Inclusive Practice
Identifying SLCN

Speech and Language UK ([Speech and Language UK: Changing young lives](#)) reports that in some parts of the UK, more than 50% of children start primary school with poor communication skills. This diminishes the child's ability to meet their full potential in all areas of the curriculum and in developing strong relationships with those around them. Therefore, early identification of speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN) is crucial.

Whilst some SLCN are easier to spot – e.g., where there are profound difficulties with speech – there are many children whose struggles are more subtle, easier to overlook if practitioners are not thorough and consistent in their approach.

Having a sound understanding of the expected stages of development and the sequence of learning will enable practitioners to identify delays sooner.

Pause for thought: When did you last engage in any learning/professional development opportunities to further your understanding of speech, language, and communication needs? Is this something you might benefit from?

To support you in strengthening your practice, you might find it helpful to reflect on your experiences.

Task 1

Think about a child you are working with (or have worked with recently) who you have identified as having speech, language, communication needs.

1. Describe the child's strengths and their SLC needs – do you feel like you have a holistic view of the child?
2. Have you established any specific outcomes/targets to work on with the child to support their SLCN?
3. What provision (activities, interventions, strategies) have you put in place to support their progress?
4. How are the child's parents involved in supporting their child?
5. Who else has been involved in supporting the child?
6. How do you use your observations of the child to inform your next steps?

Task 2

Now spend a little time thinking more generically about practice in your setting around supporting children with SLCN. Review the questions below as a team, or with a peer. Make a note of anything that you think you could do to strengthen practice in this area.

- How are children's SLC needs assessed?
- What tools or resources do you utilise to support you in making a reasonable assessment of the children's needs?

- What do you do if you have concerns that a child's SLC skills are delayed?
- What provision is in place in your setting to support children who have SLCN? Think about the resources, the environment etc.
- Who can you involve in the process? A peer to moderate your findings? Your setting-based SENCo for advice? Your area SENCo for advice about the graduated approach/strategies that you could try? Parents, to share their perspectives?
- Who makes the decision if or when to refer to specialist agencies? Who then makes to referral?
- Do key persons have opportunities to liaise with specialist agencies/services directly? How are their reports/information sharing utilised?
- How do you respond to advice in SALT / EYST / EP reports?

Resources for your review

Development Matters - Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Birth To 5 Matters – Guidance by the sector, for the sector

What-to-expect-in-the-EYFS

Resource library for educators - Speech and Language UK: Changing young lives

SLCN-early-interventions-resource.pdf (leicspart.nhs.uk)

Help, Support and Resources - Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (leicspart.nhs.uk)