



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

Early Years Team

Supporting Children's Speech, Language and
Communication Development in Early Years
Settings and Schools



Contents and Rationale

Rationale:

This document contains general advice in relation to the speech, language and communication development of children. It suggests strategies which may be useful for some children and general good practice for all. It does not contain specific advice for individual children that require support from a speech and language therapist. Please contact your Universal Speech and Language Therapist or the SLT advice line if you would like to discuss a specific child.



Please use this guidance alongside the EY Ordinarily Available Provision document which can be accessed here: [ordinarily_available_provision_westmorland_furness_final.pdf \(openobjects.com\)](#)

Contents:

Glossary of SLC terminology

How children develop their Speech, Language and Communication skills

Ages and stages of typical development

Ages and stages of typical development

How speech, language and communication work together to enable effective communication

How children and young people who are learning more than one language develop SLC skills

Different ways a child or young person may not follow typical patterns of speech, language or communication development

The different ways a child may not follow typical patterns of SLC development.

Indicators which may suggest a child or young person has SLCN.

Speech, language and communication skills support other areas of learning.

Top tips for talking with children

Physical Environment

Adults in the Environment

Ways in which adults can support speech development of children and young people

Ways in which adults can support language development of children and young people

Ways in which adults can support communication development of children and young people

Listening and attention difficulties

Difficulties with understanding

Difficulties with expressive language

Speech difficulties

Children and families

Using strategies to support SLCN and SEMH

Using strategies to support SLCN and SEMH

Useful documents and websites

Process document

Glossary of SLC terminology

Speech

Speech is the sounds made when talking. Children learn speech sounds in a developmental order and there are specific rules which apply, for example when sounds can/ cannot start words. Speech also incorporates factors such as volume, pitch, intonation and fluency. Volume control can be tricky for some children and they may speak either very quietly or loudly. As children get older they generally develop the ability to alter the pitch of their voice, for example, when telling a story or engaging in imaginative -play.

Intonation is a later skill which means children can stress different words in sentences, thereby altering the meaning. This is useful when developing a sense of humour.

Language

Language is talking using words and sentences whilst developing appropriate grammatical skills. It is also about what is understood. Children generally need to repeatedly hear new words in context before they will use the word correctly themselves. In English there are lots of rules about how we order words in sentences which can be hard for young children to grasp. Children will start by using single words then gradually add words to make sentences of increasing length as they get older. Children will also take time to explore and then learn correct grammatical structures, for example how to change words depending on the tense. Rules are complex and take time to be learnt. Higher level skills such as inference and reasoning are also an important parts of language development.

Communication

Communication is very important because it is vital in developing and maintaining relationships. It includes an understanding of how to interact and engage with others and an ability to understand the nuances of non-verbal communication as well as being able to attend to and respond to what is being said. Non-verbal communication includes gesture, eye-contact and expression and is a very powerful part of conversation.

Speech language and communication needs (SLCN)

Children are described as having SLCN when they do not develop at a typical rate in this area or have a specific difficulty. Difficulties can vary from slight to severe and can occur in one or more areas of speech, language and communication. There will be specific reasons why some children have difficulties, but for others this will never be known. Specific genetic conditions such as Down Syndrome or structural causes, for example, having a cleft palate may result in SLCN. Needs may also be associated with another diagnosable need for example Autism or a developmental delay. Family history, social disadvantage and/ or environmental factors may also be contributing factors as in some areas up to 50% of children have SLCN. Children will benefit from being in a SLC supportive environment with knowledgeable and supportive adults.



How children develop their Speech, Language and Communication skills

How SLC work together to enable effective interaction 0-3 years

From birth upwards

- Make eye contact
- Develop joint attention
- Copy facial expression
- Making noises and saying words (repeat back)

By 18 months

Babies will be able to say around 20 words, understand some simple words and short phrases and point to familiar objects when you ask them.

By 2 years

Toddlers will usually use 50 or more single words, start to put two to three word sentences together, ask simple questions and understand between 200 and 500 words.

By 3 years

Children will usually use up to 300 words of different types, refer to something from the past, put 4 or 5 word sentences together, ask lots of questions and understand simple 'who?', 'what?' and 'where?' questions.

Speech, language and communication skills are crucial to young children's overall development. Being able to speak clearly and process speech sounds, to understand others, to express ideas and interact with others are fundamental building blocks for a child's development. Research suggests that good communication, language and literacy at a young age have the highest correlation with outcomes at school.

Top Tips for Talking

- Follow the child's play
- Use the child's name to gain their attention



Observe

Wait

Listen

- Comment with simple language
- Describe what the child is doing
- Repeat and add a word

Remember

- 1 Question
- 4 Comments, repetitions, expansions or explanations



Say less

Stress

Slow

Show



Ages and stages of typical development

Age Range - 0-5 Years

Speech

By 5 years old children will:

- Be able to make most speech sounds apart from l, r, j, th, ch and sh.
- Use speech which is clearly understandable by others.
- Uses sentences of 4-6 words which are mainly grammatically correct.
- Be able to use plurals, pronouns and prepositions correctly.
- Learn and use new words rapidly.



Language – Understanding

By 5 years old children will:

- Understand 'what', 'where', 'why' and 'who' questions.
- Understand how to orally blend and segment ready for reading.
- Understand a growing number of adjectives.
- Be able to follow a simple story told orally without the use of pictures.
- Be starting to have an awareness of humour and will laugh at jokes.
- Have an awareness of the language used to sequence time.



Language – Talking

By 5 years old children will:

- Ask lots of questions, including 'why' questions.
- Link sentences of varying lengths and talk about the past.
- Be able to describe something they can see.
- Be interested in the meaning of unknown words.
- Use language to express their wants and needs.
- Argue when they disagree.

Communication

By 5 years old children will:

- Be starting to write, but won't be able to write something that they can't say.
- Happily initiate conversations with adults they know and their peers.
- Use language to express their thoughts and to give their ideas.
- Use language to take on imaginary roles.
- Take longer turns in conversation.
- Use language to aid cooperation in games and play.



Age Range – 5-11 Years

Speech

By 11 years old young people will:

- Use all speech sounds correctly.
- Include lots of two syllable words and words containing multiple consecutive consonants in their speech.
- Alter their pitch, intonation and volume when taking on a role or retelling a story.
- Use a volume level appropriate to the situation.

Language – Understanding

By 11 years old young people will:

- Be able to listen to and follow an instruction whilst focusing on another task.
- Give logical, detailed answers to verbal questions.
- Understand other people's points of view.
- Ask for clarification if they don't understand something.
- Have an understanding of rhetorical questions.

Language – Talking

By 11 years old young people will:

- Be able to use words to describe something which they cannot see.
- Use sentences joined using conjunctions.
- Continue to learn and to use new vocabulary in appropriate contexts.
- Asking of questions will continue, with 'how' questions also being used.
- Be able to use more complicated grammar to describe experiences and when verbally retelling stories.
- Use sentences with a typical length of 7-11+ words.
- Use language to describe feelings.

Communication

By 11 years old young people will:

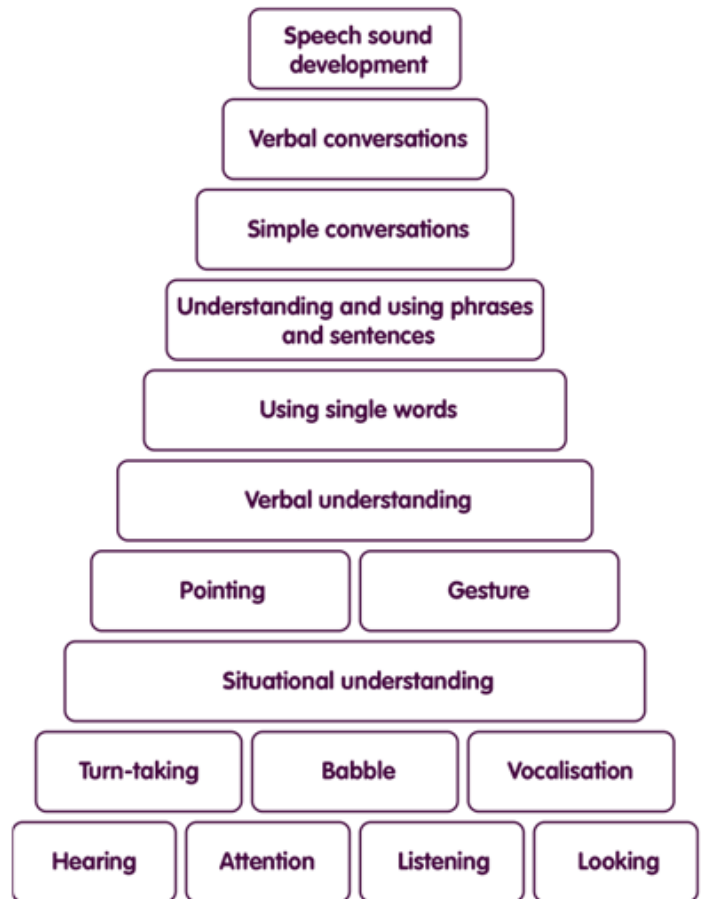
- Happily initiate conversation with adults and young people they do not know.
- Increasingly pick up on more discrete humour in conversations.
- Observe the listener to check they are interested and understanding what is being said.
- Have a greater understanding to non-verbal communication and respond to this in conversation.
- Use different language styles depending on whether they are in a formal or social situation.



How speech, language and communication work together to enable effective communication



(Liz Scott, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS 2010)



The diagram shows that attention, listening and understanding are key underlying skills in a child's communication journey. These skills can be supported from birth. In the bottom part of the diagram, a fundamental aspect is attention and listening skills. These skills play an essential role. A child needs to develop appropriate attention before they can do any of the later skills that are part of the communication process. Speech sound development is the very last block in the diagram. If the bottom row of blocks are shaky, then the whole wall will be shaky!

Speech, language and communication are complex skills which interact greatly with each other. This diagram aims to show what they are!

Children put together what they have **HEARD** and **UNDERSTAND**

Children plan and organise what they will say

Children **HEAR**,
ATTEND and
actively **LISTEN**

Using verbal and
non-verbal language
to interact with
other people –
COMMUNICATION



Children use words
to share meaning -
TALKING

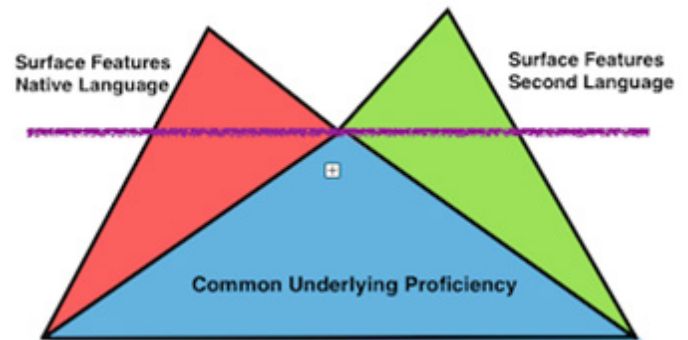
Children make and
use sounds to form
words - **SPEECH**

Children have to want, need and be confident to communicate

How children and young people who are learning more than one language develop SLC skills

Language acquisition skills and stages are the same regardless of which language children are learning to speak. Development in one language can support learning in another.

Jim Cummins is a Canadian researcher who has studied how children learn language. This diagram illustrates his iceberg theory. Like an iceberg, what is under the water is much greater than what you can see above the surface. The tip of the iceberg is what we hear and can measure e.g. word order, sentence structure, pronunciation and vocabulary. Below the surface is the underpinning knowledge about communication. This is what Cummins calls the 'common underlying proficiency' e.g. eye contact, non verbal communication, gesture etc. Children's first, second or third language can develop from this a bit like the peaks of an iceberg. Being bilingual can help individuals to learn a third language more easily.



There are two main ways that children can become bilingual:

1. **Simultaneous bilingualism** where a child is exposed to two languages from birth or in the first 3 years of life.
2. **Successive bilingualism** where a child starts off hearing and learning one language then starts learning another.

Subtractive bilingualism is where the child starts to learn a second language but the first language and culture are not valued or used, so they fade away as a consequence. The first language and the second language develop to an extent.

In **Additive bilingualism**, the child's first language/languages are used and developed and the child's culture is value while the second language is being learned. Both languages benefit and the learner has greater success in their language and overall holistic development. This research highlights the importance of maintaining and developing the child's home language after they start to learn an additional language.

EYFS Statutory Framework 1.13 For children whose home language is not English, providers must take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home. Providers must also ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language during the EYFS, ensuring children are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them when they begin year 1.

(See the Westmorland and Furness EY website for further EAL support documents)



Different ways a child or young person may not follow typical patterns of speech, language or communication development

SLCN is a broad, overarching term indicating a child has needs. This may be as a result of one or more of the following reasons:

- A specific speech and language disorder where the progress of speech and language does not follow the normal patterns of development, with a significant impact on everyday social interactions and education progress.
- A difficulty which arises following an illness, incident or accident which has occurred since birth.
- Receptive difficulties which results in children finding it hard to understand spoken language.
- Expressive language difficulties where children find it hard to use language to order and explain their thoughts.
- Social communication and interaction difficulties linked to Autism Spectrum Conditions.
- Speech delay where the child is following 'typical' stages of development but at a slower rate.
- Developmental Delay where a need has been present since birth and is identified as a child gets older and does not follow 'typical' development.
- Developmental Language Disorder which is not linked to any other condition but is specific to difficulties with an aspect or aspects of learning and using language.
- Communication and language difficulties associated with other conditions such as ADHD, Dyspraxia, Cerebral Palsy or Fragile-X.
- Glue Ear which causes fluctuating hearing loss, so can affect children's speech and language development as children then often don't correctly hear and replicate sounds/ words as they should be spoken.
- Phonological difficulties where a child struggles to produce specific sounds when talking.
- Pragmatic difficulties leading to difficulties understanding and processing Information in order an appropriate response.

It is also useful to consider any environmental factors which may be affecting a child's SLC development. These may include: home environment; dummy use; parental mental health; parental SEND; attachment difficulties; over reliance on technology; limited social interaction outside the home; nursery quality and experience and training of practitioners.



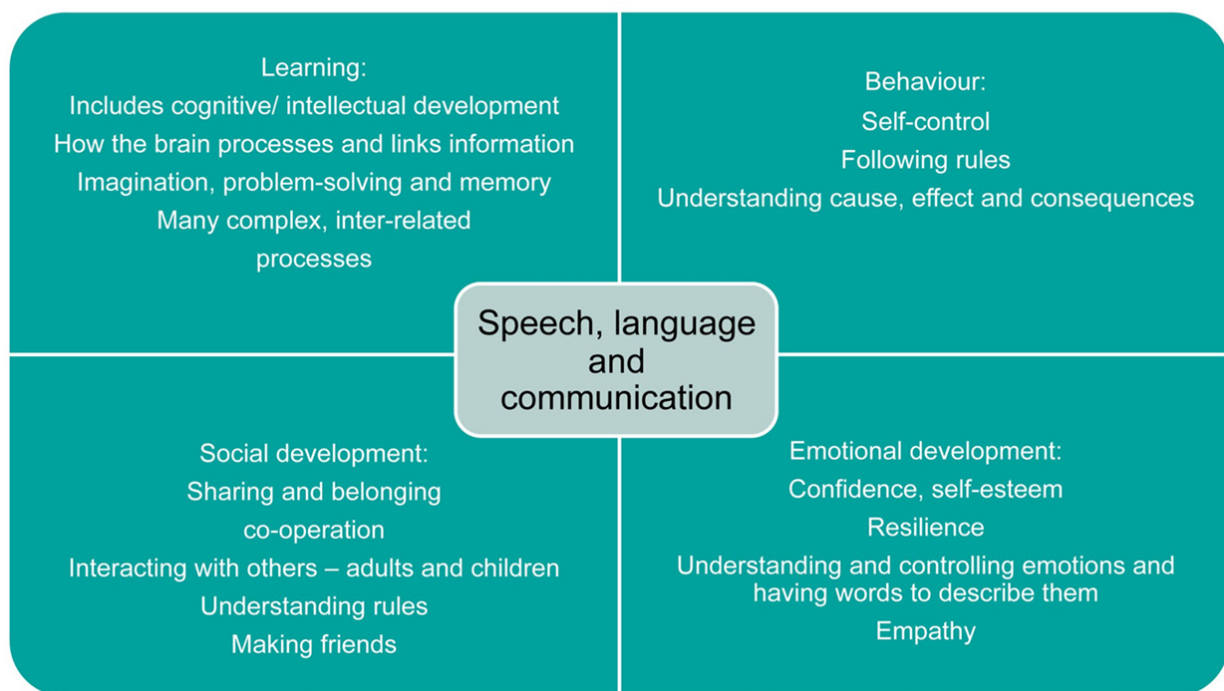


The different ways a child may not follow typical patterns of SLC development

- Not meeting developmental milestones
- Not responding to loud noises or voices
- Avoiding eye contact/facial expression (lacks joint attention)
- Silent or making unusual sounds
- Lack of interest/curiosity to explore toys or items around them
- Unable to point/gesture to make needs known
- Late to start talking
- No interest in books or pictures

10% of children and young people have long term and persistent speech, Language and Communication needs.

How speech, language and communication skills support other areas of development



Many children have a delay in SLC skills and need support to catch up. We need to identify problems early and intervene to ensure children develop in all areas.

Speech, language and communication work together to enable effective interaction.

The more time parents and practitioners spend talking with their children, the more vocabulary children are exposed to and therefore the more words children use.

Children seem to develop strong language skills when parents and practitioners ask open-ended questions, ask children to elaborate and focus on topics of interest to their child.

Responding to what the child is talking about and having familiar routines also promotes shared understanding.

Conversations about how people feel and how that affects what they do are important in learning social communication skills.

Indicators which may suggest a child or young person has SLCN

Most children follow expected patterns of development for speech, language and communication, but others don't and have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

Identifying through observation and discussion with parents and colleagues that a child is not where you would expect in terms of speech, language and development is probably the first indicator you will have of SLCN. If a child is having difficulties in another area of development, it also needs to be considered whether their speech, language and communication development is a contributing factor.

It is important to consider a child's speech, language and communication development if they are having difficulties in/with :

- Play
- Behaviour
- Literacy
- Language
- Speech
- Social interaction and relationships
- Confidence and self-esteem/ mental health
- Communication

Working with parents is vital to identify any SLCN as early as possible, as this is key to ensuring children get the support they need to ensure the best possible outcomes.





Learning

- Language is needed for problem solving.
- Children need to learn to read, write and spell. Literacy development is closely linked to language development.
- Learning requires language to be understood and responded to.
- Children learn through play using language and interaction skills.



Social Development

- Language is needed to communicate and interact with others.
- SLC skills are needed to make and maintain friendships.
- Non-verbal communication and 'rules' need to be understood.

Speech, language and communication skills support other areas of learning



Emotional Development

- Children's self-esteem and confidence can be affected by having SLCN.
- Effective communication skills are needed to develop resilience.
- Children need language to label and talk about emotions.
- Understanding of emotional language is needed to develop empathy.



Behaviour

- Children need language to self-regulate and calm.
- Understanding of language is needed to be able to follow rules.
- Language is needed to be able to exercise self-control and talk about feelings.

Top tips for talking with children

Remember....

Language development doesn't happen by accident

Children need adults to support their language and communication development and the more we know and understand about language and how it develops, the better position we're in to help.



Supporting communication development is easy when you know how

Communication is everywhere, so can be supported in all activities by making slight changes to current good practice to make it even better.

Top Tips

- Using the right level of language for each child and knowing how to build on their language skills is key – this is why it's so important to know how language develops.
- Check that children understand the language used and instructions given – ask them to repeat back what they think you said or what they need to do.
- When talking to children add one or two words to the sentence length they already use in their own talking, this provides a model of language that children can follow and build on.
- Decide on 5 key strategies you want to use. Ensure all staff know which strategies are being focused on and how they can be put in to practice.
- Ask open-ended questions (which are difficult to give a yes/no or one word answer) and ask children to elaborate on and explain their response. This helps develop strong communication skills.
- Talk about what children are interested in – let them talk first and let them lead the conversation.
- Use comments and prompts rather than questions, E.g. Say “what a tall tower” “it will be as tall as you” instead of “what are you building?”
- ‘Model’ good communication. Children learn from what they see and hear.
- Give children time to work out what you've said and what they want to say.
- Have conversations about how people feel and how that affects what they do. This is important in order to learn social interaction skills



Physical Environment

It is important to think about the physical environment when you consider how best to support speech, language and communication development in your setting, for all children and for those with specific needs. Children will thrive in a language rich and communication friendly environment.

Consider:

- Whether your physical space has been set up in a way that promotes interaction and communication. Are there large indoor and outdoor spaces as well as small more intimate spaces which give different opportunities for communication?
- Has the lighting, acoustics and visual appearance of your spaces been considered? Some children find spaces which are cluttered, over-stimulating and bright challenging. Do you have quiet, calmer spaces where children may feel more at ease to communicate? Do you limit 'blanket' noise from TV/ music and ensure there are periods of quiet?
- Have you considered where individual children prefer to communicate? Some children will be more confident and chatty outdoors, whilst others might prefer a cosy space with limited distractions.
- Are there visual supports and appropriate labelling (this does not mean labelling everything!) to support early literacy and language development? Are these actively used with the children rather than just being for show?
- Do you provide interactive displays linked to learning and children's interests which can be used as conversation starters or opportunities to promote critical thinking or problem solving?
- Has the balance of natural and man-made resources been considered? Opportunities to use open-ended resources will promote more opportunities for discussion, learning new vocabulary and negotiation.
- Are there opportunities for role-play indoors and outside starting with situations which are familiar to the children? Can resources be moved between areas and do children get to input into developing new role-play areas. Do you provide real objects and scaffold learning?
- Is there space for children to display their own creations and do adults scribe their comments and explanations?
- Is the environment regularly audited and reviewed to ensure it continues to inspire, stimulate, challenge and motivate children to learn and communicate?



Adults in the Environment

The best resource in your EY setting will be the adults, especially when it comes to supporting children with their speech, language and communication development. It is important to consider your overall ethos and policies to ensure SLC is at the heart of your day-to-day practice. It is also vital that leaders/managers regularly audit and evaluate provision and practice to ensure current research has been considered and that children's needs are being met holistically and in relation to SLC. Question to consider:

- Do all practitioners have a good understanding of child development and specifically of the stages of speech, language and communication development?
- Are staff given opportunities for CPD and is learning cascaded and discussed?
- Are all staff confident to support children with SLCN both during everyday opportunities, routines and transition times as well as during specific activities where needed?
- Are the adults in your setting good communication role models? Do they have a range of strategies for scaffolding, modelling and extending SLC development when playing with children?
- Do practitioners take into account the confidence level of the child when supporting SLC development and consider their preferred learning style and characteristics of effective learning?
- Can staff effectively alter the level of language they use depending on the needs of individuals? Do they give children sufficient time to process information and to respond without jumping in? Do they limit the amount of questions they ask and instead comment and share new vocabulary?
- Is the link between SLC and early Literacy understood and are opportunities for Phase 1 phonics provided?
- Do staff plan exciting, challenging opportunities which promote quality interactions and which give the children something to talk about?
- Are staff confident to use gesture and visuals alongside language where appropriate?
- Do all practitioners know what to do if they are concerned about a child's speech, language and communication development?





Ways in which adults can support speech development of children and young people

When supporting young children it is important to make learning fun, multi-sensory and engaging. Key to success is:

- Developing an awareness of sounds in the environment
- Encouraging good listening skills
- Playing around with rhymes, words and sounds
- Modelling the right response rather than correcting what children say.

When teaching children new words, it is important to:

- Use all the senses and talk together about shape, colour, texture
- Talk together about what it does, what it's similar to, what it means
- Talk together about how this links to what they already know
- Talk about the word structure – how many syllables, what does it start with / rhyme with.
- Help them to use it
- Reinforce the new word regularly

With older children it is important to:

- Adapt your language and consider when/ how you introduce new vocabulary.
- Introduce new words, especially those related to areas of study in context and to use them regularly.
- Teach words which have more than one meaning explicitly and in context.
- Continue to promote reading and a love of books.

It is important that adults (not just in the early years) are aware of the link between speech, phonics, reading and writing. Children will struggle to read or write a word they cannot say correctly. Adults need to support children effectively from an early age if there are concerns about speech development as it underpins all other learning.



Ways in which adults can support language development of children and young people

Getting your language right will help children and young people understand better and will support their talking too. The way adults talk to children and young people has a really big impact on both what a child understands and what they say.



Consider how you can **adapt** your language to support the child/ young person you are working with. Think about how many and what questions you ask; How much you talk; How long your sentences are; How complex your sentences are; What spaces there are for the child/ young person to talk; How many new or complex words there are and how much time the child/ young person has to think about what you say. Consider the age and developmental stage of the child/ young person and adapt your language accordingly.

Think about your use of questions. Sometimes children/ young people can be overloaded with questions, so it's good to think about the purpose of them. Certain types and too many questions can inhibit language and communication. Try to comment rather than asking lots of questions and avoid closed 'yes/no' questions.

It is important for adults to understand how to **scaffold** children and young people's language. This means providing support to enable children and young people to achieve and develop their skills. There are many ways to scaffold children's and young people's language and this approach can be differentiated to suit individuals from a young age to teenagers. Strategies to try:



- For younger children providing structures for giving information or telling stories using sequencing cards and using visual prompts can really help.
- Teaching and helping children to learn new words by talking together about the structure and meaning of the word and relating it to prior knowledge and vocabulary supports vocabulary retention.
- Breaking tasks or skills down into smaller steps makes them more manageable and allows children to have more success by keeping the task at a level that is appropriate for them.
- Adding to, or extending what a child says supports the child to move their skills on to the next stage.
- Providing language models helps children to hear the correct language structures
- Encouraging children to rehearse and practice means they are more likely to develop the skills and use them successfully, which can support confidence as well as improve their skills.

Babies are a little different!

- Support the language development of babies by ensuring they hear lots of vocabulary.
- Provide a running commentary for everyday events which encourages early communication and interaction.
- Show them objects as you talk and label them as this develops shared attention and helps words to be linked to objects.
- Use repeated songs and rhymes on a regular basis.





Ways in which adults can support communication development of children and young people

With babies it is important to make the most of opportunities for early communication through eye contact, sound making and turn taking. Much of our communication as adults is non-verbal, so those early interactions with babies – looking at them, smiling, playing with sounds, including imitating the sounds they make are all crucial pre-cursors for communication development.

When supporting children and young people it is important to :

- Model and demonstrate good communication skills. Think about how adults communicate in front of children!
- Include focused opportunities to practise skills, based on 'explicit' teaching of how to communicate effectively in different situations. Through scaffolding by adults children need to be taught to disagree, negotiate, resolve difficulties and to communicate in specific situations.
- Talk about the skills you see children using and explain the skills you are using, for example commenting on how older children resolve a conflict with peers.
- Talk about and practise communication for different events, situations and purposes. For younger children this might be speaking in assembly for the first time, for teenagers it might be preparing for interviews.
- Give children clear roles when working in a group to practise communicating in different ways.
- Ensure there are well structured opportunities for children to communicate with each other through play and social situations even as they get older.
- Adapt your language and keep your voice interesting to ensure young children remain engaged and interested. This will result in them listening more to what you say and learning more from the language models you are providing them with. Think about how you use gesture, tone, pitch, volume and non-verbal communication to model different communication skills.



Listening and attention difficulties

Children with listening and attention difficulties may:

- Be unable to focus on an adult's voice
- Be easily distracted
- Unable to follow instructions
- Not able to sit for circle time
- Disrupt the group by talking
- Get up and wander off
- Be very active or withdrawn and quiet
- Rely heavily on routine, gesture and following the other children

Strategies to support listening and attention – good practice for all children
Remember to:

- Use the child's name before talking to them or giving an instruction.
- Minimise distractions.
- Keep your language simple and pause between parts so that you give extra time for processing language.
- Get down to the child's level so that it is easier to make eye contact.
- Use visual cues, e.g. objects, pictures, gesture, Makaton sign, etc.
- Vary your intonation so that it is more interesting for the child to listen to you.
- Keep activities short, play little and often and have fun

Strategies to support children with listening and attention difficulties

- Reduce distractions and background noise
- Focus the child's attention before giving instructions
- Give individual as well as whole group instructions
- Use clear speech and simplified language
- Use appropriate vocabulary, repeating and restating
- Use visual prompts
- Specifically teach good listening skills
- Play listening games every day, both individually and in groups



Difficulties with understanding

Children who do not understand language may show some of these signs:

- Not doing as they are told
- Are very active or may be quiet or withdrawn
- Have poor attention skills
- Rely on situations/routines/gesture/watching others i.e. non-verbal cues, in order to know what to do
- Have a lack of awareness of what is going on around them
- Echo what has been said to them
- Be very verbal, but the actual content of what they say may be limited
- Only follow the last part of a long instruction

Strategies to support understanding

- Be visual: Show children what we are saying
- Use natural gestures and facial expressions
- Use objects of reference
- Use signs and visual aids with symbols, pictures and photographs
- Check understanding
- Teach children the meaning of words
- Give children additional time to process what we are saying
- Reduce your language
- Break instructions down into smaller steps

There is lots of evidence to show these things really help to develop children's language. Remember to always use the words alongside the visual strategy so the child is hearing the language at the same time.



Difficulties with expressive language

Children who find it difficult to talk may:

- Forget or misuse words or use 'empty' words e.g. 'thingy'
- Give muddled explanations
- Use immature grammar and only simple sentences
- Avoid situations where they need to speak
- Be disruptive in speaking situations
- Stick to preferred topics or phrases
- Make heavy use of gesture and other non-verbal communication
- Get into trouble when playing due to poor negotiation skills
- Be socially isolated and choose younger children as friends
- "Go blank" when chosen to answer a question

Strategies to support children with delayed expressive language

Children need opportunities to communicate everyday in every way! This can be achieved by creating a positive communication environment.

- Every time a child chooses to interact an adult should maximise this communicative opportunity
- Children learn through imitating and copying adult words, actions and behaviours. You are their best resource!
- Don't draw attention to a child's mispronunciation; model back the correct word and don't ask the child to repeat what you say.
- Support children to play and communicate with their peers
- Ensure adults are modelling correct pronunciations and vocabulary
- Keep the ball in the air by not using closed questions.



Speech difficulties

Children who have speech sound difficulties may:

- Not be understood by people outside their family
- Have difficulty making friends
- Have poor social skills
- Be reluctant to speak
- May be withdrawn and quiet
- Be very aware that people don't understand them so may use lots of gesture to get their needs met

Some children may have a physical difficulty or a moderate learning difficulty which affects their articulation of sounds and this is quite different to a sound system error.

Strategies to support children with speech difficulties

- Provide a good 'model' for the child by repeating his/her words correctly, rather than telling the child how to say it or asking him/ her to repeat it. This also lets the child know that you have understood what they are saying e.g. child: "Daddy tar" adult: "yes, that's Daddy's car"
- Don't distort sounds by over-emphasising
- Talk through how you physically make the sounds
- Play I spy games
- Sing rhymes and play rhyming games

Remember early support for any speech, language or communication needs is key, so discussion with parent is vital and timely referral to speech therapy services if appropriate.



Using strategies to support SLCN and SEMH

Current evidence based approaches to understanding children and young people's behaviour:

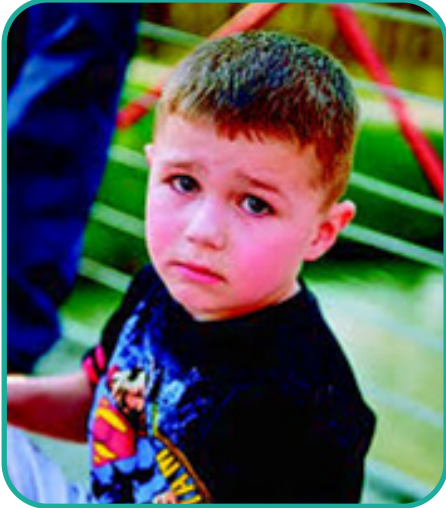
Name	Approach
Systemic	Based on all the people around the child interacting together to provide support (family, friends and the wider community).
Behavioural	Aims to modify behaviour through rewards and sanctions as thinks all behaviour is learnt. Triggers for particular behaviours are considered.
Cognitive	Based on the 'here and now'. Seeks to reframe negative thoughts as recognises how thoughts and feelings affect behaviour.
Therapeutic	Considers the effect of emotions and the importance of attachment as well as how past experiences can affect children and young people.

Strategies to promote positive behaviour, social and emotional development and mental wellbeing adapted to support children and young people with speech, language and communication needs:

- Help children to explain what has happened by using simple open-ended questions, but add prompts or visual cues if they need it.
- Ensure the child is given chance to ask for clarification.
- Provide the child with a model for successful interaction by explaining what you want them to do or say.
- Ensure the language used is at an appropriate level so the child can understand it.
- Give the child extra time to process what you have said and to think of an answer. Listen well and wait patiently.
- Use visual prompts to help the child understand routines, rules and consequences in order to support understanding.

All behaviour is a way of children communicating with us. Once we understand this we can look beyond the behaviour that is challenging us and focus on the **needs** of the child. Once we have an ideas of the need we can find ways of **meeting the need**.





Case study of successful support for a child

This is Harry. He is 5 years old and attends a small school in the reception class. He has identified SLCN and found starting school a challenge. He has received a lot of support from school who have worked in partnership with his mum. Using visual aids and simple language has really helped him to understand the daily routines and school expectations. All staff have ensured they use language at an appropriate level and short sentences. They have given Harry additional time to process information and respond to instructions. Adults have made time to play alongside him and model appropriate interaction with his peers and supported him by teaching specific language to use in social situations. They have listened carefully to Harry and learnt to de-escalate situations.

Indicators of how to recognise whether speech, language and communication needs have been met

Behaviour policies within the setting support children effectively and practice reflects what is in the actual policy, for example:

- SLCN is recognised as a potential cause of behavioural incidents and adult's language and tasks are appropriately differentiated to try to avoid incidents arising.
- Staff recognise that children cannot process language and communicate effectively when they are stressed or upset. Language is simplified and reduced to aid de-escalation during challenging situations.
- There is an emphasis on adults managing behavioural incidents as they occur, whilst still modelling good interaction, communication and listening techniques.
- Children are given adequate time to calm down after behavioural incidents before debriefing (using language at an appropriate level) takes place.

Planning effectively meets the needs of children with SLCN and SEMH, for example:

- There are lots of opportunities for the development of interaction and communication skills.
- Children are specifically taught communication skills which can help them behave well.
- If children have speech therapy episode goals these are addressed and evident in planning.
- Adults use appropriate communication strategies and language levels to support individual children.

There are less difficulties with behaviour and children make progress with their SLC development, for example:

- Opportunities to discuss emotions, be listened to and supported has resulted in less difficulties at lunchtimes and playtime.
- Children have been taught positive interaction strategies and supported to use these in social situations.
- Adults really take time to listen and see situations from the child's point of view which has led to less frustration and children having more time to express themselves.



Children and families

Partnership working with parents is a vital part of good practice in the EY. Family's are a child's primary and first care giver and will know their child best. Working together to support all children's speech, language and communication development is key and is especially important for those children with additional needs. The views of the family and child must be considered throughout and support adapted as necessary.

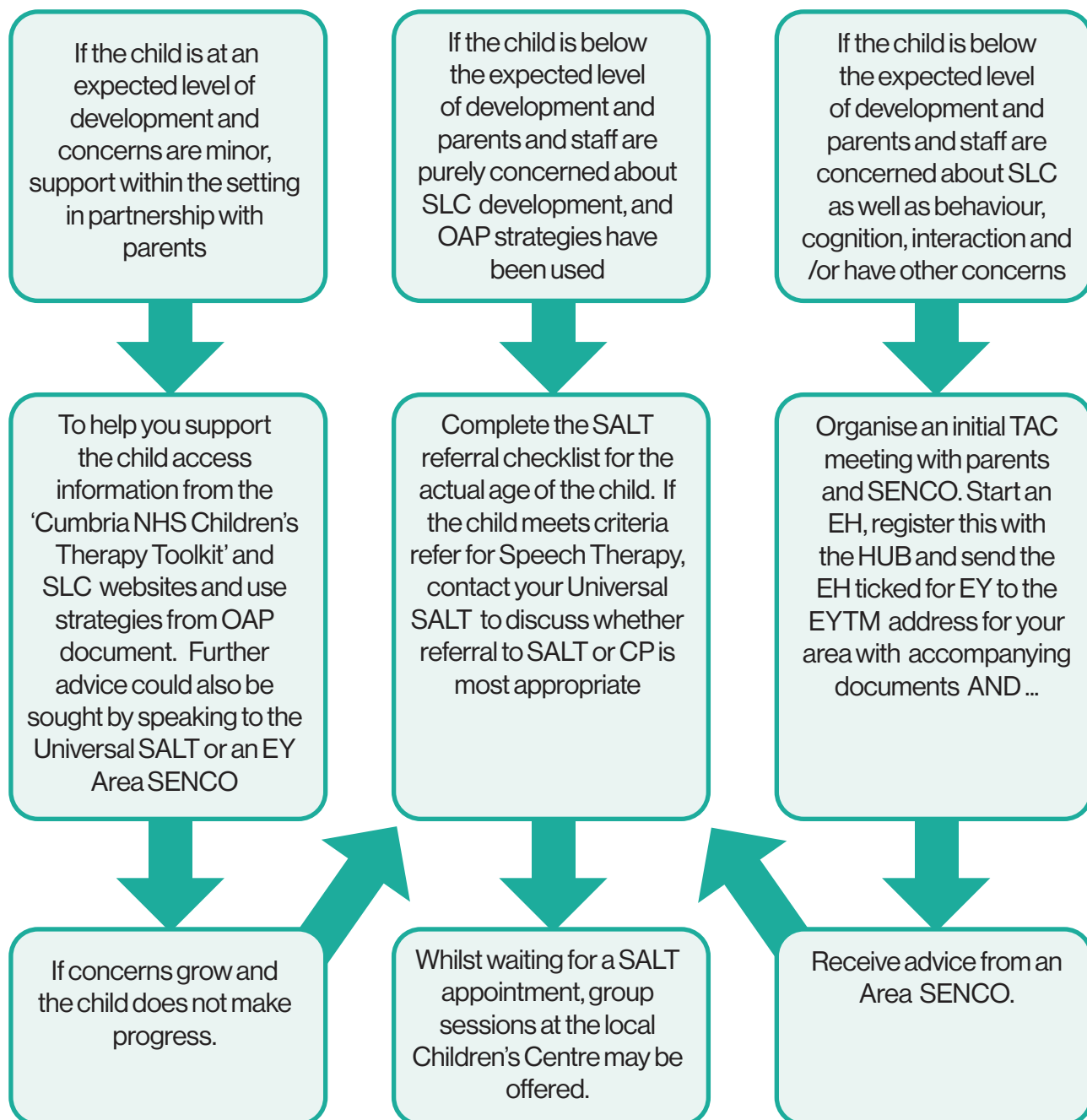
Consider:

- How you share good practice in relation to child development and SLC development with families in an appropriate way without being judgemental.
- Whether parents feel able to approach staff with concerns and to seek advice?
- How suggestions could be made or good practice shared in relation to having communication friendly environments at home as well as in the setting.
- Signposting families to other services such as SLC groups run by the local children's centre or running something yourself. Staff knowledge and experience could be shared or a specific packages or information from 'The Communication Trust' or 'I CAN' could be used.
- How families for which English is not the first language are supported and ensure you promote valuing/using their first language at home. Access EAL guidance if appropriate.
- Ways to regularly share information with families about key themes related to SLC development (e.g. dummy use, use of electronic gadgets, talking to babies) in an accessible way. Displays, stay and play sessions and digital content could be considered.
- Sharing your vision promoting communication as being key. Don't be afraid to speak to parents to request support in your quest. Consider policies where good communication can be promoted, for example limiting parental phone use at drop off/ collection times.
- Sharing 'Chat, Play, Share' song and rhyme sheets with parents to give them ideas for easy activities to do at home to support their child's SLC development.
- Sharing your approach to teaching early phonological awareness and involving parents/carers where possible.
- Signposting parents to the SLT team Facebook page 'Cumbria Communicates'.



Process for supporting an EY child where there are concerns in relation to speech, language and communication needs

If you have concerns about the speech, language or communication of a child you are key person for speak to your room leader, setting SENCO and parents and agree what will happen next.



Useful documents and websites

Universally Speaking - The ages and stages of children's communication development From birth to 5 years
Universally Speaking (speechandlanguage.org.uk)

Misunderstood - Supporting children and young people with speech, language and communication needs.
(councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk)

What to Expect in the EYFS (Parents guide to the EYFS) foundationyears.org.uk/files/2021/09/What-to-expect-in-the-EYFS-complete-FINAL-16.09-compressed.pdf

Cumbria NHS Children's Speech and Language Therapy

Families Information | Children's Speech and Language Therapy Services (westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk)

Children's Speech and Language Therapy :: North Cumbria Integrated Care (ncic.nhs.uk)

<https://www.ncic.nhs.uk/services/childrens-therapy-toolkit>

Cumbria Children's Speech and Language Therapy | Facebook

Speech and Language UK: Changing young lives

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists www.rcslt.org

<http://www.hanen.org/Home.aspx>

<https://www.afasic.org.uk>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/tips-and-advice>

Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust - Speech and Language Therapy Toolkit

Paediatric SLT Resources (humber.nhs.uk)

Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy | NHS GGC

Speech and Language Therapy Toolkit | CPFT NHS Trust

Early years: resources and tools for early language development and parental engagement | National



