

Strategy Summary: Supporting Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) in Leicester

Introduction

At the heart of communication is the time in each day for every child or young person to interact with an adult and with other children or young people. Building positive relationships is key.

Cath Jackson, SEND Early Years Support Team

Working with children, young people and families we have a role in supporting their speech, language and communication (SLC). Leicester City Council and our partners are using the [Balanced System®](#) framework to improve support for children and young people (0-25 years) who have SLC needs. We want to involve a wide range of children, young people, families, and staff to shape our approach and inform our action plan. Please read this summary document and share your views and stories by answering the questions on the final page.



Drawing by Liyana (Age 8)

I noticed that my daughter wasn't really speaking. Staff at the Children's Centre encouraged me to talk with her about what we could hear, smell and feel as we were out and about. That really helped...

Parent

Why does early language matter?

All children and young people develop in their own way. Communication starts early in life before speech. Language and the link to other social, emotional and learning outcomes means that early language is widely seen as a sign of children's wellbeing (health and happiness) (PHE, 2018). When early language doesn't develop, this might be a sign that the child or parent/carer could benefit from help.

- More than 70% of young people in the Youth Offending Service have a communication disability
- Children with language delay are twice as likely to be unemployed at 34
- Children and young people with language delay are 3 times more at risk of mental health problems in adulthood

Help for SLC in the right place, at the right time in the right way can support children and young people to thrive.

What are the early language challenges in Leicester?

Leicester has a young, diverse and deprived population. Poor housing, parental stress, and growing up in poverty are factors contributing to language delay.

- The number of children in Leicester aged 0 – 4 is almost 2.5 times the national average
- Leicester is ranked amongst the most deprived 20% of areas in England
- Children in Leicester are assessed for communication on average 16 months behind expected levels in Nursery, and nearly 18 months behind in Reception (Datenet and Leicester City Council)
- In 8 wards in Leicester more than 50% of children have predicted speech, language and communication needs (Better Communication)

What will we do to improve support for SLC in Leicester?

Our vision:

All children and young people will develop speech, language and communication to support their voice, agency and wellbeing.

Everyone who works with children, young people and their families will understand how children and young people grow and develop, and offer timely help to identify and address speech, language and communication needs.

4 aims to achieve our vision



Lead a joined-up system to offer timely, effective and accessible support for SLC needs.

Children and adults learn through stories, and to explain SLC support for families and staff as a story helps families learn together. Our Parent Champions help other parents by sharing stories from experience and providing peer support. They sit alongside, midwives, health visitors, children's centre teams, social care teams, childminders and school staff who recognise how important early language is, particularly for a child's school readiness. We're all committed to working together to help families.

Jennifer Fernandes, Early Help Employment Adviser & Chair of the North West Early Help Locality Partnership Board



Engage all parents and carers in their role as communication partners for their children, and nurture children and young people's voice, agency and wellbeing and develop an SLC Pathway

Services meet us at a difficult time, but what really helps is that they listen to us, and work alongside us with helpful suggestions.

Richard Jaramba, Chair of Leicester Parent and Carer Forum



Create communication-friendly, inclusive spaces for children and young people's learning and leisure at home, in early years settings schools and colleges, adventure playgrounds, parks, museums, neighbourhoods and across the city.

Using a lot of photos and less text helps so the person can figure out and understand what it means – we use a programme called photo symbols.

Markel, Big Mouth Forum Member



Empower staff/volunteers/families through training and ongoing learning to be confident and competent to work together, share information, identify and address children and young people's SLCN

I became more confident when I changed my environment and my friends. I was encouraged to express my opinions. Volunteering opportunities have helped me to leave my comfort zone and broaden my horizons, which has also improved my confidence.

Umaymah, Big Mouth Forum Member