

How can I support a child or young person with speech, language and communication needs?

Speak a little more slowly than you usually do

Allow time after asking a question for them to listen, think and work out what has been said.

Demonstrate

Use gestures, pictures or anything else visual to help understanding

Clarify

Ensure they understand your instructions by asking them to repeat what they think they have to do

Use shorter sentences and simpler language in instructions

For example say: "Finish the sentence you're working on".
Pause "Put your books away".
Pause "Then get changed for PE"
Say "make" instead of "produce"
"finish" instead of "complete"

Cut down the amount you talk

Allow children time to talk so that you both get a fair share of the conversation

Comment on what children are doing

This is less pressured than asking questions and encourages children to join in. For example, "You have a robot on your t-shirt" rather than "What's that on your t-shirt?"

Give specific praise about what they've done well

"You really joined in well there" or "Well done, you got dressed all by yourself today." Praise for effort is useful. If they can't think of what to say, help them

Give the words and phrases they need to use.

For example, when a child wants to join in a game being played by his friends: "Ben, you could say 'Can I join in?'"

Avoid colloquialisms, sayings and idioms

They can be confusing and children may take them literally. For example, "Pull your socks up"

Demonstrate how to say a word or sentence

This is instead of telling them they've said it wrong. For example, if they say "Car blue school" you can continue the conversation by adding "So you saw a blue car on the way to school"

Expand on what children say

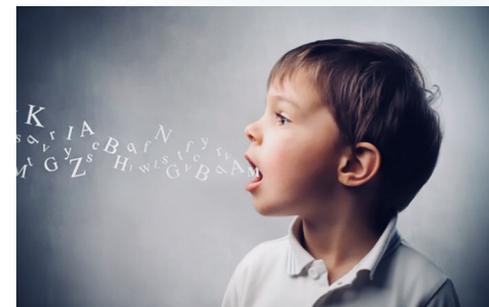
This helps them build bigger sentences. For example, if they say "Daddy going shopping" you could say "Yes, daddy's going shopping to buy some bread"

Ask children and young people what helps them

Sometimes the results are surprising .



Supporting children and young people with speech, language and communication needs



This leaflet provides information about children and young people who may need some additional help with their communication and some ways to provide further help.

What are speech, language and communication?

Speech refers to:

- Speaking with a clear voice, in a way that makes speech interesting and meaningful.
- Speaking without hesitating too much or without repeating words or sounds .
- Being able to make sounds like 'k' and 't' clearly so people can understand what you say .

Language refers to talking and understanding:

- Joining words together into sentences, stories and conversations .
- Knowing and choosing the right words to explain what you mean .
- Making sense of what people say .

Communication refers to how we interact with others:

- Using language or gestures in different ways, for example to have a conversation or to give someone directions
- Being able to consider other people's point of view
- Using and understanding body language and facial expressions, such as: - knowing when someone is bored - being able to listen to and look at people when having a conversation - knowing how to take turns and to listen as well as talk - knowing how close to stand next to someone

What are speech, language and communication needs?

This may be because they can't say what they want to, they don't understand the words that are being used or they don't know how to have a conversation. It may be a combination of these problems or it may be that they don't have enough words so they don't talk as well as they should for their age.

With help, lots of these children can catch up, though many will take much longer than others. Some will have difficulties throughout their childhood and at school and some into adulthood. However all can make progress with the right support.

Children whose first language isn't English are at no greater risk of speech, language and communication needs than any other child. However there can be challenges with identifying the speech, language and communication needs of children who are learning English as an additional language.

Every child with speech, language and communication needs is different, and their needs change as they get older. This means that every child can have difficulty with one or many of the different aspects of speech, language or communication

In some children, language is the only difficulty they have, everything else is OK.

For other children, their speech, language and communication needs are part of another condition.

There are overlaps between speech, language and communication needs and other conditions such as Autism, Dyspraxia² and Dyslexia.¹ Sometimes, having one particular diagnosis can mean that other needs may be hidden. Close working between different professionals and parents is therefore important to ensure a focus on all the needs of the child and not just one condition

Some children have less severe forms of speech, language and communication needs. In poorer parts of the country there are higher numbers of these children.

Children often miss what the teacher say or do the wrong thing as they can only understand and remember one simple instruction at a time. Children may struggle to listen well, know fewer words or talk in shorter sentences than other children the same age. Their difficulties are probably less severe and with the right support they can catch up.