



The Learning Institute

# Supporting Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) – Part 1

## Overview

*“The ability to communicate is an essential life skill for all children and young people and it underpins a child’s social, emotional and educational development.” (Bercow, 2008: p.6)*

Speech, language and communication are important in almost everything we do. Being able to make our thoughts, ideas and needs known, things we like and dislike, interacting with others and making friends are critical life skills. However for many children and young people these skills are much more difficult to develop; they have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). Every child with a speech, language or communication need is different.

This CPD activity will help you to understand the difference between a difficulty in speech, to one in language or communication. You will reflect on provision in your setting.

## Target audience

Teaching assistants, support workers

## Duration

Approximately 1 hour

The Learning Institute provides opportunities for individuals and communities through high quality education, training and research programmes that challenge personal barriers and promote social inclusion. To find out more, please get in touch.

## Introduction

Children with speech, language or communication needs (SLCN) cover the whole ability range.

They may find it more difficult to communicate with others and/or take part in conversations. This is either because they find it difficult to understand what others say or because they have difficulties with fluency and forming sounds, words and sentences. They may also find it difficult to understand meaning when they hear or see a word. This can lead to words being used incorrectly or out of context and the child or young person having a smaller vocabulary.

It is important to remember that difficulties in speech, language and communication are not always entirely separate and can overlap.

## Context

For school-aged children and young people, the likelihood of being identified as having SLCN is **2.3 times greater** for those eligible for free school meals (FSM) and living in areas of disadvantage (The Communication Trust, 2017).

School census data shows that SLC needs are the most common type of special educational need and disability (SEND) in primary schools, making up 29% of the total (Department for Education, 2012 cited in Gross, 2013, p.5)

The National Association of Special Educational Needs (NASEN) (2016) state that between 2011 and 2016 there was an 84% increase in the number of children with SLCN as their primary need. As practitioners we need to know why, although this is still open for debate. NASEN encourage practitioners to contact them with their views and any evidence through their website.

Research shows that if a child with a speech, language or communication difficulty is identified early and targeted support is put into place, they are more likely to go on to develop good reading and spelling and keep pace with their peers.

Mroz, in a study in 2006, surveyed practitioners in nursery, primary and secondary schools about training they had received in SLCN and how confident they felt to identify and support children and with speech, language or communication difficulties. Mroz (2006) found that 25% of respondents were from the primary sector and felt very confident in their ability to support SLC development; which leaves 75% that did not. Mroz also found that a third had had no initial training at all. The picture was similar in secondary schools where almost half of respondents had received no initial training in SLCN. Practitioner professional development in this area is vitally important.

## Objectives

- To understand the difference between a speech difficulty, a language difficulty and a communication difficulty
- To reflect on speech, language and communication provision in your setting
- To identify strategies to support children and young people with speech, language or communication difficulties

## Resources

Pen and paper for note taking

Internet access to following:

- Preschool Learning Alliance: Supporting Children's Speech, Language and Communication Development [video] available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmgbUsmPKpk>
- The Communication Trust: Don't Get Me Wrong [document] available at <https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/174/dontgetmewrong.pdf>
- The Communication Trust: The Way We Talk [video] available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Onqn\\_7xzp2Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Onqn_7xzp2Q)

## Task 1: Understanding the terms associated with Speech, Language and Communication Needs

This task will help you to understand the difference between having a speech difficulty, a language difficulty and a communication difficulty.

### What do the different terms mean?

Speech, language and communication needs are often grouped together; indeed skills can overlap between the three areas. Each person's speech, language and communication needs will also be different. A difficulty in speech, communication or language can be a person's only special educational need, however it can also be part of a more complex picture of needs.

When it comes to children having a speech, language or communication need there are key differences in the support and strategies that you can develop and implement for them.

1a. Watch the video film clip *Supporting Children's Speech, Language and Communication Development*, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmgbUsmPKpk>. Watch specifically from 08:43– 11:55, where a team of practitioners explain the difference between speech, language and communication.

- Make notes of the features of each type of SLC need (i.e. speech, language and communication). (You may want to do this as a mind map if you are familiar with this method.)

1b. Read pages 7 - 9 of the research by The Communication Trust, *Don't get Me Wrong*, available at <https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/174/dontgetmewrong.pdf>.

- Make notes of the features of a speech difficulty, a communication difficulty and a language difficulty. (These could be added to your mind map if this is how you have recorded your first set of notes).

1c. Watch The Communication Trust video *The Way We Talk* [7:30mins], available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Onqn\\_7xzp2Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Onqn_7xzp2Q).

- Are you able to identify children who have a speech difficulty, a language difficulty or a communication difficulty?
- Use your notes from the previous task to help you. (It is suggested that you watch the film through the first time, just listening carefully. Then play it a second time and make notes identifying which of the children has speech, language and/or communication needs).

## **Task 2: How does your setting support children with speech, language or communication difficulties?**

Your understanding of the features of speech, language and communication needs should now be established, and now the task is for you to consider how your setting supports these needs.

Go back to your notes from the first activity and look at the features of speech, language or communication difficulties one at a time.

Using a different coloured pen or pencil, add to your notes or mind map the following:

- How does the school/setting environment support a child with a speech/language/communication difficulty?
- What strategies are used to support daily routines in the school/setting (for example a visual timetable)?
- How do outside agencies support the child, staff and family?
- Do you think these strategies and environment support speech, language and communication for those with a special educational need or all children and young people?

(Note - Sometimes when completing activities like this, particular children we have worked with come to mind. Please be careful you do not name and identify any child as you will not have permission from the individual concerned and their parents/carers).

## **Task 3: Reflection on learning**

Please consider:

- What knowledge did I already have that has been refreshed by this CPD?
- How has this CPD developed my knowledge and understanding?
- Something from this CPD I will share with a colleague is...
- One question I will follow up and discuss with a colleague
- Make a record of this professional development (e.g. in your personal development log if you have one) and let your line manager/SENCO know that you have undertaken this work

## Sources

- Bercow, J. (2008) *The Bercow Report: A Review of Services for Children and Young People (0-19) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs*. Available at: [https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/8405/7/7771-dcsf-bercow\\_Redacted.pdf](https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/8405/7/7771-dcsf-bercow_Redacted.pdf). (Accessed: 19 April 2020).
- EYAlliance (2019) *Supporting Children's Speech, Language and Communication Development in Early Years Provision*. 8 February. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImgbUsmpKpk>. (Accessed: 20 April 2020).
- Gross, J. (2011) *Two Years On: Final Report of the Communications Champion for Children*. Available at: [https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/9683/nwm\\_final\\_jean\\_gross\\_two\\_years\\_on\\_report.pdf](https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/9683/nwm_final_jean_gross_two_years_on_report.pdf) (Accessed: 17 April 2020).
- Mroz, M. (2006) 'Teaching in the Foundation Stage—how current systems support teachers' knowledge and understanding of children's speech and language', *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 14 (1), pp. 45-61.
- National Association of Special Educational Needs (2016) *Two Years On*. Available at: [https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/9683/nwm\\_final\\_jean\\_gross\\_two\\_years\\_on\\_report.pdf](https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/9683/nwm_final_jean_gross_two_years_on_report.pdf) (Accessed: 18 April 2020).
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- The Communication Trust (2017) *A Generation Adrift*. Available at: [http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/31961/tct\\_genadrift.pdf](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/31961/tct_genadrift.pdf). (Accessed: 19 April 2020).

## Further reading

This is the first part of a series of four professional development modules on speech, language and communication needs in children and young people. The professional development modules should be undertaken in order, 1 - 4. All of the modules will be available on the Learning Institute website at [www.learninginstitute.co.uk/cpd](http://www.learninginstitute.co.uk/cpd).

## Want to learn more?

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