



The Communication Trust  
Every child understood

# Session 3

The Communication Environment:  
including the home environment  
and engaging parents



Norwich  
Opportunity Area

communicate

Independent Speech &  
Language Therapy

# Session Aims

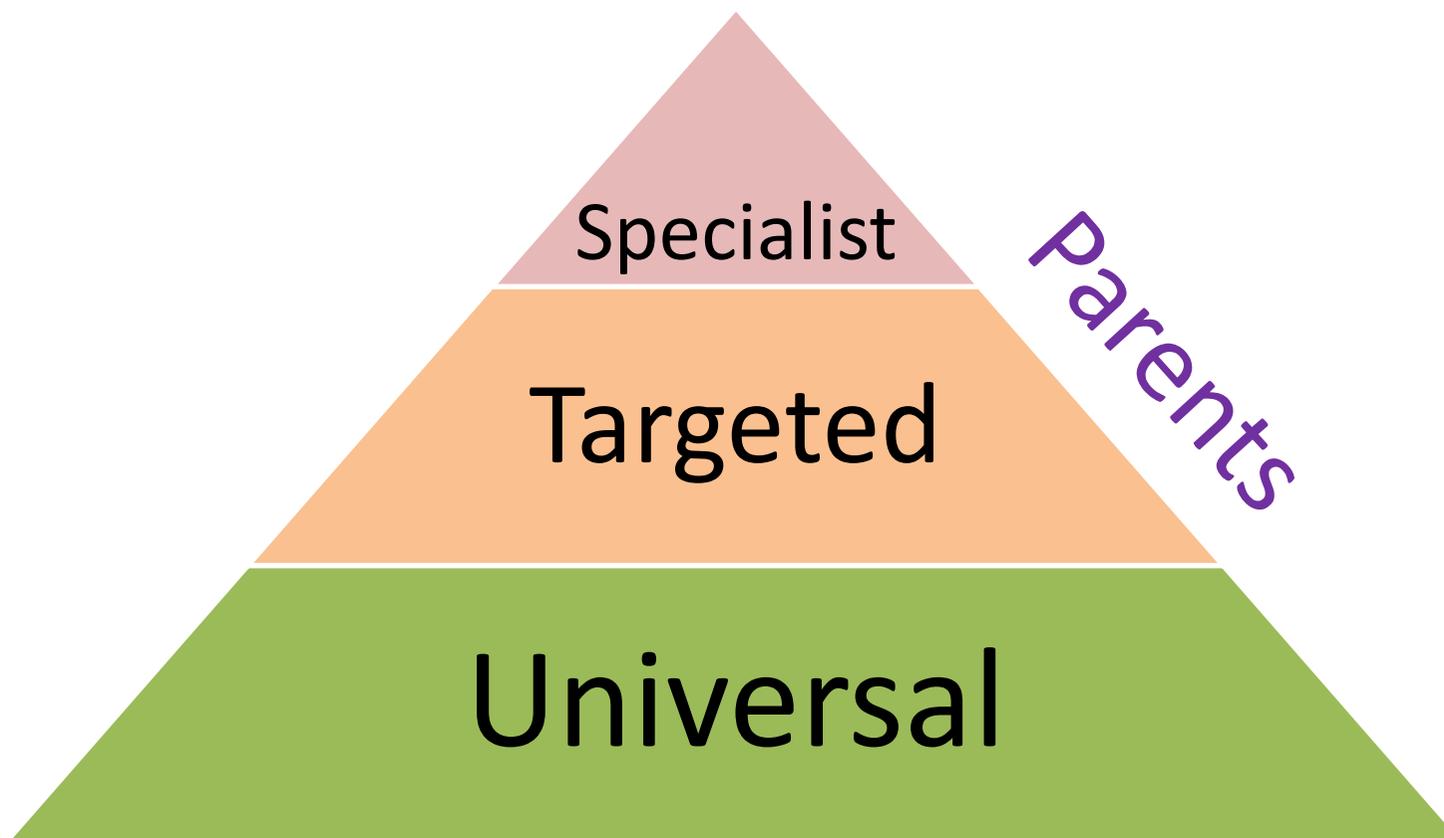
- Understand the importance of the communication environment to support all children's speech, language and communication skills, not just those with SLCN
- Be aware of what makes a communication friendly environment
- Understand the importance of the home environment for children's speech, language and communication development
- Understand the importance of involving parents and carers in a child's care and support
- Be able to support families of EAL children to support their child's speech, language and communication development

# A communication environment that supports ALL children

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- Having a universal approach to supporting communication is important
- Creating a communication friendly environment is a good way to ensure you're supporting all children's speech, language and communication skills, not just those with SLCN
- What works for all children will also help children with SLCN

# Whole setting approach



# What does a communication friendly environment look like?



# The Communication Environment

1. Language Learning Environment – the physical environment.
2. Language Learning Opportunities - structured opportunities that are present in the setting to support language development.
3. Language Learning Interactions - the ways in which adults in the setting talk with children.

# 1. Language Learning Environment

- Learning areas are clearly labelled with pictures/words throughout the classroom
- Children's own work is displayed and labelled appropriately
- Book specific areas are available
- Background noise levels are managed consistently throughout the observation, and children and adults are able to hear one another with ease
- There is good light
- The majority of learning resources and materials are labelled with pictures/ words
- Resources that are available for free play are easily reached by the children or easily within their line of vision
- An appropriate range of books are available in the book area (for example, traditional stories, bilingual/dual language books and a variety of genres and books related to children's own experiences)
- Outdoor play (if available) includes imaginative role play
- Good quality toys, small world objects and real/natural resources are available
- Musical instruments and noise makers are available
- Role play area is available

## 2. Language Learning Opportunities

- Small group work facilitated by an adult takes place
- Children have opportunities to engage in interactive book reading facilitated by an adult (for example: asking predictive questions, joining in with repetitions, story packs etc.)
- Children have opportunities to engage in structured conversations with teachers and other adults
- Children have opportunities to engage in structured conversations with peers (Talking partners)
- Attempts are made to actively include all children in small group activities

# 3. Language Learning Interactions

- Adults use child's name, draw attention of the child.
- Adults get down to the child's level when interacting with them
- Natural gestures and some key word signing are used in interactions with children
- Adults use symbols, pictures and props (real objects) to reinforce language
- Adults provide children with choices (for example: "Would you like to read a story or play on the computer?")
- Adults model language that the children are not producing yet
- Turn-taking is encouraged
- Children's listening skills are praised
- Children's non-verbal communication is praised

# Activity

- Thinking of the key factors of an environment which supports speech, language and communication, what does our setting currently do well? (Remember the focus here is on oral/spoken language)
- Identify two things which could be introduced, improved or extended
- How could we go about doing this in our setting?

# The home learning environment

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## **EPPSE report (2015)**

Young people who experienced a good early home learning environment were more likely to enter AS-levels, A-levels, and have higher attainment.

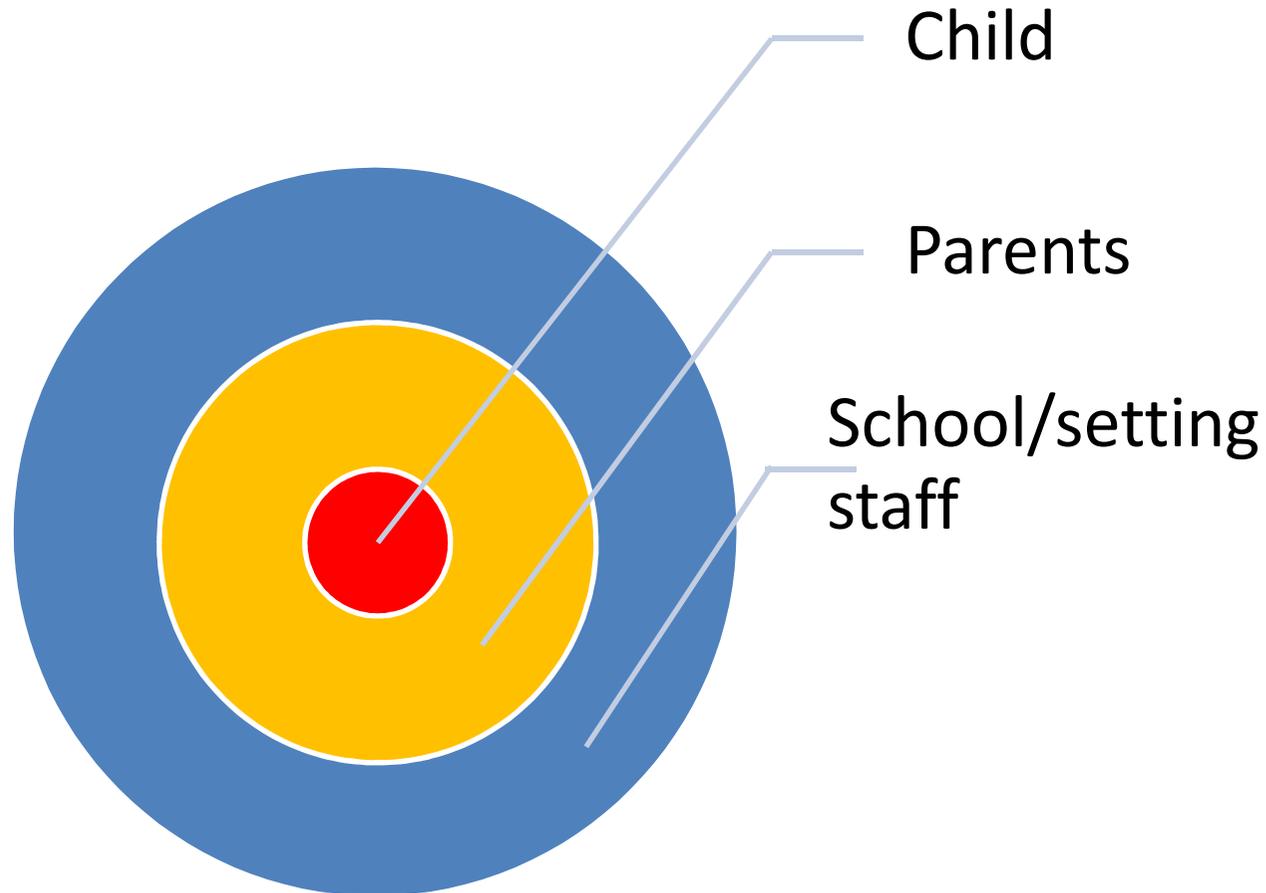
## **Evaluation of children's centres in England report (2015)**

A more enriched very early home learning environment predicted better cognitive attainment (vocabulary and non-verbal reasoning) and pro-social skills .

## **Investigating the role of language in children's early educational outcomes (2011)**

The children's communication environment influences language development; the communication environment that a child grows up in is more strongly associated with the development of their language skills than their social background.

# Working with parents/families



# Working with parents/families

“If adults talk with children effectively—taking the lead from the child, elaborating on what they say, asking questions, sharing rhymes or songs or books—then children are given the best start in developing the cognitive tools they need to succeed at school”

***(The Best Start at Home, Early Intervention Foundation)***

The communication environment that a child grows up in is more strongly associated with the development of their language skills than their social background

***(Investigating the role of language in children’s early educational outcomes , Roulstone et al)***

# Involving parents/ families

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- Meaningful engagement with parents and families takes time, and this needs to be factored into a setting's approach.
- Parents may be at different stages in their understanding of their child's SLCN, which requires sensitive and responsive support from staff.
- Staff need to be skilful in identifying and where parents are in terms of their understating and acceptance of their child's SLCN.

# What does good parental engagement look like?

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- The people who support my child know him/her well. I feel they are knowledgeable, tolerant and supportive of my child, understand what interests him/her and what is important to my child.
- I contribute to decisions about my child – through reviews and also the partnership I have with the setting my child is in.
- I am informed of choices for my child, and am supported in understanding the choices.
- My child has targets around increasing his/her independence and communication skills that we can also focus on at home.
- My child's education and experience reflects what matters to them – it is personalised.

# Discussion

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- How do we currently engage parents and families?
- What could we do better?

# EAL: Advising parents of bilingual children on speech, language and communication development

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Advice to support speech, language and communication development



Specific advice relating to bilingual children and young people





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# General advice for all parents

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- Give plenty of time for a child to respond
- Model the right way instead of correcting the child
- Don't ask too many questions, rather comment or use open questions, like 'tell me about your day'
- Make time for communication every day – have a quiet time in the day where distractions are minimised
- Get the child's full attention when you are talking to them
- Build on what children say
- Use every day routines and activities to practise communication skills
- Explain phrases and words a child doesn't understand
- Model good listening and make time to listen to them



# EAL: Specific advice for parents/carers of bilingual children

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- It is important that you continue to use all languages introduced to the child.
- Do not be concerned about mixing different languages in one sentence. This is natural for a bilingual speaker.
- Be **consistent** in your choice of words to name objects in a particular sentence. If you are using a word in one sentence do not refer to that word in the additional language in the same sentence.
- The focus should be helping the child feel successful in giving and receiving a message. Continue speaking your chosen language/s to your child even if he or she speaks back to you in a different language. If the child responds the message has been understood.

# EAL: Specific advice for parents/carers of bilingual children (2)



- Use short phrases with lots of gesture and facial expression, as well as expression in your voice. This will help the child understand the meaning behind the words.
- Encourage your child's attempts to communicate in either language, giving lots of praise.
- Use nursery rhymes and stories from any culture/language.



# Reflections and actions

- Going forward, what actions are we going to take in order to make our setting more communication friendly?
- How could we engage parents better?
- What might we be able to do differently in our support for children / families with EAL?