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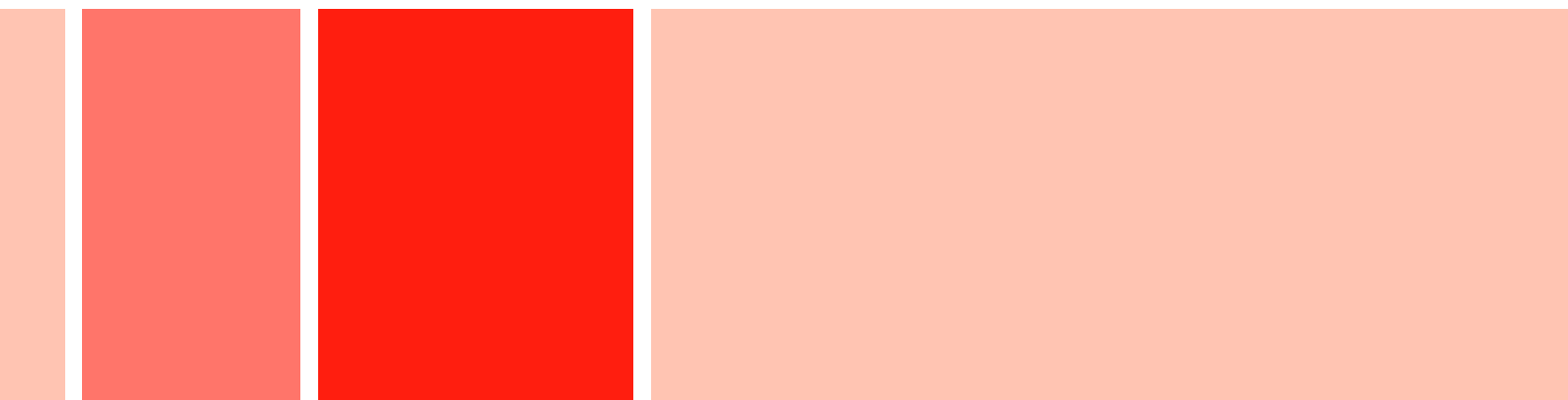
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A review of practice in the implementation of the early language development support element within Flying Start

A review of practice in the implementation of the early language development support element within Flying Start

May 2014

Arad Research in partnership with the National Centre for Language and Literacy (University of Reading)

Hefin Thomas, Jennifer Lane, Jennifer Evans and Professor Viv Edwards

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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1 Executive summary

Introduction to the review

1. Arad Research, working in partnership with the National Centre for Language and Literacy based at the University of Reading, was commissioned to conduct a review of current practice in relation to early language development (ELD) interventions within Flying Start.[1]

2. The findings of this review of practice are intended to help shape guidance associated with the early language development entitlement of the Flying Start programme. Flying Start is a Welsh Government flagship programme targeted at families with children aged between nought and three living in some of the most disadvantaged communities in Wales.

Methodology

3. The methodology for the review involved a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. This mixed methods approach was chosen to enable data to be gathered from all local authorities whilst also collecting more detailed information and views in a smaller number of areas. The approach included desk research and analysis of information from all local authorities[2], an electronic survey of all Flying Start teams, fieldwork with Flying Start staff and parents in selected local authorities and a group discussion with Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs).

4. The electronic survey was designed to collect data and views from all the local authority Flying Start teams. At the same time, the qualitative fieldwork with Flying Start staff and parents enabled more detailed views on the ELD entitlement to be collected. All fieldwork was carried out between December 2013 and February 2014.

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[1] Although there is not a standard definition of ELD services/activities, in this report we define them broadly as those activities that are most related to the ELD entitlement. These include, Language and Play groups, one-to-one sessions delivered by SLTs and other professionals; group and one-to-one ELD activities within other settings (e.g. Childcare settings, Health Visitor clinics).
[2] These included: local authority Flying Start Strategic Plans for 2012-15; local authority delivery plans for 2013-14; data monitoring workbooks for 2012-13 and data from Schedule of Growing Skills (SoGS) assessment data for 2011-13.

Models and Structure of Delivery

5. The type and structure of ELD provision offered by local authorities was examined during the review. Different types of delivery included universally available ELD activities, more targeted ELD activities and ELD activities where delivery is embedded within other Flying Start entitlements. The links between Flying Start ELD activity and generic Language and Play/Number and Play (LAP/NAP) provision (i.e. that which is provided across the whole of Wales rather than only in Flying Start areas) were also considered during the review.

6. The review found that the delivery of universal ELD provision (e.g. LAP groups), whilst important, is not sufficient to reach all families and particularly those in high need groups. To ensure that more families access ELD activities, greater emphasis should be placed on embedding ELD across all entitlements. This requires ELD activities to be regularly delivered within other settings. This also requires clear and consistent modelling of good practice in adult-child interaction by staff.

7. The role of SLTs in shaping the delivery of ELD activities and providing advice and guidance to other professionals was considered to be important. Flying Start staff outlined the value of regular sessions with SLTs to be able to raise queries and share experiences.

Awareness and Understanding

8. The review considered the views of Flying Start staff in terms of their perceptions of levels of parental awareness and understanding of ELD. Flying Start staff who participated in fieldwork reported that awareness and understanding of the ELD entitlement and the benefits of activities to develop ELD were low among parents. This was particularly the case among high need families who are less engaged in universal ELD activities (e.g. Language and Play groups). This reinforces the findings of qualitative research undertaken as part of the National Evaluation of Flying Start (Welsh Government, 2013c) which reported that Language and Play was *'much less appreciated by parents than other entitlements*

of the programme ... because parents failed to understand the 'point' of LAP, often not understanding how it would help' (p. 49, Welsh Government, 2013c).

9. During the review, local authorities provided information on their approaches to raise awareness and understanding of ELD among parents. Much of the activity highlighted was focused on raising parental awareness of ELD activities. Less emphasis was placed on promoting the benefits of ELD to parents. The evidence suggested that a greater focus was placed on embedding messages within activities. This 'soft promotion' of ELD across entitlements was considered to be an effective approach to overcome parental reluctance to engage in ELD and should be further developed.

10. Many practitioners provided suggestions to improve parental awareness and understanding of the benefits of ELD. Local authorities outlined a need for consistent and clear national messages relating to the key milestones in ELD, good practice in adult-child interaction and the benefits of ELD for child development. This could help ensure that more information and activities relating to ELD are presented and delivered within the other Flying Start entitlements.

11. The cross-cutting nature of the ELD entitlement requires all Flying Start staff to have an understanding of these key messages and to promote them across the other entitlements (e.g. in nurseries, during home visits). The role of SLTs in raising the awareness and understanding of ELD among staff is a crucial part of this process.

Engagement

12. The review considered how local authorities engaged families in ELD and how barriers to engagement are addressed. Engagement was defined as the process of getting families to take part in Flying Start ELD activities and to maintain their participation. Identification and referral processes for families with particular needs in terms of ELD were also examined during the review.

13. The multi-disciplinary approach adopted by local authorities was considered crucial to engaging families in ELD. This is particularly the case for families with high needs. The relationships built by Health Visitors and family support workers are vital in building trust with families as well as encouraging and supporting them to access ELD services. This approach was considered important in creating a more 'social' and less 'medical' perception of SLT, which could improve the engagement of high need families.

14. The importance of a multi-disciplinary approach was evident in how local authorities create opportunities to engage families that are reluctant to access ELD services. Approaches included ELD drop-in sessions in Health Visitor waiting rooms, informal introductions to other staff in childcare settings and personal one to one communication (face to face as well as via text messaging). The promotion of such approaches to engage families should be encouraged.

15. Clear referral processes are crucial to identifying the needs of children and targeting them with appropriate services. The ability of Flying Start staff to recognise ELD milestones and refer cases appropriately to SLTs or other appropriate professionals is important. Similarly, the role of SLTs in advising other staff on the appropriateness of referrals for additional support is equally crucial.

16. Many staff proposed that engagement in ELD activity should begin earlier, ideally at the ante-natal stage in order to build awareness and encourage participation in ELD.

Screening and Assessment

17. The approaches taken by local authorities to identify, screen and assess children in terms of ELD were considered during the review. As well as being required to provide monitoring data to the Welsh Government on children in their Flying Start areas, a variety of tools are used by local authorities to assess and identify children's needs and to monitor their progress.

18. The use of appropriate screening and assessment tools was considered important in terms of identifying children's needs and providing evidence of progression. Staff welcomed the national use of the Schedule of Growing Skills (SoGS) as a child development assessment tool whilst acknowledging that it is not a specialist tool for assessing speech and language development. Although in Flying Start universal training for using SoGS is provided across Wales, many staff highlighted inconsistencies in the tool's implementation and considered that the guidance for SoGS should be more prescriptive.

19. The Welsh Government outlined several measures that were being put in place to reinforce the national training including a 'Trainer Network' and regular communication to SoGS practitioners with further guidance.

20. The role of SLTs in providing advice and guidance on the use of screening and assessment tools was considered important by Flying Start staff.

Capacity and Training

21. The review considered the capacity levels of local authority Flying Start teams to deliver the ELD entitlement as well as the amount and type of training offered to staff within different roles.

22. The majority of local authorities employ SLTs as part of their core teams. During visits, Flying Start co-ordinators emphasised the importance of SLT capacity in the planning, delivery and monitoring of the ELD entitlement. The role of SLTs in training and supporting other professionals such as advisory teachers, LAP staff and childcare staff was highly valued.

23. Flying Start co-ordinators and SLTs outlined a need for all staff to receive basic ELD training including an understanding of ELD norms[3] and good practice in adult-child interaction. The need for staff who spend more time with children to participate in more detailed accredited training was also highlighted.

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[3] Normal ELD including expected milestones.

24. Many local authorities suggested that staff should receive continued training or refresher courses to raise awareness of the importance of ELD.

Recommendations

25. The following recommendations are made on the basis of the review:

    i.   The Welsh Government could consider developing a pack of written and digital ELD resources, which could be used by all local authorities to outline key messages relating to ELD and the benefits of the entitlement. These messages would be applicable for parents and staff. The development of these resources could be led by a group consisting of individuals with a mixed set of skills including SLTs, representatives of each of the entitlements and a parent.

    ii.   The profile of the ELD entitlement within Flying Start should be raised and it should be embedded as a cross-cutting entitlement within the Flying Start Health Visitor service, parenting support programmes and childcare. This could be achieved by encouraging more information and activities relating to ELD to be presented and delivered as part of the other Flying Start entitlements.

    iii.   Information on the benefits of ELD and activities relating to the entitlement should be promoted to all parents earlier starting at the antenatal stage.

    iv.   Building on the examples highlighted in this report, notable practice regarding activities that successfully engage high need families in ELD activities should be identified and disseminated to local authorities. This could be done via Flying Start co-ordinator meetings or established regional SLT networks. Examples of notable practice highlighted in this report include engaging

parents during the ante-natal period, delivering one-to-one sessions in the home and family support workers attending ELD sessions with families.

v.　All local authorities should employ SLTs as part of their core teams, with a particular focus on the ELD entitlement.

vi.　All Flying Start staff should receive a minimum level of training relating to ELD norms and good practice in adult-child interaction. This training should be overseen by a SLT.

vii.　Flying Start childcare practitioners and other staff who deliver ELD provision directly to children should be encouraged to undertake more detailed training relating to ELD. Where possible, this training should be accredited and planned by a SLT.

viii.　All staff using screening and assessment tools should receive training on the implementation of these tools to ensure that they are applied consistently.

2   Introduction to the Review

2.1   Arad Research, working in partnership with the National Centre for Language and Literacy based at the University of Reading, was commissioned to conduct a review of current practice in relation to early language development (ELD) interventions within Flying Start.

2.2   This research was commissioned to inform future Flying Start policy, and specifically guidance associated with the ELD entitlement to the programme.

2.3   This report presents the findings of the review, which was carried out between December 2013 and February 2014.

Flying Start

2.4   In 2006/7, the Welsh Government launched the Flying Start programme, which aims *'to make a decisive difference to the life chances of children aged under four in the areas in which it runs'* (p. 1, Welsh Government, 2009). The programme is an area-based programme, geographically targeted to some of the most disadvantaged areas of Wales and is universally available to families with children aged nought to four in those areas. Through early identification of the needs of these individual families, the programme aims to improve children's language, cognitive, social and emotional development and physical health. By supporting children's development, the programme aims in the longer term to reduce the number of people with very poor skills, improve qualifications at the end of schooling and increase employment prospects.

2.5   Flying Start is administered as a grant to local authorities to fund provision for children and their families within selected target areas. Provision delivered as part of the programme consists of the following:

- Free, high quality, part-time childcare;

- Intensive health visiting support;

- Parenting support; and

- Support for Early Language Development.

2.6   Families within the targeted areas have access to all the entitlements of the Flying Start programme. Although the core entitlements are universally available to families in the selected areas, tailored support depending on individual families' needs is an important aspect of the programme. These entitlements delivered as a holistic package based on specific individual family needs.

Management of Flying Start

2.7 Each local authority has a Flying Start co-ordinator who manages a core team of staff delivering the programme. The members of this core team differ across local authorities but may include: Health Visitors; Parenting Workers; Childcare Workers; Midwives; Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs); and Language and Play Workers. The Flying Start Strategic Guidance (Welsh Government, 2012a) recognises the important roles that these various practitioners make to the programme.

2.8   As part of the Flying Start Strategic Guidance, the Flying Start Financial Management Annex document (Welsh Government, 2012b) states the following:

> *'The Welsh Government has allocated Flying Start funding to local authorities. Each local authority's allocation covers its own spending and that of its associated third party Flying Start providers. Within the agreed totals, it has considerable discretion over setting priorities to deliver the Flying Start services for which it is responsible' (p. 11).*

2.9   Local authorities are required to submit their Flying Start budget and expenditure figures for each year. An analysis of this data

demonstrates that the ELD budget was only a small proportion of the overall Flying Start budget in all local authorities in 2012-13: ranging from 13.85 per cent to 0.7 per cent across local authorities in Wales. This suggests that only a small proportion of the grant provided to local authorities for the Flying Start programme is used to fund ELD staffing and contract costs. The data also indicates that the actual spend on the ELD entitlement can vary when compared to the budget allocated: this ranged from an overspend of 20 per cent in one local authority to an underspend of 63 per cent in another in 2012-13.

Aim and objectives of the study

2.10   The overall aim of the project was to review current practice across all 22 local authorities in Wales in relation to the implementation of the ELD support entitlement within Flying Start. The findings of this review will complement those of a corresponding review of research evidence (Welsh Government, 2014a) on early speech and language interventions undertaken in parallel to this study. Both reports will help inform Welsh Government Flying Start guidance documents.

2.11   A number of other evaluation reports have been published over the last five years (Welsh Government, 2010, 2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014b). One of these reports, Flying Start qualitative research with high needs families (Welsh Government, 2013c), highlighted the low uptake of Language and Play (LAP) courses among families with high needs.[4] It also reported that the ELD entitlement was valued far less than other elements of the Flying Start programme, attributing this perception to parents' lack of understanding of the benefits the entitlement would bring to them and their children. The present review of current practice therefore builds on this recent

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[4] High needs, as defined in the Flying Start qualitative research with high needs families report (2013), refers to lone parents, workless households and those on low incomes.

research and explores points that emerged from the recent report in further detail.

3   Methodology

3.1   This section provides an overview of the methodology that was used to conduct the review of current practice of the implementation of the ELD entitlement within Flying Start.

Overview of the methodology

3.2   The review involved a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods including desk research and analysis of information from local authorities[5], an electronic survey of Flying Start teams, fieldwork with Flying Start staff and parents in selected local authorities and a group discussion with Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs). Below we outline the rationale and limitations of the methodology, whilst sections 3.7 to 3.13 provide an overview of these approaches.

3.3   The rationale for the mixed method approach outlined above was to enable a breadth of information to be analysed from all local authorities whilst undertaking more in depth research in a smaller group of areas. The electronic survey was designed to collect data and views from all the local authority Flying Start teams. At the same time, the fieldwork with Flying Start staff and parents enabled more detailed views on the ELD entitlement to be collected.

3.4   To ensure a consistent approach, research themes identified from the outset, and summarised in Table 1, provided a framework both for the collection of data and for reporting the findings of the review from section 4 onwards.

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[5] These included: local authority Flying Start Strategic Plans for 2012-15; local authority delivery plans for 2013-14; data monitoring workbooks for 2012-13 and data from Schedule of Growing Skills (SoGS) assessment data for 2011-13.

Table 1. Overview of research themes and key questions for the Review

Theme 1 – Models and structure of delivery
• What LAP / ELD activities are offered and how are they structured? • What is the nature /structure of related activities through other Flying Start entitlements? • How tailored is the activity to the local needs? • What is the role of external partners in delivering activity? • How are the needs of bilingual/ multilingual families addressed? • What is the relationship between generic LAP/NAP grant programme and ELD entitlement of Flying Start

Theme 2 – Parental awareness and understanding
• How is information about LAP / the ELD entitlement provided to families in Flying Start areas? And by whom? • How do Health Visitors (and others) encourage parents to take up LAP services? • How are the benefits of the services explained to families? How does this compare with Flying Start provision through other entitlements?

Theme 3 - Engagement
• How is parental engagement encouraged? • What are the referral plans and procedures? • What support do parents get to attend LAP courses (e.g. transport, childcare, etc.)?

Theme 4 – Screening and assessment
• What are the assessment and identification tools used? How are needs assessed? • How is progress measured? • What other systems of assessing change are in place? • How are the outputs and outcomes of the service recorded and monitored?

Theme 5 - Training
• What training is provided to staff delivering ELD provision? • How is it ensured that staff involved in delivering ELD provision have the required level of understanding of ELD? • How is staff's level of understanding of ELD assessed?

Source: Arad Research

Limitations of the methodology

3.5   The methodology adopted for the review has provided valuable insights into what Flying Start staff considered to be effective in delivering the ELD entitlement. However, limited quantitative evidence of the impact of different approaches is available to lend greater weight to these perceptions. Furthermore, the limited scope of the qualitative fieldwork with local authorities

has meant that more in-depth information from practitioners and parents in other areas of Wales is not included.

3.6 The findings presented in this report are based on the views of professionals, drawing on their knowledge and experience of delivering ELD. These insights and views are valuable in informing future approaches. It is important to note, however, that there has been limited independent evaluation of the methods and programmes currently in use across the local authorities. This is reinforced in the findings from the corresponding review of evidence report (Welsh Government, 2014a). Indeed, this was acknowledged by many of the SLTs consulted during the review and may be an area for consideration in future evaluations of Flying Start.

Desk research

3.7 The desk research consisted of a review of the background documentation to gain an initial understanding of the ELD activities and approaches being adopted and delivered through the Flying Start programme across Wales. Documents that were reviewed included all local authorities' Flying Start strategic and delivery plans and data monitoring workbooks, which the local authorities are required to submit to the Welsh Government.[6]

3.8 In addition to reviewing the above documentation, data collected through Schedule of Growing Skills (SoGS) assessments, a tool used by all local authorities to assess children's development was analysed to establish any associations with the research themes and key questions for the Review.

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[6] Within their Flying Start strategic plans, local authorities are required to outline their plans for the programme from 2012 to 2015. These plans focus on the four core elements of the programme are submitted to the Welsh Government every three years. Local authorities are also required to submit deliver plans which outline any changes to the delivery of the programme originally set out it the local authorities' strategic plans. In addition to these plans, local authorities submit a data monitoring workbook which documents their budget profile and expenditure for the programme.

Survey of Flying Start teams

3.9 In addition, Flying Start co-ordinators were invited to provide details of the ELD entitlement within their local authority via an email survey. Responses were received from all 22 local authorities in January and February 2014. These responses were reviewed and common themes were identified. The survey pro forma is included in Annex 1.

Qualitative fieldwork with selected local authorities

3.10 To gain a more in depth understanding of the ELD provision delivered within Flying Start areas and to identify examples of good practice, visits to five local authorities were undertaken in January and February 2014. These were selected to include: a mix of urban and rural areas; a geographical spread across Wales; an area with a high proportion of black and minority ethnic (BME) families; and an area with a relatively high proportion of Welsh speakers. The rationale for this approach was to ensure that the sample of local authorities was as representative of Wales as possible.

3.11 Table 2 below shows the five selected local authorities and the rationale for their selection.

Table 2. Selected local authorities and rationale for their selection

Area	Rationale
Cardiff	South east Wales Urban area Area with a high proportion of BME families
Caerphilly	Valleys area
Denbighshire	North east Wales
Ceredigion	Mid-Wales Rural area Area with a relatively high proportion of Welsh speakers
Conwy	North-west Wales

Source: Arad Research

3.12 During the visits to the five local authorities, interviews or group discussions were conducted with the Flying Start co-ordinator, head of ELD and/or SLTs. Discussions with other staff, including

Advisory Teachers, Childcare Workers, family support workers[7], Language and Play staff and primary school teachers, also took place during visits[8]. Observations of ELD activities being delivered by SLTs and other staff in various settings were also undertaken in each area. These included baby LAP groups, ELD activities in nurseries, one-to-one sessions in the home, training for parents and training for staff. Informal discussions with parents were also conducted following these activities. A summary of the fieldwork undertaken in each area is included in Annex 2.

Group discussion with Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs)

3.13   A focus group with seven SLTs was conducted to determine their views on current ELD provision as part of Flying Start across Wales and models of good practice. The SLTs taking part in the focus group were from a wide range of local authorities. In addition, participants included a representative from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) and a SLT from Aneurin Bevan Health Board.

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[7] Although this is not a formally defined role in Flying Start guidance, several local authorities employ staff in a 'family support worker', 'family worker' or 'family key worker' role. In the local authorities visited during the fieldwork, this role appears to involve building relationships with a caseload of higher need families and engaging them in the community, often undertaking activities in the home with a view to eventually getting families to attend group sessions.
[8] The views of these professionals expressed during the fieldwork are referred to as those of 'Flying Start staff' in this report.

4 Models and Structure of Delivery

4.1 The report on the delivery and implementation of Flying Start, as part of the National Evaluation (Welsh Government, 2013a), suggested that different models of delivering the ELD entitlement could help improve parental engagement.

4.2 This section outlines the findings of the review in terms of the type and structure of ELD provision offered by local authorities. These include universally available ELD activities, more targeted ELD activities and ELD activities where delivery is embedded within other Flying Start entitlements.

Universally available ELD activities

4.3 The main ELD provision offered through Flying Start is Language and Play (LAP) / Number and Play (NAP). All local authorities offer LAP/NAP but structure its delivery in slightly different ways. Some LAP/NAP provision is through group sessions, often delivered in childcare or community settings, and other provision is via one-to-one sessions, delivered in centres or the family home. Most local authorities offer both group sessions and one-to-one sessions. Whether families attend group sessions or receive one-to-one sessions depends on needs.

4.4 LAP sessions are often delivered in 'drop-in' sessions across local authorities but are also offered as a course (usually 4-6 sessions) within the programme. Several Flying Start co-ordinators and staff highlighted the challenge of getting parents to commit to a set course of LAP sessions. Some Flying Start staff considered drop-in provision to be more appealing to parents and a way of reaching greater numbers of children.

4.5 In order to overcome barriers, such as the perception that LAP groups were too formal, several local authorities 'branded' these groups under different names. Examples encountered during

the review included 'Laugh and Learn', 'Little Stars', 'Let's Sing' and 'Singing Hands'.

4.6 Local authorities have adopted a multi-disciplinary approach to delivering LAP, involving SLTs, assistant SLTs, advisory teachers and other staff in the delivery of these sessions. Some local authorities ensured that at least one member of staff involved in delivering LAP in each setting had received training from a SLT.

4.7 LAP sessions observed during the review involved a number of methods of delivery with children from four months to three years old. These included:

- parents and children singing and reciting nursery rhymes in a group (with lyric sheets provided by the local authorities);

- families sitting in a circle with children taking turns to play with various toys;

- children listening to a practitioner reading a story;

- children observing a puppet show; and

- more informal play opportunities.

4.8 During all of the LAP sessions observed, SLTs and other staff disseminated ideas to parents verbally and through written materials, and encouraged parents to try these activities at home. Staff also passed on tips for creating simple toys and different play strategies that would encourage ELD. Some of the groups observed offered opportunities for parents to borrow books and other resources from the setting.

More targeted ELD programmes

4.9 Local authorities reported that, where children are identified as having additional needs in terms of ELD, specific tailored interventions are often planned by SLTs in partnership with other professionals. These could be a series of sessions with

SLTs in clinics or Flying Start centres or recommendations to attend universal ELD sessions such as LAP.

4.10 Staff in local authorities also noted that SLTs often play a more strategic role in planning interventions for family support workers to deliver in the home. This could involve undertaking initial assessments and setting targets for activities to be delivered with the family. Flying Start co-ordinators emphasised the important consultative role played by SLTs in planning and overseeing interventions delivered by other staff as well as providing guidance and support. This role was considered important because of SLTs' knowledge of the most appropriate programmes and interventions as well their ability to assess the progress of children and advise how best to deliver activities. Flying Start staff outlined how drawing on the expertise of SLTs gave them greater confidence in delivering ELD interventions.

4.11 During this review, several local authorities reported that parents of children in high need families were often reluctant to engage with SLTs, or with targeted ELD support delivered by other staff. It was considered important to explain what happens in a clinical appointment with a SLT as a way of minimising the number of missed appointments.

4.12 Flying Start co-ordinators and SLTs emphasised the different approach to missed appointments in Flying Start areas. In generic SLT services, missed appointments would lead to children being discharged; it is not be possible for staff to follow-up families because of a lack of capacity and absence of consent. In Flying Start areas, the additional capacity and closer working relationships within a multi-disciplinary team allow SLTs to ask other staff (e.g. family support workers) to help follow-up these families, leading to greater re-engagement with ELD services. One SLT noted that: *'In Flying Start, there is more of a familiar face to the service. It means Speech and Language Therapy is less medical and more social.'* The findings of this review suggested that creating a more 'social' perception of SLT

services is beneficial in engaging high need families through Flying Start.

4.13   A range of speech and language programmes are used by local authorities as part of structured activities for parents. Two programmes cited in the National Evaluation of Flying Start and mentioned frequently during this review are Elklan and Hanen. Elklan is a speech and language programme that includes training for practitioners and parents of children under five. The Hanen Early Language Programme is a language development programme used in a wide range of countries. In the context of Flying Start, many local authorities have integrated these as part of broader parenting support. Local authorities highlighted the good feedback received from parents and staff who had attended these courses and referred to anecdotal evidence of a positive impact on staff confidence and enthusiasm. However, they also noted that recruiting high need parents to take part and maintain their attendance on ten week courses was very challenging and, in many cases, unrealistic. This was because many of these families had low confidence or motivation and were reluctant to commit to attending this many sessions in advance.

4.14   Several local authorities were focussing on shorter courses for parents (two to four weeks) in order to try and improve take-up and attendance. An example of a shorter course outlined by two local authorities was the Ican 'Talk boost' programme[9]. Recently introduced in one local authority, this two-week course was seen as 'parent friendly' because it involved four sessions over a fortnight rather than ten sessions delivered over a couple of months as with some other courses. It was therefore considered easier to recruit parents and ensure they completed the course. Staff reported that they had better levels of attendance on these shorter courses.

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[9] http://www.ican.org.uk/talkboost

4.15   Many local authorities offer additional services which focus on overall child development with an element of ELD within them. For example, one local authority described their 'portage' or home visiting educational service for pre-school children with additional needs. Similarly another local authority delivers Parent as First Teacher (PAFT) sessions. PAFT focuses on children's overall development by emphasising the importance of parent child interaction through play. Although it aims to support children's overall development, communication is a key component.

Embedding ELD delivery within other entitlements

4.16   The importance of embedding the ELD entitlement across the other three Flying Start entitlements was evident during the review. The ELD entitlement of Flying Start is not delivered in isolation from the other three Flying Start entitlements but instead is embedded across the whole programme. The Flying Start qualitative research with high need families report (Welsh Government, 2013c) suggested that integrating LAP/NAP activities within childcare or as part of parenting programmes could help boost parental engagement. The evidence from this review reinforces this conclusion, drawing on a number of examples of local authorities incorporating ELD within childcare, parenting and Health Visitor entitlements.

4.17   The review highlighted examples of how the Health Visiting entitlement of Flying Start links with the ELD entitlement. Health Visitors are normally the family's first point of contact within Flying Start and provide information regarding ELD activities. They also conduct initial assessments on the children, mainly using the SoGS, and refer children to SLTs or other staff if assessments identify additional needs. Section 6.9 below outlines that, in one local authority, LAP sessions are delivered in the waiting rooms for outreach Health Visitor clinics and this

was considered by staff to be a successful approach to engaging parents.

4.18   The delivery of ELD provision is also embedded within the childcare entitlement of Flying Start. Several examples of SLTs or advisory teachers delivering ELD interventions in nurseries were encountered during the review. For example, in one local authority's childcare settings, staff deliver a nine week ELD course entitled 'First 100 words' to targeted children. Additionally LAP sessions are often delivered in childcare settings.

4.19   In some local authorities, trained staff will visit childcare settings to promote ELD. For example, in one local authority 'Key Family Workers' run small group sessions to fulfil this role. In another local authority, a team of advisory teachers visits childcare settings to deliver ELD activities and model good practice to key childcare workers. Targets are then set for key workers to deliver specific ELD activities with individual children.

4.20   As well as delivering provision, staff within childcare settings will assess children's language development and refer those identified as being at risk. SLTs may visit childcare settings and conduct speech and language assessments. They will provide support to the childcare staff in delivering the ELD entitlement. Often, if children are identified as having additional needs, play plans are developed to support their ELD within the setting. These play plans are often developed with the input of a SLT and reviewed regularly by the childcare staff to monitor children's progress. In some local authorities, Flying Start childcare staff also receive ELD training e.g. Elklan (see section 8).

4.21   ELD messages are also embedded within parenting programmes. For example a number of local authorities offer a parenting programme entitled 'You Make the Difference'. This programme is a Hanen course which focuses on teaching

interacting with children, including how parents can positively support their child's language development. Staff in one local authority identified the Parents as First Teachers (PAFT) course (see 6.14) as an effective way of embedding ELD within a parenting course. PAFT focuses on teaching parents about child development, and in particular brain development, and helping them to talk, play and interact with their child. PAFT was viewed as offering a 'non-threatening approach' and that this therefore made it easier to get parents involved. One staff member commented that *'[The PAFT programme] is about changing the culture of how child interaction is viewed'*.

4.22   Flying Start co-ordinators highlighted the importance of ensuring that ELD is embedded across all the entitlements (i.e. that information and activities relating to ELD are presented and delivered within the other Flying Start entitlements) and that this should inform future policy development. The evidence from this review suggests that this is happening and is effective in engaging parents. Multi-disciplinary working was considered to be crucial in ensuring that this happens.

> *'Liaison between all services in FS especially as children move toward childcare settings is vital so that additional support can be put in place where difficulties are identified.'*
>
> Flying Start co-ordinator survey response.

Relationship between Flying Start and generic LAP / ELD provision

4.23   In addition to ELD provision delivered through Flying Start, all local authorities receive a separate LAP grant to deliver interventions across the whole local authority (i.e. in Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas). The relationship between the provision delivered through these funding streams was explored during fieldwork with local authorities.

4.24   Survey responses from local authorities indicate that they have adopted a range of models for delivering generic and Flying

Start LAP/NAP provision. These include: delivering and managing generic and Flying Start LAP/NAP separately; delivering the same generic provision in both Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas; and both Flying Start and generic staff working in partnership within Flying Start areas with generic services also offered in non-Flying Start areas. The evidence gathered during the review is not suitable for evaluating whether one approach is more or less effective than another.

4.25   Eight local authorities provided information in their survey response to indicate that the LAP/NAP activities delivered in Flying Start areas were managed and delivered separately to those offered in non-Flying Start areas. In these local authorities, greater levels of one-to-one LAP/NAP provision, screening and assessment appeared to be offered in the Flying Start areas.

4.26   Two local authorities noted that the same LAP provision was delivered in both Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas. In one of these areas, all LAP/NAP provision across the whole local authority was managed by the generic service, with no Flying Start funded LAP activities provided. In the other area, LAP/NAP sessions were universally advertised to all families but Flying Start families received a personal invitation to attend.

4.27   Four local authorities outlined that both Flying Start and generic LAP/NAP were delivered in Flying Start areas whilst generic LAP/NAP services were also delivered in non-Flying Start areas. In these areas, Flying Start and generic staff tended to work in partnership to deliver LAP sessions in the Flying Start areas. In these local authorities, generic and Flying Start staff tended to share resources (e.g. song sheets) and/or train together. One local authority noted that

> *'The [generic] NAP/LAP co-ordinator runs training courses in partnership with the Flying Start Advisory Teacher to all*

local authority staff who work in any organisation involving children 0-4 years old, including Flying Start areas.'

4.28 The information provided by the other eight local authorities was not sufficient to be able to outline differences in LAP/NAP in Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas.

4.29 In general, survey responses from local authorities indicated that greater levels of LAP/NAP provision were provided in Flying Start areas compared to the generic services in non-Flying Start areas. Survey responses indicated that there was a greater emphasis on one-to-one sessions in the home and greater levels of screening and assessment in Flying Start areas.

4.30 Five local authorities reported that they worked in partnership with schools and/or libraries to deliver generic LAP/NAP services. One local authority outlined how their generic LAP services were focused on schools and on supporting the development of the adult's key skills alongside their child.

4.31 One local authority noted that some generic LAP provision was funded through the Families First programme. This tended to be one-to-one LAP provision delivered in the home with families progressing to universal LAP groups once they had been engaged.

4.32 During the qualitative fieldwork, staff in some local authorities reported that having different sources of funding for LAP meant provision was not as co-ordinated or consistent as it could be. In one local authority, the Flying Start co-ordinator outlined how all staff delivering LAP in Flying Start areas were trained by and worked closely with SLTs as part of a multi-disciplinary team. However, this was not the case for staff delivering generic LAP in other parts of the local authority. As a result, it was felt that the generic LAP and Flying Start LAP provision were not being delivered as consistently as they could be. Some co-ordinators suggested that having one funding stream for ELD could be more effective in ensuring consistency of delivery.

Meeting the needs of bilingual / multilingual families

4.33 Local authorities outlined their approaches to addressing the needs of bilingual and multilingual families in their survey responses and during visits. These findings are outlined below.

Welsh-medium provision

4.34 In terms of Welsh-medium provision, approaches to address the needs of families included:

- assessing the language needs of families;

- providing written information on provision through the medium of Welsh and English;

- offering specific Welsh language ELD sessions;

- offering access to bilingual staff or SLTs;

- ensuring one member of staff at each setting was able to speak Welsh; and

- delivering LAP/NAP sessions bilingually.

4.35 In addition to the above approaches, local authorities responding to the survey mentioned that the Welsh language is embedded within Flying Start provision. During visits conducted as part of the review, this was observed in several settings through incidental Welsh phrases, singing Welsh nursery rhymes or providing Welsh-medium resources.

Provision in languages other than Welsh or English

4.36 In terms of other languages, approaches taken to address the needs of bilingual/multilingual families included assessing the language needs of families; providing information leaflets in various languages; and providing access to interpreters/translators for ELD sessions.

4.37 Flying Start co-ordinators and SLTs in some areas emphasised the importance of interpreters being culturally aware and having some understanding on the topic area. It was noted that having a contextual understanding of the purpose of a session was important in order to pass on the messages that SLTs or other staff were seeking to convey. Some staff reported for instance, that translators did not always fully understand messages that SLTs were trying to give. However, local authorities also highlighted close working relationships with some translators and having the opportunity to request specific interpreters.

Suggested improvements to delivery

4.38 Some SLTs proposed that a set of 'design principles' should be developed at national level to underpin practice in LAP groups and to help ensure that the quality of delivery was consistent across Wales. These principles should include the key messages that needed to be communicated during these sessions regardless of how the groups are branded to parents.

4.39 Some Flying Start co-ordinators and SLTs proposed that the Welsh Government could consider leading the development of literature to market the importance of ELD in child development to parents. It was noted that local authorities currently spend significant sums of money on materials from commercial providers and that a process led by a national 'task and finish' group could help develop consistent messages aimed at parents that could be used by all local authorities.

4.40 Flying Start co-ordinators in several areas proposed that more emphasis should be placed on embedding ELD practice within the other entitlements (e.g. childcare), as well as having ELD-specific activities. Some Flying Start co-ordinators considered that this could be a more efficient way of reaching a greater number of children. Some co-ordinators also suggested that current national monitoring arrangements did not fully recognise ELD activities that were embedded within other entitlements.

Monitoring the number of children participating in ELD activities within entitlements was therefore suggested as a way of encouraging local authorities to embed ELD across the programme.

4.41 Flying Start co-ordinators and staff emphasised the need for SLTs to be heavily involved in planning provision and providing guidance and support to staff delivering activities. Some proposed that there should be guidance on the recommended number of children per SLT in Flying Start areas (see section 8 for further discussion on capacity and training).

Summary findings relating to models and structure of delivery

4.42 The delivery of universal ELD provision (e.g. LAP groups), whilst important, is not sufficient to reach all families and particularly those in high need groups. To ensure that more families access ELD activities, greater emphasis should be placed on embedding ELD across all entitlements. This requires ELD activities to be regularly delivered within other settings. This also requires clear and consistent modelling of good practice in adult-child interaction by staff.

4.43 The role of SLTs in shaping the delivery of ELD activities and providing advice and guidance to other professionals was considered to be important. Staff outlined the value of regular sessions to be able to raise queries and share experiences.
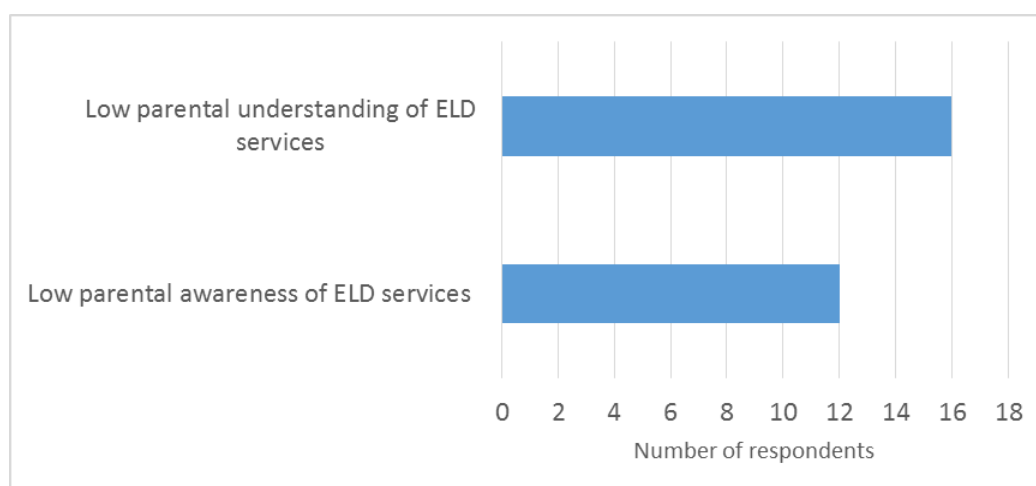
5   Awareness and Understanding

5.1   Qualitative research undertaken as part of the National Evaluation of Flying Start (Welsh Government, 2013c), presented findings relating to parent awareness and understanding of Language and Play activities and the ELD entitlement of Flying Start. Language and Play was reported to be *'much less appreciated by parents than other entitlements of the programme ... because parents failed to understand the 'point' of LAP, often not understanding how it would help'* (p. 49, Welsh Government, 2013c).

5.2   This section outlines the findings of the review of practice relating to the awareness and understanding of ELD among parents and staff. The impact national evaluation report (Welsh Government, 2013b) states that

> *'It is vital that the programme increases the awareness of, referral to and take-up of Flying Start services in order to achieve medium to longer term improvements to child and parent outcomes. In this context, the take-up of key Flying Start entitlements has been considerable'* (p. 6).

5.3   Building on the findings from this report, the review considered how aware parents and staff were of the importance of ELD; how local authorities raise parents' awareness and understanding of the ELD entitlement and associated services[10]; and how the benefits of ELD activities could be better communicated to parents. Findings relating to approaches for engaging families in ELD activities are discussed in section 6.

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[10] Although there is not a standard definition of ELD services/activities, in this report we define them broadly as those activities that are most related to the ELD entitlement. These include, Language and Play groups, one-to-one sessions delivered by SLTs and other professionals; group and one-to-one ELD activities within other settings (e.g. Childcare settings, Health Visitor clinics).

Parental awareness and understanding of ELD

5.4   During the qualitative research with local authorities, Flying Start staff were asked what they perceived to be parents' levels of awareness and understanding of the ELD entitlement. We outline the findings based on these perceptions below.

5.5   In general, Flying Start staff who took part in qualitative research during the review indicated that parental awareness and understanding of the ELD entitlement and the services provided through Flying Start were low. Survey responses indicated that this presented a barrier to effective practice. Figure 1 below shows that 16 out of the 22 local authorities who completed the survey reported that low parental **understanding** of ELD services was a barrier to effective practice. Additionally, 12 of the 22 local authorities reported that low parental **awareness** of ELD services was a barrier to effective practice. Interviews with Flying Start staff suggested that low levels of parental awareness and understanding of ELD had an impact on the value parents placed on ELD activities and consequently on their willingness to engage in these activities. This suggests that raising parental awareness and increasing understanding of ELD activities are important in order to effectively support children's ELD.

Figure 1. Barriers to effective practice to support ELD

Source: Flying Start review of practice survey

5.6   During visits to local authorities, Flying Start staff suggested that
       parental awareness and understanding of the importance of
       language development need to be improved if children's ELD is
       to be effectively supported. Staff in several local authorities
       reported that some parents did not consider themselves to have
       a significant role in their child's ELD. Some staff also reported
       that some parents considered that their child's ELD was the
       responsibility of nurseries or schools. SLTs reinforced this
       message, noting that raising parental awareness and
       understanding of ELD should be a priority for local authorities
       across Wales. A SLT interviewed stated that 'communication is
       not necessarily a high priority for some parents'.

5.7   The review's findings suggest that communicating the benefit of
       ELD activities to parents is important in order to improve their
       understanding of the entitlement and, ultimately, their
       engagement in ELD activities.

Staff awareness and understanding of ELD

5.8   The findings of the review suggest that awareness of ELD
       among Flying Start staff in local authorities has increased in
       recent years. A total of 20 out of the 22 local authorities
       indicated in their survey response that they provide training to
       staff in relation to ELD (see section 8). This training is generally
       provided or overseen by SLTs and varies in its length and
       nature depending on the role of the staff.

5.9   Flying Start co-ordinators and staff emphasised the important
       role played by SLTs in raising the awareness and understanding
       of ELD among staff. Several co-ordinators and staff noted that
       key messages relating to ELD should be developed by SLTs
       and communicated to staff. It was suggested that this could help
       ensure that the knowledge and expertise of SLTs was
       disseminated to other Flying Start staff. The role of SLTs in
       providing training, guidance and ongoing support for other staff

was also considered to be very important by Flying Start co-ordinators and staff (see section 8).

5.10 Most Flying Start co-ordinators and SLTs that participated in the fieldwork highlighted the need for consistent messages to be communicated by all staff to parents regarding ELD. This included information on their child's developmental milestones relating to ELD, the important role of parents in ELD and how parents could support their child's ELD. A discussion on developing and disseminating more consistent messages on ELD is presented in sections 4.39 above and 5.20-5.21 below.

5.11 Most Flying Start co-ordinators and SLTs emphasised that all staff should follow good practice in adult-child interaction when communicating with children in the presence of their parents. They noted that consistent modelling of good practice by Flying Start staff was vital to ensure that parents were more aware of how to support their child's ELD. SLTs noted that consistency would also help ensure that parents were not 'sent mixed messages' by different Flying Start staff. A discussion on how to ensure consistent messages from staff to parents is included in sections 4.39 and 5.20-5.21.

Approaches used to raise awareness of ELD activities

5.12 Local authorities provide information to parents about the services that are available in various ways. Different types of literature and information were highlighted in survey responses and examples of these were provided during visits, including information packs, leaflets, posters, booklets, newsletters and parental case studies. This information was communicated in various ways, for instance by post to Flying Start families, in displays at Flying Start settings, and by staff during Flying Start activities and sessions.

5.13 Electronic communication methods were also used to relay information about ELD services to families. For example, some

local authorities provided information on their website and some use social media. Several Flying Start staff highlighted their use of text messages to communicate with parents already engaged in Flying Start – both in terms of the ELD entitlement and activities relating to the other Flying Start entitlements (see section 6.18).

5.14 Flying Start co-ordinators, staff and SLTs highlighted the importance of taking a multi-disciplinary approach to raising awareness of ELD services. As well as ensuring consistent messages, this was also seen as a way of encouraging families to follow a 'pathway' through different services (including ELD and other Flying Start entitlements) and to remain engaged in Flying Start activities. Some local authorities outlined the 'pathways' that were available to children and families to engage with services at different stages of a child's development. This was reflected in informal discussions with several parents during the visits, who indicated that they had followed a 'pathway' by being signposted through several Flying Start activities (e.g. Health Visitor clinics leading to 'Baby massage' and on to Baby Language and Play).

5.15 During visits to local authorities, co-ordinators outlined the importance of their staff in raising awareness of ELD activities. In general, Health Visitors were seen as the initial provider of information for families. Within many Flying Start areas, they provide families with an information pack which summarises Flying Start entitlements and the services available. This pack may include a timetable of ELD activities on offer.

5.16 Many local authorities commented on the importance of raising awareness of ELD very early on, either directly through midwives or through other staff at sessions run by midwives. Providing information to parents during the antenatal stage was considered an effective approach to raise awareness, with some practitioners suggesting that parents were more receptive to information during this stage. Examples of this type of

engagement included SLTs or advisory teachers attending antenatal sessions to discuss the importance of ELD, and to encourage good parenting practice and attendance at ELD group sessions. During a visit to one local authority, SLTs outlined how they had started to attend 'Bump and Beyond' antenatal sessions, working in partnership with midwives. Although this was a relatively new development, staff hoped that that this could increase the likelihood of those parents engaging in ELD activities once their child had been born.

5.17   Although information provided by Flying Start team members was considered important, many staff deemed word of mouth from other parents to be one of the most effective approaches to raising awareness of ELD provision and its benefits. It was noted that parents were more likely to engage with services that had been advocated by other parents.

5.18   With the importance of advocacy from other parents in mind, Flying Start staff in one local authority outlined how they advertise ELD provision by displaying posters which capture the positive impact of the services in case studies of families who have used them. These case studies included photos and testimonials from families outlining their positive experiences of participating in Flying Start activities.

5.19   In some areas, parents are encouraged to participate in courses aimed at developing a more detailed understanding of ELD and improving adult-child interaction. Parents who took part in the research in one local authority outlined the benefits of taking part in the Elklan 'Let's Talk for Under 5s' course. [11] These included increased confidence and improved understanding of different strategies for interacting with their child (e.g. understanding the development of communication, different types of play).

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[11] Further information on Elklan is provided in Section 8.13.

Improving awareness of ELD

5.20 Many Flying Start co-ordinators and SLTs provided suggestions on how to increase awareness of the ELD entitlement and the benefits of the activities provided. These included:

- developing a set of prescribed simple key messages relating to ELD at each stage of a child's development, (e.g. the number of words a child should know at the age of 18 months);

- good practice in adult-child interaction (e.g. ideas for play or dialogic reading); and

- the benefits of ELD (e.g. improved literacy, behaviour and social skills).

5.21 Several Flying Start co-ordinators and SLTs proposed that these 'key messages' should be developed at an all-Wales level and then promoted consistently by all local authorities. It was suggested that this would ensure that all Flying Start staff were delivering accurate and consistent messages to promote the benefits of ELD.

5.22 Several Flying Start co-ordinators, staff and SLTs noted that parents were more receptive to information on their child's development during the antenatal period. They therefore suggested that greater efforts should be made to promote the importance of ELD during the antenatal period. Suggestions for doing this included: employing more midwives through Flying Start; more Flying Start staff attending or co-delivering sessions with midwives; and placing greater prominence on ELD within antenatal information.

5.23 Staff in local authorities also suggested other approaches to improve awareness of ELD among parents and staff. Some highlighted a need for more ELD training and opportunities for staff to raise queries with SLTs. Staff capacity and training issues are explored further in section 8.

Summary of findings relating to awareness and understanding

5.24 Awareness and understanding of the ELD entitlement and the benefits of activities to develop ELD are low among parents, particularly among high need families who are less engaged in universal ELD activities.

5.25 Much of the activity highlighted by local authorities during the review focused on raising parental awareness of ELD activities. Less emphasis was placed on promoting the benefits of ELD to parents than on raising awareness of the activities available. The evidence suggested that a greater focus was placed on embedding messages within activities. This 'soft promotion' of ELD across entitlements was considered to be an effective approach to overcome parental reluctance to engage in ELD and should be further developed.

5.26 Local authorities outlined a need for consistent and clear national messages relating to the key milestones in ELD, good practice in adult-child interaction and the benefits of ELD for child development. This could improve the process of embedding ELD across the other Flying Start entitlements.

5.27 The nature of the ELD entitlement requires all Flying Start staff to have an understanding of these key messages and to promote them across the other entitlements (e.g. in nurseries, during home visits). The role of SLTs in raising the awareness of ELD among staff is a crucial part of this process.

6 Engagement

6.1 Engaging families in ELD activities is one of the main challenges facing local authorities. This review defines engagement as the process of getting families to take part in Flying Start ELD activities and to maintain their participation.

6.2 Qualitative research as part of the National Evaluation of Flying Start, (Welsh Government, 2013c), found that LAP did not appear to make *'a lasting impression on many parents, and few had tried to put what they had learned into practice on a regular basis'* (p. 51). Echoing this, a separate strand of the National Evaluation, a report on the delivery and implementation of Flying Start (Welsh Government, 2013a), found that the increase in engagement in LAP activity was *'less marked than that for each of the other entitlements'* (p. 26).

6.3 This section explores the approaches taken to engaging families in ELD activities and to overcoming some of the barriers to engagement. It also outlines some of the processes used to identify families with particular needs in terms of ELD and the referral processes that are in place to this end.

Levels of engagement in ELD activity

6.4 Many local authorities noted that family engagement with ELD services was low. Reasons for low levels of engagement outlined in section 5 above included low levels of awareness and understanding about ELD and the services that are available through Flying Start. Limited awareness of the importance of both ELD and the role played by parents was also frequently highlighted by Flying Start staff.

6.5 Flying Start co-ordinators, staff and SLTs also suggested a number of reasons why levels of engagement in LAP courses were low. These included a general reluctance among parents to commit to six-week courses; a perception among parents that

LAP groups were 'too formal' or 'too posh'; a perceived stigma associated with targeted support among some parents; and low levels of confidence among some parents. These were reported by Flying Start staff to be greater barriers among higher need families and younger parents. One Flying Start co-ordinator echoed the views of many practitioners who took part in the research in noting that some parents questioned why they were being offered ELD provision.

6.6   Older parents and parents that were part of a wider parental peer group (i.e. who could attend with other parents they knew) were reportedly more likely to attend LAP sessions. Some parents that took part in discussions following a baby LAP session noted that their confidence and willingness to attend a drop-in LAP session had grown significantly over the years. One parent noted that she would not previously have been confident enough to sing to her child at home, and certainly not as part of a group. Parents in other local authorities outlined how their confidence to attend LAP sessions had increased following initial engagement in other activities such as baby massage. These initial courses had helped them gain confidence to attend a group session and to get to know other parents in their area.

6.7   The barriers outlined above had led many of the local authorities to adjust their approach to engaging parents, particularly those from higher need groups. Some of the approaches encountered during the review are outlined below.

Approaches to engage families in ELD activities

6.8   The report on the delivery and implementation of Flying Start, as part of the National Evaluation (Welsh Government, 2013a), noted that

> '… *parental demand for Flying Start LAP was said to be high in areas where the teams had focused on emerging needs and had made adjustments to the more traditional*

LAP programmes, either in terms of what they offered, or where they offered it' (p. 26).

6.9 Examples of LAP provision found to support parental engagement included:

- introducing sessions in a wider range of settings (including one-to-one home-based provision);

- activities covering a wider age range, with programmes on language and number development from birth to age three;

- clearer referral pathways from other provision/programmes into LAP activities, including a focus on encouraging parents to take-up 'Baby LAP'; and

- proactive promotion of LAP activities by Health Visitors, involved in referring families to support for language development, based on an early assessment of need.

6.10 These findings provide an important context and reference point when reviewing strategies to increase parental engagement in early language programmes.

6.11 Many Flying Start co-ordinators reported that families attending universal ELD provision such as LAP/NAP groups were often more likely to be families with low/medium needs[12]. In contrast, families that were referred for one-to-one provision were reportedly more likely to be higher need families. Changing this profile to encourage more high need families to attend universal provision was considered a challenge by Flying Start staff.

6.12 It was reported that many parents were reluctant to engage in ELD group activity and Flying Start staff often had to work in partnership to engage parents over several weeks or months. Often, this involved Health Visitors and/or family support workers making initial one-to-one contact, building a relationship with the family over a period of time and then seeking to

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[12] Families with low/medium needs included all families except those classified as high needs families.

persuade parents to attend a group activity (e.g. Baby massage, Parentcraft) to build their confidence.

6.13 Providing one-to-one support in the home was considered to be an effective, although resource-intensive, approach to engage some parents. This was particularly the case among high need groups or those who consistently missed appointments at Flying Start centres. Family support workers were considered by many Flying Start Co-ordinators to play a crucial role in gaining the trust of parents through informal face to face contact, leading in some cases to attendance at one-to-one sessions and group sessions at Flying Start centres. However, many required continued support to attend sessions (e.g. some family support workers accompanied parents to sessions or provided transport for them).

6.14 One parent who took part in the fieldwork noted that her experiences of one-to-one support, including ELD and play activities delivered in the home, had been 'life-changing' and had an impact on her child's confidence, communication and behaviour. This parent noted that they did not have the motivation or confidence to attend an individual or group session at a Flying Start setting. However, this parent described how she felt comfortable working with a professional she trusted in her home. The parent noted that: *'She [child] used to be really nervous whenever someone came through the door, but now she's really curious and happy to see [practitioner name]'*.

6.15 Getting 'familiar' or 'trusted' practitioners (particularly family support workers) to informally introduce other professionals such as SLTs or advisory teachers to parents was seen as an effective approach to engagement. This was described in one local authority as a 'soft introduction' that could help overcome some parents' mistrust of professionals. One SLT outlined the benefit of such an approach:

> *'The multi-agency approach is crucial to building trust and relationships. You liaise with a worker who knows them well and then maybe drop in to introduce yourself'*.

6.16 One parent that took part in a discussion following a LAP group noted that they had been encouraged to start attending the group by a family support worker who arranged a local 'buggy walk' group. The family support worker had then attended the parent's first LAP session with them. The parent noted that *'I would have been too nervous to come on my own.'*

6.17 Another approach to engage parents used by Flying Start staff was for a trusted practitioner (e.g. family support worker) to arrange a one-to-one session at a Flying Start setting to coincide with a LAP group. A Flying Start co-ordinator noted that this allowed the parent to informally observe the activity on offer without committing to it beforehand. In some cases parents had taken part in a LAP session without having planned to do so. One Flying Start co-ordinator commented that: *'family support workers are crucial as they are seen as being less formal in their engagement.'*

6.18 Text messaging was considered a vital tool for sending reminders about events and services. Several Flying Start staff commented on the importance of sending personalised reminders by text to parents before all sessions they were due to attend. As well as providing reminders, text messages were seen as an important pre-cursor to phone calls with many parents. It was reported that some parents were reluctant to answer their phones to an unfamiliar number. Texting was therefore considered useful in ensuring that parents answered phone calls.

6.19 Embedding ELD activities in other entitlements and settings was a common approach outlined by local authorities during the review. One example observed during the review involved SLTs and/or advisory teachers delivering ELD activities in childcare

settings in order to model good practice to childcare staff[13]. Another example observed involved an advisory teacher delivering a LAP group in the waiting room of a drop-in Health Visitor clinic. Parents and children were able to observe or participate in the session without having to commit to it beforehand, and were encouraged to come to other ELD sessions. Ensuring that parenting programmes included elements of adult-child interaction was also considered good practice in one local authority. Embedding these practices more widely was perceived to rely upon all staff receiving some training in ELD (see section 8).

6.20 Creating informal and incidental opportunities for Flying Start staff to model good practice and pass on their knowledge to parents was a widely reported practice during the review. Examples included, occasionally encouraging parents to come into nursery settings when picking up their child (rather than simply picking them up at or outside the entrance) and using these opportunities to informally model good practice in adult-child interaction.

6.21 Flying Start staff highlighted the need to address any perceived stigma associated with being offered ELD provision. Several co-ordinators emphasised the importance of marketing all ELD activity as universal whilst making additional efforts to encourage high need families to attend. Some Flying Start staff also highlighted the challenge of engaging fathers (both generally and in ELD provision). It was suggested that recruiting a greater number of male staff through Flying Start could help support the engagement of fathers. However, it was also noted that recruiting male staff was challenging with low number of males applying for positions.

6.22 A number of practical incentives were used by local authorities to encourage initial and continued engagement in ELD activities.

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[13] Further information on delivery models is included in section 6. Several examples of SLTs delivering training on delivering ELD interventions were also outlined (see section 8)

These included: organising or providing travel (some staff suggested that arranging taxis or offering lifts from the house was a more effective approach than paying for public transport); providing food before or after sessions; organising parties (e.g. at Christmas) to create initial engagement opportunities; providing free resource packs for attending.

6.23 In some areas, setting up specific groups for younger parents was considered effective in overcoming some of the barriers to engagement outlined above. This had helped address issues around lower levels of confidence in one family drop-in centre. A family centre manager noted that these parents initially felt somewhat intimidated by the older parents and had therefore been reluctant to attend the centre. However, their confidence had improved through being part of a younger peer group.

6.24 A similar approach was found to have been effective in other areas. One Flying Start co-ordinator outlined an example of family support workers starting a 'buggy-walking' group which led to the development of a supportive peer group of parents who were more confident in attending LAP sessions together.

Referral procedures

6.25 Referrals for more specific ELD support are made by a number of individuals including Health Visitors, staff in Flying Start childcare settings and SLTs. In some cases families can self-refer. Overall, most referrals are made by Health Visitors who assess children and identify those with additional needs.

6.26 In most cases families are either referred to ELD activities such as LAP or to SLT services. The SLT will then conduct further assessments to identify the specific needs of the child. Referrals are often made using forms which relate to the screening tools outlined in section 7. For example, in one local authority visited as part of the review, Health Visitors use the Bristol Surveillance

of Children's Communication (BRISC) screen referral form to refer children to SLT services.[14]

6.27 Regular review of referrals by multi-agency teams enables families to receive interventions as early as possible. For example within one local authority, weekly meetings are held to discuss all referrals received the previous week and to allocate them to the appropriate Flying Start team member. In their survey response, this local authority explained that *'the weekly allocation allows for a faster identification and input when a need is identified.'*

Improving engagement in ELD

6.28 Local authorities offered suggestions as to how to improve levels of engagement with ELD services. One commonly offered suggestion was to focus more attention on intervening earlier. Members of Flying Start teams advocated the importance of communicating with families during the antenatal period. In a similar vein to the discussion of awareness and understanding in section 5 above, it was proposed that local authorities could either employ a greater number of midwives or increase opportunities for ELD staff to work in partnership with midwives in Flying Start areas (e.g. accompanying midwives during visits or jointly delivering sessions). In one Flying Start area, generic services midwives were provided training on Flying Start entitlements in order to raise awareness of ELD. Although this was a recent development, it was hoped that this would lead to better awareness, understanding and engagement with these parents in the longer term.

6.29 Ensuring that all Flying Start staff had received basic training to recognise developmental norms in children's ELD and were able to refer children to appropriate services was another common suggestion (see section 8 for more information on

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[14] Further information on the BRISC and other assessments is included in section 7.5.

training). Training all staff to understand and promote the
benefits of ELD was also advocated by many professionals.
Increasing opportunities for Flying Start staff to co-deliver and
observe SLTs delivering ELD interventions was advocated as a
more informal way of achieving this end.

6.30   One Flying Start staff member suggested that a 'Flying Start
passport' could be developed to encourage continued
engagement with all entitlements and services. This would
involve a system of gaining stamps for participating in services
linked to each of the entitlements. If their engagement and
attendance were good, parents would then be entitled to some
form of incentive (e.g. a resource pack) for completing all four
entitlements.

6.31   Several suggestions on structuring the delivery of ELD activities
designed to improve engagement were made by local
authorities. These are discussed in more detail in section 6.

Summary findings relating to engagement

6.32   The multi-disciplinary approach adopted by local authorities was
considered crucial to engaging families in ELD. This is particularly
the case for families with high needs. The relationships built by
Health Visitors and family support workers are vital in building
trust with families as well as encouraging and supporting them to
access ELD services. This approach was considered important in
creating a more 'social' and less 'medical' perception of SLT,
which could improve the engagement of high need families.

6.33   The importance of a multi-disciplinary approach was evident in
how local authorities create opportunities to engage families that
are reluctant to access ELD services. Approaches included ELD
drop-in sessions in Health Visitor waiting rooms, informal
introductions to other staff in childcare settings and personal
one to one communication (face to face as well as via text

messaging). The promotion of such approaches to engage families should be encouraged.

6.34   Clear referral processes are crucial to identifying the needs of children and targeting them with appropriate services. The ability of Flying Start staff to recognise ELD milestones and refer cases appropriately to SLTs is important. Similarly, the role of SLTs in advising other staff on the appropriateness of referrals for additional support is equally crucial.

6.35   Many staff proposed that engagement in ELD activity should begin earlier, ideally at the antenatal stage in order to build awareness and encourage participation in ELD.

7 Screening and Assessment

7.1 Local authorities are required to provide monitoring data to the Welsh Government as part of their Strategic Plans. As well as being required to provide certain information on children in their target area, a variety of screening and assessment tools are used by local authorities to assess and identify children's needs and to monitor their progress.

7.2 In this section, we outline the findings of the review in terms of approaches to identification, screening and assessment.

Identification and screening tools

7.3 A number of different tools are used to screen and assess children; many of these can also be used to measure progress. All local authorities use the Schedule of Growing Skills (SoGS), which is a standardised developmental screening tool which is used by all 22 local authorities to assess children aged two and three years old and includes elements relating to ELD. Some local authorities also use SoGS to assess children earlier than two years of age. For example, in some local authorities SoGS is used to assess children at 8 months old. The SoGS tool is discussed further in section 7.8 below whilst more specialist tools used for ELD screening and assessment are outlined below.

7.4 Seven local authorities indicated in their survey responses that they used the Wellcomm Assessment Tool[15]. This is an initial speech and language screening tool which can be used by all Early Years practitioners. It is suitable for children between the ages of six months and six years old. It uses a traffic light system to identify children who show potential language difficulties as well as those requiring immediate referral and intervention. The system categorises children as either red, amber or green as follows:

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[15] A further two local authorities outlined that they were considering introducing the tool.

- Red – consider referral to a specialist service for further advice/assessment;

- Amber – extra support and intervention required; and

- Green – no intervention currently required.

7.5 Other assessment tools used by two or more local authorities[16] include the following:

- Ward Infant Language Screening Test Assessment Acceleration Remediation (WILSTAAR) – two local authorities;

- REEL (Receptive-Emergent Expressive Language) – two local authorities;

- Pre-school Language Scale – three local authorities;

- BRISC Screen (Bristol Surveillance of Children's Communication) – two local authorities;

- Baseline Assessment in Childcare – four local authorities;

- Derbyshire Language Scheme – three local authorities; and

- ICan checklist – two local authorities.

7.6 In addition to the assessment tools listed above, some local authorities use locally developed assessment tools. For example, one local authority uses the Early Language Observation Tool which includes a checklist that draws on some of principles underpinning the REEL tool.

7.7 Many of the screening or assessment tools used to identify those children and families who require additional support are also used to monitor children's progress. Local authorities commented on how professional judgement was an important part of assessment. Flying Start co-ordinators and SLTs noted that training staff to administer tools consistently and interpret them properly was as important as the choice of tool used (see section 8 for further information on training).

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[16] Based on the survey of local authorities undertaken as part of this review.

Assessment and evaluation

7.8 As outlined above, all local authorities undertake SoGS assessments on children aged two years old and again when they are three years old. The SoGS is a standardised developmental screening procedure for professionals who need to establish the developmental levels of children. The individual assessment can be used at any time with children from birth to five years, enabling professionals to assess them as and when appropriate and convenient. All Flying Start practitioners delivering SoGS are trained in administering the tool. SoGS provides a 'snapshot' of a child's developmental level, including areas of strength and potential delay. It enables an assessment of children across nine 'skill sets' including Hearing and language skills; Speech and language skills; and Interactive Social Skills[17].

7.9 Local authorities welcomed the use of a national standardised approach to setting a baseline and assessing progress in child development. It was acknowledged that other tools needed to be used locally when undertaking specific ELD assessments. To this end, Flying Start staff acknowledged that SoGS was not a specialist tool for assessing progress in ELD.

7.10 Flying Start co-ordinators and SLTs commented that guidelines for administering the SoGS assessment were open to interpretation and that this could lead to variations in the implementation of the tool. SLTs and Flying Start co-ordinators also noted that instructions to practitioners were not scripted as is the case with some other screening tools which meant that the tool could be interpreted differently.

7.11 The evidence from the review suggests that there may be a difference in how the SoGS is administered which may make

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[17] The other seven skill sets are: Passive Postural Skills; Active Postural Skills; Locomotor Skills; Manipulative Skills; Visual Skills; Self-care Social Skills; and Additional Skills.

comparisons of data across local authorities unreliable. Overall, there was a consensus that SoGS should continue to be used but that the guidance on use should be more prescriptive in order to minimise variation in the way the tool is administered.

7.12 The Welsh Government outlined a number of measures that have been put in place to improve the consistency and quality of delivery of SoGS assessments within Flying Start across Wales. Firstly, universal training has been provided to all those administering SoGS to try and ensure a more consistent understanding of the tool. Secondly, a SoGS 'Trainers Network' has been established at national level to share good practice and to discuss any queries or challenges faced locally. Thirdly, regular 'top tips' emails to share guidance for undertaking SoGS assessments are disseminated to all SoGS practitioners to share information on the consistency of delivery.

7.13 As mentioned in section 3, data for the skill sets most relevant for language development[18] collected through SoGS over the period 2011-13 for children aged two and three years old were analysed during the review. This involved examining the number and percentage of children that fell into the following categories for each local authorities:

- At or above the developmental norm for the age assessed at;

- Up to one interval below the developmental norm for the age assessed at; and

- More than one age interval below the developmental norm for the age assessed at.

7.14 For each local authority, the percentage of children scoring in each of the above categories was reported. This analysis showed considerable variation in SoGS scores across the local authorities. For example, the percentage of 23-25 month olds assessed in 2011-13 that were at or above the developmental norm for their age group in terms of speech and language,

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[18] Hearing and language skills; Speech and language skills; and Interactive Social Skills.

varied from 60 per cent to 88 per cent across local authorities[19]. However, as noted above, SoGS is not a specialist tool for assessing ELD therefore findings from this analysis should be treated with caution. An analysis of SoGS data against data on the number of children per SLT and the percentage of Flying Start budget allocated to ELD in local authority showed no strong correlations between these datasets.

7.15 In terms of broader evaluation methods, some local authorities provided detail on their use of Results-based Accountability (RBA) scorecards and related performance indicators. These performance measures included measures relating to attendance, referrals to ELD services, parental feedback on activities, child progression (based on assessment tools such as SoGS and the Pre-School Language Scale) and parental views on the impact of activities on their child. The National evaluation of Flying Start: Area case study synthesis report (Welsh Government, 2013a) noted that RBA

> *'is used by local authorities primarily as a tool for monitoring and planning operational change to meet local needs, rather than for establishing a long-term, authority-wide evaluation strategy'*(p. 59)

Summary of findings relating to Screening and Assessment

7.16 The use of appropriate screening and assessment tools was considered important in terms of identifying children's needs and providing evidence of progression. Staff welcomed the national use of SoGS as a child development tool whilst acknowledging that it is not a specialist tool for assessing speech and language development. Although universal training for using SoGS is provided across Wales, many staff highlighted

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[19] The corresponding percentage of children aged 35-37 months assessed in 2011-13 that were at or above the developmental norm for their age group in terms of speech and language varied from 69 per cent to 89 per cent across Wales.

inconsistencies in the tool's implementation and considered that the guidance for SoGS should be more prescriptive.

7.17 The Welsh Government outlined several measures that were being put in place to reinforce the national training including a 'Trainer Network' and regular communication to SoGS practitioners with further guidance.

7.18 The role of SLTs in providing advice and guidance on the use of assessment and screening tools was considered important.

8 Capacity and Training

8.1   Local authorities were asked to provide information on the capacity of their workforce to deliver ELD. They were also asked their views on current levels of capacity and training within different roles and what improvements could be made across their local authority.

8.2   In this section we outline the findings of the review relating to capacity and training.

Capacity to deliver ELD entitlement

8.3   Within Flying Start a number of staff are involved in delivering ELD provision to varying degrees. Some staff roles, however, are more focused on delivering the ELD entitlement than others. For example, the primary role of SLTs is focused on enhancing children's ELD whilst it is only one part of the role of childcare staff.

8.4   Local authorities responding to the survey indicated that capacity of the workforce and availability of specialist staff were barriers to effective practice in delivering the ELD entitlement of Flying Start. The graph in figure 2 below shows that out of the 22 local authorities responding to the survey questions on barriers to effective practice, 11 highlighted capacity of the workforce and five the availability of specialist staff.

Figure 2. Barriers to effective practice to support ELD
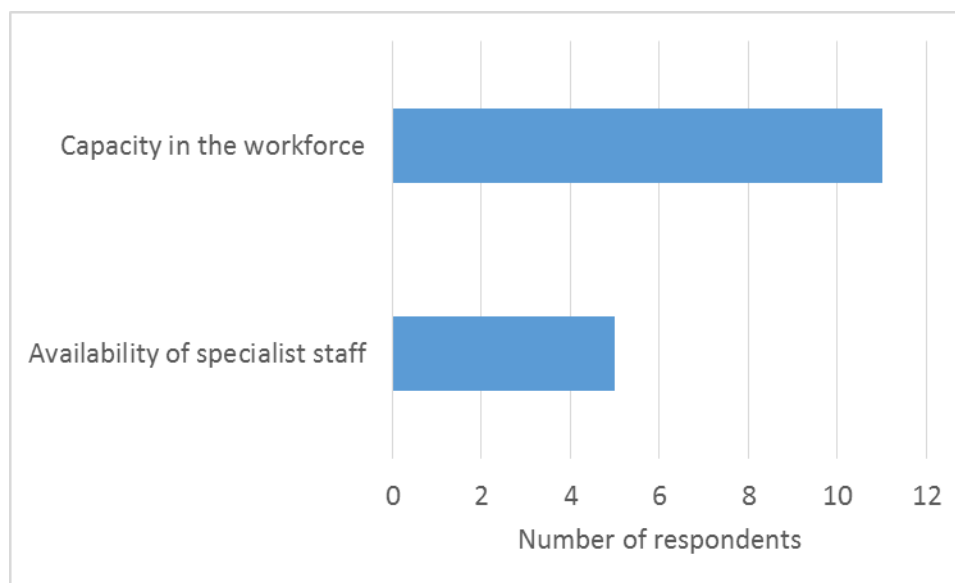
Source: Flying Start Review of Practice survey

8.5 Most local authorities (18 out of 22) employ SLTs as part of their Flying Start team. The number of full time equivalent (FTE) SLTs employed through Flying Start varies from three in one local authority to 0.2 (i.e. the equivalent of working one day a week) in another. Four local authorities indicated that they do not employ SLTs through Flying Start. Analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between the number of SLTs and the number of courses each local authority delivers. However this analysis found no significant relationship between these two datasets.

8.6 Data from local authorities shows that the number of children per one FTE SLT (in local authorities that employ SLTs), ranges from 411 children in one local authority to 6775 in another. This, therefore, suggests that the caseload for SLTs may vary considerably across the different local authorities. It should be noted that this analysis does not take generic SLT services provided in Flying Start areas into account.

8.7 Many local authorities considered the role of the SLT to be vital to ensuring the ELD entitlement is delivered effectively. SLTs are specialists with in-depth knowledge and understanding of

speech and language. Consequently it was felt that SLTs are crucial members of the team, both as deliverers and providers of information and guidance for other staff. Flying Start co-ordinators as well as SLTs consulted during the review were of the view that all local authorities should have SLTs working within the Flying Start programme.

8.8 In some local authorities, SLTs work part time for Flying Start and part time for generic services. SLTs were of the view that this enables strong communication links between Flying Start SLTs and generic SLT services. These strong links can be beneficial because they allow referrals to generic SLTs to be passed on to Flying Start SLTs earlier for further assessment and interventions to take place.

8.9 It was considered that the key role of the SLTs is to share their expert knowledge with other staff involved in delivering ELD provision, and thus indirectly with parents through other Flying Start staff.

8.10 SLTs also provide support to staff delivering ELD provision in relation to assessing children and identifying those requiring referral and in helping to develop the play plans for children implemented by childcare staff.

8.11 In addition to SLT, local authorities were asked in their survey response to supply the number of other ELD specialists employed through Flying Start. From these responses it was found that the number of FTE specialists ranged from nought to nine across the different local authorities. Various local authorities provided job titles of these ELD specialists, including LAP Support Assistants, ELD Support Workers, Teaching Assistants, Play Workers, Basic Skills Co-ordinator and Flying Start Story Teller. However during discussions, local authorities' co-ordinators and SLTs commented on how the term 'ELD specialists' may be interpreted differently across the different local authorities. This demonstrates the challenge of quantifying

the level of capacity to deliver the ELD entitlement across the local authorities.

Staff training

8.12 Many local authorities stressed the importance of staff training to ensuring all staff involved in delivering the ELD entitlement convey consistent messages across the programme.

> *'Every member of staff has been trained from Health Visitors, Midwives, Early Years Practitioners, Parenting Support Workers and Childcare workers so that the same messages are incorporated into everything we do and all of the contacts we have with the families.'*
>
> Flying Start co-ordinator, survey response.

8.13 Responses to the local authorities survey indicated that the most commonly offered training courses delivered to staff are Elklan and Hanen. Below is an overview of these courses.

- Hanen: Language development training for practitioners (e.g. 'Learning Language and Loving It'). In many local authorities staff working within childcare settings receive Hanen training.
- Elklan: Speech and language training course delivered by SLTs or an experienced teacher. The course is accredited and is often delivered to childcare practitioners working within Flying Start settings.

8.14 In some local authorities, staff delivering ELD services receive training on the normal development of speech, language and communication to enable them to identify children who may require additional ELD support. For example, in one local authority all members of staff are required to attend a one day mandatory training course (Norms 1 and 2 training) which provides staff with basic knowledge of normal development. SLTs considered that training of this kind should be provided to

all Flying Start staff who work directly with children, including Health Visitors, family support workers and childcare staff.

8.15   Training relating to adult-child interaction is also provided in many local authorities. SLTs consulted during the review considered that all Flying Start staff should receive at least one day's training in good practice relating to adult-child interaction. It was suggested that this should focus on the importance of modelling good interaction to parents. This was viewed as an important way to ensure that ELD messages from staff focusing on different entitlements were consistent and effectively delivered across Wales.

8.16   Many local authorities were of the view that staff should receive continued training or refresher courses to raise awareness of the importance of ELD. These refresher courses could either be a repeat of the training the staff have already received or they could have slightly different content while still delivering similar messages.

8.17   For staff involved in more focused interaction with children (e.g. childcare staff, advisory teachers), a more detailed level of training was proposed by a number of SLTs and Flying Start co-ordinators. It was suggested that these staff should participate in accredited, evidence-based training typically over ten sessions. Courses provided by Elklan and Hanen were proposed by some staff in local authorities although it was also suggested that training could be developed in-house as long as it was run by SLTs.

8.18   Survey responses from local authorities indicated that staff knowledge of ELD is assessed in various ways including the following:

- Questionnaires after training to ascertain knowledge;

- Self-evaluations;

- Supervision – childcare staff may receive supervision from SLTs; and

- Assessment after training. With Elklan, for example, staff are required to complete a portfolio which is then assessed.

Improvements to capacity and training

8.19 It was proposed that all local authorities should employ SLTs as part of their core teams to play a leading role in overseeing the ELD entitlement and to assess the skills requirements of the workforce in relation to ELD.

8.20 During fieldwork visits, Flying Start staff suggested that all staff working with children should receive at least one day of training on ELD norms[20] and one day on good practice in adult-child interaction. All staff should receive refresher training at least every two years. This training should be planned and led by SLTs, with opportunities for staff to ask for support or guidance from their SLT.

8.21 In addition to the one day ELD norms training mentioned above, some local authorities suggested that staff with a greater level of interaction with children (e.g. childcare staff) should receive further training on ELD norms and adult child interaction. It was advised that SLTs should deliver around ten sessions of training to these staff, following an accredited course.

Summary of findings relating to capacity and training

8.22 The majority of local authorities employ SLTs as part of their core teams. During visits, Flying Start co-ordinators emphasised the importance of SLT capacity in the planning, delivery and monitoring of the ELD entitlement. The role of SLTs in training and supporting other professionals such as advisory teachers, LAP staff and childcare staff was highly valued.

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[20] Normal ELD including expected milestones.

8.23 Flying Start co-ordinators and SLTs outlined a need for all staff to receive basic ELD training including an understanding of ELD norms and good practice in adult-child interaction. The need for staff who spend more time with children to participate in more detailed accredited training was also highlighted.

8.24 Many local authorities suggested that staff should receive continued training or refresher courses to raise awareness of the importance of ELD.

9 Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 This section outlines the conclusions and recommendations of the review of practice under the five themes presented above.

Delivery

9.2 The delivery of universal ELD provision (e.g. LAP groups), whilst important, is not sufficient to reach all families and particularly those in high need groups. To ensure that more families access ELD activities, greater emphasis should be placed on embedding ELD across all entitlements and training key professionals such as family support workers. This requires ELD activities to be regularly delivered within other settings. This also requires clear and consistent modelling of good practice in adult-child interaction by staff.

9.3 The role of SLTs in shaping the delivery of ELD activities and providing advice and guidance to other professionals was considered to be important. Staff outlined the value of regular sessions to be able to raise queries and share experiences.

Awareness

9.4 Flying Start staff reported that awareness and understanding of the ELD entitlement and the benefits of activities to develop ELD are low among parents, particularly among high need families who are less engaged in universal ELD activities.

9.5 Much of the activity highlighted by local authorities during the review focused on raising parental awareness of ELD activities. Less emphasis was placed on promoting the benefits of ELD to parents. The evidence suggested that a greater focus was placed on embedding messages within activities. This 'soft promotion' of ELD across entitlements was considered to be an effective approach to overcome parental reluctance to engage in ELD and should be further developed.

9.6 Local authorities outlined a need for consistent and clear national messages relating to the key milestones in ELD, good practice in adult-child interaction and the benefits of ELD for child development. This could improve the process of embedding ELD across the other Flying Start entitlements.

9.7 The cross-cutting nature of the ELD entitlement requires all Flying Start staff to have an understanding of these key messages and to promote them across the other entitlements (e.g. in nurseries, during home visits). The role of SLTs in raising the awareness of ELD among staff is a crucial part of this process.

Engagement

9.8 The multi-disciplinary approach adopted by local authorities was considered crucial to engaging families in ELD. This is particularly the case for families with high needs. The relationships built by Health Visitors and family support workers are vital in building trust with families as well as encouraging and supporting them to access ELD services. This approach was considered important in creating a more 'social' and less 'medical' perception of SLT which could improve the engagement of high need families.

9.9 The importance of a multi-disciplinary approach was evident in how local authorities create opportunities to engage families that are reluctant to access ELD services. Approaches included ELD drop-in sessions in Health Visitor waiting rooms, informal introductions to other staff in childcare settings and personal one to one communication (face to face as well as via text messaging). The promotion of such approaches to engage families should be encouraged.

9.10 Clear referral processes are crucial to identifying the needs of children and targeting them with appropriate services. The ability of Flying Start staff to recognise ELD milestones and refer

cases appropriately to SLTs is important. Similarly, the role of SLTs in advising other staff on the appropriateness of referrals for additional support is equally crucial.

9.11 Many staff proposed that engagement in ELD activity should begin earlier, ideally at the antenatal stage in order to build awareness and encourage participation in ELD.

Screening and assessment

9.12 The use of appropriate screening and assessment tools was considered important in terms of identifying children's needs and providing evidence of progression. Staff welcomed the national use of SoGS as a child development tool whilst acknowledging that it is not a specialist tool for assessing speech and language development. Although universal training for using SoGS is provided across Wales, many staff highlighted inconsistencies in the tool's implementation and considered that the guidance for SoGS should be more prescriptive. The Welsh Government outlined several measures that were being put in place to reinforce the national training including a 'Trainer Network' and regular e-mails with further guidance. The role of SLTs in providing advice and guidance on the use of such tools was considered important.

Capacity and training

9.13 The majority of local authorities employ SLTs as part of their core teams. During visits, Flying Start co-ordinators emphasised the importance of SLT capacity in the planning, delivery and monitoring of the ELD entitlement. The role of SLTs in training and supporting other professionals such as advisory teachers, LAP staff and childcare staff was highly valued.

9.14 Flying Start co-ordinators and SLTs outlined a need for all staff to receive basic ELD training including an understanding of ELD norms and good practice in adult-child interaction. The need for

staff who spend more time with children to participate in more detailed accredited training was also highlighted.

9.15 Many local authorities suggested that staff should receive continued training or refresher courses to raise awareness of the importance of ELD.

Recommendations

9.16 The following recommendations are made on the basis of the review:

i. The Welsh Government could consider developing a transferable pack of written and digital ELD resources, which could be used by all local authorities to outline key messages relating to ELD and the benefits of the entitlement. These messages would be applicable for parents and staff. The development of these resources could be led by a group consisting of individuals with a mixed set of skills including SLTs, representatives of each of the entitlements and a parent.

ii. The profile of the ELD entitlement within Flying Start should be raised and it should be embedded as a cross-cutting entitlement within the Flying Start Health Visitor service, parenting support programmes and childcare.

iii. Information on the benefits of ELD and activities relating to the entitlement should be promoted to all parents earlier starting at the antenatal stage.

iv. Notable practice regarding activities that successfully engage high need families in ELD activities should be identified and disseminated to local authorities. This could be done via Flying Start co-ordinator meetings or established regional SLT networks.

v. All local authorities should employ SLTs as part of their core teams, with a particular focus on the ELD entitlement.

vi.   All Flying Start staff should receive a minimum level of training relating to ELD norms and good practice in adult-child interaction. This training should be overseen by a SLT.

vii.   Flying Start staff that spend a greater amount of time working with children (e.g. childcare staff) should be encouraged to undertake more detailed training relating to ELD. Where possible, this training should be accredited and planned by a SLT.

viii.   All staff using screening and assessment tools should receive training on the implementation of these tools to ensure that they are applied consistently.

Annex 1: Pro forma used to gather the views of Local authorities on ELD

The following questions were circulated to all Flying Start co-ordinators in December 2013 in order to collect their views as part of the review of practice.

Name:	
Role:	
Local Authority:	

1. What information about Language and Play / the Early Language Development entitlement is provided to families in your area? And by whom?

2. How are the benefits of the ELD services explained to families? How does this compare with Flying Start provision through other entitlements?

3. What assessment and identification tools do you use to identify the Early Language Development needs of families?

4. What referral plans and procedures do you have in place for the Early Language Development entitlement?

5. What Early Language Development services do you offer families through Flying Start? What generic ELD services are available alongside this?

6. What Language and Play/ Number and Play provision do you offer through Flying Start? What generic LAP/ NAP services are available alongside this?

7.	What evidence do you have to demonstrate the effectiveness of the above Early Language Development provision in improving language and communications skills?

8.	Please outline the number of full-time equivalent staff currently involved in delivering the Early Language Development entitlement of Flying Start?

	Number of FTE staff
Speech and Language Therapists employed through Flying Start (FTE)	
Other ELD specialists employed through Flying Start (FTE)	

9.	What are the roles of the wider team not employed through Flying Start in delivering the ELD entitlement? (e.g. childcare staff, Speech and Language Therapists, family centres, nursery nurses) What systems do you have in place to ensure that they are able to deliver this element effectively?

10.	How do you assess your staff's levels of understanding of Early Language Development?

11.	How do you measure children's progress in Early Language Development? What tools do you use to assess distance travelled?

12.	What systems do you have in place to ensure that the language needs of your bilingual/ multilingual population are met? In your response below, please refer to any systems for Welsh/English plus systems for minority ethnic languages

13. What are the barriers to effective practice to support Early Language Development?

(Please mark all that apply with an x)

Low parental awareness of ELD services	☐	Capacity in the workforce	☐
Low parental understanding of ELD services	☐	Availability of specialist staff	☐
Lack of demand for ELD services	☐	Availability of training for staff	☐
Limited staff awareness of ELD services	☐	Other (please expand below)	☐

Other (please expand below)

How can these barriers to effective practice be addressed?

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14. Would you like to be considered as one of the six Flying Start Partnerships that will be visited in early 2014 to explore these questions further?
(Visits will include interviews with Flying Start co-ordinators, ELD staff and, where possible, service users)

Yes ☐   No ☐

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15. Please note any further comments you have in relation to the Early Language Development entitlement of Flying Start below

Annex 2: Summary of the fieldwork

Table 3. Summary of the fieldwork undertaken during visits to five Local authorities

Local authorities	Fieldwork undertaken
Cardiff	Interview with Flying Start co-ordinator and speech and language therapy manager. Group discussion with two LAP staff and three speech and language therapists. Observation of baby LAP Group and informal discussion with six parents and one staff member.
Caerphilly	Group discussion with Flying Start co-ordinator, speech and language therapy manager, head of ELD entitlement and head of Health Visitor entitlement. Interview with parenting lead. Interview with advisory teacher and nursery key worker. Observation of family support worker delivering an ELD activity in the home and informal discussion with staff member and parents. Observation of advisory teacher delivering ELD activity at a nursery.
Denbighshire	Interview with Flying Start co-ordinator and head of ELD. Group discussion with two speech and language therapists, Flying Start co-ordinator and head of ELD. Interview with parent whose child had received one-to-one ELD support. Observation of speech and language therapist delivering ELD activity in childcare setting.
Ceredigion	Group discussion with Flying Start co-ordinator, SLT manager, speech and language therapist and advisory teacher. Observation of five parents receiving Elklan training from speech and language therapist. Informal discussion with five parents. Interview with manager of family drop-in centre. Observation of nursery staff delivering ELD activities with 2 and 3 year olds Discussions with nursery staff. Interview with primary school teacher responsible for class coming from Flying Start centre.
Conwy	Group discussion with Flying Start co-ordinator, SLT manager, head of Health Visitor service. Group discussion with five nursery staff who had received Elklan training. Observation of baby language and play session delivered by SLT. Informal discussion with three parents. Observation of language and play session delivered by advisory teacher. Informal discussion with four parents. Discussion with two speech and language therapists.

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