

Information and guidance  
for education settings

# Speech, Language and Communication Toolkit

for schools



March 2020

Central  
Bedfordshire



BEDFORD  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Luton**



This document was created in partnership with:

Central Bedfordshire Council | Bedford Borough Council | Luton Council | NHS Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy in Luton and Bedfordshire

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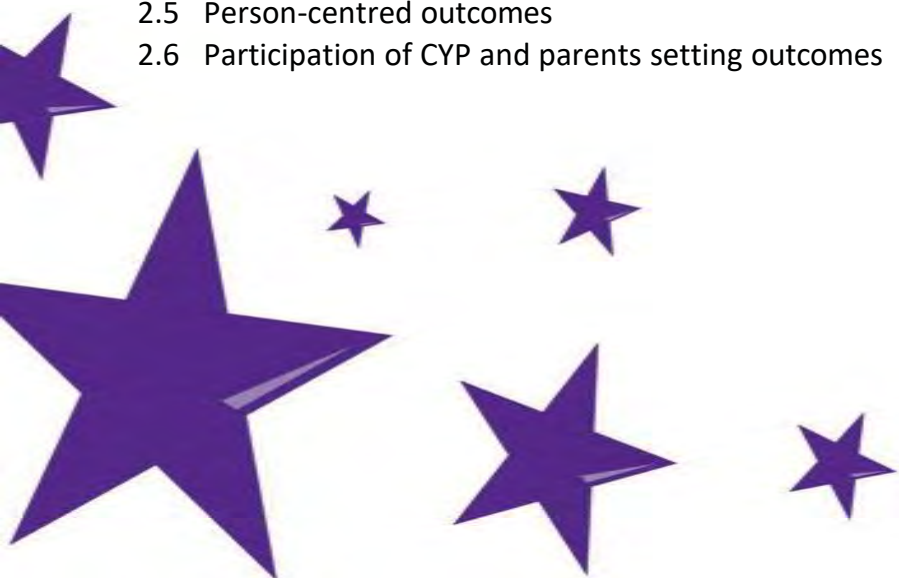
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# Background

## Where it began

The development of the toolkit started with Central Bedfordshire School Forum releasing funds for early intervention projects. By definition, early intervention means identifying need at the earliest opportunity and providing support at the right level. There has been some great work in supporting children and young people (CYP) in the early years. However, as recognised in the Bercow: Ten Years On report (2018) “The good work that has happened for younger children needs to happen for older children too”. Schools asked for support with regards to how to help pupils with speech and language communication needs (SLCN)


and this became one of the projects.

## You said, we listened, we did...

Parents and schools were becoming increasingly frustrated with not being able to easily access support for CYP with SLCN. This reflected the service model being too heavily focused on the specialist level and not enough focus on the universal and targeted levels of support. In response to schools wanting to know how they could better support CYP with SLCN in their school, we have developed this toolkit which sits within a wider training model. The toolkit and training model are built on the evidence base and what we know to be good practice from the literature.

## In partnership with Bedford and Luton

The toolkit has been developed in partnership with Bedford Borough Council and Luton Council. As a result of their commitment, we have been able to extend the use of this toolkit across more schools. With different organisations working together better, more CYP will get the support they need (Bercow, 2018). NHS Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy in Luton and Bedfordshire work with CYP across all three local authorities so joint partnership and vision is even more pivotal.



*“The good work that has happened for younger children needs to happen for older children too”.*

Bercow: Ten Years On (2018)

## Co-production with professionals

This toolkit has been co-produced with a core group of professionals across health and education including:

### Educational psychologists

#### SENCoS

#### Speech and language therapists (SLTist)

The toolkit has also been through an engagement process with other teams within the SEND service, YOS and SNAP parent carer forum.

## All together

The development of this toolkit would not have been possible without the commitment and vision from Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedford Borough Council, Luton Council and NHS Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy in Luton and Bedfordshire.

We are proud to be working together – through a PAN Beds approach, to develop this toolkit and a wider vision for Speech, Language, and Communication (SLC) support. This ensures a level of consistency across the county for our CYP.

# Welcome to the toolkit

## Why a toolkit?

The aim of this toolkit is to provide schools with information and resources related to SLC. We hope it will give you a strong knowledge base and the confidence to support all pupils to develop the necessary SLC skills to succeed in life. The toolkit is a central resource which sits within a wider framework of training and support.

## Who should use the toolkit?

We recommend SENCos use this toolkit as they have a lead role in co-ordinating support for pupils with SLCN. However, we would encourage you to share it with other members of staff as appropriate. The toolkit will be most useful for mainstream schools.

## The toolkit includes:

The toolkit is a guide to the whole process of supporting SLC skills within the school environment. Here, you can find information about:

- **Making SLC a priority in your school**
- **How to identify SLCN and plan support**
- **Strategies that can be used within the classroom**
- **Additional targeted support**
- **Sources of further information.**

The toolkit has been developed to sit alongside the **Progression Tools**. This is a tool which schools can use to help identifying pupils with SLCN. Schools can consider purchasing the Progression Tools at a low one-off cost:

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/shop-for-educators/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-primary-years-set](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/shop-for-educators/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-primary-years-set)

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/shop-for-educators/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-secondary-years-set](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/shop-for-educators/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-secondary-years-set)



## Quick definitions

**SLC** = Speech, Language, and Communication.

*All CYP develop these necessary skills as part of typical development.*

**SLCN** = Speech, Language and Communication Needs.

*An umbrella term to describe CYP who have difficulty in some aspect of SLC skills and who may require additional support.*

**SLTist**= Speech and Language Therapist.

**CYP** = Children and Young People/ Child and Young Person

*CYP will sometimes be interchanged with the term 'pupils'*

**Parents** = *In line with the SEND Code of Practice (2014), the term parents will be used which includes all those with parental responsibility (parents and those who care for the child).*

**EHC Plan** = Education, Health, and Care Plan

This identifies educational, health, and social needs and the relevant support for CYP who need more support than is available through SEN support.

## Layout of the toolkit

There are four sections to the toolkit, with an introduction at the beginning of each to explain what will be covered.

You can navigate the pages by clicking on the headings in the contents page.

Look out for a summary of information in the **Key messages** boxes.

Click on **professional development resources** to take you to external links for further reading.

Green, orange, and red colours have been used to show **universal**, **targeted** and **specialist** levels of support.



# Section 1:

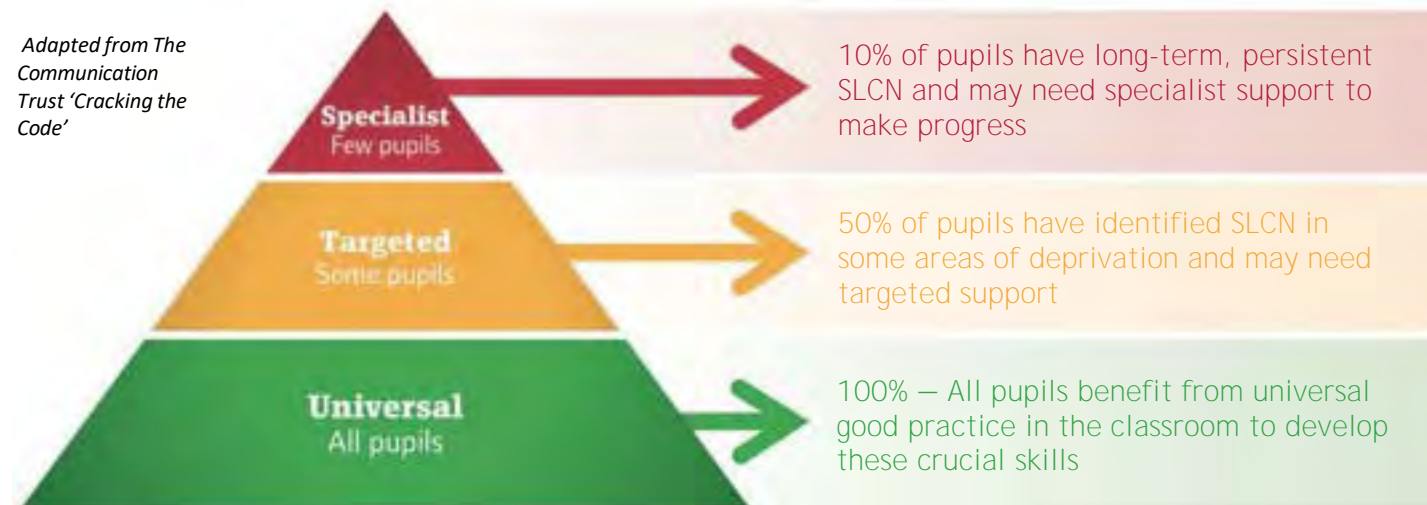
## Introduction to the toolkit

This section of the toolkit will set the scene for supporting SLC skills within schools. It will give you an understanding of how important these skills are, the levels of support needed by different pupils and how to make SLC a priority in your school.



# 1.1 Universal, targeted and specialist support

The Bercow report (2008) identified that CYP should be supported across three levels – universal, targeted and specialist. The SEND reforms (2014) state that all children with SLCN (with or without EHC plans) should be supported in schools and there should be an inclusive approach to practice. Here we explain what each level means and what it looks like for CYP within school.



**Universal Level** – all pupils should have support to develop SLC skills within the classroom and school setting as part of **good practice**. Sometimes, it is referred to as ‘quality first teaching’ or ‘whole school approaches’. This level should also enable effective early identification of pupils who may be struggling. This may be known as Wave 1 in schools.

**Targeted Level** – for **some** pupils requiring **additional support** when a need is identified. Pupils may be included in individual or group interventions. This may be known as Wave 2 in schools.

**Specialist Level** – a **few** pupils may require **specialist support** in order to make progress. Pupils are likely to be known to the speech and language therapy service and receive support in the form of an assessment, advice/recommendations, or intervention. This may be known as Wave 3 in schools.

## Key messages

Pupils with SLCN should be identified at the earliest opportunity and support should be given at the right level.

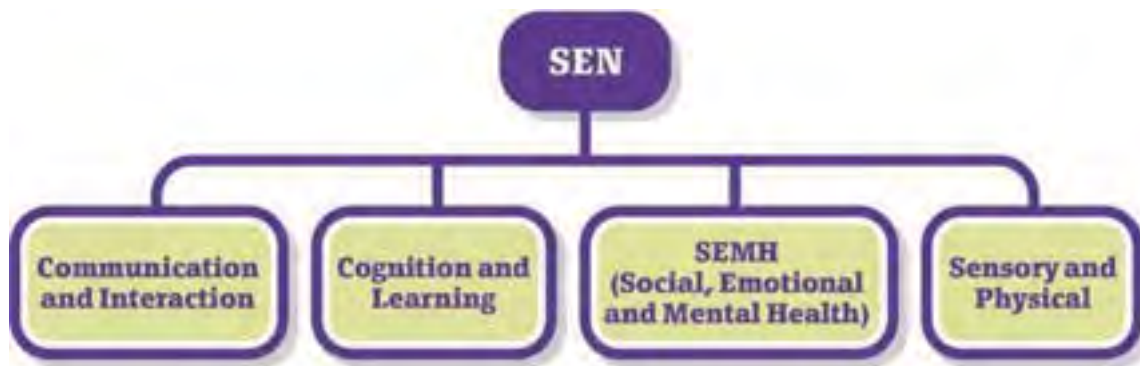
It’s important to recognise that not all pupils with SLCN will require specialist provision.

Equally, the levels of provision are not mutually exclusive. For example:

- Pupils at **targeted** or **specialist** level – will always require **universal** support, e.g., staff to adapt their language and use visual support within the classroom in order for pupils to access the curriculum.
- Pupils at **specialist** level may also require some **targeted** support, e.g., small group interventions.

**This toolkit will help you identify which level of support a pupil needs and how to support them.**

## 1.2 The SEND Code of Practice



Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25 years

There are four broad areas of need as described in the SEND Code of Practice (2014). SLCN falls under the category of 'communication and interaction'. However, these broad areas of need are not definitive; and the SEND Code of Practice (2014) recognises that individual children often have needs across all of these areas, and that these needs may change over time. It is also clear that the purpose of identification is to work out what action is needed, not to fit a child into a category.

### Quick definitions

SLC is an abbreviation for Speech, Language and Communication

- **Speech** – sounds, voice, intonation and fluency.
- **Language** – understanding (*receptive language*) and talking (*expressive language*). Includes vocabulary and grammatical structures.
- **Communication** – how we share information and interact with other people. Includes non-verbal communication (e.g., gestures, eye-contact, body language) and conversational rules.

### Professional development resources:

[www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/rcslt-communication-needs-factsheet.pdf](http://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/rcslt-communication-needs-factsheet.pdf)



### Key messages

The Communication Trust (now called Speech and Language UK) report 'Don't Get Me Wrong' identified that some groups of CYP are at an increased risk of SLCN, including:

- Pupils with dyslexia
- Pupils with dyspraxia
- Pupils with ADHD
- Pupils with emotional and behavioural disorders

Furthermore, in another report 'A Generation Adrift', The Communication Trust identified that some CYP with SLCN can be:

- **Missed** – Without policy and practice that enables consistent identification of all children with SLCN.
- **Misinterpreted** – Because SLCN can be difficult to spot when there are associated academic, emotional, and behavioural difficulties.
- **Misunderstood** – When support is provided by diagnosis or category, rather than profiling and monitoring needs.

## 1.3 Importance of SLC for other areas of development

Speech, language, and communication skills underpin other areas of development. For example, language is the vehicle for learning and vocabulary is a strong predictor of educational attainment.

### Learning

**Learning is often a social and interactive process. For example, information from the teacher is received verbally, and pupils are encouraged to express their ideas in whole class or group discussions.**

**Vocabulary** - Vocabulary is important for understanding key concepts in subjects, such as 'multiply' in maths and 'osmosis' in science. Pupils will need to understand and use vocabulary in order to extend their learning. It is important to remember, that academic language differs from conversational language.

**Literacy skills (reading and writing)** - There are many skills needed for reading and writing, including good spoken language skills and phonological awareness. See the reading model based on Snowling and Stackhouse (1996) in appendix.

### Behaviour

**Behaviour can be a form of communication.**

Higher level language skills are also vital for thinking and reasoning. For example, to problem solve, make predictions, and consider another person's perspective.

## Speech, Language and Communication

### Social development

**Speech, language, and communication skills underpin all our interactions. For example, we need to share our experiences, interpret non-verbal cues, and respond to ever changing social dynamics.**

### Emotional development

**Vocabulary is vital for being able to understand, recognise and express our own emotions as well as other people's. Emotional vocabulary goes beyond the basic 'happy' and 'sad' descriptions, for example 'proud', 'content' and 'hurt'. It is becoming increasingly important for pupils to be able to manage and self-regulate emotions.**

If a child has SLCN, confidence, self-esteem, empathy, and resilience can all be impacted.



## 1.4 SLC at the heart of every aspect of your school

As you have seen, SLC skills are vital for pupils to succeed in life. All pupils need to develop SLC skills, with CYP requiring different levels of support to achieve this. It is therefore important for schools to consider how they can make SLC a priority in their school. Here are some principles towards achieving this.



Professional development resources

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/media/3216/tct\\_genadrift\\_update.pdf](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/media/3216/tct_genadrift_update.pdf)

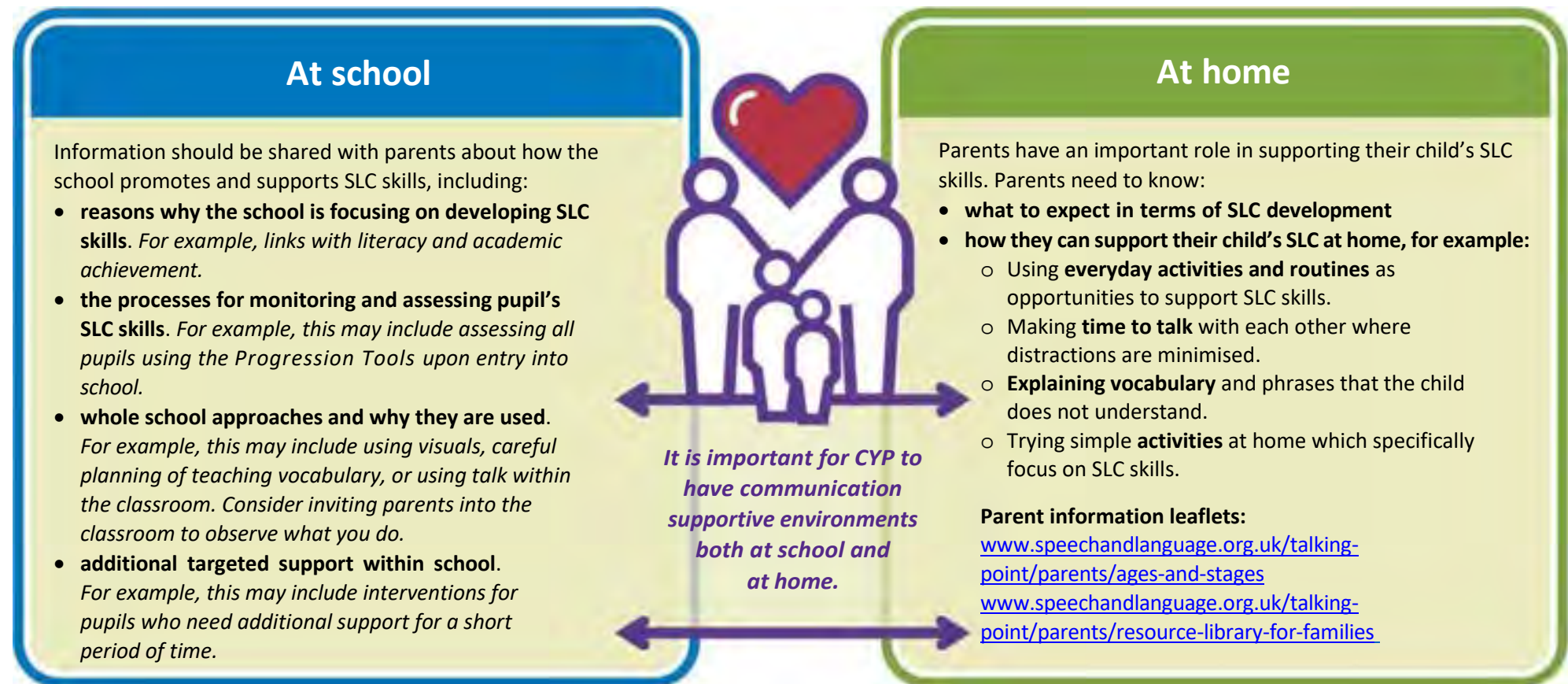
[www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/1tctworkforce-development-report-final-online.pdf](http://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/1tctworkforce-development-report-final-online.pdf)

## 1.5 Sharing the priority of SLC with families

Consider inviting parents into school to share the school's priority for SLC. Parents will be interested to know:

- **Milestones for typical SLC development and the importance of these skills**
- **What the school does to support SLC**
- **How they can help and support their child's SLC at home.**

Most of a child's school year (including holidays) are spent at home or in the wider community. So, it is important for parents and school to work together.



# Section 2:

## Identifying and planning support for SLCN

Under-identification of SLCN is still a prominent issue (Bercow, 2018). This section of the toolkit covers how to identify SLCN, including the range of tools that are available for schools to use. One of these tools is the Progression Tools which helps schools to specifically identify which areas of SLC pupils are struggling with, and what level of support they need. These are available to purchase here: [primary version](#) and [secondary version](#).

We also look at how identification fits into the graduated response through an 'Assess-Plan-Do-Review' cycle, as well as how to plan support for pupils with SLCN, including SEND support plans and outcomes.



### Key messages

Any procedure for identifying SEN should be stated in the school's policy, including the use of checklists and/or the Progression Tools.

It is important for all staff to have an awareness of typical SLC development and to look out for pupils who may be struggling. Remember, SLCN may not be as obvious as the effects. Pupils may have associated academic, emotional, or behavioural difficulties.

## 2.1 Factors to consider when identifying SLCN

### Hearing

Hearing is critical for the development of SLC skills. The two main types of hearing loss include:

- **Sensorineural hearing loss** - damage to the inner ear (e.g., cochlear). This is a permanent hearing loss.
- **Conductive hearing loss** - sound which cannot pass efficiently through the outer and middle ear, often caused by blockages such as wax or glue ear (a build-up of fluid). It is usually temporary; however, it can be permanent in some cases.

It is also possible to have both types, known as a **mixed hearing loss**. Deafness can occur in either one (unilateral) or both (bilateral) ears. If there are any concerns regarding a child's hearing, consider a referral to audiology for a hearing test.

**Professional development resources:** [www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support)

### Overall level of development

A CYP may have SLCN as part of a wider developmental delay or special educational need. If this is the case, it is important to look at their general learning profile. We may expect their language skills to be in line with the rest of their development. To make these judgements, consider using assessment screens (e.g., *the Progression Tools*) and typical development norms (e.g., *Universally Speaking*) which are closer to the CYP's development.

### Working memory

Working memory is the ability to temporarily hold information in our minds whilst manipulating it. Information can be lost from working memory if there are distractions, if there is too much information, or if the task is too demanding. If information is lost from working memory, it cannot be retrieved.

Working memory has a significant impact on learning across the curriculum and within social opportunities. Poor working memory capacity can be seen in a range of pupils including those with DLD, dyslexia, ASD, and ADHD. EAL pupils may also temporarily have greater demands on their working memory as they are coping with unfamiliar vocabulary and grammar.

**Professional development resources:**  
[www.pdnet.org.uk/media/WM-classroom-guide.pdf](http://www.pdnet.org.uk/media/WM-classroom-guide.pdf)



## English as an Additional Language (EAL)

The facts:

- **Learning more than one language does not cause SLCN.**
- **Pupils with EAL are at no greater risk of SLCN.**

However, we know it can be difficult for schools to identify SLCN in EAL pupils. Use the EAL vs SLCN indicators checklist in the appendix.

### What is typical for EAL pupils?

It is typical for pupils to mix words from both languages (codeswitch) and initially make grammatical errors, for example with past tense.

If a pupil is new to English, it can take up to 2 years for them to learn basic language (e.g., for daily conversations) and up to 5-7 years to develop more complex language (e.g., for academic purposes).

### Professional development resources:

EAL information and resources: [www.bell-foundation.org.uk](http://www.bell-foundation.org.uk)

Examples of interaction strategies: [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/default/files/migrated/article/inline/Understanding%20the%20Stages%20of%20Learning%20for%20Children%20with%20EAL.pdf](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/default/files/migrated/article/inline/Understanding%20the%20Stages%20of%20Learning%20for%20Children%20with%20EAL.pdf)

EAL toolkit and use of TAs to support EAL students: [www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk) (some of these resources are for members only)

## Key messages

What you can do to support pupils with EAL:

- Encourage parents to speak to their child in their home language. This builds a firm foundation for learning an additional language, e.g., English.
- Consider careful placement of children with EAL within the classroom, e.g., sitting next to a proficient speaker or a buddy system.
- Pupils who are new to English may experience a short 'silent period'. Involve them in activities and comment on what they are doing. But avoid putting pressure on them to speak.

## 2.2 Using the Progression Tools

The **Progression Tools**, produced by The Communication Trust, are easy to use and are useful for specifically identifying which areas of SLC the pupil is struggling with. They should be used alongside other sources of information, to build a comprehensive picture of the CYP's abilities.

### When to use the Progression Tools?

The Progression Tools can either be used as a baseline measure for the whole class/year group, or as a targeted screen for individual pupils when a concern arises. The Progression Tools can be repeated (after at least a term) to measure pupil's progress.

### What do the Progression Tools assess?

The Progression Tools cover 6 areas of SLC skills including:

- **Understanding spoken language**
- **Understanding and using vocabulary**
- **Sentences**
- **Storytelling and narrative**
- **Speech**
- **Social interaction**



### Professional development resources:

We recommend you watch this free video on how to use the Progression Tools: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=5V6uluil0b4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5V6uluil0b4)

To purchase the Progression Tools, please visit: [primary version](#) and [secondary version](#).

### Level of support

The Progression Tools will help you to identify what level of support the pupil needs, using the RAG rating system.

- **Green** = The pupil's SLC skills are developing in line with their development. They would benefit from **universal support** to continue developing their SLC skills.
- **Amber** = The pupil has identified SLCN. They would benefit from additional **targeted support** in school, in the form of either individual or small group interventions.
- **Red** = The pupil has SLCN that may require **specialist support**. Discussion and consent should take place with parents and a referral made to specialist services following local procedures.

### Strategies and interventions

Included in the toolkit is a section on strategies and interventions.

At **universal level** this includes strategies to support a communication friendly environment by considering:

- **physical space**
- **high quality classroom talk**
- **vocabulary teaching**
- **adult use of language**

At **targeted** level this includes specific strategies, published programmes and resources related to the area of SLCN identified in the Progression Tool.

## 2.3 SEN support

SEN support may be needed when a CYP is not making progress despite high quality teaching at universal level. The SEND Code of Practice (2014) states that when a CYP requires SEN support, this should take the form of a four-part cycle of 'Assess-Plan-Do-Review' (see diagram next page). This is known as the "graduated response".

### When might an EHC Needs Assessment be necessary?

- When a CYP fails to make progress despite "relevant and purposeful action"
- Where a CYP demonstrates significant difficulties, and it is clear that an EHC Needs Assessment may be necessary from the start.

### Professional development resource:

[www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/childrens-families-act-guidance.pdf](http://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/childrens-families-act-guidance.pdf)

### CYP and parents at the centre

It is important to put the CYP and their parents at the centre of the work that you do, ensuring that at each stage of the process there is effective participation. This includes having early conversations to discuss needs and desired outcomes, sharing what is currently working well (both at school and home), and keeping them informed of progress.

### Top tips for talking to parents about their child's SLC:

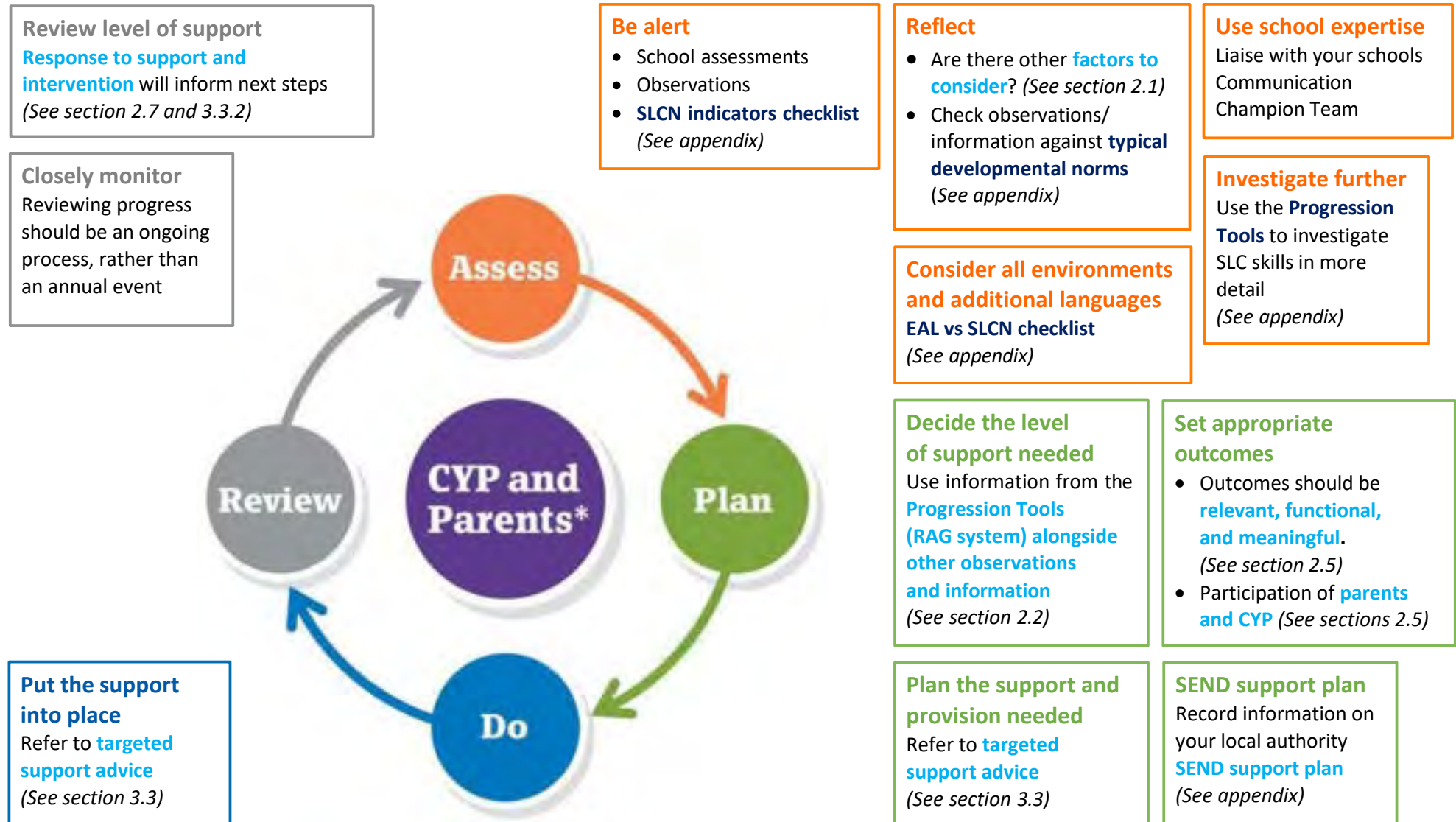
- **Empathy and understanding before advice** – it is important to openly listen and acknowledge parents' views and concerns. Be sensitive to the fact that some parents may not have any concerns at all. CYP may also present differently at school compared to at home.
- **Include positives** – let parents know where their child is doing well, as well as where they may be struggling.
- **Be honest about concerns and give examples** – support what you are saying with examples.
- **Be solution focussed** – include positive statements, e.g., 'your child needs to...' rather than 'your child can't...'.
- **Allow time to digest** – Be sensitive to the fact that some parents will need time to process that their child is having difficulty in some aspect of SLC skills. Let parents know when they can come and speak to you again (open-door policy) or schedule a follow up meeting.

### Professional development resource:

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/for-professionals/the-communication-trust/more-resources/professional-development-video](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/for-professionals/the-communication-trust/more-resources/professional-development-video)

## 2.4 Assess-plan-do-review cycle

A variety of tools are available to support schools in the ‘assess’ part of the cycle (indicated by navy text in the diagram). These include checklists and the Progression Tools. Some points are described in further detail within the toolkit (indicated by blue text in the diagram)





## 2.5 Person-centred outcomes

The SEND Code of Practice (2014) defines an outcome as “the benefit or difference made to an individual as a result of an intervention”. It should capture what is important to the CYP now and how this will be important to them in the future. It is then up to all those involved to think how best to achieve this.

### The difference between objectives and outcomes

The SEND Code of Practice (2014) represents a change in target setting. Schools used to set ‘objectives’ which focused on the problem and linked to academic achievement. Now they are required to involve CYP in discussions about what they want for the future.

CYP often want to see improvement in the following areas:

- **Friendships**
- **Understanding and managing emotions**
- **How other people talk to them and treat them**

Parents often value outcomes for their child when related to:

- **Independence**
- **Social inclusion**

### Professional development resources:

Involving children and young people with SLCN:

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/attachments/Participation%20Factsheet%202015%20Final.pdf>

### Key messages

As part of the SEND reforms (2014) there is now a statutory duty to find out from the CYP:

- What their views, wishes, feelings, interests, and **aspirations** are
- What **outcomes** or goals they want to achieve
- What **support** they need to do this

**Outcomes** should be:

- Aspirational
- Unique to each CYP
- Relevant, functional, and meaningful
- SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound). This means progress against them can be measured.
- Focused on the long-term but broken down into smaller steps for how this can be best achieved

Outcomes should be made for every CYP on the SEN register, whether they have an EHC plan or not.

Outcomes and provision should be recorded on the SEND support plan applicable to your school or local authority.



**Example:**

*Being able to chat with friends and family is important to me.*

*I have SLCN and find narrative skills particularly difficult*

*Long-term: I can talk about an event*

*Short-term: I can sequence a 3-part sequence*

**Embedding strategies into the classroom:**  
*Adults to repair conversations by modelling back the sentence, e.g., adjusting the order. Adults to use visual timetables and reference explicitly to events, e.g., "First it's maths, next it's lunch".*

**Targeted support:**  
*In 1:1 sessions, I will practise sequencing photographs of events that are relevant to me in the order of 'first', 'next' and 'last'.*

## 2.6 Participation of CYP and parents in setting outcomes

One of the key principles as part of the SEND reforms (2014) is the importance of involving the CYP and parents in setting outcomes. They will therefore need to be provided with the information and support necessary to enable them to participate in decision-making.

### The pupil's voice

The very nature of SLCN may make it challenging for a CYP to participate effectively if appropriate support is not given. The most important principles are to:

- **Ask the CYP how they want you to support them**
- **Know the pupil well**

The adult should be able to facilitate their participation, by taking into account how the pupil best communicates, making sure information is accessible and checking they have understood.

#### General strategies:

Strategies will be individual to the pupil, but the following should be considered:

- **Adult use of language and visual support** – Some pupils may find it helpful for adults to use simple language, avoid jargon, build in pauses to give time for processing, and use visual support.
- **Demonstration and practice** – Some pupils may not have much experience of being involved in this type of decision making. They may therefore find it helpful to have demonstrations or practise the skills beforehand.

#### Specific considerations:

- **Talking about future aspirations** – This can be a particular challenge for some pupils with SLCN. If this is the case, start by talking about the *now*, e.g., what is going well now and what could be better now

### The parent's voice

- **Listen (using the OARS approach)**– It is important for parents to feel that they are listened to and understood. Start by using **O**pen questions to give parents an opportunity to express their concerns and aspirations for their child's future. Continue with **A**ffirmations, **R**eflective listening, and **S**ummaries.
- **Clear information** – Be mindful of parents' own language/literacy levels and ensure discussions are jargon free.
- **Joint goal setting** – Agree on goals which you can work towards together. Help parents to understand what their child is working towards and why so that they can see the benefits for providing support at school and home.

#### Professional development resources:

Developing Outcomes:

[https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/media/3519/slc\\_n\\_tools\\_evaluating-outcomes\\_1\\_.pdf](https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/media/3519/slc_n_tools_evaluating-outcomes_1_.pdf)

Involving children and young people with SLCN:

[www.slcframework.org.uk/resource/involving-children-and-young-people-with-slc-n-a-toolkit-for-education-settings](http://www.slcframework.org.uk/resource/involving-children-and-young-people-with-slc-n-a-toolkit-for-education-settings)

# Section 3:

## Outcomes and resources

This section of the toolkit will cover **universal strategies** for supporting all pupils to develop SLC skills, **targeted strategies** for some pupils identified with SLCN, and processes for referring a few pupils to **specialist services**.

### Evidence based practice

The strategies and interventions mentioned here are based on evidence from clinical expertise and research. Please visit the following data bases for up-to-date evidence-based interventions:

- **Speech and Language What Works database** [www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/for-professionals/the-communication-trust/what-works-database](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/for-professionals/the-communication-trust/what-works-database)
- **EEF – Education Endowment Foundation** [www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit](http://www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit)

There may be other programmes which you are familiar with that are not mentioned below. It is important to consider which aspects of SLC skills they target and how strong the evidence base is for these programmes.

### Further information

Each section will contain links to further sources of information. We have included page references to the Elklan ‘Language Builders’ (yellow book, for primary schools) and ‘Secondary Language Builders’ (red book). These books are available to purchase, if you have not already been on an accredited Elklan course:  
[www.elklan.co.uk/Shop/Language\\_Builders\\_for\\_5-11s](http://www.elklan.co.uk/Shop/Language_Builders_for_5-11s)  
[www.elklan.co.uk/Shop/Language\\_Builders\\_for\\_11-16s](http://www.elklan.co.uk/Shop/Language_Builders_for_11-16s)





## 3.1 Universal support

*(All pupils)*

A **communication friendly environment** considers both the classroom and the school setting as a whole. It should provide opportunities for **everyone** to understand and take part, in order to support their academic, social, and emotional development.

The following key features of a communication-friendly environment will be discussed:



**Physical environment**



**High quality classroom talk**



**Vocabulary teaching**



**Adult use of language**

These strategies support the development of **all** pupil's SLC skills but are also particularly beneficial for pupils with SLCN. We have included quotes from pupils with SLCN, taken from the Children's Consultation report (2018) – these are indicated in purple italics, e.g., *"...talking helps me understand"*. For a video on providing a communication friendly environment, visit: [www.vimeo.com/838694717/e7fb31c64c](https://www.vimeo.com/838694717/e7fb31c64c)



## 3.1.1 Physical Environment



If you would like to know more about Communication Friendly Spaces™, visit: [www.elizabethjarman.com](http://www.elizabethjarman.com)

### Space, layout, and seating arrangements

#### *How do I implement it in the classroom? Examples:*

- The classroom should be arranged so that all pupils can see the teacher, board, displays etc.
- Pay particular attention to seating arrangements for pupils who need the greatest access. For example, pupils with poor attentions skills should sit at the front of class or away from distractions. Pupils with a hearing loss should be able to see the teacher's face, particularly if they use lip pattern to support understanding.
- Give consideration to how pupils are seated to support group work and discussions.
- Make sure that the environment is not too 'busy' in terms of colour and displays to avoid sensory chaos.

### Light and noise levels

#### *How do I implement it in the classroom? Examples:*

- Be aware of background light, e.g., from windows.
- Keep background noise and distractions to a minimum and manage this on a consistent basis. Be mindful of noise from equipment and consider soft furnishing to absorb sound.

### Visual Support

**What is it?** The use of signs, symbols, pictures, diagrams, objects, and colour-coding. It also includes non-verbal communication such as natural gestures, facial expression, and body language.

#### *Why use it? "Things around me in school to help like symbols and pictures, it might help you to learn"*

Visual support can help pupils' understanding by:

- **Maintaining focus of attention.**
- **Reducing load on memory.**
- **Supporting written text and spoken language.**
- **Condensing information or highlighting key ideas.**

**How it helps pupils with SLCN:** CYP with SLCN particularly benefit from visual support. For example, they can benefit from the extra processing time that visual support allows.

#### *How do I implement it in the classroom? Examples:*

- Use labels with photographs and words to support understanding of location. For example, on trays and cupboards to show where resources are kept or above pegs to show where children hang their coats and bags.
- In primary schools, use visual timetables to show the structure of the whole day, e.g., maths, literacy, break. In secondary schools, consider adapting personal timetables, for example by using colour (e.g., to correspond to the colour of exercise book of a particular subject) a picture (e.g., to represent the subject) or a photograph of the teacher for each subject.
- Use task plans to show what the pupil needs to do for a particular activity. This will help support independence by giving them step by step instructions.
- Use colour-coding to show the structure of sentences and questions.
- Use prompt cards to teach and reinforce rules.
- Use demonstrations to explain new activities.

## 3.1.2 High quality classroom talk

High quality classroom talk facilitates spoken language skills (sometimes referred to as ‘oracy’ skills). Research indicates that these skills are just as important as reading and writing skills and require explicit teaching and practice. If you would like to know more, then visit the following websites:

- [www.esu.org/oracy](http://www.esu.org/oracy)
- [https://languageresearch.cambridge.org/images/CambridgePapersInELT/Oracy\\_2018\\_ONLINE.pdf](https://languageresearch.cambridge.org/images/CambridgePapersInELT/Oracy_2018_ONLINE.pdf)
- [www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk)
- [www.liberty.k12.ga.us/pdf/TandL/Effective\\_Questioning\\_Talk.pdf](http://www.liberty.k12.ga.us/pdf/TandL/Effective_Questioning_Talk.pdf)



### Talk for learning

**What is it?** Creating opportunities to use discussion and talk to support learning. It can take place in either whole class discussions or small groups. The two main types of talk are:

- **Dialogic Talk** - enables pupils to explore and build upon their own ideas and others'. A supportive environment for talking is created. For example, talking opportunities are equal (e.g., ‘no hands up’ policy) and pupils listen to each other. The aim is to achieve a common understanding.
- **Exploratory Talk** - enables pupils to listen critically but constructively to each other’s ideas. Reasons are given to justify answers if any views are challenged. The aim is to reach an agreement.

**Why use it?** Talking allows pupils to formulate their thoughts, communicate their ideas and reflect upon their learning. It also helps teachers to understand and clarify pupils thinking.

**How it helps pupils with SLCN:**  
“...talking helps me understand”

### How do I implement it in the classroom?

- **Questions**
  - Use open ended questions
  - Ask probing questions such as ‘how?’ and ‘why?’ to facilitate detailed answers beyond re-call.
- **Extend pupils thinking**
  - Encourage differences in opinions and different viewpoints.
  - Tentatively offer suggestions where necessary and signpost a change of topic, e.g., “have you thought about....?” or “have you considered....?”.
- **Give pupils opportunities to talk**
  - Validate efforts from classroom discussions.
  - Set expectations and rules for classroom talk.
  - Allow sufficient time for feedback following group work.
  - Consider how pupils are seated in the classroom depending on the format of discussion.

**Working with parents:** Parents can be encouraged to give their child time to talk to them. They can start by asking open questions like “tell me something you liked about today?” and give everyone in the family a turn to talk, e.g., at mealtimes.

**For more information, please visit:**

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/for-professionals/primary-and-secondary-school-teachers](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/for-professionals/primary-and-secondary-school-teachers)

## **‘Thinking time’ rule**

### ***What is it?***

Allowing pupils more time to answer a question. The teacher may wait up to 10 seconds between setting the question and requiring an answer. It also links to the ‘no hands up’ rule and ‘talking partners’.

### ***Why use it?***

Research shows that increasing wait time increases the length of responses and participation from less able students. It also decreased the number of “I don’t know” or no responses.

***How it helps pupils with SLCN:***  
***“people talking when I’m thinking – that’s not good”*** CYP with SLCN need more time to process spoken language and articulate a response.

### ***How do I implement it in the classroom?***

- Introduce thinking time – let pupils know about the concept.
- Alert pupils that you will be asking a question.
- Give more thinking time when asking complex questions, e.g., ‘why?’ questions or questions that require prediction/problem solving (verbal reasoning) such as “what will happen if...?”.
- Use thinking time in the following ways:
  - Independent time – allow pupils time to process the question and think through their answer independently.
  - Paired discussion time - allow pupils to think about the question with a partner.
  - Writing time – allow pupils to put their thoughts on paper first.
- Adjust the length of waiting time depending on the pupils in your class.

### ***Working with parents:***

Encourage parents to pause after speaking, to give their child an opportunity to respond.

## 3.1.3 Vocabulary teaching

### **What is it?**

A framework for teaching vocabulary effectively in school, for example, 'Word Aware' developed by Parsons and Branagan (2010).

### **Why use it?**

Vocabulary is fundamental to learning; it is linked to reading comprehension and academic attainment. In addition to indirect approaches (e.g., a rich reading experience), pupils also need direct approaches (e.g., selecting and teaching specific words) in order to learn vocabulary effectively.

### **How it helps pupils with SLCN:**

CYP with SLCN often have difficulty storing and retrieving vocabulary. This means they may have vague meanings of the word or make minor mispronunciations. They will need more exposure to new words and for vocabulary to be specifically taught.

### **How do I implement it in the classroom?**

Teaching vocabulary:

- Identify core vocabulary. These will be words that are essential to understanding the topic and will be encountered again but are not too easy and not too hard. You may wish to sort and select words based on the system of: anchor words, goldilocks words and step on words. Be aware of cross-curricular vocabulary used in exam questions such as 'compare', 'discuss' or 'summarise'.
- Discuss definitions of new vocabulary and use a **word map/wizard** to teach phonological (sound), semantic (meaning) and syntactic (grammar) features. Do not forget to include diagrams or pictures.
- Reinforce words in class:
  - Write vocabulary on the board and refer to it explicitly during the lesson.
  - Link vocabulary to activities in class. Vocabulary is best taught in context and with real experiences.
  - Arrange frequent encounters in multiple contexts (at least six exposures per new word).
- Review vocabulary at the end of the lesson, day, week, or term. Consider having a central vocabulary wall in class or pupils creating their own glossary for each topic.

### **Working with parents:**

- Share vocabulary lists with parents on a regular basis so that words can be practiced and reinforced at home.
- For parents with younger children, encouraged them to support their child to learn new words and concepts using everyday tasks.
- For parents with older children, encourage them to use and explain high level words.

Leaflets for parents (with primary or secondary aged children) can be found here:  
[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/parents/resource-library-for-families](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/parents/resource-library-for-families)

### **For more information:**

[www.thinkingtalking.co.uk/word-aware](http://www.thinkingtalking.co.uk/word-aware)  
[www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk)

Elklan Language Builders (yellow book – page 50-69, red book – page 54-70)





## 3.1.4 Adult use of language









### *Top tips:*

- Use a **slower** pace when speaking.
- **Pause** to give pupils extra time to process a question or instruction.
- Encourage pupils to **ask for help** and seek clarification when they have not understood.
- **Simplify language** when needed (e.g., rephrasing or explaining key words).
- Try and **link** new vocabulary to information the pupil is already familiar with.
- Be aware that **sarcasm, irony, and implied meaning** may not be understood.
- **Keep instructions concise** (chunking) and give them in the order you want them to be carried out.
- Be aware of the **complexity of questions** (e.g., Blank levels).

## 3.2 Targeted support *(pupils identified as having SLCN needs)*

By using the checklist and/or Progression Tools, you would have identified which areas of SLC the pupil has difficulty with, e.g.,

-  Understanding spoken language (page 28-29)
-  Understanding and using vocabulary (page 31-32)
-  Sentences (page 33-34)
-  Storytelling and narrative (page 35-36)
-  Speech (page 37-38)
-  Social Interaction (page 39-40)



Now you can support the individual by embedding strategies within the classroom and providing targeted interventions.

### Strategies to embed within the classroom

Regardless, of which tier of support the pupils needs (e.g., targeted or specialist) strategies should be embedded within the classroom to ensure a supportive environment. This includes:

- **Adult use of language**
- **Visual support**

Some of these strategies may already be familiar to staff if the school are implementing universal strategies successfully.

### Targeted interventions

In addition, pupils may need targeted interventions (either individual or group) outside of the classroom, to practice their SLC skills. Included in this section of the toolkit:

- **Aims for targeted intervention.**
- **List of programmes which are highly structured and includes session plans, resources, and training.**
- **List of resources which can be used if planning your own small groups or individual intervention**
- **Advice for running interventions**

*“The Better Communication Research Programme highlights the importance of a personalised approach to teaching and learning, reflecting an understanding of a pupil’s language learning and literacy needs, social and communication difficulties and academic progression”*

A generation adrift (2013)

## 3.2.1 Understanding spoken language

A pupil must be able to understand what is being said to them before they can express it.

Understanding language can encompass other skills such as attention and listening, understanding vocabulary, verbal reasoning, problem solving and working memory. Please refer to other sections of the toolkit for more specific recommendations.

### *Indication of difficulties*

- May give irrelevant answers or not respond to questions.
- May have difficulty understanding implied meaning.
- May only remember part of an instruction.
- May need you to repeat the instruction several times.
- May watch other children so that they can work out what to do.

### *Impact*

- May have poor reading comprehension.
- May show disruptive behaviour, become quiet/withdrawn, or look lost, as they are unable to understand what is being asked of them.
- May appear like they have not paid attention.
- May not recognise when they have not understood and do not ask for clarification.
- May avoid, opt out, or abandon tasks.



### Strategies to embed within the classroom

#### *Visual support strategies*

Instructions, questions, and explanations should be supported visually referred to explicitly

- Use colour coding symbols and signs to support understanding of questions, e.g., 'why?', 'when?' and 'how?'
- Use a visual timetable to show the structure of the day
- Use visual task plans for pupils to easily refer back to.
- Use natural gesture or point to pictures while speaking to highlight key words/messages.
- Demonstrate wherever possible.
- Write key points and vocabulary on the board.

## ***Adult use of language***

### ***Focus attention***

- Make sure you have gained the pupil's attention (e.g., by using their name) before giving an instruction or introducing an activity.

### ***Questions***

- Be aware of the complexity of questions. For example, 'how?', 'when?', and 'why?' questions (Blank levels 3 and 4) require inferencing skills, which may be particularly challenging to answer.
- Give the pupil enough time to respond to questions.

### ***Consider simplifying your language***

- Use shorter sentences.
- Use simpler vocabulary (e.g., "mix together" rather than "combine").
- Use positive statements (e.g., "walk" rather than "don't run").
- Avoid using 'if' (e.g., "Tom, you have school dinners, rather than "If you have school dinners).
- Emphasise the important words within a sentence and repeat key information.
- Explain non-literal or ambiguous language (e.g., "pull your socks up")
- Be explicit with instructions, rather than using inferred language (e.g., "please can you close the window?" rather than "it's a bit cold in here now")

### ***Recording key points***

- Provide opportunities for the pupil to either draw or write down key points.

### ***Instructions***

- Say things in the order you want the pupil to do them (e.g., "Pack away your books, then go to lunch" rather than "Before you go to lunch, pack away your books).
- Break information into smaller chunks.
- Repeat information as required.

### ***Slower rate of speech***

- Slow down your own rate of your speech and pause more often, to allow more time for the pupil to process information.

### ***Check understanding***

- Check understanding by asking the pupil simple questions or asking them to repeat key points.
- Encourage the pupil to say when they have not understood, e.g., "what does it mean?" or "can you repeat the question please?".

## Targeted interventions (individual or small group)

### *Principles/ aims of programmes*

Principles/aims of published programmes and resources:

- For pupils to learn how to identify why they have not understood. For example, because it was said too quickly, they did not understand the words used or because the instruction was too long.
- For pupils to learn phrases which they can use to repair conversation breakdown, e.g., “can you say it again please?”, “can you write it on the board please?”, “can you say it slower please?”
- For pupils to learn and practice memory strategies such as, counting on fingers, rehearsal, visualisation, and note-taking.
- For pupils to know which strategies are most effective for them so that they can use them independently. Please note that some of the memory strategies will only be suitable for children of 8 years and older and they will only be able to spontaneously use them from this age.

#### Published Programmes

##### *Comprehension monitoring*

Active Listening for Active Learning

[www.integratedtreatmentservices.co.uk/our-approaches/speech-therapy-approaches/active-listening-active-learning](http://www.integratedtreatmentservices.co.uk/our-approaches/speech-therapy-approaches/active-listening-active-learning)

#### Resources

[www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/resources](http://www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/resources)

##### *Auditory memory*

Black Sheep Press Memory resources [www.blacksheepress.co.uk/product-category/memory-skills-3](http://www.blacksheepress.co.uk/product-category/memory-skills-3)

Elklan Language Builders (yellow book page 32-37)

##### *Comprehension monitoring*

Elklan Language Builders (yellow book page 99-102, red book page 90-93)

##### *Blank Levels*

[www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Introduction-to-Blank-levels.docx](http://www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Introduction-to-Blank-levels.docx)



## 3.2.2 Understanding and using vocabulary

A specific area of vocabulary is **word-finding difficulties** (storing and retrieving words). This means a pupil may find it difficult to recall a word which they know but cannot retrieve. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7TJ7Th8cY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7TJ7Th8cY)

### *Indication of difficulty*

- May have a limited range of vocabulary or difficulty learning new vocabulary.
- May struggle to 'find' words they know.
- May use the wrong words or made-up words.
- May over-use general words, e.g., "thingy", "that".
- May use a lot of fillers or hesitations, e.g., "um", "er".

### *Impact*

- May become withdrawn or frustrated as pupils are often aware of their difficulties.



### Strategies to embed within the classroom

#### *Adult use of language*

- Emphasise key words/concepts when speaking "The mouse is under the box"
- Reinforce new vocabulary in different situations and contexts – with plenty of repetition.
- Try and link new vocabulary to information the pupil is already familiar with.
- Give phonological or semantic cues to support word-retrieval. For example,
  - the beginning sound of the word
  - the first syllable of the words
  - an associated word
  - Can the pupil describe it or talk about what the word means?

#### *Visual support strategies*

- Use pictures/symbols/objects to support understanding.
- Use tools such as word maps.
- Use a multi-sensory approach when teaching, rather than relying on spoken language alone.
- For the pupil to create personal word glossaries, with diagrams and pictures.

## Targeted interventions (individual or small group)

Principles/aims of published programmes and resources:

- For pupils to develop a range of words including nouns, verbs, prepositions (e.g., ‘in/on/under’) and adjectives/adverbs (e.g., ‘heavy’, ‘little’).
- For pupils to be able to identify and use synonyms.
- For pupils to be able to sort words into categories and identify similarities/differences.
- For pupils to be able to describe a word based on its attributes/functions or provide a definition.
- For pupils to be able to use word finding strategies when unable to retrieve a word.

### Published Programmes

#### Vocabulary

Reception – ‘Nuffield Early Language Intervention’

[www.teachneli.org](http://www.teachneli.org)

*(also works on narrative skills, attention and listening and phonological awareness).*

Primary – ‘Talkboost’

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/talk-boost](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/talk-boost) *(also works on listening, sentences, storytelling, and conversations).*

Secondary – ‘Vocabulary Enrichment Programme’

[www.routledge.com/Vocabulary-Enrichment-Programme-Enhancing-the-Learning-of-Vocabulary-in/Joffe/p/book/9780863887987](http://www.routledge.com/Vocabulary-Enrichment-Programme-Enhancing-the-Learning-of-Vocabulary-in/Joffe/p/book/9780863887987)

### Resources

[www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/resources](http://www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/resources)

#### Vocabulary and concepts

Rhodes to Language (pupils in KS2 – KS4)

[www.elklan.co.uk/Shop/Rhodes\\_to\\_Language](http://www.elklan.co.uk/Shop/Rhodes_to_Language)

Elklan Language Builders (yellow book page 79, 82)

#### Categorisation and word retrieval strategies

Semantic Links [www.elklan.co.uk/Shop/Semantic\\_Links](http://www.elklan.co.uk/Shop/Semantic_Links)

## 3.2.3 Sentences

Includes problem solving and **verbal reasoning difficulties**, e.g., explanation, justification, and prediction.

### Indication of difficulty

- May have difficulty with using well-formed and longer sentences.
- May make errors or miss out pronouns and tense markers etc.
- May mix up the word order making spoken language difficult to understand.
- May have difficulty with hypothesising and predicting.
- May rely a lot on pointing or gestures to get their message across.

### Impact

- May have difficulty with literacy (the same problems they have with spoken sentences will be evident in their written attempts).
- May have difficulty developing vocabulary through reading (for example they may not be able to work out the meaning of an unknown word from the context of the sentence).



## Strategies to embed within the classroom

### Adult use of language

- Model the correct response (rather than correcting mistakes)
  - **Repeat back** what the pupil says using the correct vocabulary and grammar – so that they hear good examples. *Sometimes referred to as re-casting.*
  - **Expand** the sentence by adding a few words - to show how they can make their sentence longer. *Sometimes referred to as expansion.*
  - **Emphasise** key words – to draw the pupil's attention to.

### Visual support strategies

- Use colour coding approaches, e.g.,
- Use colour to highlight missing words in written work, e.g., blue line for location words.

## Targeted interventions (individual or small group)

Principles/aims of published programmes and resources:

- For pupils to develop grammatical structures. For example:
  - pronouns (e.g., 'he/she/him')
  - plural endings (e.g., regular '-s' and irregular 'sheep')
  - auxiliaries (e.g., 'is/are')
  - past tense (e.g., regular '-ed' and irregular, e.g., 'broke')
  - future tense (e.g., 'will/is going')
  - comparatives (e.g., 'better')
  - conjunctions (e.g., 'and/but/because')
  - connectives (e.g., 'firstly/therefore')
- For pupils to develop verbal reasoning skills. For example, prediction, evaluation, justification, and explanation.

### Published programmes

#### *Verbal reasoning*

Language for Thinking: A Structured Approach for Young Children

[www.thinkingtalking.co.uk/language-for-thinking](http://www.thinkingtalking.co.uk/language-for-thinking)

### Resources

[www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/resources](http://www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/resources)

#### *Questions (Blank levels)*

Elklan Language Builders (yellow book page 39-47, red book page 44-51)

#### *Grammatical structures*

Elklan Language Builders (red book page 76-80)

#### *Colour coding\**

\*It is recommended that you seek advice and support from a Speech and Language Therapist when using Colourful Semantics and/or Shape Coding, particularly if the pupil presents with severe or complex SLCN.

- An introduction to these approaches can be found in Elklan Language Builders (yellow book page 76-77).
- Colourful Semantics pack: [www.elklan.co.uk/Shop/Colourful\\_Semantics](http://www.elklan.co.uk/Shop/Colourful_Semantics)
- Shape Coding: [www.shapecoding.com](http://www.shapecoding.com)

## 3.2.4 Storytelling and narrative

A specific area of narrative is sequencing. Sequencing is the ability to organise and order events.

### *Indicators of difficulty*

- May find common sequences hard to remember, e.g., days of the week.
- May have difficulty talking about events, retelling stories, or making up their own stories.
- Narratives may be shorter, may not be organised/coherent (e.g., difficulty setting the scene, events not linked together), may include irrelevancies.

### *Impact*

- May be difficult for someone to understand and follow what they are saying.
- May have difficulty with peer relationships (e.g., not being able to talk about things that have happened or explain things clearly).
- May have difficulty with literacy skills.

### Strategies to embed within the classroom

#### *Adult use of language*

- If the pupil makes a mistake in their sentence, help them to repair it by modelling back the sentence. You may need to:
  - Adjust the order
  - Add missing vocabulary
  - Add grammatical structures

#### *Visual support strategies*

- Use first, next and last templates to help structure events.
- Use story planners/narrative frameworks to help structure stories, e.g., 'beginning', 'middle' and 'end'.
- Use visual timetables and reference explicitly to events, e.g., "First it's maths, next it's lunch".
- Use colour coding approaches to show that question words relate to story components, e.g., who = characters, what doing = what happened (events), where = location (places), when = time, what like = description of characters/ settings.
- Use timelines to make concepts of past events explicit.





## Targeted interventions (individual or small group)

Principles/aims of published programmes and resources:

- For pupils to understand concrete units of time (e.g., times of day, days of the week, seasons) and abstract concepts of time (e.g., earlier, soon, later).
- For pupils to order and describe a sequence of events.
- For pupils to be able to use sequential concepts (e.g., 'now and next', 'before and after', 'first', 'then', 'last').
- For pupils to have an increased awareness of the components of a story (e.g., beginning, middle and end) and understanding of question words (e.g., who, when and where, what happened?).
- For pupils to be able to re-tell stories (before they can generate their own narrative).



### Published programmes

#### *Storytelling and Narrative*

##### **Black Sheep Press**

- Reception – 'Reception Narrative Pack'  
[www.blacksheepress.co.uk/product/reception-narrative-narrative-skills-for-age-3-5-years](http://www.blacksheepress.co.uk/product/reception-narrative-narrative-skills-for-age-3-5-years)
- Key Stage 1 - 'Speaking and Listening Through Narrative'  
[www.blacksheepress.co.uk/product/speaking-and-listening-through-narrative-ages-5-7](http://www.blacksheepress.co.uk/product/speaking-and-listening-through-narrative-ages-5-7)
- Key Stage 2 – 'From Oral to Written Narrative'  
[www.blacksheepress.co.uk/product/from-oral-to-written-narrative-ages-7-11](http://www.blacksheepress.co.uk/product/from-oral-to-written-narrative-ages-7-11)
- Secondary  
[www.blacksheepress.co.uk/product/secondary-talk-narrative-ks3-4-2](http://www.blacksheepress.co.uk/product/secondary-talk-narrative-ks3-4-2)

##### **Speechmark**

- Secondary – 'Narrative Intervention Programme' (developed by Victoria Joffe)  
[www.routledge.com/Narrative-Intervention-Programme/Joffe/p/book/9780863887970](http://www.routledge.com/Narrative-Intervention-Programme/Joffe/p/book/9780863887970)

### Resources

[www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/resources](http://www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/resources)

#### *Storytelling and Narrative (narrative grids)*

Elklan Language Builders (yellow book 88-94, red book 87-88)

#### *Sequencing*

Sequencing cards - We recommend you photograph sequences to make it personal and motivating for CYP. However, if you wish to purchase resources, Speechmark Colour Cards produce a range of 2, 3, 4, 6-8 step sequences.

[www.routledge.com/search?kw=sequence+colorcards](http://www.routledge.com/search?kw=sequence+colorcards)

Elklan Language Builders (yellow book page 85-86, red book page 86)

#### *Questions (blanks levels)*

Elklan Language Builders (yellow book page 39-47, red book 44-51)

## 3.2.5 Speech (speech sounds, stammering and voice)



Underlining processes are involved with the development of speech skills. There is a subconscious element, known as the ‘speech processing system’ and a conscious element known as ‘phonological awareness’. **Phonological awareness** is the ability to reflect on the word structures including rhyme, syllables, and phonemes.

### Indication of difficulty

#### Speech:

- May have difficulty producing specific sounds/substitute sounds/miss off parts of words.
- May have poor phonological awareness.
- May have speech processing difficulties such as sequencing multi-syllabic words.

#### Stammering:

- May repeat sounds or part of words, e.g., “b-b-b-but”.
- May prolong sounds, e.g., “mmmum”.
- May block, e.g., no sound comes out.
- May have tension in their face or make extra movements, e.g., blinking.

#### Voice:

- May have an unusual voice quality, e.g., hoarse, husky, breathy, rough, or weak.
- May lose their voice or it cuts out whilst speaking.

### Impact

#### Speech

- May be unintelligible to unfamiliar listeners.
- May have difficulty with phonics, e.g., unable to tell the difference between sounds.
- May be at higher risk of reading, spelling, and writing difficulties (if have weak phonological awareness).
- May have difficulty learning new vocabulary (if have persistent speech processing problems).
- May avoid speaking in certain situations or avoid certain words.

#### Stammering

- May avoid certain situations (e.g., social events or responding to questions in class).
- May avoid certain sounds or words.
- May adopt strategies to hide their stammering, e.g., change what they were going to say mid-sentence.
- May feel fear frustrated or embarrassed because of their stammering.

## Strategies to embed within the classroom

### Adult language and communication

#### Speech sounds

- Focus on what the pupil is saying not how they are saying it.
- Repeat back clearly what the pupil has tried to say – so that they hear good models.
- Avoid direct correction and don’t make the pupil repeat after you.
- If you are finding it difficult to understand, ask if they can show you. Don’t pretend to understand.

#### Stammer

- Focus on what the pupil is saying not how they are saying it.
- Don’t interrupt or finish their sentence for them.
- Slow down your own rate of speech
- Encourage turn-taking to avoid pupil feeling rushed or interrupted.
- Give plenty of time for the pupil to answer the question, to avoid the pupil feeling under pressure.
- Don’t give direct advice about how to manage their stammer. For example, it’s often not helpful to tell them to “hurry up”, “slow down” or “take a deep breath”.

#### Voice

- Encourage turn-taking to avoid pupils shouting over each other.
- Ensure voice rest periods by having a balance between activities that require voice and activities which don’t.



## 3.2.6 Social Interaction

Many CYP experience difficulties with social interaction including pupils with ASD and language disorders.

- **pragmatic skills** – refers to how a CYP uses communication in a social situation, e.g., non-verbal communication, turn-taking, initiating, and maintaining conversation.
- **social thinking** (a term developed by Michelle Garcia Winner) refers to the process of how we understand our own and other people's thoughts/feelings/intentions.

### *Indication of difficulty*

- May find it difficult to understand and discuss their own/ other people's feelings.
- May find it difficult to see things from another person's point of view.
- May find it difficult to start, join in and maintain conversations. For example, they may interrupt, give too much information, may switch topic without signal or persevere on a favoured topic.
- May find it difficult to understand and use non-verbal communication, e.g., body language, eye-contact, personal space, and tone of voice.
- May not understand non-literal language, e.g., jokes, idioms, and metaphors.

### Strategies to embed within the classroom

#### Adult language and communication

- Support the pupil to maintain topics of conversation. For example, if the pupil changes subject, remind them of the topic and encourage them to talk about the other topic afterwards.
- Support the pupil in giving the appropriate amount of information. For example, let the pupil know if they have not given you enough information.
- Model appropriate social phrases such as when greeting someone.
- Talk about your own feelings and model appropriate responses.
- Use real life situations as an opportunity to discuss solutions to a problem, e.g., "We haven't got enough chairs. What should we do?"
- It may be necessary to label the feeling for the pupil in the situation.



### *Impact*

- May show disruptive behaviour.
- May have difficulty with peer relationships.
- May find it difficult to join in and play with other peers. Unstructured activities such as 'break time' may be particularly challenging.
- May have difficulty participating in group work.
- May have difficulty adapting to new or unfamiliar social situations.

#### Visual support strategies

- Reinforce expected social skills in the class by using symbols
- Help students to 'check-in' and say how they are feeling using visual support.

## Targeted interventions (individual or small group)

Principles/aims of published programmes and resources:

- For pupils to develop awareness of using different registers when talking to different people.
- For pupils to develop social skills important for interaction and group work, e.g., turn-taking, following instructions, problem solving and collaboration.
- For pupils to develop an understanding and use of non-verbal communication skills (e.g., body language, proximity).
- For pupils to develop emotional literacy (e.g., vocabulary related to emotions).
- For pupils to develop emotional regulation strategies (e.g., strategies to regulate or move between different emotion states).

### Published programmes

#### *Pragmatics*

‘Talkabout’ series (developed by Alex Kelly)

[www.routledge.com/Talkabout/book-series/SMT](http://www.routledge.com/Talkabout/book-series/SMT)

‘Socially Speaking: a pragmatic social skills programme for primary schools’  
(developed by Alison Schroeder)

[www.ldlearning.com/product/social,-emotional-and-mental-health/social-skills/games/socially-speaking/admt00416](http://www.ldlearning.com/product/social,-emotional-and-mental-health/social-skills/games/socially-speaking/admt00416)

#### *Emotional literacy and regulation*

‘The zones of regulation’ (developed by Leah Kuypers)

[www.zonesofregulation.com](http://www.zonesofregulation.com)

#### *Social skills*

‘Lego based therapy: how to build social competence through LEGO-based clubs for children with autism and related conditions’ (LeGoff, 2014)

<https://uk.jkp.com/products/legobased-therapy>

### Resources

[www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/resources](http://www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/resources)

#### *Pragmatics*

Reception – KS1 ‘Talking about friends: situational understanding’  
(Black Sheep Press)

[www.blacksheepress.co.uk/product/talking-about-friends-situational-understanding-2](http://www.blacksheepress.co.uk/product/talking-about-friends-situational-understanding-2)

Elklan Language Builders (yellow book page 105-106, red book page 96-100).

#### *Emotional literacy*

Elklan Language Builders (red book page 101-103).

#### *Non-literal language*

‘Mystifying Metaphors’

[www.elklan.co.uk/Shop/Mystifying\\_Metaphors](http://www.elklan.co.uk/Shop/Mystifying_Metaphors)

‘120 idioms at your fingertips’

[www.elklan.co.uk/Shop/120\\_Idioms\\_At\\_Your\\_Fingertips](http://www.elklan.co.uk/Shop/120_Idioms_At_Your_Fingertips)



## 3.2.7 Advice for running interventions

### Why should schools run interventions?

Research shows that when TAs run one-to-one or small group interventions, it can have a positive impact on pupils' attainment (when TAs receive high quality support and training). **Professional development resource:** <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/teaching-assistants>

#### Choosing group members (if applicable)

- Groups typically consist of a maximum of six children.
- Consider how well the pupils will work together. It can be helpful to include some children who will act as good role models (e.g., for language or behaviour).

#### Selecting an adult to run the intervention

- One adult to consistently lead the intervention/group. Other support staff may also be needed.
- The adult leading the intervention should be appropriately trained (e.g., Level 3) and supported. Specific training for published programmes is advised. They should know the pupils fairly well and understand SLCN.
- It is preferable if the adult also spends time with the pupil in class to promote the generalisation of skills.

#### Planning

- Interventions should be planned into the timetable to ensure consistent running of interventions, availability of staff and rooms/spaces. Spaces should be clear of distractions.
- Sufficient time should be allocated to staff leading interventions in order to prepare resources before the session, record progress after the session and to feedback and liaise with others such as class teachers.
- The content of interventions should be consistent with or extend learning from the classroom. For example, selecting vocabulary to pre-teach.

#### Monitoring of progress

- Use a screen before and after the period of intervention to measure response and progress. Most published programmes will have their own.
- Each programme will have aims for the period that the intervention runs. The leading adult will likely select 2-3 aims to work on per session.
- Use a record form to record progress after each session. Reflect on whether the pupils have achieved the aim and if they need to move onto a different aim the following session.

#### Length and frequency

- The length of each session will depend on the attention abilities of the pupil(s). However, as a guide, most interventions for school aged children run between 20-45 minutes.
- Typically, interventions occur 2-3 times a week, but this will depend on the programme and other practicalities.
- Most interventions will run for a minimum of 20 sessions (e.g., equivalent to a school term).

#### During the session

- Re-cap rules/expectations at the start of each session, e.g., listening to others.
- Use a visual timetable to show which activities will be covered in the session. Include the aim of the activity as well as the game.
- Remember – interventions are for practicing and working towards the aim. So, give the pupil the support they need in order to learn and don't over test them.
- Use different activities to practise each skill. Activities should be engaging and incorporate the goal. For example, if working on the concept 'in' - drop water balloons in a tray.
- Use visual support and language which supports their SLC skills, e.g., chunk information, repeat new vocabulary etc.

## 3.3 Specialist support

*(Pupils with long-term and persistent SLCN)*

This section of the toolkit will support schools to better understand when it is appropriate to refer to specialist services, e.g., NHS Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy in Luton and Bedfordshire, for assessment, advice, or intervention.

In this section of the toolkit, we also discuss what information to gather to make effective referrals.



## 3.3.1 When to refer to specialist services

Two options:

- **Referral to NHS speech and language therapy service after identification of SLCN.** For example, the CYP may score within the **red** zone on the Progression Tools, indicating that specialist services may be required.
- **Referral to NHS speech and language therapy service following targeted interventions and monitoring of progress.** This would be an outcome of the review phase in the 'Assess-Plan-Do-Review' cycle. For example, if the CYP has made less progress than expected with targeted intervention, they may need specialist support in order to make progress. *See section 3.3.2*



In both cases, it is recommended that you follow local procedures by looking at referral guidelines.

Please visit the NHS Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy in Luton and Bedfordshire website:

[www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/how-to-refer](http://www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/how-to-refer)

## 3.3.2 Decision making chart following targeted support

Stepping up or stepping down support: work out the degree of progress, consider the pupil profile and make the appropriate response

<p><b>Response to interventions</b></p>	<p>Pupil makes progress Aims of the intervention met May need fewer prompts to support their SLC skills Child now has typical SLC skills for their development</p>	<p>Pupil makes less progress than expected Aims of the intervention not met May need more prompts to support their SLC skills Child does not have typical speech and language for their development</p>
<p><b>Other observations</b></p>	<p>No further concerns about underlining cause, e.g., DLD Limited <b>functional impact</b>, e.g., accessing the curriculum, social skills, or emotional wellbeing (<i>See section 3.3.3</i>)</p>	<p>Concerns about underlining cause, e.g., DLD <b>Functional impact</b> evident, e.g., accessing the curriculum, social skills, or emotional wellbeing (<i>See section 3.3.3</i>)</p>
<p><b>Indication of need</b></p>	<p>The pupil's language difficulty may have been due to limited exposure or EAL</p>	<p>The pupil may have persistent SLCN</p>
<p><b>Next steps</b></p>	<p>May step down to <b>universal level</b> of support only. Continue monitoring in school as necessary. As a pupil progresses through school, the language demands increase so the CYP may need support again at a later time A referral to NHS speech and language therapy service may not be required at this time.</p>	<p>The pupil may require <b>specialist level</b> of support in order to make progress. The pupil may need an assessment, specific recommendations and possibly an individual programme from a specialist. Schools should continue providing universal support. Consider referring to NHS speech and language therapy service using local referral procedure.</p>

### 3.3.3 What do we mean by functional impact?

Functional impact relates to how well a child can participate in everyday activities. Whilst there are currently no formal assessment measures of functional impact for SLCN, the following aspects are taken into account:

#### Accessing the curriculum, e.g.,

- Literacy.
- Attention and listening.
- Participation in language-based tasks.
- Learning new information.

#### Social skills, e.g.,

- Solitary play or difficulty in group situations.
- Difficulty with peer relationships.

#### Emotional wellbeing, e.g.,

- Internalising difficulties.
- Externalising difficulties.





## 3.3.4 Collating information for onward referrals

When outcomes continue to not be achieved despite support being provided, or when a more significant difficulty is identified, this toolkit provides the opportunity to collate evidence to support onward referrals if required.

### NHS speech and language therapy

Assessment and advice from a SLTist may be needed when the pupil has SLCN and needs one of the following:

- an individual/ specialist communication system (this is known as AAC). For example, PECS or voice output communication aid.
- a differential diagnosis, e.g., DLD.
- specialist support in order to make progress.

When referring to NHS speech and language services, the information provided by referrers is invaluable. Include information on:

***“Evidence suggests that...decisions about allocation and type of intervention [should be] based on the nature of SLCN, how it impacts on functioning and the young person’s response to intervention”***

Children with severe SLCN (2011)

Professional development resource:

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/for-professionals/the-communication-trust/more-resources/making-effective-referrals](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/for-professionals/the-communication-trust/more-resources/making-effective-referrals)

### Related needs and challenges

- Sensory needs (e.g., visual, hearing)
- Cognitive profile (e.g., memory)
- Mental health
- Learning difficulties

### 2. Response to strategies and interventions, e.g.,

- Less than expected progress.
- Requires lots of prompting and responds well to strategies, e.g., visual support or verbal cues.

### 3. Functional Impact

- Accessing the curriculum
- Social skills
- Emotional wellbeing

### 4. Communication profile - which areas of SLC does the CYP have difficulty with?

- Include examples and attach appropriate information from assessment, e.g., the Progression Tools.
- It is valuable to use common language when referring to specialist services to ensure information is not misunderstood.

### 5. Other professionals involved, e.g.,

- Educational psychologist
- Child development service
- CAMHS

# Section 4:

## Appendix

In this section of the toolkit is additional information, links to organisations and tools to use to support identification and planning for pupils with SLCN.



## 4.1 FAQs



### Toolkit

#### *Can I use the toolkit with children who have ASD?*

Yes - for some aspects. The toolkit is intended to support CYP with SLCN. By definition, SLCN covers all pupils who may need additional support, based on need rather than diagnosis. Whilst the toolkit helps identify and support SLC skills, it does not cover every need that a CYP with ASD may experience, e.g., sensory sensitivity.

#### *Can I use the toolkit with children who have a wider developmental delay or learning disability?*

Yes. The toolkit is designed to support all children with SLCN, regardless of diagnosis or condition. However, you may wish to use a Progression Tool which is closer to the CYP's development (See section 2.1 'factors to consider when identifying SLCN').

#### *Can I use the toolkit with reception aged children?*

Yes. In addition to this toolkit, there is also an 'Early Years Communication and Language Toolkit' produced by NHS Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy in Luton and Bedfordshire. Please visit: [www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk](http://www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk). Consider which is the most appropriate for your setting. It may be that you use some resources from each.

#### *Can I use the toolkit with 16–18-year-olds, e.g., in sixth form?*

Yes – although some sections may not be as applicable.

**Identification** - There is a Progression Tool for this age group in order to support identification of SLCN.

**Universal/Targeted support** - When selecting appropriate universal and targeted strategies, you will need to consider the pupil's age/development as some may be more appropriate than others. Speech and Language UK has a targeted programme which supports pupils getting ready for the workplace, which you may wish to consider. This is designed for pupils aged 14-18 years, more information can be found here:

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/training-licensing/programmes-for-nurseries-and-schools/talk-for-work](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/training-licensing/programmes-for-nurseries-and-schools/talk-for-work)

**Specialist support** - Be mindful that the referral pathway to specialist services may differ for 16–18-year-olds.

#### *Can this toolkit be used by special schools?*

Yes – although some sections may not be as applicable. For example, the school environment and how the curriculum is taught may differ to a mainstream school in order to suit the needs of pupils. Pupils are also likely to already have their needs identified and have an EHC plan in place. However, we encourage special schools to use the toolkit as they deem appropriate.

## The Progression Tools

### *Who can use the Progression Tools?*

The Progression Tools are designed to be used by non-specialists, e.g., SENCOs, teachers or highly trained TAs. It is recommended that the member of staff knows the child well as this will make it easier to interpret the responses they give.

### *Which Progression Tool should I use?*

In most cases, you can choose the Progression Tool which matches the pupil's age. Use your judgment if a pupil is in between ages. For example, if a pupil is 8 years and 11 months, the 9-10 years Progression Tool may be the most suitable. In some cases, you may decide to use a Progression Tool which is closer to a pupil's development (See section 2.1 'factors to consider when identifying SLCN').

### *How often can I repeat the Progression Tools?*

It is recommended that you leave at least a term before you repeat it again in order to monitor progress.

### *Can I use the Progression Tools with the whole class or year group?*

Yes. The Progression Tools can be used in this way to enable consistent identification of SLCN. The group profile form and RAG rating system allows schools to easily monitor all pupils' SLC development.

### *Can I use the Progression Tools alongside other baseline assessments or tools?*

Yes. If concerns arise following a school baseline measure, e.g., reception baseline assessment (RBA) or phonics test, we recommend you investigate the pupils SLCN further using the Progression Tools.

For guidance in using the phonics screen with pupils already identified as having SLCN, please visit [www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/48883960/communicating-phonics-the-communication-trust](http://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/48883960/communicating-phonics-the-communication-trust)

In addition to the Progression Tools, you might find it helpful to use the first language screener and speech screener developed by the NHS Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy in Luton and Bedfordshire. Please visit: [www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/specialism/bilingualism](http://www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/specialism/bilingualism) and [www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/speech-sounds-screen](http://www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/speech-sounds-screen)

### **Is there any training on how to use the Progression Tools?**

Each Progression Tool comes with written guidance. There is also a short video and Top Tips guide for each set which can be found here:

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/shop-for-educators/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-primary-years-set](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/shop-for-educators/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-primary-years-set)

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/shop-for-educators/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-secondary-years-set](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/shop-for-educators/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-secondary-years-set)

### **Why does the Toolkit promote the use of the Progression Tools?**

The Toolkit has been developed and designed to sit alongside the Progression Tools. The Progression Tools enables schools to specifically identify which area of SLC the pupil may be struggling with. In the Toolkit, the same headings have been used in the outcomes and resources section, which makes it easier for schools to then plan support.

The Progression Tools are based on theoretical information about typical development. They have been developed in collaboration with school staff and have been tested on a large number of mainstream schools and CYP.

We recognise that there are other assessments or monitoring tools available. However, we recommend the Progression Tools because we feel they offer schools good value for money. Speech and Language UK have also produced a range of publications and resources with the aim to support CYP to communicate to the best of their ability.

## **Further support**

### ***Who can I contact if I have any further questions about using the Toolkit?***

Please contact your NHS speech and language therapist for your dedicated area. Contact details for NHS Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy in Luton and Bedfordshire can be found on the back cover of this toolkit.

### ***Do I have to use the Toolkit or complete the Progression Tools before making a referral to specialist services?***

The Toolkit has been created in partnership with NHS Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy in Luton and Bedfordshire. We therefore recommend you use the Toolkit and Progression Tools to support your referral and to put immediate support in place for the CYP. Please refer to guidance documents and referral forms on their website: [www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/how-to-refer](http://www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/how-to-refer)

### ***Where can I find more information?***

The Toolkit is designed to be a practical tool – you will therefore not find a reference list towards the back of this document. Instead, we have inserted direct links throughout the Toolkit for easy access to publications for further reading. These are signposted as ‘professional development resources’ or found in the appendices (see section 4.4) Other information, such as SLC strategies, are common recommendations within the Speech and Language Therapy field.



## 4.2 SLCN diagnoses/labels

Speech and Language Therapists work with a range of children who have SLCN. In this section, we will describe SLCN disorders in relation to the figure below.

To see a full list of who Speech and Language Therapists work with, please visit: [www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/#section-3](http://www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/#section-3)

### Speech, language and communication needs – an overview



### Key messages

- Speech and Language Therapists play a vital role in diagnosing most of these conditions together with other professionals.
- We expect schools to be aware of these conditions, but not to label or diagnose themselves.

Professional development resource:  
[www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/docs/Covid/language-disorder-briefing-paper-with-edit.pdf?la=en&hash=98B6A1E60824D52CCDFFACCE5EE6D67749D9](http://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/docs/Covid/language-disorder-briefing-paper-with-edit.pdf?la=en&hash=98B6A1E60824D52CCDFFACCE5EE6D67749D9)

## Language Disorder

A language disorder is the term used for children with SLCN, where there is an indication of **functional impairment** and **poor prognosis**.

- **Functional impairment** means barriers to everyday life activities such as communication and learning.
- **Poor prognosis** means their language difficulties are likely to persist. In other words, their language difficulties are unlikely to resolve spontaneously, and they are unlikely to 'catch up' with their peers. If a child still has severe language difficulties by the time they are 5 years old, their language difficulties are likely to persist.

### *Developmental language disorder (DLD)*

Developmental Language Disorder (previously known as Specific Language Impairment / SLI) affects the way that children understand and use language. It is a severe and persistent need that interferes with everyday life and school achievement. It is not associated with a known biomedical condition such as ASD or Down's syndrome. However, children with DLD can have co-occurring conditions such as ADHD, dyslexia, and speech difficulties. Approximately 7.5% of CYP have DLD.

Children who have receptive language difficulties (understanding difficulties) and difficulties across many domains of language are more likely to need specialist support in order to make progress. Areas of impairment include:

- **Grammar (e.g., syntax and morphology)**
- **Semantics**
- **Word finding**
- **Pragmatics**
- **Verbal learning/memory**
- **Phonology**

[www.radld.org](http://www.radld.org)

[www.afasic.org.uk/developmental-language-disorder-dld](http://www.afasic.org.uk/developmental-language-disorder-dld)

[www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/clinical-information/developmental-language-disorder](http://www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/clinical-information/developmental-language-disorder)

### *Language disorder associated with/in the context of...*

This term is used when there are differentiating biomedical conditions such as:

- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)\***
  - **Down's syndrome**
  - **Cerebral palsy**
  - **Sensorineural hearing loss**
- (Bishop et al, 2016)

### *\*Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)*

Autism is a lifelong, developmental disability that affects how people communicate and interact with the world. The characteristics of Autism vary, but usually consist of persistent difficulties with:

- Social communication and interaction (e.g., understanding facial expressions, jokes and sarcasm, emotions, or the rules of conversation).
- Restricted and repetitive behaviours (e.g., the need for predictable routines or strategies to support change and transitions).

It can also be common for a person with autism to experience sensory processing difficulties, for example, over-or-under sensitivity to sounds, touch, taste etc.

[www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

## Speech Sound Disorder (SSD)

Speech sound disorders is an umbrella term, and they can occur in isolation or co-occur with language difficulties. Below is a summary of the categories and some are explained in further detail.

### Functional speech sound disorders (no known cause):

- articulation disorder (errors with individual speech sounds)
- phonological disorder (errors with speech sound processes)

### Motor speech sound disorders:

- dysarthria (weak muscles)
- dyspraxia (difficulty with co-ordinating speech muscles)

### Structural speech sound disorders:

- cleft palate and other orofacial defect

### Childhood Apraxia of Speech (CAS)

Sometimes referred to as 'Developmental Verbal Dyspraxia / DVD'. It is a condition where children have difficulty in making and co-ordinating the precise movements needed to produce clear speech. Features may include:

- A limited range of consonant and vowel speech sounds.
- Overuse of one sound (favourite articulation).
- Inconsistent production and unusual error patterns.
- Breakdown in sequencing sounds in words, particularly as the length of words increases.

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/media/3304/verbal-dyspraxia-factsheet-may-2016.pdf](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/media/3304/verbal-dyspraxia-factsheet-may-2016.pdf)

### Articulation and phonological disorders

Articulation disorders focus on errors of individual speech sounds (phonetic development). Whereas a phonological disorder focuses on rule-based errors, e.g., fronting, final consonant deletion (phonological processes).

All children will make speech errors as part of typical development (norms can vary between sources). However, most children are able to use clear speech sounds between 5 -6 years of age, with a few exceptions such as 'th' and 'r'.

[www.speech-language-therapy.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=30:table2&catid=11:admin&Itemid=117](http://www.speech-language-therapy.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=30:table2&catid=11:admin&Itemid=117)

### Dysarthria

Dysarthria is caused by brain injury and results in difficulty moving the muscles needed for speech. Dysarthria can be developmental, e.g., cerebral palsy, or acquired, e.g., a stroke.

Features may include:

- "Slurred" or "mumbled" speech.
- Nasal-sounding or breathy.
- Errors may be affected by tiredness and posture.

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/dysarthria](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dysarthria)

### Orofacial structural defects (e.g., cleft lip/palate)

A split or a separation of the cleft lip and/or palate. It can affect one or both sides.

Features may include:

- Velopharyngeal dysfunction (VPD), e.g., hypernasality and/or nasal air emission.
- Articulation and/or phonological errors.

[www.clapa.com/what-is-cleft-lip-palate](http://www.clapa.com/what-is-cleft-lip-palate)

## Other areas of SLCN

### Fluency

Stammering (also sometimes referred to as 'stuttering' or 'dysfluency') makes it physically hard for someone to speak. Someone who stammers will repeat, prolong, or get stuck on sounds or words. There might also be signs of visible tension as the person struggles to get the word out. Nationally, approximately 5% of children stammer at some point and about 1% continue to stammer into adulthood.

[www.stamma.org](http://www.stamma.org)

[www.actionforstammeringchildren.org](http://www.actionforstammeringchildren.org)

### Selective Mutism (SM)

Selective Mutism is an anxiety disorder which prevents those affected from speaking in certain situations, such as at school or in public. A person with SM may want to speak, but find themselves physically unable to do so, due to their overwhelming anxiety. They will be able to speak in other, less anxiety provoking situations.

[www.selectivemutism.org.uk](http://www.selectivemutism.org.uk)

### Voice

A voice disorder may cause changes to the voice or complete loss of voice. It may be caused by how you use your voice or another medical condition. ENT (Ears, Nose, and Throat) doctors play an important role in diagnosing and treating voice disorders. Features may include:

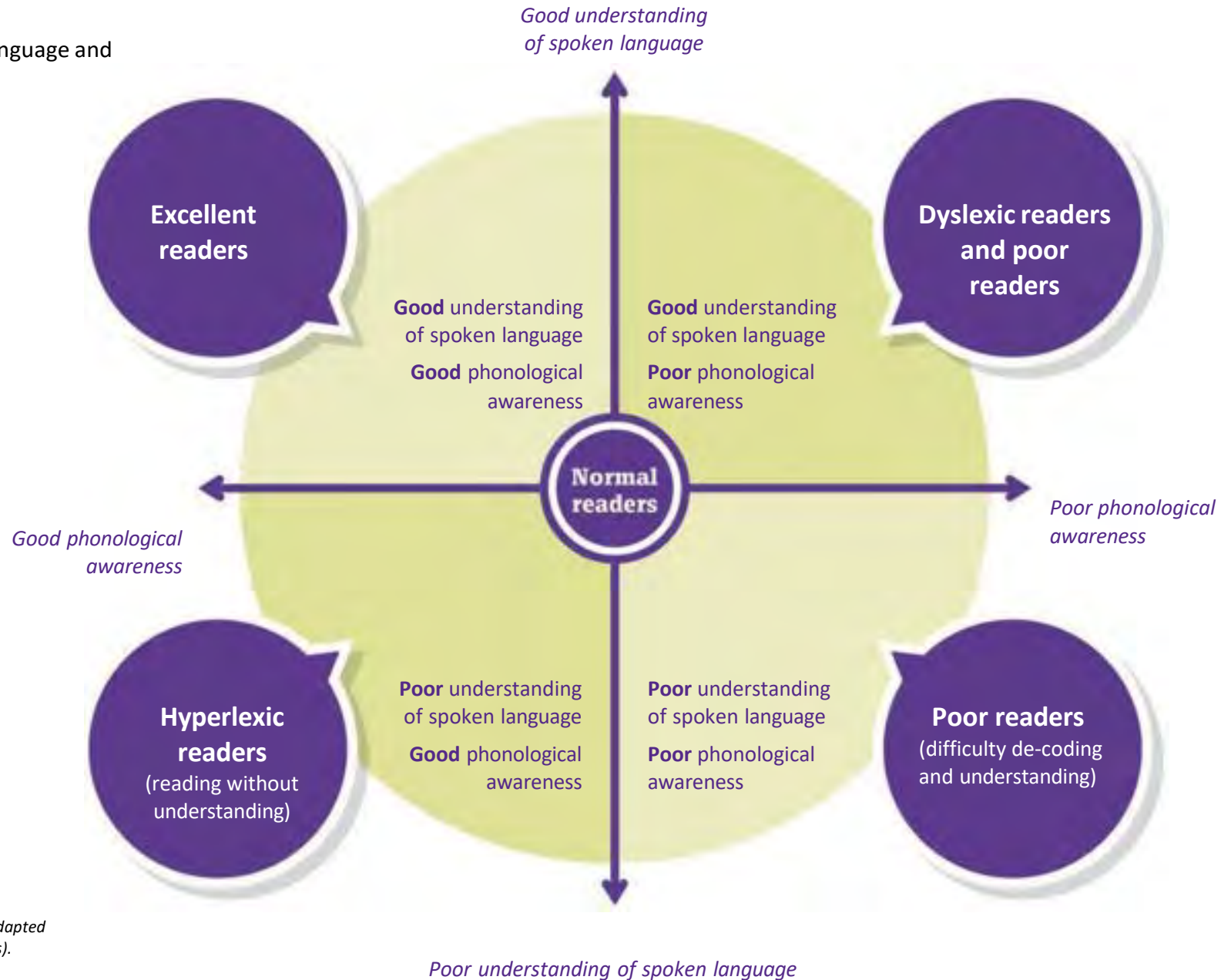
- **Hoarse, croaky, strained, breathy or weak voice quality.**
- **Abnormal pitch (e.g., too high/low or pitch breaks).**
- **Abnormal loudness (e.g., too high/low, or decreased range).**
- **Increased vocal effort.**
- **Frequent coughing or throat clearing.**

[www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/clinical-information/voice](http://www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/clinical-information/voice)

[www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk](http://www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk)

## 4.3 Reading abilities diagram

The link between spoken language and phonological awareness.



*Reading abilities based on Snowling and Stackhouse 1996 (adapted from Elklan 'Language Builders' series).*



## 4.4 Links to organisations and published reports

### Local sources

- **NHS Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy in Luton and Bedfordshire:** [www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk](http://www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk)
- **The Local Offer**
  - Central Bedfordshire Council: <https://localoffer.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/kb5/centralbedfordshire/directory/home.page>
  - Bedford Borough Council: <https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk/kb5/bedford/directory/home.page>
  - Luton Council: <https://directory.luton.gov.uk/kb5/luton/directory/localoffer.page>

### National sources

- **Speech and Language UK** [www.speechandlanguage.org.uk](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk)
- **Afasic** [www.afasic.org.uk](http://www.afasic.org.uk)
- **Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)** [www.rcslt.org](http://www.rcslt.org)

### Published reports/ statutory guidance

- **Don't Get Me Wrong** published by The Communication Trust [www.yor-ok.org.uk/Images/Disability/Dont%20get%20me%20wrong.pdf](http://www.yor-ok.org.uk/Images/Disability/Dont%20get%20me%20wrong.pdf)
- **A Generation Adrift** published by The Communication Trust [www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/media/3216/tct\\_genadrift\\_update.pdf](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/media/3216/tct_genadrift_update.pdf)
- **Professional development in speech, language and communication: Findings from a national survey** published by The Communication Trust [www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/1tctworkforce-development-report-final-online.pdf](http://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/1tctworkforce-development-report-final-online.pdf)
- **Children with severe SLCN** published by ICAN [www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/media/1935/ican\\_talkseries9.pdf](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/media/1935/ican_talkseries9.pdf)
- **Bercow: Ten Years On** published by ICAN and RCSLT [www.bercow10yearson.com](http://www.bercow10yearson.com)
- **Children's Consultation Report** published by Wendy Lee Ltd [www.bercow10yearson.com/evidence](http://www.bercow10yearson.com/evidence)
- **SEND Code of Practice (2014)** [www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25)

## 4.5 Tools

Here are a range of tools available to schools to support identification and planning of support for pupils with SLCN. Most of these tools are free to use, included within the Toolkit or which can be accessed via the website links (with the exception of the Progression Tools which are available to purchase at a low one-off cost).

**SLCN indicators checklist** (see below) – a quick screen that can be used before the Progression Tools.

**EAL vs SLCN indicators checklist** (see below) – a quick screen to consider if difficulties in English are due to EAL or SLCN.

**Typical development norms** – to check typical SLC development.

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/for-professionals/the-communication-trust/universally-speaking](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/for-professionals/the-communication-trust/universally-speaking)

**Progression Tools** – an assessment which can be used by education professionals to specifically identify which areas of SLC the pupil has difficulty with. It does not replace a specialist assessment from a Speech and Language Therapist.

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/shop-for-educators/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-primary-years-set](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/shop-for-educators/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-primary-years-set)  
[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/shop-for-educators/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-secondary-years-set](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/shop-for-educators/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-secondary-years-set)

**First language screen** – [www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/specialism/bilingualism](http://www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/specialism/bilingualism)

**Speech screener** – [www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/speech-sounds-screen](http://www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/speech-sounds-screen)

**Talking Mats** (see below) – a communication symbol tool which can be used by education professionals to involve CYP.

## 4.5.1 Talking Mats

Talking Mats is a communication symbol tool which can be used by education professionals to involve CYP in the decision-making process when setting outcomes.

It supports children and young people to:

- **Think** about and explore issues relevant to them
- Structure and **organise** their thoughts
- **Share** their views and opinions

### In practice

**Topic** – what you want to talk about

**Options** – subcategories relating to the topic

**Top scale** – allows CYP to indicate their feelings about each topic and option

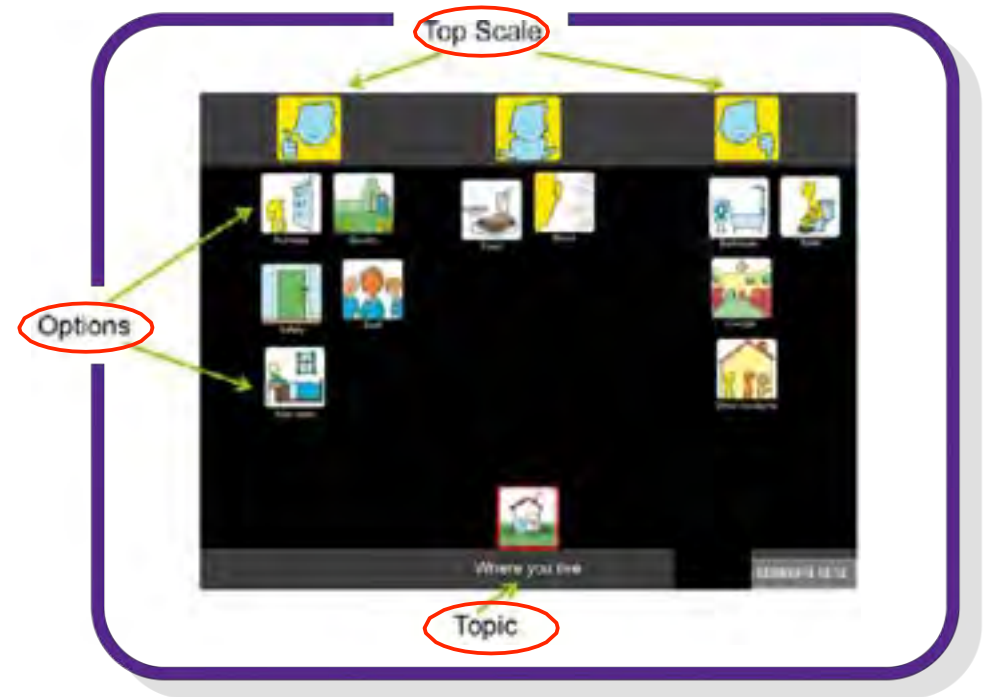
Once the topic is chosen, the CYP is given the options one at a time and asked to think about what they feel about each one. They can then place the symbol under the appropriate top scale symbol to indicate what they feel.

Watch a short video of Talking Mats being used with a young person

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzAgGmLYpE0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzAgGmLYpE0)

More information, resources and training can be found at:

[www.talkingmats.com](http://www.talkingmats.com)



## 4.5.2 SLCN indicators checklist

Pupils with SLCN will have strengths and difficulties in different areas. Use this checklist as a starting point to reflect on the pupil's needs. Then compare to what is expected for their development using 'Universally Speaking'.

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/for-professionals/the-communication-trust/universally-speaking](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/for-professionals/the-communication-trust/universally-speaking)

If they are presenting with SLCN, then we recommend you use the Progression Tools to investigate further.

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/shop-for-educators/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-primary-years-set](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/shop-for-educators/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-primary-years-set)

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/shop-for-educators/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-secondary-years-set](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/shop-for-educators/progression-tools-from-the-communication-trust-for-secondary-years-set)

Area of SLCN

Tick if applies



### Understanding

Do they find it difficult to listen?

*Example: attention is better in 1:1 situations or with non-verbal tasks*

Do they watch/copy others so they can work out what to do?

Do they struggle to follow long or complex instructions?



### Vocabulary

Do they have a limited range of vocabulary or difficulty learning new vocabulary?

*Example: use a lot of fillers "er", over-use general words "that", or use the wrong words*

Do they struggle to 'find' words they know



### Sentences

Do they have difficulty using well-formed sentences?

*Example: use short sentences, make errors, or miss out pronouns/markers*




Do they sound muddled when talking in longer sentences?

*Example: mix up the word order*

Do they rely a lot on pointing or gestures to get their message across?

Area of SLCN

Tick if applies

Area of SLCN	Tick if applies
 <p><b>Storytelling and Narrative</b></p> <p>Do they have difficulty talking about events, re-telling stories, or making up their own stories?  <i>Example: include irrelevancies, omit setting the scene, or omit how events link together</i></p>	
 <p><b>Speech (speech sounds, stammering and voice)</b></p> <p>Are they difficult to understand due to speech errors?  <i>Example: errors in producing specific sounds, miss out or substitute sounds</i></p> <p>Do they stammer?  <i>Example: repetition, e.g., 'b-b-b-but', prolongation, e.g., 'mmmine', block, e.g., no sound comes out, tension in face, or make extra movements, e.g., blinking</i></p> <p>Do they have an unusual voice quality?  <i>Example: hoarse, husky, breathy, rough, or weak voice quality. Voice cuts out whilst speaking.</i></p>	
 <p><b>Social Interaction</b></p> <p>Do they have difficulty starting, joining in, or maintaining play/ conversations with others?  <i>Examples: plays on own or alongside, interrupts, gives too much information, switches topic without signal, or perseveres on a favoured topic</i></p> <p>Do they find it difficult to understand and discuss their own/other people's feelings?</p> <p>Do they find it difficult to understand and use non-verbal communication?  <i>Example: body language, personal space, or tone of voice</i></p> <p>Do they have difficulty with understanding non-literal language?  <i>Example: jokes, idioms, sarcasms, metaphors</i></p>	



## 4.5.3 EAL vs SLCN indicators checklist

It can sometimes be unclear whether a pupil's language abilities are due to EAL or SLCN. Use this checklist as a starting point. The 'additional questions' can be used to further explore answers. Remember to ask parents questions or ask a staff member who speaks the same language (if possible).

### Main question

**1) Which is the pupil's strongest language?**

**Comment**

### Additional Question

Which languages are spoken at home, how much and by whom?

*Example: siblings may be speaking in English.*

**Comment**

How much previous exposure has the pupil had to English?

*Example: the pupil may have attended an English-speaking nursery for a couple of years.*

**Comment**

Which language does the pupil communicate mostly in?

*Example: parents may ask questions in their home language, but their child may respond back in English.*

**Comment**

**2) Are there any concerns about the pupil's home language?**

*Important note: Do not assume that the CYP is using words from their home language; they may be using jargon (made up words not present in either language). Ask for exact (e.g., word-for-word) examples of what the child says.*

**Comment**

Have they reached their expected milestones?

*Example: parents may report that their child was slower to start speaking compared to their siblings.*

**Comment**

Are they easily understood by others?

*Example: the pupil may not be using recognisable words and sentences that make sense.*

**Comment**

**Additional Comments**

**3) Have they made progress?**

**Comment**

Have they made progress with targeted groups?

*Example: the pupil may have made progress with targeted support after approximately a term.*

**Comment**

**Additional Comments**

**Additional Comments**

## Contact your NHS speech and language therapist for your dedicated area

**Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy  
in Luton and Bedfordshire**  
CCS Bedfordshire Community Health Service

- ☎ 03005550606
- @ [ccs.beds.childrens.slt.admin@nhs.net](mailto:ccs.beds.childrens.slt.admin@nhs.net)
- 🌐 <https://childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk>

Central  
Bedfordshire



BEDFORD  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Luton**



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Central Bedfordshire Council | Bedford Borough Council | Luton Council | NHS Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy in Luton and Bedfordshire