

Positive practice

This handbook will take you through strand C of the Universal stage on the Speech, Language and Communication framework (SLCF) called positive practice. It will look at ways to develop the skills and knowledge (entitled competencies for the purpose of this framework) needed for this strand to support professional development.

Speech, language and communication are vital skills for all children and young people to develop, so it is important that people working with children are aware of this. In 2008, the Communication Trust developed the Speech, Language and Communication Framework (SLCF). This sets out the skills and knowledge needed by people who work with children and young people so that they understand the importance of communication, how to support its development and how to identify and effectively work with children and young people who have particular needs in these areas.

To gain skills and knowledge, professional development opportunities are essential. Often, the way this is done is through attending a training course. However, this is not always possible: there are often cost and time issues; not everyone in a setting may have an opportunity to attend and sharing the learning amongst a team may be difficult. Additionally, in some cases formal training may not actually be the most effective way to develop skills in practice.

There are many ways to develop your skills and knowledge – through working and talking with others, sharing ideas and practice, trying things out and seeing what makes a difference. However, it can be difficult to know where to start and although there may be information available, it can be challenging to find exactly what is most relevant for you and your work. This booklet has been developed to provide some simple and structured ways to develop your skills and knowledge in speech, language and communication, linked to the SLCF. You may have already used the SLCF online to help evaluate your current skills.

For each skill or area of knowledge (called competences on the SLCF), there are 5 recommended steps, which follow a model of adult learning. We firstly give you some **background** – why this might be important or relevant to work on.

1. Then we give **information** or links to useful sources which are relevant for the competence.
2. **Summarising** what you have read or looked at is the next useful step.
3. We then suggest some ways that you might **try this out in your practice**. These are structured activities to try to link the information into your real working practice.
4. **Reflection** is important to see how things went and what difference your learning may make.
5. Finally, we recommend that you think about your **next steps**– perhaps how to put your learning into your practice more consistently or looking at further skills you would like to develop. It's a good idea to go back to the SLCF and update your evaluation at this point too.

We hope that information and activities here are simple and clear and relevant to different roles and settings, so you can develop knowledge and practice easily and well. However, these suggestions are not moderated or accredited. We would strongly recommend as good practice, that when you use the booklets you have contact wherever possible with appropriately qualified professionals, to support the quality of your learning and development of your practice. These will be practitioners with recognised experience and knowledge in this area and may include Speech and Language Therapists, specialist teachers, advisors, and lead practitioners for communication.

Universal C1

Be aware of and use positive ways to communicate with children and young people where you work

Background

It is difficult to imagine a role working with children and young people which doesn't rely on communication skills. Indeed, many policies, occupational standards and qualifications include effective communication with children and young people as a central part. However, even with this, it is something which can easily and often be taken for granted.

1. Information

The Common Core of skills and knowledge for the Children's workforce has a range of information on general communication skills

www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/assets/0000/9007/CommonCore_FINAL.pdf

There may be other useful information available from local sources.

2. Summarise

Make a list of key ways to communicate positively with the children or young people you work with. Aim for at least 5 and include ways of focusing on both talking and listening.

3. Take it into practice

The following activities are designed to help you learn more about positive communication with children and young people and to think about how you can use this more in your work. It's really important to use reliable references and information to support your activities and wherever possible to discuss your ideas with other professionals particularly those with experience in supporting speech, language and communication. Choose one which would suit you and your work.

- ✓ Use your list to consider what works well in your practice with children or young people. Identify if there are approaches you would like to use more or differently. Write a plan showing how you might do this.
- ✓ Choose one of the positive ways to communicate with children that you currently use. Describe an example of when you have used it and what the result was. Consider and note ways you could improve or extend this.
- ✓ Choose one of the ways to communicate with children that you don't currently use. Make a brief plan for how you could introduce it into your work. Try it out – make a note of what you

did, the context and what the effect was for the child you were working with. Consider and note ways you could improve or extend this.

- ✓ With appropriate permissions, record some of your working (either audio or video) or ask a colleague to observe you for a short time. Use your list of ways to communicate positively as a checklist to show which ways you are currently using in your practice. Identify ways which are effective or useful and show how you could improve or extend your communication with children further.

4. Reflection

- What did you find out about positive ways to communicate with children and young people?
- What did you notice about your current practice?
- If you tried out new or different ways of communicating with children, how did this affect your conversation or interaction with them? Did the quality of the interaction change? Was the child or young person more involved? Ask the child or young person their views.
- Highlight one way in which your learning about positive ways to communicate could improve your practice.
- Has this improved your understanding, skills or confidence in positive communication with children and young people?

5. Next steps

- Write down one way to communicate positively with children or young people that you will include in your work.
- Consider how you could share your learning with others.
- What would you like to focus on or develop further?

Universal C2

Be aware of some of the positive features which promote a positive communication environment

Background

The physical environment, including the adults within it, can support children's speech, language and communication in many ways. It is therefore important that we look carefully at the environments children are in to see:

- what supports their speech, language and communication well
- what could be improved
- how we could make these improvements.

There are a number of resources and information sources which focus on the ways in which the environment can support speech, language and communication. They may use terms like:

- communication friendly environments/settings
- communication supportive environments/settings
- language rich environments

Some of these resources include checklists that you can use to audit an environment to see how well it uses approaches which support language. Some of these resources are available to download free of charge; other resources are available to buy. There may also be resources available locally, which may have been developed by local services. For example, many speech and language therapy departments have developed guidance for communication friendly settings and schools. Some resources focus more on a particular age group – although many of the principles are similar for all ages.

1. Information

Read one or more of the recommended resources about how the environment can support speech, language and communication.

Early years:

Early Years Foundation stage – Enabling environments

<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/84399>

<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/84490> (p 41)

Every Child a Talker: guidance for early language led practitioners – page 40

<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/153355>

Early Years and primary (although principles also applicable beyond this)

Communication Friendly environments

www.symbolsinclusionproject.org/resources/classroom/cfe/index.htm

Communication Friendly Spaces www.elizabethjarmanltd.co.uk

Is your school communication friendly? This is a resource with a range of information focusing on making schools communication friendly for pupils with SLCN.

www.afasicengland.org.uk/?s=communication+friendly

All ages

www.talkingpoint.org.uk/for%20professionals/adapting%20the%20environment.aspx

This looks at key features of the environment to support children with Speech, language and Communication needs (SLCN) but this is also applicable to many other children.

The Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) also contains useful information along with an audit for communication friendly environments.

2. Summarise

Make a list of some of the features of an environment which supports speech, language and communication. It's good to aim for at least five. Remember to include how adults and their language are also important in the environment.

3. Take it into practice - choose from:

The following activities are designed to help you learn more about the features of a positive communication environment and to think about how you can use this more in your work. It's really important to use reliable references and information to support your activities and wherever possible to discuss your ideas with other professionals particularly those with experience in supporting speech, language and communication. Choose one which would suit you and your work.

- ✓ Design a booklet or poster for your setting, showing some of the key features of the environment which can positively support speech, language and communication.
- ✓ Draw a simple diagram of your setting, or a particular part of it, and label it to show how the environment currently supports speech, language and communication. In a different colour, draw and label ways this support could be extended or improved.
- ✓ Take photographs of your setting (with appropriate permissions) showing the ways in which the environment currently supports speech, language and communication. Make a simple plan of two ways you could improve your environment and how this could be achieved.
- ✓ Using one of the checklists available, (or you could create one from your reading of other resources if you prefer) and with agreement from your workplace, carry out an audit of how your environment supports speech, language and communication. Identify at least two ways you could improve your environment and describe how this could be achieved. Put this plan into action and note down any differences this made to the children or young people in your setting.

4. Reflection

- Check back to your original information and make sure your ideas fit with the evidence available.
- What have you found out about the environment and speech, language and communication?

- Identify one way this has affected your thinking about the communication environment or practice.

5 Next steps

- Write down one way that you will look to improve your environment in relation to communication.
- Consider how you could share your learning with others.
- What would you like to focus on or develop further?

Universal C3

Be aware of some positive strategies to support speech, language and communication development of children and young people you work with

Background

Speech, language and communication skills develop through children and young people interacting with others, so adults have a crucial role in helping all children and young people to develop, improve and use these skills.

Anyone working with children and young people can support speech, language and communication development. For some people, this will be a major part of their role and the focus on supporting communication development throughout will be high. For others, this will be a smaller part of their work, but it is important for everyone to know of some straightforward ways to support the speech, language and communication development of the children and young people they work with and to be able to make the most of opportunities across the working day.

1. Information

Read one or more of the information sources recommended. There may also be information available locally which will be useful. Choose information which is most relevant to the age of children you work with.

The Talking Point website has a wealth of information on speech, language and communication. There are three sections which may be particularly useful:

<http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/en/Teachers.aspx>

This includes information for professionals working in education, highlighting ways to support speech, language and communication.

<http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/Parent.aspx>

This is aimed at parents, but has some great information on simple and fun ways to support speech, language and communication in lots of different contexts.

<http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/Teachers/Ages%20and%20stages.aspx>

The ideas on ways to support speech, language and communication development in this section are specifically linked to different ages and stages of development, giving clear ways of how to help children move forward in their communication development.

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists also provide an information leaflet, relating to a child's development:

<http://www.rcslt.org/docs/free-pub/helpyourchildtotalk.pdf>

Specifically aimed at early communication development, the Talk to your Baby website has a number of different resources for parents and practitioners which you may find useful.

<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/talk-to-your-baby/resources/1515-supporting-childrens-early-language-development-and-communication-skills>

<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/talk-to-your-baby/resources/external-resources>

2. Summarise

Make a list of strategies which you think are particularly useful or important. Try to aim for at least five. It's good if you can include ones which would support understanding as well as talking, but the exact areas you might cover will change depending on the age of the children or young people you work with.

3. Take it into practice

The following activities are designed to help you learn more about strategies to support speech, language and communication development and to think about how you can use this more in your work. It's really important to use reliable references and information to support your activities and wherever possible to discuss your ideas with other professionals particularly those with experience in supporting speech, language and communication. Choose one which would suit you and your work.

- ✓ Choose a strategy. Write down what it is; who you will use it with and how you will use it. Write some brief information about why you have chosen this particular strategy and what you would hope to see when you have been using it for a while.
- ✓ Think about different areas of speech, language and communication (for example, speech, listening, understanding, talking, communicating with others – the exact areas may vary depending on the age of the children you work with). Choose a strategy from each area and make a table which shows what each strategy is, how you would use it and who with. Identify what you would hope to see from using each strategy for a while.
- ✓ Design an information leaflet for a colleague highlighting different strategies that would be relevant to use with the children you work with.
- ✓ Choose one of the strategies you have found out about. Plan how you would introduce this into your practice. Include information on the age of the children you work with, along with when and how you would use the strategy. Try the strategy in practice a number of times. Note down how you felt it worked and what differences there may have been for the child/ren you used it with (bear in mind, some strategies won't have instant results). Ask the child/ren what they thought too.

4. Reflection

- Check back to your original information to make sure your ideas fit with the evidence available.
- What have you found out about strategies which support speech, language and communication development?

- Identify one way this has affected your thinking or practice in using strategies to support speech, language and communication development of the children you work with.

5. Next steps

- Write down one way that you will look to use strategies to support speech, language and communication development in your work in the future.
- Consider how you could share your learning with others.
- What would you like to focus on or develop further?

Universal C4

Be aware of the role of communication in seeking the views of children and young people

Background

In working with children and young people, it is now widely established that it is important to consult with them and find out their views, particularly about the work we are doing with them and issues that may be particularly important to them.

In practice, this may happen through a range of different strategies, such as discussion, interviews, questionnaires, observation and written records.

1. Information

Children Now have developed a participation charter, which is described at:

www.cypnow.co.uk/news/562808/Participation+participation+charter

For children with special educational needs (SEN), there is information about participation in the SEN Toolkit. Some of this would also be relevant to children and young people who do not have SEN.

www.teachernet.gov.uk/doc/4609/Toolkit%20%20Text.pdf

There is some detailed information about consultation, including different ways to ask children and young people their views at:

[www.family-](http://www.family-friendly.net/downloads/Guidelines_2_Consulting%20with%20children%20&%20young%20people.pdf)

[friendly.net/downloads/Guidelines_2_Consulting%20with%20children%20&%20young%20people.pdf](http://www.family-friendly.net/downloads/Guidelines_2_Consulting%20with%20children%20&%20young%20people.pdf)

2. Summarise

Write a summary, using any information you have read, explaining the role of communication in seeking the views of children and young people.

3. Take it into practice:

The following activities are designed to help you learn more about strategies to support speech, language and communication development and to think about how you can use this more in your work. It's really important to use reliable references and information to support your activities and wherever possible to discuss your ideas with other professionals particularly those with experience in supporting speech, language and communication. Choose one which would suit you and your work.

- ✓ Choose one of the methods used to find out the views of the children or young people you are working with. Describe how this method works. Show clearly where communication is important in this method.
- ✓ Outline all the methods you use to find out the views of children or young people. Show the role of communication for each of the ways you have described.
- ✓ Plan an activity or time to gain the views of a child or young person you work with. In your planning, explain what you think the role of communication will be in this activity. When you

have completed the activity, describe the different ways in which communication played a role in finding out the child's views.

4. Reflection

- Check back to your original information to make sure your ideas fit with the evidence available.
- What have you found out about the role of communication in getting the views of the children and young people you work with?
- How has this changed your awareness of the role of communication in gaining children's views?

5. Next steps

- Write down one way that your awareness of the role of communication will help when you are gaining the views of the children you work with.
- Consider how you could share your learning with others.
- What would you like to focus on or develop further?

Universal C5

Be aware of the existing systems where you work for collecting appropriate information with regard to speech, language and communication

Background

There are different kinds of information about speech, language and communication that are either useful or important for settings to collect. This may include information about children; information on their development; their current levels of skills or attainment; how they use these in your setting and information or concerns from parents. It gives a clear picture of where a child is, in terms of their SLC development, to help planning, show progress and link communication to other areas of development or learning relevant to your setting. Further, information on children's skills can help to show the effectiveness of support for communication through measuring changes and outcomes. Clear information about children's speech, language and communication is also essential where there are concerns as this will most effectively help to identify children's speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

There are also other sorts of information which may be useful for settings to collect for example: resources or information for staff to share with parents or ways to share skills or knowledge gained by staff through training.

1. Information

A number of national frameworks in England will include systems for collecting information on aspects of speech, language and/or communication, although they may use other terms (for example speaking and listening).

These might include

- The Foundation Stage profile in the Early Years

www.nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/83972

- Assessing pupil progress (APP) materials in schools

www.curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/assessment/Assessing-pupils-progress/index.aspx

- Speaking, Listening, Learning: Working with children in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2

www.nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/84856

Other UK countries will use different frameworks.

It is likely that there may be locally developed systems for collecting information which may be particularly relevant for your work.

2. Summarise

Make a list of any systems where you work for collecting information on speech, language and communication.

3. Take it into practice

The following activities are designed to help you learn more about the systems for collecting information on children's speech, language and communication and to think about how you can use this more in your work. It's really important to use reliable references and information to support your activities and wherever possible to discuss your ideas with other professionals particularly those with experience in supporting speech, language and communication. Choose one which would suit you and your work.

- ✓ Find out what information on speech, language and communication is collected in your setting and how. Explain how this fits it with other systems to collect information on children in your setting and show clearly what your role in this is.
- ✓ Write an information leaflet for new staff, explaining how information on speech, language and communication is collected where you work. (If you wish to use this in your work place, please ensure you check with your line manager first.)
- ✓ If your workplace does not have a system/s to collect information on speech, language and communication, in discussion with your manager, and if appropriate to your role make a plan showing why this would be important and outline how one could be developed

4. Reflection

- Check back to your original information to make sure your ideas fit with the evidence available.
- What have you found out about collecting information about children and young people's speech, language and communication in your work place?
- How has your awareness about information collection about speech, language and communication in your setting changed?

5 Next steps

- Write down one way that your awareness of the way information about speech, language and communication is collected in your setting will help your practice.
- Consider how you could share your learning with others.
- What would you like to focus on or develop further?