

Better Communication Research Programme

The Better Communication Research Programme (BCRP) followed the Bercow Review of services for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs in 2008 and was funded by the Department for Education. The Programme involved researchers from across the UK working on 5 strands of research examining evidence for interventions, prevalence of SLCN, costs of services, families' preferred outcomes and factors influencing socio-emotional outcomes.

Bristol Speech and Language Therapy Research Unit (BSLTRU) was primarily involved in the following strands of the Programme:

1. Best Evidence – understanding the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of different interventions and understanding factors that influence their effectiveness and efficiency

Researchers: Yvonne Wren, Sue Roulstone

The research team in BSLTRU were primarily involved in a survey of speech and language therapists' use of interventions. Following a series of interviews with speech and language therapists, an online survey was designed which asked respondents to identify the most typical child on their caseload from a number of given options relating to age, type of difficulty and setting where they saw the child. The respondents were then asked which interventions they used with the most typical child on their caseload. Items in the survey also asked respondents about how they delivered these interventions. 576 individuals responded to the survey. Information on the most commonly used interventions was then linked to the strand in the programme which was considering the evidence base for interventions.

This work was written up in one peer reviewed publication (see link below) and two final reports which are available from the Department of Education website. The first of these is titled, 'Exploring interventions for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs: A study of practice' and can be accessed at:

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-RR247-BCRP13> .

The second report, called 'What Works: Interventions for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs', reports on the evidence base for interventions currently in use. This is available at:

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-RR247-BCRP10>.

A website for use by practitioners was developed as a result of the 'What works' strand. This consists of a database of interventions with information on the current evidence available for each. New evidence based interventions and changes to the evidence base for existing interventions are added to the database as they become available ensuring that the information is current. The database is hosted by the Communication Trust and can be accessed at:

<http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/projects/what-works/>

2. Children's and parent's preferred outcomes

Researchers: Sue Roulstone, Jane Coad, Helen Hambly, Anne Ayre



We ran focus groups and a questionnaire survey with parents, alongside arts-based workshops with children with SLCN, to explore outcomes that children and parents value. We also conducted a systematic review of outcome measures to identify measures that assessed outcomes that children and parents value.

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-RR247-BCRP12>

BSLTRU Publications:

Hambly, H., Coad, J., Lindsay, G., Roulstone, S. (2011). Listening to children and young people's desired outcomes. In S. Roulstone and S. McLoed (Eds), *Listening to Children and Young People with Speech, Language and Communication Needs*. J&R Press.

BSLTRU Presentations:

Hambly, H, Ayres, A. and Roulstone, S. Parents' views on important outcomes for children with SLCN. Presentation at the 31st Symposium on Research in Childhood Language Disorders, June 2011, Madison, US.

3. A stammering cohort study

Researchers: Rosemarie Hayhow, Sue Roulstone

The study aimed to compare the outcomes for young children who stammer (CWS) and who are referred to community clinics, and to determine the factors that impact upon treatment implementation and outcome. Forty SLTs were recruited to this study which investigated the outcomes for 63 children, under 7 years of age. Twenty four therapists recruited between one and seven children with one specialist accounting for 25 of the participants. All therapists provided information about stammering and gave general advice and some provided written information based upon the guidelines recommended by the British Stammering Association. Follow-up speech data was collected for 55 (85.93%) children with a mean number of weeks post baseline of 37.2 (SD: 7.6).

The numbers recruited to the study were not sufficient to relate outcomes to particular treatments, however of those we were able to contact, 45 showed positive changes, 5 showed no change and 5 showed negative change over the time period of the study. Children with higher levels of stammering at follow-up, as measured by the per cent of syllables stammered, had received significantly more therapy time (but not more contacts) than those with lower levels of stammering

($p = .008$). Parents were asked if they felt the therapy session(s) and the time they had spent had been worthwhile. All but one said 'yes' or 'definitely yes'. Thirty-seven parents elaborated their response and, in most cases, the benefit was expressed in terms of the support and help that they received as parents and the presumed rather than explicitly stated benefits to their child. The full report can be accessed at:

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Pag...>

Interim and full reports for all studies can be found on the BCRP website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/abo...>

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Speech and Language Difficulties have produced a report which picks up on many of the findings of the BCRP. Please see the attached file below.

Funders:

Department for Education