

## Guidance for Adopting a Whole Setting/School Approach

### Initial considerations: deciding when to focus on SLCN as a priority for development

In Worcestershire, as well as nationally, the level of knowledge, understanding and skills in SLCN vary between individual practitioners (*Jordan & Thomas, 2010*). It is important that everyone who works with children has the appropriate knowledge and skills to:

- promote speech, language and communication development;
- identify those children who are experiencing difficulties;
- support children with SLCN.

(*Speech, Language & Communication Framework – SLCF: [www.communicationhelppoint.org.uk](http://www.communicationhelppoint.org.uk)*)

Prior to the child entering pre-school or school, the child's speech, language and communication development is primarily the responsibility of the parent, alongside any individual professionals that may be involved with supporting the child or the family (e.g. Health Visitors; GPs etc). Although much of what is included below is relevant to anyone involved with children with SLCN, this guidance is aimed for schools and settings and focuses on their collective professional development. For further guidance for other professionals such as Midwives, Health Visitors or GPs please refer to the Parents section of this website.

In settings and schools, SLCN may have already been identified as a priority area for development and included in the Early Years Focused Improvement Plan (FIP) or the School Development Plan (SDP). If not, making the decision to focus on SLCN will depend upon a number of factors which may be determined by analysis of any or all of the following:

- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) Audit
- Early Years Foundation Stage Pathway profile information
- Prior attainment data showing levels achieved in national and optional tests or from teachers' own assessment (schools' own data).
- Other screening tools or assessment data (e.g. Language Link)
- Contextual value-added (CVA) data about the school's own performance (from RAISEonline) and

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CVA data on schools in similar circumstances.

- Other pupil and school level estimates (e.g. from the Fischer Family Trust via LAs, CAT scores, etc.).
- Lesson observations
- Previous staff training in the area of SLCN and the impact of that training

#### Focused Improvement Plan (FIP)

In Early Years, the Focused Improvement Plan (FIP) is written in response to areas identified during the self-evaluation process. Specific actions are planned to address improvement over a realistic timescale, matched to the resources available, and staff responsibility is allocated to these actions. FIPs are living documents and it is important to monitor the progress of the plan.

#### School Development Plan (SDP)

A school development plan (SDP) is a strategic planning document covering the school's activities over a period of time. School Development Plans should be based on the needs of individual schools and issues that may need addressing. For example, a school may decide to focus on SLCN as part of their school development plan based on data that may have raised issues that could highlight SLCN in school, such as:

- SLCN as the highest area of need on the SEN record if both primary and secondary areas of need are counted;
- increase in the number of pupils being referred for Speech & Language Therapy in KS 1;
- small number of pupils at Key Stage 1 and 2 who cause low-level behaviour problems and appear to have a poor attitude to learning.

Alternatively, focusing on SLCN could be incorporated within existing priorities in school such as raising attainment or preventing disaffection. These decisions need to be taken within the context of the cycle for school improvement:

(adapted from: original Dyslexia/SLCN IDP)



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### Initial Considerations

When making the decision to focus on SLCN as a priority for development, senior management or leadership teams should consider the following questions:



### Whole Setting / School SLCN Pathway Summary (5.1)

The Whole Setting/School SLCN Pathway Summary flowchart summarises processes to be undertaken when developing SLCN provision within a school or setting. It sets out recommended routes to ensure that all staff have 'universal' knowledge about SLCN. 'Universal' knowledge is defined by the Speech, Language and Communication Framework as:

"...the skills and knowledge relating to speech, language and communication for **everyone** who works with children and young people." (*Speech, Language and Communication Framework – SLCF; The Communication Trust, page 11*)

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The Whole Setting / School SLCN Pathway Summary flowchart is organised around the following stages:

1. Prioritising SLCN as part of the FIP (Focused Improvement Plan) or SDP (School Development Plan)
2. SLCN Self-evaluation Audit for all staff; gaining parent and child views
3. Identifying and prioritising areas for staff development
4. Staff training/development (including whole class strategies, "communication-friendly environments"; identification of SLCN; targeted interventions) – this may include whole school or individualised training, shadowing other staff, focused observations, etc.
5. Implementation of development work
6. Monitoring and evaluating impact and outcomes

### Completing the Staff Self-Evaluation Audit (5.3)

***What is the level of staff confidence, knowledge and skills in meeting the needs of children with SLCN in our setting/school?***

To help answer this question, a Staff Self-Evaluation Audit (download 5.3) could be used to measure current levels of staff confidence, knowledge and skills. The audit can subsequently be used to inform action plans for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and act as a baseline measure of the impact of this development work.

It is recommended that each member of staff complete the self-evaluation audit *individually* but a larger Primary School or a Secondary School may decide to gather a single year group/department response for subsequent internal audits and/or INSET.

### Gaining the views of parents (5.4)

Seeking parents' perceptions about the support provided for their child by the setting or school can be very helpful in informing practice. The Parent Questionnaire (download 5.4) is intended to be used for this purpose and to give parents the opportunity to raise any concerns they may have about their child's needs and the provision that is being made for them. This can help to inform what might be done to improve provision. It could also be used as a measure of impact if redone at a later date.

## Gaining the views of the child (5.6 / 5.7)

It is important to ascertain how children feel about the provision they receive as this can also help to inform practice. Depending upon the developmental level of the child and their individual needs, settings and schools can choose from a range of tools to help gauge children's views about the provision and support they receive. Refer to:

- Consulting with children on their education/experience (download 5.6)
- Pupil Attitude survey (download 5.7)



- "Having My Say" (contact Worcestershire Integrated Specialist Support Services <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/education-and-learning/stay-safe/children-and-families/children-with-disabilities/integrated-services---speciali.aspx> for further information).

***N.B. it is important to consider the developmental level of the child (including their developmental level of visual recognition) and the form of communication the child typically uses.***

Using visual prompts and symbols can support the child's understanding and ability to respond. By providing a visual representation of a single word or concept, visual cues help make meanings clearer and easier to understand. However, it is important to consider the child's developmental level of visual recognition when using symbols.

Widgit symbols are being used in an increasing number of settings and schools across Worcestershire – further information about Widgit symbols can be found at [www.widgit.com](http://www.widgit.com)



## Identifying and prioritising areas for staff development

Once the Self-evaluation audit is completed, and when parents as well as the children themselves have provided their views, the results should be collated by the senior management or leadership team in readiness for an analysis of staff development needs and the creation of an action plan. The named co-ordinator needs to allocate sufficient time to collate the various responses and arrive at a consensus. What is needed is a 'best fit' for staff confidence and competence at this stage. Schools and settings also need to think about whether they are attempting to achieve a consensus amongst all staff or whether they will develop separate action plans for different groups e.g. Teaching Assistants (TAs) or Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) may require additional or different training.

Consideration should be given as to who is the best person to analyse the results and produce an action plan. It may be the Setting Manager, CPD manager, the Head, Inclusion manager, and/or the SENCo. Information from the Self-evaluation audit can then help to:

- Consider what you are doing already;
- Identify where good practice that exists already can be shared within the setting or school;
- Decide on which approach to delivery is required i.e. staff meeting, INSET, individualised training, network with other settings, schools etc.
- Signpost to additional support needed (e.g. training from outside agencies)

The Staff Self-evaluation audit can be used again after a period of time and action, to reflect on and demonstrate an increase in universal knowledge and impact on practice.

## Action planning

Depending on the size of the setting or school and the range of staff that complete the self-evaluation audit, the next step may be the creation of one or more action plans (see examples for Early Years Settings 5.8 and Schools 5.9 - downloadable). There is a blank Action Plan (download 5.10) available.

Once schools or settings have established their priorities and identified areas for development there may be a number of options or routes to take, including:

- identifying a key member of staff to lead the setting or school through the SLCN Pathway and provide 'in-house' staff training as necessary.

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- using the Inclusion Development Programme (see section 3.3) to help develop staff skills and universal knowledge. Support for this can be provided by outside agencies (more information and links to training opportunities in Worcestershire can be found on the SLCN Pathway website).
- supporting parents – refer to the Parents section of the website for more information and suggestions.
- using the “Show Me” DVD ([www.languageforlearning.co.uk](http://www.languageforlearning.co.uk)) and handbook as a focus for staff development. The DVD will help practitioners to support children with SLCN at a universal level. Aimed for teachers and teaching assistants at all key stages, the DVD demonstrates how to put strategy ideas into practice. Demonstrations by teachers, teaching assistants and children bring the ideas from the handbook to life. The handbook also contains photocopiable materials to enable the resources demonstrated to be created.
- exploring training options to further develop skills. Settings and schools may request bespoke training from a range of services. More information and links to training opportunities in Worcestershire can be found on the SLCN Pathway website.

