

Agenda Item	16. Part 1
Report No	CLH 30/18

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Care, Learning and Housing

Date: 22 August 2018

Report Title: Update on Emerging Literacy

Report By: Director of Care and Learning

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Emerging Literacy is a developmental approach taken to match the teaching and learning of foundational literacy skills to the needs of the children in the early stages. It supports the development of vocabulary, fine motor skills and cognitive skills and over the past 5 years has developed from a small project to an approach now used in many schools across the Northern Alliance.
- 1.2 The success of the approach is that it has been created and supported across services, with specialist knowledge and input from education staff, educational psychology and allied health professionals, to support the foundational skills required through a process that is developmentally sensitive to the individual.
- 1.3 This report provides an update on progress thus far and the benefits being achieved for children and practitioners in adopting this approach to developing literacy skills in the classroom.

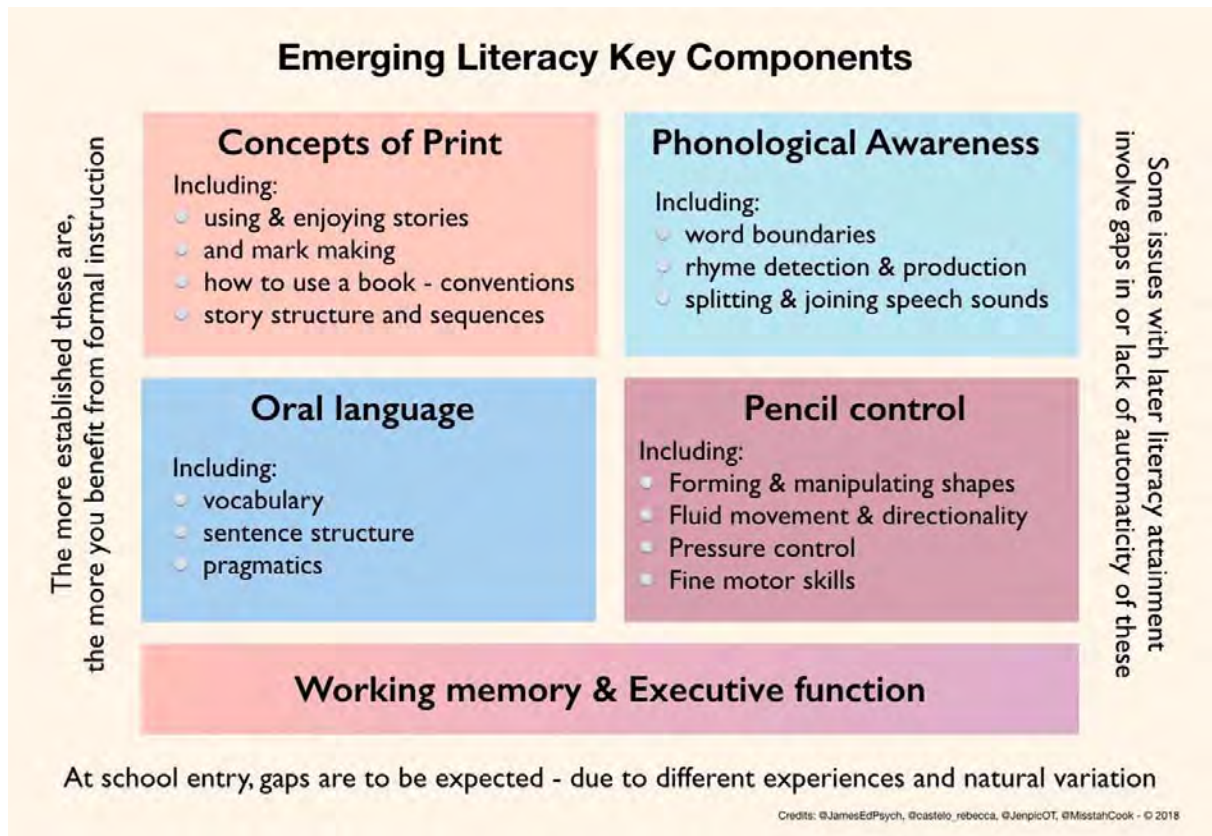
2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - i. Note and comment on the progress being made through this approach to literacy development and the benefits achieved for children in those schools who use it.
 - ii. Note the wider benefits of sharing this approach across the Northern Alliance.

3. Background: 2013 – 2016

- 3.1 The Education, Children and Adult Services committee were provided with [an update on Emerging Literacy](#) in October 2016. The paper detailed the work undertaken by a range of services across Highland, including education practitioners, the Early Years Educational Psychologist and Allied Health Professionals, to provide resources and professional learning to enable education practitioners in the early stages of school to adapt their literacy instruction to the developmental status of the children in their setting.
- 3.2 The update provided an overview of:
- the initial development and testing in Highland
 - the early evidence of effectiveness of the approach
 - the collaboration between the local authorities across the Northern Alliance which is funding a workstream lead post seconded from Highland.
- 3.3 In 2013/2014, Highland's Primary Literacy Working Group, including practitioners from Highland schools and input from Highland's Early Years Educational Psychologist, looked at the Literacy and English primary school attainment trends both locally in Highland, through Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) data, and at a national level through the Scottish Summary of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN). Two points were noted by the group:
- despite evidence based literacy instruction in the early stages of primary, some children did not meet age and stage expectations by the end of Primary 1
 - despite evidence based literacy instruction in the early stages of primary, some children who presented as making age and stage expectations by the end of P1 did not make age and stage expectations the end of by Primary 4.
- 3.4 In 2014/2015 the Primary Literacy Working Group collaborated with Highland allied health professional (AHP) colleagues in occupational therapy (OT) and speech and language therapy (S<) to explore the two points noted above. The research and professional practice identified five key clusters of skills that both underlie early literacy learning and explain later dips in attainment. These are:
- concepts of print
 - fine motor skills and pencil control concepts
 - oral language
 - phonological awareness
 - working memory and executive functions.
- These are provided as a summary below.

3.5



3.6 During the 2015/2016 academic session the literacy classroom teaching experience of the teachers on the working group, in combination with the specialist subject knowledge of the AHPs and the Early Years Educational Psychologist, enabled the group to create resources to support teachers to match the teaching and learning of foundational literacy skills to the needs of the children in their classrooms and schools. Teachers on the working group committed their own time as part of their professional development to attend the working group as well as creating and trialling resources. The AHPs prioritised input through [Ready to Act](#).

4. Support for Schools: 2016 – 2018

4.1 Since August 2016 a Depute Head Teacher from a Highland primary school has been seconded to the role of Quality Improvement Officer (QIO), Curriculum, to support the development and implementation of taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy across the Northern Alliance local authorities. This post is expected to continue until July 2019.

4.2 The QIO has worked as the Highland education key link and the Emerging Literacy workstream lead across the Northern Alliance to design and deliver the model of support across Highland and the Northern Alliance.

4.3 The support model for practitioners in Highland includes:

- initial training,
- online resources and
- local networks of practice,

all of which have been designed to ensure a multi-agency collaborative approach between and by frontline Highland education and health practitioners to support teachers in taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy.

5. Emerging Literacy Networks

- 5.1 Whilst the initial training and access to online resources provide education practitioners with the developmental knowledge and tools to support developmentally sensitive teaching, the Emerging Literacy Networks have been a catalyst to the changes in practice which have led to the improvements in outcomes for children.
- 5.2 There are three key aims of the Emerging Literacy networks:
- provide a local forum for education staff to further develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in the five clusters of skills which underlie literacy learning
 - provide a local forum for education and health practitioners to collaborate on their approaches to supporting children's literacy, language and communication development
 - provide a local forum for education and health practitioners to co-construct, test, and review resources to support children's literacy development, sharing these across Highland and the Northern Alliance.
- 5.3 In the 2017/2018 session there were ten local networks of practice, each with five sessions throughout the year:
Mid – (1) Dingwall and (2) Invergordon
North – (3) Golspie and (4) Thurso
South – (5) Aviemore, (6) Smithton and (7) Inverness
West – (8) Fort William, (9) Portree and (10) Ullapool
The Portree network also has the facility for practitioners from locations such as Muck and Tongue to access the network remotely using Google Meet.
- 5.4 93 out of 174 of Highland primary and special schools consistently accessed and contributed to the Emerging Literacy networks during the 2017/2018 academic session. This included schools who had joined the networks in August 2017 for their first year of support and schools who had joined the networks in August 2016, further developing their knowledge, understanding and skills through collaborative networking for their second year. The networks took place in local primary schools in the areas above and were delivered as twilight sessions from 4pm – 6pm.
- 5.5 The 50 network sessions (five in each of the ten locations) during the 2017/2018 session were delivered by the QIO for Emerging Literacy across the Northern Alliance, alongside input from occupational therapy and speech and language therapy colleagues and the Early Years Educational Psychologist. To ensure the fidelity of the approach, the content of the networks was co-constructed by a multi-agency group of education and health practitioners. The content of the networks, for example, included resources from the Emerging Literacy Oral Language Toolkit, a resource which has and is being developed together by teachers, meeting in their own time as part of their professional development, to create and review resources, and speech and language therapists, who through [Ready to Act](#) are developing these resources as an aim to support early interaction and prevention.

6. Evidence of Impact/Outcomes

- 6.1 In May 2018, following the support provided through the training, online resources and local networks, practitioners were asked to evaluate the impact of the support on their professional learning and the evidence of outcomes for children.

6.2 All practitioners reported benefits of working collaboratively through the local networks. These broadly included:

- development and sharing of resources
- development of new knowledge
- opportunities to share practice
- peer discussions on school improvement planning.

6.3 When asked, ***‘What have the benefits been on your professional learning being part of the Emerging Literacy training and networks’***, additional support needs teachers, class teachers and senior managers reported:

‘Collegiate discussions have been beneficial; further discussions with speech and language therapy and other specialists proved interesting and helpful i.e. aspects of memory, importance of rhyme.’

‘My practice has changed, making me more evaluative about my learning and teaching. I am enjoying what I am teaching and I have a solid understanding about what I am teaching.’

‘A forum to discuss things with other teachers from different schools has been great and has given a clearer idea of what to do and how to do it.’

‘I have recognised the importance of using assessment information to identify appropriate next steps.’

‘It has been a great way of enhancing my knowledge and understanding of emerging literacy and provided me with lots of good ideas and resources to bring into the classroom which the children have all greatly benefitted from.’

‘Having access to peers and experts to review and reflect on practice. Having the access to high quality resources and excellent whole school planning tools has made participation a pleasure.’

6.4 Practitioners also reflected on the evidence they had that taking a developmental approach to emerging literacy had impacted on the children in their class/school. Additional support needs teachers, class teachers and senior managers listed a number of sources of evidence, including:

- ‘Achievement of CfE Level’ information
- children who are happy and confident
- children’s application of skills when reading, spelling and writing
- engagement levels of children
- ongoing monitoring of foundational literacy skill development
- positive reflections from families about the progress their children have made.

6.5 The data on ‘level judgements’ from session 2016-17 was also able to be analysed. This is a measure of how many children reached or exceeded curricular expectations in talking and listening, reading, and writing at the end of P1.

6.6 General conclusions were that:

- Children in Emerging Literacy Network schools outperformed those in non-

network schools in all three curricular areas

- This is particularly evident for the children living in the most deprived SIMD deciles
- Children in the least deprived deciles did as well or better in Emerging Literacy Network schools, showing that the approach did not “hold them back” in any way

6.7 Detailed results with graphs are presented in **Appendix 3 – P1 Level Judgement data for 2016/2017**. There are unavoidable measurement issues with the Level Judgements and with potential bias in intervention/comparison groups, but these are unlikely to be sufficient to offset the effect sizes seen. It should be noted that it will not be so easy to provide reliable comparison data for session 2017-18 and in the future, both because of short term measurement issues with the level judgments but also because the spread of the approach makes finding a meaningful “control group” challenging.

7. Next steps

7.1 Following the collaborative support provided through training, networks and online platforms, practitioners were asked to reflect on the areas in which they would like further support during the 2018/2019 session. The areas which practitioners identified were:

- family learning
- further opportunities to learn from other practitioners
- opportunities for specific networking with other senior managers
- oral language development
- pencil control concepts
- progression to support professional judgement and ‘Achievement of CfE Levels’
- taking a whole school approach, from the early years onwards, to literacy, language and communication
- working memory.

7.2 In Highland, education practitioners and AHPs will continue to collaborate in working groups to support the development of the Oral Language Toolkit and the Pencil Control Skills Toolkit. This is reflected in **Appendix 1: Emerging Literacy Resource Development Model**. The local Emerging Literacy Networks of practice will continue to be a forum for new professional learning, collaborative reflection and the generation of new resources. This is reflected in **Appendix 2: Emerging Literacy Network Session Structure**.

7.3 In order to support sustainability at local level, the following are key priorities which feature in the 2018/2019 improvement plan:

- enable peer support at local level through identifying and supporting “Lead Practitioners” from schools who will deliver aspects of professional learning through networking learning communities
- work with link Allied Health Professionals and Educational Psychologists to support schools in taking a whole-school approach to emerging literacy
- expand on the online resources available for family learning, language, motor and working memory development
- collect and analyse foundational literacy skill data for all schools that commit to the emerging literacy workstream in Highland.

8. Implications

8.1 Resource

The QIO post is currently funded by the Northern Alliance local authorities, via dedicated Scottish Government monies. This is intended to continue until July 2019. The ten Lead Practitioners each require four days release from school to enable them to receive training. AHP input is provided from existing posts as part of the Ready to Act agenda

8.2 Legal

There are no implications.

8.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)

An Equalities Impact screening has been completed and does not indicate the need for a full assessment.

The materials are just as suitable for use in smaller rural schools with composite classes. Local practitioner networks cover all areas of Highland through face-to-face networks and the networks can be accessed digitally.

The essence of the approach is to reduce the long term educational, financial and health impacts of inequalities at school entry, including those based on gender and deprivation, and this is monitored throughout.

8.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever

There are no implications.

8.5 Risk

In the initial stages, the expertise and therefore the training for staff in this approach sat with a small number of practitioners. Although the wider monitoring and strategic plan still sits with a core team, the widespread use of the approach and the development of local practitioner networks has reduced the risk of the approach not being taken forward or the fidelity of the approach being reduced.

8.6 Gaelic

Phonological awareness materials, including a screener, have been developed in Gaelic. Materials from the Oral Language and Pencil Control Concepts toolkits are being translated from English to Gaelic. To support progression, a progression tool similar to the Literacy and English progression tool for Early Level will be developed for Literacy and Gàidhlig for Early Level. This will be done in collaboration with local authorities across the Northern Alliance.

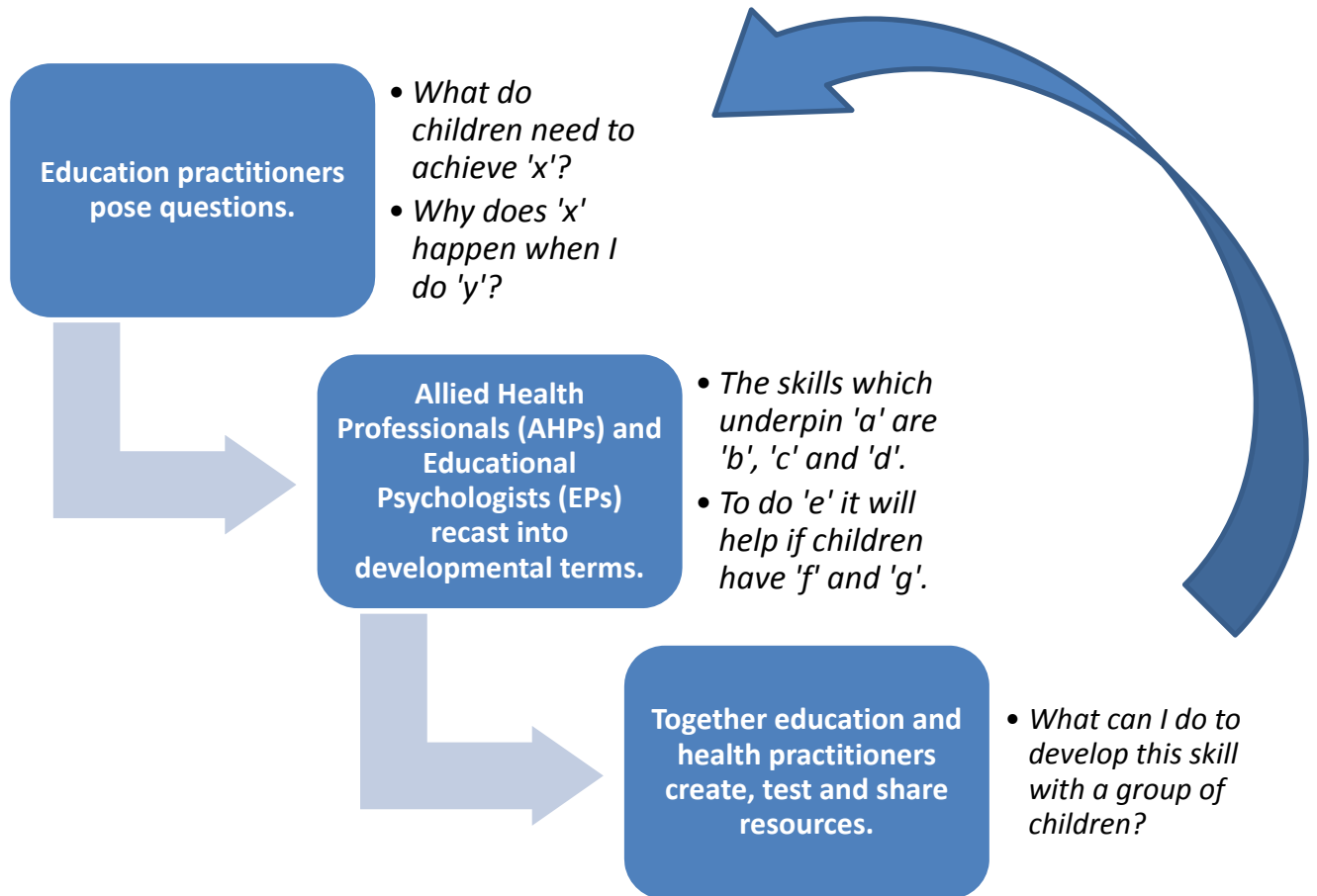
Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 23 July 2018

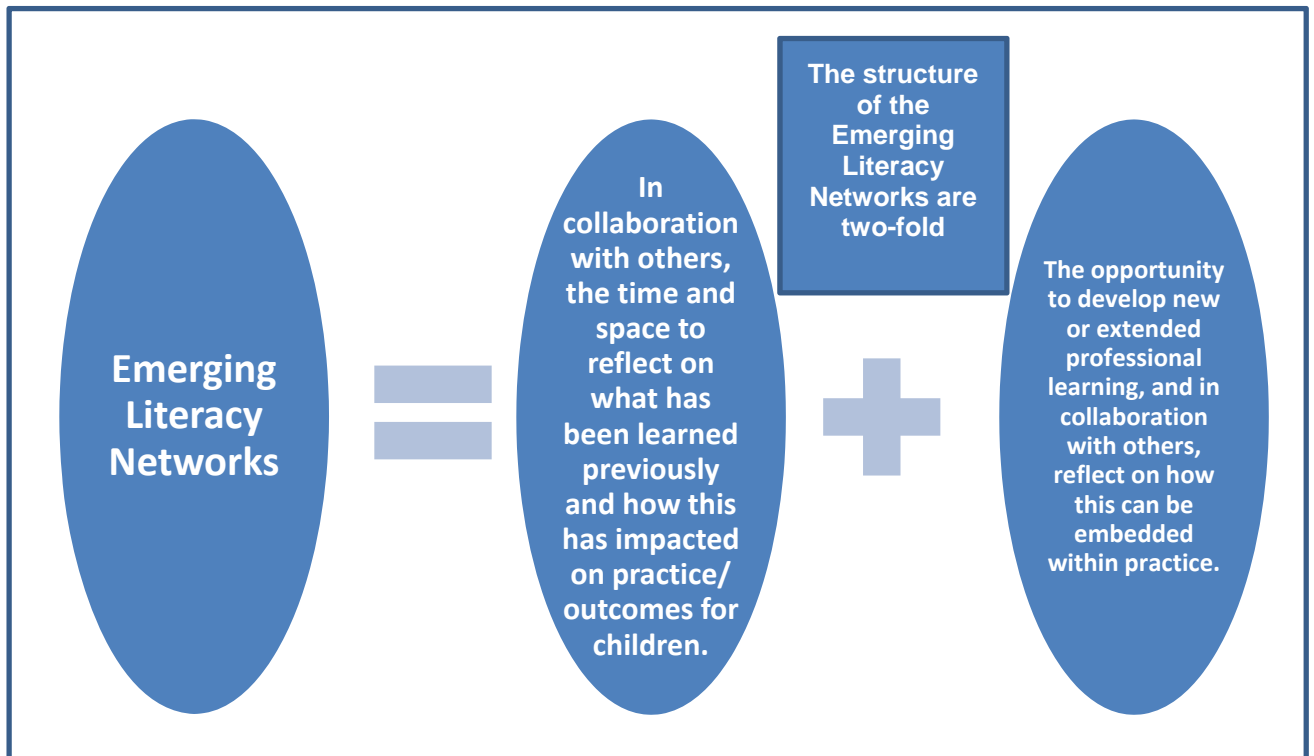
Authors: James Cook, Quality Improvement Officer and James McTaggart, Educational Psychologist

Background Papers: Appendix 1-3 (attached)

Appendix 1: Emerging Literacy Resource Development Model



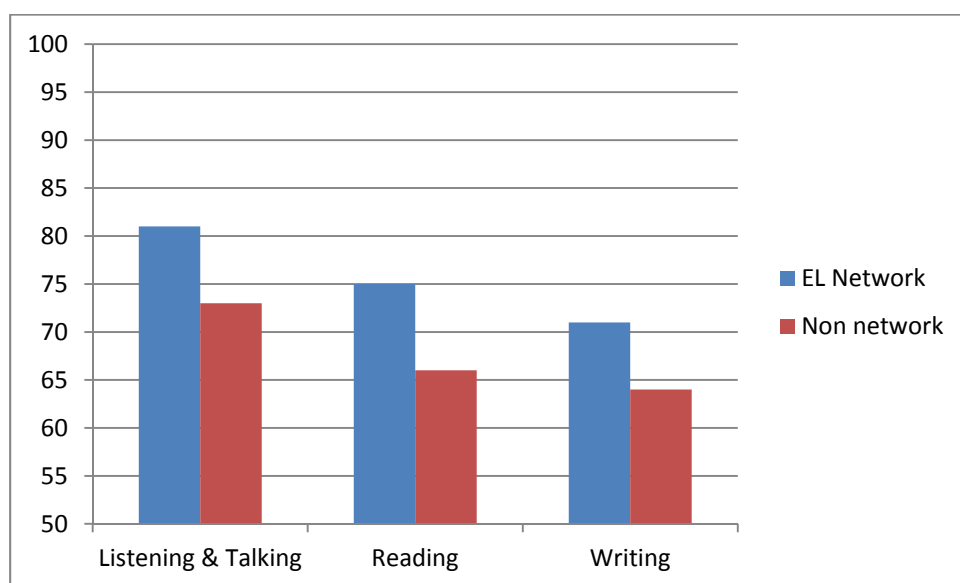
Appendix 2: Emerging Literacy Network Session Structure



Appendix 3 – P1 Level Judgement data for 2016/2017

This Appendix presents an analysis of ‘Achievement of a Level’ judgement data at the end of session 2016-17 by P1 teachers. This is a key measure in the National Improvement Framework. Achieving a level roughly means that a child is performing at, or exceeding, age and stage expectations measured against national benchmarks.

The percentages of children attaining at least Early Level in the three literacy areas are shown in this graph. It can be seen that children in Emerging Literacy schools were more likely to achieve at least Early Level in every aspect of literacy. They were 30% more likely to attain at least Early Level in all 3 areas, 50% more likely in Listening and Talking, 60% in Reading and 40% in Writing.



The importance of developmental foundations for literacy attainment can be seen in the fact that of the children who attained Early Level in both Reading and Writing, only 3% did not also achieve Early Level in Listening & Talking.

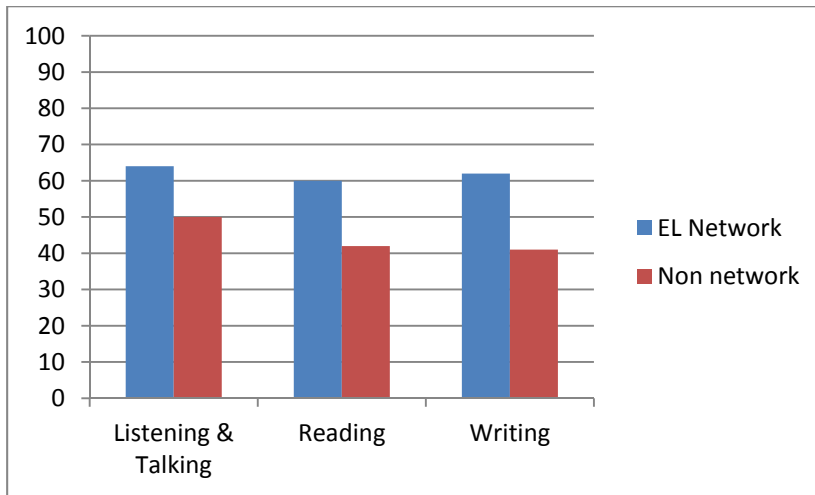
Results by level of deprivation

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) provides an estimate for the levels of socio-economic disadvantage for individual pupils. It can be divided for convenience into deciles, with 1 being the most deprived and 10 the least deprived. Our results show strong effects of Emerging Literacy for the most deprived young people, with no detrimental effect for the least deprived – suggesting that the approach does not hold children back. This is to be expected for an approach that is aimed to enable differentiation for all children, including additional challenge and consolidation for the higher performing.

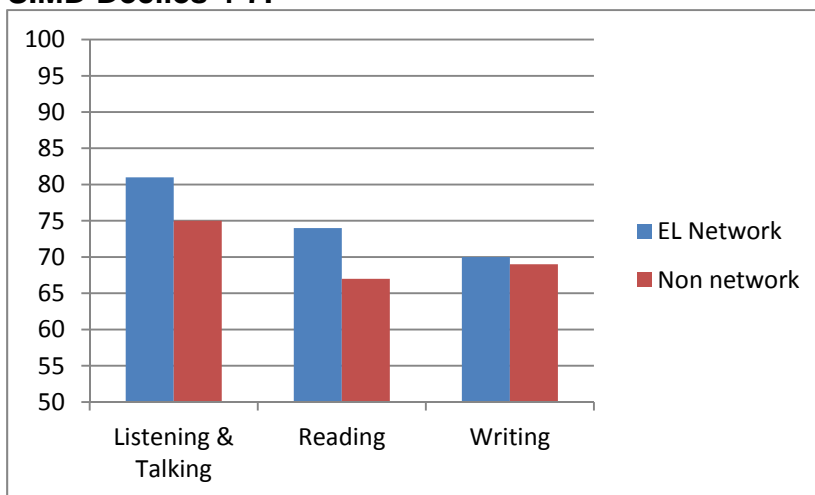
The most deprived children (SIMD Deciles 1-3) were **twice** as likely in Emerging Literacy Network schools to achieve at least Early Level in each area.

The following graphs show the percentages of children attaining at least Early Level in literacy for:

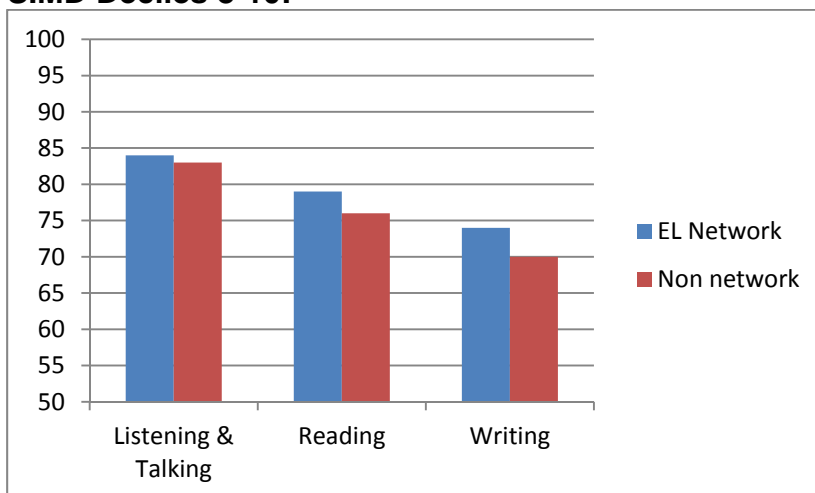
SIMD Deciles 1-3:



SIMD Deciles 4-7:



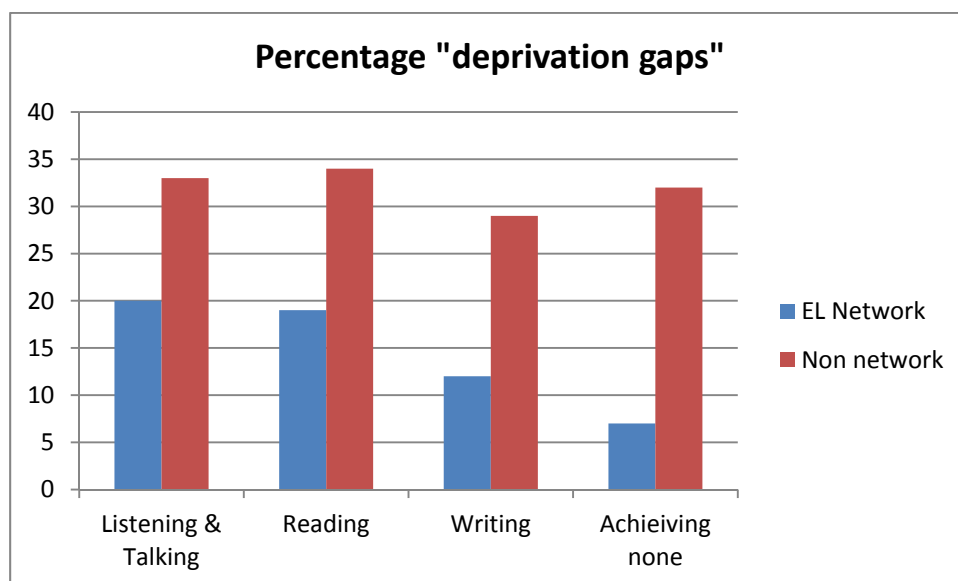
SIMD Deciles 8-10:



Deprivation gaps

An intuitive way to illustrate deprivation related effects is to calculate the performance gaps between most and least deprived children. The differences in percentages of children attaining at least Early Level in Deciles 1-3 and 8-10 gives an estimate of this gap. The deprivation gaps in Emerging Literacy schools are around **half** those from non-Emerging Literacy schools. If we take the differences in

percentages of children attaining NO early level, the deprivation gap is cut by **three-quarters**.



Caveats

There are three potential sources of measurement error or bias in these results. Each is unlikely to have a serious effect on the overall picture for reasons given below. Given the impracticality of so-called gold-standard matched or cluster controls in this project, the results remain indicative – however the size of the effects seen are likely to be larger than any bias.

Issue	Context
Teacher level judgements may not be reliable	This would be an issue for both EL and non-EL schools. In this sample size (2500) unduly harsh/lenient judgements are likely to cancel out. Unreliability of measurement can be an issue through making small effects harder to detect – the effects here are likely to be larger than measurement error
The EL group may contain schools that are “better” at literacy or have more able pupils	There is no possibility of matching controls in this project. However, schools were recruited to the project who had written literacy into their School Improvement Plans, mostly because their data showed improvement was needed. Not all teachers attending networks were initially enthusiastic or in support of the approach.
EL teachers may be unconsciously inflating judgements because they want EL to “work”	Teachers had no knowledge that Level Judgments would be used for evaluation. Bias, if any, is likely to be two-way since making people more aware of issues tends also to make judgments finer and more searching. Between group differences may also be bidirectional in that some teachers in the non-EL schools were using EL without coming to networks – thus reducing the apparent effect size.