Session 1.2

Identification and Assessment of Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

TOTAL TIME – 1.5 HOURS

Resources required:
- Videos – YouTube links are given on relevant slides.

Session aims

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- Understand what the term 'SLCN' means

- Be aware of how to identify children with SLCN

- Understand the relationship between learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) and SLCN

- Know some strategies to support the identification of SLCN in children with EAL

- Understand our roles and responsibilities for supporting children with SLCN

- Be aware of the processes and procedures in our setting for raising concerns

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1 min (0:01)

By the end of this session you will….
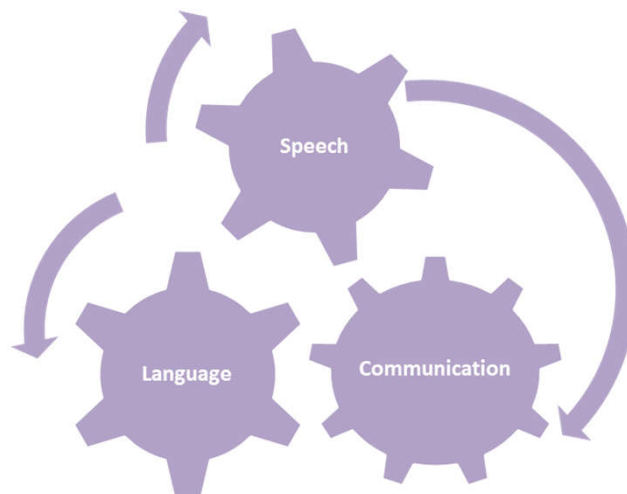
4 mins (0:05)

Who can remember from last session what each of these terms mean?

People to volunteer answers, notes to prompt below:

- Speech – how children use sounds to make words

- Language – includes:
    - Understanding (sometimes called comprehension or receptive language) – making sense of what people say.
    - Talking (sometimes called expressive language) – which 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).

- Communication – 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.

Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)

Most children follow the expected pattern of development for their speech, language and communication at the expected times.

Some, however, do not.

These children are described as having speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

2 mins (0:07)

Speech, language and communication needs, also referred to as "SLCN", are varied and wide ranging, and you can probably think of at least one child who you know or work with who has SLCN.

Children's SLCN can be very different – they may be <u>delayed</u> across one or all areas of their SLC development, or they may have more <u>long term needs</u> in one area, or more than one area. SLCN may be a child's primary need, or it may be part of another diagnosis, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, hearing impairment, or learning difficulties.

Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)

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Watch this video, which looks at children with different types of SLCN.

Consider:

• What aspect of their speech, language and/or communication are they struggling with?

• What strengths can you see?

• How does this resonate with what you see in your day to day practice?

The Way We Talk

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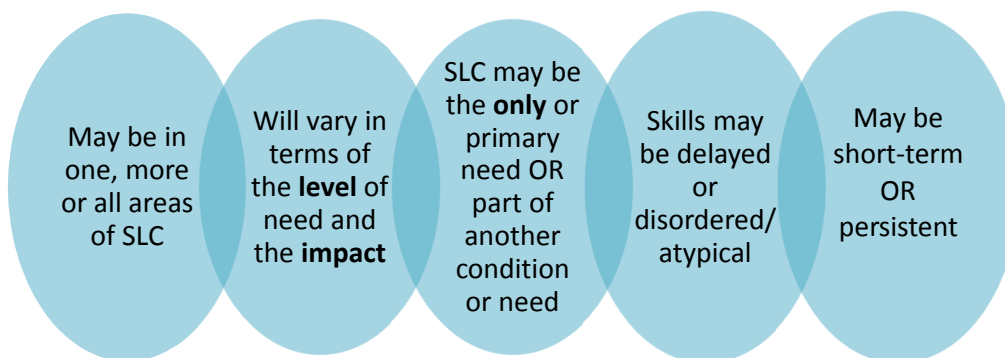
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Onqn_7xzp2Q

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18 mins for video & discussion (0:25)
- 8 mins to watch video
- 10 mins group discussion

Watch the Video 'The Way We Talk' – 7 mins 30
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Onqn_7xzp2Q

Ask participants to think about questions on slide as they watch the video. After watching video, discuss questions on slide as a group.

Every child or young person's SLCN will be different and individual

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| May be in one, more or all areas of SLC | Will vary in terms of the **level** of need and the **impact** | SLC may be the **only** or primary need OR part of another condition or need | Skills may be delayed or disordered/ atypical | May be short-term OR persistent |

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3 mins (0:28)

Each child or young person will have a unique profile of needs.

For some, only one area is tricky – so their speech may be very difficult to understand but their language is developing well; their speech and talking are fine, but communicating with others is difficult. For others, there may be difficulties in several, or all areas of speech, language and communication.

Difficulties may vary in terms of their severity – some children will have mild difficulties whereas others' may be severe and complex.

For some children, SLCN are part of another condition – e.g. autism, hearing impairment, cerebral palsy. Others will have SLCN in the absence of another condition. When children have persistent SLCN in the absence of another condition, this is called Developmental Language Disorder.

If a child has delayed (rather than disordered) SLC, they are following the typical patterns of development, only at a slower rate. There is evidence that shows in some areas, particularly where there are high levels of social disadvantage, around 50% of children are starting school with delayed language. (Locke, Ginsborg and Peers 2002)

Depending on the type and level of difficulty, some SLC may be short-term, particularly if the child receives the right input and support at the right time. Around 10% of all children will have SLC which are long term and persistent, often requiring specialist support and intervention.

It's also really important to highlight that adults taking a positive role in supporting and extending children's SLC skills will make a positive difference and can minimise potential impacts.
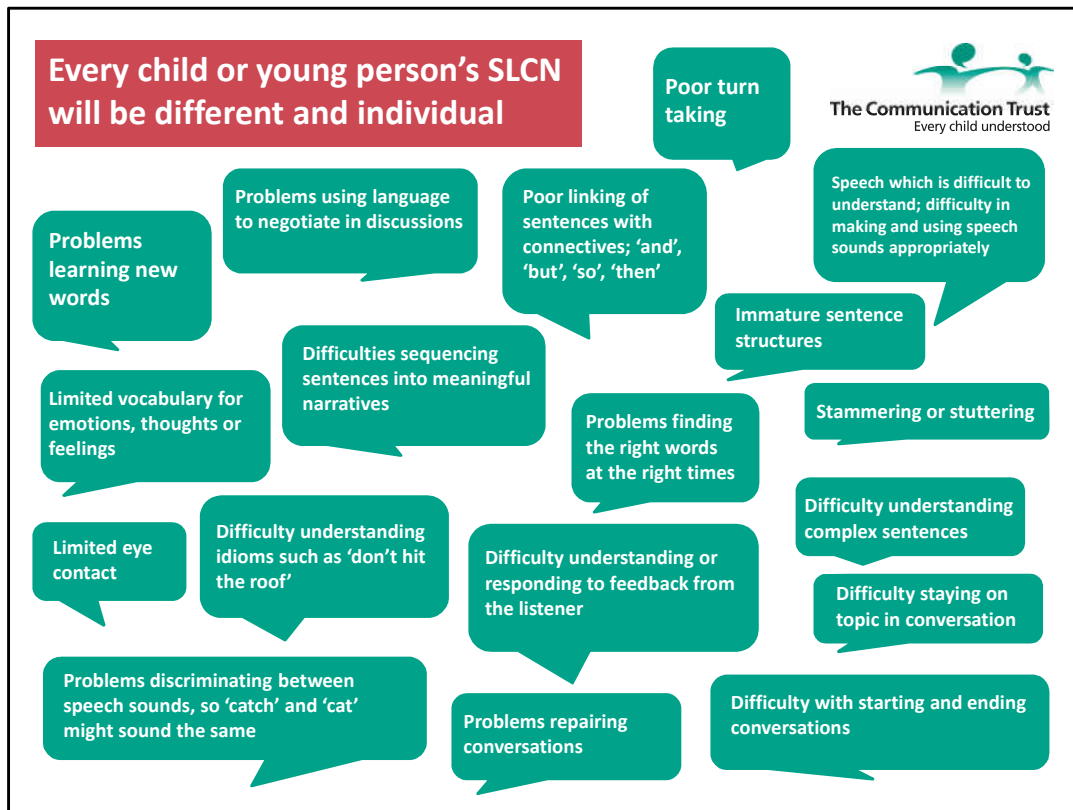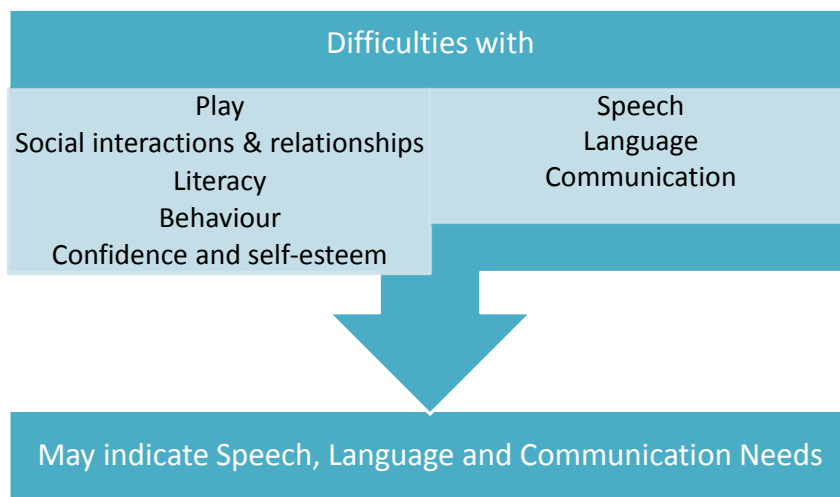
4 mins (0:32)

Talk through slide – showing possible examples of how SLCN may present in different individuals.

Can anyone think of examples of children they work with who show difficulties in any of these areas?
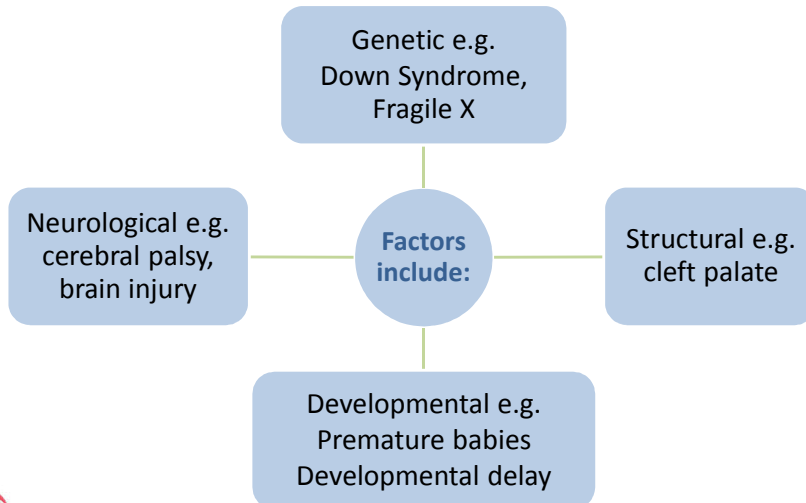
2 mins (0:34)

There are important things to look out for which may suggest a child or young person has SLCN. Knowing ages and stages of development will really help to see if a child is on track with their skills. However, it is also really important to look at other areas of concern to see if and how SLC may be playing a part. Observing and monitoring children's progress is really important to recognise possible SLCN.

There are also many tools to support people to identify a child or young person's needs (which we will touch on later in this session).
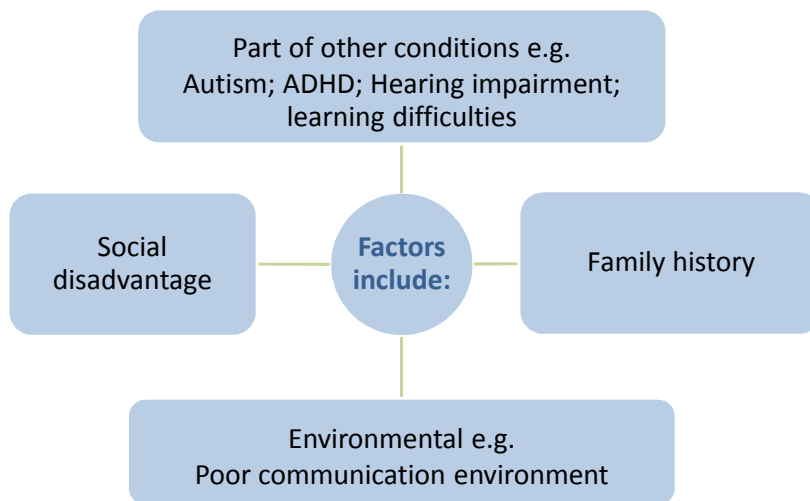
2 mins (0:36)

The following two slides look at some of the factors which may be associated with speech, language and communication needs. It's important to stress that these are factors and, particularly for some, not definite causes.

- *So, for example, not all premature babies will have delayed communication development; not all children living in socially disadvantaged areas will have SLCN etc.*
- *In the developmental section, as well as premature babies, babies with a low birth weight may be at risk of developing SLCN.*
- *It's also important to stress that for many children and young people with SLCN there is often **no known cause.***

3 mins (0:39)

This slide shows some additional factors that may be associated with SLCN.

The links between social disadvantage and language development are well evidenced. A recently published report: "The role of language in children's early educational outcomes", led by Sue Roulstone, looked at what it is about a child's early environment which can influence their language development - for example showing that:

- ***The communication environment is a more dominant predictor of early language than social background.** In the early stages of language development, it is the particular aspects of a child's communication environment that are associated with language acquisition rather than the broader socio-economic context of the family.*
- *The communication environment was also a strong predictor of performance on entering school. So what the mother <u>did</u> (in terms of activities and interaction with her child), <u>had</u> (in terms of resources) and <u>felt</u> (in terms of feeling supported and sense of wellbeing) in the first two years of her child's life was shown to be important in children's performance at 5 years.*
- *Influential factors in the child's communication environment included the early ownership of books, trips to the library, attendance at pre-school, parents teaching a range of activities and the number of toys and books available.*

This research can be found at: www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RB134.pdf

Another important point is that learning more than one language (becoming bilingual) IS NOT a risk factor. Children and young people learning more than one language are no more at risk of SLCN than any other children. Nor do children and young people have SLCN because they are learning more than one language. We will discuss EAL in more detail later in this session.

The impact of under-identification of SLCN

- The long-term impact of under-identification and lack of support for SLCN is significant.

- Research shows that high numbers of young people with mental health needs or behaviour difficulties have SLCN that have been missed earlier on in their lives.

- Under identification is an issue for the justice system also. A study found that two thirds of young offenders have speech, language and communication difficulties, but only in 5% of cases were they identified before the offending began (Bryan et al, 2015).

1 min (0:40)

(Gascoigne and Gross, 2017)
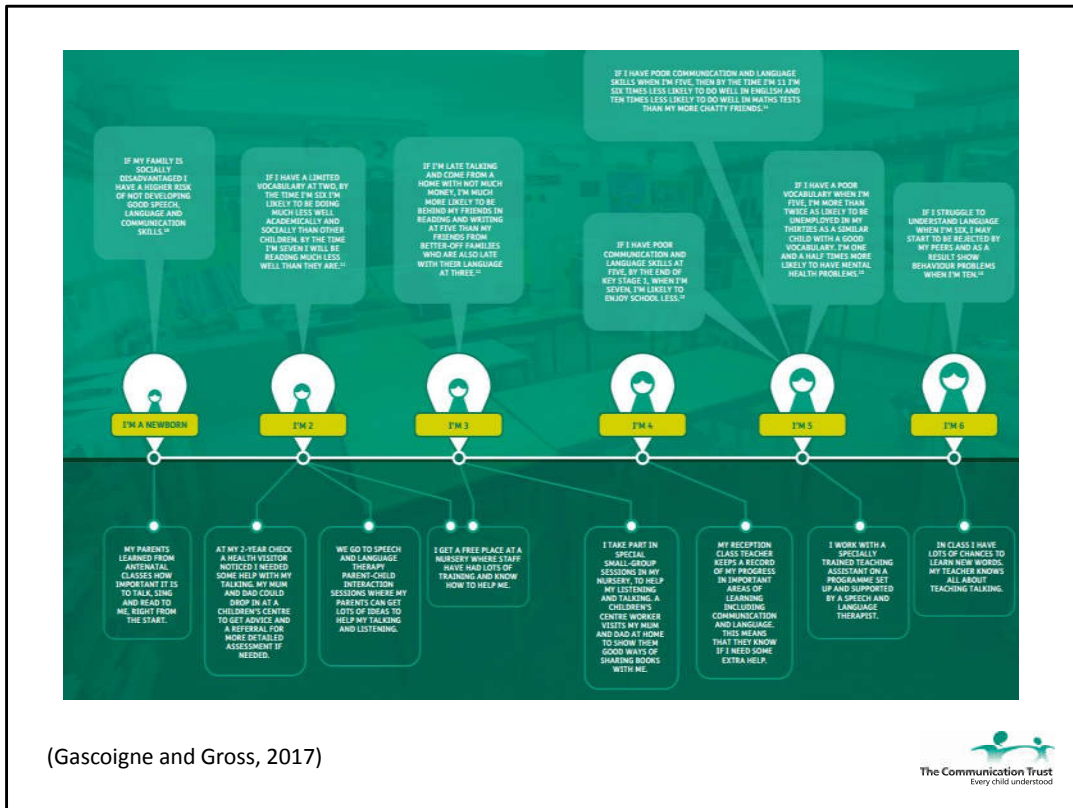
3 mins (0:43)

Briefly talk through some of the key points on this slide.

This helps to highlight the importance of identification and support for children with SLCN, and how early identification and support can make a big difference.

Recognising SLCN:
Two possible approaches

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Ages and stages resources

- *Universally Speaking 0-5* and *5-11 years*
- Talking Point Progress Checker
- *Stages of Speech and Language Development* poster
- *What's Typical Talk at Primary* poster

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Indicators checklists/ screening tools

- Wellcomm
- Progression Tools
- ECAT

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5 mins (0:48)

There are a number of different resources available to help practitioners recognise SLCN.

*They tend to take two different approaches:*
1. *Ages and stages resources: these set out what you would expect children and young people to be doing with their speech, language and communication at different ages. You can then check to see if the child or young person is where you would expect for their age or not. We used "Universally Speaking" in the last session to learn about and check typical development for different age groups.*
2. *Indicators checklists: usually set out features which may suggest that a child or young person has SLCN. They describe some things which children and young people may do if they have SLCN – for example, "Do they frequently use 'empty' language like 'thingy', 'whatsit', 'you know' instead of the name of an object?"*

*Both of these approaches are used to gain some information about where a child or young person's needs may lie, but they are **not** used on their own to decide (or diagnose) what type of difficulties and needs an individual child or young person has. To do this, the child or young person would need detailed assessment by more specialist professionals.*

What tools do we already use in our setting?
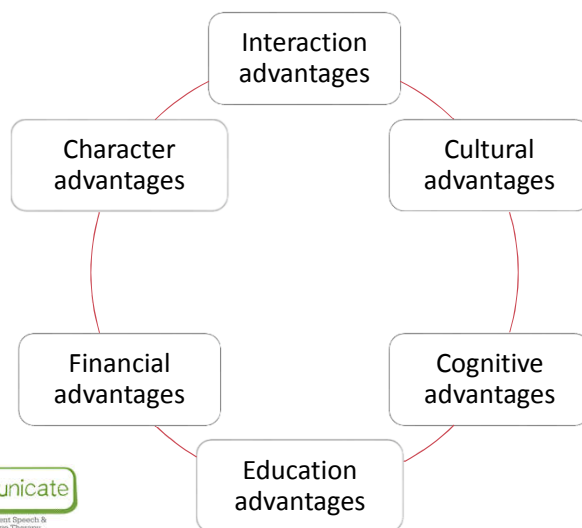
4 mins (0:52)

Slides 14-20 are all about EAL. We've separated these out because the topic can create some confusion when linked with SLCN.

Learning English as an additional language is not a risk factor for SLCN. There is overwhelming evidence to suggest that mother tongue development does not hinder but indeed can support English acquisition. (Juarez 83, Duncan & Gibbs 1989, Leung 1996, Rodby 1998, Cummins 2000)

Interaction advantages:
- *Bilinguals can interact in different communities.*

Cultural advantages:
- *Bilinguals have access to different cultures and customs. (e.g. different dress and different food)*

Cognitive advantages:
- *Bilinguals are able to mix languages.*
- *Bilinguals have a store of words from two languages, which allows them to think more creatively and flexibly.*
- *Knowing what language to speak to whom in which situation allows bilinguals to be more sensitive to the needs of listeners.*
- *Evidence has shown that bilinguals perform better on IQ tests.*

Education advantages:
- *Research suggests that pupils of bilingual education systems may produce better curriculum results.*
- *Also bilingual learners find learning a third language much easier.*

Financial advantages:
- *There are also potential economic and employment advantages.*
- *Bilinguals have a wider choice of jobs - as they are in demand for the extra language skills they have.*

Character advantages:
- *Being able to switch between languages and use more than one language makes people feel good about themselves and their abilities, and therefore may raise self esteem.*

EAL and SLCN: True or false?

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Children and young people who have more than one language:

- All have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)
- And are slow to develop English language skills, should be referred to speech therapy straightaway
- Can't have SLCN
- Are more likely to have SLCN than children who aren't

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3 mins (0:55)

Ask participants as a whole group whether each statement is true or false.

All of these statements are **false!** See discussion points relating to each individual statement below.

Children and young people who have more than one language all have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) - FALSE

→ *As discussed on the previous slide, there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that mother tongue development does not hinder but indeed can support English acquisition.*

Children and young people who have more than one language and are slow to develop English language skills, should be referred to speech therapy straightaway - FALSE

→ *Often children learning a second language after the first has been established go through a 'silent period'. This can often last quite a long time but its importance is to enable meaning in the new language. This may cause anxiety to practitioners or parents, but it should be treated as a normal phenomenon like any settling in period in a new environment. If a child is learning their home language within normal limits (that is, as you would expect) they do not require support from a speech and language therapist.*

Children and young people who have more than one language can't have SLCN - FALSE

→ *Any of the indicators of possible SLCN (covered in the previous few slides) apply to children and young people learning more than one language in the same way as other children. However, there would only be concerns if there were difficulties in **both** languages when compared to children of a similar age and experiences (rather than difficulties only in English).*

Children and young people who have more than one language are more likely to have SLCN than children who aren't - FALSE

→ *Learning more than one language (becoming bilingual) IS NOT a risk factor for SLCN. Children and young people learning more than one language are no more at risk of SLCN than any other children.*

For children with more than one language, it is important to support their speech, language and communication development in each of the languages they use. If children are developing well in their home language, any additional support would come through practice in a setting focusing on English as an Additional Language or an Ethnic Minority achievement team (or equivalent). A speech and language therapist's role is if there are concerns about a child's development in their home language as well as English.

EAL and SLCN

- It is important to identify if a bilingual child has a SLCN.

- Early identification and assessment are essential to support the child in their setting and at home.

- There are some key things to look out for, both in terms of their language skills and in other areas too.

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1 min (0:56)

Read through the points on this slide.

The next slide covers some of the things to look out for.

EAL and SLCN – what to look out for

Language	• Slower progress than you would expect • Difficulties with particular speech, language and communication skills – e.g. speech sounds, vocabulary, understanding, sentence structure
Other areas of development	• Specific difficulties in English literacy skills • Social, emotional or behaviour difficulties • Attainment
Parents	• Raising concerns

3 mins (0:59)

For all of the indicators on this slide, there would be concerns if there were difficulties in __both__ languages when compared to children of a similar age and experiences.

What progress you would expect would be based on how long children and young people have been learning English, and the amount and type of support they have received to support their language learning. Limited progress in their home language is important to look out for too.

Any of the indicators of possible SLCN (covered in the previous few slides) apply to children and young people learning more than one language in the same way as other children.

Ref (Wei, Miller and Dodd 1998)

EAL: How can we find out about languages in our setting?

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People

- Ask the parent/carer
- Ask the child
- Gain information from siblings
- Ask colleagues in setting
- Remember to find out if there is a dialect present

Paperwork

- Check admissions papers or previous records the child brings
- Record the information in the child's record
- Update this as necessary
- Keeping a central record helps settings get an overall picture

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3 mins (1:02)

There are two key ways of finding out about the languages a child or young person hears, knows and /or uses – speaking to people, and checking the relevant paperwork (it is important that this is kept up to date).

Extra notes regarding some of the points on this slide:

Using colleagues in setting:
- *At the initial contact with the family, if the parents do not speak English then ask a member of staff to communicate with the family if they speak the same language.*
- *It is important to note that a representative who is not a professional interpreter should not be used for formal assessment. If available always book a professional interpreter. A professional interpreter will provide a professional and non-bias interpretation.*

Find out about dialect:
- *Different variations of language may have different vocabulary and sound systems which are not shared by the speakers of the same language.*

Remember…
It is important to value the diversity of families. The children and families should feel welcome and their diversity celebrated.

EAL: What information do we need?

- What is the child or young person's main language?
- When were they exposed to English?
- What is the main language spoken at home?
- Is English used at home?
- Do any siblings use English?
- What languages does the child or young person understand?
- What languages do they speak?
- What languages do the parents speak?
- What dialect is used?

3 mins (1:05)

It is important to gather as much information as possible about children who are learning English as an Additional Language. This will give a clear picture, both of individual children, as well as an overview of the languages used in our setting as a whole. It will also help when involving other agencies for support.

Additional useful information also includes:
- *The birth order of the child or young person (for example if they have an older sibling, they may be more familiar with English than if they are the oldest child)*
- *How proficient the parents are in English*
- *What the literacy skills of the parents are (in English and home language)*
- *What is the country of origin of the family and what was their pattern of migration to the UK. For example, some children may have had a number of moves within countries, where different dialects are used and then moves to other countries where different languages are spoken before then settling in the UK. For example, a Somali child who moved from their village to another, where a different dialect was spoken, then moved to Kenya, where they started to learn Swahili, then moved to England. Rapid and frequent moves can make it difficult for any of the language to effectively establish*

If a child is learning their home language within normal limits (that is, as you would expect) they do not require support from a speech and language therapist.

If a child is having difficulty learning BOTH languages, the child will need to be referred to a Speech and Language Therapist for further assessment and support.

EAL: Different ways to find out about the languages a child is using

- Observe the child or young person in different situations and contexts

- Discuss with parents

- Information from other professionals

- Carry out a specific activity with the child or young person

- Ask the child or young person what language they prefer to use

3 mins (1:08)

It is important to assess the child's communication in different situations and with different people. This should include structured and unstructured situations, with adults and peers. When observing, make sure that you consider a child's understanding as well as their talking.

Always involve the parent/carer to gain their perception of how the child is presenting at home, as this will be the child's most familiar environment and also the child will be interacting with people who s/he is very familiar with.

Talking to colleagues or accessing information from other records or reports will be useful.

You can also try carrying out a specific activity with the child or young person. This might be asking them to describe pictures or tell a story. You could plan and undertake activities using interpreters – for example, asking questions based on pictures and objects through an interpreter.

Be aware that some children will go through a 'silent phase'. Often children learning a second language after the first has been established go through a 'silent period'. This can often last quite a long time but its importance is to enable meaning in the new language. This may cause anxiety to practitioners or parents, but it should be treated as a normal phenomenon like any setting in period in a new environment.

Reference – www.londonsigbilingualism.co.uk

Raising concerns re: SLCN

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- If you work with young children, you may be the first professional to have concerns. Raising these effectively will support early identification and intervention, which are crucial to support children's development and minimise the potential impacts.

- However, this may also be the case if you work with an older child or young person.

- Many children and young people have had their speech, language and communication needs MISSED completely.

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5 min (1:13)

Everyone, whatever age of child they work with, is in a position to recognise a child's needs.

Early identification and interventions work - however, some children will have been missed, or their difficulties may show up later, so it's essential that everyone sees this as part of their roles and responsibilities.

Group discussion: *What is the process/procedure in our setting for raising concerns about a child's speech, language and communication needs?*
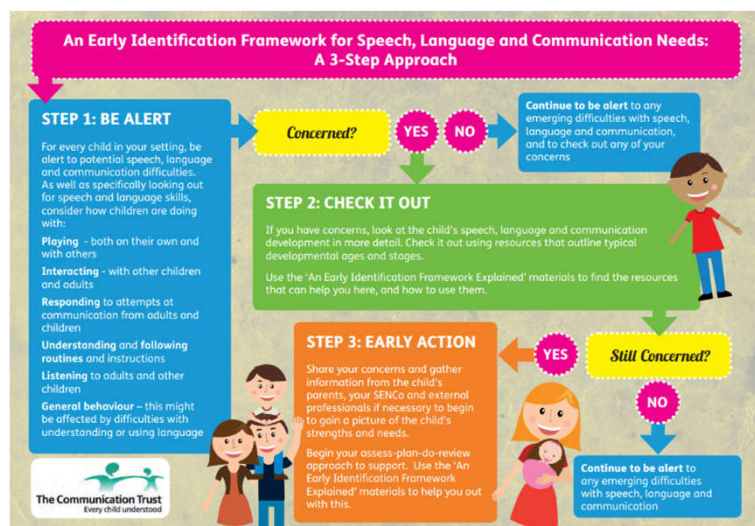
5 mins (1:18)

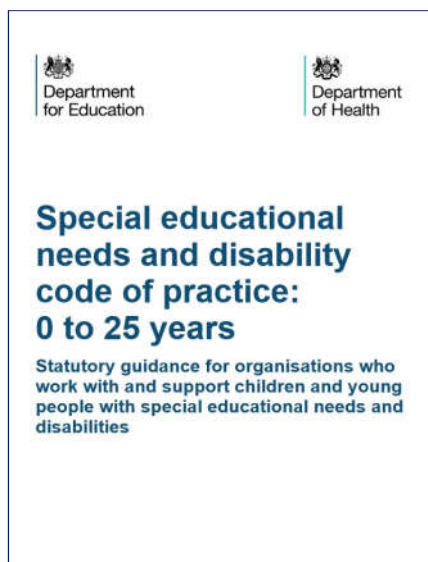Look at the Early Identification Framework – this resource sets out 3 step approach to identification.
Read through slide.

How might you be able to adapt your observations to ensure that you are always aware of how a child is progressing with their speech, language and communication skills?

Highlight the fact that it is EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY to identify children with SLCN (or any other type of SEND)

Roles and Responsibilities

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Department for Education

Department of Health

Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years

Statutory guidance for organisations who work with and support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities

- 4 broad areas of need within SEND – Communication and Interaction is one of them.

- There is a chapter with a specific early years focus

- Outlines roles and responsibilities for supporting children with SEND – for children with EHCPs, and those on SEN support.

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1 min (1:19)

SEND Code of Practice – legislation was reformed in 2014.

Roles and Responsibilities

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- When a child is identified as having SEN, settings should take action to remove barriers to learning, using a graduated approach – assess, plan, do, review.

- All those who work with young children should be alert to emerging difficulties and respond early. In particular, parents know their children best and it is important that all practitioners listen and understand when parents express concerns about their child's development.

- We know that early identification and ensuring effective provision has an impact on children's long term outcomes.

- It is therefore essential that EVERYONE working with children and young people is able to identify need and help to ensure that a child's needs are being met within the provision.

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2 mins (1:21)

Highlight the importance of SEND being EVERYONE's business – it's not just the role of the SENCO, or of specialist provisions.

Additional support for children's SLCN

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Who might offer additional support?

In your setting
(e.g. you, language lead, senior colleague, SENCO)

Outside your setting
(e.g. Speech and Language Therapist, SLT or teaching assistant, advisor)

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What might that additional support be?
Changes to the environment
Using interventions, approaches or strategies
Further assessment
Speech and Language Therapy
Programmes designed by a specialist
Working with other adults & support staff
Training or information for staff
Work with parents

2 mins (1:23)

This looks at some of the support which may be appropriate – some may be direct; some may be through advice or training.

What support is happening in our setting? What local services can we access for extra support?

Reflections and actions

- What are the processes / procedures for raising concerns in our setting?

- How might we make the processes and procedures more clear in our setting? Posters / visual reminders on display?

- Familiarise yourself with a new screening tool or ages and stages resource – and use this to check the speech, language and communication skills of a child you work with.

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

Any more reflections/actions from this part of the session today?