Examples of Good Practice and Case Studies

There is a wide range of other guidance available to help practitioners deliver the reforms which Communicating the Code seeks to add to rather than duplicate. Follow this link to find additional resources and support. This document can also be downloaded from our website here.
Children and Young People at the Centre

Pen pictures/ communication passports
These will vary according to the context it will be used, and the needs of the individual. They can vary in length and format and can also be made digitally in which case video and/or audio files could be included, and this would give useful information about the individual in different settings. Usually they are written in the first person, and tend to be made up of several distinct sections which may include:

- Appreciation: what people like and admire about the child or young person, their character and talents
- What is important to the individual: what matters to them from their perspective about school and life
- How to support: expertise shared by parents, staff and the student too, about how to get the best out of the student
- Possibly also further information about communication/ health needs/ eating and drinking skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photo of Sam</th>
<th>What’s great about me!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I like being with my family and playing with my dog, Susie.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am fun to be with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am a great dancer, and a good artist!!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s important to me</th>
<th>How you can support me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking to school with my friend Sophie.</td>
<td>I get worried about changes to any routines, and need warning that this is going to happen before it does.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing pictures and being able to take them home.</td>
<td>I need time to process what you have said. You can do this by: asking a question and then waiting; giving me one piece of information at a time, and using simple language. Using pictures helps me too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having time to tell you about what I did last night, when I get to school.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Developing Outcomes

Innovative and creative approaches are called for, informed by the interests, SLCN and learning level of the child or young person. Many of these approaches can be used to encourage the child or young person’s participation in general, and not just to inform outcome setting:

- Using **Talking Mats** can be very helpful in working out outcomes with a child or young person. It enables a shared reference, and taking a photo of the mat or using the Talking Mat app means there is a visual record of what the individual has said to refer back to. See [www.talkingmats.com](http://www.talkingmats.com) for more information on using this approach.

- **Sorting tasks** could be used dependent on the understanding level of the individual and your knowledge of him or her; consider beforehand a range of statements written simply and/or in symbol form, e.g. “I like playing with my sister”, “I am good at writing”, “my teachers use tricky words” and so on.

- Ask the child or young person to choose ones that are true for him or her, and to put those in their personal box or bag. Or have one box with a smiley face for “agree” and one with a grumpy face for “disagree” (but test these concepts are understood well first!). You can then use your findings for further discussion, or as another means of capturing what is true for the individual right now, and what skills can be built upon.

- **Arts-based methods** can be effective in giving children and young people time and space to reflect upon what is going well, and what could be better. The BCRP invited children to draw pictures of themselves including family members, where they lived and any pets. This was then used as a basis for discussion with the individual about what they like about themselves, etc. Older children were asked to draw a good day, a bad day and a perfect day, as a way to extrapolate information about what is important to them, and what could be improved for them.

- One school used a **small group** session around making a one-page profile to engage the children in thinking about what is important to them, and any changes they would make. The group focussed on one item at a time, e.g. “what is good now” with lots of symbol resources and other pictures available to them to choose from for their pictures (or help to draw their own). Again, this led to each child having a tangible record that could be reflected upon for further discussion or to assist in outcome setting.
Communicating The Code
Children and Young People at the Centre

• Quality of Life measures may be useful going forwards in providing a baseline for a child or young person in order to measure progress over time. As yet, although there are many in existence, the majority are not aimed at capturing SLCN. The “Index of Inclusion” has an informal questionnaire designed to capture children and young people’s views on inclusion within school, and may be helpful in looking at how the environment supports SLC currently. The index can be accessed online at: www.csie.org.uk/resources/inclusion-index-explained.shtml

Other approaches:

• **Observation** schedules/listening to what children say spontaneously

• **Role-play** situations with/without puppets

• **Story telling** with/or without puppets or give children an unfinished story to complete

• Children/young people can be given statements or pictures to decide which go at the top of the **ladder** (important can be represented by a smiley face) and which go at the bottom (less important - sad face).

• **Happy/sad/blank** faces to represent how children feel or agree/disagree with a statement/picture.

• **Photographs** – taken by the child or young person as a starting point for an interview, as a way of recording information, to create a “story” of children’s opinions.

• **Tours and map making** – e.g. where do you live/go? who do you talk to? where is it easier/harder to talk and why?

• **Making videos/WebPages/Podcasts together.**

• **Group activity** such as: adults to make statements, then children to run and join the team they agree with e.g. join x if you think… join y if you think...

• Make a **road map/school map/community map** and mark on the areas the child or young person goes, people they are with, where is it easy/difficult to communicate. You could put a green sticker on the easy places, red for the tricky, yellow for ones in between and discuss afterward.

• **Sentence completion:** have some sentence starters for the child or young person to finish off, e.g. “I like / don’t like talking because…”, “I like / don’t like talking about…”, “If I don’t understand I…”, “When I get stuck saying a word I…”, “At home I talk to…”, “At school I talk to…”, “I am good at…”, “I need help with..”, “I like / I don’t like…”.
Case Study
Mark is 12 years old. He has a severe speech disorder and uses an Ipad alongside his speech to communicate. Using talking mats, Mark identified that he wants to be able to go to his local shop by himself to buy items his mum needs. This is an outcome that matters to him, and motivates him. Short-term targets to achieve this outcome were worked out by his school team and parents as follows:

- Money skills: Mark to work out what he wants to buy and how much it would cost, and to identify the coins he would need.

- Communication skills: ensure the relevant vocabulary is on his device and he knows how to access and use it. Role-play shopping scenarios, and how to repair any exchanges that go wrong.

- Real-life practice: mum to take him to the shop regularly, give him items to find independently, and allow him to go first to purchase the items.

Success with these targets is monitored, progress reviewed but all are focused on Mark’s ultimate outcome.

Case Study
Sarah is 17 years old and has moderate learning difficulties and associated SLCN. She has difficulties with her memory and organising herself to carry out tasks. At school she likes cookery. School have identified using symbols to support, that Sarah would like to be better at baking cakes, and to manage more independently. This was her main outcome. Steps towards this were put in place by the school as follows:

- Sarah to learn and remember the key ingredients using symbol support. Shopping for ingredients with her parents, and at school has also formed part of the plan.

- To sequence the steps involved, and initially this is scaffolded using symbols arranged from left (first) to right (last). This includes setting the timer and washing up. Staff to gradually reduce prompts and support.

- To extend this into baking other things, and also into selling the cakes at the school fair.
Engaging with Parents

- Joint activities with parents can provide a good opportunity for them and practitioners to build up a strong and collaborative working relationship. Developing pen pictures jointly can be a good way to draw upon parent’s knowledge and expertise of their child, and assist with transitions. It also enables the parent to share what is difficult and what works, and to feel listened to by the setting.

- Practitioners asking the right questions of parents can help greatly to give a holistic view of the child or young person, and their functional abilities, e.g.:
  - How does x show you what he wants?
  - How does x refuse or say “no”?
  - What have you tried at home already? Did it work?
  - What strategies do you find helpful at home?
  - What support do you need to help your child?
  - What support do you think your child needs?
  - What are your hopes for your child this year and for the future?
  - The information gained from these conversations will help greatly in outcome setting, and enable a shared understanding of the individual.

- Asking parents and families for information on the child / young person’s interests and home life is useful too. For example: people who are important to them, places they like to go, what interests them and so on. This will help greatly with planning for conversations with the child or young person but also give a good hook into topics of interest too.

- Evidence needs to be collected of the child or young person’s outcomes that can be shared with parents. This should be accessible and reflect the concerns of parents. This means jargon free, without abbreviations or the use of tables and graphs. It could be presented in many forms depending on the outcome set, such as the use of photos or video footage alongside paper-based systems.
Early Years

- Find out what your professional development needs are and look for ways to gain further professional development in this area. The Speech, Language and Communication Framework (SLCF) can be used to gauge practitioner knowledge and plan training to meet any gaps.

- Ensure you know when and how to refer to local Speech and Language Therapy services. The Talking Point website also has a link to an advice line for individual telephone consultations, and can signpost to local services.

- For best practice, it's useful for settings to have a professional development strategy that includes communication and SLCN. The SLCF is a good starting point for this. It will enable a staff team to identify areas of development need and signpost to relevant training providers.

- Utilise evidence to select appropriate interventions to support young children. The What Works database of evidenced interventions can help you do this.

- Display posters depicting good practices and ‘ages and stages’ in prominent places in nurseries or clinics can keep everyone aware. The Communication Trust has two ‘Cracking the Code posters that can be downloaded here.

- Remember to visit our dedicated Early Years section on our website where we have links to many other early years resources. www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/early-years/.
Case Study

Developing good universal practice for speech, language and communication is important. The Better Communication Research Programme (BCRP) looked at how to ensure the environment for children with SLCN was communication supportive. They summarised the evidence into 3 main areas:

1. **The Language Learning Environment**: the physical environment and learning context

2. **Language Learning Opportunities**: the structured opportunities to support children’s language development

3. **Language Learning Interactions**: the ways in which adults in the setting talk with children

From this “the Communication Supportive Classroom (CSC) Observation Tool” was developed. This is an evidence-based tool that allows staff to profile the language learning environment. It was developed for Key Stage 1 in particular but the structure remains relevant across the key stages and for specialist provisions. Research has shown that whilst the physical environment and the layout of a classroom are often conducive to good language learning, opportunities for students to develop their language skills, and particularly the quality of adult-child language interactions in the classroom are often areas of weakness, and:

“Good classroom organisation to maximise language development needs to be complemented by the fine tuning of oral language interactions by staff.”

**Opportunities include:**

- Small group work
- Interactive book reading
- Structured opportunities for high quality adult verbal input such as discussing, collaborating and problem-solving with students
Universal good interaction practices to develop speech, language and communication skills include:

- Getting down to the child’s level physically
- Confirming the child’s contributions
- Labelling – providing vocabulary in context
- Using appropriate open-ended questions
- Direct language learning (commenting, extending what a child is saying)
- Modelling language responses (such as scripting)
- Supporting listening skills (e.g. calling name first, waiting, establishing eye-contact, reducing background noise)
- Encouraging turn-taking
- Deliberately working on aspects of language such as grammatical skills, vocabulary and narrative

Many schools are focusing on promoting communication skills within their early years provision effectively to reduce barriers to learning further up the school. Screening tools in nursery and reception are used to establish a baseline for children, and language and phonics intervention groups are in place at a targeted level for children at risk of SLCN.

**Speech Link** and **Language Link** are innovative multi-media packages that give teachers and teaching assistants the ability to screen for developmental speech and language difficulties. Information is also given about implementing appropriate support programmes and strategies. Schools are empowered to manage straightforward speech and language delays and to prioritise children who need referral for more specialist support.

Opportunities are taken to incorporate communication within all areas of the school day, for example, instead of a rolling snacktime, which takes away the need to communicate, snacktime is now used to encourage skills such as choice-making, requesting food/drink and social communication skills.
Communication Commitment – Tips

The Communication Commitment provides lots of ideas and resources for schools and is also an avenue for schools to share with one another. Here are a few ideas from Commitment schools:

- Have a ‘communication tips’ folder in every classroom, or on a board in a central place in school where parents and other visitors can see.
- Hold an event for parents to talk with students about how communication skills have been important in their careers.
- Provide all staff with tools to audit their language environment.
- Hold INSET days focused on speech, language and communication.

The Communication Commitment – Case Study

- To assist with identification, it is useful to compare current levels of identification in the school to national evidence on prevalence, so that you can estimate numbers of children/young people you should be seeing. With SLCN, schools can also more effectively interrogate their data based on risk factors for SLCN. It may be useful for your setting to develop a profile in terms of what numbers of SLCN would be expected here e.g. 5-7% of children will have specific difficulties with language and communication. Is this what you are seeing? In an area of social disadvantage the number is likely to be much higher, and could be up to 50% of the intake having delayed speech and language skills. How are you currently identifying these needs?

- Provision mapping can help with planning: assessment and intervention over the four broad areas in the code should look carefully at the balance and distribution of support. These 4 areas are:
  - Communication and Interaction;
  - Cognition and Learning; social,
  - Emotional and Mental health difficulties; and
  - Sensory and Physical needs.

It can certainly be argued that difficulties with communication is likely to impact on or be a feature for many children and young people in all these areas of SEND.
Post 16

- Many secondary schools and FE Colleges are using communication passports within their provision for young people with SEN. These are written jointly with the young person, so that s/he can consider what works for them, and as a way to set outcomes. These are also updated regularly with a member of staff. This process helps staff by setting out clearly strategies that work for the young person, and supporting the partnership between the individual and the setting.

- Helping the young person to prepare for new stages in their lives is essential for smooth transitions. Social Stories can be very useful in setting out for a student at school what the changes are, and through making it together and reading it over time, can provide an internal script to lower anxiety levels. The National Autistic Society has lots of information on how to write social stories with a young person. See www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/strategies-and-approaches/social-stories-and-comic-strip-conversations.aspx for more information.
The Local Offer

Examples of Local Offers from Local authority websites:

**Worcestershire** have published a Local Offer for Speech, Language and Communication Needs in Worcestershire which includes this information about their Universal Services:

It is estimated that 10% of all children and young people have long term or persistent speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) – the most prevalent special educational need identified by primary schools. In addition some schools in deprived areas of Worcestershire have identified 50% of all 5 year olds entering school with delayed receptive language skills. To meet this level of need an integrated whole workforce solution is required. Speech, language and communication is everyone’s business. Worcestershire has adopted *The Balanced System*® framework as it offers a practical and holistic solution to meeting the needs of children and young people. Support is identified at a universal, targeted and specialist level as recommended by the Better Communication Research Programme and the SEN Code of Practice.

**Universal Level**

The universal offer ensures all children have appropriate early language and communication opportunities. At this level:

- Information and guidance is provided to parents and carers to support speech, language and communication skills development. This is available from a number of sources including the Worcestershire SLCN Pathway and the Children’s Speech and Language Therapy Service website and social media feeds.

- All schools and settings identify how they will meet speech, language and communication needs as part of their local offer. Schools utilise the national Communication Commitment to support them in adopting a whole school approach.

- All settings provide children with a communication and language friendly environment. Audits are undertaken utilising appropriate tools, for example audit tools from Worcestershire’s SLCN Pathway, Language for Learning and the Better Communication Research Project.

- All practitioners are trained at a universal level of competency and are able to identify and support speech, language and communication needs.
Hampshire Local Offer has used the resources provided by The Communication Trust to create this page on their Local Offer, which can be accessed if you type ‘communication’ into their search box. It also informs you of a wide range of settings that will provide targeted support to children with ‘delayed speech’, if you put this term into their search box.
Blackpool Local Offer provides information about the specialist services provided by one of The Communication Trust’s members, The British Stammering Association when you type ‘stammer’ into their search box.
The London Borough of Sutton’s Local offer has a variety of services that can be found by searching ‘Communication’ including a full description of their Speech, Language and Communication support team.
Essex Local Offer has a large number of services that are found when searching ‘communication’ and a range of filters can be easily applied to find the services that are most likely to be suitable.
Brighton & Hove’s Local Offer contains information about their Language Support Service and how it works with many other services and professionals:
Camden offers a range of early intervention services at early years settings and these are described in detail, together with access routes, as part of their Local Offer. These services include some that are specifically targeted for children with social and communication difficulties.
Dudley are in the process of mapping their services for children with SEND at school to ensure that services are both consistent and equally available across the Authority. They have included this information in their Local Offer.