

## Spotting the Signs of SLCN

### What is SLCN?

SLCN (speech, language and communication needs) is the term used to describe the wide and extensive range of needs related to all aspects of communication. Speech, language and communication underpin everything we do – for example, understanding what others say, making our needs known, learning in school, expressing our feelings and emotions, socialising with others and building relationships.

A child with speech, language and communication needs may have some or all of these difficulties:

- speech that is difficult to understand
- they might struggle to say words or sentences
- they may not understand words that are being used, or the instructions they hear
- they may have difficulties knowing how to talk and listen to others in a conversation

SLCN is often called a ‘hidden difficulty’ and children’s speech, language or communication needs are often misinterpreted, misdiagnosed or missed altogether. This is because most children with SLCN look just like other children, and can be just as clever. What other people might see is a child who is having difficulty learning to read, is showing frustration and/or behaviour problems or having difficulties with friendships. Other children may appear to be withdrawn or isolated. Any of these indicators can suggest SLCN.

### How can parents spot the signs that their child may have speech, language and/or communication needs?

The development of speech, language and communication is very complex and, although there are a number of theories, no one knows exactly why these skills sometimes do not develop as expected. There may be a number of reasons. Sometimes there is a known cause such as a hearing impairment, a physical disability such as cerebral palsy or a learning difficulty. In other cases, however, there is no obvious reason.

**It is important to remember that every child is an individual and will develop in different ways and at different rates.**

If you have concerns about your child's speech, language and/or communication development, and would like to know what the signs are for a possible SLCN, a useful place to begin looking is at the main stages of language development (visit the *Identification of SLCN* page of the SLCN Pathway site and download the *Developmental Norms*).



There is also a very helpful and comprehensive reference on the Talking Point website (My Child) at: <http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/Parent/My%20Child%20Is.aspx> where you will see the sequence through which typically developing children gain skills in areas of language development. As all children are different, these are meant as a guide only. The sections are organised into age groups to help you find the information that is most appropriate for your child.

**Within each age group you will find:**

- Information about how children typically develop communication skills.
- Tips for supporting language at this age.
- Things to look out for - difficulties that some children have at these ages.

Initial concerns and early warning sign tools are also available within the SLCN Pathway – visit the *Identification of SLCN* page for more information.

