



THE BALANCED SYSTEM®

A WHOLE SYSTEM APPROACH TO PLANNING AND DELIVERING SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



THE BALANCED SYSTEM® OVERVIEW



OVERVIEW

The Balanced System® is a whole system, outcome based, framework that can be used to understand, plan and evaluate services to support children and young people. The framework emerged from work to support children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and has evolved to include occupational therapy and physiotherapy. The model has also been used to underpin commissioning of child and adolescent mental health services and community paediatrics.

This document outlines the core model and principles. An online platform has been developed where tools and templates which have been formulated to support work with commissioners, providers, practitioners and schools are available. More information about the Balanced System® can be found at www.bettercommunication.org.uk and www.thebalancedsystem.org

The Balanced System® is available via Better Communication CIC, a not-for-profit organisation established to support change in children's services. Marie Gascoigne, the originator of the Balanced System® is the Director and lead consultant, drawing in a team of associates with specific skills and competence to meet the requirements of each new project.

The Balanced System® Scheme for Schools is a school based development programme leading to accreditation, which has been developed in collaboration with NAPLIC and Afasic.



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THE BALANCED SYSTEM®¹

The Balanced System® is a framework for commissioning and service provision to meet the needs of children and young people with a range of needs including speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

The core model, identifies the key components to having a system that maximises the use of all elements of the children and young peoples' workforce whilst recognising that jointly commissioned outcomes, integrated service delivery and core involvement of parents, carers and young people sit as the foundations of the system. The service delivery element identified the crucial importance of local leadership for the issue and a clear strategic overview. The delivery itself is based on a continuum of universal, targeted and specialist support delivered by the wider and specialist workforce working together and supported by a platform of training and development.



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THE BALANCED SYSTEM® FIVE STRANDS

Alongside the core model, the Balanced System® Five Strands, identifies the five key areas for which outcomes need to be specified at a universal, targeted and specialist level in order to maximise the impact of the integrated resource.

Overarching and detailed outcomes are provided for each of the Five Strands at Universal, Targeted and Specialist levels (see below for example).

These are expanded to show the processes and possible methods of achieving the outcomes including the relative contribution of key elements of the workforce and the role of parents, carers and where appropriate, young people themselves. This is organised into the Balanced System® Integrated Solution Tool which is an online tool.

FAMILIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Are supported with appropriate **information** to make informed choices and **skills** to **support** development

ENVIRONMENTS

- Are audited, **adapted** and **enhanced** to maximise **participation**

WORKFORCE

- **Specialist knowledge** and skills are used to **build capacity** in the wider workforce to support across universal, targeted and specialist levels of provision

IDENTIFICATION

- Is efficient and **accessible** including training of others to identify and provision of pre-referral advice in community settings

INTERVENTION

- Is **appropriate and timely**, and may include direct or indirect, individual and group interventions delivered in a **functional** context



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EXAMPLE OF HIGH LEVEL OUTCOMES FOR SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS

FAMILY SUPPORT	ENVIRONMENT	WORKFORCE	IDENTIFICATION	INTERVENTION
<p>Universal: Parents, carers and young people are supported with appropriate information and skills about typical communication development and how to be an effective communicative partner. Families are able to make proactive choices with respect to their children's needs</p>	<p>Universal: Environments in which children and young people (CYP) spend time for learning and leisure are communication friendly. Environments have appropriate enhancements</p>	<p>Universal: The wider workforce is supported to gain a good basic understanding in order to support speech, language and communication skills development across all contexts</p>	<p>Universal: Identification of potential speech, language and communication needs is as efficient and accessible as possible. Pre-identification advice and information will be available</p>	<p>Universal: Homes, settings and schools will be supported to provide a universal offer that supports the speech, language and communication of all children and young people</p>
<p>Targeted: Parents and carers of, and young people with, identified speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) are supported with targeted information and skills relevant to their needs in order to make choices and access services</p>	<p>Targeted: Environments in which CYP spend time for learning and leisure are communication friendly and have appropriate enhancements and adaptations for children and young people with identified SLCN</p>	<p>Targeted: The wider workforce is supported to develop specific knowledge and skills to support CYP with identified SLCN</p>	<p>Targeted: Efficient and accessible processes which support identification of SLCN. This may include referral to additional appropriate provision</p>	<p>Targeted: CYP needing a targeted intervention will receive appropriate and timely provision. This may be delivered 1:1 or in a group and should be in the most functionally appropriate setting</p>
<p>Specialist: Parents and carers of, and young people with, specialist and specific speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) are supported with the appropriate specific information and skills in order to make choices and access services</p>	<p>Specialist: Environments in which CYP spend time for learning and leisure are communication friendly and have appropriate enhancements and adaptations for children and young people with specialist SLCN</p>	<p>Specialist: Knowledge, skills and expertise are developed in identified members of the wider workforce in order to ensure support for specialist SLCN</p>	<p>Specialist: Identification and assessment for specialist and specific SLCN is efficient and accessible.</p>	<p>Specialist: CYP needing a specific or specialist intervention will receive appropriate and timely provision. This may be delivered 1:1 or in a group and should be in the most functionally appropriate setting</p>



BALANCED SYSTEM® COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK PRINCIPLES

The core principles which apply across the age range and across the any area include:

- **good information accessible to all** – information about early development, links to quality assured information in a range of media, good knowledge and skills in the wider children’s workforce to signpost to relevant information
- **early identification** – which means not only identification of young children with potential needs but quick identification of those presenting to services at any point
- **access** – simple, and efficient access to the universal support system, use of drop-ins for parents and setting and school based professional discussions and observations
- **assessment** – appropriate to the presenting profile in order to move as easily as possible into supportive interventions from core service delivery system which may or may not include direct intervention from a therapist
- **intervention** – from a range of professionals working with parents and carers and young people to deliver universal, targeted and specialist interventions as appropriate to need at the given time – accepting that a range of interventions from all levels could be accessed simultaneously and that needs change over time
- **impact** – measured not only at the level of the child or young person but also at a systems level

Information

Identification

Access

Assessment

Intervention

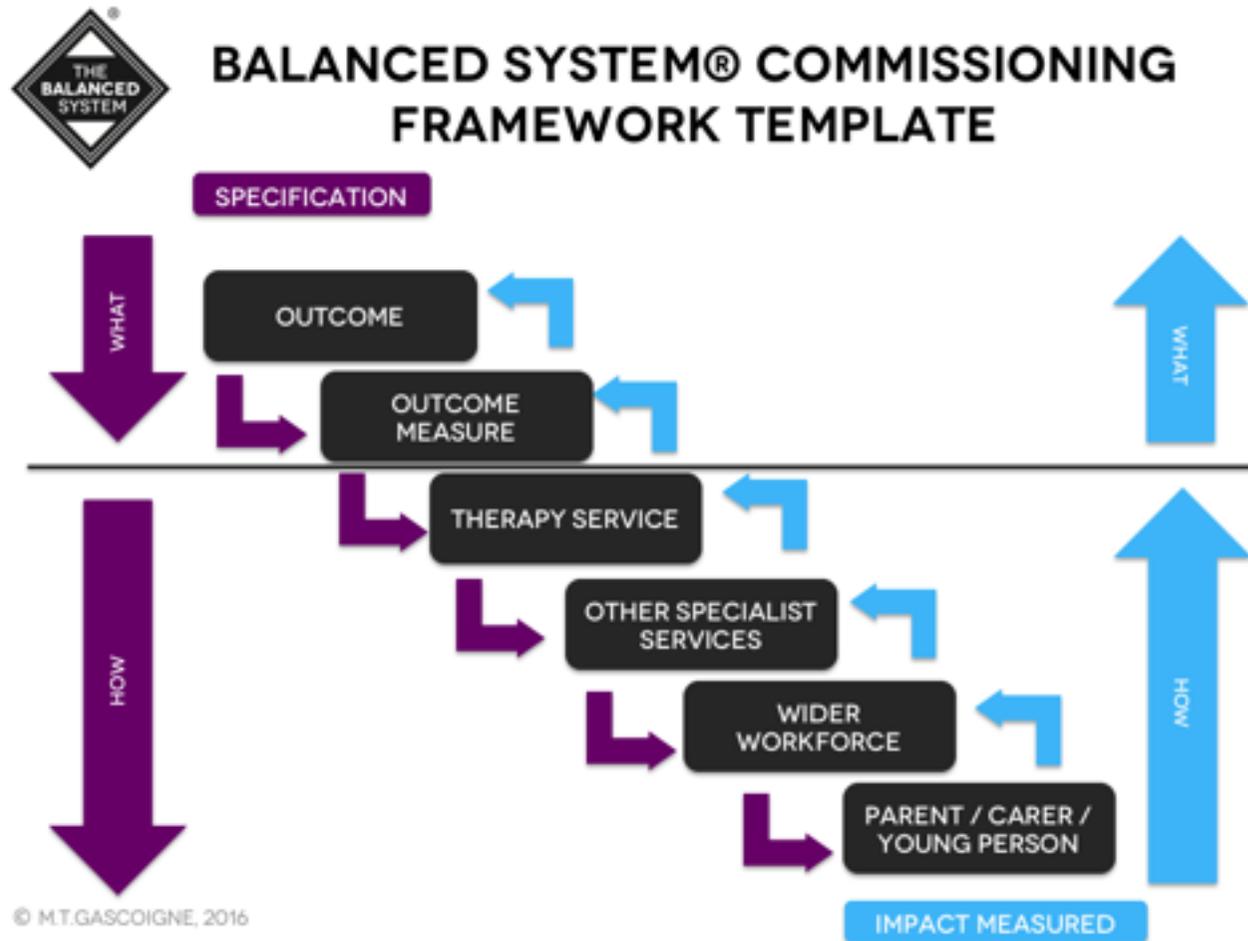
Impact



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The Balanced System® Commissioning Framework Template, provides a visual overview of how the Integrated Solution is configured. The Integrated Solution is an online tool which includes outcomes, outcome measures and the relative contribution in terms of specified inputs required from all elements of the wider and specialist workforce as well as how parents, carers and young people can engage directly. Examples of processes and activities that will support the achievement of the outcomes are also available within the tool if commissioners wish to specify at that level and / or facilitate providers to access the provider area of the platform to support service delivery.





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Outcomes are measured using a four level system adapted from Freidman's Outcomes Based Accountability framework as illustrated. For each outcome within the Integrated Solution there are outcome measures and potential KPIs specified which can be tailored to a specific situation and need.

THE BALANCED SYSTEM® OUTCOME MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

	QUANTITY	QUALITY
EFFORT	<p>LEVEL 1 INPUT</p> <p>HOW MUCH DID WE DO?</p> <p>TRADITIONAL MEASURES OF ACTIVITY AND INPUTS</p>	<p>LEVEL 3 IMPLEMENTATION</p> <p>HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?</p> <p>MEASURING WHETHER THE INPUTS WERE OF A HIGH QUALITY</p>
EFFECT	<p>LEVEL 2 REACH</p> <p>IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?</p> <p>MEASURING ACCESS TO THE INPUTS DELIVERED</p>	<p>LEVEL 4 IMPACT</p> <p>DID IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?</p> <p>FOR THE INDIVIDUAL? FOR A GROUP? FOR A POPULATION</p>

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After Freidman, 2005 and "Turn the Curve" (DCSF, 2008)



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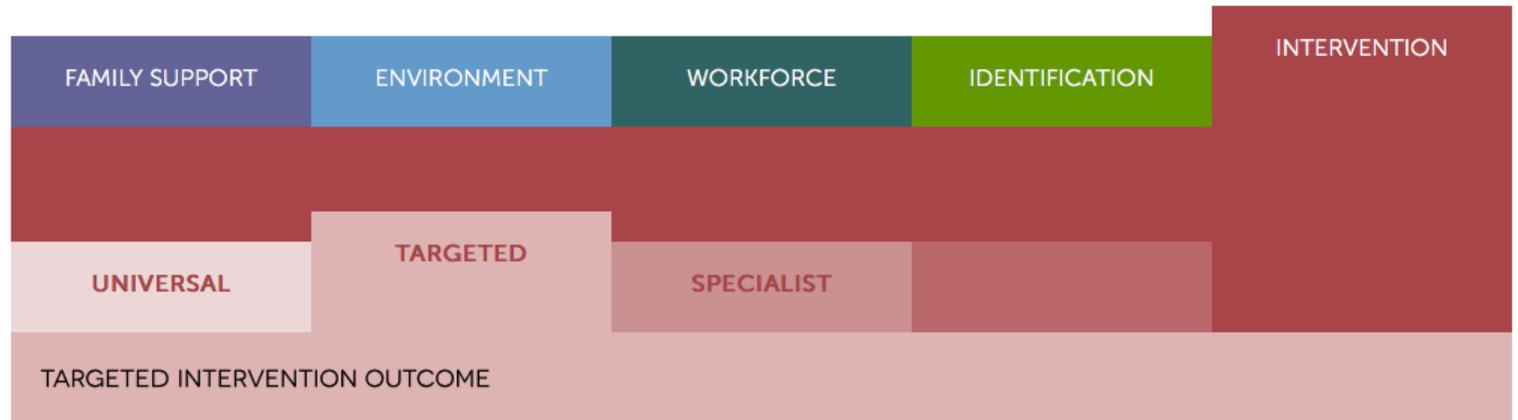


INTEGRATED SOLUTION TOOL

WORKED EXAMPLE

The following pages illustrate an example outcome taken through the process from outcome, through outcome measure, through the relative contributions to achieving impact for the child or young person.

The example shown is in the intervention strand at a targeted level.



Hide SLCN

Outcome:

IN2. Children with a targeted level of SLCN have access to a rolling programme of evidence based targeted interventions to develop core speech, language and communication skills in 1:1 and small groups. These interventions are designed by specialist practitioners; SLTs and / or specialist teachers

- ▶ WAYS TO ACHIEVE THIS OUTCOME
- ▶ EVIDENCE FOR THIS OUTCOME
- ▶ HOW DIFFERENT GROUPS CONTRIBUTE TO THIS OUTCOME
- ▶ CONTEXT FOR THIS OUTCOME



THE BALANCED SYSTEM® OVERVIEW



Outcome:

IN2. Children with a targeted level of SLCN have access to a rolling programme of evidence based targeted interventions to develop core speech, language and communication skills in 1:1 and small groups. These interventions are designed by specialist practitioners; SLTs and / or specialist teachers

▼ WAYS TO ACHIEVE THIS OUTCOME

A targeted programme of interventions and support is available in settings and school 

For example

School has a link SLT in place to provide oversight and guidance as well as training and leading targeted interventions as appropriate

School staff supported by the link SLT identify and set up targeted interventions which take place with school based practitioners taking the lead once established

The SLT identifies groups which will consistently run on a targeted level programme across settings and schools

Appropriate strategies are used to support children with identified SLCN in the home, settings and schools 

For example

SLT service will provide information and outline resources to facilitate targeted interventions for high incidence SLCN

SLT service will provide information and outline resources to facilitate targeted interventions for high incidence SLCN. This might be for 1:1 or group work at a targeted level



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▼ EVIDENCE FOR THIS OUTCOME

Evidence of targeted interventions delivered or led by SLT and/ or specialist teacher service or specialist early years worker in settings and schools ?

Evidence of targeted interventions delivered or led by setting or school based staff

? Level 1 measures:

Number of targeted interventions delivered or led by SLT and/ or specialist teacher service or specialist early years worker in settings and schools

Number of targeted interventions delivered or led by setting or school based staff

Target % of children identified as needing targeted level support who have accessed setting or school led targeted interventions ?

Target % of children identified as needing targeted level support who have accessed SLT led setting or school based targeted interventions

? Level 2 measures:

Reach against target % of children identified as needing targeted level support who have accessed setting or school led targeted interventions

Reach against target % of children identified as needing targeted level support who have accessed SLT led setting or school based targeted interventions



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Quality of setting / school based interventions as evaluated by SLT and specialist teaching colleagues 

Quality of setting / school based interventions as evaluated by setting / school based staff

Quality of setting / school based interventions as evaluated by parents and / or young people

Level 3 measures:

% excellent evaluations of setting / school based interventions as evaluated by SLT and specialist teaching colleagues

% excellent evaluations of setting / school based interventions as evaluated by setting / school based staff

% excellent evaluations of setting / school based interventions as evaluated by parents and / or young people

Evidence of impact on SLCN and learning for children accessing targeted level support 

Level 4 measures:

Case study examples which could include assessment data but also other measures of development and / or attainment as appropriate to the setting or school

% of children and young people accessing targeted support who are evaluated as not requiring any further intervention



▼ HOW DIFFERENT GROUPS CONTRIBUTE TO THIS OUTCOME

SLT



? Specification

Speech and language therapist establish the targeted interventions, providing both programme of work and resources

Speech and language therapists co-run interventions with school based staff to ensure confidence and competence levels are reached and maintained

Speech and language therapists monitor the selection and progress of children accessing targeted interventions

Speech and language therapists lead targeted interventions as appropriate, e.g. for children also receiving specialist interventions in parallel; within schools where the workforce is at an early developmental stage with regards to capacity and competence



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Wider workforce



Specification

Wider workforce deliver school based targeted interventions supported by speech and language therapists and specialist teachers

Wider workforce plan and record sessions complying with the agreed schedule for delivery

Other specialist



Specification

Specialist teachers working in partnership with SLTs across any element of the targeted offer

Parents / Carers



Specification

Parents and carers participate in interventions as appropriate including reinforcing specific activities in the home and attending elements of school based interventions as appropriate



▼ CONTEXT FOR THIS OUTCOME

Local area agreement to the model of intervention

Individual schools need to collaborate in delivering the targeted interventions

Link therapist to have adequate time resources available to school

School based communication champions



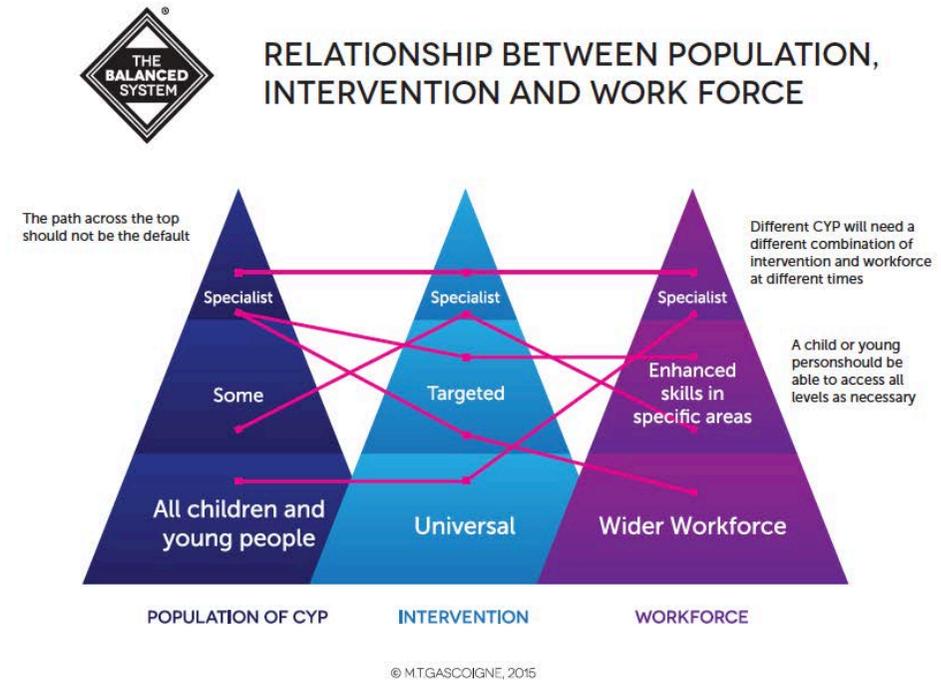
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The Balanced System® is not intended to be prescriptive in terms of the detail of delivery. However, there are core principles which underpin successful implementation.

- Collaborative working is integral to achieve outcomes. Support for children’s needs in a particular area should be seen as a shared responsibility: parents, school, early years settings, therapy providers, the wider workforce.
- Therapists have an active but different role across the levels
- Children and young people are defined by their profile of need, not a setting attended or a diagnosis or whether they have an Education, Health and Care Plan or identified Additional Need
- Not all children and young people with identifiable need require direct intervention from a therapist, however, input from a therapist to the training and infrastructure development to allow others to support children at universal and lower-targeted levels is a fundamental part of the model.
- There is no automatic ‘read across’ between children and young people who might be described as having complex or specialist needs in terms of an Education, Health and Care Plan or Additional Need and the requirement for specialist level therapy support. It is often the case that targeted support is appropriate for children and young people where a specific need is part of a wider profile.
- Similarly, there will be children and young people with specific needs who may not otherwise be identified at a complex or specialist level of need who will require specialist interventions in order to maximise their potential.

FIGURE 7: SHOWING THE RELATIONSHIP ACROSS POPULATION, INTERVENTION AND WORKFORCE³⁶

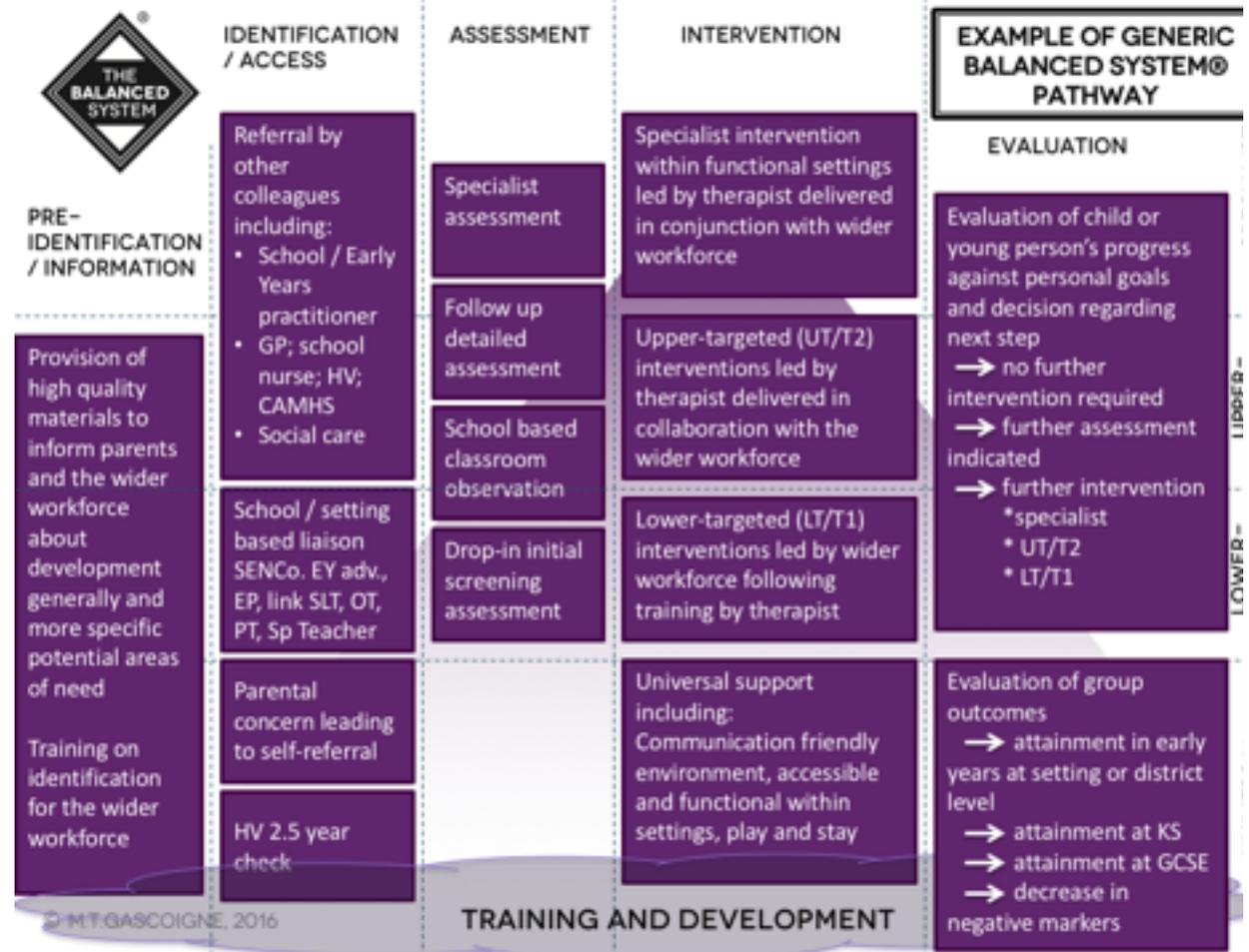




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- Pathways should be flexible to allow children and young people to benefit from support drawn from one or more tiers (universal, targeted and specialist) simultaneously.
- Where possible provision should be delivered in most functional settings for the child or young person
- Functional goals should always be at the centre of interventions.

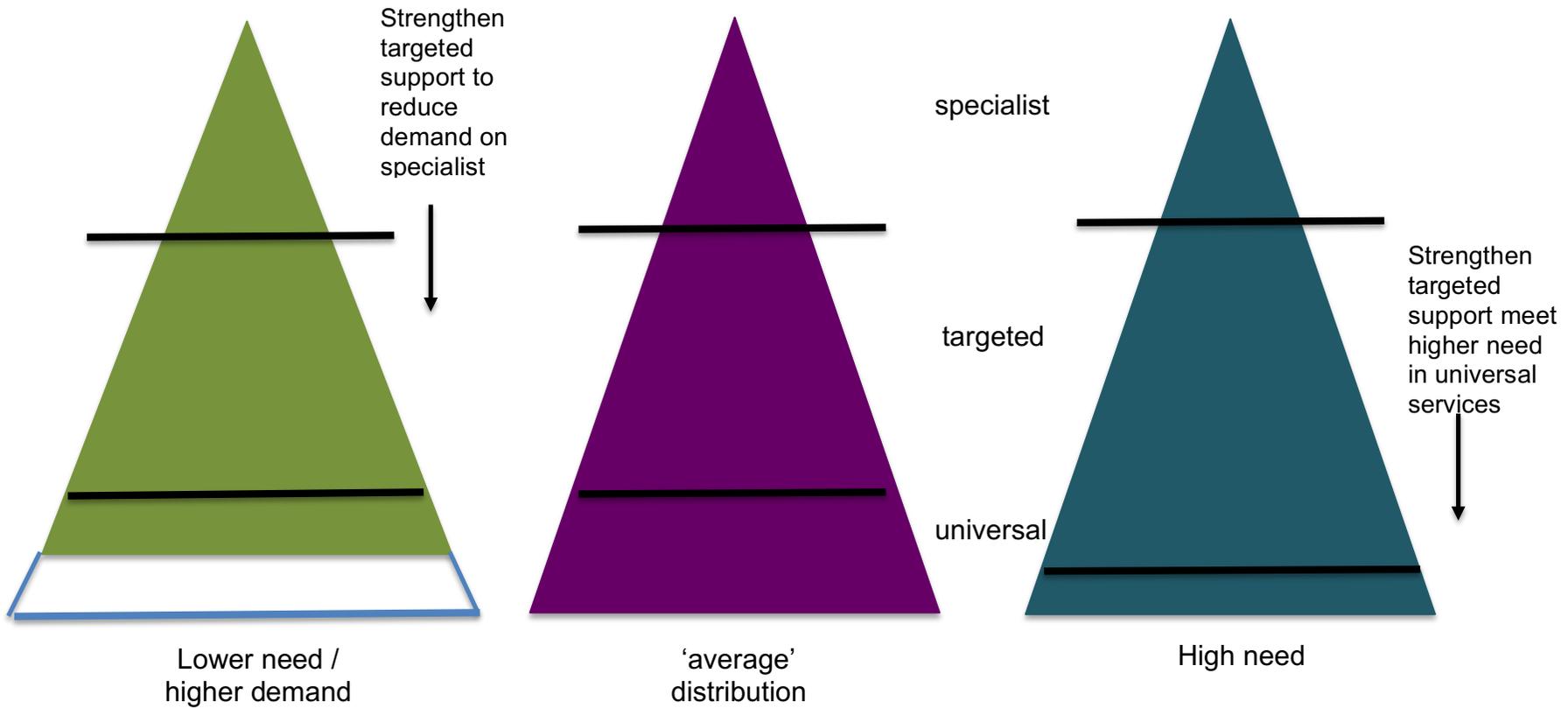




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ADJUSTING MODEL TO MEET NEED





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MATCHING SPECIFICATION – TO ACTIVITY – TO NEED

FROM THE BALANCED SYSTEM® INTEGRATED SOLUTION TOOL:

FAMILY SUPPORT OUTCOMES

UNIVERSAL

FS1. All parents and carers are supported with information and resources to encourage their role as effective primary communicative partners for their children

TARGETED

FS2. Parents and carers of children with identified SLCN receive specific additional support to ensure confidence in their role as a key communication partner and educational support for their child

SPECIALIST

FS3. Parents and carers of children with specialist SLCN receive specific specialist support to ensure confidence in their role as a key communication partner for their child and to increase their understanding of the specific communication challenges associated with their child's needs

Family Support

Environments

Workforce

Identification

Intervention



MATCHING SPECIFICATION – TO ACTIVITY – TO NEED

FROM THE BALANCED SYSTEM® INTEGRATED SOLUTION TOOL:
EXAMPLE – RELATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNIVERSAL OUTCOMES

FAMILY SUPPORT

FS1. All parents and carers are supported with information and resources to encourage their role as effective primary communicative partners for their children

REQUIREMENTS FOR AN INTEGRATED SPECIFICATION:

Speech and Language Therapists write, commission or provide professional oversight of all information regarding SLCN provided to parents/carers

Speech and Language Therapists will be available to provide informal advice

Speech and Language Therapists plan and deliver specific training regarding basic communication strategies with colleagues (e.g. Health Visitors; specialist teachers, SENCo, educational psychologists, school based teachers)

Health visitors and school nurses need to disseminate information from a range of media to parents/carers at key milestones

Health Visiting, early years consultants, specialist teaching and educational psychology services need to work collaboratively with speech and language therapists to deliver training for parents regarding basic communication strategies

Specialist

Targeted

Universal