

Session 5:

Foundations for Learning: Speech, Language and Communication Approaches for School Readiness





Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Speech, Language and Communication (SLC): away from 'school readiness' and towards wellbeing

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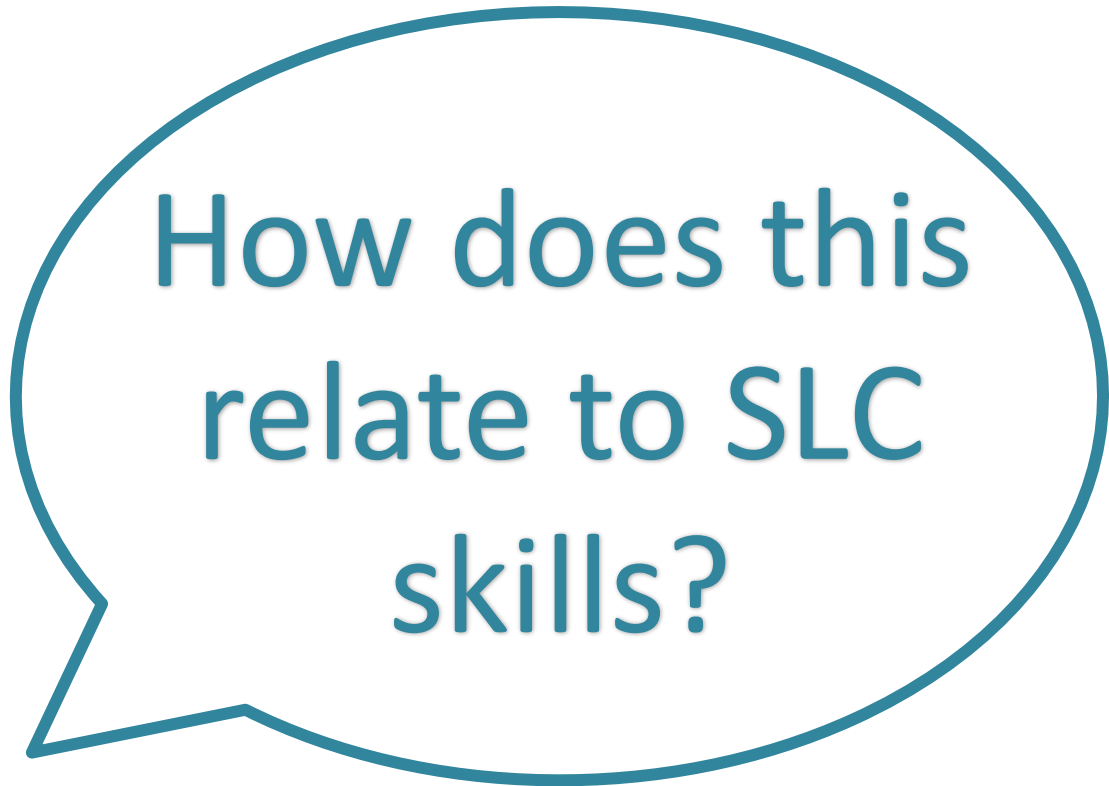
‘Giving every child the **best start** in life is a key factor in reducing health inequalities. Speech, language and communication (SLC) skills are essential for positive health, wellbeing, education and employment outcomes. Promoting SLC in the early years can **reduce the impact of social disadvantage** across the life course¹’

¹Beard 2018 (bold added)



What matters to families?

<https://www.menti.com/alpeqgve27ux>



32%

32% of children with **speech, language and communication needs** live in areas of **high social disadvantage** ¹



90% of care leavers in a 2021 study had previously undetected **speech, language & communication needs** ²



Children with **speech, language & communication needs** are more likely to experience bullying ³



81% of children with **emotional & behavioural disorders** have communication needs not previously identified ⁴



Modest investment into training early years practitioners can have a **huge impact** on children's speech, language & communication outcomes ⁵



Wellbeing

Responding to a child's actions and words is key

- ¹ Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), 2023 Additional learning and special educational needs (gov.wales) <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Schools-Census/Pupil-Level-Annual-School-Census/Special-Educational-Needs>
- ² Clegg, J., Crawford, E., Spencer, S. and Matthews, D. (2021). Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) in Young People Leaving Care in England: A Study Profiling the Language, Literacy and Communication Abilities of Young People Transitioning from Care to Independence. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health*, 18, 4107. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18084107>
- ³ Lloyd-Esenkaya, V., Forrest, C.L., Jordan, A., Russell, A.J. & Clair, M.C.S. (2021) What is the nature of peer interactions in children with language disorders? A qualitative study of parent and practitioner views. *Autism & Developmental Language Impairments*, 6, 23969415211005307
- ⁴ Hollo A., Wehby J. & Oliver R. M. (2014). Unidentified Language Deficits in Children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: A Meta-Analysis. *Exceptional Children*
- ⁵ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/early-years-toolkit/communication-and-language-approaches>

Why not 'school readiness'?

We know that what parents want most is for their children to be **happy**, make **friends**, and feel **connected**.

Risks of using the term 'school readiness' include

- pressure on parents to ensure that their child is “ready for school”, rather than the school being ready to welcome the child.
- focus on a medical model of disability, rather than a social model.
- focus on 'getting the child ready for school' as if the early years are unimportant.
- reinforces idea that school do 'the real work' when it comes to education with no recognition of the critical importance of the home learning environment .

We would like to steer the conversation away from 'school readiness' and towards the critical impact of early support for SLC on a child's wellbeing.

We know that what families and practitioners do in the early years makes a difference to children's outcomes later in life ³.

²EIF, 2017

³EEF, 2021



Talk with Me

Welsh Government's [Talk with Me](#) / [Siarad Gyda Fi](#) Delivery Plan sets out to promote best practice in SLC in the early years, with 5 objectives covering:

- Raising public awareness of the importance of SLC in the early years
- Identification of SLC Needs
- Evidence based interventions for SLC at universal, population and targeted levels
- Workforce development
- Cross policy commitments





Talk with me

10 tips to help me learn to talk



1 Start talking to me before I am born



2 I can learn our language and culture from you



3 Our best place is face to face



4 Sing me a rhyme at any time



5 Let's talk and play every day



6 Let's look at books together



7 Talk with me about what we can see



8 Let's turn 'screen time' into 'you and me time'!



9 Add a word to what you have heard me say

big!

10 I love to talk with everyone!



Applying the key messages to change behaviour

Capability

Limited understanding of how to support SLC development, including milestones and activities

Opportunity

Limited time together
Other developmental needs prioritised

Motivation

Parents tend to seek advice on SLC from friends and family rather than professionals



Behaviour:
Talking together

Identification of SLCN in children aged 0 to 5 years

‘**Prosiect Pengwin**’: Coproduction of bespoke bilingual SLC surveillance and intervention package for Wales

Based on recommendations from: [Early language screening review | GOV.WALES](#)



Comprises seven work packages, each designed to contribute to the core outputs of:

1. A co-produced bilingual SLC **surveillance tool** which identifies children in need of intervention at a universal, population, targeted or specialist level.
2. A programme of evidence-based interventions which complement the surveillance tool.
3. A training programme to support implementation of the surveillance tool and intervention programme.

The outputs will be designed to fit with the existing planned contacts in the Healthy Child Wales Programme (15, 27 and 42 months), to meet all 14 recommendations from the Review of Early Language Screening report and to reflect the preferences of the workforce and families. Due for completion in 2026.

a systemic or preventative approach to screening may be more beneficial than a single screen

known risk factors should be combined with monitoring of language skills and/or dynamic assessment to enhance screening

information about children's language background and exposure to each of their languages should be collected as this is crucial to the screening process for bilingual children

Training the workforce/ cross government commitments

- SLC training framework: [Talk with me: all Wales Speech, Language and Communication \(SLC\) training pathway tool | GOV.WALES](#)
- Estyn/ CIW training
- Health Visitor training: [Talk With Me: training | GOV.WALES](#)
- CLA workforce training survey
- Free online Elklan training: [An Introduction to Speech, Language and Communication](#)
- Working with Curriculum for Wales, Community Focused Schools & ALN teams to support resource development, share Talk with Me messages and identify training needs



Resources for practitioners

- TWM [campaign page](#) to share with families
- TWM [key messages](#) for SLC development
- TWM [practitioner page](#)
- [ExChange](#) Community of Practice: training [videos](#)
- [Training pathway](#) for EY practitioners
- [Ages and stages](#) chart for settings
- Behaviour and learning to talk [leaflet](#) for families





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Thank you!

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