Progression Tools: FAQs

• **What are the speech, language and communication Progression Tools?**

We know some children and young people can have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) that can impact on their ability to listen, understand and express themselves. However, it's not always easy to judge how well a child or young person is progressing with these skills; children and young people may have good skills in one area whilst struggling in others.

The Progression Tools aim to support teaching staff (and other staff who work directly with children such as early years practitioners) to identify children and young people who may be struggling to develop their speech, language and communication skills. They can also be used to track progression of these skills over time or following interventions.

The Tools are based on theoretical information on typical language development and also on the Communication Trust's *Universally Speaking* booklets (www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/universallyspeaking).They aim to provide a relatively quick way of determining where children/young people are against where they should be for their age and provide more information about how these vital skills are progressing.

The Tools are **not** a diagnostic tool and do not in any way replace the detailed speech, language and communication assessment by a speech and language therapist that some children/young people will need. However, they will provide information to help practitioners decide whether children/young people would benefit from a targeted intervention or whether they need specialist assessment and support.

• **How were the Tools developed?**

The Progression Tools were developed by specialists in speech, language and communication in collaboration with mainstream teachers, teaching assistants, SENCOs and school leadership teams. They have been tested on a large number of mainstream schools and settings, on a range of children and young people. The feedback we have received has been invaluable in shaping the final suite of Tools.

• **Who should use the Tools?**

The Tools are for non speech and language specialists who regularly work with children and young people in a variety of mainstream settings, such as teachers, teaching assistants and early years practitioners. We recommend careful reading of the instructions and familiarisation with the Tool before using it directly with children.

We have also produced a free training video (www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/ptfilm). Practitioners who are going to use any of the tools should watch this for further guidance before using the tools. The video

includes guidance on questions, observations and scoring as well as examples of best practice.

• How should I use the Tools?

The Tools are designed to be used on a one-to-one basis with the child or young person. The Tools have 2 main sections, questions and observations. Question sections are designed so that practitioners are able to work through each question easily with each child or young person. The observations section asks more general questions about how the child/young person communicates in other situations, such as in the classroom. This is to be completed by a member of staff who knows the child or young person and who is able to make realistic judgements through observations or knowledge of them.

The direct questions are designed to be completed in 1 session - but for the age 3 Progression Tool, some practitioners worked through the whole tool in one 30 minute session whilst others delivered the tool in two shorter sessions. The practitioners know the child best. If the child is getting fidgety, it is best to stop the tool and start again at another time. All other ages should be completed in 1 session – if the child/young person is unable to do this, it will suggest that there could be a problem and should be noted down.

• What ages are the Tools for?

There is a set of **8** Tools. Each Tool contains a colour reference booklet with instructions on how to use it, questions to ask the children or young people, guidance on how to observe their behaviour, and methods to track their results.

Practitioners will also receive black and white copies of the questions and observations sections and the scoring tables. These are for practitioners to photocopy and write on as many times as they wish for the number of children/young people they use the Tool with.

The following Tools are available to order:

- ➢ **Age 3**
- ➢ **Age 4**
- ➢ **Age 5-6**
- ➢ **Age 7-8**
- ➢ **Age 9-10**
- ➢ **Age 11-12**
- ➢ **Age 13-14**
- ➢ **Age 16-18**

• How can I order the Tools?

Please go to **www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/shop** to order. You can pay by credit card or for orders over £30 you can request an invoice.

How much do the Tools cost?

Each Progression Tool is being sold at a price of £29.99 plus postage and packaging. You can also order 4 Tools and receive a 15% discount. The 3 secondary tools (Age 11-12; Age 13-14 & Age 16-18) are available as a set at the introductory price of £76.47

How do I score the Tools?

Guidance is provided in each Tool to work out a score for each question:

- Scores are added together to give a total score for each aspect of language
- These totals can be summarised in the summary table and plotted on to the profile chart

Although examples are given to support marking and scoring, it is impossible to give every response a child or young person might make. It is useful therefore for practitioners to have a look at what they are expected to be able to do; this is stated at the beginning of each question. This, the guidance and the examples will help practitioners score the answers. It would be useful to read through the specific scoring guidelines before they use the tool. (Each practitioner should also watch the scoring guidance provided in the training video).

How do the Tools link to/complement the National Curriculum?

Primary

The new national curriculum in relation to spoken language is quite unusual. In different areas of the curriculum it gives a year by year breakdown of the content to be covered in the programme of study. For spoken language however, the programme of study is a series of statements which are meant to apply across every year from years 1-6, but which schools will need to differentiate according to the ages of the children they teach. Schools will therefore need to develop their own descriptors about progression within spoken language, something many schools will find challenging.

The Progression Tools will be essential to help schools understand what progression in spoken language should look like for 5-18 year olds. The different areas of speech, language and communication outlined in the Progression Tools: *Understanding of Spoken Language; Understanding and Using Vocabulary; Sentences; Story-telling and Narrative; Speech and Social Interaction* should link in to the different areas of spoken language covered by the programme of study, although there's often less of a focus on understanding spoken language in the programme of study than there is in our resources.

Progression Tools could show evidence of progress relative to the national curriculum and the value of Speech and Language Therapy, because they are more detailed and developmentally based than the new national curriculum is set out to be.

Secondary

Key stage 3: Spoken English

Pupils should be taught to:
- o speak confidently and effectively, including through:
- o using Standard English confidently in a range of formal and informal contexts, including classroom discussion
- o giving short speeches and presentations, expressing their own ideas and keeping to the point
- o participating in formal debates and structured discussions, summarising and/or building on what has been said
- o improvising, rehearsing and performing play scripts and poetry in order to generate languages and discuss language use and meaning, using role, intonation, tone, volume, mood, silence, stillness and action to add impact

Key stage 4: Spoken language
The national curriculum for English reflects the importance of spoken language in pupils' development across the whole curriculum - cognitively, socially and linguistically. Spoken language continues to underpin the development of pupils' reading and writing during key stage 4 and teachers should therefore ensure pupils' confidence and competence in this area continue to develop. Pupils should be taught to understand and use the conventions for discussion and debate, as well as continuing to develop their skills in working collaboratively with their peers to discuss reading, writing and speech across the curriculum.

Spoken English - Pupils should be taught to:
- o speak confidently, audibly and effectively, including through:
- o using Standard English when the context and audience require it
- o working effectively in groups of different sizes and taking on required roles, including leading and managing discussions, involving others productively, reviewing and summarising, and contributing to meeting goals/deadlines
- o listening to and building on the contributions of others, asking questions to clarify and inform, and challenging courteously when necessary
- o planning for different purposes and audiences, including selecting and organising information and ideas effectively and persuasively for formal spoken presentations and debates

- o listening and responding in a variety of different contexts, both formal and informal, and evaluating content, viewpoints, evidence and aspects of presentation
- o improvising, rehearsing and performing play scripts and poetry in order to generate language and discuss language use and meaning, using role, intonation, tone, volume, mood, silence, stillness and action to add impact

- **How does the age 3 Tools link to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)?**

One of the prime areas in the English Early Years Foundation Stage is *communication and language*. The age 3 Tool provides an opportunity to identify whether children are developing in line with their age in this area.

Within *communication and language*, the early learning goals (ELG) are based around: o
    Listening and attention: Skills for this ELG can be monitored in the sections focusing on:
        - Understanding spoken language
        - Social interaction

   o **Understanding**: Skills for this ELG can be monitored in the sections focusing on:
        -Understanding and using vocabulary
        - Understanding spoken language

   o **Speaking:** Skills for this ELG can be monitored in the sections focusing on:
        - Understanding and using vocabulary
        - Sentences
        - Storytelling and narrative
        - Speech sounds

In addition, elements of this tool provide an understanding of how children are developing in the area of *personal, social and emotional development* and underlying skills for *literacy*.

- **Is there training to use the Tools?**

A training video has been produced by the Trust, which supports practitioners to use the Progression Tools. The Progression Tools are like nothing else on the market; they are for non-specialists to use and are a useful way for teachers, teaching assistants and early years practitioners to track the speech, language and communication development of the children and young people they work with. The Tools are especially useful to identify children and young people who aren't progressing as well as previously thought.

The video introduces the Tools and showcase why it's important to use the Tools, whilst providing an overview of how to use the Tools and how to complete the scoring, as well as where to go for more information once the tools have been completed.

The video is available on our YouTube channel and via the following link:
www.thecommunicationstrust.org.uk/ptfilm.

- **How do the Tools link to the SEND Reforms?**

In line with the SEND Code of Practice 2014, the Progression Tools can support schools with:

Identifying and monitoring pupils who require SEN support
Encouraging teaching and support staff to be responsible for the SEN needs of the children in their class
Identifying and supporting staff training needs
Developing a whole school approach to SEND

www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/sendreforms

- **Who do I contact for more information?**

For any enquiries about ordering the Progression Tools please contact **enquiries@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk**