

Speech, Language and Communication and the Children's Workforce

I CAN Talk Series - Issue 5

The Communication Trust

The purpose of The Communication Trust is to raise awareness of the importance of speech, language and communication across the children's workforce and enable practitioners to access the best training and expertise to support the communication needs of all children.

The Communication Trust was founded by Afasic, Council for Disabled Children, I CAN and the BT Better World Campaign. The DCSF is a major funder of The Communication Trust. This small core group is supported by a number of partners. There are over 20 voluntary and community groups who contribute to the work of the Trust. In addition the Trust is consulting with a number of representatives of the children's workforce, including the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT), the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA).

To ensure that school staff and other members of the children's workforce can access provision, the Trust will promote available training and workforce development programmes through an online enquiry service and training database which will be launched in the spring of 2008.

To find out more:

Cara Evans
Programme Manager
The Communication Trust
Tel: 020 7843 2553
cevas@thecomunicationtrust.org.uk

Anita Kerwin-Nye
Director
The Communication Trust
Tel: 020 7843 2537

The Communication Trust
8 Wakley Street
London
EC1V 7QE
www.thecomunicationtrust.org.uk



Speech, Language and Communication and the Children's Workforce

Contents

Summary

The Children's Workforce

Communication as the Central Skill for Life

Speech, Language and Communication and the Children's Workforce: the need for skills and knowledge

Training and Professional Development in Speech, Language and Communication: key issues and initiatives

Conclusion



Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) is used to describe the whole group of children and young people who have difficulty with some aspect or aspects of communicating. This will include those whose needs are minor and/or temporary and children and young people with complex and long-term needs.

Summary

Speech, language and communication skills are fundamental to the development of learning, and social and emotional well-being and are essential to support the development of skills for life and work. It is therefore vital that everyone working with children and young people has a clear understanding of the relevance of speech, language and communication development and needs for their work.

This *I CAN Talk* report which is supported by The Communication Trust highlights this relevance. It then considers the importance of communication development and impact of SLCN.

The report then discusses the need for practitioners to develop their skills in this area and the resultant need for appropriate and accessible training and professional development opportunities across the children's workforce. Finally, the report examines the evidence of some key issues around professional development including effectiveness, cohesion and barriers to accessing opportunities. Throughout the report, examples are provided of current initiatives and programmes looking to meet the challenges in ensuring that the children's workforce is skilled and confident in supporting children and young people's speech, language and communication development and needs.

The Children's Workforce

The children's workforce is described as 'everyone working with children, whatever the sector they are in, whatever the age range they are working with, whether employed by a public, private or voluntary organisation'.¹ In 2005, a study² estimated there were 2.6 million people in the children's workforce in England,³ defined as occupations where 'contact is substantial'.⁴ This includes practitioners in early years; education and training; health; sport and fitness; outdoor education, recreation and training; play work; social care; voluntary work; youth justice; youth work and support. Clearly, there may be many more practitioners who have involvement with children at a lower level.

The range of roles within the children's workforce is extensive. In one study, data was collected on 125 different roles although this omitted many educational and health roles being considered in parallel work carried out by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and National Health Service (NHS).⁵ Indeed, The School Workforce Development Board for example, has identified at least 28 separate roles in the area of 'school support'.⁶ The range of settings is also extensive across domestic, community and institutional locations. The children's workforce can therefore be seen as highly complex.

¹ Children's Workforce Strategy: Building a world-class workforce for children, young people and families The Government's response to the consultation (2006) DfES

² Cooper, A. (January 2005) *The children's workforce in England: A review of the evidence* Version 1.0 DfES internal document

³ *Mapping Qualifications and Training for the Children and Young People's Workforce Short Report 2* (2005) Sheffield Hallam University

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Johnson, S. et al 2004 *Systematic mapping exercise to show how existing qualifications fit with the proposed career progression framework for school support staff* (Brief RB518) DfES London

Speech, Language and Communication and the Children's Workforce

The need for a skilled, confident and flexible workforce

The *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme clearly identifies the need for a skilled, confident and flexible workforce to achieve its aims of improved outcomes for all children.⁷ The resultant *Children's Workforce Strategy* sets out a plan of action of workforce developments⁸ echoed within the recent Treasury report *Aiming High for Disabled Children*, which states that 'good quality staff can transform a child and family's experiences of services'.⁹ High quality experiences with trained and committed staff have been identified as preparing children most effectively for later learning;¹⁰ in settings where staff have higher qualifications, children have been shown to make more progress.¹¹

However, the context for the children's workforce is changing. Children's services are being transformed, with resultant changes to working practice. The *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme highlights integration at every level as key and provides training materials on integrated working.¹² Greater flexibility of roles and transfer of skills across the children's workforce have also been identified as essential to support improvements in the workforce and lead to better outcomes for children.¹³ Early years has been identified as an immediate priority area for workforce development,¹⁴ with the introduction of the early years professional qualification seen as key to raising the quality of early years provision.¹⁵ The Transformation Fund aims to support training in the sector, including a focus on equipping more staff to work with children with special educational needs (SEN).¹⁶

In many fields, there has also been significant growth recently both in terms of numbers of practitioners and in the scope of work. Between 1998 and 2001, the size of the childcare workforce grew by 21% to 275,000¹⁷ and from 1997 to 2005, the number

of support staff working in schools had nearly doubled, with one of the fastest growing areas being teaching assistants including SEN staff.¹⁸ However, there have been concerns that this increase in staffing is not matched with an increase in expertise leading to limited positive impact on children and young people.¹⁹ Models of deployment of teaching assistants require analysis²⁰ and staff training and development need to be part of long-term strategic planning.²¹ Further, the personalised learning agenda²² within education and an increased range of services in schools will require an even more highly skilled and flexible workforce.²³

These changes and the priority of developing skills, knowledge and flexibility across the children's workforce have resulted in a number of national initiatives. The Children's Workforce Network is a strategic body, working collaboratively with the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC), other sector skills councils and partners including the TDA to support the development of the children's workforce through a range of projects and initiatives.

The CWDC is developing the Integrated Qualifications Framework (IQF) which aims to support the development of greater competence and flexibility across the children's workforce, through making it easier to acknowledge practitioners' skills, knowledge and experience and transfer these across different roles and settings.

The children's workforce is large, diverse and complex and the requirement for a skilled and confident workforce has been made clear. In examining the importance of communication for children and young people, it becomes apparent that the children's workforce has a critical role to play in the speech, language and communication development and needs of all children.

Communication as the Central Skill for Life

Speech, language and communication skills have great significance for the ongoing and successful development of all children and young people. Competence in oral language is crucial for later academic success, positive self-esteem and improved life chances.²⁴ Speaking and listening together with reading and writing are prime communication skills, central to children's intellectual, social and emotional development.²⁵ Communication is valued highly by employers, with 61% identifying it as the most important 'soft skill' for their workforce.²⁶ However, there is growing recognition of the scale and impact of children's poor communication.²⁷ A recent Ofsted survey identified that in a third of settings, standards in communication, language and literacy, and specifically speaking and listening were below the expected levels of the Foundation Stage curriculum.²⁸

SLCN: prevalence and impact

In some areas of the UK, upwards of 50%²⁹ and in others as many as 84%³⁰ of children on school entry have SLCN described as 'language delay'. These highly significant figures are reflected in the concerns of school staff surveyed, who believed that around 50% of children across the UK start school without the language skills considered vital for an effective start to their education.³¹ This is not only an issue at school entry age: there is emerging evidence that communication difficulties are common in secondary-aged pupils in areas of deprivation.³² A survey identified that 75% of young people in one inner-city school had communication difficulties which hampered relationships, behaviour and learning.³³

Significantly, up to 10% of all children have long-term, persistent SLCN,³⁴ which equates to around 1.4 million children and young people under 20 in the UK.³⁵

The impact of SLCN is significant and wide-ranging, affecting critical areas for children and young people. Educational attainment, social relationships and behavioural and emotional development³⁶ may all be affected by SLCN, with further impact on longer term life opportunities. Without help to develop required levels of language, literacy and numeracy, young people will have restricted opportunities for employment.³⁷ Successful development of literacy depends on competent language skills;³⁸ poor literacy and numeracy ability are linked with lower income, poorer health, low self-confidence and low motivation.³⁹ There is evidence for strong links between social disadvantage and SLCN⁴⁰ and a high correlation has been shown between children with SEN and criminal behaviour.⁴¹

The importance of speech, language and communication is clear and currently highlighted by The Bercow Review,⁴² a major government review into services for children's speech, language and communication. The Review will examine the current situation and identify improvements to be made to effectively support their SLCN, including ways to further improve workforce skills.⁴³ This has great importance across the children's workforce and crucial value for children and young people with SLCN and their families.

Speech, language and communication skills are essential, underpinning crucial areas of development for all children and young people. Many experience difficulties with these skills and the impact for them, their families and wider society is extensive. Therefore speech, language and communication have great significance for all those who work with children and young people.

⁷ *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* (2004) HM Government

⁸ *Children's Workforce Strategy: Building a world-class workforce for children, young people and families* The Government's response to the consultation (2006) DfES

⁹ *Aiming High for Disabled Children: better support for families* (May 2007) HM Treasury/DfES

¹⁰ *National Childcare Strategy Factsheet* www.pm.gov.uk/output/page1430.asp

¹¹ Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, L., Taggart, B. and Elliott, K. (2003) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Findings from the pre-school period* DfES

¹² www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/delivering-services/integrated-working/

¹³ *Children's Workforce Strategy: Building an Integrated Qualifications Framework* (2006) DfES

¹⁴ *Children's Workforce Strategy: Building a world-class workforce for children, young people and families* The Government's response to the consultation (2006) DfES

¹⁵ www.cwdcouncil.org.uk

¹⁶ www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00056/

¹⁷ *National Childcare Strategy Factsheet* www.pm.gov.uk/output/page1430.asp

¹⁸ *Developing People to Support Learning: a skills strategy for the wider school workforce 2006-9* (2006) TDA

¹⁹ *Inclusion: Does it matter where pupils are taught?* (2006) Ofsted

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *Developing People to Support Learning: a skills strategy for the wider school workforce 2006-9* (2006) TDA

²² Department for Education and Skills *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* (2004)

²³ *Developing People to Support Learning: a skills strategy for the wider school workforce 2006-9* (2006) TDA

²⁴ Snow, P.C. and Powell, M.B. (2004) *Developmental Language Disorders and Adolescent Risk: A public-health advocacy role for speech pathologists?* *Advances in Speech Language Pathology* 6 (4) 221-229

²⁵ Rose, J. (2006) *Independent Review of Early Reading*

²⁶ www.trainingreference.co.uk/news

²⁷ *I CAN Talk: The Cost to the Nation of Children's Poor Communication* (2006) I CAN

²⁸ *The Foundation Stage: a survey of 144 settings* (2007) Ofsted

²⁹ Locke, A., Ginsborg, J. and Peers, I. (2002) *Development and Disadvantage: Implications for Early Years JLCD* Vol 27 No 1

³⁰ www.stokespeaksout.co.uk

³¹ Basic Skills Agency (2002) *Summary Report of Survey into Young Children's Skills on Entry to Education*

³² *I CAN Talk: Language and Social Exclusion* (2007) I CAN

³³ Sage, R. (2005) *Communicating with Students Who Have Learning and Behaviour Difficulties: A Continuing Professional Development Programme* *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties* 10 4 281-297

³⁴ Lindsay, G., and Dockrell, J. with Mackie, C. and Letchford, B. (2002) *Educational Provision for Children with Specific Speech and Language Difficulties in England and Wales* Cedar and Institute of Education, University of London

³⁵ www.statistics.gov.uk/ccl/nugget.asp?id=716

³⁶ *I CAN Talk: The Cost to the Nation of Children's Poor Communication* (2006) I CAN

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ Palmer, S. (2004) *Foundations of Literacy Literacy Today* no 38

³⁹ DfES (2003) *The Skills for Life Survey: A National Needs and Impact Survey of Literacy, Numeracy and ICT Skills*

⁴⁰ *I CAN Talk: Language and Social Exclusion* (2007) I CAN

Speech, Language and Communication and the Children's Workforce

Speech, Language and Communication and the Children's Workforce: the need for skills and knowledge

As communication is fundamental to all aspects of children's development, skills and knowledge in this area are highly relevant for the entire children's workforce. A common factor identified in the *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge of the Children's Workforce*,⁴⁴ is that practitioners work with and therefore communicate with children, young people and their families. The *Common Core*⁴⁵ also identifies that all practitioners need to be able to recognise those experiencing developmental difficulties.

Although there is considerable variation in the level and nature of involvement practitioners have with children's communication, *Aiming High for Disabled Children* has identified that appropriate, specific skills are vital across the workforce.⁴⁶ Disabled children and young people, including those with SLCN, are likely to meet a full range of practitioners, from universal services such as health visitors and children's centre staff, through targeted provision such as specialist teachers and speech and language therapists (SLTs).

Statistics support this: 19.2% of pupils in England are currently identified as having SEN⁴⁷ with SLCN being the most prevalent SEN among pupils with statements of SEN.⁴⁸ As most children and young people with SLCN are included in mainstream schools,⁴⁹ high quality, specialist staff are key for ensuring progress for children with SEN, alongside focused professional development for all staff.⁵⁰ Yet major concerns have been expressed about training and qualifications for staff working with children with communication disabilities.⁵¹

These factors identify the need for a graduated hierarchy of professional development, including a focus on shared understanding and collaboration, to provide the essential skills across the entire children's workforce.

The requirements for knowledge, understanding and skills in speech, language and communication vary between individual practitioners, but for everyone in the children's workforce, accessible training and professional development opportunities at the right level and right time are essential to fully support speech, language and communication development and needs.

The need for training and development

There are a number of factors highlighting the current context and need for training and professional development to support speech, language and communication development and needs. The requirement for increased awareness for all is stated across sectors by organisations such as I CAN,⁵² The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT),⁵³ the BT Better World Campaign⁵⁴ and Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). Communication difficulties are the focus of the opening phase of the Department's Inclusion Development Programme, and the DCSF is also working with TDA to strengthen provision in initial teacher training (ITT), including coverage of SLCN issues.

Within the educational context, collaborative training has been recommended for teachers and SLTs, both during initial training and as continuing professional development (CPD), along with a comprehensive accredited system

for all practitioners working with children with SLCN.⁵⁵ The *Joint Professional Development Framework (JPDF)*⁵⁶ provides an outline of CPD for teachers and SLTs to develop skills and knowledge collaboratively.

SLTs clearly have crucial roles to play in supporting the children's workforce in speech, language and communication development and needs. The training of others is seen as a central activity for SLTs to maximise impact⁵⁷ and a Sure Start evaluation highlighted the need for sufficient SLT input to support training and development in language and pre-literacy for a range of professionals.⁵⁸ However, the RCSLT has identified the need to explore the roles of the workforce, particularly within trans-disciplinary working, considering those skills shared by a range of practitioners and those unique and specialist to SLTs.⁵⁹ Shortages of SLTs are frequently reported with a dearth of highly trained professionals predicted over the next 10 to 20 years.⁶⁰ Along with the growing recognition of the importance of speech, language and communication for the wider workforce, across sectors and practitioner groups, this means that many more practitioners need training in speech, language and communication development and needs.

A number of current initiatives aim to provide this:

- **The Communication Trust**⁶¹ which is a group of organisations including Afasic, the BT Better World Campaign, the Council for Disabled Children and I CAN is focusing on speech, language and communication within the children's workforce. The Communication Consortium is a consultative group of 20 relevant organisations, providing input and support to the work of The Communication Trust.

- Underpinning the work of The Communication Trust is the development of the **Speech, Language and Communication Framework (SLCF)** - a multi-agency framework for professional development in children and young people's communication (a revised and extended *JPDF*) which will outline the skills and knowledge recommended for the entire children's workforce around children's speech, language and communication across four stages of competence. This aims to provide increased coherence for professional development for managers, practitioners and training providers across the children's workforce.

Current levels of knowledge

For a range of practitioners, there is currently limited training in speech, language and communication in initial training courses and as part of CPD. This can result in low levels of skills and confidence.

'Basically I wouldn't know where to start'.⁶² PGCE student about including children with SLCN

Within the educational context, complaints about the lack of appropriate training of school staff are common.⁶³ Surveys have shown that over a third of teachers had received no preparation for meeting the needs of children with SEN during ITT, and 73% had no SEN training that covered speech, language and communication.⁶⁴ There is a well-documented gap in teachers' knowledge and understanding of the different kinds of SEN that children have⁶⁵ and much evidence that teachers and support staff are struggling without the appropriate training to improve outcomes for children with SEN.⁶⁶ Therefore, practical training and support are needed to make inclusion a successful practice.⁶⁷ Teachers themselves may recognise their own limitations and feel they lack skills

⁴¹ Education and Skills Committee (2006) *Special Educational Needs: Third report of session 2005-6* House of Commons

⁴² www.dfes.gov.uk/bercowreview/index.shtml

⁴³ www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/conDetails.cfm?consultationId=1513

⁴⁴ *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce* (2005) DfES

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Aiming High for Disabled Children: better support for families* (May 2007)

HM Treasury/DfES

⁴⁷ *National Statistics First Release DfES Special Educational Needs in England*

January 2007

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Lindsay, G. and Dockrell, J. with Mackie, C. and Latchford, B. (2002)

Educational provision for children with specific speech and language difficulties in England and Wales CEDAR

⁵⁰ *Inclusion: does it matter where pupils are taught?* (2006) Ofsted

⁵¹ *Mapping Qualifications and Training for the Children and Young People's Workforce Short Report 5* (2005) Sheffield Hallam University

⁵² www.ican.org.uk

⁵³ RCSLT AGM 2005

⁵⁴ www.btbetterworld.com

⁵⁵ Law, J., Lindsay, G., Peacey, N., Gascoigne, M., Soloff, N., Radford, J., Band, S.

with Fitzgerald, L. (2000) *Provision for Children with Speech and Language Needs.*

Facilitating Communication between Education and Health Services

⁵⁶ *Joint Professional Development Framework* (2001) I CAN

⁵⁷ Gascoigne, M. *Supporting children with speech, language and communication needs within integrated children's services* RCSLT position paper RCSLT: London

⁵⁸ *Promoting speech and language - a themed study in fifteen Sure Start local programmes* Sure Start Report 022 June 2007

⁵⁹ Gascoigne, M. *Supporting children with speech, language and communication needs within integrated children's services* RCSLT position paper RCSLT: London

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

⁶² Marshall, J., Stojanovic, V. and Ralph, S. (2002) 'I never even gave it a second thought': PGCE students' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with speech

and language impairments *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders* vol. 37 no. 4 475-489

⁶³ Pearman, E., Huang, A. and Mellblom, C. (1997) The inclusion of all students: concerns and incentives of educators *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities* 32 pp 11-20

⁶⁴ I CAN Yougov survey (2007)

⁶⁵ Scruggs, T. and Mastropieri, M. (1996) Teacher Perceptions of Mainstreaming and Inclusion *Exceptional Children* 63(1) 59-74

⁶⁶ Education and Skills Committee (2006) *Special Educational Needs: Third Report of Session 2005-6* House of Commons

⁶⁷ Yasutake, D. and Lerner, J. (1996) Teachers' perceptions of inclusion for students with disabilities: a survey of general and special educators *Learning Disabilities* 7 pp 1-7

⁶⁸ Dockrell, J. and Lindsay, G. (2001) *Children with specific speech and language difficulties - the teachers' perspective* Oxford Review of Education vol 27 No 3

⁶⁹ I CAN Yougov survey (2007)

Speech, Language and Communication and the Children's Workforce

to meet the needs of children with SLCN.⁶⁸ In one survey, only 35% of teaching staff were confident that they had the skills to support children with SLCN and 81% felt they would benefit from more training in the area.⁶⁹

A number of influential reports^{70, 71} highlight similar concerns and detail the need for improved training for teachers in SEN and speech, language and communication. The Education and Skills Committee⁷² recommended that SEN training should become a core, compulsory part of ITT for all teachers. The RCSLT has also called for ITT to address in detail the development of language and communication skills and the implications of communication impairment for teaching and learning.⁷³

In early years and childcare settings there are also concerns about training and levels of skill and knowledge. *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*⁷⁴ placed renewed emphasis on early identification and there is evidence that appropriate, adapted early identification leads to improved outcomes.⁷⁵ Yet, it has been highlighted that some early years practitioners lack the tools to undertake this crucial activity.⁷⁶ Research has also identified very limited training in speech and language as part of initial training and low levels of post-qualification training.⁷⁷ A 2006 *Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey* showed that training in speech and language was often given very low priority in early years settings, with some practitioners such as child minders, having no additional training in speech and language.⁷⁸ Even in effective settings, knowledge about speech, language and communication may be limited and there may be examples of inadequate understanding of key approaches such as teaching sound patterns.⁷⁹

For disabled children, a key barrier to accessing childcare is a lack of disability training for the workforce, including issues with the level of specialist training

and expertise supporting children with additional communication needs.⁸⁰ In a national survey, 71% of childminders had not undertaken any specific training to prepare them for working with children with disabilities. Half of childminders caring for children with special needs had not undertaken such training.⁸¹

It is important that the focus on speech, language and communication continues beyond early years and childcare provision. Studies have demonstrated the vital need for ongoing support to maintain the benefits of early intervention. Benefits for children from disadvantaged backgrounds provided by pre-school settings⁸² can be eroded in primary school experiences.⁸³ Clearly this is of particular importance given the link between language and social disadvantage.⁸⁴

Therefore, a continued focus on speech, language and communication within the primary years and beyond is essential and those working in these settings require the skills and knowledge to be able to achieve this.

In order to extend levels of skill and knowledge within educational, early years and childcare settings, a number of current initiatives are in place, including:

The Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) funded by the DCSF is, a self study, web-based development tool which supports mainstream teachers and staff in early years and school settings in their work with children and young people with SEN. The IDP was launched in October 2007 and includes speech, language and communication in the first phase of training.⁸⁵

The I CAN Early Talk Programme⁸⁶ works with local services and includes professional development opportunities targeting three levels of knowledge and practice for those working with children under five in day care or early education settings to support speech, language and communication development

for all children and ensure effective provision for those with SLCN. The I CAN *Primary Talk* project is developing similar training for those working in primary schools and is currently piloting materials.⁸⁷

Communicating Matters⁸⁸ funded by the DCSF is a set of training materials aimed at all practitioners working with children in Foundation Stage settings to promote the development of communication and language for all children in the early years.

Parents/carers and speech, language and communication development

The home environment has as much impact on a child's development as school,⁸⁹ with parents and carers also having a vital role in supporting speech, language and communication development. A high quality home learning environment promotes intellectual and social development.⁹⁰ However, in a recent poll, 98% of respondents felt that parents needed to know more about typical speech and language development.⁹¹ There is evidence that parents benefit from an increased understanding of how children learn language,⁹² and may require the support of professionals to enable them to gain this. The level of skill of those delivering parenting support programmes has a demonstrable and direct relationship with the outcomes achieved,⁹³ therefore practitioners need appropriate knowledge of the area and appropriate training to ensure they are able to effectively work with parents on supporting speech, language and communication.

Currently, a range of local and national initiatives are in place, supporting parents in developing their children's speech, language and communication skills, including the Talk to your Baby awareness-raising campaign⁹⁴ and the I CAN *Chatter Matters* DVD.⁹⁵

SLCN and the wider workforce

Most discussion around speech, language and communication development and needs has been seen predominantly in the context of early years or education settings. While these remain vitally important, the increase in awareness of links between language and behaviour,⁹⁶ social disadvantage⁹⁷ and criminal behaviour⁹⁸ mean that a wider range of professionals have a critical requirement for greater understanding of speech, language and communication to best support the children and young people in their services. However, there is little acknowledgement of this in either initial training or CPD. For example, recent research in social care training found there was no guarantee that any student, on qualifying, would have been taught about communication skills with children and young people,⁹⁹ despite the fact that most of their work is in the most complex childcare situations where communicating with children is particularly demanding.¹⁰⁰

Information about the value of speech and language therapy input to young offenders and the prison population is also emerging,¹⁰¹ with clear references to the benefits of training to increase understanding among prison staff and others in the children's workforce about the nature of SLCN.^{102, 103} It is likely, therefore, that the level of awareness of practitioners in relevant professional groups needs specific development. For example, in the 2006 *Common Standards for the Justice Sector*, the standard 'communicate effectively with others'¹⁰⁴ identifies a responsibility to reduce barriers to effective communication, yet there is no specific mention of SLCN as one such barrier.

⁷⁰ Education and Skills Committee (2006) *Special Educational Needs: Third Report of Session 2005-6* House of Commons

⁷¹ *Inclusion: does it matter where pupils are taught?* (2006) Ofsted

⁷² Education and Skills Committee (2006) *Special educational needs: Third Report of Session 2005-6* House of Commons

⁷³ RCSLT AGM conference 2005

⁷⁴ www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ete/sen/

⁷⁵ Howlin, P. (1998) Practitioner review: Psychological and educational treatments or autism *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Applied Disciplines* 39(3) 307-322

⁷⁶ Mroz, M. and Hall, E. (2003) Not yet identified: the knowledge skills and training needs of early years professionals in relation to children's speech and language development *Early Years Journal of International Research and Development* vol 23 no 2 pp117-130

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ 2006 Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey

⁷⁹ Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B. and Elliott, K. (2003) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: findings from the pre-school period* DfES

⁸⁰ *Aiming High for Disabled Children: better support for families* (2007) HM Treasury/DfES

⁸¹ www.ncma.org.uk/download/membershipsurvey07.pdf

⁸² Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B. and Elliott, K. (2003) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Findings from the pre-school period* DfES

⁸³ Wood, C. and Caulier-Grice, J. (2006) *Fade or flourish: how primary schools can build on children's early progress* SMF

⁸⁴ I CAN *Talk Language and Social Exclusion* (2007) I CAN

⁸⁵ www.dcsf.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2007_0193

⁸⁶ www.ican.org.uk/earlytalk

⁸⁷ www.ican.org.uk/primarytalk

⁸⁸ www.surestart.gov.uk

⁸⁹ Wood, C. and Caulier-Grice, J. (2006) *Fade or flourish: how primary schools can build on children's early progress* SMF

⁹⁰ Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B. and Elliott, K. (2003) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Findings from the Pre-school Period* DfES

⁹¹ I CAN *Chatter Matters* www.ican.org.uk

⁹² *National Evaluation Report Promoting Speech and language – a themed study in fifteen sure start programmes* (2007) Sure Start

⁹³ *Children's Workforce Strategy Update* p23

⁹⁴ www.literacytrust.org.uk/talktoyourbaby

⁹⁵ I CAN *Chatter Matters* www.ican.org.uk/primarytalk%2095

⁹⁶ Law, J. and Garrett, Z. (2004) *Speech and Language Therapy: Its potential role in CAMHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health* 9 2 p50

⁹⁷ I CAN *Language and Social Exclusion* (2007) I CAN

⁹⁸ Education and Skills Committee (2006) *Special Educational Needs: Third Report of Session 2005-6* House of Commons

⁹⁹ Luckock, B. and Lefevre, M. *Knowledge Review: Teaching Learning and Assessing Communication Skills with Children in Social Work Education* Scie 2006

¹⁰⁰ www.communitycare.co.uk/Articles/2006/09/21/55798/social-workers-need-better-skills-to-communicate-with.html

¹⁰¹ Bryan, K. 2004 Preliminary Study of the Prevalence of Speech and Language Difficulties in Young Offenders *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders* 39, 391-400

Speech, Language and Communication and the Children's Workforce

The value of SLT input to young offenders institutions, including the positive impact of staff development has been raised by Lord Ramsbotham in the House of Lords.¹⁰⁵ There is also some emerging evidence of training and development within the wider workforce with SLTs delivering training to foster carers and social workers¹⁰⁶ and seminars for staff and volunteers in organisations offering recreational or leisure services to young people and those supporting young people at risk.¹⁰⁷

In many key areas of the children's workforce, current levels of confidence, skills and knowledge about speech, language and communication are low. To fully develop children's speech, language and communication skills, identify SLCN and provide effective support for children and young people, increased knowledge and understanding are needed and so appropriate training and professional development opportunities are essential.

Training and Professional Development in Speech, Language and Communication: key issues and initiatives

The importance of training and professional development are clear. However, it is necessary to consider a number of key issues.

Effectiveness and benefits

Training and professional development may take many forms and there is a lack of comprehensive information about the most effective training and professional development for the children's workforce to acquire and implement the skills needed to support speech, language and communication development and needs. In general terms, single workshops to early childhood educators, presented by a specialist have been cited as ineffective as their brief format does not foster meaningful, long-term changes in educators' knowledge or practice.¹⁰⁸ Sustained, collaborative CPD has been identified as the most effective for changing teacher behaviours and impact on learners.¹⁰⁹ However, evaluation of training and CPD may not always be robust. An Ofsted report identified that schools failed to allow enough time to support effective professional development and evaluation procedures were often weak.¹¹⁰

The effectiveness of training can be measured across a range of parameters including increased practitioner confidence, positive changes to practice and improved outcomes for children and young people. A recent programme,¹¹¹ training speech and language therapy assistants to deliver language interventions, showed effective outcomes for children working individually or in group settings. It can be difficult, however,

to gain a wide overview of the effectiveness of current, available training and professional development opportunities, as not all provide published evaluations and attributing the impact on outcomes for children and young people on training specifically is not always straightforward.

However, a range of training programmes available nationally and locally including those developed by Hanen,¹¹² *Stoke Speaks Out*,¹¹³ the *Belfast COMET project*,¹¹⁴ *Speech and Language Development Project*¹¹⁵ and *Gwent Early Years Language Project*¹¹⁶ have reported successful outcomes for practitioners, parents, carers and in some studies, children and young people themselves.

Limited overview

There is a lack of knowledge about current levels of expertise in the workforce,¹¹⁷ and no coherent approach to developing the skills and competencies required by those working with disabled children and young people.¹¹⁸

Across the UK, a wide range of professional development in speech, language and communication exists, but there is currently no cohesive approach outlining what opportunities are available, for whom and at what level. Training includes diverse content across a whole range of topics in speech, language and communication development and needs. This is differentially available for various practitioners and offered by a raft of providers including academic institutions, SLT departments, local authority teams and private and voluntary organisations. Many formats will be used, from twilight sessions and day courses, cascade training, such as *Learning Together: Working Together*¹¹⁹ through to electronic and distance learning

opportunities, such as those provided by Sheffield¹²⁰ and Birmingham Universities.¹²¹ Much training may be developed locally or as a bespoke response to local need, although national programmes offered by organisations such as University College London,¹²² SENJIT¹²³ and I CAN,¹²⁴ accredited courses including Elklan¹²⁵ and *Language for Learning*¹²⁶ and professional development linked to frameworks such as the *JPDF*¹²⁷ are also available.

Quality assurance and accreditation

There is no standardised quality assurance system across the range of training offered in speech, language and communication development and needs, and although a number of training providers have achieved accreditation this is not the case for the majority of training. This is at odds with the government's push for accreditation.¹²⁸

Training 'overload'

Government policy initiatives around inclusion have a key impact on training needs.¹²⁹ There is a requirement for general training on inclusion in addition to training about particular special needs, resulting in a need for prioritisation of training. Training in SLCN therefore has to compete with other training needs for practitioners, settings and services.

Barriers to accessing training

For teachers, budget has been identified as the greatest barrier to accessing training about speech, language and communication (58%), shortly followed by time (52%).¹³⁰ In the same survey, 40% were also unclear about where to access training. Likewise managers of integrated services in the children's workforce have identified difficulty in sourcing provision and finding appropriate qualifications

¹⁰² www.holyrood.com/content/view/full/527/10051/

¹⁰³ *RCSLT Written Evidence* Department for Education and Skills Committee

¹⁰⁴ www.skillsforjustice.com/websitefiles/AB1.pdf

¹⁰⁵ www.theyworkforyou.com/lords/?id=2006-10-27b.1446.0&s=blair

¹⁰⁶ www.ispchildcare.org.uk

¹⁰⁷ *'Watch your Language'* www.afasic.org.uk

¹⁰⁸ Garet, M., Porter, A., Desimone, L., Birman, B. and Yoon, K. (2001) What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers *American Educational Research Journal* 38, 915-945

¹⁰⁹ Cordingley, P. (2003) *The impact of collaborative CPD on classroom teaching and learning* London: EPPI

¹¹⁰ *Continuing Professional Development in Schools Inspected September 2000 - April 2001 Ofsted 2002*

¹¹¹ Boyle, J., McCartney, E., Forbes, J. and O'Hare, A. (2006) An RCT and Economic Evaluation of Direct versus Indirect and Individual versus Group Modes of Speech and Language Therapy for Children with Primary Language Impairment *Health Technology Assessment* 11 (25)

¹¹² Girolametto, Weitzman and Greenberg 2003 *Research Summary Learning Language and Loving It™ The Hanen Program® for Early Childhood Educators/Teachers 2003*

¹¹³ www.stokespeaksout.org

¹¹⁴ www.belb.org.uk/publications/335.pdf

¹¹⁵ McMahon, A. and Mulholland, K. (May 2007) The Speech and Language Development Project Presentation at Language and Early Years Curriculum Conference I CAN

¹¹⁶ Holland, M. and Llewellyn, A. (May 2007) Changing Classroom Practice The Speech and Language Development Project Presentation at Language and Early Years Curriculum Conference, I CAN

¹¹⁷ *Aiming High for Disabled Children: better support for families* (May 2007) HM Treasury/DfES

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Learning Together: Working Together* (2003) I CAN

¹²⁰ www.shef.ac.uk/hcs/prospective_pg/lacic

¹²¹ www.education.bham.ac.uk/programmes/cpd/courses/speech.htm

¹²² www.ucl.ac.uk

¹²³ www.ioe.ac.uk

¹²⁴ www.ican.org.uk

¹²⁵ www.elklan.co.uk

¹²⁶ www.languageforlearning.co.uk

¹²⁷ For example Calderdale and Kirklees; Barking and Dagenham;

MSc Joint professional Practice City University www.city.ac.uk

¹²⁸ *World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England* Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills July 2007

Speech, Language and Communication and the Children's Workforce

on offer and have expressed concern that although they have responsibility for the professional development of colleagues, they have no shared background and have minimal understanding of training pathways for them.¹³¹

For other groups of staff within the children's workforce, priorities will vary, with some groups having a mandatory requirement for CPD and others not. Childminders, for example, report timing, locality, content, awareness and funding as the most significant barriers to accessing training¹³² and volunteers - of which there are around 175,000 within the children's workforce¹³³ - may have particular difficulties accessing training.

However, there are a number of initiatives to address key issues in training and professional development for speech, language and communication. To develop an overview of professional development, The Communication Trust¹³⁴ is undertaking work to look at mapping training and professional development in the area of speech, language and communication, against the developing SLCF, which should increase the coherence in this area and provide the potential for developing a relevant quality assurance system.

Managers and training providers are looking at ways of overcoming barriers to accessing training, including using different formats such as cascade training, electronic or distance learning or self-directed study through programmes such as the IDP.¹³⁵

Training and professional development in speech, language and communication can lead to increased confidence, improved practice and better outcomes for children and young people. Collaborative training is highly valuable for practitioners working with children with SLCN. However, further research into the most effective methods of professional development for different practitioner groups is needed, alongside more evidence of the impact of training and development on outcomes for children and young people.

There are a wide range of issues around training and professional development opportunities in speech, language and communication for practitioners across the children's workforce. Local and national initiatives look to overcome these issues in a variety of ways. There is a need for a clear overview of available professional development opportunities in speech, language and communication development and needs to support managers, practitioners and training providers across the children's workforce.

Conclusion

There is a vital need for a children's workforce skilled and confident in supporting the speech, language and communication development and needs of children and young people across the UK. To achieve this, training and professional development opportunities are essential, yet there are many challenges to overcome. There is a need for greater understanding across the wider workforce of the importance of speech, language and communication and the impact of SLCN. More research into the most effective forms of professional development for different practitioners will mean that training needs can be met most efficiently. Further, there is a need for clear training pathways to be signposted to managers and practitioners, enabling progression and development and enhancing the speech, language and communication experiences of the children and young people with whom they work.

¹²⁹ *Mapping Qualifications and Training for the Children and Young People's Workforce Short Report 5 (2005)* Sheffield Hallam University

¹³⁰ | CAN Yougov 2007

¹³¹ *Mapping Qualifications and Training for the Children and Young People's Workforce Short Report 5 (2005)* Sheffield Hallam University

¹³² *Report on the barriers to training for home based childcare workers* NCMA 2006

¹³³ *CWDC Breakdown of occupational groups*

¹³⁴ www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

¹³⁵ www.dcsf.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2007_0193

I CAN Talk Series

I CAN Talk is a series of papers exploring contemporary issues in children's communication development and disability. *I CAN Talk* papers review current research and literature and offer practical evidence-based solutions to inform debate on speech and language and to support practitioners, parents and policy makers.

I CAN Talk Communication Disability and Literacy Difficulties Issue 1

I CAN Talk The Cost to the Nation of Children's Poor Communication Issue 2

I CAN Talk The Cost to the Nation of Children's Poor Communication: Scotland Edition Issue 3

I CAN Talk Language and Social Exclusion Issue 4

Author: Lisa Morgan
Contributor: Mary Hartshorne
Production: Ravi Bhela, Cara Evans

© The Communication Trust/I CAN 2008

I CAN
8 Wakley Street
London
EC1V 7QE
Tel: 0845 225 4071
E-mail: info@ican.org.uk
www.ican.org.uk
www.talkingpoint.org.uk

