

Breaking the Intergenerational Cycle

of Speech, Language and Communication Needs for Children at 27 months of age

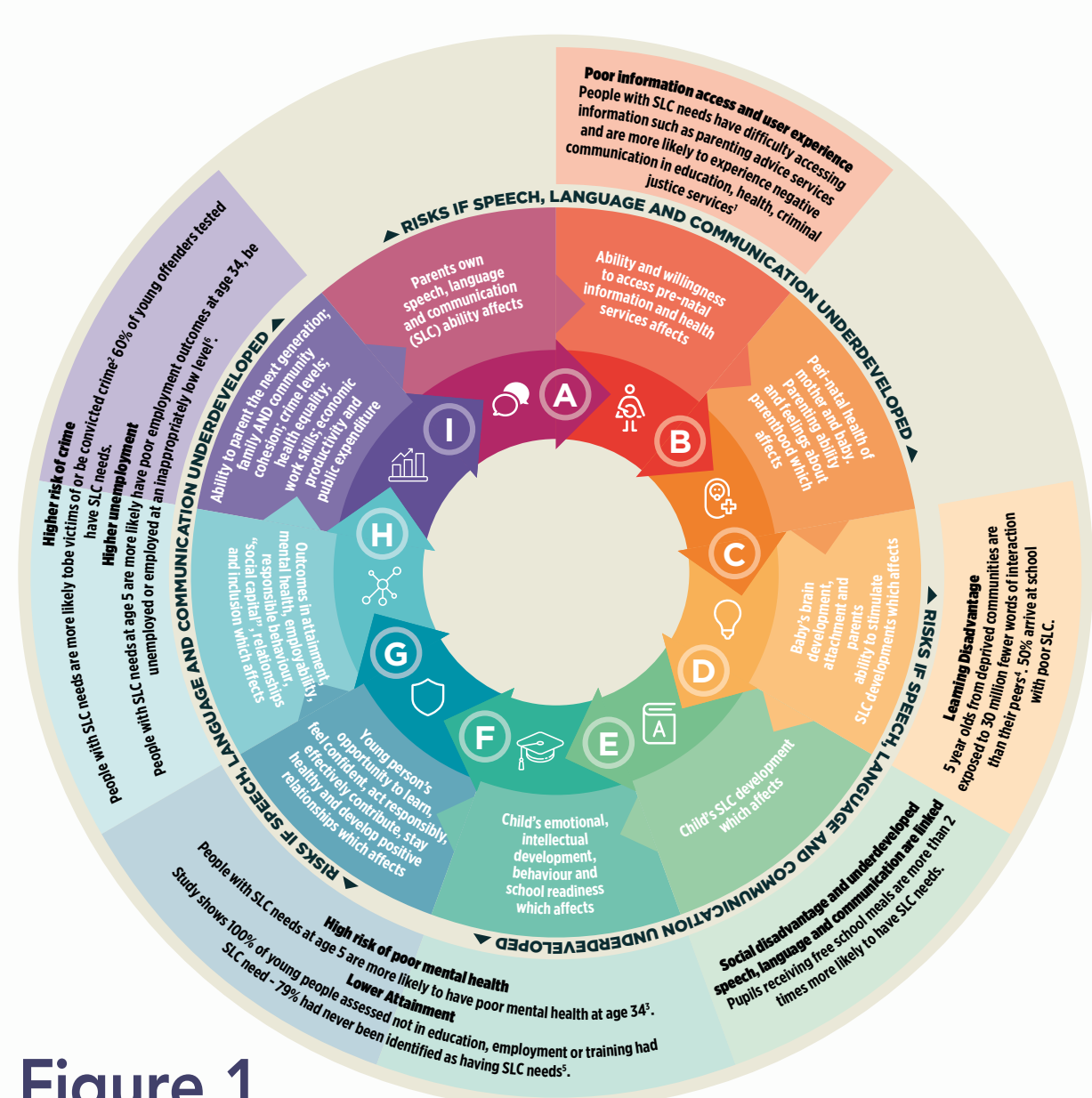


Figure 1

Speech language and communication needs (SLCN) are identified as the greatest developmental concern affecting children at 27 months of age across South Lanarkshire. The consequences reach into the classroom, justice system, mental health services and work place. Language underpins all learning, without it children struggle to express emotions, develop a sense of personal identity, learn, become literate and connect with the world around them. We have the potential to break this cycle but intervention needs to be early and in partnership with parents and carers (Figure 1) ^{1,2}

Data from ISD Discovery in 2016/17 provided a clear South Lanarkshire picture of the size of the problem with 27% of children within the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) quintile 1 identified as having a SLCN in comparison with those in SIMD quintile 5 (14.3%), a 12.7% gap. Carluke is a rural town in Clydesdale Locality and baseline data from the health visiting (HV) team identified 22% of children with a SLCN at 27 months.

Theory of change **'Providing an evidence based, parent led, early intervention bundle can improve the outcomes for children identified with a speech, language and communication concern'**. The project links to the NHS Scotland 2020 vision as it focuses on prevention, anticipatory care, supported intervention and coproduction for parenting and early years.

Overview

Speech language and communication needs (SLCN) are identified as the greatest developmental concern affecting children at 27 months of age across South Lanarkshire. The consequences reach into the classroom, justice system, mental health services and work place. Language underpins all learning, without it children struggle to express emotions, develop a sense of personal identity, learn, become literate and connect with the world around them. We have the potential to break this cycle but intervention needs to be early and in partnership with parents and carers (Figure 1) ^{1,2}

Methodology

Using the three- step improvement framework for Scotland's public services³ we developed a Project Aim – 20% reduction in the number of children identified at 27 months with a SLCN requiring specialist intervention by April 2018 (baseline at implementation 39.2%)

Diagnostic Mapping: Identified the Problem

- HV recall and review timescales varied between 4-35 weeks
- Lack of detail and quality information provided on 'request for assistance' (RFA) to Speech and Language Therapy lengthening the vetting process and delaying access to the service
- The current SLCN resource distributed to parents/carers provided child developmental guidance as opposed to supporting targeted intervention
- Variation in staff knowledge and confidence in the area of SLCN

Working across two systems and services, we created a local improvement team of Speech, Language Therapists and Health Visitors (HV) and built capacity and capability in using Quality Improvement approaches in practice.

Within the diagnostic phase several Quality Improvement tools helped the team to understand the size of the problem with process mapping, training needs analysis to identify gaps in knowledge and confidence. Including the Model for Improvement and iterative **plan do study act** cycles.

Process Change

The change package/SLCN bundle included:

- Learning Session for HV staff – linked to NES HV National SLC Resource (Figure 3)⁴
- Early intervention goal setting tool 'SPEECH' (Figure 4)
- Guidance to support accurate recording of assessment outcome
- Child Review standard < 12 weeks
- SLCN Pathway
- RFA Exemplar

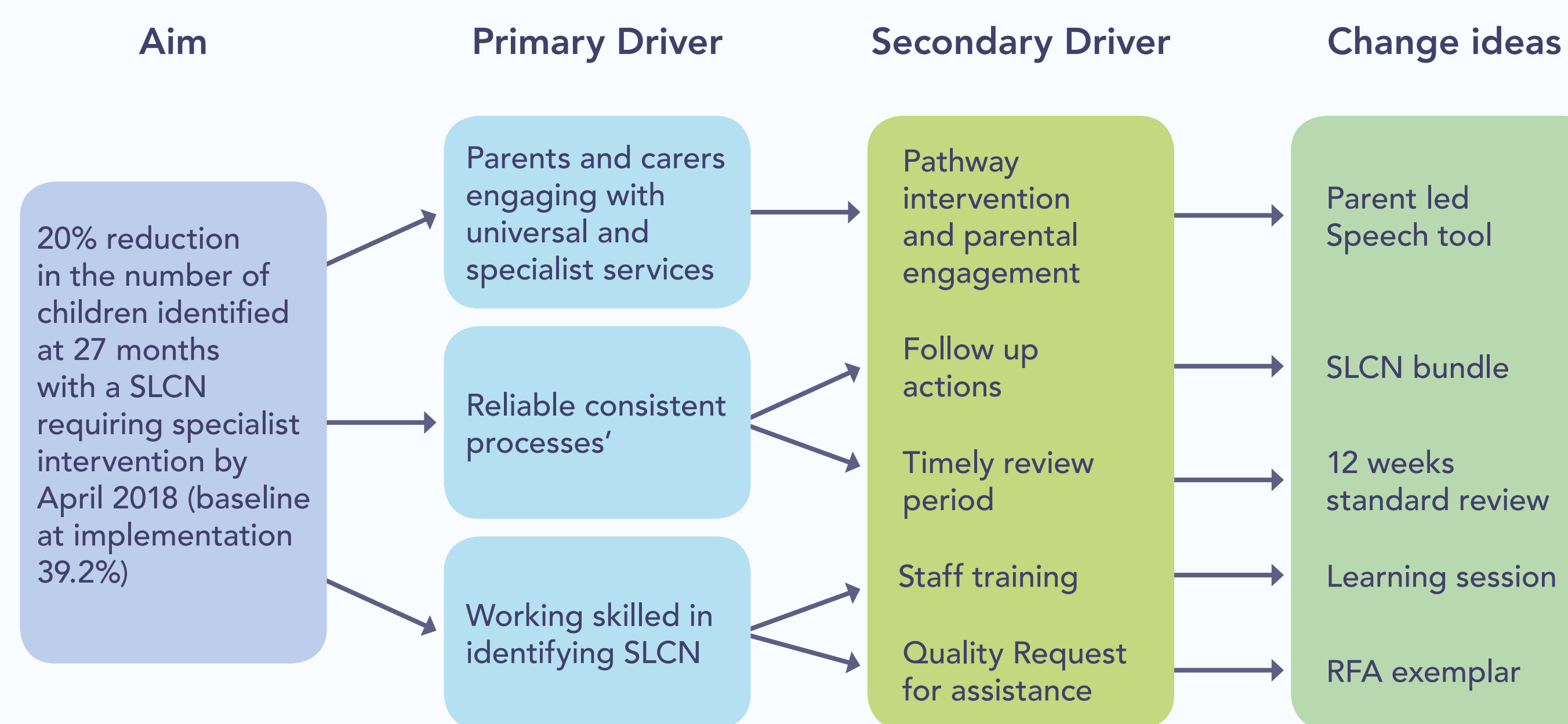


Figure 3



Figure 4

Figure 2 Driver Diagram



Outcomes and Results

Chart 1 Outcome Measure

During the period of May 16 - April 18 107/579 children were identified with a SLCN. The baseline data illustrates that 39.5% of children were referred to specialist services. As the SLCN bundle was implemented in practice this reduced to 13.2% a 26.3% reduction - achieving our aim.

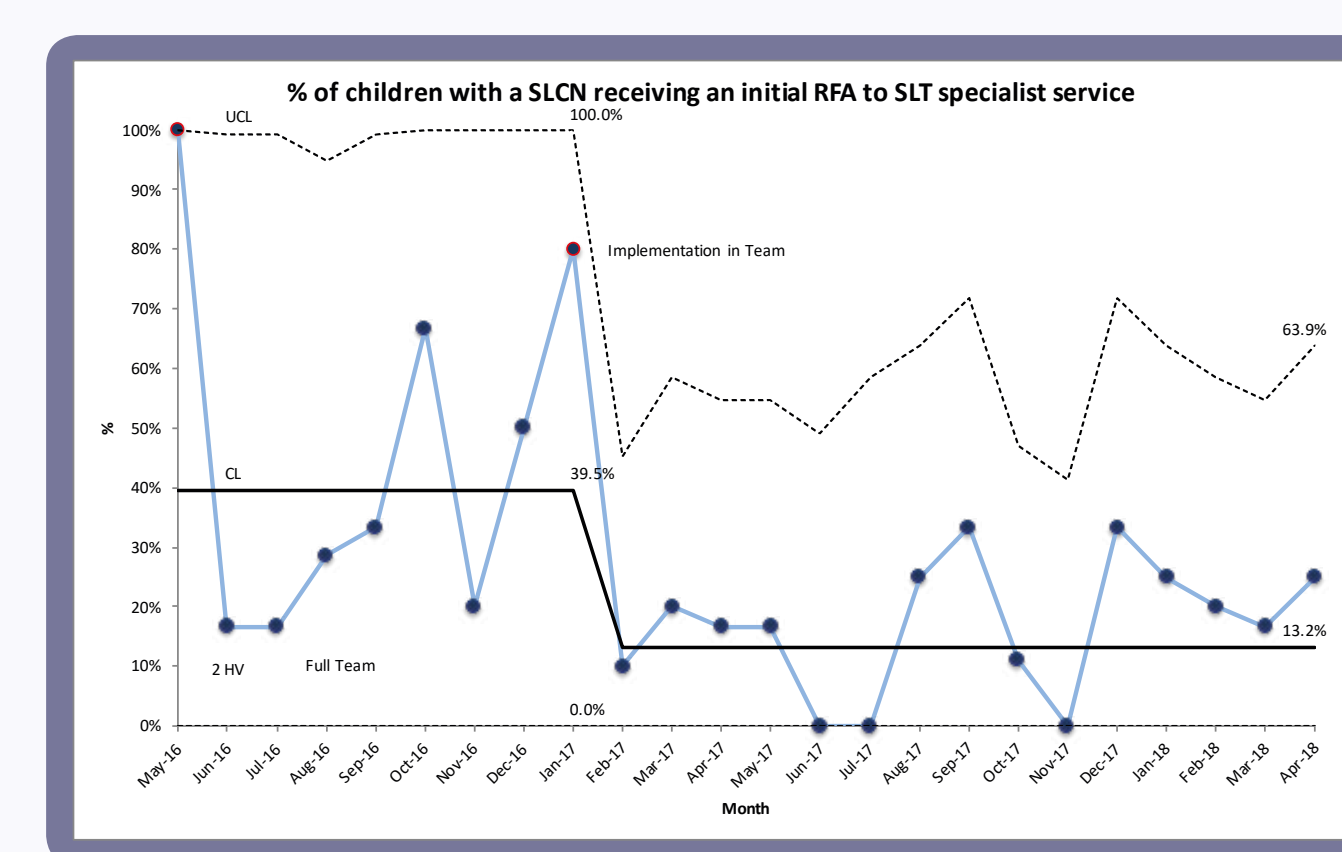


Chart 2

The percentage reliability of children (107 children in total) receiving the intervention increased to 94.4% as the process became embedded within practice.

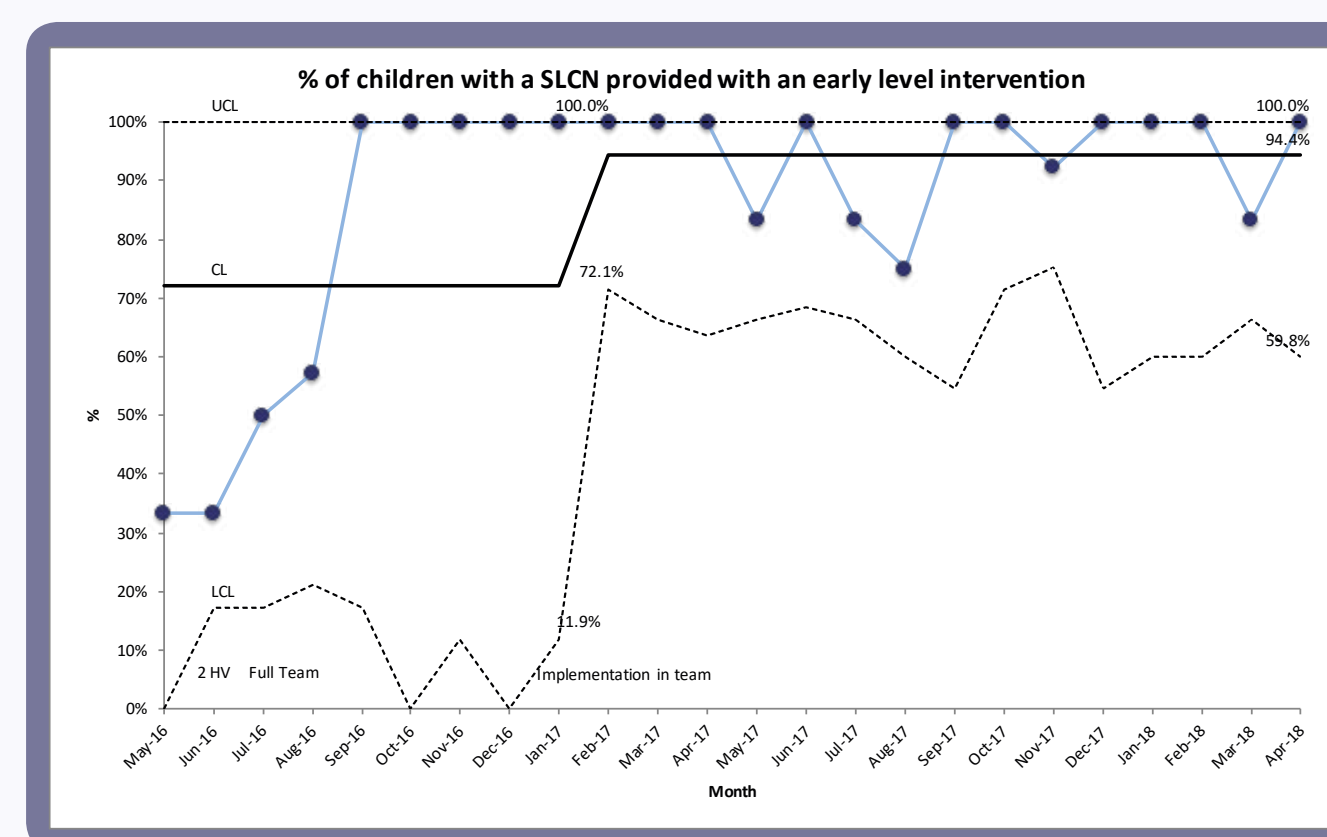
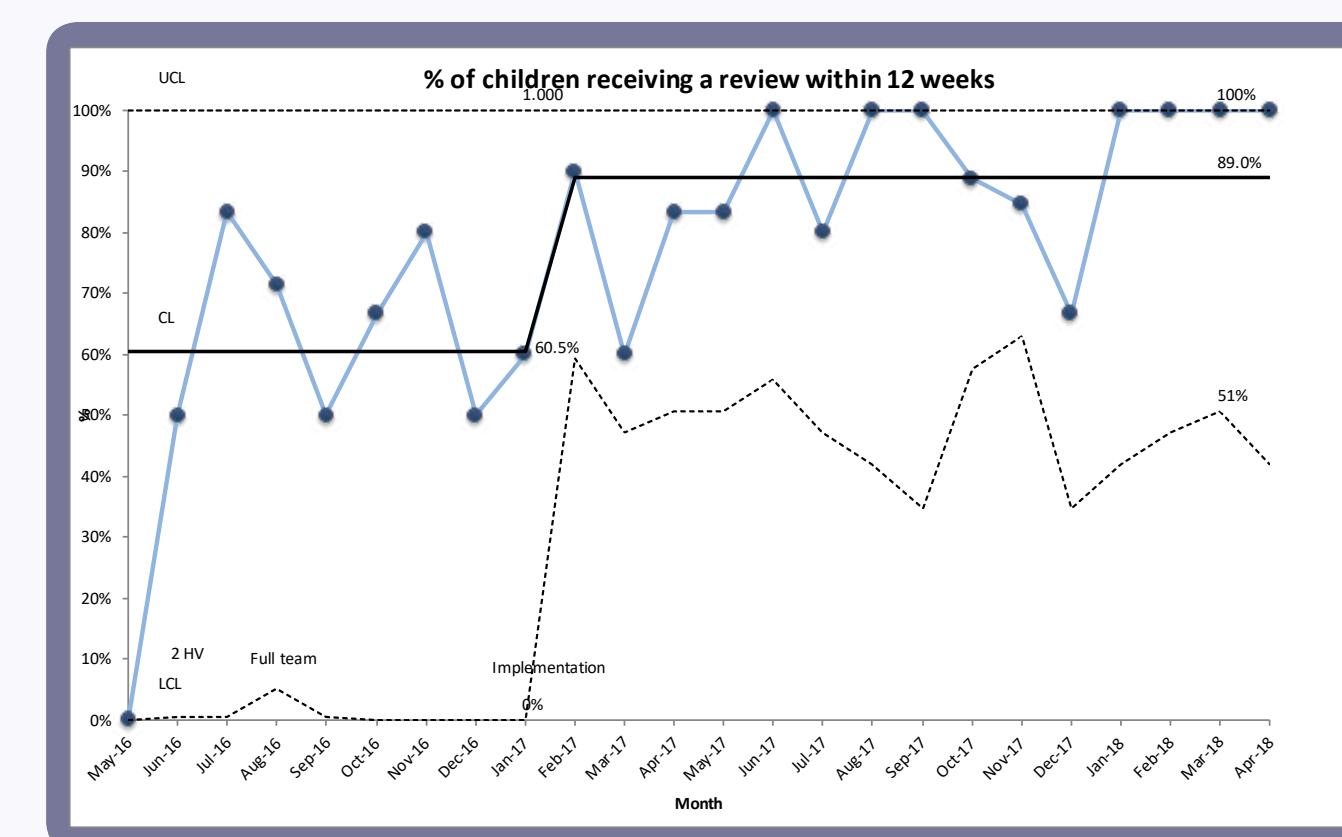


Chart 3

The run chart shows that the process for a review within 12 weeks evidences improvement and has seen a 28.5% increase in reliability since implementation.



Key learning and Conclusions

- Learning and development within the HV workforce was integral to the outcome and informed the development of a NHS Education for Scotland National Speech Language and Communication e-learning resource for health visitors across Scotland.
- The SLCN bundle has proven to be effective in supporting HV staff to provide first level intervention for children with a SLCN.
- The service improvement pathway ensured a robust infrastructure for health visitors to support National Universal Pathway practice.
- Parents reported they are more aware of children's age and stage of development and how they can support their child's speech, language and communication skills, demonstrating an effective co-production approach.
- Speech and Language Therapy reported an improvement in the quality of RFA's received.
- Short review period allowed rapid feedback and review on impact and outcome of intervention.

Scale and Spread

The improvement work is now moving to spread and scale across South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership.(HSCP) Early planning with North HSCP is in place to support Pan Lanarkshire spread .The improvement project has also been shared across both Local and National child health platforms.

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If you need this information in another format or language, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs. Phone: 0303 123 1015 Email: equalities@southlanarkshire.gov.uk www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk

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2. Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists. 2017. Speech, Language and Communication. A National Asset. Available on-line from: https://www.rcslt.org/governments/docs/speech_and_language_communication_capacity_factsheet_2016
3. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/three-step-improvement-framework-scotlands-public-services/>
4. Speech, language and communication: Giving children the best possible start in life resource: <http://slctooforh.v.nes.digital>

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