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| Institution: University of Warwick |
| Unit of Assessment: Education |
| Title of case study: Improving provision for children with speech, language and communication needs |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This case study demonstrates how research into children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) has had impact by influencing government policy and legislation, improving provision for children and their parents, providing resources and support for voluntary organisations, and assisting local authorities and trusts in the management of SLCN services. The research informed the 2008 Bercow Review of Provision for Children with SLCN, which in turn led to the Department for Education (DfE) Better Communication Action Plan for improving educational provision. Further research by the team, carried out as part of this Action Plan, underpinned the All Party Parliamentary Group on Speech and Language Difficulties 2013 report and the development of the Children and Families Bill 2013. In addition, the team have collaborated extensively with practitioners and voluntary organisations including a comprehensive two-year DfE funded programme with the Communication Trust (2013-15) to educate and raise awareness of SLCN among its 50 constituent organisations and develop practitioners' knowledge and skills.</p> |
| <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Our research programme (1997 to present) was designed to explore the nature of children's SLCN and implications for policy and practice. It was led at Warwick by Lindsay who was PI on all but one grant. The research programme includes a 10 year longitudinal study [1-3], studies of provision by education and speech and language therapy services [4-6], and studies funded by the DfE, first to inform the Government's Bercow Review [7] and then to inform the policies and practices that followed that Review based on the Better Communication Research Programme (BCRP) [8].</p> <p>A DfE/Department of Health/Welsh Assembly project identified lack of provision and limited inter-agency planning and implementation of policy and practice [4]. This led to a national study of local authority and health trust practices and provision (mainstream and special: [5, 6]. Our longitudinal study of children with specific language impairment (SLI) [and two ESRC studentships] produced original findings in several domains. It was the first to identify trajectories of different behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and self-concepts over time (8-17 years) [9,10]. We examined the perceptions and views of parents regarding their children's needs and provision made; the nature of written language difficulties [11,12]; the high level of overlap of needs of children with SLI and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) [5]; inconsistent policy and practice [4,5] and good practice [5]; and the importance of implementing interventions including educational provision guided by constellations of needs, which may change over time, rather than diagnostic categories [5,6].</p> <p>These inter-related sets of studies formed the foundation for the successful bid to provide the research input to the Government Review of provision for children with SLCN led by John Bercow MP [7], comprising an empirical study of LA and health trust practice, building upon the earlier research, research reviews; and consultation to Bercow as Review chair. The review quoted our evidence extensively [i]. We identified the lack of evidence-based practice, reflecting both an actual lack of evidence, and lack of availability for practitioners and policy makers of evidence for effectiveness and cost effectiveness. We also presented a model of provision to address children's needs [13]. The Secretary of State accepted all of the Review recommendations, including a major research programme [ii].</p> <p>Our Better Communication Research Programme (BCRP)[8] allowed us, through 10 inter-related projects, to provide more evidence to support the development of policy and practice implications of Bercow, to produce evidence based resources to support practitioners and policy makers, and provide parents with research based information [14]. This research has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated the overlap in characteristics of children with different types of SLCN indicating the importance for intervention of identified need rather than by diagnosis. • Identified parents' preferred outcomes and measures for these. • Developed a <i>What works for SLCN?</i> resource comprising reviews of interventions to assist practitioners select evidence-based interventions. • Developed costing and cost effectiveness resources for commissioners and practitioners. • Developed a <i>Communication Supporting Classroom Observation Tool</i> to assist key stage 1 |

teachers optimise the communication supporting characteristics of their classrooms.

- Identified changes necessary in the DfE's category of SLCN for use in national statistics.

Taken together this research provides a substantial corpus of evidence on SLCN that has been used extensively by Government to design policy e.g. development of the Children & Families Bill 2013 and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Speech and Language Difficulties report on SLCN and Social Disadvantage.

3. References to the research

Grants

Eight grants value £2.13 million supported this research. (NB. Lindsay P.I. on all grants except 4 where he was Co-I.)

1. Match or Mismatch? **G. Lindsay**, and J. Dockrell. The Gatsby Trust, £115,000. 1996-98.
2. An investigation of Services for Children with Specific Speech and Language Difficulties: Children with specific speech and language difficulties: the transition to secondary school. **G. Lindsay** and J. Dockrell. The Gatsby Charitable Foundation, £112,200. 1999-2002.
3. Raising the achievements of children with specific language and communication difficulties: Key Stage 4 to work and college. **G. Lindsay** & J Dockrell. DfES, £154,355. 2004-06.
4. Provision for children with speech and language needs: facilitating communication between education and health services. **G. Lindsay**, with J. Law, M. Gascoigne; N. Peacey. DfEE, £127,000. July 1999 – August 2000 – awarded to City University.
5. Educational provision for children with specific speech and language difficulties in England and Wales. **G. Lindsay** & J. Dockrell, Nuffield Foundation, £43,680. 2000-2001.
6. Educational provision for children with specific speech and language difficulties – the investigation of good practice. **G. Lindsay** & J. Dockrell, Nuffield Foundation, £36,753. 2003-05.
7. The effective and efficient use of resources in services for children and young people with speech, language and communication difficulties: Bercow review. **G. Lindsay**, J. Law, J. Dockrell, & N. Peacey. DCSF, £35,000. 2008.
8. Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) cost-effectiveness research programme. **G. Lindsay**, J. Dockrell, J. Law & S. Roulstone, with A. Vignoles, J. Beecham, **S Strand**, & T. Charman. DCSF £1.5 million. 2009-2012.

Warwick researchers (all **bold** in references) in addition to Professor Lindsay comprised: Professor Strand, Mairi Ann Cullen, Dr Clare Mackie, Dr Olympia Palikara, Dr Jessie Ricketts, Dr Martin Desforges, Susan Band, and 4 research assistants. Other co-investigators included Professors Dockrell, Vignoles, Charman and Mr Peacey (Institute of Education, London): Professors Law (Newcastle), Roulstone (UWE), Beecham (LSE).

Publications

9. **Lindsay**, G., Dockrell, J. & **Strand**, S. (2007). Longitudinal patterns of behaviour problems in children with specific speech and language difficulties: Child and contextual factors. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 77, 811-828. [Peer reviewed; Impact factor 2.09/5 year impact factor 2.6]
10. **Lindsay**, G. & Dockrell, J. E. (2012). Longitudinal patterns of behavioral, emotional and social difficulties and self-concept in adolescents with a history of specific language impairment. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools* 43, 445-460. [Peer reviewed; Impact factor 1.26/5 year impact factor 1.52]
11. Dockrell, J., **Lindsay**, G., **Mackie**, C., & Connolly, V. (2007), Constraints in the production of written text in children with specific language impairments. *Exceptional Children*, 73, 147-164. [Peer reviewed; Impact factor 2.06/5 year impact factor 2.99]
12. Dockrell, J.E., **Lindsay** G. & Connelly, V. (2009). The impact of specific language impairment on adolescents' written text. *Exceptional Children*, 75, 427-446. [Peer reviewed; Impact factor 2.06/5 year impact factor 2.99]
13. **Lindsay**, G., Dockrell, J.E., **Desforges**, M., Law, J., & Peacey, N. (2010). Meeting the needs of children with speech, language and communication difficulties. *International Journal of*

Language and Communication Disorders. 45, 448-460. [Peer reviewed; Impact factor 1.44/5 year impact factor 1.84]

14. **Lindsay, G.**, Dockrell, J., Law, J., & Roulstone, S. (2012). *Better communication research programme: Improving provision for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs*.

London: <http://www.education.gov.uk/researchandstatistics/research/better> [A suite of 19 research reports funded by £1.5m DCSF grant and published by DfE; peer reviewed for the DfE by two international experts as well as DfE research and policy staff]

4. Details of the impact

The research programme has produced a 'virtuous circle' of research and impact as we have worked closely with policy and practitioner beneficiaries to produce relevant and usable research, frequently leading to further funded research. The impact occurred in two phases and has been a very strong influence on the direction of policy-making, leading to improvements in provision for children with SLCN, and better resources for practitioners and parents.

The first phase of impact of our research was to shape policy by informing the 2008 Bercow Review, the first comprehensive review of provision for children and young people with SLCN. The Review drew extensively on both the empirical study we conducted for the Review and on our prior research, both documented extensively in Bercow (2008) [i]. The Secretary of State accepted all the Bercow Review's recommendations and approved a multifaceted action plan to improve services for children with SLCN (£12m). Drawing on our findings, one recommendation of the Bercow review was a programme of research 'to enhance the evidence base and inform delivery of better outcomes for children and young people'. In the second phase we were commissioned following a competitive process to undertake a 3-year £1.5 million research programme (reduced to £1.3million as part of the austerity cutbacks) into effectiveness and cost effectiveness of provision for children with SLCN (DfE 2009-12), the Better Communication Research Programme (BCRP: Lindsay PI) [8]. DfE published 19 research reports from the BCRP (overview, 2 interim, 4 thematic, 12 technical reports) [14]. This research had 17,125 hits in the first 4 months and has had documented effects on developing government policy on SLCN and SEN through two main routes, considered next, and by DfE commissioning a programme of dissemination and embedding.

First, the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Speech and Language Difficulties (formed as a result of the 2008 Bercow Review) held an inquiry in 2012 into the links between SLCN and social disadvantage. The APPG's report (2013) documents extensive reference to the BCRP reports (52 separate references). Its Chair, Lord Ramsbotham, gave the "*strongest possible support for the excellent reports, which we hope will be adopted and exploited by successive governments for years to come. They are a priceless treasure trove of information, evaluation and advice and a credit to the work of all those who contributed to their research and production*" [iii].

Second, our research has influenced the development of legislation for children with special educational needs (SEN), including SLCN [iv]. Proposals to reform provision for children and young people with SEN were first set out in the SEN and disability green paper *Support and Aspiration*, published in March 2011. This drew on our BCRP Interim Report and our separate DfE funded study of the development of support to improve teachers' knowledge and skills on SLCN and other SEND. In May 2011 Lindsay gave evidence to the Education Select Committee that drew on the BCRP research and informed their 2012 scrutiny of the Green Paper. In autumn 2013 the Select Committee appointed Lindsay its Specialist Adviser when conducting Pre-legislative Scrutiny of the draft Bill, described by the DfE as '*the biggest reform in 30 years*'. The representative of the Communication Trust drew on evidence from the BCRP when acting as expert witness during the scrutiny of the draft Bill. The Minister, Edward Timpson, stated, "*We are continuing to take forward many of the key recommendations (of the BCRP), including our work with the Communication Trust... to help to disseminate much of the good practice that came out of that research programme and to ensure that all that is brought together in one place, with the involvement of the royal colleges, and used effectively and pragmatically where we know it can make a difference on the ground...*" [v]

In addition to working directly with policy-makers, our entire research programme was designed to involve and benefit practitioners, voluntary and community sector organisations, and LAs by providing resources to inform their practice, use in lobbying government, and advising

parents/teachers [vi, vii]. As recommended by the Bercow Review, the Government funded a Year of Communication (2011) led by the Government's Communication Council (of which Lindsay is a member) and Communication Champion. This included three highly successful national conferences attended by over 300 practitioners and commissioners of services at which the emerging BCRP findings were presented, (documented in the Communication Champion's final report) [viii]; a national publicity campaign to raise awareness of SLCN; the 'Shine a Light' awards to promote outstanding practice (Lindsay a judge), run by the Communication Trust, which has raised the profile of SLCN organisations and schools and created a mechanism for helping to give them credibility and prestige within the sector. The DfE is funding a further two year programme of practitioner development by the Communication Trust advised by ourselves (2013-2015). The Minister reported, "*I am aware that the practical tools for schools developed by the better communication research programme, including those for developing communication supporting classrooms, are being widely disseminated by the Communication Trust as part of its work with the Department and elsewhere*" [19].

The purpose of these activities is to use the BCRP evidence to raise awareness of SLCN, improve practitioners' knowledge and skills, and improve practice and commissioning of services; and to inform parents about the latest research and developments in provision that may benefit their children [vi]. These have been extensively downloaded, supported by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) who have promoted these resources to all UK SLTs after their survey found >90% of their members rated it positively [ix].

We collaborated with the Communication Trust to develop web-based versions of our *What Works for SLCN?* resource (94,004 views March-July, >4000 registrations) and the *Communicating Supporting Classroom Observation Tool* [vii]. Lindsay works with Afasic, a voluntary body for parents and children with SLCN, co-editing the *Afasic Abstract* which disseminates research to parents, practitioners, commissioners, and with the RCSLT to disseminate best practice to its members [vi].

We can therefore trace the influence of our extensive research on policy through the Bercow Review, Action Plan, and Select Committee inquiry, all of which lead to the 2013 legislation, the Children and Families Bill 2013, and APPG report. We can also show impact on practice by the evidence of extensive access to and take up of BCRP materials, and testimony for influence on practice.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- i) Bercow, J. (2008). *The Bercow Report: A review of services for children and young people (0-19) with speech, language and communication needs*. London: DCSF. [This report cites the research extensively and uses it to inform its recommendations]
- ii) DCSF (2008). *Better Communication: An action plan to improve services for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs*. Nottingham: DCSF. [This report cites our research from the Bercow Review]
- iii) All Party Parliamentary Group on Speech and Language Difficulties (2013). *The links between speech, language and communication needs and social disadvantage*. http://www.rcslt.org/governments/docs/all_party_parliamentary_group_on_slcn_inquiry_report
- iv) Policy Adviser, DfE, can confirm that the research influenced DfE policy.
- v) Edward Timpson, Minister, Westminster Hall, House of Commons, Hansard Debates 19.6.13. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm130619/halltext/130619h0001.htm#13061963000001>
- vi) Chief Executive of Afasic can corroborate the impact of the full research programme for parents and families.
- vii) Chief Executive of The Communication Trust can corroborate the programme of dissemination of the BCRP and its impact on practitioners.
- viii) Former Government Communication Champion can confirm the implementation of the BCRP in collaboration with the DfE, practitioners and the voluntary sector; and the impact of the whole research programme including the BCRP on policy and practice.
- ix) Chief Executive of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists can corroborate the impact of the BCRP on the All Party Parliamentary Group's review and on speech and language therapists.