

Better Communication

An action plan to improve services for children and young people
with speech, language and communication needs



A commitment from
The Children's Plan

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Ministerial foreword

Speech, language and communication are crucial to every child's ability to access and get the most out of education and life. Children can have a range of different speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). They can be primary, such as specific language impairments or a stammer, or secondary and related to another need like autistic spectrum disorders, hearing impairments or physical disabilities. They include many of the most vulnerable children, those most in need of effective support to reach their potential.

John Bercow MP has done an excellent job of highlighting the importance of speech, language and communication. His report identified the areas where services need to improve to help children and young people with SLCN get the best out of life. We are pleased to be able to respond with this Action Plan which sets out a range of initiatives across Government to improve services for children and young people with SLCN culminating in the National Year of Speech, Language and Communication in 2011-12.

Creating an environment in which every child develops effective speech, language and communication skills and those with SLCN have the best opportunity to succeed is a challenge for everyone working with children and young people from speech and language therapists to early years practitioners and from health visitors to teachers and parents.

We therefore plan to improve understanding across the whole children's workforce of



A stylized, handwritten signature of Ed Balls in black ink.

Ed Balls MP

Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families

the importance of speech, language and communication. Support for children with SLCN will be further embedded into universal services, including through Every Child a Talker and the Child Health Promotion Programme.

We will also help children's services and primary care trusts to jointly commission better specialist services for those that need them by developing and learning from good practice through pathfinders in up to 20 areas. We then want those lessons to be learned nationally so the pathfinders will be used to develop a supplemental joint commissioning framework on SLCN and guidance for all areas.

To help us deliver initiatives across all children's services, we will form a Communication Council to provide ongoing advice and support on improving provision for children with SLCN. We will also appoint a Communication Champion to raise awareness of the importance of speech, language and communication, work with delivery partners to coordinate initiatives and organise the National Year of Speech, Language and Communication.

It is vital that we make sure children and young people with SLCN have the best opportunity to succeed. We are therefore very grateful to John Bercow MP for setting us this challenge and look forward to working with the Communication Council, Communication Champion and others to make a difference for children and young people with SLCN.



A handwritten signature of Alan Johnson in black ink.

Alan Johnson MP

Secretary of State for Health

Executive summary

1. The Bercow Report laid out the challenge faced by policymakers, commissioners, the children's workforce and delivery partners to effectively support children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). This action plan sets out the Government's response: a range of initiatives to improve services for children with SLCN culminating in the National Year of Speech, Language and Communication in 2011-12.
2. Many of the initiatives are integrated within mainstream programmes and projects to ensure that all services understand the importance of supporting children SLCN. To help co-ordinate work and make sure it delivers the service improvements required:
 - The Government will appoint a Communication Champion to raise awareness of the importance of speech, language and communication and work with delivery partners to develop and co-ordinate initiatives to improve services;
 - A Communication Council will be formed to monitor service improvements and provide the Government with ongoing advice and support in delivering these initiatives; and
 - The Government will commission a review of progress to improve services for children and young people with SLCN in summer 2010.
3. All professionals working with children should support the development of all children's speech, language and communication skills. Practitioners need an awareness of SLCN so that they can identify them and, if necessary, refer children for additional support. In order to give the wider workforce an understanding of the importance of speech, language and communication and the knowledge and skills required to support those with SLCN:
 - The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) will work with the Children's Workforce Network (CWN) to encourage awareness of the importance of speech, language and communication throughout the children's workforce, including through the development of the integrated qualifications framework;
 - The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) will continue to develop and roll out initial teacher training units on special educational needs (SEN) which include coverage of SLCN and also develop the framework for the Masters in Teaching and Learning qualification which will incorporate SEN like SLCN;
 - The National Strategies will continue to promote the Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) providing continuing professional development on SLCN to practitioners; and
 - The Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) is commissioning an independent evaluation which will look at the impact of teacher training initiatives, reporting in March 2011 and informing future policy on developing the workforce to better support children with SEN, including SLCN.
4. Services provided to all children support the vital development of speech, language and communication skills and help to identify those who need targeted and specialist services. We will therefore ensure that mainstream early years, education and health services provide prevention, early identification and intervention services needed to support children and through parents/carers, to develop speech, language and communication skills. These services will be developed through:

4 Better Communication

- The £40m Every Child a Talker (ECAT) programme which will raise early years practitioners' awareness of the importance of speech and language;
 - The Child Health Promotion Programme, which will ensure all children's speech, language and communication skills are reviewed between the ages of 2 – 2 ½ to spot any difficulties early;
 - The dedicated schools grant formula review which will consider how best to fund educational provision for children with SEN; and
 - The DCSF and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) ensuring that the primary and secondary curriculums and the guidance provided alongside them help teachers support the development of speech, language and communication skills.
5. Meeting Communication Needs through Targeted and Specialist Services sets out how the Government will work to help commissioners make joined-up effective and responsive provision for children and young people with SLCN.
6. For children and young people identified as having a SLCN, targeted and specialist services need to provide quick and effective support. Developing specialist and targeted provision for children with SLCN that meets these needs remains a challenge for commissioners. We will help commissioners to develop services better able to make effective interventions by:
- Supporting a series of pathfinders on effective commissioning for children and young people with SLCN which will be used to develop a supplemental joint commissioning framework on services for children with SLCN;
 - Investing up to £500k each year for the next three years to develop the Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) sector; and
 - Commissioning a research programme including looking at the cost-effectiveness of provision for children with SLCN.
7. Finally, this Action Plan provides an indicative summary timetable for initiatives to improve services for children and young people with SLCN and explains how the initiatives will be funded.

Section 1

Improving services for Children and Young People with Speech, Language and Communication Needs

- 1.1 Speech, language and communication are central to each child's potential to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and ultimately achieve economic well-being¹. The Bercow Report² set out the challenge of improving services for children with speech language and communication needs (SLCN) with five key themes:
- *Communication is crucial*, a key life skill at the heart of every social interaction and vital to children's successful development;
 - *Early identification and intervention* is essential to maximise each child's chance of overcoming their communication need and succeeding;
 - *A continuum of services designed around the family is needed* for children with SLCN;
 - *Joint working is critical* to deliver services that provide effective support; and
 - *The current system is characterised by high variability and a lack of equity.*
- 1.2 The Government is already rising to meet this challenge through the Aiming High for Disabled Children Programme, measures to improve support for children with special educational needs (SEN) such as the Inclusion Development Programme (IDP), the development of a Child Health Strategy and other initiatives. The recent *Children's Plan One Year On*³ sets out plans to develop a clearer focus on outcomes for all children with special educational needs (SEN), including those with SLCN. The document sets out how progress will be independently
- reviewed by Ofsted from April 2009 and an ongoing inquiry by Brian Lamb into parental confidence in the SEN process of assessment and provision which will report in autumn 2009. However, the Bercow Report sets out a clear mandate for further change.
- 1.3 This action plan sets out the initiatives planned and in progress across Government which support its aim, to ensure the *wellbeing of every child with SLCN and allow them to reach their full potential.*
- 1.4 Over the next three years, the Government will work to meet the following objectives culminating in the national year of speech, language and communication in 2011-12:
- Raise awareness of the importance of speech, language and communication to the development of all children across the children's workforce;
 - Support delivery of universal services that promote language development (for example through the Child Health Promotion Programme and mainstream education settings);
 - Help local commissioners plan and deliver targeted and specialist services for children with SLCN that meet the demands of their local area, based on evidence of what works.
- 1.5 The Bercow Report articulated the importance of a strong universal offer to all children with recognition across the children's workforce of the importance of speech language and communication and an awareness of how to identify and support

1. More information on the Every Child Matters outcomes is available at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/aims/

2. *The Bercow Report: A Review of Services for Children and Young People (0-19) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs* published in July 2008 by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/slcnaaction

3. The Children's Plan One Year On was published by DCSF in December 2008 and is available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/

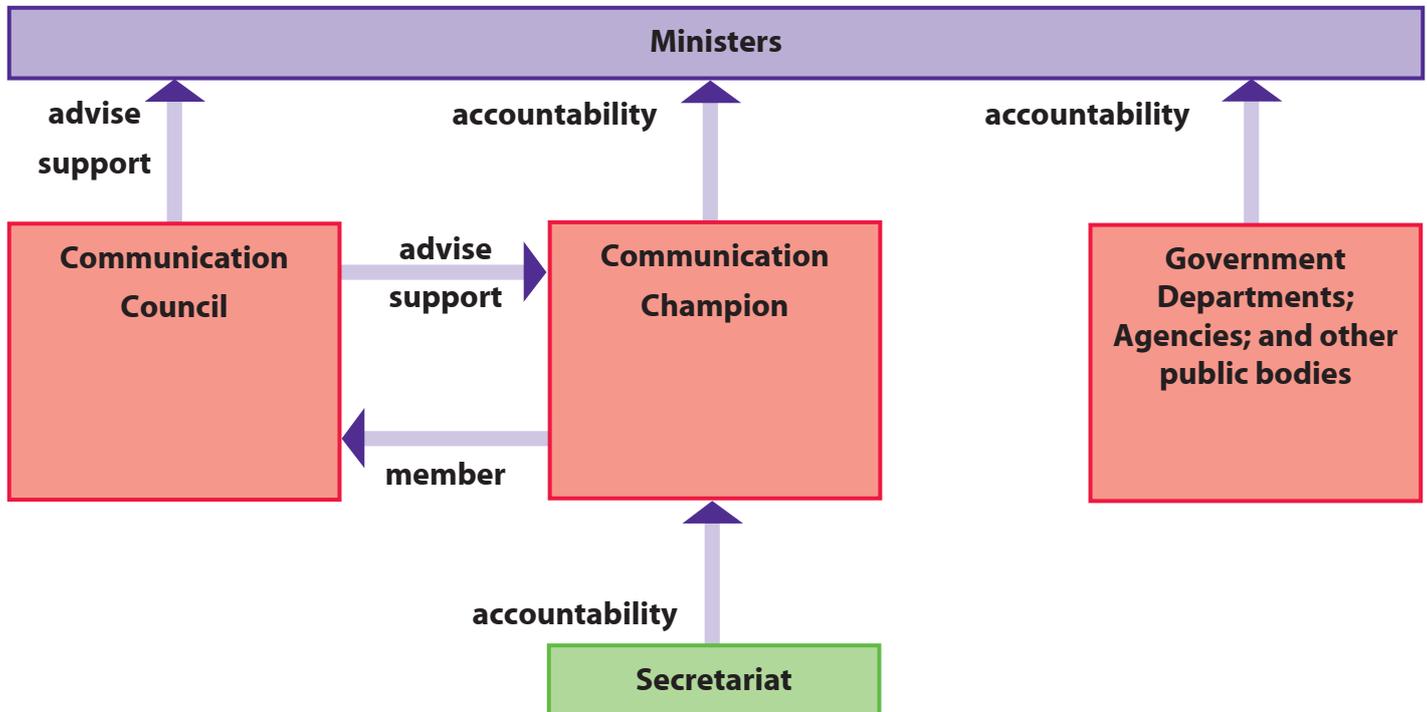
children and young people with SLCN. This awareness amongst all those who work with children is essential to help support both those with minor needs and those who also need specialist interventions. It is essential that targeted and specialist services are provided effectively where they are required. However, just as important is what happens in the time that the child spends with their parents, in early years settings or in the classroom.

- 1.6 Meeting the objectives set out above – improving services for children and young people with SLCN – therefore requires action across Government, particularly the Department of Health (DH) and Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), and their delivery partners. It is crucial that responsibility to promote children’s speech, language and communication development, including those with particular needs is seen as a mainstream issue and delivered through universal provision. This means that many initiatives set out below are being delivered through existing programmes with existing accountability and governance arrangements.
- 1.7 To ensure that the initiatives come together and deliver the service improvements required, Ministers will appoint a Communication Council to monitor progress and provide them with ongoing advice and support. They will also appoint a Communication Champion, who will be a member of the Council, to co-ordinate and lead initiatives working with Government, its delivery partners and other stakeholders.

The Communication Champion

- 1.8 The Communication Champion will be appointed by Ministers for a term of three years following an open recruitment process.
- 1.9 The Communication Champion will be a key member of the Communication Council and will be responsible for:
 - Promoting the importance of speech, language and communication for children across England amongst commissioners, service providers, the children’s workforce and the wider public with particular focus on those with SLCN;
 - Identifying and sharing good practice in supporting the development of speech, language and communication in children;
 - Working across Government, delivery partners and other stakeholders to co-ordinate each initiative and build on prior work to improve services for children and young people with SLCN; and
 - Planning, organising and leading the National Year of Speech, Language and Communication in 2011-12 which builds on and develops previous initiatives to raise awareness of the importance of speech, language and communication particularly for children with SLCN, promote the sharing of effective strategies to encourage language development and engage local and national stakeholders in supporting the development of speech, language and communication.
- 1.10 An early task will be to review the effectiveness of alternative and augmentative communication provision in different areas of the country to identify effective practices and inform the development of future initiatives to improve services.

Relationships diagram



The Communication Council

1.11 The Communication Council will be formed to advise and support Ministers and the Communication Champion on delivering improvements in services for children and young people with SLCN. Its role will involve ongoing monitoring of services to bring issues to the attention of Ministers and the Champion.

1.12 To achieve this, members of the Communication Council will:

- Receive and consider updates on the Government's initiatives to improve services for children and young people with SLCN;
- Provide advice, support and challenge on progress and other areas where consultation is needed to those working on initiatives, including the Communication Champion;
- Help arrange and advise on consultation as required by those working on initiatives

to improve services for children and young people with SLCN; and

- Promote the importance of speech language and communication, and share information about the Government's initiatives to improve services for children and young people with SLCN within their own organisations and those they work with.

1.13 Ministers will appoint the members of the Communication Council and it will be chaired by senior civil servants on behalf of Ministers. The Council's terms of reference are set out in Annex B.

1.14 The team providing support to the Communication Champion will also provide the secretariat to the Communication Council. Their role will include arranging and facilitating meetings of the Council and its sub-groups and, in particular, supporting the parent and young person representatives to fulfil their role as members of the Council.

Monitoring Success

- 1.15 The Communication Council will play a key role in monitoring the success of initiatives to improve service for children and young people with SLCN. They will consider the progress of projects and provide constructive advice to the Communication Champion and Government.
- 1.16 The improvement of services for children and young people with SLCN will support existing public service agreement commitments which are being monitored through a range of attainment and parental perception indicators. The DCSF is also already looking to improve the information it publishes about pupils with SEN, including SLCN, which will support external analysis of their progress.

Public Service Agreements

- 1.17 The Government is already signed up to improve services for children with SEN and disabilities – including children with SLCN – through public service agreements (PSAs)⁴ published in 2007.
- 1.18 In particular, PSAs 10 and 11 require improvements in the educational attainment of all children and narrowing gaps between those from disadvantaged groups and others. Raising the attainment of children with SEN, including those with SLCN, will be crucial to meeting the targets attached to the indicators in these PSAs. In addition, PSA 12 includes a Disabled Children's Services Indicator which will measure parental experience of services for disabled children⁵.

- 1.19 Improving Early Years Foundation Stage attainment, including the Communication, Language and Literacy of all children, is a key target within PSAs 10 and 11. This indicator is cascaded to local authorities as part of the national indicator set for local government. This encourages the system to focus on the communication and language skills of every child in early years, intervening early and effectively for those with difficulties.
- 1.20 The Government will consider how SEN in general and SLCN in particular are addressed in new PSAs prior to the start of the next spending review period.

National Data

- 1.21 Current data collected on pupil attainment and through the school census (such as most of those underpinning PSAs 10 and 11) can be disaggregated by type of need for pupils with SEN at School Action Plus and with a statement. Primary and secondary types of need are recorded for these pupils using categories including SLCN, autistic spectrum disorders and hearing impairment⁶. However, this data should be used with some caution as it has a number of limitations. For example, it doesn't necessarily identify pupils with communication problems arising from primary needs other than SEN or cover those whose needs are met entirely by the school (i.e. those at School Action).
- 1.22 National level attainment data by type of need was published for the first time in July 2008⁷. From 2009, a new annual publication from the DCSF will contain user-friendly

4. The relevant PSA Delivery Agreements are available at www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/3696.htm. PSAs 10 and 11 (*Raise the educational achievement of all children and young people and Narrow the gap in educational achievement between children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers*) drive improvements in educational performance, including for children with SEN like SLCN. PSA 12 (*Improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people*) is intended to underpin improvements in wider services for children, including disabled children.

5. More information about the development of the disabled children's services indicator is available in the report prepared by the National Centre for Social Research for the DCSF published in September 2008 and available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/programmeofresearch/projectinformation.cfm?projectId=15553&resultspage=1

6. Definitions of the types of need that can be input into the school census are available at www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/datatypes/

7. Attainment information on pupils with SEN by type of need was published in July 2008 as an additional table to the Statistical First Release *National Curriculum Assessment, GCSE and Equivalent Attainment and Post-16 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, in England 2006/07* available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000759/index.shtml

and relevant information on pupils with SEN, including SLCN. As currently envisaged it will provide directly, or give access to detailed tables of data – at local level where appropriate – on pupils with SEN, including SLCN. It will also provide a guide to accessing and using SEN related data covering the Every Child Matters wellbeing outcomes from a range of sources. This will meet the requirement of the SEN (Information) Act 2008⁸ specifically to consider the wellbeing of children with SEN in deciding how to publish data.

- 1.23 The DCSF is also looking at collecting information about the type of need of pupils at school action and the disability status of all pupils through the school census from 2011. This will allow pupils with lower levels of SLCN to be identified in education statistics for the first time. However, the details of this data collection need to be considered carefully to ensure that it does not impose undue burdens on the schools and local authorities that are required to provide the data.
- 1.24 The DCSF also announced in the Children's Plan that it would develop guidance for schools on target setting and assessing the progress of pupils with SEN. This guidance will cover all children with SEN, including those working below level 1 of the National Curriculum (whose attainment is assessed by teachers using the 'P-scales'⁹). The DCSF is working with National Strategies to develop guidance and training materials on improved data and its use and with Ofsted to develop the capacity of RAISE online¹⁰.

- 1.25 This improved use of data on children with SEN over the next few years – through the new annual publication, collection of new information and development of progression guidance – will provide a stronger framework for the national evaluation of initiatives to improve outcomes for children and young people with SLCN.

Review of Progress

- 1.26 The DCSF and the DH will commission a review of its progress in improving services for children and young people with SLCN in Summer 2010. This review will inform preparation for the National Year of Speech, Language and Communication and help ensure that the year builds on success already achieved and addresses any gaps that have emerged.

8. Details of the passage of the SEN (Information) Bill are available at <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2007-08/specialeducationalneedsinformation.html>. The final text of the SEN (Information) Act 2008 is available at www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2008/ukpga_20080011_en_1 and the commencement order which will bring it into effect on 1 January 2009 is available at www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2008/uksi_20082664_en_1

9. More information on the P-Scales can be found at www.qca.org.uk/qca_8541.aspx

10. RAISE online (Reporting and Analysis for Improvement through School Self-Evaluation) provides interactive analysis of school and pupil performance data for local authorities, schools and school improvement partners. More information is available at www.raiseonline.org

Local accountability

- 1.27 Services that provide direct support to children with SLCN are commissioned locally, largely by primary care trusts and local authorities working together through Children's Trusts.
- 1.28 Local authorities and primary care trusts (PCTs) are independent of National Government and have a responsibility to set priorities in accordance with local needs. Since the beginning of 2008-09, the Government holds local authorities to account through a new local performance framework proposed in the October 2006 Local Government White Paper¹¹. PCTs are held to account, by Strategic Health Authorities, through the NHS Operating Framework.
- 1.29 These frameworks allow National Government to influence local commissioners while leaving them with the autonomy to address differing local circumstances. The Communication Champion will therefore need to encourage local commissioners to respond positively to initiatives to improve services for children and young people with SLCN to ensure that all areas see benefits.

Children's Trusts

- 1.30 Local authorities, primary care trusts and other relevant partners come together in their local Children's Trust to jointly commission and align services for children and young people within the framework of a strategic and overarching Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). Forthcoming legislation will strengthen Children's Trusts by making the Children's Trust Board a statutory body with responsibility for producing, publishing and monitoring the CYPP. This will have the effect of extending ownership of strategic planning and commissioning to all Children's Trust partners, making it a genuinely joint process.

- 1.31 Statutory guidance for Children's Trusts was published in November 2008¹² which encourages Children's Trust partners to commission services that support the early identification of children with needs, such as SLCN, and make effective and appropriate interventions.
- 1.32 Ministers will write to Directors of Children's Services on the publication of this action plan to suggest that they give a member of their Children's Trust Board leadership for promoting speech, language and communication in the local area.

Comprehensive Area Assessments

- 1.33 The performance management framework set out in the September 2006 Local Government White Paper is intended to simplify arrangements and reflects the desire to give local authorities (LAs) and their partners 'the freedom and powers to meet the needs of their communities...'
- 1.34 As part of the new framework, Comprehensive Area Assessments¹³ (CAA) will replace Comprehensive Performance Assessments (CPA), children's services Joint Area Reviews and Annual Performance Assessments, and social care star ratings from April 2009. They will provide area assessments of the performance of services in each locality and organisational assessments of individual public bodies which will inform each other. The assessments will start with the priority areas identified within the Local Area Agreement (LAA), an agreement between national and local government which includes targets for up to 35 indicators deemed local priorities. Other evidence will also be considered if performance in an area outside the LAA is of concern or shows significant success.

11. *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, published in October 2006 by the Department for Communities and Local Government, available at www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongprosperous

12. *Children's Trusts: Statutory guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve well-being of children, young people and their families*, published in November 2008 by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/localauthorities/index.cfm?action=content&contentID=16933

13. More information about Comprehensive Area Assessments is available in the consultation document available at www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa/consultation.asp

- 1.35 Risk-based inspection of a particular service or group of services as part of CAA will replace most rolling inspections from April 2009 (although there will be an inspection programme led by Ofsted on services for looked after children and safeguarding). An inspectorate, such as Ofsted, may trigger an inspection where performance or improvement levels are not satisfactory, where a service, outcome or group of users are subject to significant risk and where the risks or underperformance cannot be addressed through other means.
- 1.36 Ofsted are currently finalising plans for inspections that might be carried out within CAA and how they will be triggered. Available evidence related to services for children with SEN, including SLCN, will be considered in CAA and deciding whether an inspection might be necessary. Services for children with SEN, including SLCN, will when appropriate be within the scope of a triggered inspection.

Key actions

- This action plan sets out a range of initiatives to improve services for children with speech, language and communication needs culminating in the *National Year of Speech, Language and Communication* in 2011-12.
- The Government will appoint a *Communication Champion* by April 2009 to raise awareness of the importance of speech, language and communication and work with delivery partners to develop and co-ordinate initiatives to improve services.
- A *Communication Council* will be formed to monitor service improvements and provide the Government with ongoing advice and support in delivering these initiatives. It will meet for the first time in spring 2009.
- The Communication Champion and Communication Council will be supported by a Secretariat in place by April 2009.
- Forthcoming legislation will *strengthen Children's Trusts* by putting their boards on a statutory framework.
- The Government will commission a *review of progress* to improve services for children and young people with SLCN in summer 2010.

Section 2

Working together to improve communication

- 2.1 Whether they are health visitors, care assistants in children's centres, teachers in schools or others working with children, all members of the mainstream children's workforce should support the development of all children's speech, language and communication skills. The successful development of speech, language and communication skills is important to all children and effective support is even more important to those with SLCN. Practitioners need an awareness of SLCN to allow them to identify it and, if necessary, refer children to additional support.
- 2.2 It is therefore vital that all people working with children:
- Appreciate the importance of speech, language and communication;
 - Are aware of how they can support the development of speech, language and communication in all children;
 - Can identify children who may have SLCN and know where to get them additional support; and
 - Know how to work with specialists, such as speech and language therapists, to build an effective environment for all children to develop speech, language and communication skills.
- 2.3 Whether they are health visitors, care assistants in children's centres, teachers in schools or others working with children, all members of the mainstream children's workforce should support the development of all children's speech, language and communication skills. The successful development of speech, language and communication skills is important to all children and effective support is even more important to those with SLCN. Practitioners need an awareness of SLCN to allow them to identify it and, if necessary, refer children to additional support.
- 2.4 The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) is part of the *Skills for Care and Development Sector Skills Council*. It aims to improve the lives of children and young people by ensuring that those who work with them have the best possible training, qualifications and support. CWDC is working to build a children's workforce that is aware of and responsive to the needs of all children, including those with disabilities and SEN like SLCN.
- 2.5 The DCSF has asked CWDC, as part of their remit, to work to develop the children's workforce's capacity to support children with SEN and disabilities. This will require improved awareness throughout the workforce of the importance of speech, language and communication and how to help children with SLCN. CWDC are members of the Communication Trust's advisory group and will continue to work with them to develop and deliver improvements in the workforce's ability to support children with SLCN.
- 2.6 The CWDC will work in partnership with the Children's Workforce Network (CWN) to consider the most effective and appropriate ways to address SCLN in the development of qualifications and training. The CWN includes sector skills councils and other organisations covering the health, education, justice and social care sectors. The CWN board will consider how it will work to do this in February 2009. It will consider the importance of SLCN, SEN and disabilities in the development of the Integrated

The whole children's workforce

- 2.3 The *2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy*¹⁴ sets out a vision for a workforce that is: ambitious for every child and young person; excellent in their practice; committed to partnership and integrated working; and respected and valued as professionals. This vision underpins our desire

14. *2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy* was published by DCSF in December 2008 and is available at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/childrenandyoungpeoplesworkforce/

Qualifications Framework (IQF, a set of approved qualifications allowing progression, continuing professional development and mobility across the children's workforce¹⁵) and the common core¹⁶.

- 2.7 Practitioners in early years settings are also encouraged to use materials provided by the Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) described below and will benefit from the Every Child a Talker (ECAT) programme discussed in the next chapter. The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists will support the engagement of the speech and language therapy profession and promote best practice for speech and language therapy service delivery.

Schools

- 2.8 Teachers must already demonstrate that they meet certain standards, including the ability to support pupils with SEN such as SLCN before they are granted qualified teacher status (QTS)¹⁷. However, the broad range of SEN that a teacher might encounter makes it hard to ensure their initial teacher training covers all possible needs in depth. The DCSF, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and their partners are therefore providing a range of tools to help all teachers develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to provide effective support to children with SLCN.
- 2.9 Teaching assistants also have a role to play, often providing regular direct support to children with SEN like SLCN. The work described above planned by CWDC and the IDP described below both offer opportunities for teaching assistants to develop the skills and confidence that they need to effectively help children with SLCN.

Initial Teacher Training (ITT)

- 2.10 The curriculum for teacher training is not nationally prescribed and training providers have flexibility in the way they design, deliver and manage their programmes. But they are required to demonstrate that the content, structure, delivery and assessment of their training are designed to enable trainee teachers to demonstrate that they have met the QTS standards.
- 2.11 The Children's Plan reaffirmed the Government's commitment to high quality professional development for teachers and announced funds for a range of activity in this area. A key part of that is the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) programme to help training providers develop the knowledge, skills and understanding of trainee, beginner and experienced teachers in relation to SEN and disability. Resources specifically related to supporting children and young people with SLCN are an integral part of the programme. New, specially developed units for primary undergraduate ITT courses were launched in summer 2008, backed by £500,000 to support dissemination and incorporation into existing courses. A specific section on "Speech, language and communication" is included in the new materials and communication is interwoven throughout the units.
- 2.12 Similar resources for secondary undergraduate ITT and primary and secondary PGCE providers are being developed for dissemination in 2009, to be followed by resources for beginner teachers undertaking their induction.

15. More information on the IQF is available at www.iqf.org.uk/

16. The IQF inclusion principles already include a requirement that qualifications reflect the *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce*. The Common Core is available from www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/common-core

17. More information about initial teacher training requirements and qualified teacher status standards are available at www.tda.gov.uk/partners/ittstandards.aspx

Continuing Professional Development – Masters in Teaching and Learning

- 2.13 The Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) will be a professional qualification for teachers, designed to fulfil the government's ambition to make teaching a masters level profession¹⁸. It will be available from September 2009, initially to all newly qualified teachers (NQTs) recruited in the North West of England and to NQTs and newly appointed heads of department in all National Challenge schools. The masters programme will be practice-based and provide teachers with the opportunity to develop their professional skills and specialist expertise in the workplace with the support of a trained in-school coach as well as a tutor from a higher education institution. It is expected that MTL will be a three year programme.
- 2.14 A national framework that can be used by providers of MTL is currently being developed and should be finalised by the end of 2008. The TDA are working with a range of national experts as well as social partners, HEIs and schools to develop this framework, using the outcomes from consultation events held in Summer 2008 as a starting point¹⁹. The framework will be tight enough to gain national consistency, but flexible enough to allow providers to develop a programme that meets local needs. The consultation identified that SEN is a key content area for MTL and TDA will ensure that this is covered, including SLCN, in programme development.

Continuing Professional Development – Inclusion Development Programme

- 2.15 The Inclusion Development Programme²⁰ (IDP) provides continuing professional development to teachers and others working in schools and early years settings. It is designed to increase the confidence and expertise of mainstream practitioners in supporting children with high incidence SEN. The first materials, currently in circulation, are concerned with working with children with SLCN and dyslexia. The focus on communication difficulties in Round One of IDP was a very conscious decision, reflecting the fundamental importance of communication to progression and learning. Work has begun on IDP material on autism, for release in 2009.
- 2.16 The National Strategies are working with local authorities though the new SEN regional hubs to promote the IDP. The regional hubs have funding to provide local authority training events and other activities to encourage take up.
- 2.17 DCSF is commissioning an independent evaluation which will look at the take up, permeation and impact of the IDP including the extent to which it has raised the confidence of teachers and other staff, and any evidence of improved outcomes for individual children. The same evaluation will also look at impact of the teacher training initiatives being funded through the TDA. It is expected that fieldwork will begin early in 2009 with regular interim reports and a final report in March 2011. The evaluation will inform future rounds of IDP and SEN training policy more generally.

18. More information about the Masters in Teaching and Learning is available at www.tda.gov.uk/partners/cpd/masters_in_teaching_and_learning.aspx

19. A summary of the consultation outcomes can be viewed at: www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/c/consultation_outcome_summary_for_wamg_and_web.pdf

20. More information about the Inclusion Development Programme is available at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary/features/inclusion/sen/idp

Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) standards

The professional standards for teachers set out the professional attributes, professional knowledge and understanding, and professional skills required and training providers must not award a trainee QTS unless they are satisfied he/she has met the required standards. Many of those standards relate to teaching children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities and the following are of particular relevance. They require trainees to:

- “know how to make effective personalised provision for those they teach, including those for whom English is an additional language or who have SEN or disabilities, and how to take practical account of diversity and promote equality and inclusion in their teaching.” (Q19)
- “know and understand the roles of colleagues with specific responsibilities, including those with responsibility for learners with SEN and disabilities and other individual learning needs.” (Q20)

And teach lessons and sequences of lessons across the age and ability range for which they are trained in which they:

- “use a range of teaching strategies and resources, including e-learning, taking practical account of diversity and promoting equality and inclusion...” (Q25(a))
- “Support and guide learners to reflect on their learning, identify the progress they have made and identify their emerging learning needs” (Q28)
- “Evaluate the impact of their teaching on the progress of all learners, and modify their planning and classroom practice where necessary.” (Q29)

Leaders and commissioners

- 2.18 Service leaders and commissioners also need to understand the importance of speech, language and communication. Leaders set the context within which practitioners who work with children operate. They therefore need to be aware of their role in helping those who work for them to support children with SLCN. Commissioners also need to appreciate the service needs of children with SLCN and know how to commission effectively to meet those needs.
- 2.19 The DCSF published a professional development framework for senior leaders of children’s services in April 2008²¹. It describes the knowledge, skills and behaviours that are relevant to leaders and managers of children’s services. These include being able to improve performance through a responsive and flexible service that reflects the needs of children and to collaborate with local partners who are particularly important to the provision of effective services for children with SLCN.
- 2.20 The framework was widely circulated to local authorities, Government Offices, the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) and CWN. CWDC will promote the framework as part of its integrated working communications campaign for 2008-09 and 2009-10 and work with the CWN to support the development of a strategy for leadership and management of Children’s Trust partners incorporating the framework.
- 2.21 The DH will improve the capacity of clinical leaders to deliver services that effectively support children with SLCN through the implementation of the NHS Next Stage Review led by Lord Darzi²². *A High Quality Workforce: NHS Next Stage Review*²³ was published in June 2008 and sets out the strategy for developing the NHS workforce.

21. *Leading and Managing Children’s Services in England: a national professional development framework* is available from the bottom of the page at www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/implement.shtml

22. Information about the NHS Next Stage Review is available at www.ournhs.nhs.uk/

23. *A High Quality Workforce: NHS Next Stage Review* is available at www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_085840

It commits to preparing practitioners to take leadership roles, able to use an up to date knowledge of key issues, to improve delivery and to giving commissioners the information that they need to develop effective services in their area.

Key actions

- CWDC will work with the CWN to *encourage awareness of the importance of speech, language and communication throughout the children's workforce.*
- The TDA will continue to *develop and roll out initial teacher training units* on SEN which include coverage of SLCN with secondary units available from 2009. They are also developing the framework for the Masters in Teaching and Learning qualification which will include coverage of SEN including SLCN when it is introduced in autumn 2009.
- The National Strategies will continue to promote the *Inclusion Development Programme* providing continuing professional development on SLCN to practitioners, with materials on autistic spectrum disorders launched in 2009 and on behavioural, emotional and social difficulties in 2010.
- The DCSF is commissioning an *independent three year evaluation* which will look at the impact of initiatives to develop workforce skills in SEN and disability. The evaluation will report in March 2011 and inform future policy on developing the workforce to better support children with SEN, including SLCN.
- The DCSF and the DH will continue to *promote higher standards of leadership* through the professional development framework for leaders of children's services and the implementation of the Lord Darzi led NHS Next Stage Review.

Section 3

Supporting communication through Universal Services

- 3.1 Services provided to all children support the vital development of speech, language and communication skills and help to identify those who need targeted and specialist services. It is crucial to children – particularly those who might have less developed speech and language when entering school (estimated to be up to 50% of some socio-economically disadvantaged populations) – that service providers work to encourage the development of speech, language and communication.
- 3.2 We will therefore ensure that mainstream early years, education and health services provide prevention, early identification and intervention services needed to support children and through parents/carers, to develop speech, language and communication skills. Programmes to support all children, like the Every Child a Talker (ECAT) programme and the Child Health Promotion Programme, work together to provide the frameworks needed to identify and make effective interventions to those with SLCN. They bring the mainstream workforce together with specialists, like speech and language therapists, to support all children. It is also important that services for young offenders are able to address SLCN as part of their provision for all young offenders to help those with SLCN in this particularly vulnerable group.

Early years services

- 3.3 Early years providers – such as Children’s Centres and private and voluntary childcare providers – play a key role in providing care and education for many children under the age of five. They also support the children’s

parents who need to provide a good environment for language development. It is in early years that the foundations of speech, language and communication skills develop, so giving parents the guidance that they need to support their child’s development, identifying difficulties early and providing appropriate support are particularly important. Through the Early Years Foundation Stage profile and ECAT Programme, Early Years practitioners will have the skills and the framework that they need to identify and support children with SLCN. The Early Support Programme²⁴ also provides Early Years workers with information and materials to help them provide guidance and support to parents.

Early Years Foundation Stage

- 3.4 All registered Early Years providers have been required to use the Early Years Foundation Stage profile since September 2008²⁵. The profile sets out and provides observation based assessment criteria for standards for development, learning and care of children from birth to five.
- 3.5 The profile includes four scales covering the overall theme of communication, language and literacy: Language for communication and thinking; linking sounds and letters; reading; and writing.

Every Child a Talker

- 3.6 In July 2008, the Department for Children, Schools and Families announced the Every Child a Talker programme (ECAT). ECAT is designed to equip practitioners to work both with children and with their parents and ensure children experience a language

24. More information on the Early Support Programme is available at www.earlysupport.org.uk

25. More information on the Early Years Foundation Stage profile is available at www.naa.org.uk/naa_17850.aspx

rich environment. In the year it enters the programme, each local authority is recruiting an early language consultant who will be responsible for identifying 20 settings and supporting a lead practitioner in each, as well as facilitating networks of settings so that good practice is cascaded and fully embedded across the LA.

- 3.7 The programme aims to improve the skills and expertise of Early Years practitioners so that they are better able to support the development of young children's speaking and listening skills. It forms part of the commitment made in the Children's Plan to support the Early Years workforce to access training for continuous professional development by providing additional funding for supply cover.
- 3.8 The programme will cost £40m over the three years from 2008-09 to 2010-11 with around 50 local authorities joining the programme in each of the three years.

Health services

- 3.9 Health services play an important part in every young child's life particularly monitoring a child's development and providing information to parents from early pregnancy and throughout the first years of life. They provide support to the child, helping to identify needs.
- 3.10 The updated *Child Health Promotion Programme* (pregnancy to 5 years) was published in March 2008²⁶. The aim is to strengthen and improve this important universal preventive programme. The programme is built on evidence gathered by experts over many years, and includes screening, health and development reviews, immunisations, health promotion and parenting support that every family is entitled to. The programme provides health and development reviews at key stages in a child's development. We are learning more about how children develop and recognising the importance of pregnancy and the first two years of life. We know that the development of language begins in the womb. This means that Child Health Promotion Programme places an emphasis on the promotion of positive parenting, learning in the home and communication at every review from pregnancy onwards. The 2-2½ years review is a key contact for monitoring a child's speech and language development and guiding parents on promoting their child's communication skills. The Child Health Promotion Programme for school age children and young people is also being developed and will be published in 2009. Ongoing reviews of children and young people's speech, language and communication needs will be considered within this.
- 3.11 The Personal Child Health Record (PCHR) or "Red Book" provides a record of child development, growth, immunisations and the results of screening tests. The National Working Group, which is responsible for the PCHR, is reviewing its content so that it fully reflects the *Child Health Promotion Programme*. This content review will reflect the strengthening of the development review at 2-2½ years-old.
- 3.12 The Child Health Promotion Programme is a progressive universal model. This means that it is a core programme offered to all parents and children with additional evidence based programmes and services offered to parents and children who need additional preventive interventions to help them achieve their potential. The development of speech and language is strongly influenced by a child's early environment and experience. This means that additional services that promote child health and development need to be offered to those families whose children are vulnerable to language delay. The government is currently testing an intensive nurse-led home visiting programme in 30 sites across England. The Family Nurse

26. The updated Child Health Promotion Programme is available at www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/DH_083645

Partnership Programme (called the Nurse Family Partnership in the US) has been developed over 30 years in the US where three research trials have shown significantly improved outcomes for children and families including language development and school achievements. It is early days in this country but early findings look promising and we are expanding the number of sites testing the programme to 70 by 2011. At the same time, a research trial is being undertaken to find out if the programme benefits children and families in this country. Further expansion and mainstreaming will depend on the outcome of the research trial.

Schools

3.13 Mainstream schools educate most pupils with SLCN and so need to have the structures and systems in place to address the needs of these pupils. Through funding from the dedicated schools grant, the further development of personalisation and the framework provided by the primary and secondary curriculums, schools need to be able to help those with SLCN meet their full potential. *21st Century Schools: A World-Class Education for Every Child*²⁷ sets out the Government's vision for world class schools that deliver the Children's Plan aim to make this the best place in the world for our children and young people to grow up. It encompasses the need for schools to offer early intervention with specialist and targeted service where appropriate, such as to support children with SLCN. The vision also includes co-location of a range of services on the same site to facilitate joint working that supports earlier intervention and helps children and families access services simply and directly.

Funding

- 3.14 Schools are primarily funded through the dedicated schools grant (DSG) which is intended to support most of their activities. These include the mainstream education of all children and additional support for children with SEN, including SLCN. They should provide an indication of how they use their SEN funding as part of their SEN policy.
- 3.15 The formula for distributing DSG is intended to take account of the differing needs that schools have, such as the likelihood that some will have more pupils with SEN. However, no part of the grant is ring-fenced. Ring-fencing money for SEN provision would be impractical and deny schools the flexibility to respond to the specific needs that they face. As we have already observed, much of the support for children with SEN comes from the mainstream staff and services that help all pupils such as classroom teachers and teaching assistants. It is important that schools and local authorities are clear about how resources for SEN are used to deliver the best possible outcomes for children with SEN.
- 3.16 To support schools, the National Strategies are working with local authorities to encourage the use of the Audit Commission's self-assessment tool which was published in May 2008²⁸. This tool enables schools to evaluate the effectiveness of their spending to support pupils with SEN (including SLCN).
- 3.17 A review of the formula used to calculate DSG was launched at the end of January 2008²⁹. The purpose of the review is to ensure that all schools get the support they need and that they have the confidence they require to plan their spending effectively over the longer term.

27. *21st Century Schools: A World-Class Education for Every Child* was published by DCSF in December 2008 and is available at <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-01044-2008&>

28. The Audit Commission SEN/Additional Educational Needs Value for Money Resource Pack for Schools is available at <http://sen-aen.audit-commission.gov.uk/>

29. More information about the DSG funding formula review is available at www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/schoolfunding/DSGformulareview/

3.18 The DSG formula review aims to develop a single transparent formula for the DSG, distributing resources in line with relative need and recognising the different costs of educating particular groups of pupils. It intends to provide a funding system that supports schools and LAs to raise the educational achievement of all pupils and narrow achievement gaps. The review will therefore consider how best to fund educational provision for children with SEN and a programme of research has been commissioned which will – amongst other things – investigate the cost of support for children with different types of SEN, including SLCN.

Personalised Teaching and Learning

- 3.19 The 2005 Schools White Paper³⁰ committed to an education system which meets the individual needs of all children through greater personalisation. This transformation is underpinned by a substantial investment in schools – over £1 billion was earmarked for personalised learning in the 2005-08 CSR period, and £1.6 billion has since been allocated for personalised learning and special educational needs across 2008-11.
- 3.20 Guidance for schools and teachers on personalised learning and evaluating priorities for development has been published in October 2008³¹. The guidance is designed to help school leaders, teachers and School Improvement Partners to explore key aspects of personalised teaching and learning, and support schools in moving to a system based on progression, underpinned by accurate assessment for learning, and with pupils supported with relevant interventions where appropriate. The guidance explains how lessons can be tailored to help all

children, including those with SEN like SLCN, achieve their potential.

- 3.21 Ministers will also write to local authority directors of children's services on the publication of this action plan, reminding them that resources are provided through the Revenue Support Grant, and the Dedicated Schools Grant strand for personalised learning and SEN, to enable them to provide appropriate support to all children with SEN.

Curriculum

- 3.22 Sir Jim Rose is currently conducting an independent review of the primary curriculum which will report in Spring 2009³². The review will inform the development of a new primary curriculum to be launched in 2011. The interim report, published in December 2008, highlights the fact that discussion of reading and writing in primary education often fails to recognise the central importance of developing all children's spoken communication. It makes clear that speaking and listening skills are essential in their own right and encourages schools to take stock of how effectively they provide opportunities for children to enlarge their vocabulary, listen attentively and talk confidently about their work. The Review will examine these issues further for the final report.
- 3.23 The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) launched the new secondary curriculum in August 2007. The statutory requirements of the new curriculum came into effect for year 7 pupils in September 2008 and will apply to all key stage 3 and 4 pupils from September 2010. The national curriculum website provides guidance to schools about designing and developing the curriculum and includes case studies

30. The Schools White Paper, *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All - More Choice for Parents and Pupils*, published in October 2005 is available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/schoolswhitepaper/

31. *Personalised Learning – A Practical Guide* published by the DCSF in October 2008, available at <http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00844-2008>

32. More information about the Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum can be found at <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/primarycurriculumreview/>

of effective practice. The case studies and examples are intended to reflect the work of all types of schools and pupils and are being developed and added to on an ongoing basis. The flexibility and reduced prescription within the new secondary curriculum supports personalisation and gives schools the scope to tailor their curriculum provision to the needs of individuals and groups in their school.

- 3.24 The QCA are committed to representing diversity and inclusion in materials provided to support the curriculum, including SLCN. The QCA will ensure a representative nominated by the Communication Trust joins its equalities reference group to help inform the development of guidance and other materials to support the new primary and secondary curriculum.

Children and Young People in contact with the Youth Justice System

- 3.25 Only a small proportion of children and young people come into contact with the youth justice system. However, there is evidence that children and young people in the youth justice system are more likely than the general population to have SLCN and, if the services provided to them are not able to help address those needs, they risk perpetuating a cycle of criminal behaviour and poor outcomes.
- 3.26 The Youth Crime Action Plan, published July 2008³³, set out the Government's plans to improve education and training for young offenders. It announced that forthcoming legislation would make local authorities responsible for securing education and training for young people in custody³⁴. The aim is to ensure that, so far as is practical education in custody meets young peoples'

personal needs, is aligned with arrangements for education and training in the mainstream education sector and provides continuity for young people entering and leaving custody. Within the Youth Crime Action Plan, government committed to considering how we best meet young offenders' special educational needs as part of the new funding and delivery model and made clear that plans should be developed in the context of the evidence and recommendations from the Bercow review and Sir Jim Rose's recommendations on the identification and teaching of children with dyslexia. We also expect that under the new arrangements, whereby local authorities are responsible for education of young people in custody, there may be greater opportunity for collaboration and joint commissioning between education and health services for young people in custody at the local level.

- 3.27 Transfer of the responsibility for commissioning health services in Young Offender Institutions and adult prisons in England commenced in 2003 and was fully devolved to the NHS by April 2006³⁵. Primary Care Trusts work with their partner establishments to develop a comprehensive health needs assessment of the population and commission on the basis of that need. The Health and Social Care Strategy for Children and Young People in Contact with the Criminal Justice System will be published in Spring 2009. The strategy will build on the Youth Crime Action Plan, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Review and the forthcoming Bradley review of how more offenders with severe mental health problems can be diverted away from custody and into more appropriate facilities. It will set out plans to improve the provision of health services, including speech and language therapy services, and raise the awareness of the importance of communication within the

33. The Youth Crime Action Plan is available at www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/youth-crime-action-plan/

34. There will be a phased implementation for different types of establishments (dependent on the nature of current secure estate contracts).

35. Healthcare is commissioned in Secure Children's Homes and Secure Training Centres under different arrangements.

workforce working with young offenders. It will also highlight the importance of addressing needs such as SLCN early to help children and young people avoid contact with the youth justice system.

3.28 The DCSF will ask the Communication Trust – as part of its remit in 2009-10 – to prepare training materials for those responsible for the education of young people in custody. These training materials will emphasise the importance of meeting the needs of young people who have speech, language and communication and dyslexia needs and will include guidance on how to provide effective support for these young people and when to draw on the support of specialists. The Communication Trust will work with organisations with an interest in dyslexia as well as Skills for Justice to develop the materials.

- The DCSF and the QCA will ensure that the *primary and secondary curriculums* and the guidance provided alongside them help teachers support the development of speech, language and communication skills.
- The Communication Trust will develop training materials in 2009-10 on behalf of the Department for Children, Schools and Families *covering speech, language and communication and dyslexia needs for those working with young people in custody.*
- The DCSF and the Ministry of Justice will *consider how young people's special educational needs will be met in custody* under the proposed new arrangements for securing education in custody via local authorities from 2010.

Key actions

- The *ECAT* programme will roll out to all local authorities by 2010-11 raising awareness of the importance of speech and language in early years practitioners.
- The NHS focus will be through the *Child Health Promotion Programme* which includes a review of children's developing speech and language skills at age 2-2½. DH will support commissioners by providing a good practice service specification for the programme, and provide tools and learning programmes for practitioners delivering the programme.
- The *dedicated schools grant formula review* will consider how best to fund educational provision for children with SEN and will support Ministers decisions on funding in summer 2010.

Section 4

Meeting communication needs through targeted and specialist services

- 4.1 When a child or young person is identified as having a SLCN, targeted and specialist services – like those provided by speech and language therapists – need to be ready to intervene quickly and effectively. These services need to be joined up with other support that the child or young person is receiving – for example through universal services. They also need to ensure that the child's family have the information and support that they need to help their child.
- 4.2 Developing specialist and targeted provision for children with SLCN that meets these needs remains a challenge for commissioners. Pathfinders will therefore be used to develop a new commissioning framework for services for children with SLCN and Becta will work to develop the alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) sector. The framework for making provision for children with SEN will be reviewed and research will be commissioned to inform future policymakers and commissioners.
- Commissioning pathfinders**
- 4.3 A joint commissioning framework for children's health services is in development alongside the Child Health Strategy to support improvements across the full spectrum of need. This overarching framework sets out the context for further development of best practice in specific areas such as SLCN.
- 4.4 A supplemental joint commissioning framework for children with SLCN will be developed through work with up to 20 local area pathfinders. Local commissioners (local authorities and PCTs), working in partnership will be invited to apply to become pathfinders in early 2009 to inform the development of a best practice joint commissioning framework. The framework will also include models of good practice covering the development of the children's workforce to improve the delivery of services for children and young people with SLCN and local level commissioning of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). The final number of pathfinders will depend on the quality and range of applications received.
- 4.5 This pathfinder project will run from 2009-10 to 2010-11 when the supplemental joint commissioning framework will be completed. The project will cost up to £2m, including funding for central coordination of the project and funding for the pathfinders themselves to allow them to take part, share information and contribute to the development of the framework. The additional funding for the pathfinders will not be to provide services, but to ensure that the lessons learned are applicable to other local commissioners after the completion of the programme.
- 4.6 The pathfinder areas will consider the appropriate capacity for speech and language therapy, and how that capacity is best used – for example, the amount of time that speech and language therapists spend on one to one support and the amount of time they spend working with other members of the children's workforce to build a better environment for the development of speech language and communication skills. They will also consider the role of other specialists. Difficulties that arise in identifying the appropriate commissioner, and best practice models for monitoring performance and sharing information about their service, will be covered as well as the provision of support to young offenders with SLCN.
- 4.7 These commissioning pathfinders will also benefit from being developed in conjunction

with the Commissioning Support Programme which will help Children's Trusts plan, design and implement services more effectively by providing tailored support as and when Trust partners need it. Jointly developed and endorsed by the DCSF and DH, this programme will cover the commissioning of all services for children, young people and their families, including social care, health and education. It will run across England until April 2011 and will include a community of practice with a dedicated web-resource, special interest groups, local networks and tailored commissioning advice and support.

Alternative and Augmentative Communication

- 4.8 Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) is the term used to describe extra ways of helping people who find it hard to communicate by speech or writing. AAC helps them to communicate more easily and encompasses many different methods which can be unaided, such as signing, or aided, such as using low tech picture charts or high tech electronic systems.
- 4.9 Children who need to use AAC and those who support them often need specialist expertise to help them get the best out of their system. High tech aids, such as Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs) which are required by a very small number of children can also be very expensive in their own right. The need to meet these high cost and low incidence needs presents an ongoing challenge for commissioners.
- 4.10 Scope's report 'No Voice, No Choice'³⁶ built on the Bercow Report, to highlight the need for better commissioning of AAC for children and young people. Improved AAC commissioning needs to be sustainable and it therefore needs to be an integral part of the frameworks developed for SLCN provision and community equipment.

Commissioning Pathfinders and Pilots

- 4.11 The commissioning pathfinders described above, running from 2009 to 2011, will look at local level commissioning of AAC where this is appropriate.
- 4.12 As part of the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme, the DH will develop commissioning models for children's community equipment (possibly including regional models) to run a programme of pilots starting in 2009-10. These will also include the provision of high cost AAC aids for children with low incidence significant SLCN. These pathfinders and pilots will be evaluated to inform future guidance on the commissioning of AAC.

The Home Access Programme

- 4.13 The Government is investing £300m in the Home Access Programme targeting those who do not have technology and internet access and providing funding to families with school age children, providing financial support for families on low incomes to gain access to this valuable technology. Becta, the government agency leading the national drive to ensure the effective and innovative use of technology throughout learning, is responsible for the programme. The levels of support provided to families by the programme will be the subject of pilots; it may include the purchase of AAC equipment supporting access to learning at home for some children.
- 4.14 The programme began in November 2008 by providing targeted funding available for all local authorities to provide home access for groups such as looked after children and others for whom the authority has special responsibility. The wider programme – covering all children who need it – will be piloted in early 2009 in two local authority areas, with expansion to the rest of England starting in autumn 2009. The ACE Centres in Oldham and Oxford and AbilityNet have been working with Becta to develop the programme and its potential coverage of AAC.

36. *No Voice, No Choice*, published by Scope in November 2008 is available at www.timetogetequal.org.uk/page.asp?section=36

Development of the AAC Sector

- 4.15 There is a range of voluntary and commercial sector organisations that provide advice and support to commissioning organisations in the provision of AAC. These include, for example, the ACE Centres in Oldham and Oxford and AbilityNet. In the long term providers need to be able to support themselves largely through contracts directly with commissioners. However, we recognise that there is a national interest in ensuring that a vibrant AAC community is in place to support the development and provision of AAC as the supplemental commissioning framework is developed.
- 4.16 Becta will also be appointing an AAC coordinator to coordinate development work in the sector. This role is designed to support organisations that provide expertise in AAC to develop their service concurrently with the development and rollout of the new commissioning framework through the pathfinders described above. This will help to ensure that the AAC sector provides strong, sustainable services that meet the needs of local authorities and PCTs operating the new commissioning framework.
- 4.17 Becta will also be providing financial assistance in the form of grants of up to £500k each year for the next three years to organisations within the AAC sector. These grants will be available from 2009-10 until 2011-12. Further information on this funding will be made available in early 2009.
- 4.18 Part of the role of the Communication Champion will be to review the effectiveness of AAC provision in different areas of the country to identify good practice and inform the development of future initiatives to improve services.

Reminding Commissioners of their responsibilities

Ministers will write to local authority directors of children's services on publication of this action plan to remind them of their responsibilities to give information to families where SLCN is identified. This duty includes a requirement to tell parents what provision is available in their local area and to consult parents on service planning and delivery. The letter will also remind local authorities that the IDP is useful to support continuing professional development in their early years and schools workforces. They will also be reminded and that they should use the national professional development framework *Leading and Managing Children's Services in England* to support the development of leaders and commissioners. The letter will suggest that local authorities may want to consider giving a member of their Children's Trust board responsibility for SLCN in the local area. Finally the letter will remind local authorities that Ministers expect mainstream funding, including the dedicated schools grant funding for personalised learning and SEN, to be used to support children with SEN, including SLCN.

The 2009-10 NHS Operating Framework³⁷ sets the key priorities for the NHS, including a continued focus on the needs of children. The Child Health Strategy will set out further detail on the service offer for children and families, including services to meet the needs of children with SLCN.

The Communication Champion's ongoing role will include raising awareness of responsibilities and best practice within local authorities, PCTs and other delivery partners.

37. The Operating Framework for the NHS in England 2009/10 was published by DH in December 2008 and is available at www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_091445

Special Educational Needs (SEN) framework

- 4.19 The SEN Code of Practice³⁸ sets out the framework of responsibilities and duties local authorities and schools have to make provision for children and young people with SEN, including SLCN. It provides statutory guidance on the framework and explains that schools must use their best endeavours to make appropriate provision for children with SEN and, where necessary, local authorities must assess and draw up 'statements' of SEN in order to meet individual children's needs. The Code also explains that an essential function of the local authority is to make effective arrangements for SEN by ensuring that the needs of children and young people with SEN are identified and assessed quickly, and matched by appropriate provision.
- 4.20 *The Children's Plan One Year On* sets out plans for Ofsted to conduct a review of progress on SEN starting in April 2009. The review will consider the provision made for particular groups of children – such as those with SLCN – who require jointly commissioned services and how the frameworks for SEN and the social care of disabled children support those with the most severe needs.
- 4.21 After the Ofsted review, the DCSF will consider whether changes are needed to the statutory basis of the SEN framework or other aspects of SEN provision based on its findings.
- 4.22 The Lamb Inquiry is also looking at parental confidence in the system for assessment and provision for children with SEN³⁹. The Inquiry has commissioned a number of innovative pilots intended to improve parental confidence. It will report in Autumn 2009 and inform the Ofsted review.

Building a case for future policymakers and commissioners

Cost-effectiveness research

- 4.23 Research commissioned as part of the Bercow Review⁴⁰ concluded that existing literature is insufficient to allow a robust judgement to be made about the costs, benefits and effectiveness of provision for children with SLCN and under what circumstances particular interventions are more cost-effective. Evidence for the cost-effectiveness of services will be crucial to allow future policymakers and commissioners to make appropriate decisions about service development. The DCSF will therefore commission a three year research programme to help inform future policy and commissioning.
- 4.24 Following the recommendations of the research commissioned as part of the Bercow Review, the research programme will consider locational, pedagogic, organisational and employer base interaction issues in a study of the cost effectiveness and efficiency of interventions.

Workforce modelling

- 4.25 The DH is developing workforce modelling tools, which will help Strategic Health Authority (SHA) Workforce Directors to consider any additional workforce needs in delivering high quality and personalised care for all children. These tools will include components covering the workforce supporting children with SLCN. These components will be tested in the commissioning pathfinders looking at best practice in supporting children with SLCN from 2009 to 2011 before they are rolled out in 2011-12.

38. The SEN Code of Practice is available at www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/sencodeintro/

39. More information about the Lamb Inquiry is available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/lambinquiry/

40. The report 'Effective and Efficient Use of Resources in Services for Children and Young People with Speech, Language and Communication Needs' by Lindsay et al. was published by DCSF and is available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/programmeofresearch/projectinformation.cfm?projectId=15350&resultspage=1

Support for families

4.26 A range of resources and services are available to support parents nationally, through local commissioners, service providers and the voluntary sector.

National support

4.27 At a national level the DCSF publishes information for parents about the SEN framework⁴¹. It also supports organisations that provide advice and support to parents through its Parent Know How programme, such as Contact a Family which provides a helpline and web service providing information for parents of children with disabilities, including those related to SLCN⁴².

Local commissioners

4.28 At a local level the government is working to improve support for parents and involve them in service provision through local authority provided parent partnership services, parent's forums and Local Involvement Networks.

4.29 Local authorities (LAs) are required to provide Parent Partnership Services (PPS) providing impartial advice and information to families whose children have SEN⁴³, including SLCN, and to make those services known to parents, head teachers, schools and relevant others. The SEN Code of Practice sets out minimum standards and expectations of the role for LAs and PPS. In December 2007, the DCSF published *Parent Partnership Services – Increasing parental confidence*⁴⁴ which builds on the standards in the Code by exemplifying

good practice in the provision of impartial Parent Partnership Services and increase parents confidence in them.

4.30 As part of the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme the DCSF committed £3 million between 2008 -10 to support the development of parents forums in each local authority area across England. These are intended to develop the involvement of parent carers in the planning and strategic development of services for disabled children, including those with SLCN⁴⁵.

4.31 Local Involvement Networks (LINKs)⁴⁶ aim to give citizens a stronger voice in how their health and social care services are delivered. Each local authority has funding and a legal duty to enable LINK activities. Run by local individuals and groups and independently supported - the role of LINKs is to find out what people want, monitor local services and to use their powers to hold them to account. LINKs have been established in most areas between April 2008 and September 2008.

Direct service providers

4.32 At a local level, children's centres, schools and health service providers work to keep parents informed about their child's development. They help parents understand and meet their child's individual needs. For example, children's centres often provide guidance to parents about the importance of using language around young children to facilitate their development and health service providers are developing the information that they give to parents about speech, language and communication as part of the improved

41. *Special Educational Needs (SEN) – A Guide for Parents and Carers* is available at www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=3755

42. Information about Contact a Family is available from www.cafamily.org.uk/

43. More information about parent partnership services and contact details for local services are available from the National Parent Partnership Network at www.parentpartnership.org.uk/

44. *Parent Partnership Services – Increasing parental confidence* is available at <http://publications.everychildmatters.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00959-2007>

45. More information about Aiming High for Disabled Children parent participation funding and grants is available at www.togetherfdc.org/Topics/PPFundingandGrants.aspx

46. More information on LINKs is available at www.dh.gov.uk/en/Managingyourorganisation/PatientAndPublicinvolvement/DH_076366

Child Health Promotion Programme. Initiatives to develop the skills and knowledge of the children's workforce, set out in chapter 2, will improve the support that they are able to give parents directly. The Early Support Programme⁴⁷ also provides information and materials for all parents with young children, including information about speech, language and communication.

Voluntary sector

- 4.33 A range of voluntary sector organisations provide additional information and support to parents that is available nationally. For example, the 'Talking Point' resource provided by ICAN⁴⁸ provides online information on speech language and communication in children for parents and those who work with them.
- 4.34 The DCSF will help the voluntary sector develop additional support for families through its Children, Young People and Families (CYPF) grants programme. Funding announced for the implementation of the Bercow Report will be added to the CYPF grants programme so that speech, language and communication is a key priority for the programme. Three bids for support from Afasic, the British Stammering Association and ICAN have been successful in this process and will receive funding to develop support for families.

Key actions

- The DH will support a series of *pathfinders on effective commissioning for children and young people with SLCN* in 2009-10 and 2010-11.
- These pathfinders will be inform a *joint commissioning framework on services for children with SLCN*.
- Becta will work to develop the AAC sector towards self-sustainable business models by *recruiting an AAC coordinator and providing up to £500k each year for the next three years (starting in 2009-10) in development grants* for the sector.
- The Ofsted review of SEN in 2009 will *consider the importance of joint commissioning* in making provision for pupils with SEN, including SLCN.
- The DCSF will *commission a research programme including looking at the cost-effectiveness of provision for children with SLCN* which will start in 2009.
- The DCSF will *fund voluntary sector activities to improve support for families* through its Children, Young People and Families grant programme.

47. More information on the Early Support Programme is available at www.earlysupport.org.uk

48. The Talking Point website is available at www.ican.org.uk/TalkingPoint/Home.aspx

Section 5

Timetable for improvement

5.1 The following table sets out an indicative timetable for many of the initiatives set out above to improve services for children and young people with SLCN, culminating in the national year of speech, language and communication.

2008-09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every Child a Talker (ECAT) rolled out to 50 LAs • Summer 2008 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bercow Report published – Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) launches materials focussing on Speech, Language and Communication Needs – Undergraduate Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Modules on SEN rolled out for trainee primary school teachers. • Autumn 2008 – Spring 2009 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Action Plan published – Primary care trusts (PCTs) and local authorities are invited to take part in SLCN Commissioning Pathfinders – Tender to recruit secretariat to support the Communication Council and the Communication Champion completed – Tender for research programme completed – Communication Champion appointed – Communication Council meets for the first time
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<p>2009-10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECAT rolled out to around 50 LAs • Spring 2009 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sir Jim Rose’s review of the primary curriculum published – SLCN Commissioning Pathfinders launched • Summer 2009 – Autumn 2009 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – IDP launches materials focussing on Autistic Spectrum Disorders – ITT Modules on SEN rolled out for undergraduate trainee primary school teachers and postgraduate trainee teachers. – Masters in Teaching and Learning available to Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in the North West and NQTs and newly appointed heads of department in National Challenge Schools from September 2009 • Autumn 2009 – Spring 2010 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lamb Inquiry reports – Ofsted Review of SEN published
<p>2010-11</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECAT rolled out to around 50 LAs • Community equipment commissioning models piloted • Summer 2010 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Review of Progress – Decisions of the Dedicated Schools Grant formula review announced • Autumn 2010 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Begin roll-out of new arrangements for local authorities to take responsibility for securing education and training for young people in custody
<p>2011-12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Year of Speech, Language and Communication • Spring 2011 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Joint Commissioning Framework for SLCN finalised • Autumn 2011 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Launch of new Primary Curriculum

Funding Improvement

5.2 There is already a lot of funding available to support children and young people with SLCN, much of which has been delegated to local commissioners. Much of the focus of the initiatives set out above is to improve mainstream and universal services. Most of the initiatives described above will be funded through existing commitments and as part of mainstream programmes. For example:

- Planned expenditure in schools and local authorities to support children with SEN, including SLCN, is approximately £4.9bn in 2007-08;
- £1.6bn has been committed over 2008-09 to 2010-11 to support the delivery of personalised learning and SEN;

- £40m has also been committed over three years to deliver the ECAT programme;
- £300m will be spent on the Home Access Programme providing home internet access for children in families who would not otherwise have it which may include AAC; and
- The Children's Plan committed a further £18m nationally over three years to improve SEN provision through the development of training materials and guidance on the progression of pupils with SEN amongst other things.

5.3 Nationally, DH and DCSF will provide up to £12m over three years as announced on the publication of the Bercow Report to support additional costs of the initiatives described above. Indicative funding is set out in the following table:

Initiative	Funding			
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12 ⁴⁹	Total
Commissioning Pathfinders and Framework and Community Equipment Model Development	£1.2m	£1.3m		£2.5m
Communication Champion, Secretariat, review in 2010 and National Year of Speech, Language and Communication	£640k	£925k	£3.8m	£5.165m
Research programme	£500k	£500k	£500k	£1.5m
Becta AAC grants	£500k	£500k	£500k	£1.5m
Training Materials for those working with Young Offenders	£300k			£300k
Supporting Families (CYPF grants)	£460k	£475k		£935k
Total	£3.6m	£3.6m	£4.8m	£12m

49. Funding in 2011-12 is subject to the Department for Children, Schools and Families' and the Department of Health's settlements in the next spending review period.

National Year of Speech, Language and Communication

The National Year of Speech, Language and Communication in 2011-12 will be the culmination of the work to improve services for children and young people with SLCN set out in this action plan. It will provide an opportunity to celebrate the progress made and also further embed the recognition of the importance of speech, language and communication in workforces that work with children and young people. It will also be an opportunity to launch new initiatives to address gaps that have emerged as the work set out in this action plan has gone forward.

The National Year will be led by the Communication Champion with the support of the Communication Council and the secretariat and detailed planning will be for them.

However, the National Year is likely to include materials sent to schools, children's centres, health services and other providers to remind practitioners of the importance of speech, language and communication and a series of awareness raising events across the country.

The National Year will also provide an opportunity to remind commissioners again of their responsibilities towards children and young people with SLCN and to promote further the good practice that has been derived from the commissioning pathfinders and other activities that will take place over the next few years.

Annex A – Responses to each recommendation of the Bercow Report

	Recommendation	Response	Timescale and Responsibility
1	<i>We recommend that the Government creates a Communication Council to monitor and support implementation of this Review's recommendations.</i>	The Communication Council will be formed to provide ongoing support and advise the Government on the delivery of initiatives to improve services for children and young people with SLCN (see the terms of reference in Annex B).	<p>The first meeting of the Communication Council will be convened by the DCSF in spring 2009.</p> <p>Subsequent meetings and support will be provided by the secretariat to be recruited by the Government to support the Communication Champion and Communication Council by April 2009.</p>
2	<i>We recommend that the Government creates the post of a Communication Champion to lead on awareness raising and best practice dissemination elements of the Communication Council's work.</i>	The Communication Champion will be appointed by Ministers to promote speech, language and communication, identify and share good practice and plan and organise the National Year of Speech, Language and Communication.	<p>The Communication Champion will be appointed by the DCSF and the DH following a recruitment exercise in early 2009.</p> <p>The Champion and their secretariat will be contracted to work until the end of the National Year of Speech, Language and Communication in 2011-12.</p>
3	<i>We further recommend that the Government commissions a National Year of Speech, Language and Communication to be led by the Communication Champion.</i>	The Communication Champion will plan and organise a National Year of Communication.	The Communication Champion and their secretariat, with the advice and support of the Communication Council, will develop plans for the National Year in 2011-12 after their appointment.

	Recommendation	Response	Timescale and Responsibility
4	<i>We recommend that all parents receive information which emphasises the importance of speech, language and communication to all children through the Child Health Promotion Programme.</i>	<p>Speech and Language is covered as a topic within the third full health and development review at 2-2½ year as part of the Child Health Promotion Programme.</p> <p>This will serve to provide parents of pre-school children with information about the importance of and how to promote their child's speech, language and communication.</p>	<p>The Child Health Promotion Programme is the NHS's core preventive programme for child health and well-being. It is the overarching evidence based programme that promotes and protects children's health.</p> <p>The updated Programme for early years was published in March 2008.</p>
5	<i>We recommend that a range of information, advice and support should be readily available to families, particularly at key stages and transition points in a child's life.</i>	<p>The Minister is writing to local authorities on the publication of this action plan to remind them of their duty to make information available to parents of pupils with special educational needs including speech language and communication needs.</p> <p>The Aiming High for Disabled Children core offer includes a strand on information for families. Local authorities and primary care trusts success in delivering the core offer will be measured through the Disabled Children's Services Indicator. This will encourage commissioners to improve information provision.</p> <p>The Child Health Strategy will emphasise the importance of providing information and support to families.</p> <p>The Communication Champion will, as part of their work to raise awareness and spread best practice, look at how to encourage local service providers to improve their information, advice and support for parents.</p>	<p>DCSF Ministers will write to local authority Directors of Children's Services on the publication of this action plan and DH will communicate the action plan to NHS Chief Executives.</p> <p>The DCSF has commissioned BMRB to conduct a survey to measure the Disabled Children's Services Indicator. It will be measured for the first time at national level at the end of the 2008-09 financial year with results available in spring 2009. The indicator will be measured for the first time at local level in 2009-10 with results expected in autumn 2009.</p>

	Recommendation	Response	Timescale and Responsibility
6	<i>We further recommend that the Government considers the case for funding national, regional and local support services for parents.</i>	The DCSF will help the voluntary sector develop additional support for families through its Children, Young People and Families grants programme.	Between 2009-10 and 2010-11 three bids for support from Afasic, the British Stammering Association and ICAN will receive funding to develop support for families through the Children, Young People and Families grant programme.
7	<i>We recommend that the Government reminds local authorities of their current duties to provide information to families, including about publicly funded provision.</i>	<p>The Minister is writing to local authorities on the publication of this action plan to remind them of their duty to make information available to parents of pupils with special educational needs including speech language and communication needs.</p> <p>The Communication Champion will, as part of their work to raise awareness and spread best practice, look at how to encourage local service providers to improve their information, advice and support for parents.</p>	DCSF Ministers will write to local authority Directors of Children's Services on the publication of this action plan.

	Recommendation	Response	Timescale and Responsibility
8	<p><i>We recommend that PCTs and local authorities work together to undertake surveillance and monitoring of children and young people to identify potential SLCN across the age range, and particularly at key transition points.</i></p>	<p>Speech and Language is covered as a topic within the third full health and development review at 2-2½ year as part of the Child Health Promotion Programme. This review will play a key role in the monitoring and surveillance of pre-school children to support the early identification of any difficulties.</p> <p>The Every Child a Talker (ECAT) programme and Early Years Foundation Stage profile will provide early years practitioners with the skills and framework to identify and make appropriate provision for children with SLCN.</p> <p>Schools are required to use their best endeavours to identify SEN, including SLCN, in older children. Teachers ability to do this will be improved through the introduction of new units in initial teacher training courses and the continuing professional development provided by the Inclusion Development Programme and the Masters in Teaching and Learning.</p>	<p>The Child Health Promotion Programme is the DH's core evidence based programme that oversees the health and development of children and supports parents to protect and promote their child's health.</p> <p>The DCSF is rolling out the ECAT programme to approximately 50 local authorities in each year from 2008-09 until 2010-11.</p>
9	<p><i>We recommend that surveillance and monitoring is delivered through PCTs adopting the recently updated Child Health Promotion Programme and, in particular, implementing the child and family health and development reviews, including the review of speech and language development.</i></p>	<p>Speech and Language is covered as a topic within the third full health and development review at 2-2½ year as part of the Child Health Promotion Programme.</p> <p>This review will play a key role in the monitoring and surveillance of pre-school children to support the early identification of any difficulties.</p>	<p>The Child Health Promotion Programme is the DH's core evidence based programme that oversees the health and development of children and supports parents to protect and promote their child's health.</p>

	Recommendation	Response	Timescale and Responsibility
10	<i>We recommend the Government considers a review of the "red book" (the Personal Child Health Record), to ensure families and professionals have a clear record of a child's speech and language development at key ages and stages.</i>	The Personal Child Health Record will be reviewed and updated to fully reflect the Child Health Promotion Programme. This review will look at the inclusion of Speech and Language which is covered as a topic within the third full health and development review at 2-2½ years.	DH will liaise with the National Steering Committee, which is responsible for the Personal Child Health Record, to review its content.
11	<i>We recommend that speech, language and communication is prioritised by all Children's Centres and that it is a primary focus for measuring every child's progress.</i>	The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework sets the framework for measuring children's progress in Early Years and includes several strands related to speech, language and communication. The ECAT programme aims to raise early years practitioners awareness of the importance of speech, language and communication and give them the knowledge and skills to effectively support children with SLCN.	The DCSF is rolling out the Every Child a Talker programme to approximately 50 local authorities in each year from 2008-09 until 2010-11.
12	<i>We recommend that the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) asks Sir Jim Rose to examine how to strengthen the focus on speech, language and communication in the primary curriculum and that the Department be ready to act on his advice.</i>	As part of his ongoing review of the primary curriculum, Sir Jim Rose has agreed to look at how to strengthen the focus on speech, language and communication in the primary curriculum.	Sir Jim Rose's interim report of his primary curriculum review was published in December 2008. His final report will be published in Spring 2009.
13	<i>We recommend that the DCSF reinforces its inclusive approach to SEN in the revised secondary curriculum by preparing and disseminating widely exemplifications of the effective removal of barriers for pupils with SLCN, in line with the principles of the National Curriculum inclusion statement.</i>	The new secondary curriculum is supported by guidance on teaching and learning using the curriculum including case studies and examples. These are being developed and added to on an ongoing basis and should, in the future, reflect the needs of pupils with SLCN.	The QCA will invite a representative of the Communication Trust to join its equality reference group early 2009. They will then be able to provide support for the ongoing development of guidance and examples on teaching and learning using the secondary curriculum.

	Recommendation	Response	Timescale and Responsibility
14	<i>We further recommend that, when issuing guidance to local authorities and schools on the use of funding, including that for personalised learning, the DCSF emphasises the importance of meeting the needs of all children and young people with SLCN.</i>	References to the use of personalised learning to support pupils with SEN, including SLCN, have been, and will continue to be, included in guidance on personalised learning and the use of other funding.	Ministers will write to local authority directors of children's services on the publication of this action plan to emphasise the need to use their funding to support children and young people with SLCN. The DCSF will continue to emphasise the importance of personalised learning to support pupils with SEN, including SLCN, in future guidance.
15	<i>We recommend that, as part of the work on World Class Commissioning, the Government produces a joint framework for commissioners, including Children's Trusts and schools, on the commissioning of a continuum of universal, targeted and specialist services for children and young people with SLCN across the age range 0-19.</i>	A joint commissioning framework for children's health services will be published alongside the Child Health Strategy to support improvements across the full spectrum of need. This overarching framework sets out the context for further development of best practice in specific areas such as SLCN.	The DH and Department of Children, Schools and Families will publish the overarching joint commissioning framework alongside the Child Health Strategy Commissioning pathfinders looking at outcomes for children with SLCNs from 2009 to 2011 will inform a supplementary joint commissioning framework and guidance on SLCN for all commissioners to be published in 2011.
16	<i>We recommend that the commissioning framework is developed through a programme of pathfinders, funded and supported by the Government, to identify best practice and evidence of effective interventions for children and young people with different types of SLCN and to show how joint working and commissioning works well in a range of local areas.</i>	A number of local areas will be selected as pathfinders to build on the overarching joint commissioning framework for child health services by developing best practice in services for children with speech, language and communication needs.	The DH and DCSF will develop and administer the Pathfinders. Pathfinder applications will be invited in early 2009 and the pathfinder projects will begin in 2009 and run until 2011.

	Recommendation	Response	Timescale and Responsibility
17	<i>We recommend that the Department of Health creates a speech, language and communication annex to Standard 8 of the Children's National Service Framework: Disabled Children and Young People and those with Complex Health Needs.</i>	The need for further guidance, such as an exemplar on SLCN attached to the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services ¹ , will be reviewed following the local area pathfinders on commissioning for children with speech, language and communication needs.	The DH and Department of Children, Schools and Families will consider the need for additional guidance after the pathfinder projects are completed in 2011.
18	<i>We recommend that the current DCSF review of the Dedicated Schools Grant should take account of how the school funding system supports the delivery of universal, targeted and specialist services for children and young people with special educational needs.</i>	The Dedicated Schools Grant review encompasses all school funding policy. It will consider funding for all children with SEN, including those with very high-cost SEN as well as those with low-cost, high frequency SEN and other Additional Educational Needs (AEN). This will include those with a range of SLCN.	The DSG Formula Review Group is gathering evidence on the main issues until June 2009. They will announce formal proposals for consultation in early 2010 and the new formula will be used for the first time in 2011-12.
19	<i>We recommend that the commissioning framework includes advice on:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>how to assess the range of skills in local children's workforces;</i> • <i>how to identify the right skills and capacity mix required in the children's workforce to deliver services and agreed outcomes, including staff with specialist skills able effectively to assess and support children and young people with SLCN;</i> • <i>how to develop the workforce by identifying and addressing skills or capacity "gaps"; and</i> • <i>how to develop effective collaborative practice between different services and members of the workforce.</i> 	Best practice guidance on commissioning for SLCN will be developed to build on the overarching joint commissioning framework for child health services based on a programme of pathfinders running from 2009 to 2011. The pathfinder projects will develop models of good practice covering the development of the children's workforce to improve the delivery of services for children with speech, language and communication needs.	The DH and Department of Children, Schools and Families will manage the pathfinders project from 2009 to 2011 when the outputs will be published.

1. Available at www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/NationalServiceFrameworks/Children/DH_4089111

	Recommendation	Response	Timescale and Responsibility
20	<i>We recommend professionals from across the children's and young people's workforce undertake pre-qualification training in collaborative and multidisciplinary working, alongside professionals from other backgrounds.</i>	Multi-agency training will be encouraged where it is practical.	CWDC will look for opportunities to encourage multi-agency training through the Integrated Qualifications Framework and other initiatives to develop the children's workforce's ability to support children with disabilities as a whole.
21	<i>We recommend that the Children's Workforce Development Council, in collaboration with the Children's Workforce Network, ensures that speech, language and communication and SLCN are a core requirement or unit at the appropriate level in all qualifications for the children's workforce as part of the emerging Integrated Qualifications Framework.</i>	<p>The Integrated Qualifications Framework (IQF) will include qualifications which meet the IQF inclusion principles.</p> <p>The IQF inclusion principles include a requirement that qualifications reflect the <i>Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce</i> which includes understanding of communication and effective multi-agency working.</p>	<p>CWDC is working with the CWN to develop the IQF.</p> <p>The Children's Workforce Network Board will consider in February 2009 how best to address the importance of SLCN, SEN and disabilities in the development of the IQF and its broader work.</p> <p>The framework is being implemented through a phased approach and is due to cover all sectors of the workforce by the end of 2010.</p> <p>CWDC will shortly be reviewing the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge and during this process they will consider whether any changes or additions are necessary to reflect this recommendation.</p>
22	<i>We further recommend that the standards for Qualified Teacher Status ensure that students develop a better understanding of children and young people's SLCN and of how to address those needs.</i>	<p>The QTS Standards already require new teachers to be able to effectively support children with SEN, including SLCN, and disabilities.</p> <p>The TDA is working with ITT providers to improve the knowledge and confidence of new teachers in supporting children with SLCN.</p>	<p>The TDA launched resources on SEN including a dedicated unit of speech, language and communication for use in primary undergraduate ITT programmes in Summer 2008.</p> <p>The TDA are working with training providers to develop similar resources for secondary undergraduate courses and postgraduate courses which will be launched in 2009.</p>

	Recommendation	Response	Timescale and Responsibility
23	<p><i>We recommend that DCSF includes speech, language and communication, both as a core requirement and as an elective module, in the new Masters in Teaching and Learning.</i></p>	<p>The Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) will provide teachers with the opportunity to develop their professional skills and specialist expertise in the workplace with the support of a trained in-school coach as well as a tutor from a higher education institution. The TDA are working with a range of experts to develop a national framework for the qualification and will ensure that SEN, including SLCN, feature in the MTL programme.</p>	<p>The DCSF and TDA are developing a national framework that can be used by providers of MTL.</p> <p>The qualification will be available from September 2009, initially to all newly qualified teachers recruited in the North West of England and to some teachers in all National Challenge schools across the country.</p>
24	<p><i>We recommend that the Government ensures that good quality training, such as that provided through the Inclusion Development Programme (IDP), is available to everyone in the children's workforce, including health and education professionals, to develop their skills in relation to speech, language and communication. This should include training for staff wishing to specialise in working with children and young people with more severe and complex SLCN. In ensuring that training is available, the Government should consider how it should best be provided, including consideration of whether training should be an entitlement and the circumstances in which it would be appropriate to fund the "backfilling" of posts in order to enable staff to undertake training.</i></p>	<p>The IDP provides continuing professional development to teachers and others working in schools and early years settings. It is designed to increase the confidence and expertise of mainstream practitioners in supporting children with high incidence SEN.</p> <p>The National Strategies are working with local authorities through the new SEN regional hubs to promote the IDP. The regional hubs have funding to provide local authority training events and other activities to encourage take up.</p>	<p>The first set of materials, launched by the DCSF and National Strategies in 2008, focus on SLCN and dyslexia. In 2009, additional materials will be launched focusing on autistic spectrum disorders.</p> <p>Independent evaluation will establish how far the IDP has helped to raise teacher confidence, how helpful the material on SLCN was thought to be and any gaps.</p>

	Recommendation	Response	Timescale and Responsibility
25	<i>We recommend that the Government, working with other partners, undertakes a modeling exercise to help Strategic Health Authorities and Primary Care Trusts, in partnership with their local authorities, to estimate the workforce that they will require to deliver appropriate services for children and young people with SLCN.</i>	<p>The NHS Operating Framework for 2009-2010 highlights the need for strategic workforce plans for children's services. DH is developing workforce modelling tools to support this.</p> <p>These tools will include components covering the workforce supporting children with SLCN. These components will be tested in pathfinder areas looking at best practice in supporting children with speech language and communication needs from 2009 to 2011.</p>	The DH will manage the pathfinders project from 2009 to 2011 when the outputs will be published.
26	<i>We recommend that the Government considers a programme of research to enhance the evidence base and inform delivery of better outcomes for children and young people.</i>	A programme of research looking at the cost-effectiveness of interventions for children and young people with SLCN will be commissioned.	The DCSF will commission the research programme to run for three years from 2009 to 2011.
27	<i>We recommend that the Government develops a 'hub and spoke' model of regional provision [of communication aids], coordinated by a national organisation. Moreover, we recommend that on appointment the Communication Champion should immediately evaluate the effectiveness of local areas' AAC provision, and report findings to the Communication Council.</i>	<p>Best practice guidance on commissioning for SLCN will be developed to build on the overarching joint commissioning framework for child health services based on a number of pathfinders running from 2009 to 2011. These pathfinders will look at local level commissioning of AAC.</p> <p>A pilot programme will be developed to test commissioning models for children's equipment. These will include the provision of AAC for children with low incidence significant SLCN.</p> <p>Becta will provide grants over the next three years to help organisations that provide expertise on AAC develop strong, sustainable services that meet the needs of commissioners.</p> <p>The Communication Champion will be asked to review the effectiveness of AAC provision in local areas on appointment.</p>	<p>The DH will manage the pathfinders project from 2009 to 2011 when the outputs will be published.</p> <p>The DH will develop community equipment models in 2009 for subsequent testing.</p> <p>Becta will announce requirements and application arrangements for the AAC sector grants early in 2009.</p>

	Recommendation	Response	Timescale and Responsibility
28	<i>We recommend that the Government's forthcoming Youth Crime Action Plan and the follow-up work on young offenders' health should consider how best to address the SLCN of young people in the criminal justice system, including those in custody.</i>	<p>The Youth Crime Action Plan, published July 2008, set out the Government's plans to improve education for young offenders.</p> <p>The Health and Social Care Strategy for Children and Young People in Contact with the Criminal Justice System will set out plans to improve the provision of health services, including speech and language therapy services.</p> <p>Training materials on speech, language and communication and dyslexia will be developed for those responsible for the education of young people in custody.</p>	<p>Forthcoming legislation is scheduled to make local authorities responsible for securing education and training for young people in custody (with roll-out commencing from September 2010).</p> <p>The DH plans to publish The Health and Social Care Strategy for Children and Young People in Contact with the Criminal Justice System in Spring 2009.</p> <p>The DCSF will ask the Communication Trust – as part of its remit in 2009-10 – to prepare training materials for those that work with young people in custody.</p>
29	<i>We recommend that the DCSF reminds local authorities of their statutory responsibilities and parents of their rights regarding consultation procedures.</i>	<p>DCSF Ministers will write to local authority Directors of Children's Services reminding them of their responsibility to consult parents.</p> <p>The Communication Champion may want to further encourage Children's Trusts to take on board this recommendation as part of their work to raise awareness of SLCN with local commissioners.</p>	<p>DCSF Ministers will write to local authority Directors of Children's Services on the publication of this action plan.</p>
30	<i>We recommend that each Children's Trust appoints an appropriate senior member of its governing board to lead on speech, language and communication in the local area. This leadership role should include overseeing a drive to improve outcomes.</i>	<p>It will be up to each Children's Trust to decide how to address this recommendation.</p> <p>DCSF Ministers will write to local authority Directors of Children's Services suggesting that they consider this carefully.</p> <p>The Communication Champion may want to further encourage Children's Trusts to take on board this recommendation as part of their work to raise awareness of SLCN with local commissioners.</p>	<p>DCSF Ministers will write to local authority Directors of Children's Services on the publication of this action plan.</p>

	Recommendation	Response	Timescale and Responsibility
31	<i>[Where there is a lack of clarity about the responsible commissioner] we recommend that the Government considers amending regulations and associated guidance.</i>	<p>Best practice guidance on commissioning for SLCN will be developed to build on the overarching joint commissioning framework for child health services based on pathfinders.</p> <p>The pathfinder projects will look at difficulties that arise in identifying the appropriate commissioner.</p>	The DH will manage the pathfinders project from 2009 to 2011 when the outputs will be published.
32	<i>We recommend that the new CAA takes account of the effectiveness of Children's Trusts in facilitating joint working and effective commissioning to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people with SLCN.</i>	<p>The CAA will consider available evidence related to services for children with SEN, including SLCN, in both reporting and deciding whether any inspection might be necessary. Services for children with SEN, including SLCN, will when appropriate be within the scope of a triggered inspection.</p>	<p>The joint inspectorates' final consultation on the Comprehensive Area Assessment closed in October 2008.</p> <p>As one of the inspectorates responsible for the CAA, Ofsted is working to develop reporting and inspection arrangements.</p> <p>CAA will replace previous local assessments and rolling inspection programmes from April 2009. The first reports will be published in November 2009.</p>
33	<i>We recommend that during the debate following this paper the Government considers whether sufficient numbers of Children's Trusts are functioning effectively in terms of improving outcomes for children and young people with SLCN, and takes account of the evidence and recommendations of this Review in any plans to strengthen Children's Trust arrangements, including by further legislation.</i>	<p>The DCSF will strengthen Children's Trusts to help them play an effective role in the joint commissioning of services for all children, including those with SLCN.</p>	<p>The DCSF published guidance for Children's Trusts in November 2008.</p> <p>It will strengthen Children's Trusts by putting their boards on a statutory basis in forthcoming legislation.</p> <p>Regulations and further guidance will follow the passage of the legislation in due course.</p>

	Recommendation	Response	Timescale and Responsibility
34	<i>We recommend that the forthcoming Ofsted review takes full account of the need for the joint provision of services for children and young people with SLCN.</i>	<p>Ofsted will review progress on the Government's SEN strategy considering the provision made for groups of children with SEN, including those, such as many with SLCN, who require jointly commissioned services.</p> <p>After the Ofsted review, the DCSF will consider whether changes are needed to the statutory basis of the SEN framework or other aspects of SEN provision based on its findings.</p>	<p>The terms of reference of the Ofsted review will be agreed with the DCSF in 2009.</p> <p>The review will begin in April 2009 and Ofsted will report their findings to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families in 2010.</p>
35	<i>We recommend that the DCSF work closely with its central and local government partners to promote the framework to local leaders ['Leading and Managing Children's Services in England'], setting out in the 2009 Departmental Annual Report the steps taken and the progress made.</i>	<p>The framework was widely circulated by the DCSF in April 2008 to local authorities, Government Offices, the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and Children's Workforce Network partners.</p> <p>The DCSF have asked CWDC to promote the framework.</p>	<p>CWDC will promote the framework as part of its integrated working communications campaign for 2008-09 and 2009-10.</p> <p>The DCSF will report on the steps taken to improve local leadership and management of children's services in its 2009 Annual Report.</p>
36	<i>We recommend that the Department of Health supports the development of appropriately skilled and experienced clinical leaders who can interpret policy and research to support the delivery of evidence-based practice for children and young people with SLCN.</i>	<p>Support and development for clinical leaders is central to implementation of the NHS Next Stage Review.</p>	<p>The DH is working to implement the commitments made in the NHS Next Stage Review.</p>
37	<i>We recommend that the Government considers retaining national early years targets beyond 2011. We further recommend that the Government considers introducing a national indicator specifically for SLCN to underpin a relevant Public Service Agreement from 2011.</i>	<p>A decision on the retention of Early Years targets beyond 2011 will be made closer to the time.</p> <p>The Government will consider the inclusion of an SLCN indicator in a future Public Service Agreement.</p>	<p>New Public Service Agreements will be agreed across Government prior to the start of the next spending review period.</p>

	Recommendation	Response	Timescale and Responsibility
38	<i>We recommend, therefore, that the joint framework on commissioning emphasises the need for local agencies to monitor performance and publish their findings in forms accessible to children, young people, parents and professionals.</i>	<p>Best practice guidance on commissioning for SLCN will be developed to build on the overarching joint commissioning framework for child health services.</p> <p>The pathfinder projects will develop best practice models for monitoring performance and sharing information about their service.</p>	The DH will manage the pathfinders project from 2009 to 2011 when the outputs will be published.
39	<i>We further recommend that the Government makes as much data as possible available about the educational attainment of children and young people with SLCN to allow it to be accountable for progress and to encourage improvement in provision.</i>	A new annual publication will contain more detailed tables of data – at local level where appropriate – on pupils with SEN, including SLCN. It will also provide a guide to accessing and using SEN and SLCN related data covering the Every Child Matters wellbeing outcomes from a range of sources.	<p>The new annual publication is currently being planned by the DCSF.</p> <p>It is currently anticipated that it will be published for the first time in autumn 2009.</p>
40	<i>We recommend that progress on implementing the recommendations of this review is assessed through an independent progress check conducted in 18 months' time.</i>	Ministers will commission a review of progress towards improved services for children with SLCN. This will consider the further action required and issues that need to be addressed as part of the National Year of Speech, Language and Communication in 2011-12.	The DCSF will arrange and support a review of progress in Summer 2010.

Annex B – Communication Council Terms of Reference

The Communication Council will monitor and support the Government's initiatives to deliver improvements in services for children and young people (0-19) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) following the Bercow Report (July 2008)¹.

To achieve this, members of the Communication Council will:

- Receive and consider updates on the Government's initiatives to improve services for children and young people with SLCN;
- Provide advice, support and challenge on progress and other areas where consultation is needed to those working on initiatives, including the Communication Champion;
- Help arrange and advise on consultation as required by those working on initiatives to improve services for children and young people with SLCN; and
- Promote the importance of speech language and communication, and share information about the Government's initiatives to improve services for children and young people with SLCN within their own organisations and those they work with.

The role of the group will be reviewed in 2012 following the National Year of SLCN proposed for 2011-12.

Membership

The Communication Council is a small, focused advisory body with the following representatives covering national government, health, local authority and community service providers and their clients. The membership is appointed jointly

by Ministers in DCSF and DH at their discretion. The following members attend each meeting:

- Communication Champion;
- Director of Early Years, Extended Schools and Special Educational Needs, DCSF (joint-chair);
- Director of Chief Nursing Officer's Directorate, DH (joint-chair);
- Parent of a child with speech, language and communication needs;
- Young person with speech language and communication needs;
- Communication Trust representative (representing expert organisations across the voluntary and community sector within its communication consortium);
- Children's Workforce Network representative;
- Commercial Sector representative;
- Association of Directors of Children's Services representative;
- NHS Confederation representative;
- Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists representative; and
- DCSF and DH staff and secretariat as required.

The Ministers with policy responsibility for services for children with SLCN in DCSF and DH will also be members and attend periodic meetings.

Other individuals may be asked to attend meetings from time to time for the whole meeting or particular agenda items at the chair's discretion.

Sub-groups will be formed as required to meet separately and advise on particular areas of work. These groups will include representatives of the Council and other organisations with an interest in the area.

1. *The Bercow Report: A Review of Services for Children and Young People (0-19) with Speech, Language and Communications Needs* was published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in July 2008. It is available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/slcnaaction

Notes

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