

Lancashire Language Leads Newsletter

Spring 2023

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Hello everyone and welcome to the Spring term 2023.

Last term (December '22), Nasen (The National Association for Special Educational Needs) (<http://www.nasen.org.uk/>) published a survey asking their members to tell them more about provision for Speech, Language and Communication Needs in EYs settings and schools. Both the data and their professional conversations told Nasen that SLCN is a huge area of concern post-pandemic, even more so than previously, particularly in the Early Years and Key Stage 1.

The findings from the Nasen report indicate how important this area is to settings, as evidenced by the large number of settings who have invested in training and staff time to support children with SLCN. They also highlight some of the challenges around access to external support.

Speech, language and communication are central life skills. They are linked to learning, attainment, behaviour, social and emotional development as well as mental wellbeing.

Your commitment to the role of Language Lead and championing the crucial importance of SLCN to support children's ongoing development remains as vital as ever.

We very much look forward to continuing to work with you to deliver with confidence a language-rich curriculum which supports every child and in advocating for communication friendly, inclusive environments.

We very much hope you all enjoy this edition of our newsletter.

Next Cluster Meeting

Wednesday 1st February at 13.30-15.00

LINK at the end of the newsletter

Speech sounds refers to the sounds we use in words. For our speech to be understood, we have to use the right sounds in the right order to make up a word.

There is a developmental order to how children usually develop their speech sounds. This means that some speech sound errors are found in typical speech sound development at different ages. In this article, we are not going into depth about developmental norms for speech sounds, instead we have focused on giving you practical ideas that you can use at a universal level to support the speech sound development of any child in your setting. If you do need a reminder on what to expect when, there is some useful information here [Ages and stages \(speechandlanguage.org.uk\)](https://speechandlanguage.org.uk).

To start with, try to implement the following good practice principles with all children at all times:

1. When playing and interacting with a child, try to be down at their level and face to face. This means the child can see and hear your speech sound models clearly and vice versa.
2. Focus on developing attention and listening skills so that the child is able to attend to your speech sound models and focus on what you are saying. Having some quiet time with a child everyday will help with this, i.e., turn electronics off!
3. Try to phase out dummies and bottles as soon as possible so that the child can experiment with different sounds and move their tongue and lips freely. Trying to talk around a dummy/ bottle can be very difficult and makes sounds made at the front of the mouth very hard to say.
4. Slow down your own speech so that you are modelling a steady rate of speech. This will help a child tune in to sounds but also encourage them to adopt the same in their own talking.



5. Try to focus on WHAT the child is saying rather than HOW they say it. If they are feeling frustrated, acknowledge this and remember to respond and praise them for what they have been able to express.
6. Model back a correct production of the word if a child makes a mistake but do not expect them to repeat it as this is likely to be too difficult. Avoid correcting a child's speech directly, e.g. instead of correcting 'no... it's not a tar it's a car', just model the correct response, 'yes it's a car'.
7. If you are struggling to understand the child, see if they can get their message across in a different way, e.g., by showing you, using actions / gestures, describing the target item....

Alongside these general principles, have a think about more targeted activities that might be useful to support and develop speech sound awareness and production:

Letters & Sounds

Phase one of the Letters & Sounds programme is all about helping children to tune into sounds and develop their early sound awareness skills. Have a look at the programme for lots of great ideas to develop environmental listening skills through to early oral blending and segmenting.

Sound Lottos

There are lots of sound lotto games available on the market to develop children's early listening skills as a foundation for speech sound development. These can be made simple for younger children (e.g., matching the noise to the correct animal) or more difficult for older children (e.g., matching the speech sound to the corresponding letter).

Nursery Rhymes

Singing nursery rhymes together is a good way to encourage children to experiment with sounds and for adults to model these. Try to be animated and make it fun by adding in actions and gestures. Emphasise the rhyming words for children to hear. Try pausing to see if the children can fill these in for you in songs, they are familiar with.



Syllables

Understanding and recognising syllables (beats) in words is an important underpinning skill for speech sound development. Try clapping or tapping out the syllables in words during everyday routines and play, e.g., ‘*ba-na-na*’ at snack time, ‘*home – time*’ at the end of the day etc. If the child finds this difficult, try gentle hand over hand clapping to help them get the idea.

Rhyme

Rhyme is also a great skill to develop in order to support children’s awareness and use of speech sounds later on. Share rhyming songs and books with children to encourage them to explore and have fun with sounds.

Sound Games

Games that involve listening and thinking about sounds can be great fun and really useful to support children’s underlying sound knowledge. Have a go with ‘I - Spy’ or see if the child can find things around the house / nursery that contain a specific sound, e.g., ‘*what can you see that begins with a ssssss sound?*’ Remember that this is a more difficult activity and is more appropriate for 4–5-year-old children as a result.

Auditory Bombardment

If you can identify a specific sound that a child is finding difficult or not using in their talking, try to model it as much as you can to give them lots of opportunities to hear the sound being used. For example, put items with the target sound into a feely bag to explore with the child so that you can label the objects. Remember there is no need for the child to say the words themselves at this stage as this will be too difficult; the important thing is for them to listen and hear the sound modelled.

One final point....

Remember to be patient with children experiencing speech sound difficulties. Changing the way, we speak is incredibly difficult and they are not being ‘lazy’ if they struggle to learn and use a new sound. Learning and mastering new sounds can take a long time so be prepared to support them and provide reassurance when needed.

*Helen Jackson, Speech & Language Therapist
Lancashire & South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust*

In recent times, we have had lots of conversations around the high number of 2yr olds in settings who are not yet talking. Of course, it's important to try to boost the language skills of these children, however, if we focus on supporting our babies and younger toddlers, we can often prevent them becoming those 'late talkers'.

Providing the right support for our youngest children who haven't yet mastered spoken language can feel tricky, but there's lots you can do to help them get ready for talking. Focusing on communication with babies and young toddlers is REALLY important!

We know that in the first 2yrs of a child's life their brains are growing rapidly, busily developing lots of connections as they learn. This makes this early stage of life the most important to get right!

There are several skills our youngest children need to learn in order to become confident communicators – all before they start using words!

Making Sounds – those early sounds that babies make are important. From those early coos and gurgles to raspberry blowing, squeals and later babbling – it's all practise for later talking. Not only are our babies learning how to use their voice and muscles to make different sounds, they are also learning from how others respond to their noises. Very early on, babies start to realise that their voice has power!! They can use their voices to get a cuddle, get fed, get an adult's attention.... and lots more!

Babababa

GAGAGA

As babies reach around 7-8 months, they should be starting to babble and use some of the sounds we might recognise as speech sounds, e.g., dadada, or gagaga. The more you respond to these sounds, copying the child's sounds immediately, using these sounds during play, the more the baby will use them too.

Take a look at the information and video here for tips to promote baby babble: [When do babies start babbling and how to encourage them? - BBC Tiny Happy People](#)

Understanding

We know that, before we can use words effectively, we need to understand what they mean! Typically developing babies and toddlers will begin to recognise familiar words long before they actually use them. This means that supporting children to build a vocabulary of words they *understand* will help them to develop that spoken vocabulary in time too.



You can support understanding of new words by helping children make connections between the words you use and the things they can see/hear etc. Use the key words for the objects/activities the child is interested in, repeat them often, while holding up the object/doing the action or looking at a picture. Combine this with gestures too for added support.

Using gestures is a really effective way of supporting understanding and getting on the road to learning words. Young children often use actions (e.g., waving bye, pointing, actions in songs) before they learn the words, and this is a really important step in their development. Be sure to use lots of actions during play to match the words you are saying. If you use Makaton in your setting, this is a great way of supporting understanding and enabling young children to begin to communicate.

Interaction and joint attention

Being able to take back and forth turns with another person and engage in shared enjoyment is a hugely important skill – laying the foundations for later conversations and building social relationships.

To encourage those back and forth turns, you need to start by following the child's lead, or focus of interest. Once you know what they are paying attention to, you can respond by imitating their sounds or actions, or adding a

word or gesture to go with it. Then stop and wait to see how they take their next 'turn'.

Take a look here for some great information about the importance of joint attention: [Joint Attention: Why Tuning into Your Child is So Important - BBC Tiny Happy People](#)



If you need a refresher on what to expect when, for typical pre-verbal development there is some useful information here:

[Ages and stages \(speechandlanguage.org.uk\)](https://speechandlanguage.org.uk)

You can also use the 'observation check points' in Development Matters.

[Development Matters - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

For tips to share with parents, take a look here:

<https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/parents/ages-and-stages/>

[Learning to talk | 6 to 12 months | Start for life \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

[How can we Support Parents and Families? | Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust \(bfwh.nhs.uk\)](https://bfwh.nhs.uk)

*Louise Rylance, Speech & Language Therapist
Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust*

Supporting SLCN development in partnership with parents/carers

Part of the presentation for the Spring term cluster meeting will be on the theme of Early Years practitioners supporting SCLN development in partnership with parents/carers, thus enabling parents/carers to facilitate SLC development in the home learning environment.



This will be presented by Abigail Hyatt, Specialist Higher Level Teaching Assistant, Specialist Teaching Service, Early Years Team.

Presentation Summary

The home learning environment

Several studies have confirmed that an enriching home learning environment is especially important during the early stages of children's development. The quality of the home learning environment relates not only to the amount of verbal stimulation a child receives but also the extent to which children are exposed to other enriching activities (for example, regular visits to the library, book sharing, high-quality toys).

Supporting the home learning environment.

Parents, caregivers and those closest to the child have the most important role in supporting SLC development and are best placed to affect the context in which children live.

Findings from behavioural insights studies have identified that there are 3 main barriers that families may face that need to be addressed:

Capability: Parents may not understand the importance of language development or the activities that can support it. They may have low literacy skills, or lack confidence in their ability to support their child's language development and may not see a need for these skills, and some parents are less likely to proactively seek information.

Opportunity: Fewer financial resources, physical environments in or near the home, and other disadvantages (for example, poor health) may make it more

difficult to provide enriching activities, and the reality of daily life can reduce parents' time or prioritisation of these.

Motivation: Parents, and the communities that influence them, may not understand the potential benefit of early language development, or education and prioritise other areas of child development and wellbeing instead – they may also lack confidence or networks of support.

Engaging those closest to the child to influence their child's SLC development in a strengths-based way that improves the home learning environment is a key component of the Department for Education's Home Learning Environment Behaviour Change model.

*Abigail Hyatt, Specialist Higher Level Teaching Assistant,
Specialist Teaching Service, Early Years Team.*



There are plenty of home learning activities to try on the Lancashire Early Years website.



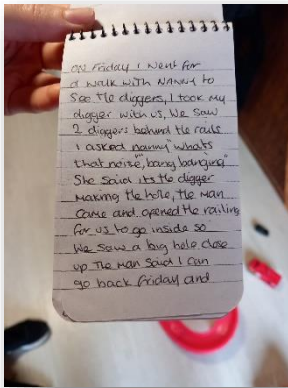
[Parental engagement and home learning - Lancashire County Council](#)

Walk and Talk Initiative



Our walk and talk campaign is going from strength to strength with many of you organising events to encourage families to get outside.

Westgate Pre-School, Morecambe held a Walk and Talk session and invited parents to walk with them along Morecambe Prom.



At ShellyTots Daycare the children are given a notepad to take home for parents to record what they have talked about when they walk and talk.

Little Blossoms of Barrowford went on a spotacular walk for Children in Need and shared their idea on our Facebook page.

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/lancsearlyyears/>



Little Brook Children's Nursery, Accrington went to the train station. They walked and talked about the different trains.

Please send us your photographs or experiences and keep walking and talking!

[Walk and Talk - information for - Lancashire County Council](#)

Developing language and vocabulary for better road safety

With the promotion of our 'Walk and Talk' initiative, that encourages families to get outside, it is a good time to consider road safety.

Learning about how we use our roads safely can easily become part of every journey that we make with children. Very young children enjoy pointing at and naming different types of vehicles e.g., bus, car, lorry, bike, tractor etc. As they grow, help them to understand words like 'road', 'traffic' 'pavement' and 'kerb' and how we use these to keep ourselves safe.

Repeating simple messages such as 'Hold hands, stop, look and listen' when crossing a road can help children start to develop into safer road users. Using and talking about zebra crossings or pelican crossings can help children grow their knowledge and understanding of keeping safe as we use the roads for our regular trips.

For resources and advice on road safety please visit Lancashire's Safer School's Moodle by clicking on the [link here](#).



Hear more about the Little Steps scheme from Tom Brown, Reading Development Officer.

Little Steps is a brand-new library offer for 2- to 5-year-olds developed in consultation with speech and language specialists.

The scheme involves a series of flashcards featuring bright animal characters. Each of these focusses on a different developmental theme, including emotions, making friends, finding your voice, family, self-esteem and growing up,

through use of a recommended book list and suggested activities for you and your child to enjoy together, giving them confidence, learning and practise.

Each year there will be a new set of animal flashcards allowing you and your child to continue using the scheme throughout their early years.

This scheme will be completely **free** to participate in at any local Lancashire library and is due to launch in early 2023.



Tom Brown, Reading Development Officer

Getting ready for school

A child's first day at school is a big moment for both them and their parents or carers. Plenty of information exists on the internet about preparing for school such as being in a routine and helping the child to get plenty of sleep, including on Lancashire's County Council website.

A leaflet containing top tips of how to support getting your child ready for school including ideas about activities and tasks you can do together in preparation for that first day is available here:

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/early-years-childcare-and-family-support/getting-ready-to-start-school/>

The leaflet now contains a handy checklist, making it interactive and families can tick off the tasks as they give them a go and complete them. This will show them how they are progressing and hopefully encourage them to continue to learn new activities.

There are also contact details for help if the child is unable to do all the activities, aiming to prevent parents worrying and to signpost them to the correct assistance.

It is hoped that the newly revised leaflet will be distributed far and wide to ensure, where possible, that children are ready for school.



Public Health Team

Useful Websites

Help for Early Years Providers Guidance for people who work in early years, from the Department for Education. Early years child development training

[Communication and language - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-for-early-years-providers)

National Literacy Trust Time together booklet in 22 different languages (extract below)

[Time together - support for multilingual families | National Literacy Trust](https://www.nlitetrust.org.uk/time-together-support-for-multilingual-families)

What you can do to support your child

Research shows that there are seven things parents can do with their child to help them learn and achieve good outcomes in life⁴.

Share books and stories

Looking at books together is a great way of learning from a very young age.

Sing songs and rhymes

Singing nursery rhymes and songs is a great way to help your child learn new sounds and words through rhyme and repetition.

Play together

Young children learn through play. Playing together helps children develop the skills they need to communicate and socialise.

Play with letters

Playing games with the shapes and sounds of letters makes learning fun.

Get out and about

Going for a walk or to the shops together gives you and your child new things to experience including things to see, feel, smell, taste and hear, as well as lots to chat about!

Access to books

If a local library is open, you can borrow books for free, and attend free activities for children. Local nurseries, children's centres and schools can provide access to free books. Just ask!

Paint and draw

Making marks and scribbles are the beginning of learning to write.

These simple activities really make a difference to how your child learns and develops their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. You can have fun together and get ready for school at the same time!

Next Cluster Meeting

Wednesday 1st February at 13.30-15.00

[Click here to join the meeting](#)