

Speech and Language Questions and Answers from Countywide SENCO Forums- July 2022

Q- At the moment our NHS speech services for children with EHCPs is really lacking - some children have not been seen for months and months or had any target reviews since early this academic year or even late in the last academic year.

A- One of the drivers for this work is recognition of the challenges you've shared, which is why this is a whole-systems approach. Undoubtedly, this transformation work is happening at a time of significant pressure for our speech and language therapy services who are experiencing many challenges, including high numbers of unfilled vacancies.

Supporting SLCN is not uniquely the role of a Speech Language Therapist (SLT): they bring the expertise into the whole workforce system – everyone has a role to play. Some children and young people will require direct support from a SLT at various points on their journey, but they will always require the wider workforce to be part of their support package to achieve outcomes. Through the Balanced System® Framework, SLT services are focussing on improving confidence and skills in the wider system.

Q- Could our SAL TAs be given a programme of training to upskill Lead TAs in schools on SAL to get better quality support into all schools?

A- Workforce development (which includes training) is one of the essential five strands of the Balanced System® with the outcome of having a skilled workforce able to support SLC(N). There needs to be an ongoing commitment to this at a school level as well as at a SLT service level, with an approach to workforce development based on each unique setting's/team's needs. We know that training alone does not necessarily have the required impact, but ongoing support and coaching is really what can make a difference.

Q- It is logical that teachers and teaching assistants receive more support to understand speech and language, and that advice is given on environments. But teachers and teaching assistants have very little time to deliver more focussed interventions as they are also upskilling and looking at environments for all the other needs and areas of learning and dealing with a crisis emotional wellbeing and mental health. We are currently finding it very difficult to recruit enough staff. In the meantime we are screening children and giving support following screening. Surely, some of this support could be given by training parents.

A- Family support is one of the 5 strands of the Balanced System®. This includes empowering all parents to support the development of their child's speech, language and communication potentially reducing the numbers of some vulnerable children requiring targeted support. Parents of children with identified SLCN also need support with specific strategies and adaptations – this is our responsibility as a whole workforce. A focus on functional outcomes i.e. what is important to the child and family, is key. Do support

parents/carers to be fully involved in SLCN support, whether that is facilitating a meeting with the speech and language therapist or helping them to understand the targeted support you are giving to their child so that they can support this at home.

Q- We use Language Link , Speech Link and NELI, but the push is to have more children in the classroom being taught by the class teacher rather than outside having interventions.

A- While interventions have an important role to play, creating enabling environments for communication is one of the five key strands of the Balanced System[®], and is a key area requiring development for us in Kent. This means that children's communication needs can be better supported in the classroom context. In some areas in Kent, SLT services are looking at trialling teachers as part of SaLT team to support this.

Q- Yes, this is what my head of school said about the balanced system. I was hoping that there was more training and support but when she went to the information session she said there wasn't

A- We are seeing more children coming into schools with higher levels of need and are aware of the need to skill workforce to support children who are non-verbal. SLT teams are trialling some innovative ways of providing this sort of workforce development such as through video-based coaching.

Q- Does this mean that we are actually going to get Speech and Language specialists coming in to Secondary School's to help, rather than just telling us to do an on-line training and then do it ourselves?

A- The direction of travel is for schools to have a link therapist who builds an understanding of the school and can support the setting with its SLC offer across the 5 strands (Family support, Environment, Workforce development, Identification, and Intervention and 3 levels (at universal, targeted and specialist). We are aware that currently secondary provision is particularly limited across Kent. There are significant challenges relating to capacity and transformation – change will take time.

Q- Is the Balance System a Kent model or have other Trusts in other LAs adopted it or similar?

A- The Balanced System Framework has been developed over 20 years and is used in many other parts of the country.

Q- Do many schools commission additional support for SLCN?

A- Many schools currently commission additional support for SLCN, either via SLAs with NHS or via other traded services. This has increasingly been the norm since the 2015 SEND Code of Practice. In some LAs, most schools commission additional SLT support to enhance the offer from central commissioning.

For Further Resources for Schools- Please Scroll Down

Useful resources and training for schools:

Family Support:

[Parents \(ican.org.uk\)](https://www.ican.org.uk)

[Afasic – Voice for Life](https://www.afasic.org.uk)

[Developmental Language Disorder | DLD and Me](https://www.slcf.org.uk) (for children and young people)

<https://speechandlanguage.info/parents>

For Workforce development:

SLCF (Speech, Language and Communication Framework [Home - SLCF - The Communication Trust \(slcframework.org.uk\)](https://www.slcf.org.uk) Staff can complete at appropriate level (e.g. Universal/Enhanced) and then find training and resources to develop skills and knowledge.

KCHFT's 'The Pod' provides some online training workshops, for example this page which includes workshops for both Primary and Secondary staff [School aged language | Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust \(kentcht.nhs.uk\)](https://www.kentcht.nhs.uk)

[RADLD - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...) – Youtube channel Raising Awareness of Developmental Language Disorder

For communication-supportive Environment:

[Resources from ICan](https://www.ican.org.uk) – this page includes checklists/audit tool for a Communication-Friendly environment.

Language for Learning resources - this training has been rolled out across Kent in recent years and includes many useful resources including classroom audits/observation tools. Have a look in your school as you may well have training manuals containing these resources. Or see website [Language for Learning](https://www.languageforlearning.org.uk)

[Educational Support for Children with Developmental Language Disorder \(DLD\) \(ican.org.uk\)](https://www.ican.org.uk)

Identification and Intervention:

SpeechLink Multimedia Limited: <https://Speechandlanguage.info>

As mentioned in the chat, this resource is widely used and valued in Kent, and used at a universal level for screening, and targeted level for intervention:

- Speech Link (around 90% Infant schools in Kent)
- Infant Language Link (around 90% of Infant schools in Kent)
- Junior Language Link (around 68% schools in Kent)

- Secondary Language Link (around 30% schools in Kent)
- Coming soon – package to focus on classroom environment and staff knowledge/communication skills
- If you already have a licence, is your school making full use of the resources? i.e. using the intervention resources and strategies, not just the screening assessment, and support from helpdesk/attendance at conferences.
- You can request a 14 day free trial if your school does not have a licence.

Language for Learning – as mentioned above, includes identification tools and universal/targeted strategies and resources. Further courses may be offered in future.

For children with more severe language needs/developmental language disorder, many schools use the following (targeted level) intervention packages (more intensive than Language Link):

- [Talk Boost speech and language interventions \(ican.org.uk\)](https://www.ican.org.uk) ○ ICan Early Talk Boost (ages 3-4)
 - ICan TalkBoost KS1
 - ICAN TalkBoost KS 2
- Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) for Year R (this was FREE for previous academic years, NELI awaiting decision about future funding for new schools, check website to see if registration re-opened) [NELI](https://www.neli.org.uk)
- [WellComm –](https://www.wellcomm.org.uk) ○ WellComm Early years (6 months to 6 years) ○ WellComm Primary (6-11 years)