

# Non-directive Communication Therapy

For children with speech,  
language and communication  
difficulties

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# The setting

- Early Years and Children's Centre
- Integrated provision for nursery aged children (3.0 years of age) with speech and language disorders
- Ethos - child led, focused on the individual learning intentions of each child

# The provision

- Specialised staff working with 16 children for a 10 week period within two nursery classes
- Key-working, including small group intervention daily and individual input
- Regular planning and updating of individual targets for all children

# The children

Typically present with delayed and/or limited:

play and interaction skills  
ability to focus and attend  
receptive and expressive language  
abilities

# The range of interventions

- Small group work, with the focus on:
  - group participation, attending and listening, interacting and building peer relationships
  - specific areas of need, e.g. vocabulary enrichment, building comprehension, expanding utterance length, conceptual understanding

# The range of interventions

- Supported play / non-directive communication therapy
  - within the nursery
  - during individual play sessions
- Individual therapy for a range of speech, language and communication difficulties

# The early years environment and the non-directive approach

## Enabling environment

- 'key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning' (DFEE, 2007)
- Language is 'most daring and most advanced when it is used in a playful setting (Bruner, 1984, 196)

# Individual play sessions

- Non-directive communication therapy approach (within the nursery or 1:1)
- 'based on developmental cognitive principles which relate directly to learning' (Cogher, 1999, p 7).
- 'aims to encapsulate all the features of the prerequisites which enhance children's language learning' (Cogher, 1999, p 10).

# Aim

- To investigate the usefulness and efficacy of non-directive communication therapy with the speech/language disordered children attending one 10 week block
- To document the changes that occur over the 10 week block and during individual play sessions

# Method

- Video recording of all children during their first and final non-directive communication therapy session
- Once weekly non-directive session with both the speech and language therapist and nursery nurse.

# Outcomes

Type of play

Interaction during play

Language and communication during play

# Play

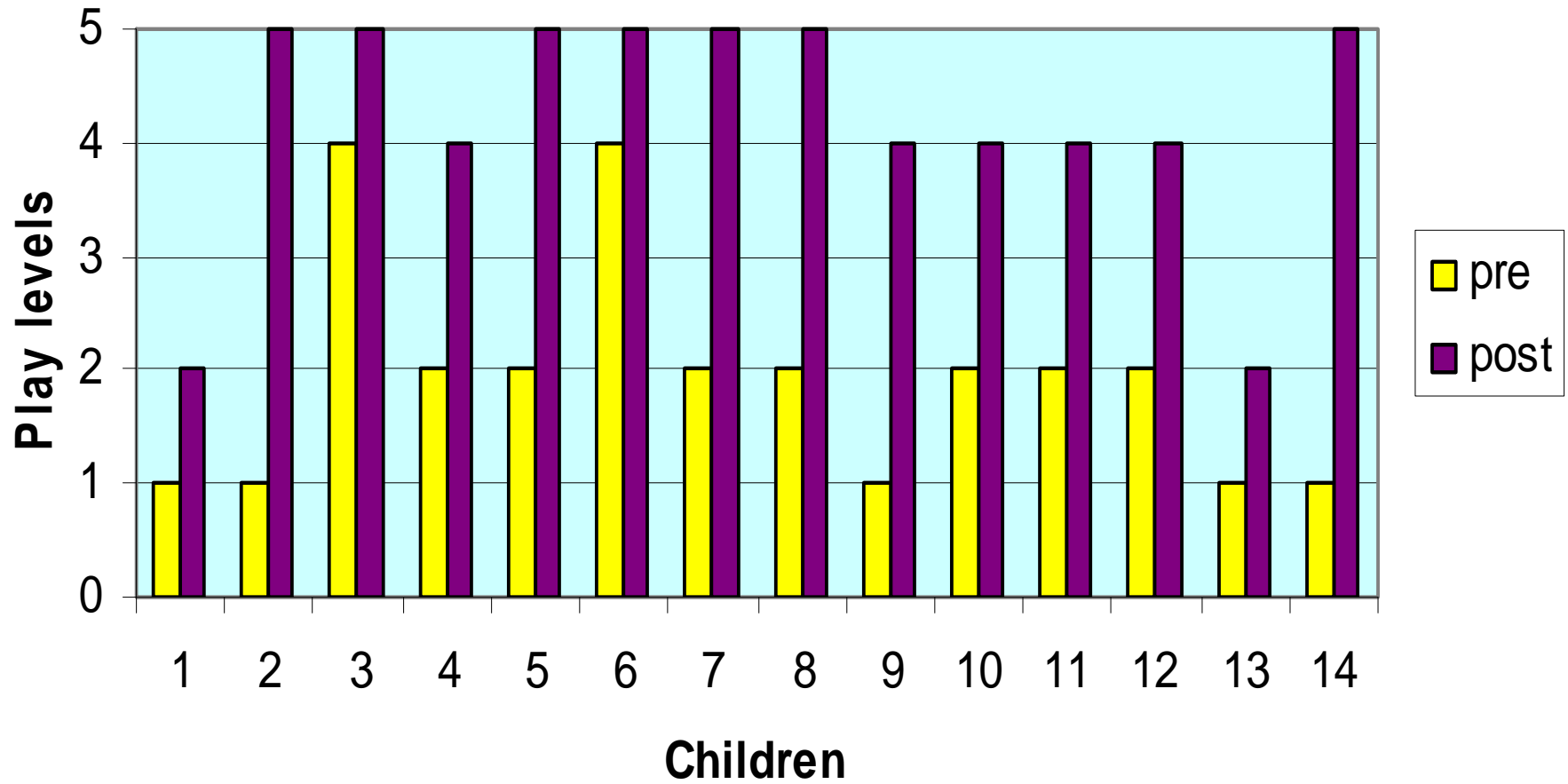
Changed dramatically in all children

- less or not at all repetitive  $\Rightarrow$  variation
- involvement / attention was no longer fleeting
- play options expanded and extended
- inclusion of others
- 'knowing what to do', having a purpose

# Play Levels

- 1 - Exploratory play
- 2 - Relational play
- 3 - Functional play
- 4 - Representational play
- 5 - Symbolic play

# Comparison of Play Levels



# Interaction

From ⇒

Infrequent or absent eye contact / reference to others

To ↓

Relating to others during play

Inclusive play

Increased interactions with others including joining in with and influencing others

Initiating the session!

# Language and Communication

From ⇒

Commenting

Repetitive language

Learned phrases

Restricted language forms, often single words

Listening to the language models of the adult

To ↓

Initiating

Commenting

Giving information

Asking questions

Incorporating adult language models into  
own commentary

Increase in utterances and utterance length



# Language play and intervention

## Language play (Crystal, 1996)

- Frequently a part of adult and child behaviour
- Important in child development
- Can help to bridge the gap between the world of home and the playground, the clinic and the classroom