

# Using the Behaviour Change Wheel to discover barriers and enablers for engaging Early Childhood Educators in partnership working with Speech and Language Therapy Services

Helen Stringer<sup>1</sup>, Di Nicholson<sup>2</sup>, Kate Hope<sup>2,1</sup>, Josie Tulip<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Speech & Language sciences, Newcastle University <sup>2</sup> Paediatric Speech & Language Therapy, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

## Introduction

Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) is one of the most common disorders of early childhood, with between 10 and 50% of children affected depending upon socio-economic background. Speech and language therapists (SLTs) have a public health role in supporting children at risk for SLCN in the pre-school and early school years. An effective way of supporting these children is through Early Years Education settings using a three tier model of universal, targeted and specialist (UTS) interventions. In the ideal iteration of this model, early childhood educators (ECE) (class teachers and teaching assistants) and SLTs work in partnership to provide the interventions, with the balance of input shifting between professionals depending upon the needs of the children and level of specialist input required. Typically the ECE provides the universal and targeted intervention with support from the SLT and the SLT provides the specialist intervention with support from the ECE. However, this requires a high level of commitment on both parts and even if training is provided and attended, the implementation is not guaranteed.

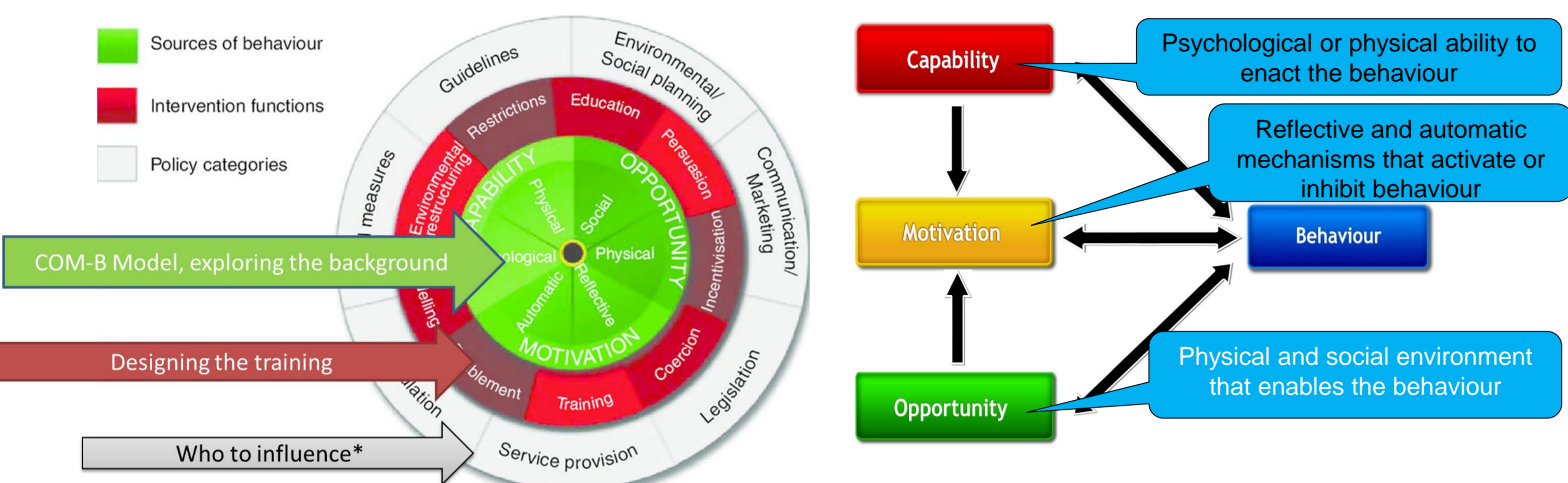


Figure 1 The Behaviour Change Wheel [1]

Figure 2 The COM-B Model [2]

## Methods

The purpose of the Northumbria Healthcare-Newcastle University Universal, Targeted and Specialist project (NNUTS) is to develop an intervention that will facilitate effective and sustained partnership working between education settings and SLT services with the outcome for pre-school children of improved oral language skills; increased readiness for school and ability to engage with literacy and formal education. The Behaviour Change Wheel (BCW)<sup>[1]</sup> three stage process for designing interventions was used as a framework (see figures 1 & 3). Findings reported here are from Stage 1 (understanding the behaviour) of the BCW. Potential target behaviours for ECEs and SLTs were identified, evaluated and selected on the basis of potential impact of the behaviour change, likelihood of changing behaviour, impact on other related behaviours, and ease of measurement. Questionnaires were used to gather information from ECEs (n=30) and SLTs (n=83) working in areas of social deprivation in the north east of England. Information gathered was transferred to COM-B models (see figure 2) focusing on the target behaviours. Using the COM-B Model to identify what change is needed in order for ECE/SLT to do target behaviour, barriers and enablers in capability, opportunity and motivation were identified. The next phase of NNUTS takes these findings forward to Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the behaviour change intervention design process.

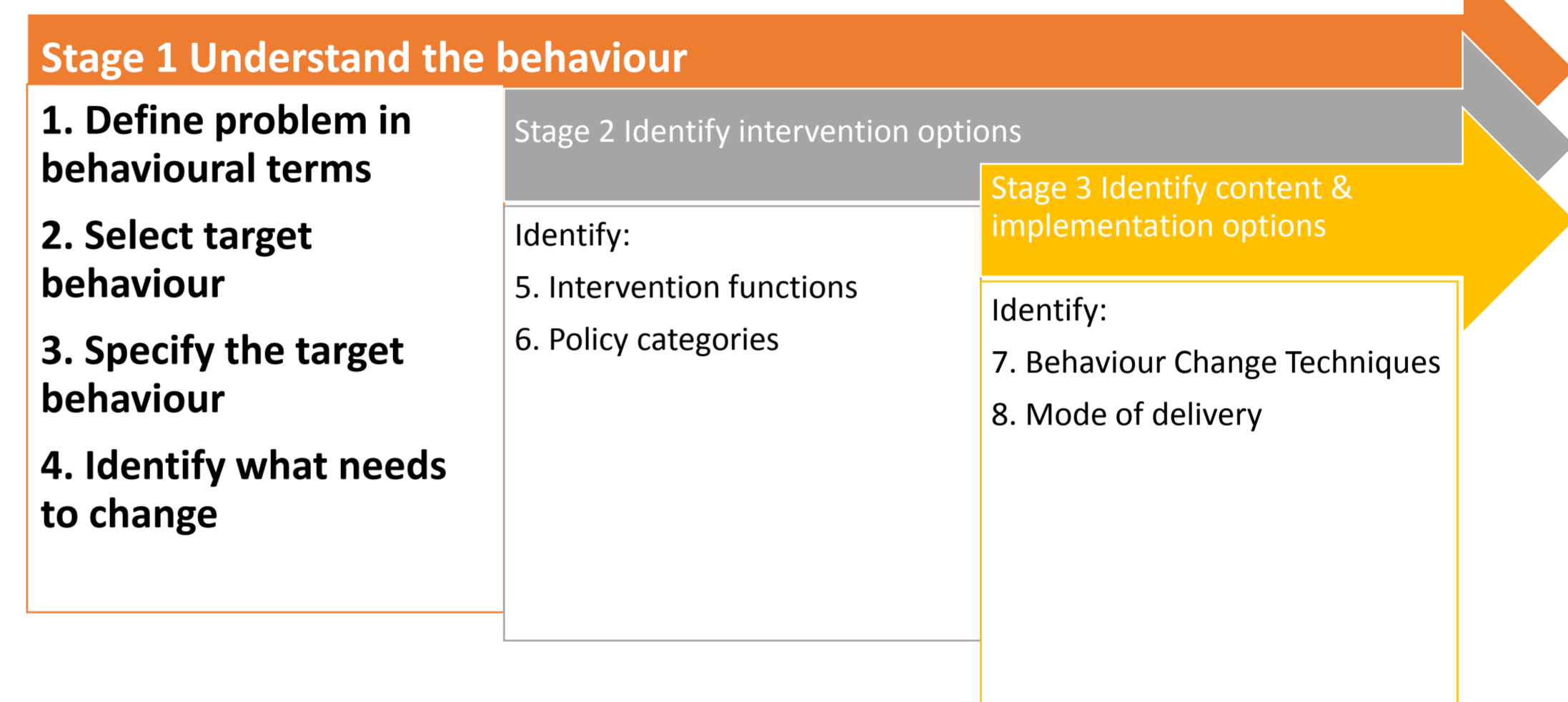
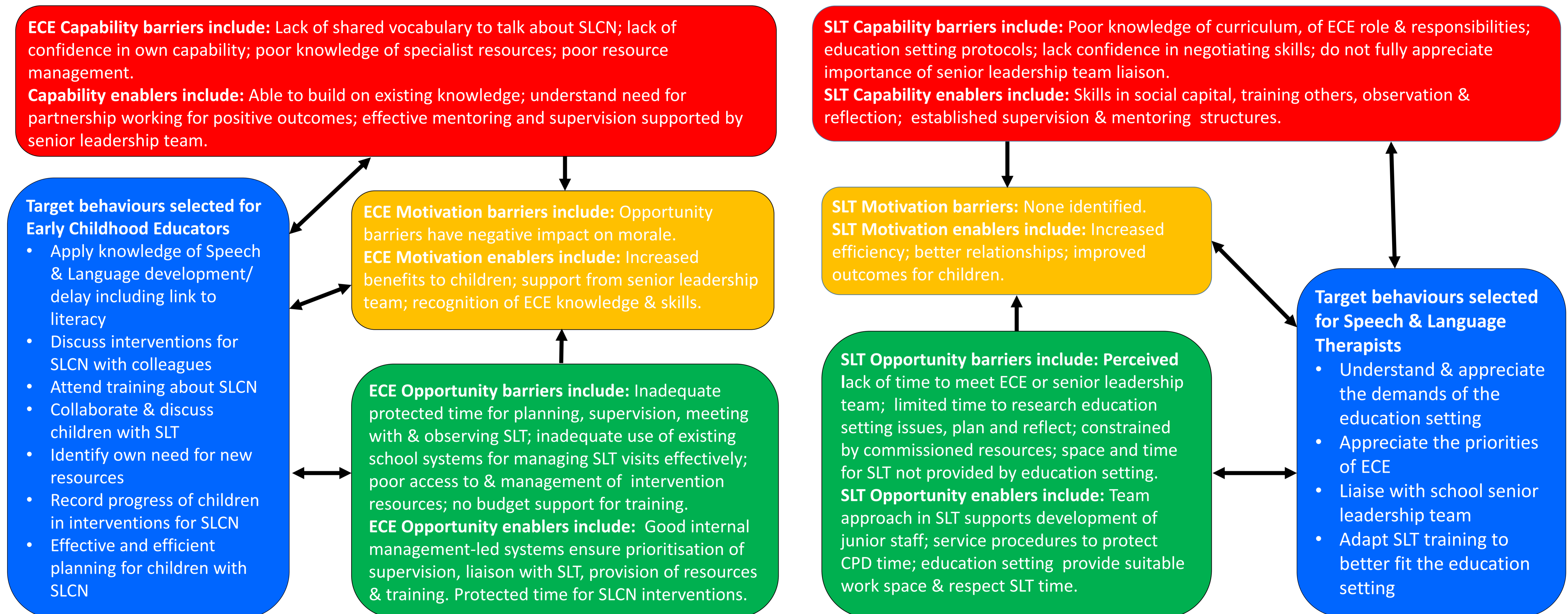


Figure 3 Behaviour Change Intervention Design Process<sup>[1]</sup>

## Results from COM-B analysis of ECE and SLT questionnaire data



### ECEs and education settings

**Capability:** In the education settings surveyed, the ECEs all thought they had appropriate baseline skills and knowledge to deliver SLT interventions if supported and developed by SLTs. All of these settings already had relationships with SLT services. Where the senior leadership team engage with the SLT service delivered, there was more strategic support and development of ECEs and efficient support processes in place.

**Motivation:** ECEs are highly motivated to engage with SLTs and see the value of this in relation to outcomes for children.

**Opportunity:** Education settings where the senior leadership team are engaged in delivery of SLT services at the universal, targeted and specialist levels have good internal processes to ensure time, space and physical resources are protected. Where this is lacking there is a negative impact on ECE motivation.

**Recommendations:** Ensure senior leadership team is engaged in management of children with SLCN. Use established internal processes to support training, protected time and resource management for ECEs working with children with SLCN.

### Discussion

**For SLTs and SLT services**

**Capability:** All the SLTs surveyed had experience working into education settings, yet lack of knowledge of the curriculum and education settings' processes and structures was still a significant barrier for more junior SLTs. Established supervision and mentoring processes and SLTs' professional skills and knowledge, augmented by training and experience in social capital were all strong enablers.

**Motivation:** SLTs are highly motivated to engage ECEs in supporting children with SLCN in education settings. They are mainly solution focussed and flexible.

**Opportunity:** Established team working practices in SLT services provide support and opportunity for junior SLTs to effectively engage with education settings' senior management team. Commissioning of SLT services may not recognise crucial need for and long term benefits of early years interventions creating resource constraints.

**Recommendations:** Ensure SLTs' effective use of social capital. Routine training in curriculum and education drivers and pressures. SLTs appropriately share resource constraint issues and seek solutions with education settings and commissioners.

## References

[1] Michie, S., Atkins, L., & West, R. (2014). *The Behaviour Change Wheel: A Guide to Designing Interventions*. England: Silverback Publishing.

[2] Michie, S., van Stralen, M., & West, R. (2011). The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. *Implementation Science*, 6(1), 42. doi:10.1186/1748-5908-6-42