



Communication Friendly Settings for Early years - video transcript

A very warm welcome to this short clip about the EEF project to evaluate **Elklan's Communication Friendly Settings Programme for Early years (or CFS)**.

As part of the Department for Education's Early Years Recovery Programme, three Stronger Practice Hubs and the EEF are working together to fund Early Years settings' access to Elklan's Communication Friendly Settings Programme. The University of York, University of Leeds and the University of Sheffield will study the programme's influence on the knowledge, skills and confidence of the whole Early Years setting staff and the children's speech, language and communication development. This will be a randomised control efficacy trial.

Elklan's Communication Friendly Settings, Early years (or CFS) has two parts:

- Part 1: In-depth training for two practitioners per setting so that they have enhanced knowledge about SLC development and how to support all children with their communication development but particularly those who have, or are at risk of having, SLCN. These practitioners become Lead Communication Practitioners (LCPs).
- Part 2: To create a more communication friendly setting, the LCPs cascade five short training sessions to all staff. The staff then work as a team implementing small changes so that the setting environment and all adult child interactions support children's SLC.

The two elements will run concurrently. A copy of the timeline can be found on the webpage. This means there is a lot to do and it is really important that everyone involved knows the time that they need to commit so I'm going to outline the essential information here.



Speech and Language Support for
3-5s

Part 1: Speech and Language Support for 3-5s course for two practitioners (LCPs). This involves three elements:

- The first is completing 10 interactive self-study eLearning sessions. Each will take approximately one hour but can be done at the practitioner's ownpace at a time that suits them. However an e-learning session must be completed every week for 10 weeks before the practitioner attends the live webinar linked to that e-learning session.
- The second is attending a live group webinar involves one hour with an Elklan Tutor (four are extended to cover Part 2 (CFS) but this will be explained in a minute). These are practical, interactive webinars so the LCPs can discuss the implementation of strategies and share experiences in consistent small groups of about 10. This means committing to attend at the same time on the same day for ten weeks (excluding half-terms and holidays and stopping in early December). Once the programme starts LCPs will only be able to swap live webinar groups if there are exceptional circumstances. It is really important that the LCPs and setting managers understand this.
- The third element is the LCPs completing Learning Log tasks to consolidate and demonstrate learning. This involves an online learning log and the LCPs can gain a level 3 accreditation. Implementing planned activities might take an hour a week and writing up the Learning Log will take up to another hour a week. This must be completed on a weekly basis so that the workload is manageable and the LCPs benefit from the marking feedback given by their Elklan tutor.

Summary of the three 3-5s course elements:

1. Completing an interactive self-study e-learning session
2. Attending a live group webinar
3. Writing up the Learning Log

All the activity across the three elements will take each LCP a minimum of 4 hours a week for 10 weeks.

Nationally accredited by Elklan and OCN London



Part 2: The CFS element which involves the whole staff team

- The LCPs cascade five one-hour Communication Counts sessions to the whole setting staff.

- The LCPs will receive a hard copy manual and powerpoint presentations and each session is delivered after the LCP has covered the information through their 3-5s course.
- All setting staff must attend the Communication Counts sessions. However, staff will have access to online sessions if they are unable to attend the face-to-face training but they must still discuss each session with an LCP for a minimum of 20 minutes.
- The LCPs will support the whole staff team to make changes to their environment and their interactions with children to ensure the whole setting supports children's SLC.
- All staff will have tasks ('Challenges') to complete between the training sessions and all staff must complete five 10 minute e-questionnaires relating to each challenge.
- A link to the e-questionnaires will be emailed to all members of staff by their LCPs. This means all staff need access to a computer or laptop.
- It is helpful if the LCPs have a certain amount of IT skills and confidence for the smooth running of the programme.
- The LCPs use a compiled questionnaire report for each 'Challenge' to complete their Level 4 Learning Log and the setting can only achieve accreditation if each e-questionnaire is completed by 80% of the staff team.

All of this activity will take each member of staff at the setting an average of an hour a week for 10 weeks. It is therefore really important that the whole team are aware of this commitment and are given time to fully engage in the programme. This means time to attend the training sessions, implement strategies, reflect on the impact and complete the e-questionnaires.

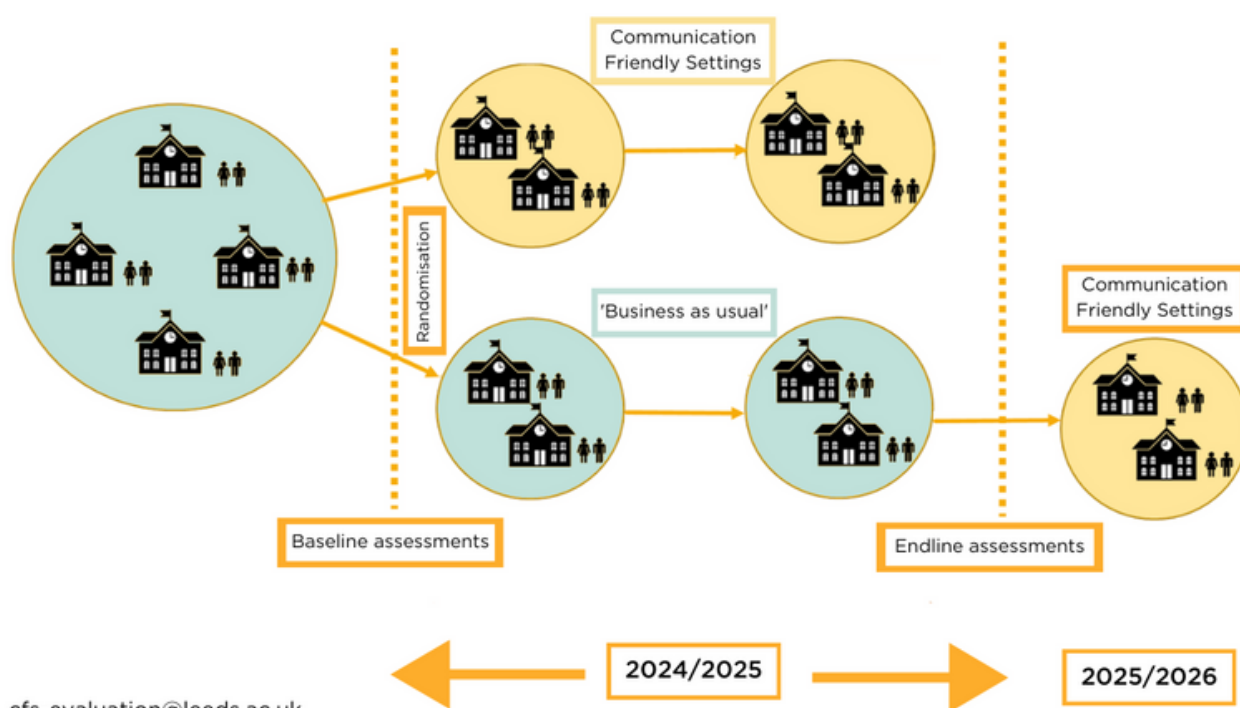
- The LCPs who are cascading the Communication Counts training need around 30 minutes to prepare each session and an hour a couple of weeks later to update their Level 4 Learning Log.
- Four of the weekly live webinars the LCPs attend (for their 3-5s course) are extended by 1-1½ hours to share experiences about implementing the cascade training with their peers. The timeline gives the details of these extensions.

The part 2 activities will take the LCPs an additional 2-2½ hours a week in addition to their 4 hours a week completing their 3-5s course. This gives a total of 6 hours a week but this will vary depending on the extended live webinars and Level 4 Learning Log.

This is an opportunity to take part in a randomised controlled research project and as such there are various commitments that are really important to be aware of.

The project is evaluating the impact on staff knowledge and confidence but also the impact on children aged 3-4. Because of the age of the children involved the whole project from pre to post programme assessments has to be achieved within one academic year because many of the children move to different settings. This means time is very short.

Parental consent collected by the setting will be needed for a sample group of 10-12 children to take part in pre and post-programme assessments. We need to complete the pre-programme assessments and start the training as soon as possible so that any impact on the children can be measured in the post-programme assessment (usually it takes six months to see progress in a child with SLCN between the intervention and reassessment). This means there is a lot to do in a short space of time but we can do it!



cfs-evaluation@leeds.ac.uk

As this is a randomised controlled trial, or research project, it means half the settings will receive the CFS programme from September 2024 (this is the intervention group). The other half act as a control group so the researchers can evaluate the difference between the children who attended settings who took part in the programme from those who did not.

Once the post intervention assessments for children at settings in both the intervention and control groups have taken place (June 2024) then the control group settings will be able to receive the programme. This means that every setting which enrolls will receive the fully funded programme, it's just that half need to wait until September 2025.

- The pre programme (baseline) child assessments will take place between September and October 2024.
- The randomisation will take place in October. This is when it is decided whether settings will be in the intervention group, and start their programme in September 2024, or the control group and start their programme in 2025.
- The online training needs to start at the beginning of October with the first live webinar one week later. These are important dates.

This means both ALL LCPs from ALL settings, whether in the intervention or control groups, will need to set aside time to attend their weekly live webinars over the 10 week period in which the CFS programme is run.

This is necessary even though only half the settings will start their training immediately, in September 2024, and the other half will wait until September 2025. We apologise for this but given the timeline, this is the only way we can get the webinar groups, LCPs and Tutors organised.

In September 2024, the LCPs from ALL the settings will be asked to select and prioritise their live webinar time slots. This means selecting the same time, on the same day, each week for 10 weeks. Once again, please remember that once the programme starts LCPs will only be able to swap live webinar groups if there are exceptional circumstances.

If you take part in this trial, it's a wonderful opportunity to make an important contribution towards the national body of knowledge and evidence-based practice.

Additionally, settings will receive:

- Fully funded CPD through the EEF and the SPHs.
- A contribution of approximately 50% of pay for the time the 2 LCPs need to complete parts 1 and 2.
- Additional payments will be made for facilitating the baseline and endpoint assessment of 10-12 children and for staff completing pre and post-evaluation surveys.

To this end, settings will receive £150 on completion of the pre-programme trial activities (November 2024) and £250 on completion of the post-programme activities (August 2025).

We're going to leave the last word to Hayley, one of our LCPs who completed the CFS programme. Thank you.