An investigation into perceptions of the value of an intensive intervention for children with pragmatic language impairments from educational and family perspectives

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Rationale
The qualitative study focussed on eight children with pragmatic language impairment who had received school-based intervention as part of the Social Communication Intervention Project (SCIP), a RCT based in Manchester and Edinburgh. Alongside the quantitative outcome measures used in the larger study, it was important to understand the intervention process from the point of view of the children, their parents and teachers. These children have complex difficulties, affected by different social contexts, which, makes changes in the child’s functional communication difficult to measure. Therefore, it was useful to gain parent and teacher opinion in relation to intervention programmes and assessing progress.

Aims of Study
The project explored the following issues:

- an understanding of parent, child and teacher perceptions of the effects of PLI for the child in different contexts
- an understanding of parent, child and teacher views around the process and experience of undertaking SLT intervention
- an understanding of what parents, children and teachers perceive as important changes in the child’s communication, including those that they perceive to result from intervention

Method
The study involved 24 individual semi-structured interviews with parents, teachers and children who have PLI. The eight PLI children were purposively selected from the larger cohort involved in the RCT. Analysis followed the framework method which allowed a combination of predetermined themes and newly generated themes to be investigated (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). The project involved analysis of individual cases and generation of themes across cases using N Vivo 7.

Findings
‘I know she is making progress as far as work is concerned but now my main concern, just for this next year or two, while she’s making the change to high school I’m more interested in, you know, in getting her ready for the world outside rather for the work inside. I think once she can deal with people…”

‘There were things like the concentration that came through from SCIP. It was looking at the person you’re talking to. Err, not shouting out. Not taking things too literally. Err, not getting upset about certain things. Err, talking to people in appropriate ways. All that has filtered through.”

‘That’s one thing that the teacher said at school, that he seems much more confident and happy in class ‘cause I suppose things are making more sense to him or he’s got things he can do to help himself understand.”

Conclusions
The different perspectives of teachers and parents as to the impact of a child’s social communication difficulties are important to incorporate when planning intervention.

The data collected suggests additional areas that may need to be focussed on within an intervention package, for example, educating staff about issues that may arise during play times.

Intervention was shown to be effective, in very functional ways, in improving a child’s language, social communication, and emotional well-being, from parent, child and teacher perspectives.

The data suggests that further work would be beneficial in developing and collating existing outcome measures that capture the functional impacts of intervention for this population of children.