

## COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION: SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS

Most categories of SEND experience some degree of speech, language and communication need. In fact, early speech, language and communication difficulties are often a key indicator of a range of other specific learning difficulties such as:

- Dyslexia and/or dyspraxia
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or
- Autism and Asperger Syndrome

Other conditions which experience a degree of SLCN are extensive, including:

- Cerebral palsy
- Down Syndrome
- Learning Disability
- Anxiety or depression

Language and communication difficulties may also be experienced in isolation, in the form of Specific Language Impairment (SLI).

Speech, language and communication needs impact any of the following areas:

- articulation: how sounds are produced
- phonological awareness: phonology or speech sound system; how sounds are interpreted
- grammar and syntax: the rules of combining words into sentences
- vocabulary: the range of words used and/or understood
- pragmatics: social use of language, such as turn-taking
- semantics: the meaning attached to words
- auditory discrimination and auditory processing: the ability to hear subtle sound differences
- prosody: how loud/soft the speech is
- verbal recall/utterance: what an individual says

### The main facts:

1. Prevalence is up to 10% of the child population
2. Although most language and communication difficulties are developmental (present from birth), some are associated with poor language environments
3. SLCN are not associated with cognitive impairment, but can often be found alongside a cognitive delay and can have a profound impact upon the development of cognition
4. If left unsupported, secondary difficulties, such as anxiety or depression are likely to develop

### The main difficulties associated with SLCN:

Main area of difficulty	Things to look for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>articulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lack of/delayed speech</li> <li>poor production of speech sounds, confuses sounds often beyond peers (e.g. sh/ch, f/th)</li> <li>difficulty eating or swallowing</li> <li>fussy eater – dislikes certain textures</li> <li>Lacks clarity</li> <li>Struggle with consonant sounds</li> <li>Finds it difficult to articulate thoughts and ideas</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phonological awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confuses certain sounds beyond usual age: e.g. 'th/f', 'b/p', 'd/t'...</li> <li>Confuses vowels – e.g. a/u</li> <li>Struggles to blend sounds: e.g. b-l = bl, c-a-t = cat</li> <li>Struggles to segment sounds: e.g. d/o/g</li> <li>Struggles with syllables</li> <li>Struggles to associate a sound with a printed word</li> <li>Phoneme-grapheme correspondence are weak</li> <li>Late or difficulty with reading</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grammar and syntax</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mixes words in sentences</li> <li>Struggle with rules of sentences and punctuation when writing</li> <li>Disorganised</li> <li>May only use single words or phrases</li> <li>Uses grammar incorrectly: "I goes walk"</li> <li>Irregular grammar is used incorrectly "there are three sheeps"</li> <li>Grammar is immature</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extremely limited vocabulary</li> <li>Delayed speech</li> <li>Struggles with subject-specific vocabulary</li> <li>Struggles to recall specific words for things - tendency to point and use simple utterances</li> <li>Difficulty in identifying the most important words within a sentence</li> <li>Difficulty in understanding questions: who, what, where, when, why, how?</li> <li>Doesn't appear to understand basic vocabulary</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semantics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulty understanding abstract concepts, such as how, or why?</li> <li>Struggles with innuendo and the subtleties of spoken language</li> <li>Misunderstands others regularly</li> <li>Takes language literally</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pragmatics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lacks eye contact</li> <li>Limited understanding of others and the rules of social communication</li> <li>Literal interpretation - struggles with inference, innuendo and hidden meaning</li> <li>Impulsive, tendency to interrupt conversation</li> <li>May use inappropriate language in inappropriate situations</li> <li>Finds it difficult to follow the rules of social situations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prosody</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unusually loud in inappropriate situations</li> <li>May suddenly blurt out a word loudly when all other words in the sentence are normal volume</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Auditory sequential memory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repeats back the incorrect word</li> <li>Forgetful</li> <li>Loses concentration easily</li> <li>Appears distant</li> <li>May change topic completely</li> <li>May be sensitive to background noise</li> <li>Appears in a world of their own</li> <li>Struggles to organise thoughts into writing</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utterance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may not speak at all (mutism)</li> <li>Struggles with word-finding, saying 'thingy' a lot</li> </ul>

### Access arrangements in exams

SLCN are complex in nature as the difficulties associated often vary between individuals. It is essential that a thorough analysis of strengths and needs by either a specialist teacher or speech and language therapist identified the areas of need and support before access arrangements are considered.

It is important that any access arrangements reflect the student's normal way of working, and are based upon what they need; they will vary from student-to-student.

#### The most common arrangements needed within exams are:

- Reader or reading pen – for poor reading comprehension, accuracy or speed
- Modified Papers - where SLCN are extensive
- Oral Language Modifier – where SLCN are severe
- 25% extra time – where rate of working is impacted
- The use of a laptop – to aid organisation of thoughts and ideas in writing, aiding fluency



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### Further Information and Support:

- Afaisic: [www.afaisic.org.uk](http://www.afaisic.org.uk)
- Communication Matters: [www.communicationmatters.org.uk](http://www.communicationmatters.org.uk)
- I Can: [www.ican.org](http://www.ican.org)
- The Communication Trust: [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk)