

## An evaluation of the current service delivery

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### What is 'Sure Steps To Talking'?

- The Sure Steps To Talking (SSTT) is a communication questionnaire that identifies children aged 11-13 months old who risk developing speech and language difficulties at 4 years old
- Health visitors (nurses specialised in child and family health) use the questionnaire to ask parents 12 questions about their child's communication
- A score of  $\geq 9$  = pass = typical development
- A score of  $\leq 8$  = fail = at risk of speech and language difficulties

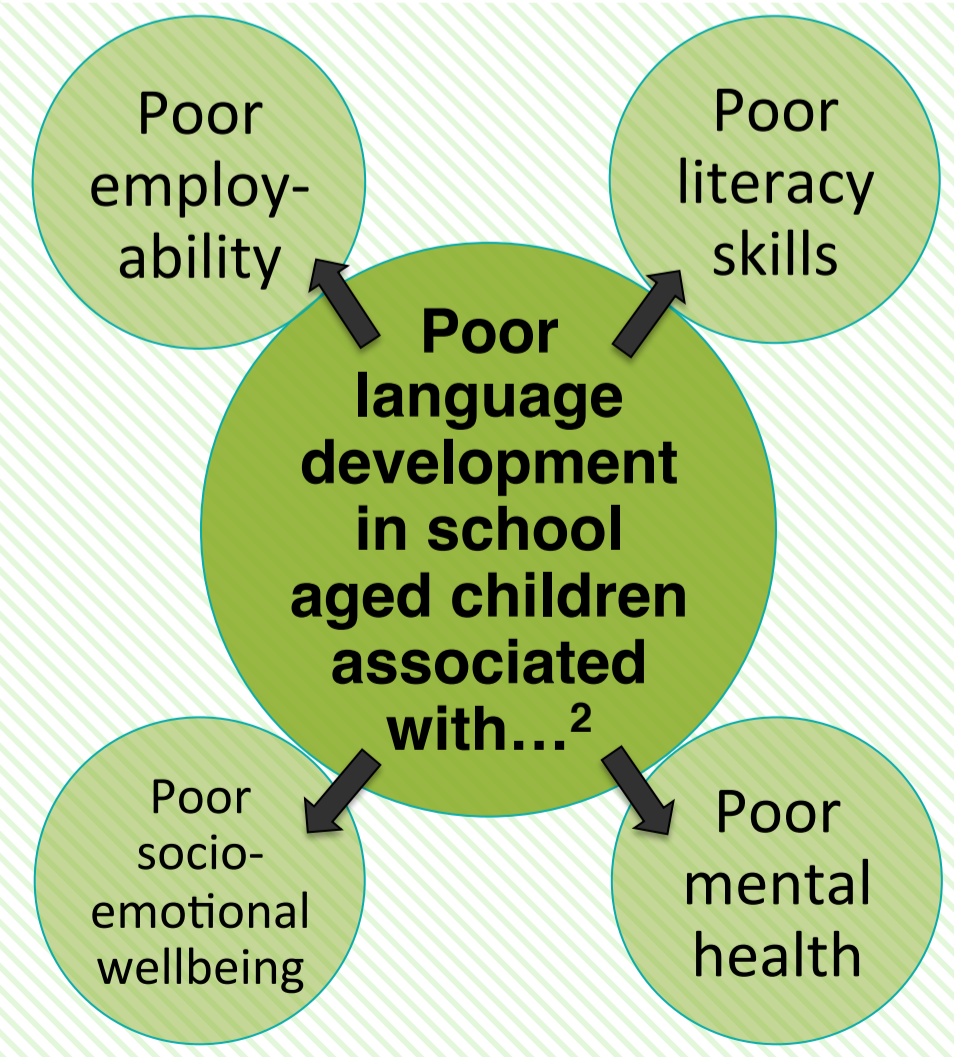
### Aims of this project

- To evaluate the Sure Steps To Talking (SSTT) questionnaire
- To make recommendations for revisions to the current care pathway for young children



### Background

The SSTT was developed in line with government public health policy to improve health and wellbeing of children. Evidence shows that 5-7% of school-aged children have speech and language difficulties and 40% in the most disadvantaged areas<sup>1</sup>.

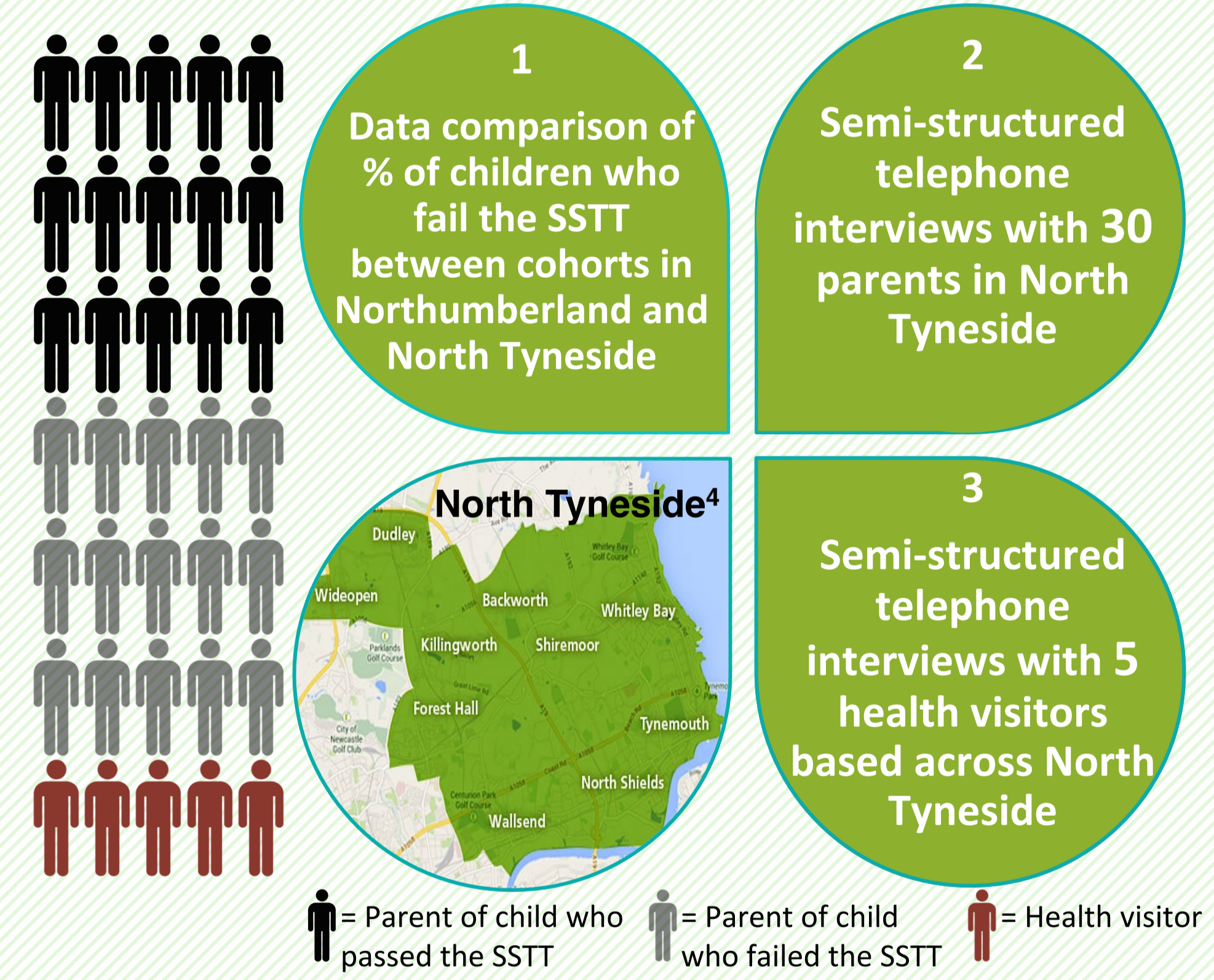


- Conventional methods of assessing early language target children between 24-26 months old when overt signs of speech emerge.
- Research shows that it is more reliable to predict language development by measuring communicative behaviours at 12 months old, including attention, understanding and turn taking, demonstrated by showing, pointing and giving gestures<sup>3</sup>.

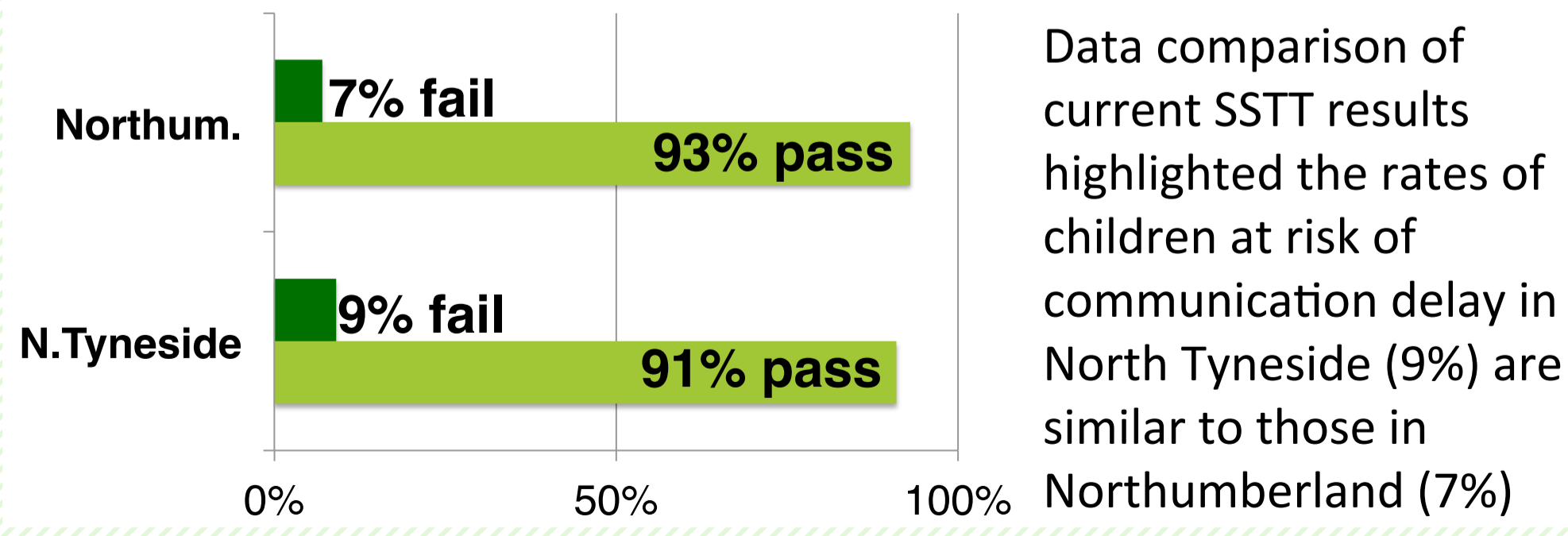
### What this project contributes

The SSTT has been used successfully in Northumberland since 2006. The SSTT was introduced in North Tyneside in 2014 and therefore requires an evaluation of the service delivery to identify any improvements.

### Methodology



### Data Comparison Results



Data comparison of current SSTT results highlighted the rates of children at risk of communication delay in North Tyneside (9%) are similar to those in Northumberland (7%)

### Interview Findings & Discussion

#### What do parents think about the delivery of services?

- Parents' understanding**
- Analysis showed that many parents focus on overt signs of communication such as talking, rather than early signs of communication such as turn taking and understanding
  - Parents expressed limited understanding of speech and language milestones and reasons to assess communication at 12 months
- Communication strategies**
- Parents highlighted current strategies were too generic and would value specific examples of activities



#### How do health visitors respond to the SSTT?

- Health visitors' knowledge**
- Health visitors valued the SSTT as a useful framework to assess communication. However health visitors do not receive training on child development therefore subtle behaviours may go undetected such as initiation of communication
- Parents' high expectations**
- Health visitors stated that some parents have high expectations of their child's development
  - Health visitors expressed the need for training on how to manage parents with high expectations



### Conclusion & Recommendations

- Increase parents' knowledge and awareness about speech and language developmental stages using existing leaflets and websites
- Incorporate specific examples of activities into existing strategies parents can use in order to develop their child's communication
- Increase health visitors' awareness of typical communication development and how to manage parents' expectations into health visitor training

### Acknowledgements

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### References

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