

Language For Life

By [Bath & North East Somerset Council](#) and [St John's Foundation](#), a registered charity

In partnership with St John's Foundation, Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES), the Language for Life programme is tackling early communication and language needs in two key areas of the local authority. By focusing on early intervention, this **area-specific, multi-agency initiative aims to improve long-term educational outcomes for children.**

Language for Life began in 2021 as a three-year multi-agency pilot funded by St John's Foundation. Closely aligned with the Foundation's Primary Empowerment Project, the programme addresses the persistent gap in educational outcomes between children receiving free school meals (Pupil Premium) and their peers in B&NES.

The pilot initially targeted early years settings in south-west Bath and south Keynsham, where participating settings have since been awarded the Language for Life Quality Mark. The programme is now entering its second rollout, a two-year initiative focusing on early years settings in the Somer Valley area.

The core aim of the programme is to "close the word gap" by equipping early years practitioners with the skills and resources to support children's communication and language development.

Key features of the programme include:

- Specialist support for early years practitioners through evidence-based toolkits.
- One-to-one guidance from a dedicated

speech and language therapist, working in partnership with the early years advisory team.

- Training and advice sessions, along with cluster support for practitioners.

The programme empowers early years settings to develop a deep understanding of communication and language development, ensuring that children are better prepared for their future educational journeys.

An independent evaluation of the programme's first two years by ImpactEd Evaluation demonstrated significant progress in children's speech and language skills.

First year (312 children screened):

- 40% of children were initially placed in the "red" category (significantly behind in speech and language skills), but this dropped to 27% by their final assessment.
- The "amber" category reduced from 36% to 23%.
- 50% of children achieved age-appropriate speech and language skills after a year of intervention.

Second year (580 children screened):

- 34% were categorised as "red" at their first screening, but this fell to just 14%.
- The "amber" group decreased from 28% to 15%.
- 71% of children were assessed as "green," indicating age-appropriate speech and language skills.

Children from English as an Additional Language (EAL) backgrounds and those eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium funding showed particularly strong progress.

The evaluation also highlighted the programme's impact on early years practitioners, who reported greater confidence in:

- Identifying speech, language, and communication difficulties among children.
- Delivering targeted support to meet individual needs.

Practitioners credited the dedicated training, resources, and collaboration with speech and language therapists for their improved ability to address communication challenges effectively.

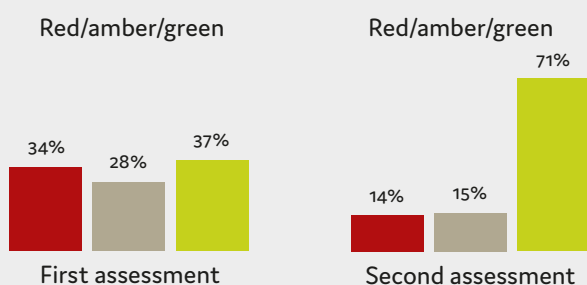
The **Language for Life** programme continues to grow, with a clear focus on expanding its reach and building upon the successes of its pilot phase. By fostering collaboration among local partners and investing in evidence-based strategies, the programme is making a measurable difference in children's speech and language development—and their future educational outcomes.

See more: [Language for Life - Making a Difference Together](#)

IMPROVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

Results for children and settings taking part in Language for Life in 2022-2023:

Percentage of children in different risk categories – 580 children



Practitioners' confidence in

identifying communication issues:

