



The development of Chatting Time Series (including Changing time is Chatting Time and Anytime is Chatting Time) – a suite of resources that support parents to interact with their babies and young children throughout the day

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## Description

There are two sets of resources:

1. Changing Time is Chatting Time is designed for antenatal parents and parents of babies:
  - Video 1 Changing time is Chatting Time – how to smile, talk, laugh and sing with your baby
  - Video 2 Your Words Work Wonders – Tips for Chatting with Your Baby
  - Parent information session containing information about baby brain development, how to smile, talk, laugh and sing with your baby throughout the day and why this makes a difference to their brain
  - Parent information session in 6 bite size 3-4 minute videos
  - Parent leaflet with Changing Time songs and QR code for the videos
2. Anytime is Chatting Time is designed for parents of children from around 12 months to 3 years:
  - Video 1 Anytime is Chatting Time – how to smile, talk, laugh, sing and share stories with your child
  - Video 2 Your Words Work Wonders – Tips for Chatting with Your Child
  - Parent information session containing information about baby brain development, how to smile, talk, laugh, sing and share stories with your child throughout the day and why this makes a difference to their brain
  - Parent information session in 6 bite size 3-4 minute videos
  - Parent leaflet with Anytime song and QR code for the videos

Chatting Time resources are used in all Sure Starts in Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) area (and now regionally across NI) to increase parents' understanding about how their baby's brain develops and their role in this. They also give parents practical advice on how to increase interaction with their child throughout the day.

The resources mentioned can be accessed at:

<https://view.pagetiger.com/chatting-time-resource-guide/v1>

## Context

One of Sure Start's overarching objectives is to improve language skills of children in Sure Start areas and so help end the intergenerational cycle of language deprivation. In Sure Starts in BHSCT area, around 70% of children entering the Developmental Programme for 2-3 year olds have delays in speech, language and communication. The role of the Sure Start SLT is to improve the language skills of children living in Sure Start areas by increasing the relevant knowledge and skills of those most proximal to the child i.e. parents, Sure Start staff, and members of the community. To be most effective, this capacity building needs to begin antenatally. Working with antenatal parents and parents of young babies were new areas of work to some in the newly recruited (late 2016) team of Sure Start SLTs.

The need was therefore identified for a set of resources that:

1. supported SLTs to begin work with antenatal parents and parents of babies
2. Provided user friendly tools for Sure Start SLTs and Practitioners to give consistent messages to parents (of children antenatal to 3 years) in an accessible and helpful way
3. Gave information about brain development and the importance of talking to your baby in a way that was easy to understand and easy to communicate to others
4. Packaged information in a simple accessible way
5. Supported parents to interact with their children in ways that promote emotional security and the development of language

## Method

Changing Time is Chatting Time (CTCT) was first developed by the BHSCT Sure Start SLT team in 2017 to support Sure Start SLTs as they moved into a new area of work with antenatal parents and parents of babies. It provided Sure Start SLTs and other Sure Start staff with a tool that enabled giving consistent health promotion messages in a clear and concise way. CTCT increases parents' understanding of why talking to their child is so important. The resources also give them simple concrete guidance on how to do this as well as tools (songs) and modelling (videos). Early outcomes from staff and parents (see below) indicated that CTCT was supporting staff to give information to parents and supporting parents to interact differently. Therefore in 2018 the need was identified to develop a similar resource for parents of slightly older children 12-36 months. At this time, we had the opportunity to be involved in a co-design project with a group of parents from East Belfast Sure Start in partnership with Save the Children. This gave us the opportunity to:

- a) Get parents' help in revising CTCT
- b) Get parents' insights and guidance in developing a new resource which became Anytime is Chatting Time (ATCT)

The parents in the East Belfast Group had valuable insights into what is helpful for parents and what isn't helpful, so it was important that this group of parents had a role in the revision of CTCT and the development of ATCT. They were able to advise on what is helpful to them in their understanding of brain development and what would support them in developing 'serve and return interactions' and 'contingent talk' (Matthews et al, 2016)<sup>1</sup> which are identified in research as critical factors in language development.

The result of this collaboration with parents was the completion of the suite of resources outlined above – some changes were made to CTCT and ATCT was developed using insights from the parents as our guide. The parents had the opportunity to appraise the changes to CTCT and the new ATCT resource and make further changes before it was completed.

## Outcomes

**Aim 1** – to support SLTs to begin work with antenatal parents.

Before CTCT, Sure Start SLTs were involved in working with antenatal parents in 2 out of 9 Sure Starts.

Currently Sure Start SLTs are involved in working with antenatal parents in 9 out of 9 Sure Starts.

86% of SLTs reported increased confidence in sharing information about brain development with parents. The one SLT who did not report increased confidence had already significant experience in this area e.g. was a Solihull trainer.

**Aim 2** - Provide user friendly tools for Sure Start SLTs and Practitioners to give consistent messages to parents (of children antenatal to 3 years) in an accessible and helpful way.

**Aim 3** - Give information about brain development and the importance of talking to your baby in a way that was easy to understand and easy to communicate to others.

**Aim 4** - Package information in a simple accessible way.

These aims were not evaluated separately. Rather, the outcomes can be inferred because:

- CTCT is now used in all 38 Sure Start across Northern Ireland
- Use of ATCT is currently being introduced across all 38 Sure Starts in Northern Ireland
- Following the introduction of CTCT, Practitioners (SLTs and other Sure Start Practitioners) reported giving information about brain development and early interaction more frequently
- Parent outcomes for CTCT and ATCT (below) report behaviour change

**Aim 5** – Support parents to interact with their children in ways that promote emotional security and the development of language.

Parent outcomes are being gathered in 3 ways (as per Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) Framework: Measuring Outcomes outside individualised care June 2021)<sup>2</sup>.

- a) Quantity of information shared
- b) Parent report of behaviour change as captured by parent questionnaire
- c) Individual examples of change as captured by staff observations and parent stories

Quantitative data is difficult to obtain due to the nature of the service area and the subjectivity but our qualitative data from our parent feedback shows behaviour change in those parents who responded to questionnaires (see b) below):

- a) Quantity of information shared:
  - CTCT video views – 2712
  - Your words work wonders (baby) video views – 736
  - ATCT video views – 2542

- Your words work wonders (toddler) – 668
  - CTCT information embedded into work of all 38 Sure Starts
  - Bite size videos shared via YouTube or WhatsApp in all Belfast Sure Starts (CTCT with antenatal parents and parents of babies; ATCT with parents of children in Developmental Programme for 2-3 Year Olds ie approx. 300 parents per year)
  - Chatting time Staff Resource Guide on Page Tiger – 421 visits spread consistently since it was first published indicating that it is still being used
- b) Parent report of behaviour change (from questionnaire responses ‘what would you tell another parent?’):
- CTCT – ***“understanding the upper brain and lower brain. So concentrating on keeping the baby calm. talking also in sing song way which definitely catches his attention more now”.***  
***“calmer babies engage more. lots of communication can be done by singing and talking to them in a sing song way. they will pay more attention and start engaging with coos and this will help further in developing their speech”***  
***“Singing and talking more to my baby and she smiles and makes noises back”***
- ATCT – what would you tell another parent?
- “How something quite simple like singing while driving, can help engage your child”***  
***“That its surprising how much I told my child what he liked and (when I follow his lead) he actually has his own point of view and his own likes”***  
***“Give them one on one time and properly listen and have conversations about them and their interests and it will pay off 10 fold”***
- c) Examples of change reported by others: CTCT
- Midwife fed back that some parents have talked about how the changing time songs ‘really work’- they help ‘calm down’ the baby and make changing time more enjoyable.
- Family Support Worker reports ‘I have noted a change in parents with whom I have completed CTCT with the feedback being they are all singing to their babies now and some reading to their babies. It started conversations with parents where they said ‘I didn’t know you could read to a small baby ‘which lead to a book talk and information on books etc.
- Mums reported that they have put the songs on the wall beside the nappy changer to aid them.’
- Family Support Worker reports ‘At Infant Massage, one Mum said that she has been singing the “Change your nappy, here we go” song to her wriggly six month old when changing him. He loves it and said it also really calms her down and it is less of a battle for both of them! At the end of the session we all sang it as we dressed our babies and nearly everyone joined in (without the handout), so they must be singing it at home’.

## Key learning points

- Parents are most likely to do something if it makes it easier to get through the day (insight given by East Belfast parents in co-design group). Singing songs makes nappy changing easier and so parents do it. There are also some parent reports of transferring this behavior to other stressful situations.
- Giving the information in a conversational way (using the illustrations from the parent session folder) rather than ‘giving a talk’ engages parents better. Information is best received when delivered by someone the parents have a trusted relationship with.

- Parents are very interested in brain development and how they can influence this in a positive way (see an example above about a parent comment re upper brain and lower brain) but they want tools to help them do this. This has resulted in further co-productions and the development of the Sure Start Chat with Me books.
- Bite size videos were introduced during lockdown and were positively received by parents who reported doing things differently as a result (see ATCT behavior change comments above). Staff found it easier to open up discussions with parents when the parents had already watched the Bite Sized videos.
- As a result of this feedback from staff and parents, Chatting Time training for staff was developed by the Sure Start SLTs and a working group of Family Support Workers. Chatting Time training is developed to help Sure Start staff explore how to embed the key messages from Chatting time into all areas of work with parents rather than just delivering a parent information session. Example of Family Support Worker feedback  
***“We are thinking about parent/child relationships, more specifically the connection using ATCT language. We are developing processes within our planning to help embed this language into our programme as a way of using a shared language to discuss attachment and bonding”***

## References

1. Matthews, D, McGillion, M & Pine, J (2016). EYFS Best Practice - All about...contingent talk. Nursery World, 25, 17-20.  
Available at <https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/features/article/eyfs-best-practice-all-about-contingent-talk>
2. Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists RCSLT (2021). Measuring outcomes outside individualised care. Available at:  
<https://www.rcslt.org/members/delivering-quality-services/outcome-measurement/outside-individualised-care/>