	Renfrew Word Finding Age equivalent	Delay identified	1 <sup>st</sup> Language
F1	3;08	3;00	<3;03	Word Finding	English
M2	3;07	2;11	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	English
M3	3;07	3;00	3;03	WNL	English
F4	3;09	4;04	4;08	WNL	English
M5	3;06	3;03	3;06	WNL	English
F6	3;06	3;01	3;03	WNL	English
M7	3;08	3;10	3;05 – 3;06	WNL	English

Table 3 – 2005 Survey results from Setting 2

The summary of the seven children assessed in Setting 2 is held in Table 4.

	Number	Percent
Intake assessed	7	16%
Boys	4	57%
Girls	3	43%
Comprehension delay	1	14%
Word Finding delay	2	29%
Comprehension or Word Finding delay	2	29%

Table 4 – Summary of results from Setting 2

#### 4.1.4) Setting 3

Setting 3 had an intake of 31 children of which ten matched the criteria for assessment. Of these ten children five were boys and five were girls. The translation needed for Setting 3 was provided by the setting. Table 5 holds their results.

Table 6 holds a summary of the results gained from the ten children assessed at Setting 3.

Child	Actual Age	Reynell Comprehension Age equivalent	Renfrew Word Finding Age equivalent	Delay identified	1 <sup>st</sup> Language
F1	3;09	3;07 – 3;08	3;10	WNL	English
M2	3;07	2;03	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	Urdu
F3	3;11	3;11 – 4;00	<3;03	Word Finding	Urdu
M4	3;07	2;03	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	English
F5	3;10	4;01	3;07 – 3;08	WNL	English
F6	3;10	2;10	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	Urdu
M7	3;10	2;04	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	Urdu
M8	3;08	2;11	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	Urdu
F9	3;09	3;02	<3;03	Word Finding	English
M10	3;09	2;10	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	Urdu

Table 5 – 2005 Survey results from Setting 3

	Number	Percent
Intake assessed	10	32%
Boys	5	50%
Girls	5	50%
Comprehension delay	6	60%
Word Finding delay	8	80%
Comprehension or Word Finding delay	8	80%

Table 6 – Summary of results from Setting 3

#### 4.1.5) Setting 4

Setting 4 had an intake of 60 children. Eighteen of these children matched the assessment criteria. Eleven of the children were boys and seven were girls. Where translation was required it was supplied by the Speech and Language Therapist; this must be remembered as it may affect the results. Table 7 shows the results from Setting 4

Three children from Setting 4 were not present at the time of the assessment and so the results for Setting 4 are based on fifteen children, not eighteen. The summary of the nine children assessed in Setting 4 is held in Table 8.

Child	Actual Age	Reynell Comprehension Age equivalent	Renfrew Word Finding Age equivalent	Delay identified	1 <sup>st</sup> Language
M1	3;08	Did not participate			Punjabi
F2	3;07	2;10	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	Punjabi
M3	3;09	4;03	3;09	WNL	English
M4	3;09	4;01	3;10	WNL	English
M5	3;10	2;00	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	Punjabi
M6	3;09	4;08 – 4;10	3;05 – 3;06	WNL	English
M7	3;07	2;10	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	Punjabi
F8	3;10	3;03 – 3;06	<3;03	Word Finding	English
F9	3;07	3;02	3;04 – 3;05	WNL	English
M10	3;09	2;05	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	Punjabi
M11	3;09	2;00	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	Punjabi
F12	3;10	2;11	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	Punjabi
M13	3;09	2;03	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	Punjabi
M14		Did not participate			Punjabi
F15	3;08	2;04	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	Punjabi
F16	3;06	Did not participate			Punjabi
F17	3;09	3;03	<3;03	Comprehension & Word Finding	English
M18	3;06	3;01	<3;03	Word Finding	Punjabi

Table 7 – 2005 Survey results from Setting 4

	Number	Percent
Intake assessed	15	25%
Boys	10	67%
Girls	5	33%
Comprehension delay	9	60%
Word Finding delay	11	73%
Comprehension or Word Finding delay	11	73%

Table 8 – Summary of results from Setting 4

**4.1.6.1) Analysis**

The four settings have different requirements for specialist help. The collective results are held in Table 9.

	Number	Percent
Intake assessed	38	22%
Boys	24	63%
Girls	14	37%
Comprehension delay	19	50%
Word Finding delay	23	61%
Comprehension or Word Finding delay	24	63%

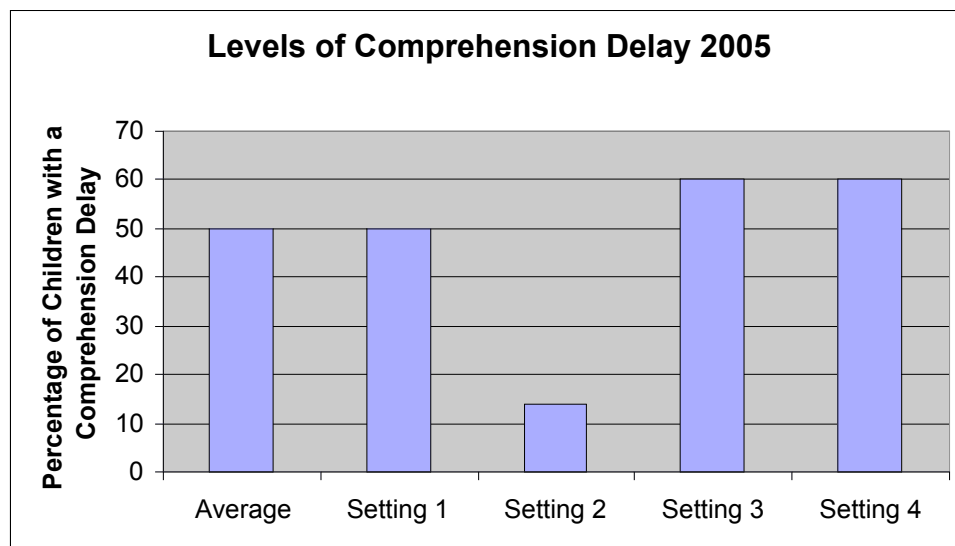
Table 9 – Summary of results from all four Settings

Fourteen children were identified as being 'Within Normal Limits'. Of these eight were boys and six were girls. Within the population this means that 37% of the surveyed children displayed the comprehension and word finding ability that is consistent with their age. These figures also show that 33% of the boys and 42% of the girls were within normal limits.

**4.1.6.2) Comprehension Delay**

Nineteen children were identified as having a comprehension delay. Graph 1 shows how the four settings compare against each other and against the average.

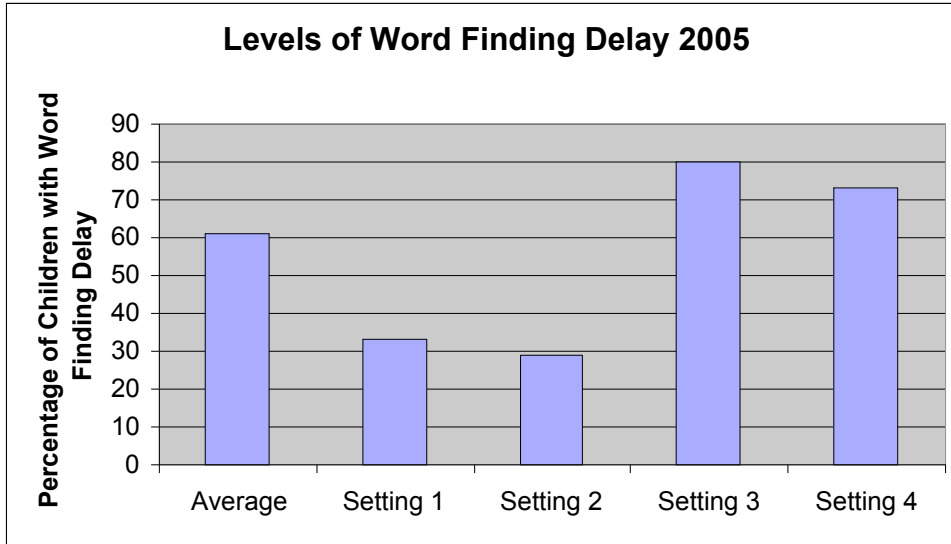
The graph shows that two of the four settings have below average scores in terms of comprehension delay. However, the average of 50% is exceeded by two settings, with the same score of 60%. The children at Setting 2 have clearly better results than the other three settings in terms of comprehension delay.



Graph 1 – Levels of Comprehension Delay 2005

#### 4.1.6.3) Word Finding Delay

Word Finding delay was identified in 61% of children. The 23 children which were in need of specialist help to increase their word finding ability came from all four settings. Graph 2 shows the levels of word finding delay found.

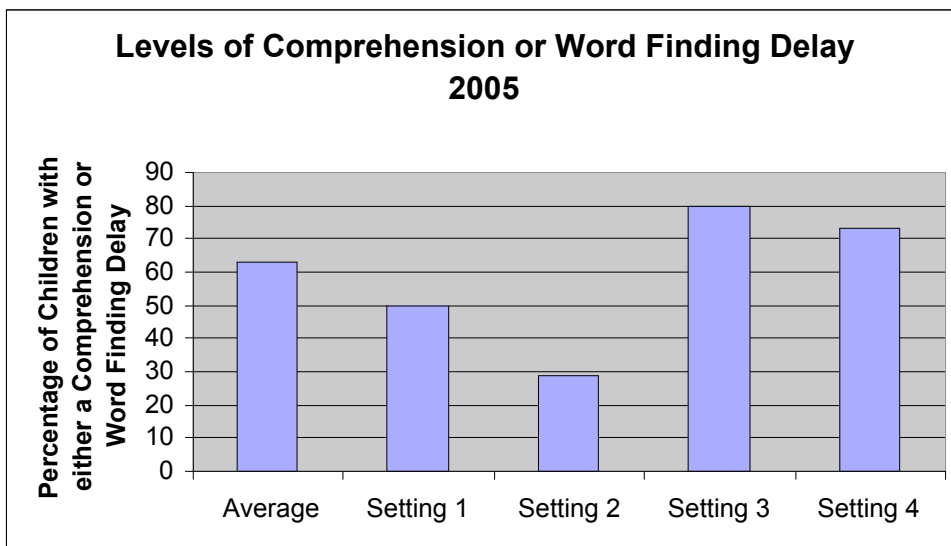


Graph 2 – Levels of Word Finding Delay 2005

The average of 61% for word finding delay is built up of scores ranging from 29% (Setting 2) to 80% (Setting 3).

#### 4.1.6.4) Comprehension or Word Finding Delay

The level of children with either a comprehension or word finding delay is higher than that for either comprehension or word finding. The percentage of children who had delay was 63%. Graph 3 shows how the four settings



Graph 3 – Levels of Comprehension or Word Finding Delay 2005

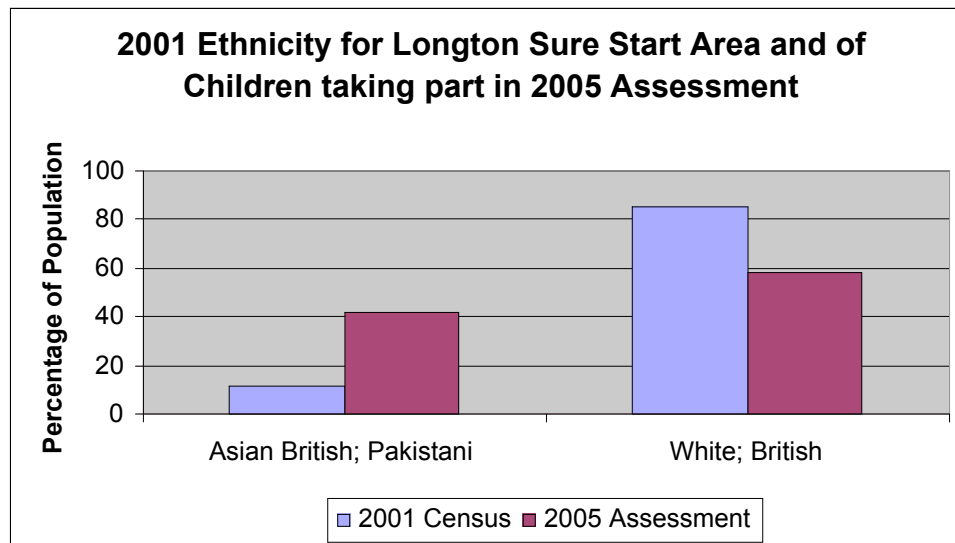
compare with the average.

The percentage of children exhibiting either comprehension or word finding delay is higher than for the individual categories but does follow the same pattern as for word finding delay. That is, the four settings are all sitting in the same positions, in terms of rank, at all three assessment stages.

#### 4.1.7) Ethnicity

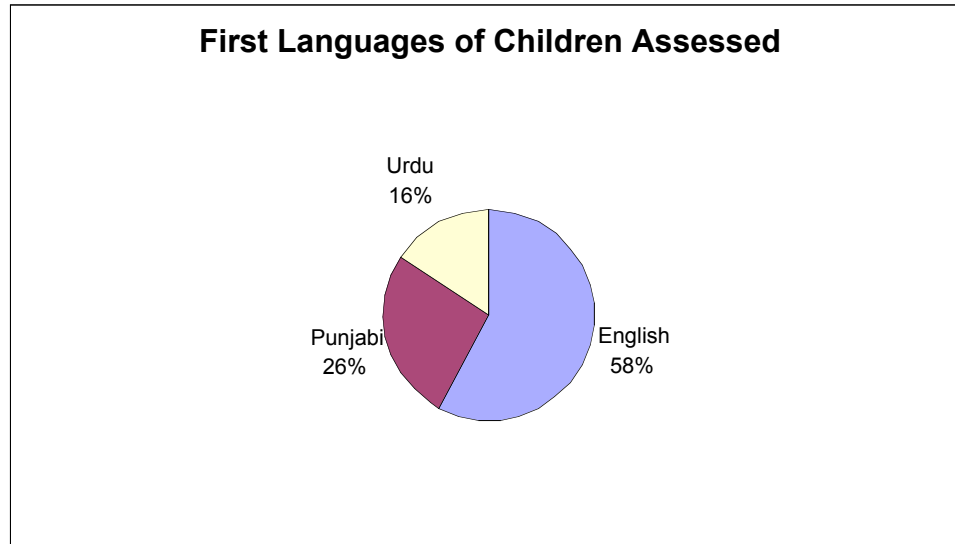
The high ethnic levels found in the Longton Sure Start area are reflected in the children assessed. However, the actual levels of ethnicity in the Longton Sure Start area are different from those found in the assessment. Graph 4 shows the ethnicity of the children assessed and the actual levels of ethnicity found in the 2001 census.

Graph 4 shows that English speakers account for the greatest percentage in both the 2001 census and the 2005 assessment. However, the percentage of Punjabi or Urdu speakers is much higher for the 2005 assessment than was actually found in the 2001 census. This may have an adverse effect on the results found as it is recognised in both assessments that the norms are calculated for children who speak English as their first language. Graph 5 shows the first languages of the children assessed.



Graph 4 – 2001 Ethnicity for Longton Sure Start Area and of Children taking part in 2005 Assessment

Fourteen of the children assessed were within normal limits. All of these had English as their first language. This means that for English speakers 63% are within normal limits. English speakers made-up 58% of those assessed; Punjabi speakers accounted for 26% of the children and 16% spoke Urdu as their first language. Table 10 shows how all language groups fared in the assessment. The levels of language delay in children vary depending upon their first language. Table 11 shows the percentage breakdown of results for children within their own language group.



Graph 5 – First Languages of Children Assessed

First Language	English	Punjabi	Urdu
Number of children	22	10	6
WNL	14	0	0
Comprehension Delay	1	0	0
Word Finding Delay	3	1	1
Comprehension & Word Finding Delay	4	9	5

Table 10 – Results of Assessment by First Language

It was found that 10.0% of Punjabi speakers experienced word finding delay and that 90.0% of children had comprehension and word finding delay. These figures were similar to those for Urdu speakers where 16.7% demonstrated word finding delay and 83.3% of children had comprehension and word finding delay.

First Language	English	Punjabi	Urdu
WNL	63.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Comprehension Delay	4.5%	0%	0.0%
Word Finding Delay	13.6%	10.0%	16.7%
Comprehension & Word Finding Delay	18.2%	90.0%	83.3%

Table 11 – Percentage Results of Assessment by First Language

#### 4.2) Comparison with 2002 Assessment

##### 4.2.1) Analysis

All the settings assessed in 2005 were also assessed in 2002. This allows a comparison to be made between the overall results of 2005 and 2002 and between the individual settings. One additional setting was assessed in 2002 but not in 2005. This setting cannot, therefore, be compared individually.

Tables 12, 13, 14 and 15 show the summaries of results from the four settings assessed in both 2002 and 2005.

	2002	2005
Intake assessed	23%	16%
Boys	22%	83%
Girls	78%	17%
Comprehension delay	33%	50%
Word Finding delay	56%	33%
Comprehension or Word Finding delay	67%	50%

Table 12 – Summary of results from Setting 1 for 2002 and 2005

Setting 1 has seen improvements in levels of word finding delay and either word finding or comprehension delay. It has, however, seen a decrease in comprehension delay. The changes have been:

Comprehension Delay	-51.5%
Word Finding Delay	41.1%
Comprehension or Word Finding Delay	25.1%

	2002	2005
Intake assessed	19%	16%
Boys	63%	57%
Girls	37%	43%
Comprehension delay	50%	14%
Word Finding delay	50%	29%
Comprehension or Word Finding delay	50%	29%

Table 13 – Summary of results from Setting 2 for 2002 and 2005

Setting 2 has improved results in all areas. The improvements found at Setting 2 have been greatest in comprehension delay where an increase of 357.1% has been achieved. The changes found are:

Comprehension Delay	357.1%
Word Finding Delay	72.4%
Comprehension or Word Finding Delay	72.4%

Setting 3 also improved in all areas. The greatest improvement was made in the area of comprehension delay where an increase of 33.3% was made. The results for word finding delay and either comprehension or word finding delay were improved but by only 12.5%.

	2002	2005
Intake assessed	25%	32%
Boys	40%	50%
Girls	60%	50%
Comprehension delay	80%	60%
Word Finding delay	90%	80%
Comprehension or Word Finding delay	90%	80%

Table 14 – Summary of results from Setting 3 for 2002 and 2005

The changes in delay at Setting 3 between 2002 and 2005 are:

Comprehension Delay	33.3%
Word Finding Delay	12.5%
Comprehension or Word Finding Delay	12.5%

	2002	2005
Intake assessed	25%	25%
Boys	46%	67%
Girls	54%	33%
Comprehension delay	46%	60%
Word Finding delay	54%	73%
Comprehension or Word Finding delay	54%	73%

Table 15 – Summary of results from Setting 4 for 2002 and 2005

Setting 4 has seen a decrease in all areas. The results are shown below:

Comprehension Delay	-30.4%
Word Finding Delay	-35.2%
Comprehension or Word Finding Delay	-35.2%

#### 4.2.2) Summary Comparison

The comparison of individual settings demonstrates changes that have occurred in the delay levels of children at those settings. The important comparison, and the one which Longton Sure Start will be assessed on, is the figure for the Sure Start area. Table 16 holds the summary information for both surveys.

Research indicates that for most speech and language disorders boys are more likely to be at risk of difficulties than girls are. The difference between the higher percentage of girls in 2002 and the higher percentage of boys in 2005 may have influenced the results.

	2002	2005
Intake assessed	23%	22%
Boys	41%	63%
Girls	59%	37%
Comprehension delay	50%	50%
Word Finding delay	65%	61%
Comprehension or Word Finding delay	67%	63%

Table 16 – Summary of results from all four Settings 2002 and 2005

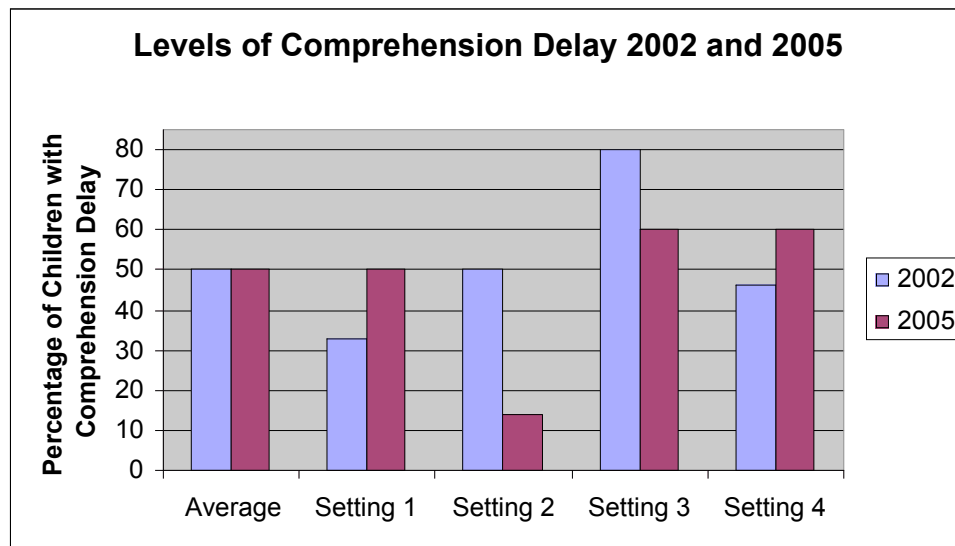
The changes found between the two assessments are shown below:

Comprehension Delay	0.0%
Word Finding Delay	6.6%
Comprehension or Word Finding Delay	6.3%

#### 4.2.3) Analysis

Fifteen children were identified as being 'Within Normal Limits' in the 2002 assessment. Of these six were boys and nine were girls. Within the population this means that 33% of the surveyed children displayed the comprehension and word finding ability that is consistent with their age. These figures also show that 32% of the boys and 33% of the girls were within normal limits. This equivalency of ability is not shown in the 2005 results where 33% of the boys and 42% of the girls were within normal limits; giving an average of 37% of children within normal limits.

The 2005 figure of 37% of children with no demonstrated delay in speech and language represents a 12.1% increase in ability.

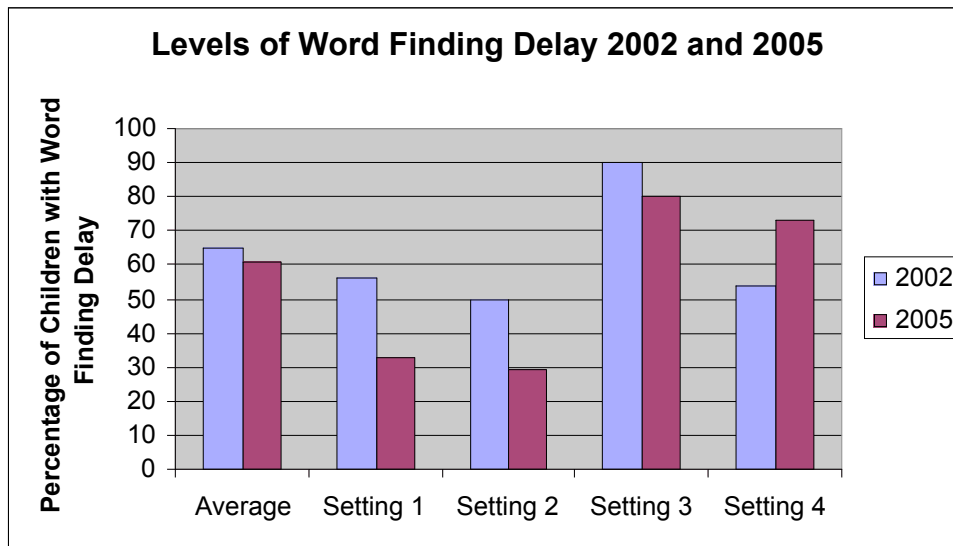


Graph 6 – Levels of Comprehension Delay 2002 and 2005

#### 4.2.4) Comprehension Delay

The difference between the two assessments, in terms of comprehension delay can be seen in Graph 6 which shows the figures from 2002 and 2005.

The average comprehension delay has remained at the same level in the Longton Sure Start Area between 2002 and 2005. Two of the settings saw a decrease in the levels of comprehension delay and two saw an increase. The overall result of these findings was a static level of comprehension delay at 50%.



Graph 7 – Levels of Word Finding Delay 2002 and 2005

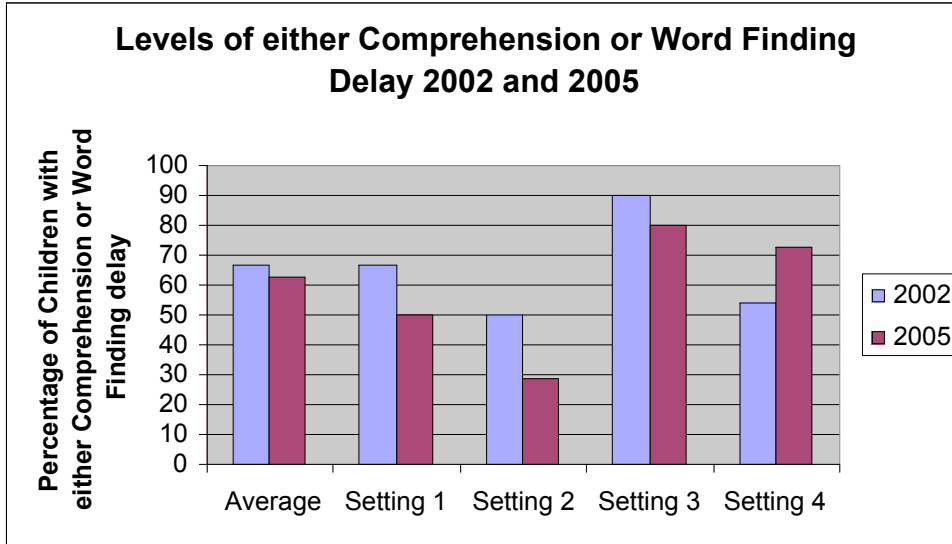
#### 4.2.5) Word Finding Delay

There was an overall decrease in word finding delay between 2002 and 2005 by 6.6% from 65% to 61%. Only Setting 4 did not achieve a reduction in word finding delay. Instead, it saw the levels of word finding delay increase from 54% to 73%. Graph 7 shows how the different results compare.

#### 4.2.6) Comprehension or Word Finding Delay

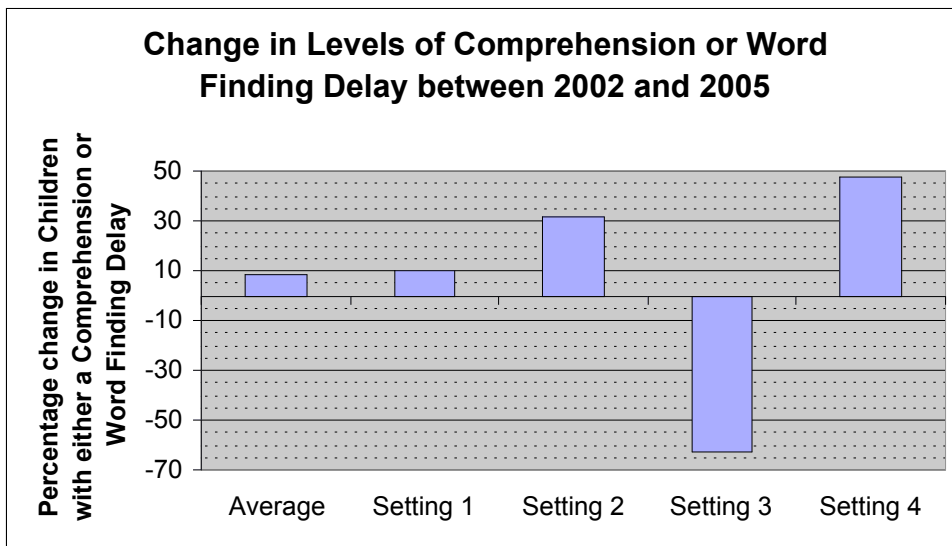
All settings, except Setting 4 have improved levels of either comprehension or word finding delay. The average improvement was 6.3% and the greatest improvement was made by Setting 2 with an improvement of 72.4%. Setting 4 had the worst result with a 35.2% change for the worse being found between 2002 and 2005. Graph 8 shows the comparison between the results of the two assessments.

The difference between the two assessments is shown on Graph 9. It shows that Settings 1, 2 and 3 achieved an increase greater than the 5% improvement targeted. Setting 4 did not achieve the 5% improvement. The



Graph 8 – Levels of either Comprehension or Word Finding Delay 2002 and 2005

average change was in the order of 6.3% which represents 4 percentage points. This does not achieve the 5 percentage point improvement targeted.



Graph 9 - Change in Levels of Comprehension or Word Finding Delay between 2002 and 2005

**4.2.7) Sure Start Contacts**

After the assessments had been conducted it was decided to establish if the children assessed had been in contact with Longton Sure Start.

Table 17 holds the results of the investigation. It demonstrates that a high number of contacts with Sure Start can produce a reduction in the number of children who have either comprehension or word finding delay.

	Number of Children	Number of Children in contact with Sure Start	Number of contacts with Sure Start	Average contacts per child	Change in Comprehension or Word Finding Delay
Setting 1	6	5	181	36.2	25.1%
Setting 2	7	5	145	29.0	72.4%
Setting 3	10	9	137	15.2	12.5%
Setting 4	15	13	239	18.4	-35.2%
Average	10	8	175	24.7	6.3%

Table 17 - Number of Sure Start contacts per child in relation to changes in either Comprehension or Word Finding Delay

#### 4.2.8) Ethnicity

Full recordings for ethnicity and first languages spoken by children were not recorded for the 2002 assessment. There are, however, some results available and these can allow some comparisons to be drawn. Table 18 shows the comparable results.

	2002	2005
Number of children without English as a 1 <sup>st</sup> language	15	16
Percentage of children without English as a 1 <sup>st</sup> language	33%	42%
Number of children without English as a 1 <sup>st</sup> language with a delay	14	16
Percentage of children without English as a 1 <sup>st</sup> language with a delay	93%	100%

Table 18 - Comparable ethnic results from 2002 and 2005

The results held in Table 18 demonstrate a 27.2% increase in the number of children who do not speak English as a first language. They also show that the number of children who do not have English as a first language with a delay increased by 7.5% to 100%. This is not a good thing. It must be remembered, though, that the norms for both the Renfrew and Reynell assessments are based on children who speak English as their first language.

The results do indicate that for children who speak English as their first language that considerable improvement have been made. That is, in 2002 45% of children who spoke English as their first language were within normal limits. In 2005 this figure had risen to 63%. This represents a 40%, or 18 percentage point, improvement for those children who speak English as their first language.

## 5) Conclusion

The following conclusions can be made following the analysis of the results gathered in the four assessments of 2002 and 2005.

- There has been a 6.3%, or 4 percentage point, increase from 33% in 2002 to 37% in 2005, in the number of children with comprehension or word finding delay within normal limits in the Longton Sure Start area. This falls below the target of a 5 percentage point increase. However, it can also be demonstrated that for those children who speak English as their first language, and for whom the assessment tools are intended to be used on that a 40%, or 18 percentage point, improvement has been seen. It can, therefore, be said that Longton Sure Start has achieved its aim of reducing, by 5 percentage points, the number of children requiring specialist speech and language help who speak English as their first language.
- There has been a significant shift in the number of boys and girls who are within normal limits. That is, in 2002 32% of boys were within normal limits. This can be related to a figure of 33% within normal limits in 2005. This is not a great change. However, in the same period the number of girls within normal limits increased from 33% in 2002 to 42% in 2005. This increase, by 27.2%, in the number of girls within normal limits brings the figures more into line with what would be expected, i.e., a higher number of girls with comprehension and word finding ability within normal limits.
- The first languages of the children assessed have had an impact on the age equivalent scores gained and the levels of comprehension and word finding delay. That is, both the Reynell and Renfrew assessment tools acknowledge that their norms are based on children who speak English as their first language. This means that the tests give an indication of the English language ability of the child but not their ability in the language they are accustomed to using. If only children who have English as their first language are considered then the level of children with comprehension and word finding delay within normal limits is 63% in 2005. This is a change, of 40%, or 18 percentage points, from the 2002 figure of 45% within normal limits.
- All settings have evidence of their children having contact with Sure Start. The greatest positive change in levels of children with incidence of either comprehension or word finding delay was found in settings where there were the highest number of Sure Start contacts and the greatest proportion of English speakers. That is, the children from Settings 1 and 2 have the largest number of Sure Start contacts, the highest proportion of English Speakers and the greatest reduction in incidence of comprehension or word finding delay. These results suggest that contact with Sure Start can help to reduce the incidence of comprehension or word finding delay. It also reinforces the belief

that children who do not speak English as their first language are not being correctly assessed.

- The results show that making use of Sure Start and the resources available can help to reduce the incidence of comprehension or word finding delay. The children from Setting 1 had the greatest number of contacts with Sure Start, with an average 36.2 each. These children also achieved a 25.1% reduction in comprehension or word finding delay. This was not the highest level of reduction. This was achieved by the children from Setting 2 who averaged 29.0 contacts per child and achieved a 72.4% reduction in comprehension or word finding delay.
- The overall level of improvement in the Longton Sure Start area of 4 percentage points is below the target level of 5 percentage points but should still be considered an achievement. The work carried out shows that for those children for whom the tests were designed, i.e., English speakers, there was a significant achievement, of 18 percentage points, which was greater than the target.

## 6) Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- The work begun in the Longton Sure Start area needs to be maintained so that the improvements that have been gained can be built on.
- Work is needed to improve children's comprehension and word finding ability. This can be done by increasing the stimuli that children are exposed to. By enriching the experiences that children have and then talking about them to embed the vocabulary children should be able to improve both word finding and comprehension ability.
- Longton Sure Start should continue to have contact with as many children as possible. This is because it has been seen that a high number of contacts with Sure Start can help to reduce the incidence of comprehension and word finding delay.
- The correlation between Sure Start contacts and improvements in the number of children with comprehension or word finding delay is explored further to identify if there is direct relationship; and, if there is share this knowledge and act upon it. Work should also be carried out to identify which types of contact provide most benefit for children.
- An investigation is made to find if an appropriate tool exists to assess the language ability of children in their first language. If one can be found then it should be used to establish what the actual ability levels of children are. If one can be found and used it will help to reduce the incidence of comprehension or word finding delay.
- The children at Setting 3 are revisited to further explore why their language ability is significantly poorer than children from other settings.
- The assessment is repeated in 2008 to identify if further improvements can be made, and if so, by how much. The 2008 assessment should be carried out in the same settings as the 2005 assessment so that direct comparisons can be made.

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