



Speech and Language Baseline Measures Stoke-on-Trent

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Initial Results



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Introduction

The initial baseline assessments for speech and language were carried out in Stoke-on-Trent in 2002. These assessments were conducted as part of Sure Starts drive to reduce the need for specialist intervention for speech and language problems by 5 percentage points.

The initial assessment demonstrated that in Stoke-on-Trent 30.6% of children aged between three years and six months and four years old had a word finding and comprehension ability that was within normal limits.

The second assessment was scheduled for 2005 and took place in the auspices of Sure Start to provide a comparable assessment.

Assessment Methods

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

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.

Results of 2005 assessment

The 2005 assessment was carried out in four of the Sure Start areas in Stoke-on-Trent. These four areas were the same ones as assessed in the initial survey of 2002.

The results found are shown in Table 1.

	Number of children assessed	Number of children with no speech or language delay	Percentage of children with no speech or language delay
Abbey Bucknall	42	19	45%
Blurton	31	18	58%
Longton	38	14	37%
Shelton/Cobridge/Hanley	33	8	24%
Total	144	59	41.0%

Table 1 2005 Assessment Results

These results, on their own, show that the majority of children in Stoke-on-Trent have a delay in speech and language. However, a comparison against the results from 2002 shows an improvement. Table 2 shows the results of the 2002 assessment.

	Number of children assessed	Number of children with no speech or language delay	Percentage of children with no speech or language delay
Abbey Bucknall	45	17	38%
Blurton	21	8	38%
Longton	46	15	33%
Shelton/Cobridge/Hanley	32	4	13%
Total	144	44	30.6%

Table 2 2002 Assessment Results

The 2002 results are significantly lower than those for 2005. Table 3 shows a comparison of the results from the two assessments and the improvements found.

	2002 Percentage of children no speech or language delay	2005 Percentage of children no speech or language delay	Percentage point improvement in children with no speech or language delay
Abbey Bucknall	38%	45%	7%
Blurton	38%	58%	20%
Longton	33%	37%	4%
Shelton/Cobridge/Hanley	13%	24%	11%
Total	30.6%	41.0%	10.4%

Table 3 Comparison of Assessment Results

The mirror image of these results shows the number of children who have word finding and comprehension delay that is not within normal limits. Table 4 shows the number of children who have a delay in word finding or comprehension from the 2005 assessment.

	Number of children assessed	Number of children with a word finding or comprehension delay	Percentage of children with a comprehension or word finding delay
Abbey Bucknall	42	23	55%
Blurton	31	13	42%
Longton	38	24	63%
Shelton/Cobridge/Hanley	33	25	76%
Total	144	85	59.0%

Table 4 2005 Assessment Results

These results show that the majority of children in Stoke-on-Trent have a speech and language delay and that work is needed to reduce this figure.

Table 5 shows the same results for 2002. This is so that a comparison can be made to show where improvements have been achieved.

	Number of children assessed	Number of children with a word finding or comprehension delay	Percentage of children with a comprehension or word finding delay
Abbey Bucknall	45	28	62%
Blurton	21	13	62%
Longton	46	31	67%
Shelton/Cobridge/Hanley	32	28	87%
Total	144	100	69.4%

Table 5 2002 Assessment Results

The results obtained in 2002, for children with a comprehension or word finding delay, were much higher than those for 2005. Table 6 compares the two assessments.

	2002 Percentage of children with a comprehension or word finding delay	2005 Percentage of children with a comprehension or word finding delay	Percentage point reduction in children with a comprehension or word finding delay
Abbey Bucknall	62%	55%	7%
Blurton	62%	42%	20%
Longton	67%	63%	4%
Shelton/Cobridge/Hanley	87%	76%	11%
Total	69.4%	59.0%	10.4%

Table 3 Comparison of Assessment Results

Conclusion and Recommendation

The initial comparison between the assessments carried out in 2002 and 2005 shows that there has been an improvement across Stoke-on-Trent of 34%, from 30.6% in 2002 to 41.0% in 2005, in the number of children who are within normal limits for speech and language ability.

This 34%, to 41.0%, increase in the number of children with normal development represents a 10.4 percentage point increase in children who have no word finding or comprehension delay. This is more than double the target figure recommended by Sure Start.

These improvements in children's ability are inspiring and encouraging but should not hide the poor speech and language skills that the majority of children possess. Work still needs to be carried out to improve the speech and language ability of children in Stoke-on-Trent so that it is in line with normal, national averages.

These initial results show that improvements have been made but do not identify their source. Further work is needed to identify causes of improvement and to link them to practical work that can be used to sustain the improvement.