

Speech, language and communication: Fundamental for the best place in the world to grow up



The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires all children and young people (CYP) to be able to **express themselves** and **understand information**. Article 12 gives every CYP **the right to say** what they think in all matters affecting them. Article 13 gives them **the freedom to say** what they think and to seek **and receive information** of any kind within the law.

Speech, language and communication (SLC) development underpins wellbeing outcomes - being safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, responsible, respected and included.

SLC development underpins 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) - GIRFEC identifies 'Being able to communicate' as a key aspect of development.

SLC development is a key strand of the Early Years Framework

Early Years Outcome Indicator (16) measures the percentage of children displaying age-appropriate communication skills.

The SLC ability of parents, carers and 'corporate parents' is fundamental to good parenting

Parents' own SLC affects their ability to interact and establish good relationships with their child; to access and benefit from parenting support and other services; and to support their child's SLC development. 82% of parents say more information on how children develop SLC would be helpful.

The Children's Workforce Core Skills framework requires the whole workforce to 'adapt their tone, language and behaviour to suit the circumstances; to include and listen to CYP and families and to ensure they fully understand decisions'

The majority of young people in crisis have SLC difficulties.

For example:

- * More than 60% of children referred to psychiatric services
- * 88% of young unemployed men
- * 26%-70% of young men in Polmont Young Offenders Institute

Unlike other parts of the UK, Scotland has no strategic, coordinated plan to optimise the SLC development of all CYP

Speech and language therapists in action:

Speech and language therapists provide:

* **Universal** and **targeted** training, guidelines, communication accessible advice and curriculum support materials to parents and colleagues across health, education and social care to optimise the speech, language and communication development of **ALL children and young people (CYP)**

* **Specialist** therapy to enable CYP with complex speech, language and communication needs to **understand** and **express themselves** to the best of their ability

Enabling parents to be great parents:

Moray's speech and language therapist-led '**Before Words**' project produces accessible parent information (reading age 9) supports SLC development from pre-birth to sentence building stages. Materials emphasise the relationship between attachment and developing communication in children and help parents to use everyday tasks as opportunities to develop communication. 'Before words' reaches all parents but particularly targets vulnerable families.

Enabling nursery teachers to be great teachers:

Speech and language therapist-led '**Communication Help and Awareness Team**' (**CHAT**) in **Forth Valley** works to enhance the SLC of pre-school children and has been shown to be more advantageous than nursery education alone. Similar programmes in England reduced the percentage of 3-4 year-olds with language delay from 64% in 2004 to 39% in 2010.

Key facts

Need:

More than 10,000 CYP (6% or two per classroom) (0-19) have SLC difficulties. SLC needs are the most common difficulties children face. More than 50% of children living in poverty enter school with SLC delay or disorder.

Economic Impact of speech and language therapy:

Speech and language therapy services can deliver an annual net benefit of at least £58 million to the Scottish economy. Every £1 invested generates £6.40 in savings.

Workforce:

577 whole time equivalent (down 2.4% since 2008) or 60% of SLTs working in Scotland work for CYP. (ISD, Dec. 2012).

Waiting times:

CYP referred to speech and language therapy services wait 27-81 weeks (median 8 weeks) for the first appointment. (ISD, July 2012).

Funding cuts:

50- 60% of speech and language therapy services have experienced funding cuts from health boards and local authorities (RCSLT survey, 2012).

Find out more about speech and language therapy in your area

Contact Kim Hartley, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

49 North Castle Street, Edinburgh, EH2 3BG

kim.hartley@rcslt.org 0131 226 5250

