

## Spotlight on Norfolk's Talk About Team

*The Norfolk Talk About Team was the winner of the Community Friendly Award at the 2015 Shine a Light Awards.*

*The Talk About project, now in its fourth year, sought to improve the communication skills of children initially aged three to five by skilling early-years practitioners and then later by working across all ages up until five. Ten specialist speech and language therapists (SLTs) worked with Norfolk County Council to run the first formalised training programme the department had run for early-years staff.*

Norfolk's children have scored below the national and regional averages on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP), which summarises and describes children's attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), measures of language and communication over recent years. The importance of early language development on educational attainment was recognised by Norfolk County Council, particularly around upskilling early-years staff leading to the *Every Child a Talker* (ECAT) project being run.

This resulted in accelerated progress for some children but much less impact on those at risk of speech and language delay. *Talk About 1* was developed to impact these children and around half of Norfolk settings opted in. Initially launching in 2012 following a successful two-year bid, there have since been two one-year extensions.

*Talk About 2* focused on the areas with the highest need through more intense and personalised training following an audit of settings' needs. All settings used the Norfolk ECAT monitoring tool and very few chose not to opt in to this second round, usually with very good reason.

*Talk About 3* has a great emphasis on developing language in the home learning environment for those children's centres with the lowest outcomes despite settings' excellent work. *Talk About 2* attracted many requests from those not targeted with the intervention and in response six core training courses are now being regularly delivered across the county during *Talk About 3*.

Data has shown that the number of children at risk of delay across all four areas of communication has decreased significantly (around 10% in each area) from Spring 2013 (first set of ECAT data) to July 2014 (fourth set of data). Practitioners' confidence levels were also audited and showed significant change, with nearly 90% feeling confident or very confident across all areas questioned.

The *Talk About* Team has been awarded the *Community Friendly Award* for their *Talk About* project being truly multi-disciplinary and systematic in its approach to using evidence.