**Why is there a need for the role of the Communication champion in Bury?**

In 2018, the Department for Education (DfE) established the Early Outcomes Fund in order to support a close in the “word gap” in Early Years.

*“Good early year’s education is the cornerstone of social mobility – and we are making record investment in this area. Children with strong foundations will start school in a position to progress, but too many children still fall behind early, and it is hard to close the gaps that emerge. We need to tackle these development gaps at the earliest opportunity, particularly focused on the key early language and literacy skills, so that all children can begin school ready to thrive”.*

After a joint bid was established, using the EIF maturity matrix: Speech, language and communication in the early years (Early Intervention Foundation (2018), with an input from all 10 GM local authorities funding was awarded to Greater Manchester Combined Authority, to strengthen pathways for speech, language and communication across each GM locality.

A project Lead was appointed for Bury to coordinate the project, and to ensure there was a consistent focus on Speech, language and communication across all sectors in Bury.

After consultation with a range of professionals across Bury, including early years providers, school staff, local authority workers, speech and language leads, Health visiting leads, and representatives from the voluntary sector a **theory of change model** was developed with additional support and guidance from the newly developed GM Pathways to Talking Team, and Manchester Metropolitan University. This model documented what needed to change across Bury, what steps were needed to bring about change, and how these changes could be measured. It also identified the long term goal for change.

A key issue was identified:

* Currently Bury does not have enough locality staff who have had the training or have the resource to effectively support and contribute to the speech, language and communication pathway.

We invited schools with a maintained nursery, and all PVI nursery provision across Bury to be involved in the project, inviting 2 members of staff from each school/setting to be trained to deliver WellComm and to become a Communication Champion and continue to strive to support speech, language and communication across Bury, and promote the Bury Pathway. Training took place for schools and nurseries in Nov/Dec 2019.

Network sessions to support our Communication Champions have already started across Bury, and more are planned for later in the year.

Future plans to offer awareness training to local childminders and LA locality staff are also being considered as part of the project.

Other useful links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-social-mobility-through-education> Improving social mobility through education (DfE:2017)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-social-mobility-peer-review-programme> Early years social mobility peer review programme (DfE:2018)