



A whole system approach to improving speech, language & communication in the early years

Glenn Carter

Head of Scotland office for RCSLT
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@Glennetal glenn.carter@rcslt.org



Objectives

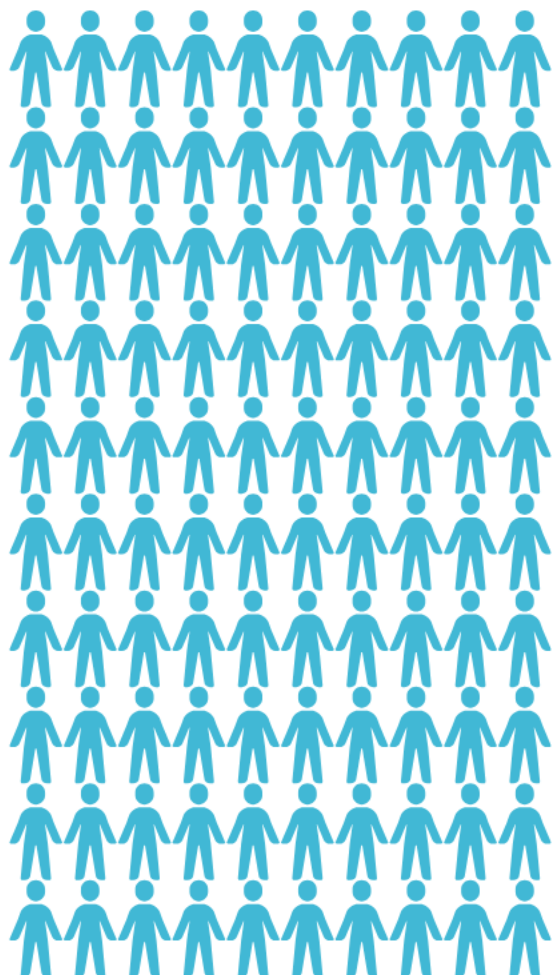
1. To develop a joint understanding about the challenges, importance and impact of communication skills in the early years and beyond.
2. To explore principles and practical steps for facilitating a whole system approach to improving outcomes for children with communication needs.

Early Intervention & Prevention

Wherever possible, we should act before a child's wellbeing is adversely affected. Help prevent concerns instead of reacting once it has already happened"

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

Predicted Speech, Language and Communication Need in Scotland



All Children
1.1 Million

Communication skills: What's the problem?



1 in 4 children and young people in Scotland have a predicted **speech**,¹ **language** and **communication** need.

Public Health Scotland reported a **significant increase** in communication needs following the **pandemic**.²



89% of staff surveyed in **nurseries** reported an **increase** in the numbers and **complexity** of children with **communication needs**.³

By **age 5** there is a **13 month gap** in **expressive vocabulary** between children from the **richest** and **poorest** backgrounds.⁴



Sources

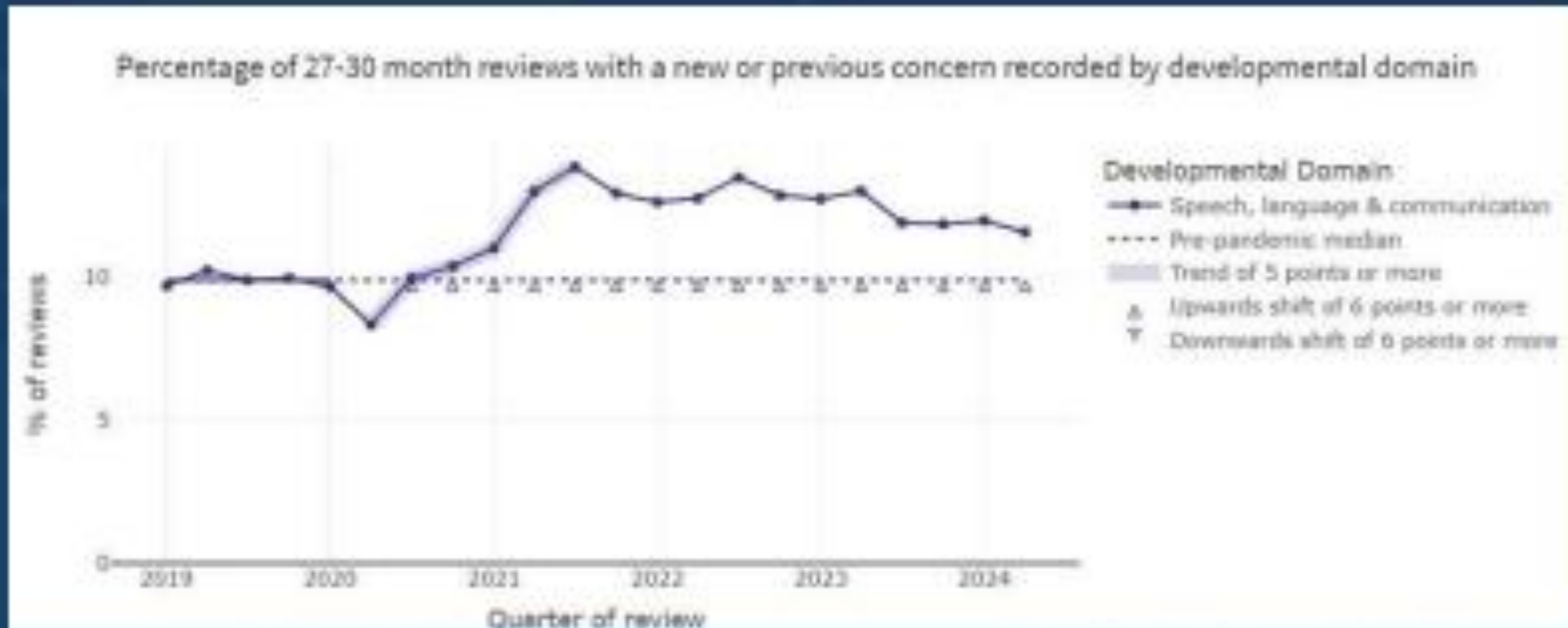
1. Equity for All (2022)

2. Public Health Scotland Report

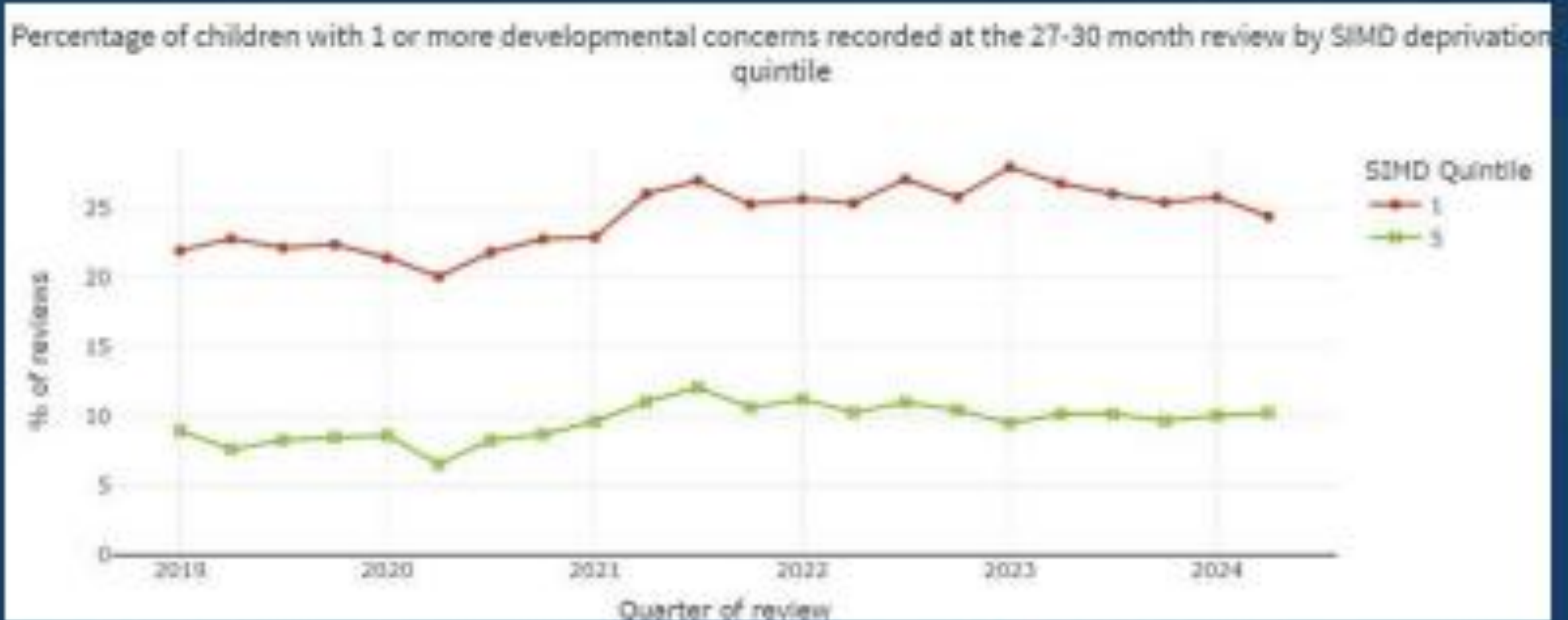
3. RCSLT Scotland survey: children's communication difficulties increase since COVID | RCSLT

4. Growing up in Scotland (2015)

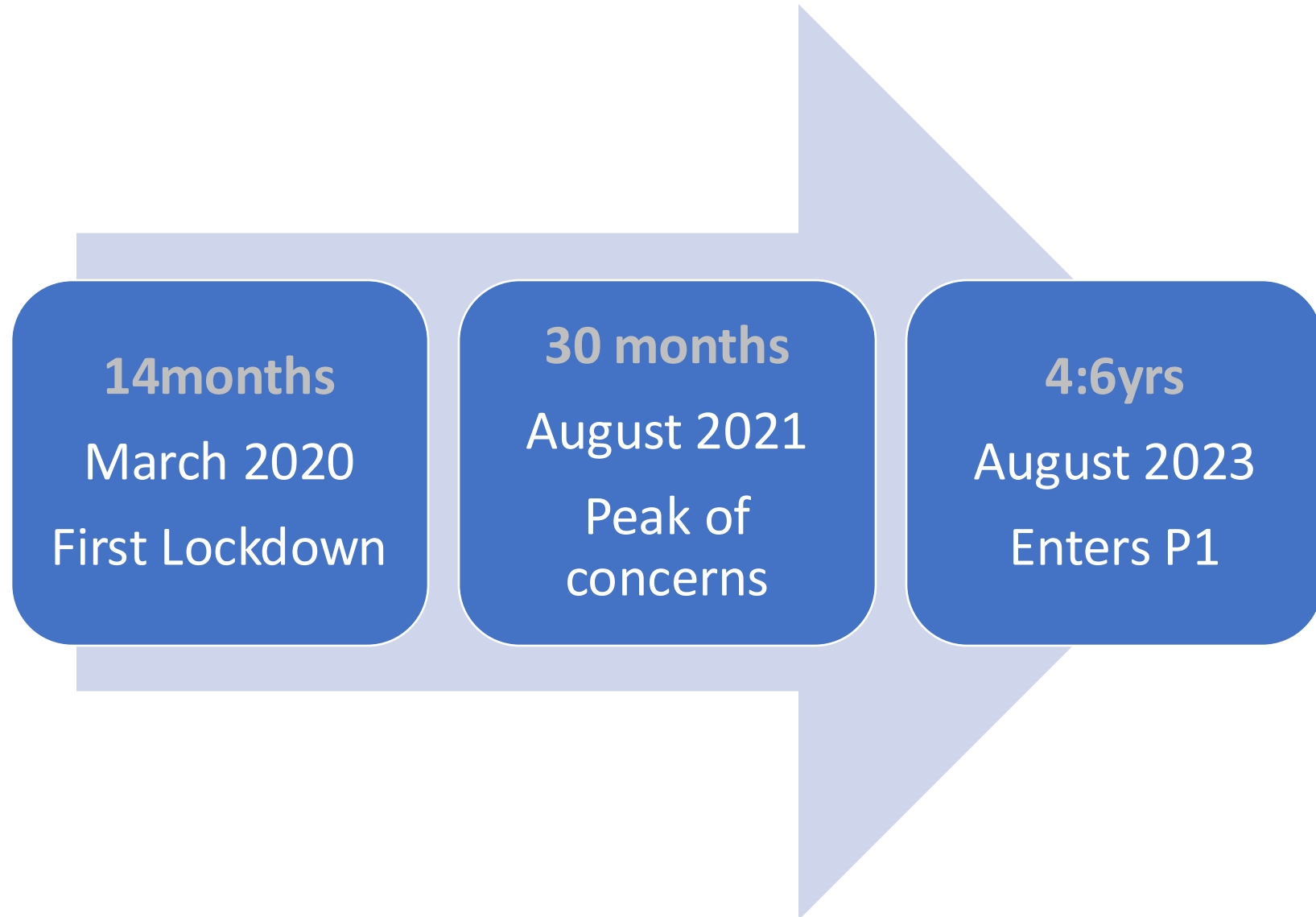
What's the problem?



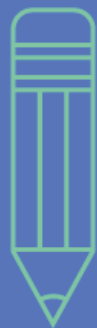
What's the problem?



Timeline



Communication: Why does it matter?



LEARNING

Early spoken language emerges as the **most important factor** influencing **literacy levels at age eleven.**¹



BEHAVIOUR

Studies consistently observe **higher levels of behaviour challenges** amongst people identified with **communication needs.**²

EMPLOYMENT



88% of long term unemployed young men

were found to have a speech, language or communication need.³



WELLBEING

Children with **vocabulary difficulties** at **age five are three times** as likely to have **mental health problems** when they reach **adulthood**⁴



JUSTICE

60% of people in contact with the **law** were found to have a **speech, language or communication difficulty.**⁵



HUMAN RIGHTS

Children's communication rights are specifically enshrined within Article 12 and 13 of the UNCRC, and has been **enshrined in Scots law.**⁶

Sources

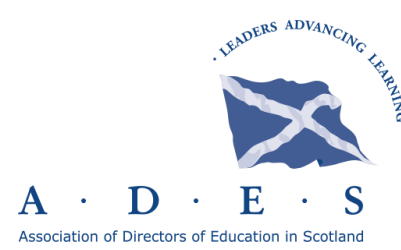
1. Moss, G and Washbrook, E (2016) The Gender Gap in Language and literacy Development. Bristol: Uni of Bristol
2. Pickles, A., Durkin, K., Mok, P., Toseeb, U., and Conti-Ramsden, G. (2016). Conduct problems occur with hyperactivity in children with language impairment: A longitudinal study from childhood to adolescence.
3. Elliott N (2011). <https://pure.southwales.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/an-investigation-into-the-communication-skills-of-unemployed-youn>

4. Botting, N., Toseeb, U., Pickles, A., Durkin, K., & Conti-Ramsden, G. Depression and anxiety change from adolescence to adulthood in individuals with and without language impairment. PloS one, 11(7), e0156678. Centre for Mental Health (2018)
5. Bryan, K., Freer, J. and Furlong, C. (2007). Language and Communication Difficulties in Juvenile Offenders. International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders, 42 (5), 505-520.
6. Convention on the Rights of the Child, Nov. 20, 1989, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3.

Why does it matter?

‘Too many babies and children in Scotland will grow up to experience academic failure, unemployment and poor mental health which could be mitigated by early support to develop their language and communication skills.’

National Early Language and Communication Project



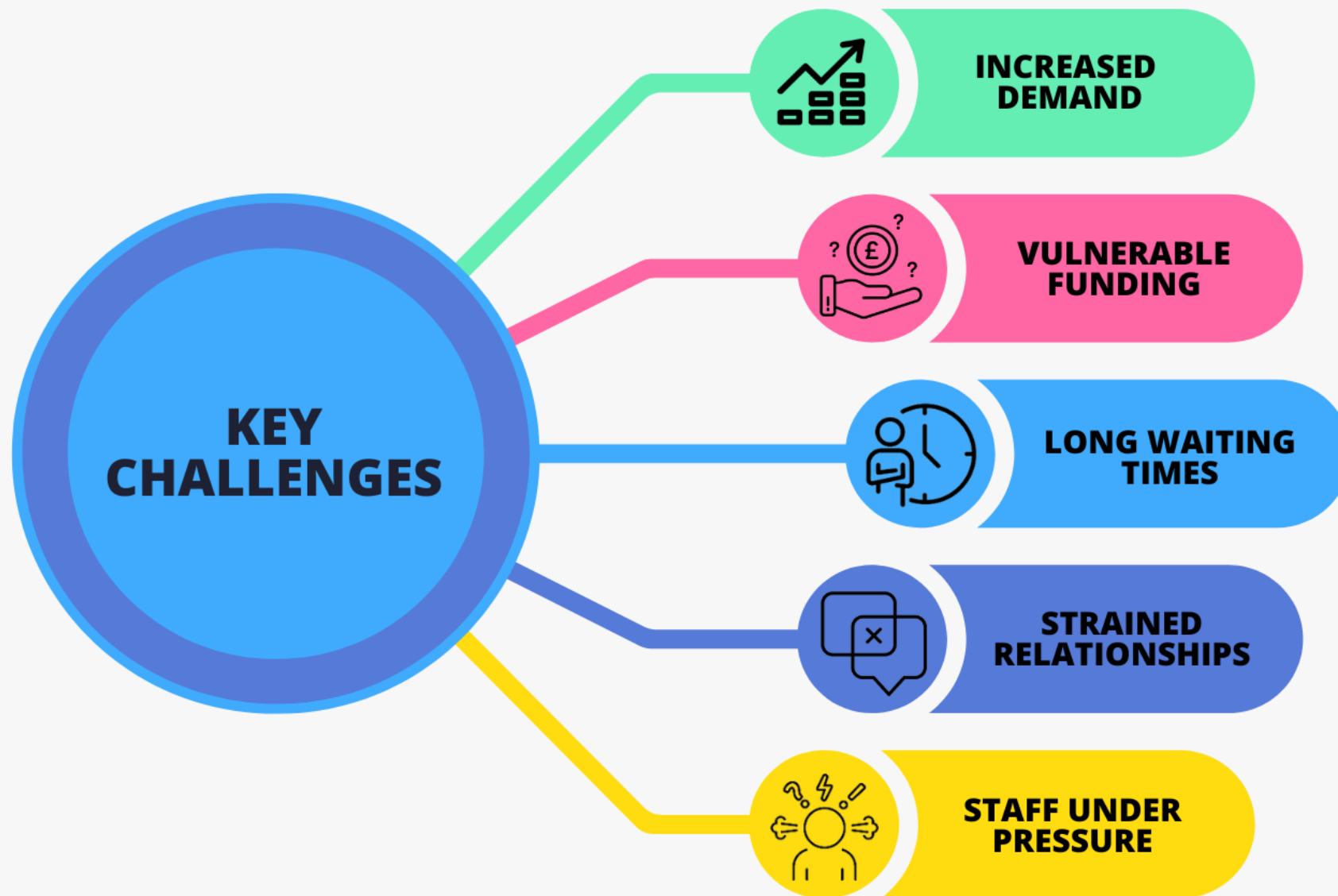
SLT Roundtable: Purpose

1. To identify principles for transformation of services for children and young people with communication and swallowing needs in Scotland.
2. To develop principles for a partnership resource agreement between health and education that will facilitate this transformation.



Participants

Name	Role
Scott Mulholland	Assistant Director of Education South Ayrshire & Head of ADES ASN Network
Glenn Carter	Head of RCSLT Scotland
Carrie Lindsay	Executive officer of ADES
Lesley Gibb	Chair of Early Years ADES Network
Alistair Reid	AHP Director – NHS Ayrshire & Arran
Nicola Richardson	AHP Director – NHS Tayside
Christine Fear	Chair of CYP Speech and Language Therapy Leads
Bryony Monaghan	Chief Education Officer – Stirling
Matthew Sweeny	COSLA

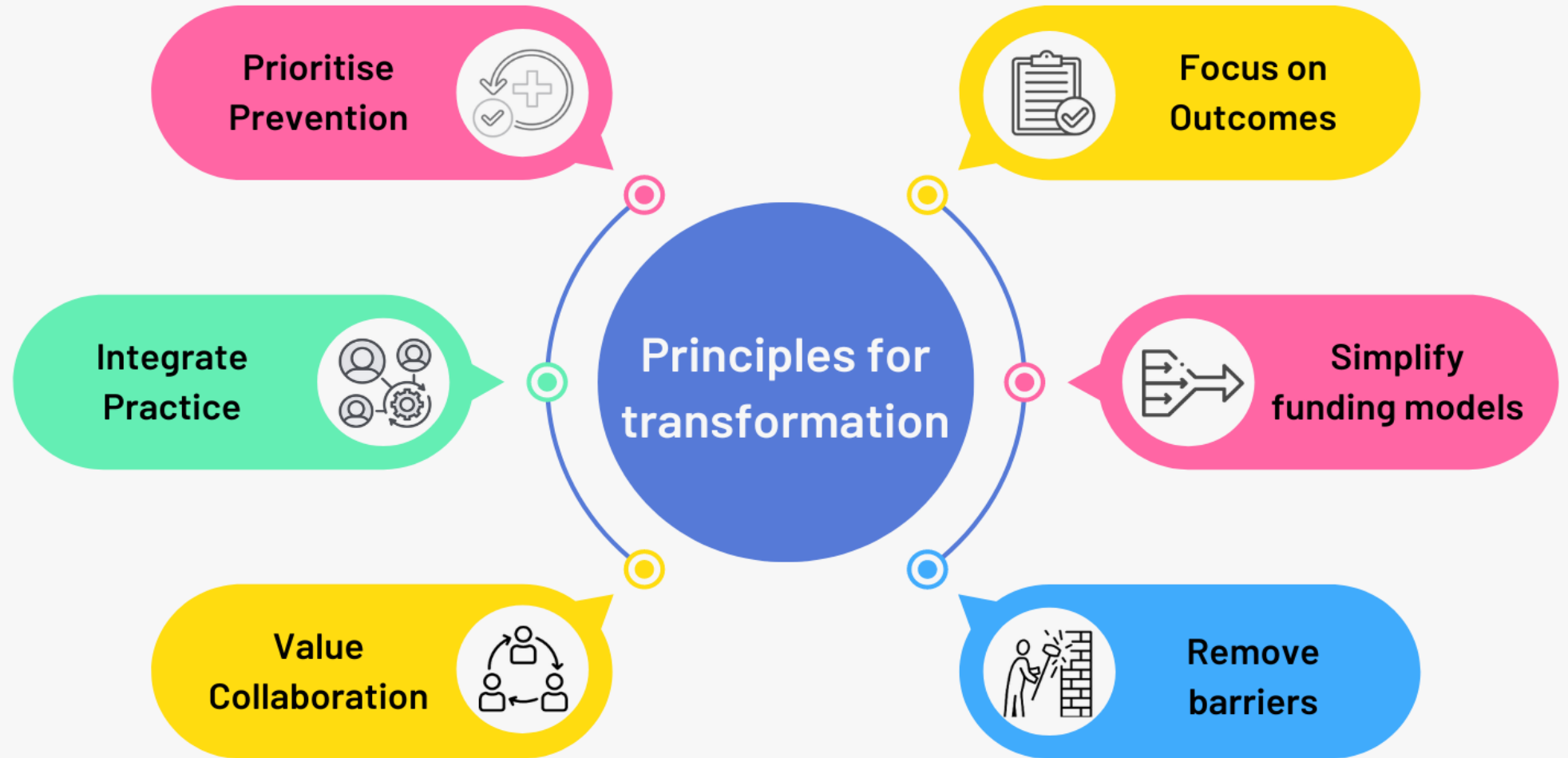


Vision

Children with communication needs:

- Grow up loved, safe, respected and able to reach their full potential
- Have their rights respected, fulfilled and protected
- Are safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included
- Experience positive outcomes in school and later life
- Have hope for the present and the future

Principles for whole system change







FAMILY SUPPORT

Families are supported with appropriate information to make informed choices and have skills to support development



ENVIRONMENTS

Are audited, adapted and enhanced to maximise participation



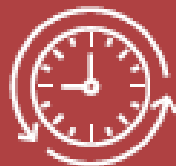
WORKFORCE

Specialist knowledge and skills are used to build capacity in the wider workforce



IDENTIFICATION

Is efficient and accessible including training of others to identify and provision of pre-referral advice



INTERVENTION

Is appropriate and timely, may include direct or indirect, individual and group interventions delivered in a functional context

BALANCED SYSTEM SCHOOLS AND SETTINGS®





INDIVIDUALISED

TARGETED

UNIVERSAL

Individual intervention
Environment adapted for child
Family understands specific
needs

Specific training
Small group / 1:1
Environmental changes

Whole placement approach
Visual Environment
Adult Child Interaction
All Staff training

What does good look like?



Areas for consideration

1. **Shared outcomes** for children and young people with communication needs are developed that the whole system is **accountable** for
2. Measures focused on **outcomes and impact** are prioritised above input measures
3. **Integrated working** and improved outcomes for children with communication needs are prioritised within children's services planning
4. Establish the **foundations for whole systems change** that will benefit children with communication needs
5. Promote the **development of quality universal, targeted and individualised** approaches for children with communication needs in Scotland

Areas for consideration

6. Speech and language therapy services are **positioned closer to education** and co-located within educational establishments, where resource allows
7. Improve speech and language therapy service **financial agreements** between health and education
8. There is **adequate funding** to deliver effective and sustainable speech and language therapy services in Scotland
9. **Increase the supply** of Speech and Language Therapists in Scotland
10. Transformation of services should start with an **analysis of local need**



[rcslt.org](https://www.rcslt.org)

scotland@rcslt.org



glenn.carter@rcslt.org



[@RCSLTSCOT](https://twitter.com/RCSLTSCOT) [@Glennetal](https://twitter.com/Glennetal)

Glenn Carter, Head of RCSLT Scotland office
glenn.carter@rcslt.org

