Key policy and research pack

**SLCN Outcome Tool:**

Working with me, my family and services to:

- Track my progress
- Measure the outcomes that matter to me and my family
- Grow the evidence base for interventions
The National Prospectus Grants Programme 2015-16:
The RCSLT SLCN Outcome Project

KEY POLICY AND RESEARCH PACK
Key legislation, policy and research
We have prepared this short document to provide you with the context from which the RCSLT SLCN Outcome Project concept has been developed.

The Children and Families Act 2014
The Children and Families Act, which came into force on the 1 September 2014, introduced the largest reforms for a generation in the way children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are supported in England.

The reforms, which are currently being implemented locally, seek to:

- Change and improve the way children with SEND and their parents are supported by their local council, health and social care services.
- Place children and parents at the heart of the system
- Introduce greater choice and control over the support they receive

These objectives will be delivered by introducing:

- Greater collaboration between professionals, and with families
- Faster, smoother processes
- Personalisation of services including bespoke solutions and personal budgets
- Greater involvement of children, young people and families in decision making

As part of the legislation, the scope of SEND policy has now been extended to cover children and young people from birth to 25 years.

A key change for practitioners is that statements of special educational needs have been replaced by the new Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan). EHC plans must state the outcomes sought for the child or young person, which should enable them to move towards the long-term aspirations of employment or higher education, independent living and community participation.

The act also emphasises the importance of the joint planning and commissioning of services to ensure close co-operation between education, health and social care. These services should provide for all children, through a combination of universal, targeted and specialist services; while the majority of children will only access universal services, children with special educational needs and disabilities, are likely to access a combination of all three. Diagram 1 (below) illustrates how the range of services and the needs of the child population interface (Gascoigne M., 2006; RCSLT Position Paper)
It is important therefore to recognise the role of universal services in supporting children and young people with special educational needs, including those with and without EHC Plans.

Key Communication, Language and Social and Emotional Development Research

National Epidemiological data indicates that SLCN is one of the most common childhood disabilities. 7% of children aged about 5 years have specific speech and language impairment (Tomblin et al 1997, Law et al (2000). It is estimated that a further 1.8% (1753 per 100,000 population) have SLCN linked to other conditions such as learning disability, cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorders (taken from Enderby et al 2013).

There is strong evidence that the prevalence of SLCN is much higher in socially disadvantaged areas. Studies have demonstrated that in some areas upwards of 50% of children may start school with impoverished speech, language and communication skills (Lee, 2013).

Furthermore, there is growing recognition, both nationally and locally, of the impact that SLCN can have on other aspects of children and young people’s development, including social and emotional development:

- There is a significant association between vocabulary difficulties at five, with poor literacy, mental health and employment outcomes at age 34 (Law et al, 2009)
- A study by Elliot found that 88% of long term unemployed young men have SLCN (Elliot, 2009)
- Research into a child with SEN and communication disability showed the total cost to society was £153,687 for two custodial sentences before 16 years of age (Audit Commission, 2004)

See table 1, below, for more research on the impact and consequence of language delay.
Table 1: The Impact and consequence of language delay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Impact and consequence of language delay</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor social competence</td>
<td>Mok et al., 2014</td>
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<td></td>
<td>St Clair et al., 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor attention skills</td>
<td>Petersen et al., 2013</td>
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<td>Social and emotional problems</td>
<td>St Clair et al., 2011</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Conti-Ramsden &amp; Botting 2008</td>
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<td>Poor academic achievement</td>
<td>Johnson et al., 2010</td>
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<td>Psychiatric disorders</td>
<td>Clegg et al., 2005</td>
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<td>Behavioural problems</td>
<td>Petersen et al., 2013</td>
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<td>Maggio et al., 2013</td>
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<td>Goh &amp; O’ Kearney, 2012</td>
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<td>St Clair et al., 2011</td>
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<td>Lindsay et al., 2007</td>
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<td>Cognitive outcomes</td>
<td>Vugs et al., 2014</td>
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<td>Poor development of literacy</td>
<td>Stoeckel et al., 2014</td>
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<td>Elbro et al., 2011</td>
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<td>Lewis et al., 2011</td>
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<td>Johnson et al. 2010</td>
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<td>Nathan et al., 2004</td>
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The Bercow Report

In 2008 The Bercow Report: A review of services for children/young people and young people (0-19) with speech, language and communication needs was released (Bercow, 2008). The report suggests better understanding of normal speech and language development is needed, and makes recommendations for universal provision, particularly in the early years. The final report contains 40 recommendations that are divided along five key themes:

- communication is crucial
- early identification and intervention are essential
- a continuum of services designed around the family is needed
- joint working is critical
- the current system is characterised by high variability and a lack of equity

The above themes and the recommendations are designed to improve the understanding and delivery of services, while highlighting that high level speech, language and communication services are in the nation’s best interest.
The Better Communication Research Programme (BCRP) was commissioned as part of the Better Communication Action Plan, the Government response to the Bercow review. It was designed as a programme of research that was rigorous but also of direct relevance and usefulness to practitioners, researchers, policy makers and commissioners, and to the parents and young people with SLCN themselves. In particular the BCRP addressed the following issues as a basis for developing recommendations for future policy and practice and guidance for some areas of practice:

- The trajectories of children/young people with SLCN over time, in differing contexts.
- The support and interventions being offered currently by schools and by speech and language therapists.
- The evidence base for current practice including indicative costs.
- The perspectives of parents and children/young people regarding the services they use and the outcomes they value. (Lindsay et al, 2012)
References


Lindsay, G., Dockrell, J., Law, J., Roulstone, S. (2012) The Better Communication Research Programme: Improving provision for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs


Gascoigne, M. (2006) Supporting children with speech, language and communication needs within integrated children’s services: position paper, London: Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists


