

Communication difficulties – Facts and Stats



How many children and young people are affected?

- In the UK, over 1 million children and young people – that's 2 – 3 in every UK classroom – have some form of long term and persistent speech, language and communication difficulty. *This can affect them early, severely and for life.*
- In areas of poverty, over 50% of children are starting school with delayed communication skills. Their speech may be unclear, vocabulary is smaller, sentences are shorter and they are able to understand only simple instructions. *Many of these children can catch up with the right support.*

What do parent and the children's workforce know?

- A poll undertaken by I CAN showed that only 43% of parents of 0 - 5 years olds were able to correctly identify the stages of communication.
- A YouGov poll, undertaken by The Communication Trust, of 349 teachers found that only 27% had received training around speech, language and communication and 81% felt they would benefit from more training on this issue.
- The *Bercow Review of Services for Children and Young people with Speech, Language and Communication Needs* (2008) found that 77% of parents who responded did not get the information and support they needed when they needed it.
- It also found that 12% said that they 'needed to know where to look'. Many felt alone because speech, language and communication needs was not understood by frontline staff (health visitors, doctors, early years and teachers) or family members.

What is the impact of long term communication difficulties?

- 50-90% of children with persistent speech, language and communication difficulties go on to have reading difficulties.

The impact – continued

- Two thirds of 7 -14 year olds with serious behaviour problems have language impairment.
- At least 60% of young people in young offender institutions have communication difficulties.
- Those with a history of early language impairment are at higher risk of mental health problems e.g. 2.7 times more likely of having a social phobia by age 19.
- The Bercow Review (2008) found that at the end of primary school, although nearly 80% of all children achieve the expected level in English, just 25% of children with long term communication difficulties reach that level – a gap of almost 55%.
- This review also found that at the end of Key Stage 4, the ‘attainment gap’ between children with communication difficulties and their peers is marked. Just 15% of children with communication difficulties achieve 5 GCSE A*- C or equivalent compared to 57% of all young people.
- When language difficulties are resolved by the age of 5 and a half, students are more likely to go on to develop good reading and spelling skills. This good performance continues throughout their school careers and they pass as many exams on leaving school as children without a history of speech, language and communication difficulties.

What is the impact of delayed language?

- A landmark US research found that by 4 a child in a professional family has experienced 45 million words. A child in a family receiving welfare support has experienced 13 million words.
- 2010 research showed that Low income children lag their middle income counterparts at school entry by nearly one year in vocabulary. The gap in language is very much larger than gaps in other cognitive skills.
- Communication skills are well known as an area of weakness among many young people (CBI).

- A study by the London School of Economics for the Prince's Trust estimated that the cost to the economy of educational underachievement is around £18 billion a year.

How does that 10% of children affected break down?

It is estimated that 10% of all children have long term of persistent speech, language and communication difficulties. This is often known as speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)

This includes:

- 7% of children who have speech, language and communication difficulties as their main difficulty. This is also referred to as specific language impairment and is often severe and complex. *There is no obvious reason or cause for these difficulties with language, and their non verbal skills are often well developed.*
- 3% of children who have speech, language and communication difficulties as part of another condition such as autism, hearing impairment, general learning difficulties etc.
- Of these children, an estimated 1% of children have the most severe and complex speech, language and communication difficulties, which prevent them from expressing their basic needs.

Children with speech, language and communication difficulties represent the most prevalent type of special education need amongst primary school pupils with statements of special educational need

NB: References can be provided.