

A Cross-Government Strategy for Children and Young People

- The Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care should use the findings and recommendations of the *Bercow: Ten Years On* review as the driver to develop a new cross-governmental strategy for children, in consultation with arms-length bodies, key voluntary agencies, professional bodies and independent experts, as well as children, young people and families. This should include a joint statement about the importance of children’s speech, language and communication.

Joint commissioning

- The Department for Education should ensure that the SEND System Leadership Board has an explicit focus on SLCN, and a transparent process for drawing upon the knowledge and experience of SLCN experts.
- Outputs of the SEND System Leadership Board should include:
 - a clear definition of joint commissioning
 - a self-evaluation tool for commissioners
 - practical guidance on seeking the views of service users and their families and co-production of service design.
- NHS England, in implementing the NHS Long Term Plan, should ensure that the integrated commissioning for SLCN is:
 - included in these arrangements as one of the tests in any accreditation regime;
 - supported through any national development work; and
 - prioritised as a means for reducing health inequalities.

Indicators related to joint commissioning and SLCN should be included within the CCG Improvement and Assessment Framework, and in any accountability measures for Integrated Care Systems as they are developed.
- Public Health England, in the next review of the service specification for the Healthy Child Programme, should reinforce the speech, language and communication elements, ensuring it is aligned with Speech, Language and Communication Pathway for children under five.

Support for long-term SLCN

- The Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education should develop an evidence-based integrated pathway for children and young people with SLCN aged 0-25, building on the pathway which Public Health England is developing for children aged 0-5.
- The Department for Education should strengthen the place of communication and language in its strategy to improve social mobility by developing plans to reduce the word gap across the age range, not just in the early years.
- NHS England, NHS Improvement and commissioners should work closely with their provider organisations and patients to identify what needs to be measured as an indicator of success and to

support providers in being able to collect and benchmark this information.

Support for long-term SLCN (continued)

- NHS England and NHS Improvement should support NHS providers to collect data on the quality and the outcomes of intervention by:
 - recommending the inclusion of outcome measures in the Community Services Dataset; and
 - expanding the Model Hospital dashboard to include quality metrics.
- The third sector should provide independent information and advice to parents about children's language development across the age range, together with practical guidance for ensuring early identification and intervention.

Professional development

- The Department for Education, in the roll out of the Early Career Framework (ECF), should ensure that the ECF curricula and training materials are informed by speech and language experts and include knowledge and understanding of how to support speech, language and communication and how to identify and support SLCN.
- The Department for Education should fund a national programme of roadshows on how to teach language for Reception and Key Stage 1 teachers, similar to the previous phonics roadshows.
- The Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care should ensure that the training for both the Designated Senior Leads for Mental Health and Mental Health Support Teams includes information on the link between SLCN and mental health, and how to recognise and respond appropriately to SLCN.

Incentivising schools (and other education providers)

- Ofsted should ensure that descriptors of high quality education in new inspection handbooks, for early years, schools and further education, emphasise the importance of pupils developing language and communication skills.
- Ofsted, in their update of inspector training, should ensure a focus on SLCN by including evidence, examples and case studies illustrating: importance of speech, language and communication to learning, social and emotional development; prevalence and impact of SLCN; ways to measure impact.
- The Department for Education should issue guidance for schools based on evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation Teaching and Learning Toolkit which highlights the importance of supporting speech, language and communication skills in order to close the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.
- The Department for Education should fund a national programme of training for education staff working with children and young people with SLCN, similar to that previously funded for autism.
- The Education and Skills Funding Agency should revise their apprenticeship funding rules for training providers and employers, to include training for communication skills development in the list of

items that can be funded.

Vulnerable groups

Government departments should ensure that practitioners who work with children and young people in settings with a known high prevalence of SLCN must be trained in recognising and responding appropriately to communication needs.

When a speech and language therapy assessment or specialist advice and support is required, they should have access to specially commissioned speech and language therapy services.

Specifically:

- The Department for Education should implement this recommendation within their:
 - plans to transform alternative provision; and
 - pilots of mental health assessments for looked-after children.

In mental health:

- The Department of Health and Social Care should ensure that Children and Young People's Mental Health Services and, where appropriate, Mental Health Support Teams, include embedded speech and language therapists with the appropriate level of specialism, able to provide the appropriate level of service.
- NHS England should ensure that speech and language therapists with the appropriate level of specialism are embedded in some of the mental health trailblazer areas, in order that the impact of their role can be evaluated.
- The Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care should ensure that funding is available for further research and evaluation of the impact of speech and language therapy interventions in children and young people with mental health needs and SLCN.

In youth justice:

- The Ministry of Justice, the Youth Justice Board and other relevant agencies should:
 - introduce mandatory communication skills training for all justice professionals as part of their training;
 - Review the effectiveness of the AssetPlus SLCN screening tool;
 - develop a consistent pathway for justice professionals to be able to refer a young person to speech and language therapy; and
 - develop guidance for youth offending teams on how to best support and meet the needs of young people with SLCN.
- The Department of Health and Social Care should monitor the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Health Assessment Tool (CHAT) in identifying SLCN.

Other recommendations

- NHS England, NHS Improvement, Public Health England and Health Education England should make use of the evidence from the *Bercow: Ten Years On* review regarding the impact of effective leadership on improving service commissioning and provision, to demonstrably inform their work developing leadership in the AHPs.

Calls to action for local leaders

- Local authorities should ensure that the evidence from the *Bercow: Ten Years On* report is included in their contribution to tackling health inequalities: in their published Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy and in their contribution to Integrated Care Systems. In their inspections, regulators should check to see that this evidence is reflected.
- School leaders should ensure that the importance of spoken language is reflected in their schools' special educational needs information report, ensuring there is clarity about how schools support the speech, language and communication of all children and also how they support those with additional needs.
- Commissioners and providers of children's speech and language therapy should support access to and engagement with services, thereby reducing the number of missed appointments, by:
 - ensuring that there is a process so that when a child is not brought to an appointment, both the referrer and family are notified, and there is a follow-up by the team around the child.
 - ensuring all professionals involved in the care of the child, as well as the child's parents or caregiver, are involved in decision-making.
 - offering alternative ways of accessing help and support based on the individual's needs.
 - systematically collecting data on children who miss appointments, and analyse the data to look at locality, local prevalence and underserved communities.