

# DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL SPEECH AND LANGUAGE STRATEGY

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## **1. Introduction**

This strategy is designed to address the needs of children with language and communication difficulties across the Authority. It sets out the continuum of provision to enable schools to make the best decisions in how to support children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

## **2. Aims and Principles**

All Children and young people should expect to be educated in their local mainstream school. Therefore all mainstream schools should have the capacity, competence and confidence to provide for pupils with additional educational needs and/or disabilities, with resources allocated to ensure maximum value for money. Services should be focused, flexible and responsive to local needs; they should be fit for purpose, monitored for impact and performance, and open to change where needed.

In order to do this, we seek to ensure schools have the confidence, knowledge and skills to support children's language development and to identify where a child is at risk of language delay. The support provided can assist schools to ensure children are prioritised and support directed in the right way.

This will have the effect of the school's analysis of the effectiveness of its teaching and systems for support before deciding that she or he has special educational needs.

Additionally, the traditional approach has been to 'over-medicalise' a problem for many families and children, with incidence of language delay having the potential to swamp specialist services and reduce their focus on the children with higher need.

The strategic direction therefore should be for schools to benefit from this graduated model of delivery which enhances and better co-ordinates universal provision, and provides a wider range of evidence based targeted interventions, with the support of specialist provision, to be delivered by schools.

Such a development will lead to earlier support for children, better targeting of support, an overall increase in capacity to deliver and clearer focus for specialist services.

## **3. Understanding Speech, Language and Communication**

The Communication Trust recommends using the following definitions of the terms speech, language and communication.

**Speech:** Children who have difficulties with speech sound development, regardless of cause. This could include difficulties with being able to make different speech sounds and / or using them in the right places in words. It would also include children who struggle to accurately

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listen and process speech sounds. Children with these difficulties may have a range of different "diagnoses", but could be described as having phonological delay or disorder, articulation difficulties or verbal dyspraxia. It may also include children with phonological awareness needs. The *Speech* category also includes children who have a stammer, so those children who have difficulties maintaining fluent speech.

**Language:** This includes both understanding of language and talking, sometimes referred to as receptive and expressive language. It will include children who have difficulties with any aspect of language, including children who struggle with one or more of the following; processing and understanding what people say; vocabulary; word finding; building sentences using appropriate grammar; syntax and morphology, talking and understanding using narratives or longer interactions and conversations.

**Communication:** This is about the way in which language is used to interact socially with others; so children who have difficulties knowing how to use language to interact with others in a variety of ways, children who struggle with the non-verbal rules of communication such as knowing how to take turns in a conversation, using appropriate eye contact, etc.

**Complex Needs:** This refers to children who will have other difficulties as well as those with speech, language and communication. Often this will refer to children with learning or cognitive needs, but may also be children with a combination of needs, such as sensory impairments, physical and language needs.

### Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

The needs of children with primary Speech, Language and Communication Need (SLCN) can often be complex and the diagnosis of SLCN can be difficult, and in some cases SLC will not be the primary need.

The term SLCN can be used as a broad and inclusive term to include those whose primary difficulties (eg disorders of articulation, phonology, receptive language, expressive language, vocal quality, fluency, or social use of language), and also those for whom these needs are secondary (eg autism spectrum disorders (ASD), sensory impairments, more general cognitive difficulties, or primary behaviour difficulties).

### Specific Language Impairment

Specific language impairment is a subgroup of SLCN and is a term that is used to describe difficulties with learning and using language, when these difficulties are not associated general learning difficulties or other conditions such as cleft palate, cerebral palsy, hearing impairment or autism. SLI falls within the umbrella term of Specific Learning Difficulties

### Delay vs Disorder

Language or speech delay describes a language or speech system that is progressing along typical developmental lines, reaching typical milestones, but at a rate slower than would usually be expected. Language or speech disorders describe a pattern of development which is unusual or atypical. These sorts of communication disorders are often harder for others to listen to and understand, and specific and specialist programmes are often required.

## 4. The Challenge

### National Data

In the UK, over 1 million children and young people have some form of long term and persistent speech and language and communication difficulty. The impact of this is that 50-90% of children with persistent difficulties go on to have reading difficulties and two thirds of 7-14 year olds with serious behaviour problems have language impairment.

SLCN is now the most common developmental disability in childhood, with all groups of children with SLCN experiencing a rapid rise in numbers. 7% of five year olds in England, on average two or three in every classroom, have a particular difficulty in speech and language, with an estimated 50% of children starting school with language skills delayed for their age. Nationally there is also a growth in numbers of children identified with SLCN as their primary need (58% since 2006) and 16.5% of statements of SEN nationally are for SLCN<sup>1</sup>.

### Local Data

The SEN national school census data (Academic year 2013/14 - Spring 2014) indicates that the primary need of 23% of school age pupils in Darlington is SLCN, just above the national average of 21%.

Speech and Language is the highest occurring SEN in Darlington growing on a year by year basis. The increase from 2013 to 2014 is 63 children.

Whilst the majority of children do not have a statement of SEN, the number of statements has increased over 25% since 2012.

SEN data for Years N1 to Year 14 is summarised below:

Year	EYA+	SA+	Statement	Total
2012	37	230	29	296
2013	0	246*	35	281
2014	102	200	42	344

\* 24 children recorded as SA+ are N1 and N2

For comparison purposes, the total number of children reported as having SLCN in the spring 2014 School Census, between Years N1 to Year 6 is below:

Year	EYFS	KS1
2012	91	167
2013	79	174
2014	106	196

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<sup>1</sup> ICAN, 2006

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The graph shows the growth between 2012-2014 of SEN at nursery and reception reaching a peak at Year 1. In Year 2 there is a significant drop with decreasing numbers through to Year 14 (12.5% of all children).

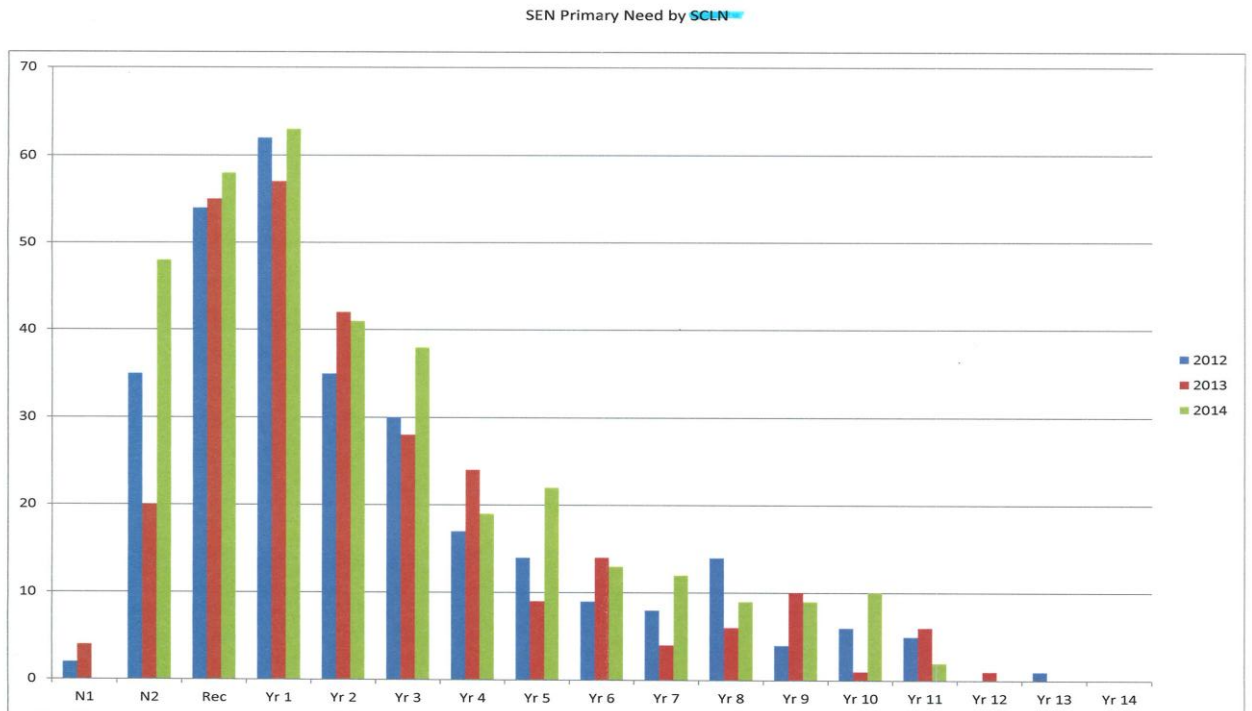
Early Years performance data for children in group settings (day-care, nursery school and pre-school playgroup) illustrates that there are 107 children presenting with Communication and Language needs in 2014/15.

According to the 2014 EYFS results, 29% of children are not reaching the Expected Levels of Communication and Language by the end of reception class. In some schools this can be 50% or more with one school having 61% of children entering year 1 underachieving in Communication and Language.

One third of Darlington children are not reaching the expected level of development in Literacy. This lack of achievement is due to the underperformance within the strands of Communication and Language – if 21% plus children are not achieving expected levels in Listening and attention, Understanding and speaking then they do not have the skills to build reading and writing on.

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## Darlington Schools Speech and Language Survey - Key Messages

A survey of speech and language support in all Darlington schools (February 2015), shows that incidences of SCLN are increasing, including those who have this as a secondary need, perhaps to autism, learning difficulties, hearing impairment, medical needs etc.

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In a survey of newly qualified teachers in 2014<sup>2</sup> a third felt under-prepared to teach language comprehension. Likewise in our Darlington survey, TA's and support staff are required to support children with SLC targets and schools feel that higher level training is required.

The majority of school SENCOs and/or HLTA's deliver SLC support in school, with the next largest group being TA's. Comments around training indicate that teachers and TAs are required to deliver SALT programmes, without significant SALT support.

Nurseries and/or schools with nurseries refer to SALT for SLCN support as they do not have access to the outreach service.

90% of settings/schools have input from a SALT and/or other health professional, with some commissioning their own SALT or alternative support. Other support for SLC is provided through other Darlington provision (eg, SCOS Behaviour support, Mount Pleasant outreach, low incidence needs team) and other external provision, eg CAMHS, Dyslexia for Action, Well Being Trust.

There was a mixed response to whether the services accessed by schools, are the right level. 33% said yes; 30% said no; 37% are not sure. Therefore schools may need more support to evaluate whether children are making the right level of progress.

The majority of respondents to the survey access NHS services. 58% of respondents access the outreach service and rate services as overall 'good' for quality.

### 5. Current Approaches

#### Universal Support

Universal support is about what should be on offer for all pupils ie the effective inclusion of all pupils in high quality everyday teaching – *Quality First Teaching*. Such teaching will be based on clear objectives that are shared with pupils and revisited at the end of the lesson; new vocabulary will be carefully explained; lively interactive teaching styles will be used and maximum use made of visual and kinaesthetic as well as auditory/verbal learning. It also involves the effective use of resources including deployment of Teaching Assistants.

Approaches like these are the best way to reduce, right from the start, the number of pupils who need extra help with their learning or behaviour.

#### Targeted Support

Targeted support is part of the school's normal differentiated curriculum and teacher's regular planning groups. For those who need help, there should be targeted support, ie. Small group or 1-1 intervention for pupils who can be expected to catch up with their peers.

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<sup>2</sup> I CAN Impact Report 2013/14

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Targeted support is designed for pupils for whom a well-structured, short-term programme, usually delivered by a TA working with a teacher, is all that is needed to enable them to catch up.

Taking part in such an intervention programme does not, when the programmes are delivered in an unmodified way in the age group for which they are intended, trigger a placement on the SEN register.

Most pupils receive this support because they have fallen a little behind their peers. They will not have SEN as defined in the code of practice. Some, however, might in addition to their lag in literacy, mathematics or social development have an autistic spectrum disorder, sensory or physical disability, or more severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. These pupils might already have been placed on SEN Support, because they are receiving other forms of intervention.

### Specialist Support

Specialist support is about intervention for pupils for whom quality first teaching and catch-up programmes are not enough. It will need to be a more individualised and intensive programme, involving more specialist expertise in the delivery, and may involve individual support. Specialist support is an SEN intervention. At this level, all pupils will be on SEN Support or have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Where it is working effectively, this model has a funnelling effect, reducing through quality first teaching how many pupils need targeted intervention, and those who need more intensive and individual help. This means that schools will be able to target their SEN resources more effectively, at fewer pupils.

## 6. Provision in Darlington

### 6.1 Early Years

#### Universal Support

Early support for young children is fundamental to laying the foundations for language development, to support the vital development of speech, language and communication skills. The emphasis on language and language development threads through all support and development work.

Early Years Private Voluntary Independent Providers, Schools and Childminders play a key role in providing foundation stage education for the majority of children under the age of five.

The statutory curriculum is governed by the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory framework *which includes communication and language*. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.



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These three areas, the prime areas, are:

- communication and language;
- physical development; and
- personal, social and emotional development.

This places a child's speech, language and communication, personal, social and emotional development alongside the physical development at the heart of early years practice. It is underpinned by observation based assessment based on a secure knowledge of child development.

There are two statutory points in the Early Years Foundation Stage where practitioners must indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development and report judgments to parents. The statutory 2 year old progress check and Early Years Foundation Stage profile provide milestone opportunities to summarise information about a child's development. This assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress whilst also helping to identify those who need targeted or specialist services.

Existing universal support includes the Darlington Borough Council Early Years Inclusion Co-ordinator Team who support group settings/schools to meet the needs of children in the setting from birth to 4+ years.

### Targeted Support

For those children whose needs cannot be met without additional support, because their needs decrease adult capacity to address the progression of the whole group/class, additional funding may be necessary. The setting/school is responsible for identifying the child's needs through appropriate assessment and comparison to the child's peer group and for ensuring that parents/carers are involved in the process. Eligibility for additional funding is based on an application (one-plan) submitted by the setting/school to the Early Years Inclusion Panel.

The Early Years Team which includes CDOs and Foundation Stage Advisory Teachers (FSAT) provides support through general training, bespoke training and specialist training. In particular the team provide Letters and Sounds Phase 1 training and specific professional development focused on the development of language. The team are familiar with the ICAN materials and use the materials and steps of development in their advice, support and training. Every Child a Talker audits are used regularly in schools and settings. One of the FSATs was the borough lead for Every Child a Talker and continues to support and offer advice in line with the recommendations.

The Life Stages Early Support Team supports children from birth to the term after their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday within the home.

The Low Incidence Needs service provide advice and support to settings/schools with early years children with high level need regarding how to use visual supports and signing with all children.

## **Specialist Support**

For those children whose needs cannot be met without additional support, because their needs decrease adult capacity to address the progression of the whole group/class, additional funding may be necessary. The setting/school is responsible for identifying the child's needs through appropriate assessment and comparison to the child's peer group and for ensuring that parents/carers are involved in the process. Eligibility for additional funding is based on an application (one-plan) submitted by the setting/school to the Early Years Inclusion Panel.

### **6.2 Reception, Key Stages 1-2**

Recognising that the ability to speak and listen underpins all learning; good primary education demonstrates this by focusing on developing and embedding talk across the curriculum.

Northwood Primary School provides a support service to ensure that children with SLCN:

- Improve their speech, language and communication skills and reduce any impact this may have on their learning;
- make good educational progress and reduce or close any attainment gap that was existing between them and their peers on entry to school;
- are happy at school, feel included and fully participate in the life of the school;
- move successfully on to a new school or provision as best for the child's needs.

Table 1 summarises the provision available to support schools in Darlington.

A specialist teacher and Higher Level TA based at Northwood Primary school run an outreach service to provide advice, information and training which can be accessed by schools through making direct contact using a request form. This is delivered at the universal and targeted levels.

## **Universal Support**

Universal support is provided through training on relevant intervention programmes such as Language Link, which should be carried out as a whole class approach, this promotes a better understanding of the English Language.

The specialist teacher and HLTA provide support to review children's language link results, support to develop programmes of support, or one to one activities and interventions, but do not deliver these. This will be followed by monitoring and further advisory visits and support to progress learning targets.

## **Targeted Support**

Children at this level of support are likely to have a One Plan with Speech and Language as a primary need.

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The aim of the outreach in this case is to support and/or contribute to the school's own SEN support package. It is the schools responsibility to track progress and provide all the evidence to show that all interventions have been fully utilised over a reasonable period of time.

It is likely children supported at this level have support from a Speech and Language therapist, and all support will be in liaison with this service. The next stage for children whose speech is not improving to the levels expected is to access

### **Specialist Services - Speech and Language Base (SLB)**

Where a child's Speech and Language development is severely disordered and having received support in schools (it is expected that the outreach service are part of the continuum of support), a recommendation can be made by both a Speech and Language therapist, and an Educational Psychologist, who will identify where a child is a suitable candidate for the specialist provision, in liaison with the Northwood SENCo and Speech and Language base team.

Eligibility is based on an application (one-plan) submitted by the setting/school to the LA Provision Panel, after recommendation from a school in liaison with the SALT and other specialists.

The SLB provides medium term support for up to a maximum of 2 years. Children can exit the base at any time within the period of placement.

For children with longer term Speech and Language needs, it is expected that these children will have a statement or EHC Plan, and this package of support will be delivered within schools. Support from the outreach service can also be accessed.

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**Table 1: Summary of Current Provision to Primary Schools**

Level	What	For	How	Support for schools
1. <b>Universal Level</b> <sup>3</sup>	High quality inclusive class teaching which promote all children's language development.	All children	Practical classroom based strategies delivered in mainstream class.	Northwood S&L base provide training which can be accessed by all schools.
		Children with mild and transient delayed language just below what is expected for their age.	Interventions delivered in mainstream class.	School staff contacts S&L outreach service who can provide support in development of interventions.
2. <b>Targeted Level</b>	Schools have or are provided with resources, enhanced knowledge and skills to identify and support SLCN with collaborative support from experts.	Children at SEN support level who have not responded to above interventions that have moderately delayed language who following intervention will return to the universal level in the short term.	SALT interventions to be delivered 1-1 or small group work.	School staff contacts S&L outreach service who provide support for school staff to follow programmes and interventions.
3. <b>Specialist Level</b>	Intervention on an individual or small group basis at resource base where language teacher and TA supports children in (F2 to KS2), up to a maximum of 2 years.	Children with a One Plan. Have SLC as a Primary SEN need ie severe and complex SLCN disorder or severe delay significantly below expected levels but able to increase participation and return to mainstream classes.	SAL therapy and interventions to be delivered 1-1 speech and language as well as group therapy.	Referral by school via SALT/EP to LA Provision Panel.  Recommendation to SLB.  Children not accessing SLB to receive outreach support at a more intensive level.
		Children with EHC Plan. SLC is more likely to be secondary SEN need.	Specialist therapy interventions	Referral via SALT/EP to SEN Panel, often statement.

<sup>3</sup> All children should be assessed through use of Language Link. If further intervention required, outreach can support. Some children already have been identified through health route, have been assessed with specific programmes being delivered by school.

## **7. Role of the Speech and Language Therapist (SALT)**

Health therapists provide three levels of support to schools where it is identified that the difficulty is impacting on the child's ability to access the educational curriculum. It would not be expected that therapy is given outside of school.

- Universal: general information for the workforce, where to go for further information and what to do if they have concerns;
- Targeted: assessment and diagnosis (including in schools) for children with SLC delay who following targeted intervention will return to the universal level; and advice to the workforce around the needs of a child;
- Specialist: for children who have been identified with a SLC disorder or severe delay where intervention planning and liaison with parents/carers and support/supervision for the workforce (including training), will facilitate the effective implementation of specialist provision.

Schools have indicated that therapists are required to advise on the delivery of personalised programmes for children. A number of schools commission their own SALT support including training but should consider the continuum of provision including the outreach service to ensure best value for money.

## **8. Moving Forward**

### **Focus Area: Universal Provision**

Actions:

- Review and evaluate training delivered in 2014/15 to Schools in Darlington, by the S&L Resource Base service.
- Working with the LA plan and deliver a rolling programme of training targeted at all Schools in Darlington.
- Actively promote the importance of language skills with parents and carers ensuring that families have access to a range of information about communication development milestones at key points in their child's life so that any difficulties can be identified early.

### **Focus Area: Targeted Provision**

Actions:

- Review access criteria for the Outreach Service
- Review communication policy and ensure planned activities including liaison with SENCOs, (advice and guidance available and levels of support expected)
- Identify and agree the suite of programmes/interventions which address identified need across the age range

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## Focus Area: Specialist Provision

Actions:

- Review key performance indicators
- Develop in liaison with the LA provision panel guidance and pathways for access
- Consider and research other delivery models having implemented and monitored strategy

## Focus Area: Partnerships

Actions:

- Set up a network of school Communication champions to act as links to the resource base and leaders of SLC within schools.
- Work with Children's Services Joint Commissioning Group to move towards joint commissioning of speech, language and therapy services and to more effectively use the skills of therapists in contributing to the development of universal and targeted services.

## 9. Conclusion

The above approaches will ensure the funded provision at Northwood School, both the resource base and outreach service, is working with the children most in need, and at the right level.