

**Promoting pupil attainment and social
inclusion
by enhancing the spoken language skills
of children in Moss Bay Ward:
Phase One Report**

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1. Introduction to Project

1.1 Project Aim

The aim of this project is to promote educational attainment and social inclusion of children in an area of high deprivation, by enhancing their skills in spoken language.

The target for this stage of the phased project is to develop a research proposal for a pilot study that comprises a community-based language enrichment intervention initiative, which is tailored to the unique needs of the local community. It is anticipated that the pilot project outputs may subsequently be used to inform recommendations and planning for a wider roll-out of the initiative across the Region. In addition, the project findings will be used to underpin a bid for more substantial funding to assure future sustainability and more in-depth research into factors influencing effectiveness of the language enrichment initiative.

1.2 Project Rationale

In 2009, South Workington Partnership identified a priority concern relating to the educational achievement of children in the Moss Bay Ward. National comparative Education data sources for the Moss Bay Ward pupil attainment scores showed that literacy levels in this Ward have been consistently below the national average, as well as below the Cumbria average since 2003 (source, Key Stage 1 Writing scores at Level 3 ie children aged 7 years). These figures also demonstrated a significant decline in pupil attainment over the past decade. These alarming data have been masked by the aggregated scores for Allerdale and West Cumbria Locality, but now need to be urgently addressed.

A recent analysis of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) additionally demonstrated that the Moss Bay Ward in South Workington has deprivation scores for Education and Health within the lowest 10% nationally (source, Public Health Intelligence Team for North Cumbria). This Ward ranked the worst for multiple significant health indicators, and considerably below the Cumbrian average on all health indicators in the index.

It has been recognised that social deprivation and an impoverished language environment have a direct influence on lower pupil attainment, as well as vulnerability for children to experience social exclusion and an increased risk of entering the criminal justice system (source, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008). Over recent years there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of the Public Health role of Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) services for early intervention with children and young families, in promoting an enriched language environment and spoken language (oracy) skills. The emergent findings from evaluations of these SLT initiatives emphasise that the effectiveness of such input is maximised where these are tailored to the unique needs and priorities of the local setting.

1.3 Project Phases

This is a phased project, mirroring the distinctive project objectives detailed below. An application for funding to support this phased-project was submitted in June 2010 and was signed off in Spring 2011. The current funding from the Samuel Lindow Foundation covers Phases One and Two of this initiative.

Phase One: Scoping Exercise. A scoping exercise of relevant local demographic data for the designated cohort, current models of relevant services and initiatives, and local community engagement with those services. Relevant data will be collected as far as possible from existing data sources and will be compared to regional and national outcomes sources. A review of other relevant published initiatives will be reported.

Phase Two: Stakeholder Consultation. A consultation exercise with all relevant local stakeholders (including representatives from Education and Health, plus local families), to elicit perceptions of local barriers to accessing current service provision, as well as the reported priorities of the participants in this local setting for this cohort of children. The output from this Phase will be a proposed research protocol for a local research study that will comprise a pilot/feasibility intervention project.

Phase Three: Language Enrichment Intervention. A community-based intervention to boost the spoken language skills in a designated cohort, designed following the outcomes of Phases One and Two. This pilot intervention project is likely to comprise a maximum of a 12 week package of language-based activities across an agreed range of community locations (possibly with follow-up outcome measures 12 weeks after the end of the intervention). As well as direct intervention activities to enrich the children's language experiences, the project may include sessions for parents and other family members, teaching staff and classroom assistants (indirect interventions). Any children who have already been identified as requiring targeted and specialist SLT services (those children who have a diagnosed speech and language disorder) would continue to receive the standard SLT case management in addition to the community-based sessions specified in this project: this is explicitly not an initiative to substitute therapy services for children who may need them.

1.4 Project Advisory Group

An Advisory Group was convened at the outset of the project, to undertake responsibility for monitoring timely achievement of project milestones and deliverables. Invited members of the Advisory Group included key local stakeholders from Education and Health services. The list of Advisory Group members is attached as Appendix 2. A summary report of the first Advisory Group meeting is included below in section 6.1.

1.5 Project Reporting

The Principal Investigator will deliver a summary report at the end of each Phase of the project. Due to unanticipated delays to the launch date and during the conduct of Phase One, this first report comprises an overview of work completed to date within the remit of both Phases One and Two. The final section of this report comprises a list of actions for the Principal Investigator to complete Phase Two. The report at the end of Phase Two will comprise a protocol for the pilot research study (Phase Three) which will be agreed by the Advisory Group.

2. Overview of supporting evidence

2.1 Importance and significance

The topic of this project is recognised as an international concern, as shown in the selection of comparative international sources below. Section 4.2 of this report also notes a number of recent and current national government-led campaigns to raise awareness of this issue. In the UK context, the timeliness of the issue is demonstrated by the recent high number of related government papers and policy guidance publications. The main documentary sources that focus on improving outcomes for children are listed for reference in section 8 of this report and encompass directives on poverty (Frank Field), Early Intervention (Graham Allen), Early Years Education – Speaking and Listening (Clare Tickell). The sections below additionally refer to empirical results from regional and local projects closer to home.

This section of the report is not presented as an exhaustive critical review, but as an indicative overview of the related strands which underpin the rationale for the current project. For this purpose, **key points are highlighted in the text**, and there is also the inclusion of **bullet point lists** where helpful.

2.2 Prevalence of speech and language difficulties

The following key points highlight the incidence and prevalence of children across UK who have speech, language and communication difficulties:

- Speech and language delay is the most common difficulty experienced by pre-school children (Law et al, 2000)
- One in twenty parents will have concerns regarding their children’s speech and language (Hall 2004). However, not all of these children will warrant specific intervention from a Speech Therapist.
- **Up to 84% of children and young people (CYP) in some socio-economically disadvantaged populations have speech and language skills that are significantly lower than their peers (Hartshorne, 2006)**
- 7% of five year olds entering school in England – (nearly 40,000 children in 2007) have significant difficulties with speech and/or language.
- **Without the right support, 50-90% of Pre-school children with speech and language delay risk experiencing difficulties with literacy.**
- 1% of five year olds entering school in England - more than 5,500 children in 2007 - have the most severe and complex speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).
- 10% of all CYP with SLCN have a long term and persistent communication disability.
- Up to two third of Young Offenders have SLCN /one third of these not recognised throughout school life.

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2.3 Factors influencing children's language development

The following sections present a brief overview of the research evidence for factors that have been shown to contribute to differences in language competences that are directly linked to socioeconomic status.

2.3.1 Mother-child interaction patterns

The mother-child interaction comprises a range of component aspects, including joint attention, attachment and the mother's responsiveness and has been confirmed as a predictor of the child's future language competences (Bee et al, 1982). There has been some evidence of mothers in less well-advantaged homes playing and talking less with their children (Farran & Haskins, 1980): however, differences in interaction style are certainly not exclusively correlated with socioeconomic status. Hart & Risley's (1999) study of 42 US families demonstrated distinctive differences in both the quantity and quality of language directed to young children in contrasting socioeconomic groups, based on monthly visits to these families until the child was 3 years old, plus a follow-up visit at 10 years old. Their three study groups equated to UK professional/business class; blue-collar workers, and low-working class.

2.3.2 Quantity and quality of child-directed speech

The average number of words per hour addressed to the children in Hart & Risley's three study groups showed a very considerable range: from only 600 words per hour in the lowest socioeconomic group, to over 2000 words per hour in the most advantaged families. This was also matched by the professional/business parents spending approximately double the time interacting with their children than the low-working class parents; and more than treble the frequency of affirmative feedback to their children. These authors asserted that children will gain a greater potential advantage from the relative amount of time their parents talk to them, than from any other benefits of their parents' wealth.

2.3.3 Home environment

The influence of the language environment in the home has been shown to impact directly on the child's language development, as well as their early reading skills and later reading comprehension level (Snow, 2001), as well as for other developmental outcomes. However, this is not exclusively related to socioeconomic status. Lawrence & Shipley's work (1996) into racial as well as economic groupings, found differences in the home language environments of 3 – 5 year old children which they attributed to "distance from mainstream culture" (Labov & Harris, 1986).

2.3.4 School environment

Striking differences have been noted between children from different home backgrounds in nursery classes. Interactions in the classroom between staff and groups of children are quite different from parent-child exchanges; mostly comprising question-answer patterns. Topic language in the classroom is mostly decontextualised, and is also adult-led rather than

initiated by the child. Children from less advantaged backgrounds have been seen to be more passive and more dependent than they are in their own homes (Tizzard & Hughes, 1994). This in turn appears to influence the way in which classroom staff adapt their language level when speaking to those children, so there is a direct influence on the way children are taught in school and on their learning (Ginsborg, 2006).

2.3.5 Link between spoken language and literacy development

The link between children's spoken language and the development of literacy skills has been unequivocally demonstrated. A child's potential for success in early reading is underpinned by their competences in phonological awareness (Cooper et al, 2002); metalinguistic awareness (Chaney, 2000); narrative ability (Roth et al, 2004); vocabulary (Dickinson et al, 2003); and semantic skills (Roth et al, 2002). A longitudinal study was conducted with over 1,000 children in UK aged between 3 – 9 years, to monitor their progress in reading (NICHD, 2005). Reading was measured by decoding skills and word recognition at approximately 4 ½ years, then by comprehension at approximately 8 ½ years. The strongest findings from that study showed that the correlation between spoken language skills at ages 3 – 4 years was highest in low socioeconomic groups. This was interpreted to be even more critically significant for children whose home environments were less likely to promote reading awareness (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002).

2.4 Features of children's language in social disadvantage

2.4.1 Features of children's language

Children with poor spoken language skills will experience difficulty in all the following:

- Expressing themselves through speaking, writing or non-verbal communication
- Understanding the spoken or written word, body language and facial expressions
- Listening to what is said to them
- Remembering the information they receive
- Expressing their feeling and emotions in an appropriate way, eg they may use violence instead of words to express themselves
- Relating to others in socially acceptable ways

(Source = Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 2010)

The following list highlights key features of language used by children in socially-deprived settings compared with normative data samples:

- **Quantitative and qualitative differences**
- **Less diverse and rich**
- **No differences in phonological skills, but do have difficulty in meta-phonological skills**
- **Poor narrative skills, especially in the most chaotic homes**
- **Persistent receptive difficulties up to 13 years +**

- **No difference in word-learning potential “fast mapping actions”**

Seminal work with UK families in the 1970s by Joan Tough showed that young children from disadvantaged families were less likely – or less able - to talk about experiences in the past or present; to talk about possible future events or to plan for them; to problem-solve; empathise with others’ feelings; engage in pretend play (Tough, 1997). Subsequent bodies of research have confirmed Tough’s original longitudinal work, to show that **these differences will be persistent over time if there is no direct intervention**. Recent work has also confirmed that **these children have the potential to improve their language skills, given appropriate input, and that these gains can be achieved relatively rapidly**.

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2.4.2 Features of Parents’ language

The following list highlights key features of language used by parents in socially-deprived settings compared with normative data samples:

- **Reduced quality & quantity of language used**
- **Limited vocabulary sets**
- **Reduced complexity of care-giver speech**
- **Limited amount of decontextualised language**

- **Consistent pattern over time – this does not change without intervention**

It has also been unequivocally demonstrated that these significant differences in the way parents speak to their children is stable and does not change without direct intervention. **The effectiveness of various approaches and strategies to enhance parental language is therefore crucial to influencing the future life chances of these children.**

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2.5 Impact of language skills on academic potential and social inclusion

Poor development of speech and language skills is directly related to diminished cognitive outcomes and educational attainment. This inevitably leads to lower employability prospects for these children. Psychological well-being and mental health outcomes have also been shown to be linked to poor communication skills; with the consequence of higher

engagement with the criminal justice sector – as referenced above (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 2010).

Children's understanding and awareness of emotion, and their skills in emotional self-regulation in the pre-school years is known to be a significant predictor of their future social competence (Farmer, 2006). To be well-adjusted children need to be able to have a high level of voluntary control over their attention and behaviour (Eisenberg et al, 2001). Some mothers of pre-school children who have poorer receptive language have been reported to use less sophisticated strategies to help their children to regulate their emotions, than parents of children with normal language development (Stansbury & Zimmermann, 1999). Another related and essential aspect is the development of the child's self-esteem. The relationship between language skills and self-esteem has recently begun to be investigated; showing that for children with poor language skills, self-esteem decreases as they become teenagers (Conti-Ramsden & Botting, 2004). Children who have lower literacy and educational attainment are also at risk of developing lower self-worth directly related to this.

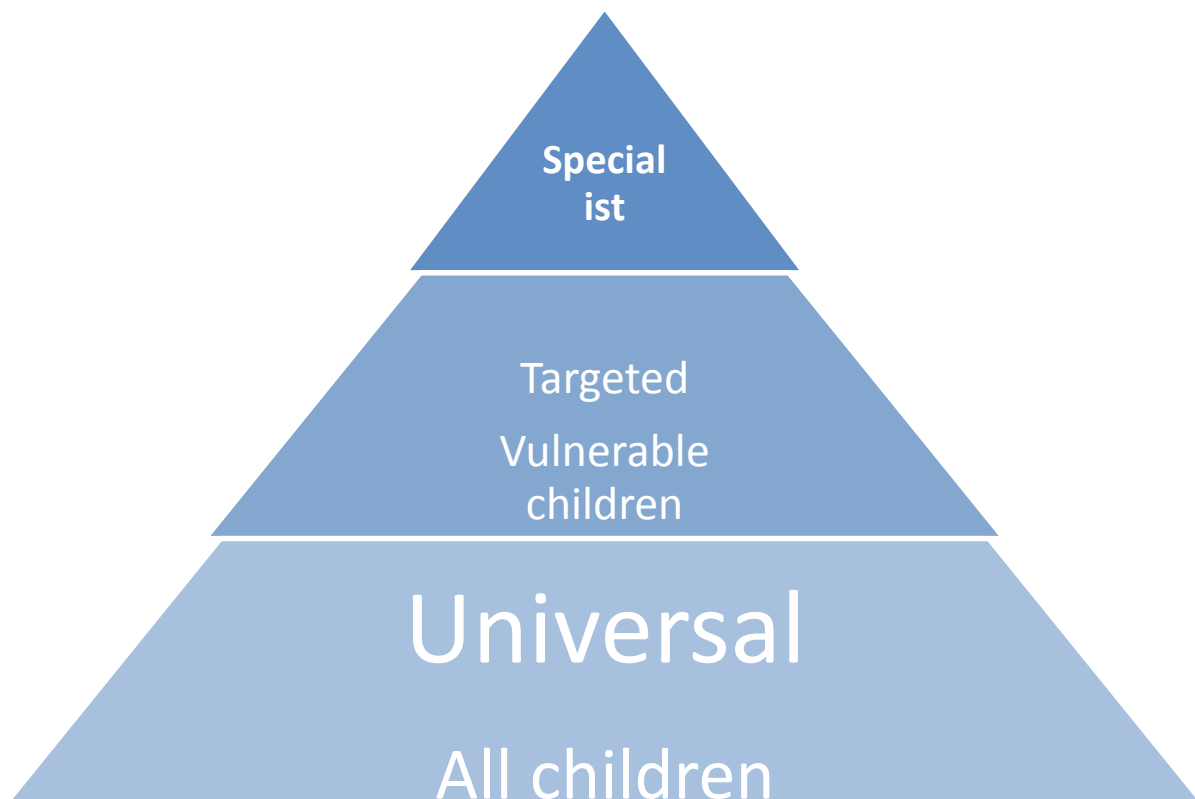
Research also highlights that as a consequence of poor parenting, children are more likely to develop early violent behaviour - leading to their involvement in crime in the future. It is estimated that without any intervention, 40% of children with early behavioural difficulties will go on to develop conduct disorder (Hutchings, 2007). It has also been shown that 40% of 8 year olds with conduct disorder are repeatedly convicted of crimes such as theft vandalism and assault in adolescence (NES Psychology, 2010).

2.6 Implications for service provision

Statutory services across UK are currently all undergoing hugely significant re-structuring, but the following key issues and implications for services still need to be addressed:

- ▶ A continuum of services, designed around the family, is needed
(Universal, Targeted and Specialist service provision * see figure below)
- ▶ Joint working is critical there needs to be integrated local services built around needs of children and young people (CYP).
- ▶ Investment is needed in developing skills of the wider workforce to improve outcomes for children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)
- ▶ There is an urgent need for effective “Joined up” commissioning of services
- ▶ There is a need to involve service users in planning and delivery of services
- ▶ There is a need to promote and safeguard the welfare of CYP

The figure below represents the hierarchy of Speech and Language Therapy services required to address these service issues (source = Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy, 2008).



SLT role in supporting universal outcomes for within Children's Centres

- ▶ Primarily one of advice and training to parents, early years professionals
- ▶ Delivery of national (i.e. ECAT) / local training programmes as part of a wider training team
- ▶ Available at specified times in settings to offer
 - general advice through training or drop in sessions
 - triage services to the wider workforce and to parents and carers.
 - Sign posting /referral on to other support services

3 Social and political context

3.1 Deprivation indices

The figure below shows the West Cumbria localities (source = Social Investment Plan for West Cumbria, 2009 <http://www.westcumbria.gov/Default.aspx?page=312>)



Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) measure the relative deprivation between areas across a range of factors. It is not an absolute measure of deprivation. It is possible to say that an area with a higher score is more deprived than an area with a lower score; but twice the score does not necessarily mean twice the deprivation. A low score does not mean no or little deprivation, just less deprivation. It is not possible to compare scores between different aspects of deprivation, for example between Health and Education, even in the same place, as they are measuring different things.

The Social Investment Plan used the most appropriate (IMD) measure for each of the Plan's four key priorities, mapped to the 12 West Cumbria localities. **Workington locality** was reported to have the following rankings at the time this report was published (pages 29-30):

- **Life Chances and Aspiration** (IMD Education, Skills and Training) = 4th most deprived
- **Poverty & Exclusion** (IMD Income) = 2nd most deprived
- **Facilities & Services** (IMD Barriers to Housing and Services) = 2nd least deprived
- **Health & Well-Being** (IMD Health Deprivation and Disability) = 2nd most deprived

These rankings underpin the original drivers for the current project proposal that was submitted by the South Workington Neighbourhood Partnership manager, as cited in section 1 of this report.

3.2 Regional community issues

The Social Investment Plan for West Cumbria "Communities that Work" was launched in September 2009. The most highly relevant statements have been highlighted below, to reinforce the timeliness of the current project. The document can be accessed at the following link: Social Investment Plan for West Cumbria
<http://www.westcumbria.gov/Default.aspx?page=312>

The Social Investment plan identifies positive features of communities as being: *"active, safe, vibrant, harmonious and inclusive communities with a sense of community identity and belonging in which there is:*

- *Tolerance, respect and engagement with people from different cultures, background and beliefs.*
- *Friendly, co-operative and helpful behaviour in **neighbourhoods**.*
- *Opportunities for cultural, leisure, community, sport and other activities.*
- *Low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour with visible, effective and community-friendly policing.*
- ***Social inclusion and good life chances for all**"* (page 7).

Opportunities for community development are identified around the following four key issues identified for the region (page 10):

- ***Life chances and aspiration.***
- *Poverty and exclusion.*
- *Facilities and services.*
- *Health and well-being.*

*"Primary school pupils in West Cumbria do as well as anywhere; even those who have the toughest start in life are catching up their peers by the age of 11. But too often by 16, **the gap between those from the poorest and wealthiest neighbourhoods is back where it was pre-school**; the progress in "narrowing the gap" made in primary education is reversed. This is the case irrespective of the secondary school attended; **what counts is the home and the community**. Where there is a culture clash between the community and school, attainment tails off, horizons narrow, confidence is damaged, and initiative is lost. Too often, those who succeed at school have to move away and are lost to the community. **Those who remain can have a negative attitude to learning and a low take up of education throughout life.***

If our communities can be built around education, breaking down that culture barrier, we can use that strength of community to provide a launching-pad for confidence and aspiration, rather than a safe retreat from it. Thus our life chances are improved and our communities are stronger for it. Only active communities can do this” (page 11).

The document specifies the following actions to address this issue (page 11, item 1.1):

- *Learning is valued and promoted within the home. People expect to achieve and learning is celebrated.*
- *Involving parents and other members of the community in supporting children’s learning.*
- *Community Learning Champions to work with groups who less frequently access adult learning.*

3.3 Local neighbourhood issues

The Social Investment Plan (2009) affirms that:

- **a neighbourhood approach** to raising aspirations and mobilising the community is needed
- attitudes to education and work tend to be affected by **local contexts**
- raising aspirations is complex and requires a **multi-agency approach**
- working together is more effective and easier at the most **localised level**.

It is noted that strong local networks are often a source of empowerment, strength and support. However they can also constrain individuals to familiar choices and locations.

Attitudes are often very localised, being **influenced by social norms and networks**, plus local economic and employment histories. Evidence suggests that campaigns to shift attitudes need to be **precisely targeted, often to a very small geographical area**. Changing attitudes and behaviours related to raising aspirations in deprived neighbourhoods will **require an in depth understanding of the attitudinal and behavioural barriers encountered within different segments of the community**.

There is already a very significant track record of successful neighbourhood initiatives within this locality, which includes projects explicitly focused on supporting parenting and family intervention projects. These Interventions are of direct relevance to the experience and expertise that will be required to inform the effective design and delivery of any future initiatives.

3.4 Influences on aspiration and attainment

The Department for Children, Schools and Families has placed increasing emphasis on the **motivations, attitudes and behaviours that enable children to fulfil their potential**. In particular, policies have focused on the impact that young people’s aspirations (and those of their parents) can have on educational attainment. Education policy has been increasingly

concerned with what happens outside the classroom –recognising the **crucial role of parents and families. Increasing attention has been paid to school readiness, parenting capacity and the home learning environment, especially in the early years.** However it has also been acknowledged that there needs to be an emphasis on the broader influences on young people and their attitudes –particularly those within communities.

Studies of aspirations and attainment (Cabinet Office, Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008) have demonstrated that not all deprived communities are alike. Parents are the most important influence on their children, but in certain neighbourhoods, children are less likely to have high aspirations. Community characteristics associated with low aspirations include:

- Close knit social networks
- Sense of isolation from broader opportunities
- History of economic decline
- Low levels of educational attainment

There is evidence that a **“locally-tailored behavioural change approach”** that mobilises a community towards a goal of supporting the children and young people may be most effective in improving outcomes. This has been defined as constructive local partnership working, engaging social capital bonding between close family and friends (Putnam, 1995).

3.5 Early Years Interventions

Despite unprecedented levels of investments, **education has failed to break the link between attainment and family background.** Too Much, Too Late (Social Market Foundation <http://www.smf.co.uk/too-much-too-late-life-chances-and-spending-on-education-and-training.html>) argues that this will not change significantly as long as the pattern of spending on education and training continues to offer a far greater public subsidy to tertiary than preschool education.

Based on strong evidence of the contribution of early education to improvements in school attainment, the report proposes a reallocation of spending in the medium term in favour of children under five. **This report argues that expanding opportunity can only be achieved by a reallocation of spending on education and training in favour of the under-fives.** Given current constraints in the public finances and competing priorities for investment, a reallocation of spending would provide the additional investment needed to offer all children under five access to the affordable, high quality services that will give them the best start in school.

“There is robust evidence that expenditure in the preschool years gives the highest rate of return on investment in human capital” (Wilson, 2010)

Language is one of the most crucial elements of a child's development at this age and language delay has been identified as a highly sensitive marker of child neglect. (Over 80% of preschool children in care have language delay) (Wilson, 2010). Reading to a child regularly at 3 years old was estimated to be twice as important as family income for a child's development at age 5 (Oxfam, 2010). Other comparative research studies indicate that the UK performs poorly compared to Europe. At 30 months 10% of children in Scotland were identified as having some degree of language delay, double the rate compared to Sweden (Wilson, 2010).

3.6 Working with communities

The West Cumbria Social Investment Plan (2009) confirms that neighbourhood renewal and community empowerment policies have recognised low levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem in some deprived communities. The conclusions are that:

- **Young people with low educational aspirations are concentrated in certain types of (deprived) neighbourhood**
- **Young people and their parents are influenced by the people and places where they live**
- **A neighbourhood approach to raising aspirations makes sense**

Initiatives should aim to build community pride, skills and confidence.

3.7 Working with Schools

The Social Investment Plan for West Cumbria (2009) identifies a wide range of recommendations, including a number that specify the key significance of schools within the local communities (page 18-20):

- *Schools are at the centre of sustainable neighbourhoods by providing community resources and venues for social enterprise, community facilities and public services*
- *Support to schools for out-of school activities, including breakfast clubs and after-school activities which involve parents and community groups*
- *Extend support for family learning*
- *Extend and continue Parenting Plus, Triple P programme, and intensive family support targeting families with new babies to promote bonding and attachment*
- *Resource Children's Centres and ensure they are supported by links to schools and primary health care facilities*
- *Children and families have access to health care and parenting support*

3.8 Working with families

Comparative international studies relating to working with families show that the **availability and uptake up of high quality parenting education in Sweden was identified as a particularly effective strategic approach**. Evidence shows that 95% of brain development occurs between birth and age 3 and during this time parents have the responsibility to ensure that many important skills are developed such as language, listening and behaviour:

“There are no bad parents, only untrained parents... No one taught me to be a parent. When I had my three children, I did what most people do: I copied my own parents. That is fine for those who had good parenting, but those who did not tend to replicate the cycles of abuse and violence.” (Hosking, Finance Committee Official Report, 2010)

In the UK, 11.5% of children start school without the behavioural skills they need and are subsequently more likely to drop out of the education system (NESTA, 2010). **School un-readiness was also identified as having negative effects on the other children in classroom**, as highlighted in Hosking’s comparative study into the performance of children in Switzerland, Slovenia and England (Hosking, 2010).

4 Review of relevant initiatives & resources

4.1 Key approaches

The following table illustrates a classification for the wide range of initiatives and resources listed in this section of the report. Consideration of these categories will be helpful in finalising the specific objectives of the Phase Three intervention project.

Type of initiative	Examples
National campaigns for awareness raising	<i>Talk to Your Baby</i> <i>Hello</i>
Initiatives for local implementation	<i>Narrative Nursery</i>
Training sessions and Parenting programmes	<i>Talking Tots</i>
Training specifically for teenage mums	<i>Talk 2 Baby</i>
Caregiver support	<i>HomeStart, Family Visitors</i>
Material support for literacy	<i>Book bags, story sacks, Reach out and Read</i>
Shared book reading schemes	<i>Dialogic Reading Programme</i>
Training for relevant professionals	<i>Lets Talk, Stoke Speaks Out</i>

4.2 National campaigns to promote language skills

- **Talk to Your Baby Campaign (2003)** UK National Literacy Trust
http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/talk_to_your_baby
- **PEAL Parents, Early Years and Learning programme** - DfES funded project 2006-08 to promote effective best practice in working with parents to engage them in their child's learning
- **First Five Years Fund** <http://www.ffyf.org/> Early childhood education for disadvantaged children in the United States
- **Hello Campaign England (2011)** <http://www.hello.org.uk/> The campaign aims are to raise awareness of the impact of poor communication skills for children. The end of the year-long campaign will be marked by the launch of a Legacy plan and impact evaluation report.

4.3 Examples of initiatives to promote language skills

The following list is intended to be **illustrative but not exhaustive**. **The selected exemplars are all “universal service” initiatives** and do not include services for children who have recognised developmental difficulties (for example the Portage educational home visiting service). The list also does not include generic services such as Sure Start and Children’s Centres: it is recognised that many of these teams incorporate a dynamic focus on supporting children’s language skills through initiatives which have been carefully tailored to meet the local community setting.

- **Narrative Therapy** UK based programme for children in for Key Stage, 1 Becky Shanks, (2002)
- **Nursery Narrative** UK based pre-school version for 3-5 years, Judith Carey (2003)
- **Talking Tots** UK based parenting session within Salford Sure Start initiative, Liz Baldwin (2003)
- **The Language Tree** UK based training approach for Early Years practitioners, Linda Whitworth & Christine Carter (2004)
- **ACT! Adult-Child Interaction Training for Nursery Staff** UK based training approach for Early Years practitioners, Sarah Hulme (2005)
- **Lets Talk** UK based intensive training programme for Early Years workers Bibiana Wigley (2010)
- **Talk 2 Baby Project** – A Swansea-based project run by a Midwife and a Speech and Language Therapist, to teach pregnant teenagers and new mums how to talk to their babies.
- **Stoke Speaks Out** – UK based partnership project in a city-centre context to promote parent-child attachment and positive parenting through training sessions for professionals.
- **Partnership Pilot, Derby City Council** – UK based specific focus on enhancing children’s speech and language skills across the 0-7 years cohort through a range of practitioner approaches
- **FAST Families and Schools Together** A US based 8-week programme where parents are asked to commit to a range of activities including giving their child 15 minutes of undivided attention every day; learning ‘family play’, and shared mealtimes. There are currently plans to train 8,000+ practitioners in UK.
- **Caregiver Language Stimulation Programme** (Oetting, Pruit & Farho, 2010) – US based projects to promote enhanced parental language
- **Novel Word learning Intervention** (Justice, Walpole & Meier, 2005) – US based ten-week programme to boost children’s language learning
- **Decontextualised language intervention** (Morgan & Goldstein, 2004) – US based programme to promote explanatory talk and “text-to-life utterance” use.
- **Specific commenting intervention** (Hockenberger, Goldstein & Haas, 2004) – US based programme to promote change in caregiver-child interaction behaviour.

- **Dialogic Reading Programme** (Whitchurch) – US based programme to teach an enhanced book reading technique to parents to promote more active engagement with their child
- **Reach out and Read** <http://www.reachoutandread.org> (High, 2000) – US based initiative for community partnerships in providing book resources for pre-school children

4.4 Resources to promote language skills

4.4.1 Paper-based resources

There are a very large number of paper-based resources, many of which are available as free downloads from the internet, particularly linked to recent national campaigns as noted above. Whilst a full list of recommended sources is given in section 8 of this report, **a small number merit mention here as exemplars of high quality materials.** These include advice and top tips for story-telling, reading, songs, rhymes and games; as well as clear information about normal developmental milestones in children’s spoken language skills. Most resources are designed for young parents, but there are additional information sheets and advice for a range of healthcare and educational professionals. There are other commercially available resources, some of which are excellent quality and represent good value for money; but those have not been listed here.

- **First Words** – ICAN poster showing key milestones in communication behaviours with familiar examples and family-friendly advice.
- **Top Tips to develop children’s speech and language** – ICAN poster guide for Early Years Practitioners
- **Talk Together** – ICAN 4-page booklet for parents explaining communication development and giving simple advice on promoting parent-child conversations
- **Share a Story** – poster for parents with tips for reading with your child.
- **Top Tips for Developing Talk** –Hello Campaign poster for parents
- **Raa Raa the Noisy Lion** – Hello Campaign TV character, with ten-point plan for parents with pre-schoolers at TV time
- **Listen Up** –Hello Campaign games pack

4.4.2 Video and DVD resources

As for the paper-based resources, there are a number of relevant video resources currently available. These have all been produced for specific purposes, hence only those which may potentially be useful as resources to be used within the current project have been selected.

- **Speech Language and Hearing Milestones Birth to age Five** DVD available from the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA)
- **Talk 2 Baby DVD** This video features pregnant teenagers and new mums in Swansea who took part in a project jointly-run by a Midwife and a Speech and Language Therapist. The teenage mums talk about what they have learned about the importance of early parent-child bonding, and the film shows them playing with their babies. The DVD format was selected for dissemination as a more user-friendly media for this target group. As well as a concern about poor literacy skills, it was also acknowledged that these young girls are likely to be given large numbers of paper-based information which they may well not read through. Additional spin-off benefits recorded as a result of this project included the development of a close network and sense of belonging for the nine girls who took part, as well as improved self-esteem and no evidence of post-natal depression, which is known to be more common in this population.

5 Scoping exercise

5.1 Meetings and consultations

5.1.1 South Workington Neighbourhood Partnership

Meetings in December 2010 with Mark Fryer in his role as Neighbourhood partnership manager. Discussions specifically focussed on the key issues and priorities for the local community context as well as the conduct and outcomes of other relevant recent and current initiatives.

5.1.2 Cumbria County Council

Meeting in December 2010 with the Director and Assistant Director of Children's Services. Discussions specifically focussed on the key issues and priorities for the Local Authority services and the anticipated impact of the imminent restructures. Full support for the proposed project was affirmed, including information and input from the School Improvement Team as appropriate.

Meeting in January 2011 with Richard Cox School Improvement Team Leader. Detailed discussion of potential alternative approaches to outcome measures, dependent on the final project design and intervention objectives. Full support for the proposed project was affirmed, including information and input from the School Improvement Team as appropriate.

5.1.3 Howgill Family Centre, Whitehaven

Discussions in February 2011 with Russell Norman, Director of the Howgill Centre explored the possibility of designing a comparative element for the Phase Three intervention project. Although there is not an exact duplication of geography, there would potentially be a good match for a comparison cohort of children related to population demographics, health, unemployment and deprivation indices.

Examples of relevant initiatives run by the Howgill Centre include:

- PACT (Parenting and Children Together)
- Come & Play
- Story Sacks
- Talking Tots
- Speech and language group

The challenge of selecting appropriate and relevant outcome measures for complex intervention initiatives was also discussed, particularly in relation to evaluation designs previously utilised by Howgill Centre. The Howgill team work closely with Cumbria County Council staff, including the Early Years School Improvement Team. The Centre also has

their own Analysis manager who has agreed to contribute advice on the proposed Phase Three project design options.

5.1.4 Cumbria PCT Speech and Language Therapy Service

Meeting in December 2010. Discussions specifically focussed on the key issues for service delivery in the local community context as well as the conduct and outcomes of other relevant recent and current initiatives.

Consultation event in January 2011 with the paediatric Speech and Language Therapy team for West Cumbria. The meeting incorporated an overview of service provision across this locality, particularly specific examples of universal services: which included a “Family Learning” initiative based at Victoria Infants School, and the implementation of Nursery Narrative (as listed in section 3 of this report under resources for promoting language development). The event also incorporated a structured group session using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT), to generate an extensive list of considerations related to running community-based language enhancement initiatives in this locality. The output from this session is reported below.

5.2 Nominal Group Exercise with SLT team

The NGT approach was selected for this consultation session with the SLT team for the purpose of generating the most exhaustive list of items possible to address the question posed (VandeVen & Delbecq, 1974; Bartunek & Murnighan, 1984; Taylor-Powell, 2002). One major advantage of NGT is that it avoids two common problems caused by group interviews and Focus Groups. Group interviews often lack a clear structure and focus and often it is reported that dominant individuals may have potentially influenced other members of the group. NGT has the clear advantage of minimizing differences and ensuring relatively equal participation. Other advantages include producing a large number of ideas and providing a sense of closure of the consultation activity that is often not found in less structured group methods.

In this case, the aim was to elicit insights into the **perceived opportunities and challenges for running a community-based language enhancement initiative in this locality.**

The exercise generated over 30 distinctive themes, which grouped into three over-arching categories of factors that will influence the potential success of these initiatives:

- Local ownership
- Participants’ priorities
- Sustainability

The key implications of these themes are represented in the figure below, and will prove to be a valuable checklist for the features of the Phase Three project design.

There has already been some very strong multi-disciplinary and cross-agency working across this locality and the consensus was that the proposed intervention project should **maximise the use of the existing experience**. The multi-agency “Narrowing the Gap” project was cited as an example of good practice.

Another emergent theme was the **support for an activity-based intervention, in contrast to a predominantly literacy-based intervention**; particularly in respect of potentially low levels of parental literacy.

Cycles of poor parenting styles was deemed to be a priority concern. It was proposed that there may be some local grandparents who may be invited to jointly plan and run sessions within the intervention project, as a way of establishing some stronger role models and **Community Champions**.



6 Advisory Group meetings

6.1 Initial meeting of the Advisory Group

May 17th 2011, Southfield Technology College

After an introduction to the project aims and background context, the Advisory Group discussed and agreed that the proposed intervention project (Phase Three) must address each of the following points:

1. **Engage with local community stakeholders**
2. **Maximise the experience and expertise of local stakeholders**
3. **Optimise the known (and anticipated) motivators for local families**
4. **Empower local families, especially “hard to reach” families**
5. **Focus explicitly on spoken language skills**
6. **Address challenges of sustainability of the (anticipated) impact**
7. **Generate tangible outputs including relevant resources**
8. **Demonstrate measurable positive benefits** (appropriate outcome measures to be determined, dependent upon the nature of the intervention activities).

The following notes comprise supplementary commentary to the above points:

“**Local stakeholders**” are those who may participate in delivery of the proposed intervention project, as well as those who are intended to benefit from it.

Initial plans were discussed for a **consultation event with parents** of children attending Victoria Infants School. It was agreed that the optimal timing for this will be at 9 am on a school-day morning, immediately after parents have dropped off children in class. The content and conduct of the session are to be agreed with the Head and Deputy at the school. It is likely that the session will incorporate screening of a short video, plus a structured but informal exercise to elicit parents’ comments. A video produced in the US was initially considered (First Five Years Fund); but a recent DVD featuring teenage mothers in Wales (Talk to Baby) may be more relevant and appropriate. [Each of these items is listed in section 4 of this report]. The conduct of this consultation event will be finalised at the second meeting of the Advisory Group.

Stakeholder support from groups who wish to be actively engaged in the implementation of the proposed project was very significant:

The staff at **Victoria Infants School** have highly relevant experience and expertise to offer this initiative; including Family Learning sessions and pre-nursery sessions in partnership with Health Visitor services. The use of the school was offered as a **venue for the parent consultation session**, as well as a **base for the intervention project**. This would resonate strongly with the Social Investment Plan target noted in section 3.1 of this report. The school have **retrospective pupil assessment data** which is

collected routinely every six weeks, which could be utilised as comparative data for prospective cohorts of pupils in a research design.

The team at the **Howgills Centre** have **highly relevant experience of parent support initiatives** which they are willing to contribute to the planning of this project.

The **Speech and Language Therapy** team in Cumbria are **actively supportive of this initiative** (see consultation session reported above in section 5.2) and also have **experience of delivery of community-based universal services** to promote and enhance language development in pre-school children.

The (former) **Neighbourhood Partnership** networks continue to be actively supportive of this initiative and have invaluable insights and knowledge of local community issues and priorities.

6.2 Next Advisory Group meetings

Second meeting: Dates currently circulated for a meeting in late September 2011

The agenda items for this meeting are to include:

- 1. Feedback comments and questions on the Phase One report**
- 2. Discussion of a detailed proposal for the parent consultation session**
- 3. Recommendations for any further stakeholder contacts**

Following this meeting, the Principal Investigator will undertake the consultation session with parents and forward a summary report to the Advisory Group members.

Third meeting: (provisionally early November 2011)

The Principal Investigator will submit the Phase Two report to the Advisory Group members for discussion of the following points:

- 1. Recommended protocol for a pilot intervention research project (Phase Three)**
- 2. Action plan for submission of application/s for required ethical and governance approvals**
- 3. Proposals for securing funding to cover the intervention project costs**

The research design challenges for an intervention study of this nature have been identified from the outset and these are listed below (section 5.2). However, the indicative findings of the consultations already undertaken as part of this phased approach have already begun to shape a range of potential solutions.

6.3 Research design challenges for intervention (Phase Three)

- Community engagement and ownership
- Identification of potential Community Champions
- Agreed intervention goals
- Implementation considerations
- Appropriate outcome measures
- Optimal timescale for intervention project
- Sponsorship

6.4 Action Points for Principal Investigator

The following list details the next actions for the Principal Investigator:

1. To be completed prior to the second Advisory Group meeting

- Undertake further consultations regarding engagement with
 - Victoria Infant School Head & Deputy
 - Victoria Infant School Chair of Governors
 - Howgills Centre staff including Ann Chambers, Analysis Manager
 - Cumbria CC School Improvement officers
 - Sarah Cooper Lead Health Visitor, Cumbria PCT

2. To be completed prior to the third Advisory Group meeting

- Undertake consultation exercise/s with
 - Victoria Infant School Parent group/s
- Review analysis approaches used to evaluate Sure Start and ECAT initiatives
 - The Sure Start Journey: a summary of Evidence DCSF2008
 - North West Review of Speech, Language and Communication Needs, Skills for Health 2010
 - Christine Screech, evaluation of 2 ECAT projects in Bristol nurseries
 - Helen Moylett, development of monitoring tool for national ECAT evaluation
 - Communication supporting environments observation checklist, Better Communication Research Programme 2011
- Consider creative options for communicating information about the project
 - Recruitment and participant information formats
 - Range of media for disseminating project outputs
- Compile list of relevant outcome measurement approaches
 - Standardised assessment tools
 - Appropriate proxy indicators
 - Self-report measures
 - Children
 - Parents
 - Professionals

7 References

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8 Additional resources

8.1 Key Policy Drivers

- ▶ NSF – Children, Young People and Maternity services (2004)
http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4089114
- ▶ ECM (2003) & Every Disabled Child Matters (2007)
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DfES/1081/2004>
- ▶ Our health , our care, our say: New directions for community services (2006)
<http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm67/6737/6737.pdf>
- ▶ Bercow Review and Better Communication Action Plan (2008)
<http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/bcap.aspx>
- ▶ Healthy Lives Brighter Futures (2009)
http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_094400
- ▶ Healthy Child programme
http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_107566
- ▶ Transforming Community services – (2009/10)
<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/TCS/index.htm>
- ▶ EQUALITY AND EXCELLENCE : LIBERATING THE NHS (JULY 2010)
http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_117353
- ▶ ACHIEVING EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE FOR CHILDREN (SEPT 10)
http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_119449
- ▶ GETTING IT RIGHT FOR CYP: OVERCOMING CULTURAL BARRIERS (SEPT 10) – Kennedy Report
http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_119445
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- ▶ Social Investment Plan for West Cumbria <http://www.westcumbria.gov/Default.aspx?page=312>
- ▶ Social Market Foundation <http://www.smf.co.uk/too-much-too-late-life-chances-and-spending-on-education-and-training.html>
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- ▶ Wilson, P. (2010). *Scottish Finance Committee inquiry into Preventative Spending: Submissions Received*. Retrieved November 23, 2010, from www.scottish.parliament.uk: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/finance/inquiries/preventative/PS-PhilipWilson.pdf>

8.2 Resources for promoting speech and language skills

I-CAN Charity <http://www.ican.org.uk/>

Talking point <http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/en/Parent.aspx> Information, advice and resources for Parents, GPs, Health Visitors Early Years Workers, Teachers, Speech and Language Therapists

Video clip presenting how children learn language:

<http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/en/Parent/My%20Child%20Is/Pre-birth.aspx>

Appendix 1: Initial Project Briefing Document

South Workington Partnership have identified a priority concern relating to the educational achievement of children in the Moss Bay Ward. National comparative Education data sources for the Moss Bay Ward pupil attainment scores show that literacy levels in this Ward have been consistently below the national average, as well as below the Cumbria average since 2003 (source, Key Stage 1 Writing scores at Level 3 ie children aged 7 years). These figures also demonstrate a significant decline in pupil attainment over the past decade. These alarming data have been masked by the aggregated scores for Allerdale and West Cumbria Locality, but now need to be urgently addressed.

A recent analysis of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) additionally demonstrates that the Moss Bay Ward in South Workington has deprivation scores for Education and Health within the lowest 10% nationally (source, Public Health Intelligence Team for North Cumbria). This Ward ranked the worst for multiple significant health indicators, and considerably below the Cumbrian average on all health indicators in the index.

It has been recognised that social deprivation and an impoverished language environment have a direct influence on lower pupil attainment, as well as vulnerability for children to experience social exclusion and an increased risk of entering the criminal justice system (source, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008). Over recent years there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of the Public Health role of Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) services for early intervention with children and young families, in promoting an enriched language environment and spoken language (oracy) skills. The emergent findings from evaluations of these SLT initiatives emphasise that the effectiveness of such input is maximised where these are tailored to the unique needs and priorities of the local setting.

Project Aim: To promote educational attainment and social inclusion of children in Moss Bay Ward, Workington by enhancing their skills in spoken language. This proposal is for a pilot project comprising a community-based language enrichment intervention package which will be tailored to the unique needs of the local community.

Objective 1: Scoping Exercise. A scoping exercise of relevant local demographic data for the designated cohort, current models of relevant services and initiatives, and local community engagement with those services. Relevant data will be collected as far as possible from existing data sources and will be compared to regional and national outcomes sources from the National Pupil Database (NPD), NHS National Benchmark Database, Office of National Statistics (ONS) and the Cumbria Observatory.

Objective 2: Stakeholder Consultation. A consultation exercise with all relevant local stakeholders (including representatives from Education and Health, plus local families), to elicit perceptions of local barriers to accessing current service provision, as well as the reported priorities of the participants in this local setting for this cohort of children.

Objective 3: Language Enrichment Intervention. A community-based intervention to boost the spoken language skills in the designated cohort, designed following the outcomes of Phases 1 and 2. This is likely to comprise a 12 week package of language-based activities across an agreed range of community locations (with follow-up outcome measures 12 weeks after the end of the intervention). As well as direct intervention activities to enrich the children's language experiences, there will be sessions for parents and other family members, teaching staff and classroom assistants (indirect interventions). Any children who have already been identified as requiring targeted and specialist SLT services (those children who have a diagnosed speech and language disorder) would continue to receive the standard SLT case management in addition to the community-based sessions specified in this project.

An Advisory Group will be convened at the outset of the project, to undertake responsibility for monitoring timely achievement of project milestones and deliverables. Invited members of the Advisory Group will include key local stakeholders from Education and Health services, plus a representative of the research sponsor.

Appendix 2: Advisory Group members

Advisory Group Chair:

Michael Heaslip, Vice-Chair of Governors, Southfield Technology College

Group members:

Mark Fryer (formerly South Workington Neighbourhood Manager)

Vivienne Halliday, Children's Services Manager, Howgill Centre Whitehaven

Vicki Webster, Victoria Infants School, Workington

Pauline Eppy, Victoria Junior School, Workington

Gillian Spokes, Victoria Junior School, Workington

Ana Harrison, Speech and Language Therapy Manager, Cumbria Primary Care NHS Trust

Richard Cox, School Improvement Team Leader, Cumbria County Council

Appendix 3: Potential research sponsors

The following list of potential sponsors is appended here for future reference pending finalisation of the size, scope and timeframe for the Phase Three intervention project. Members of the Advisory Group are invited to suggest any additions to this list, which will be discussed in regard to submission of a proposal to secure supplementary funding to cover Phase Three.

Snowball Foundation Charity, Sellafield

http://www.sellafieldsites.com/UserFiles/File/publications/sellafield%20news/Sell_news.doc.pdf

Big Lottery Fund <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding-uk>

Education Endowment Foundation <http://educationendowmentfoundation.com>

Cumbria Community Foundation <http://www.cumbriafoundation.org/apply-for-a-grant>

The following commentary is appended here for future reference pending finalisation of the size, scope and timeframe for the Phase Three intervention project.

“Most funding available to community groups is short term. At best a grant may be payable over 3 years. Over 75% of funding to the sector is for less than 3 years (Cabinet Office, 2009).

There are two inherent limiting problems for community based projects:

Engaging with individuals who are excluded from society takes a long time and a three year programme will only begin to break down the barriers.

Workers employed through grant funding leave before the end of the grant and recruitment to short term contracts is problematic.

Dependence on short-term funding means organisations are perennially seeking the next grant, rather than having the stability to plan for long-term self-reliance.

Northern Rock has recognised that funding larger projects (£100k) is missing from the sector’s economy i.e. a level that is sufficient to employ someone to keep them in post for a few years”

(Source = Social Investment Plan for West Cumbria)

