Language for Learning™ Survey for Trainers

Summary report of trainer views on Language for Learning training

1. Background

Language for Learning™ provides training and resources for those working with children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) throughout the UK. All courses are led by two registered trainers: a speech & language therapist and a specialist teacher. Developed in Worcestershire as a joint health and education project, Language for Learning is jointly owned by Worcestershire County Council and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust. Six licensed authorities have local professionals trained to deliver the training themselves: Cornwall, Dudley, Kent, Medway Solihull and Worcestershire. As part of a wider evaluation to formally measure the impact of Language for Learning, an online survey was developed and made available to gather views of trainers across all six licensed authorities, approximately 140 trainers.

2. The survey

The survey was drafted to include both quantitative and qualitative questions on: the confidence of professionals against key Speech, Language and Communication Framework (SLCF) competencies; their understanding of supporting SLCN and multi-agency working, and the main pros and cons of being a Language for Learning trainer. The survey was made available on SurveyMonkey™ and all trainers were invited to complete it over a 6 week period. The questionnaire received a very positive level of response and was completed by 109 trainers: 62 Speech and Language Therapists, 44 Specialist Teachers and 3 Educational Psychologists. At the time of the questionnaire there were 140 trainers with an active registration, making this is a reasonably high return rate (78%). The results, therefore, are deemed to be representative of the views of all Language for Learning trainers.

3. The results

Full results analysis is available in an extended report. To follow are the key findings by theme, with some chart and comment examples.

## Key finding 1: Language for Learning™ improves multi-agency working

Language for Learning encourages collaborative working between professions and organisations and this is recognised as a key positive by trainers. Over half of all trainers (55 of 103 individuals, 53%) collectively identified improved multi-agency working as the most rewarding element of being a Language for Learning trainer.

> **Working collaboratively with other professions has been identified as the most rewarding part of being a Language for Learning trainer**

Comments ranged from noting the general positive experience of networking and meeting professionals of other disciplines in their geographical area, to the great value of improved relationships, appreciation for other practices and genuine benefit of integrated working for children's outcomes.

Trainers consider the opportunity to train and deliver across professional boundaries a real plus point and most acknowledge that their working relationship with other professions had improved as a result of Language for Learning.
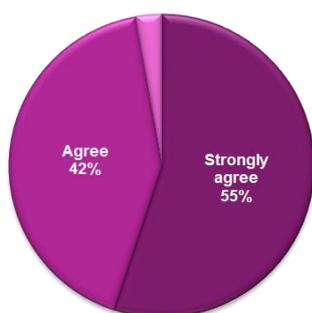
Statement: "I am confident working in partnership to develop collaborative working practices for children with SLCN"

Agree 42%
Strongly agree 55%

"Delivering [training] with a Speech and Language Therapist has developed our knowledge and understanding of each other's roles further"

"[The most rewarding part of being a trainer is] working collaboratively with educational colleagues and together supporting the course participants"

The vast majority of Language for Learning trainers (97%, 106 out of 109) are confident in working together in partnership with SLTs, Specialist Teachers or Educational Psychologists (the other professional role they deliver training with).

At the authority level, almost all trainers felt that Language for Learning had improved working relations between SLT and Specialist Teacher services in their authority.

> **94% of trainers feel that Language for Learning has improved working relationships between Specialist Teacher and SLT Services in their authority**

"Language for Learning really brings SLT and education services together on a number of levels. It give those involved (participants and trainers) a shared understanding and reference. It helps to increase liaison quickly and successfully"

Key finding 2: Trainers are knowledgeable and confident

Results for questions on knowledge and skills were remarkably reassuring, with exceptionally high levels of self-reported knowledge and understanding against key competencies.
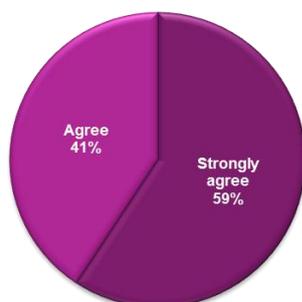
Statement: "I am aware of a wide range of resources and strategies for working with children with SLCN"

Awareness of resources and strategies for supporting children with SLCN is self-reported to be very high amongst Language for Learning trainers. 19 in 20 trainers surveyed (96%) said they had been introduced to more resources through being a Language for Learning trainer.

Overall, the vast majority (96%) of Language for Learning trainers feel confident in their ability to advise others on children's speech, language and communication development. 9 out of 10 trainers surveyed specifically agreed that their confidence in advising others on children's SLCN had increased as a direct result of being a Language for Learning trainer.

"[Language for Learning] has increased my knowledge and skills base and provided on-going support to maintain knowledge levels, confidence and motivation"

"Training alongside Speech and Language Therapists has been a fantastic opportunity to learn more about SLCN"

All SLT trainers (100%, 62 out of 62) agreed they have an understanding of practical ways to support children with SLCN in the classroom. All Specialist Teacher and Educational Psychologists trainers surveyed (100%, 46 of 46) are aware of the range of SLCN that children and young people may have.

9 out of 10 Speech and Language Therapists report that being a trainer has increased their knowledge of practical ways to support children in the classroom

Key finding 3: Training is positively received…. and implemented

Many trainers spoke of the positive, rewarding feeling of having inspired and empowered education professionals to support children with SLCN and witnessing good practice being implemented locally.

"[The most rewarding part of being a trainer is] going in to schools and seeing Language for Learning strategies and resources being used as a result of the training that has been received"

"I can see that schools are improving their capacity to differentiate at the planning stage of lessons and their purchase of teaching and learning materials is informed by their training experiences"

Key finding 4: Training resources are practical and of good quality

One in four (26, 25%) trainers specifically mentioned the resources and strategies themselves as a real plus point of Language for Learning.

Trainers report pleasure in working with attractive presentations and resource materials, describing them as "excellent" and "lovely". Resources that are ready to use are also appreciated by classroom staff.

"Lovely resources that are really accessible"

"It is good to deliver training which has built in high quality resources for delegates to use"

Trainers are pleased to have a good set of strategies to recommend in schools and these are also reportedly very well received by practitioners.

"Helpful strategies that teachers can practically put into place"

"The resources are really good and used across my school… very relevant in quality first teaching – seen as a positive in recent Ofsted"

Key finding 5: Preparing and delivering training takes time

Language for Learning trainers were frank and honest in their discussion of challenges with delivering training. By far the most common issue identified by trainers is that of time. 45 of 99 trainers (45%) mentioned time as a challenge of being a Language for Learning trainer, with some referring specifically to the time necessary for preparation and others reporting difficulties finding time to deliver the sessions themselves.

"[The most challenging part of being a trainer is] finding time to deliver courses along with all of the other aspects of my role."

"[The most challenging part of being a trainer is] being well prepared by rereading notes, materials and research prior to the delivery of each session. The standard is high so a good deal of preparation time is needed."

Comments highlighted the issue of local prioritisation, with trainers struggling to "fit in" trainer duties on top of core responsibilities and not being released from clinical or classroom duties to accommodate training delivery. Trainers reported that it can take time to familiarise themselves with course materials prior to delivery, particularly when new to a course or when providing training infrequently.

Trainers reported the biggest challenge of being a Language for Learning trainer to be finding the time amongst other responsibilities.

Key finding 6: Engagement with schools can vary

Other challenges included getting schools to take up training, managing negativity from attendees, physically organising the training sessions (venues etc) and ensuring practices learned by attendees are taken back to the classroom and supported by school management.

> *"[The most challenging part of being a trainer is] trying to get staff in schools to take on-board training and strategies in a consistent way. Often staff who attend the course do not get enough support from the Senior Management Team to embed good practice, e.g. to cascade strategies to colleagues."*

> *"[Implementation is] still often 'bottom up' with Learning Support Assistants trying to drive through changes without whole school commitment"*

Language for Learning works best when the whole school is committed to implementing the training, from Senior Management to Teaching Assistants.

Key finding 7: Trainers find Language for Learning™ valuable

New trainers attend an initial four day "Training for Trainers" course and 100% (104 of 104) of trainers report the course to be informative and useful. Virtually all trainers (99%,103 of 104) agreed that the course prepared them well for being a Language for Learning trainer. A number of trainers made comment that the ongoing support and "refresher days" from Language for Learning were beneficial.

71%   29%

Strongly agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly disagree
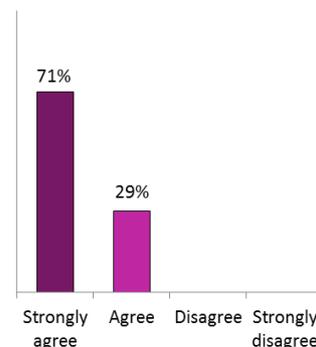
Statement: "The four day *Training for Trainers* day was informative and useful"

> *"The support from Language for Learning, the quality of materials and the refresher days ensure complete familiarity and confidence with delivery of the training"*

Agree 31%
Strongly agree 69%
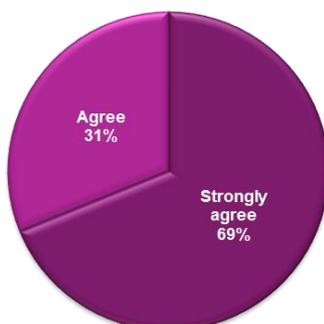
Statement: "I would recommend being a Language for Learning trainer to a colleague"

The vast majority of Language for Learning trainers (95%, 104 out of 109) feel that being a trainer has a positive impact on their day job, even considering timing pressures. It is remarkable that, without exception, all Language for Learning trainers (100%, 109 of 109) would recommend being a trainer to a colleague, with over two thirds (69%) strongly feeling this way.

> *"I would say that doing Language for Learning has been the number one resource/support/professional development "thing" that I do"*

100% of Language for Learning trainers surveyed would recommend being a trainer to a colleague.

"I have learnt so much from being a trainer and have learnt so many wonderful ideas to support my practice"

"Being a trainer has greatly enhanced my working life and I am proud to be associated with Language for Learning"

"Becoming a Language for Learning trainer and completing the initial training for trainers course has been one of the most productive decisions I've made since qualifying as a Speech and Language Therapist"

4. Overall

Overall, survey results were undeniably and overwhelmingly positive. Trainers clearly feel competent and supported in their role and value Language for Learning training.

This report summarises a comprehensive evaluation of the positive and negative aspects of Language for Learning training, with input from over 100 professionals who are familiar with it. Anecdotal opinion of trainers, whilst necessarily subjective, forms a valuable part of the Language for Learning training review and development. In addition to this survey, outcomes of Language for Learning training are measured through the self-evaluation of knowledge and skills by those attending training and through optional completion of an Achievement Award. Key survey findings will contribute to the evidence base of the added value of Language for Learning.

5. Next Steps – beyond this survey

Results of this survey research will be shared over the coming academic year. All of the outcomes will be disseminated at each of the licensed authority seminar days and this concise summary report will be circulated both internally and externally. As Language for Learning undergoes a period of reflection and development over coming months, all trainer suggestions for improvement will be taken into consideration. Language for Learning would like to thank all trainers for their valuable contribution to this piece of work.

NB/ A full-length report on results of the trainer survey has been produced and can be provided upon request