

THE BALANCED SYSTEM™

WHAT IS THE BALANCED SYSTEM™?

THE BALANCED SYSTEM™ is a framework and suite of tools and templates that can be used to improve the commissioning and delivery of services which benefit from an integrated approach to delivering outcomes. The model, developed over ten years, is theoretically driven but practically tested. The original framework was devised to provide a practical, holistic solution to the challenge of meeting the needs of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)¹. However, the framework is now being applied to other allied health professions and wider services. Throughout this introductory document, THE BALANCED SYSTEM™ FOR SLCN will be used to illustrate the system.

CORE ELEMENTS OF THE BALANCED SYSTEM™

THE BALANCED SYSTEM™ can be explained through four key diagrams. The core model identifies the components of the whole system which need to be in place to effectively deliver good outcomes.



The foundation layers include,

- Appropriately commissioned outcomes
- Delivery via an integrated workforce
- Engagement with parents and carers
- Leadership and management of those providing services

The provision within the system sits on a base of training and development for all those involved, both training of the wider workforce as well as ongoing development of the specialists within the workforce. The provision is across the three tiers of universal, targeted and specialist with the specialist and wider workforce elements being crucial at all three tiers albeit with different roles in each.

¹ For more detail on the development of THE BALANCED SYSTEM™ for SLCN, including the original Balanced System core diagram see <http://www.mgaconsulting.org.uk/balanced-system/>



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Within each tier of provision, there are five strands which need to be addressed.



THE BALANCED SYSTEM™ SPECIFICATION LEVELS

Children and young people & their parents and carers	•Are supported with appropriate information and skills to enable them to be pro-active in making choices and in supporting speech, language and communication skills
Environments	•In which children and young people spend time for learning and leisure are communication friendly and have the appropriate enhancements and adaptations
Workforce	•Using specialist knowledge and expertise to build skills in the wider workforce in order to ensure that speech, language and communication skills are appropriately supported across universal, targeted and specialist tiers
Early Identification	•Is efficient and accessible systems enable early identification of speech, language and communication needs, including training of others to identify and providing pre-referral advice within community settings
Intervention	•Is appropriate and timely , which may include direct or indirect work with individuals and groups of individuals, delivered in the most functionally appropriate context relative to specific need

These two frameworks come together in THE BALANCED SYSTEM™ INTEGRATED SOLUTION™, a dynamic electronic tool which provides a template for both a range of suggested commissioning outcomes across the tiers and strands of provision but also the outcome measures and integrated workforce contributions needed to deliver these outcomes.

A number of associated tools and templates are available to support the implementation of the INTEGRATED SOLUTION™. The cover sheet is shown in below to provide an indication of the framework structure.



THE BALANCED SYSTEM™ INTEGRATED SOLUTION

THE LEVELS OF PROVISION	THE BALANCED SYSTEM SPECIFICATION LEVELS	OUTCOME	OUTPUT	PROCESS	OUTCOMES MEASURE	SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY	OTHER SPECIALIST WORKFORCE	WIDER WORKFORCE	PARENT / CARERS	CONTEXT
UNIVERSAL	SUPPORTING PARENTS AND CARERS	THE FINAL RESULT	THE TANGIBLE ELEMENTS WHICH HAVE TO BE PRODUCED	THE PROCESSES WHICH HAVE TO TAKE PLACE	LEVEL 1: INPUT; LEVEL 2: REACH; LEVEL 3: IMPLEMENTATION; LEVEL 4: IMPACT	DETAIL ACTIVITY REQUIRED	DETAIL ACTIVITY REQUIRED	DETAIL ACTIVITY REQUIRED	DETAIL ACTIVITY / SUPPORT REQUIRED	DETAIL FEATURES REQUIRED FOR SUCCESS
	SUPPORTING THE ENVIRONMENT TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION									
	SUPPORTING THE WORKFORCE TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION									
	IDENTIFICATION OF SLCN									
	INTERVENTION FOR SLCN									
TARGETED	SUPPORTING PARENTS AND CARERS	THE FINAL RESULT	THE TANGIBLE ELEMENTS WHICH HAVE TO BE PRODUCED	THE PROCESSES WHICH HAVE TO TAKE PLACE	LEVEL 1: INPUT; LEVEL 2: REACH; LEVEL 3: IMPLEMENTATION; LEVEL 4: IMPACT	DETAIL ACTIVITY REQUIRED	DETAIL ACTIVITY REQUIRED	DETAIL ACTIVITY REQUIRED	DETAIL ACTIVITY / SUPPORT REQUIRED	DETAIL FEATURES REQUIRED FOR SUCCESS
	SUPPORTING THE ENVIRONMENT TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION									
	SUPPORTING THE WORKFORCE TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION									
	IDENTIFICATION OF SLCN									
	INTERVENTION FOR SLCN									
SPECIALIST	SUPPORTING PARENTS AND CARERS	THE FINAL RESULT	THE TANGIBLE ELEMENTS WHICH HAVE TO BE PRODUCED	THE PROCESSES WHICH HAVE TO TAKE PLACE	LEVEL 1: INPUT; LEVEL 2: REACH; LEVEL 3: IMPLEMENTATION; LEVEL 4: IMPACT	DETAIL ACTIVITY REQUIRED	DETAIL ACTIVITY REQUIRED	DETAIL ACTIVITY REQUIRED	DETAIL ACTIVITY / SUPPORT REQUIRED	DETAIL FEATURES REQUIRED FOR SUCCESS
	SUPPORTING THE ENVIRONMENT TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION									
	SUPPORTING THE WORKFORCE TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION									
	IDENTIFICATION OF SLCN									
	INTERVENTION FOR SLCN									

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The outcome measures associated with the INTEGRATED SOLUTION™ are structured around four levels which are derived from the Friedman Results Based Accountability methodology. The methodology has been adapted to provide a more focused set of measures for this area.



THE BALANCED SYSTEM™ OUTCOME FRAMEWORK

	QUANTITY	QUALITY
EFFORT	<p>LEVEL 1: INPUT How much did we do? Traditional measures of activity and inputs</p>	<p>LEVEL 3: IMPLEMENTATION How well did we do it? Measuring whether the inputs were delivered to a high standard</p>
EFFECT	<p>LEVEL 2: REACH Is anyone better off? Measuring access to support and amount of support delivered</p>	<p>LEVEL 4: IMPACT Did it make a difference? • For the individual? • For the group? • At a population level?</p>

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After Friedman, 2005 and "Turning the Curve", DCSF, 2008

Within the INTEGRATED SOLUTION™ there are suggested measures for each outcome at all four levels:

Level 1: Input: the traditional 'activity' measure

Level 2: Reach: a measure of how successful the intervention was at reaching the target market

Level 3: Implementation: a measure of the intrinsic quality of the intervention

Level 4: Impact: a measure of tangible impact as a result of the intervention

The framework provides a wide range of potential measures which can be adopted or adapted to suit the specific needs of commissioners. Typically a sample is chosen that includes a mix of measures across all four levels.



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WHY THE BALANCED SYSTEM™?

The need to express the complexity of provision for children and young people with SLCN was evidenced in the first national scoping study of provision for children in England and Wales which reported in 2000². The introduction of the Every Child Matters agenda in 2003 and the concept of universal, targeted and specialist services provided a way of considering the broad spectrum of speech, language and communication needs. The independent review of the provision for children and young people with SLCN in Hackney allowed an in-depth exploration of the multi-agency issues surrounding provision³. Between 2003 and 2006, the pre-cursors to THE BALANCED SYSTEM™ were developed by the same author at two levels.

The RCSLT Position Paper: *Supporting Children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs within Integrated Children's Services*⁴ was the result of three years research and consultation at a national level. In parallel, the Children's Integrated Speech and Language Therapy Service for Hackney and the City was developed⁵. These two projects allowed the author to develop the theoretical and policy level thinking in parallel with practical application and testing.

The final phase of development between 2007 and 2008 was informed by SLT service reviews, needs assessments to inform joint commissioning of SLCN services and strategy development for LAs and PCTs around raising attainment in SLCN.

Between 2008 and 2013, THE BALANCED SYSTEM™ has been refined and extended to take account of changing policy and legislation and further tested in the field with data from over 30 local authority / county council / health areas informing the development of both the core model and associated tools.

In 2011, the winner and runner-up of the Shine a Light award for Best Joint Commissioning were Worcestershire and Buckinghamshire respectively – both areas licensed to use THE BALANCED SYSTEM™ as the basis for commissioning and provision of services⁶.

The model is now available for both SLCN and Occupational Therapy and ongoing work is considering its use as a template for the Local Offer as well as its application to other areas of service provision.

² Law J., Lindsay G., Peacey N., Gascoigne M.T., Soloff N., Radford J. and Band S. (2000) "Provision for Children with Speech and Language Needs in England and Wales: Facilitating Communication between Education and Health Services" DfEE research report 239

³ Law J., Gascoigne M.T., Garrett Z (2003) Review of the provision for children with speech, language and communication needs in Hackney. Unpublished Report

⁴ Gascoigne M.T. (2006) Supporting Children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs within Integrated Children's Services. RCSLT London

⁵ Gascoigne M.T. (2009) Children's Integrated SLT service for Hackney and the City 2003-2009. Unpublished report

⁶ More information about these projects can be found in Gascoigne MT (Ed.) (2012) "Better Communication: Shaping speech, language and communication services for children and young people" RCSLT: London
http://www.rcslt.org/speech_and_language_therapy/commissioning/better_communication