



The Communication Trust  
Every child understood

# Session 1.1

Speech, Language and  
Communication:  
Definitions, typical development, and  
impact on other areas of learning

   
Norwich  
Opportunity Area  
Independent Speech &  
Language Therapy

**TOTAL TIME – 1.5 HOURS**

Resources required:

- *Universally Speaking: the ages and stages of children's communication development for children aged birth to 5* – enough copies for participants to share in pairs/small groups for activities. (NB: you may also like to look at the version of *Universally Speaking* for children aged 5-11 if this age group is relevant for your setting)
- Videos – YouTube links are given on relevant slides.

# Session aims

- Understand the different terms ‘speech’, ‘language’ and ‘communication’
- Understand typical speech, language and communication development
- Understand the potential impact of speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) on other areas of development

**1 min (0:01)**

Read through and explain session aims

*By the end of this session you will....*

# Why are we focusing on speech, language and communication?

## The National Picture

### Prevalence of SLCN in the UK:



In some areas of deprivation, more than 50% of children start school with SLCN

10% of all children have long-term SLCN.



7.56% of all children have a Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)

1% of all children have severe and complex SLCN

1 min (0:02)

Read through this slide.

*This is the National Picture – this is why this training is needed. Do any of those figures shock you?*

# Why are we focusing on speech, language and communication?



## The Local Picture



### **Priority 1: Improve early speech, language, listening and communication.**

To give children a better start at school and improve their chances of success as they move through the key stages of education.

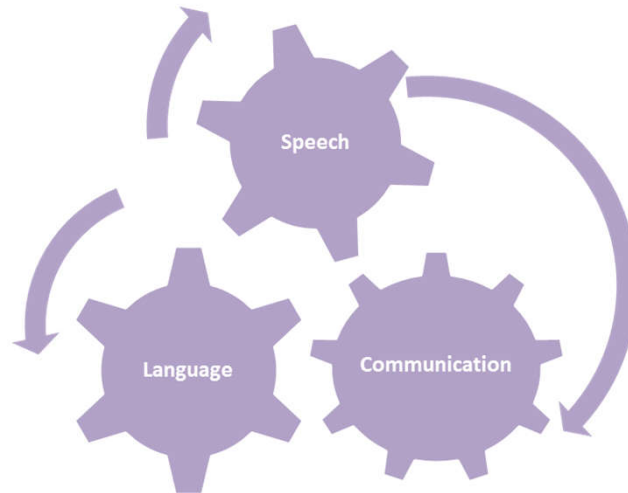


**1 min (0:03)**

*This is the Local Picture – Norwich is an Opportunity Area, so has been given DfE money to improve social mobility within the area.*

*The Communication Champions Network is part of priority 1 of Norwich's delivery plan – the aim is for there to be 120 Champions trained overall, across 22 schools and 30 settings.*

## Some definitions: What do speech, language and communication mean?

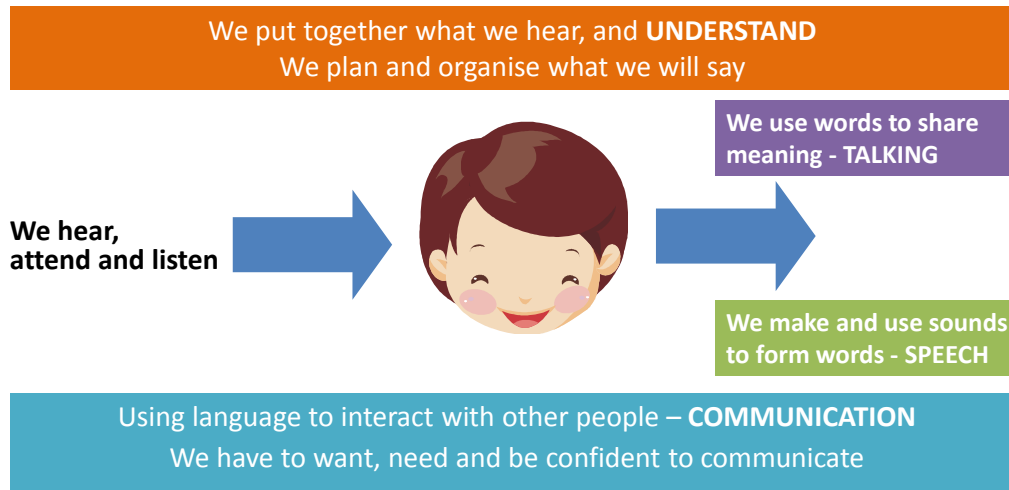


**1 min (0:04)**

*Let's start with some definitions of the terms that we'll be using. It's good to take a moment to think about exactly what we mean when we use these terms. They are discreet terms, and actually each mean something slightly different. It is important for us to be able to 'unpick' a child's speech, language and communication, in order to be able to identify what they might be struggling with.*

*So, we'll be considering speech, language and communication as different terms, but of course, they are all interlinked and impact on each other.*

## What do speech, language and communication mean?



**3 mins (0:07)**

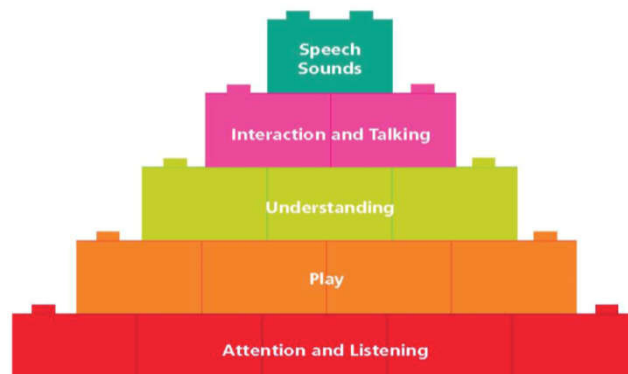
*Speech, language and communication are complex skills which interact greatly with each other. This diagram aims to show what speech, language and communication are. This can be described as a process, from listening, through understanding, planning and talking.*

*The orange and purple boxes describe language; understanding (sometimes called comprehension or receptive language) and talking (sometimes called expressive language). Language has structure and rules, which mean that people can convey their message and be understood by others. Language includes knowing and choosing the right words to explain what you mean, joining words together into sentences, stories and conversations, using word endings (e.g. '-ed' for the past) grammar and different types of sentences (e.g. questions). Language is also making sense of what people say.*

*The green box shows speech, which is how children use sounds to make words. So, articulating the sounds c-a-t and joining them together to make 'cat'. It also includes speaking with a clear voice, in a way that makes speech interesting and meaningful; speaking without hesitating too much or without repeating sounds or words.*

*Communication is shown in blue and is how we use language with **others**. This can include non-verbal communication, for example body language and facial expression, like eye-contact, turn-taking etc and how conversations work for example – how we use language or gestures in different ways like giving directions, asking for help. Communication also includes how we might change the style of our communication depending on who we are talking to.*

## What do speech, language and communication mean?



Adapted from a model used in many speech and language therapy services across the UK

### 2 mins (0:09)

*Speech, language and communication skills don't develop in a linear way. They all interact with each other. However, this can be a useful model in understanding there are skills children need to have in place and be secure before we can expect children to move on to developing other skills. It's important that children develop foundation skills that then mean that further skills can be built upon. E.g., we need children to understand words before they say them, developing a varied vocabulary is more important in the early years than pronunciation of sounds.... And imagine there's another block on the top – that would be literacy – all these things need to be in place before we can expect children to be secure in their literacy skills.*

## Activity: What is speech, language and communication?

Identifies that bag starts with 'b'	says 'pider' for spider	Completes a task quicker if told to 'get a wriggle on'
Describes what they did on their holiday	Asks 'what's for tea?'	Follows a story
Adds 's' when there's more than one '3 cars'	Babbles	Names lots of wild animals
Looks at the person talking	Takes turns in conversation	Waves good bye

### 5 mins (0:14)

*In pairs/groups, take a piece of paper and write three headings up the top – 'speech', 'language', and 'communication'. Look at the different elements on this slide and decide if you think they relate to 'speech', 'language' or 'communication', then list them on your piece of paper under the relevant headings.*

*We will go through the answers together in 5 minutes.*



## What is speech, language and communication?

Speech	Language	Communication
Identifies that bag starts with 'b'	Adds 's' when there's more than 1 '3 cars'	Waves good bye
Babbles	Asks 'what's for tea?'	Looks at the person talking
Says 'pider' for spider	Describes what they did on their holiday	Takes turns in conversation
	Names lots of wild animals	
	Follows a story	
	Completes a task quicker if told to 'get a wriggle on'	

### 5 mins (0:19)

*Let's talk through these together. There may be more than one answer for some, particularly language and communication. For example, asking 'what's for tea' is using language to find something out from somebody else – communicating and interacting.*

Further information regarding the answers given below.

#### Speech

- 'Bag starts with 'b' is to show the close link between speech sounds and learning to read and spell.
- Babbling shows that speech development starts in tiny babies – they are practising moving their mouths and making different speech sounds before learning to say words.
- 'Pider' for 'spider' – this type of speech sound error is a typical phase in children's development

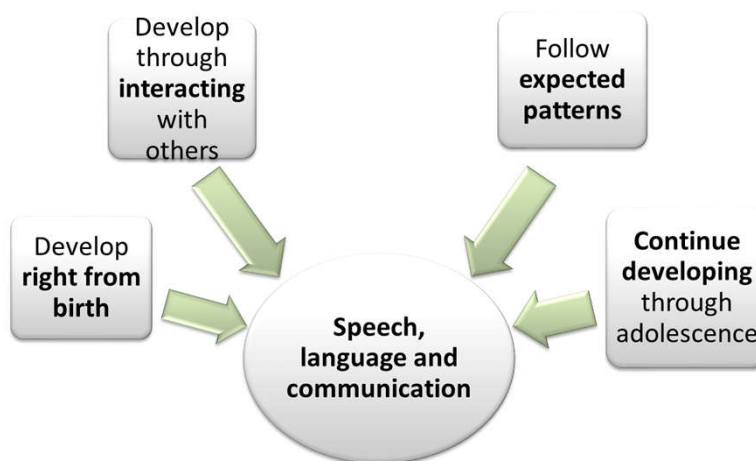
#### Language

- Adding 's' shows a grammatical change (grammar is part of expressive language).
- 'what's for tea' is using language to ask a question
- Describing their holiday requires lots of different skills, including knowing what vocabulary to use, being able to sequence and order the information, using correct sentence structure and past tense grammar, etc.
- Naming lots of wild animals shows an understanding of categories of word meanings – deeper vocabulary knowledge.
- Following a story involves listening and paying attention, understanding the words and sentence structures that are used, and processing the language as it is being heard.
- 'Get a wriggle on' shows understanding figurative (non-literal) language.

#### Communication

- Waving goodbye involves an understanding of the social act of greetings, and also demonstrates use of gesture (non-verbal communication).
- Looking at the person talking demonstrates an ability to read non-verbal cues (e.g. eye contact, facial expressions) and also following the expected social rule of looking at a person when they are speaking to you.
- Taking turns in conversation requires the person to understand the social rules of turn-taking – we all know how it feels to be involved in a conversation with someone who doesn't understand this rule!

## How do children and young people develop their speech, language and communication skills?



### 2 mins (0:21)

*There are several different academic theories about how children develop language.*

*The information here takes an interactionist view – we are predisposed to learn language and this is developed through our social interactions with others.*

*These skills develop **right from birth** – attachment is very important for speech, language and communication development and early interaction skills are the foundation for future development.*

*They develop through **interacting** with other people – one person responding to what another one does or says.*

*They follow **expected patterns** of development - skills develop in a particular order at particular times. This is true whatever the language a child is learning – each language has a typical sequence of development. Understanding generally precedes use – so a baby will understand the word ‘milk’ before he or she can say it. Children and young people, especially in the earlier stages of language development, may understand more than they are able to yet say.*

*Skills develop **throughout** a child’s early years, childhood and through adolescence.*

## Activity: Ages and stages

Look at *Universally Speaking – the ages and stages of children’s communication development for children aged birth to 5*, which describes the ages and stages of children’s speech, language and communication development.

**In small groups, choose an age to look at and consider:**

- How does this relate to your experience of children of that age?
- Is there anything you notice which surprises you?
- How could the information on ages and stages help you to support the speech, language and communication development of children you work with?



### **15 mins total time for activity (0:36)**

- 5 mins to look at *Universally Speaking* in pairs/small groups. Each small group to choose an age group to look at and answer the questions listed on the slide.
- 5 mins for a few people to share some key points from their discussion with the whole group.

NB: There are different stages of the *Universally Speaking* resource – for children aged 0-5, and 5-11 years. You may wish to look at both resources if there is time, or choose the one most appropriate for your setting.

## What's typical for a 2 year old?

Uses 50 or more single words	Points to get your attention	Babbles sounds like ba-ba-ba
Asks lots of questions	Understands between 200 and 500 words	Understands questions like 'where's teddy?'
Plays with other children	Talks about something that happened in the past	Makes short sentences of 2-3 words

### 7 mins for this slide and next (0:43)

- 5 mins in pairs/small groups to look at *Universally Speaking 0-5* and work out which of these behaviours are typical for a 2 year old.
- 2 mins to go through answers as a group (answers on next slide).

## What's typical for a 2 year old?

Uses 50 or more single words		
Asks lots of questions	Understands between 200 and 500 words	Understands questions like 'where's teddy?'
		Makes short sentences of 2-3 words

Answers to previous slide

## Ages and stages: 2 year old talk and 6 year old talk



**18 mins (1:01)** – this slide and next

- Each video around 4 mins (8 mins watching videos)
- 10 mins to discuss as a large group (**discussion points on next slide**)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K-2eqkvGauU> – 2 year old talk

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjPRRkJSQ4Y> – 6 year old talk

**OPTION** – To reduce time, consider only showing the most relevant video for your setting

## Ages and stages: 2 year old talk and 6 year old talk



- Is this what you would think of as typical talk for these ages?
- It is essential to have high expectations for children's language and to be aware when they are not meeting expected milestones in terms of their speech, language and communication development.



Discussion following videos:

- *Is this what you would think of as typical talk for these ages? Discuss if these skills are the same as what is seen in your setting.*
- Discuss 'norm shifting', which can happen in areas of deprivation – there are lower expectations for children's language development because your perception of what is "normal" shifts based on the number of children with SLCN. It is essential to have high expectations for children's language and to be aware when they are not meeting expected milestones in terms of their speech, language and communication development, so that they can get the right support.

## Speech, language and communication are central skills, with a wide ranging impact



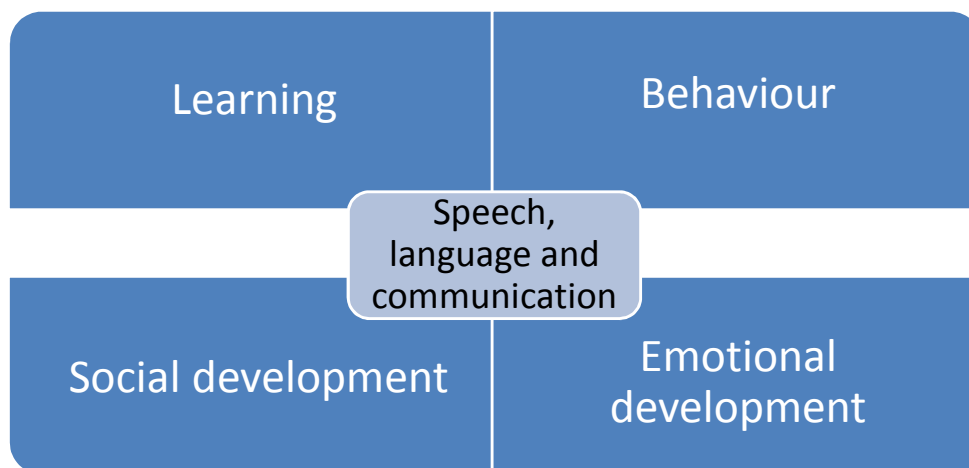
**2 mins (1:03)**

*Speech, language and communication are essential skills – central to so many other areas of development and a part of so many aspects of life.*

*It's a prime area of learning – it's difficult to think of a situation where we don't use some aspect of our speech, language and communication skills. Even now, you are using many skills such as listening, paying attention, and understanding language. You are having to hold information in your mind as I say it, and process it to make sense of it. Some of you are reading and writing at the same time as listening to me. Most of you are aware of and following expected social rules such as not speaking while I am talking to you, looking at me while I am speaking, and showing me you are listening through eye contact and nonverbal cues.*



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



5 mins (1:08)

Discussion points for each area of development given below.

*Speech, language and communication are often described as the central skill for life, which this diagram illustrates.*

### Learning:

- *Imagine when you learned a new skill, for example riding a bike or driving a car. How much language was used to help you develop this skill? (ie rehearsing information in your mind to ensure you remembered everything, talking yourself through the steps involved)*
- *Learning depends on making sense of new information and relating it to what you already know – a huge amount of this information is based in language – the meanings of words, concepts etc*
- *In many contexts, children are supported to learn (or taught) using language as a vehicle – information is given to them verbally and explained using language*
- *In our society, literacy skills are a key element of learning – it is well known that speech and language skills are essential building blocks to enable children and young people to learn to read, spell and write and to continue to develop these skills well into adulthood.*

### Social:

- *How would you make friends if you were only able to use 3 words? Or imagine if you didn't know any verbs?*
- *Social development includes:*
  - *Sharing and belonging*
  - *Co-operation*
  - *Interacting with others – adults and children*
  - *Understanding rules*
  - *Making friends*
- *Social development is based on interactions with others, but also requires children and young people coming to understand some complex and subtle 'rules' about how we talk and interact with others. These rules often change depending on context – how old you are, what the situation is, who you are talking to, what you are talking about. Often these rules are quite implicit – children and young people are expected to 'pick them up as they go along.'*

### Behaviour:

- *What happens when someone aggravates you whilst driving and you are not able to speak to them?*
- *In a difficult situation we need language to think things through in our heads and decide what we should do. We need to take into account what we are thinking and feeling, as well as other people's thoughts and feelings.*
- *We need language to help us think through the consequences of any actions we might take; how this will affect others as well as ourselves. We need language to help ourselves calm down by thinking things like 'he probably didn't mean to do that' or 'this lesson will be over soon then I can do something I want'.*

### Emotions:

- *We need language to:*
  - *Understand emotions and emotion words*
  - *Understand other people's thoughts and feelings*
  - *Think things through and decide what to do*
  - *Help with self control*
- *Emotional development depends on the ability to recognise, label and understand emotions – children need language to describe and understand their own emotions, and look at others' language and communication to help understand other people's emotions too. So for example, if someone is crying, we may need to look at the context and other elements of their body language to work out if that is because they are hurt or upset.*

## Activity – impacts

- Think about a child you know or work with:
  - What kind of difficulties do they have with speech/language/communication?
  - How are/might these difficulties impact on other areas of their development now or in the future?
  - What is helping to minimise the impact? Think about the child's character, and any support that is in place for them.

### 10 mins (1:18)

- 5 mins for discussion in pairs/small groups
- 5 mins for a few people to share with the whole group

## Potential impacts – possible answers

Speech	Language	Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People misunderstand what's being said</li> <li>• Have to repeat things a lot</li> <li>• Can get frustrated, or aggressive</li> <li>• Don't enjoy talking, so can opt out</li> <li>• Struggle to learn to read – can't work out what sounds are at the beginning of words</li> <li>• Struggle to understand or recognise rhyme</li> <li>• Struggle to work out patterns in words to help learn to spell</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't understand what's said, so do things wrong</li> <li>• Miss out on learning</li> <li>• Tune out – working out language can be so tiring</li> <li>• Copy other children so hide difficulties</li> <li>• Limited talking - their message doesn't get across</li> <li>• Can't share ideas or express needs</li> <li>• Can become passive</li> <li>• Can get frustrated</li> <li>• Other children don't want to play with them</li> <li>• Doesn't have a solid base for future learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't know how to join in</li> <li>• Have difficulty making and keeping friend</li> <li>• May get chosen less to play in games</li> <li>• May get invited to fewer play dates or parties</li> <li>• Other children may avoid them</li> <li>• Finds playing with others difficult</li> <li>• Following rules can be difficult, so problems in settings/school</li> </ul>

### 5 mins (1:23)

*We covered some of these potential impacts of SLCN in our group discussion. This slide show just a few possibilities, but there may be many more.*

*All children with SLCN are at risk of:*

- *Low confidence and self-esteem*
- *Shy, withdrawn or aggressive behaviour*
- *Frustrated or uncooperative behaviour*

*The impacts on this slide can clearly link to areas of learning, behaviour, social and emotional development.*

*It's also useful to highlight that if a child has difficulty with speech or language then this will automatically have an impact on their communication. If a child's speech is hard to understand, then their interactions with others will be problematic; they may have to repeat themselves or people may pretend to understand them when they haven't. There will be a big impact on communication and similarly with language.*

*There is lots of evidence which shows that children with SLCN:*

- *Achieve lower academically overall*
- *Are vulnerable to bullying*
- *Are likely to have difficulties with literacy.*

*There are clear links between language and social disadvantage and there are lots of studies which show that children excluded from school and those in the youth justice system have SLCN which haven't previously been spotted or supported.*

## The impact of speech, language and communication – Literacy



- 70% of children with identified language difficulties at 5 ½ still demonstrated language difficulties at 15 years old, and of these pupils, 93% also had literacy difficulties.
- Children whose speech and language difficulties are unresolved, or have been missed, are more likely to have difficulties with their literacy development.



**1 min (1:24)**

Read through this slide.

Literacy refs (for reference only):

- Stothard, S., Snowling, M., Bishop, D., Chipchase, C., and Kaplan, C. (1998) 'Language impaired preschoolers, a follow up in to adolescence' Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research 41, 407-18
- Snowling, M.J. and Stackhouse, J (Eds) (2006) Dyslexia, speech and language: A practitioner's handbook (2nd ed). Whurr Publishers Ltd

## The impact of speech, language and communication – mental health, behaviour and social development



- Young people with good language and communication skills have more friendships, and their friendships are of a better quality.
- Children and young people with communication difficulties seem to be at increased risk of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and mental health issues.



**1 min (1:25)**

Read through this slide.

Literacy refs (for reference only):

- Durkin and Conti-Ramsden (2007) Language, Social Behaviour, and the Quality of Friendships in Adolescents With and Without a History of Specific Language Impairment
- Durkin K and Conti Ramsden G (2010) Young people with specific language impairment: a review of social and emotional functioning in adolescence Child Language Teaching and Therapy 26 2 105-121

## The impact of speech, language and communication – future prospects



- Language difficulties at age 5 are significantly associated with low employment at age 34.
- 60-90% of young offenders have poor communication skills.
- Young offenders who achieved oral communication skills qualifications were 50% less likely to re-offend in the year after their release than the national average.



**1 min (1:26)**

Read through this slide.

Literacy refs (for reference only):

- Bryan, K., Freer, J., and Furlong, C. (2007) Language and communication difficulties in juvenile offenders [International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders](#), Vol. 42, No. 5, Pages 505-520
- Law et al (2013) *Early Language Delays in the UK*. Save the Children

## Reflections and actions

- Could some of the children you work with have underlying SLCN that haven't been spotted?
- Would it help to look in more detail at the speech, language and communication skills of the children you work with who have other difficulties (behaviour, literacy, making friends)?
- What might you do differently as a result from what you have learned in this session?

**4 mins (1:30)** – or any extra remaining time

Discuss as a whole group.

Emphasise the point that children may be presenting with observable difficulties in areas such as behaviour, literacy, or making friends, but these could be indicators of underlying SLCN.