Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION, DOCUMENT

Talk with Me Phase 2: Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) Delivery Plan 2026 to 2030

We want your views on our plans to extend the Talk With Me SLC Delivery Plan to include children aged 5 to 11.

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Overview

This document covers the Welsh Government's national drive to promote SLC development, with a continued focus on prevention in the early years, whilst extending the work of 'Talk with Me' to encompass a wider age range.

How to respond

Responses to this consultation should be emailed/posted to the address below to arrive by **30th April 2026** at the latest.

- Complete the questionnaire and return to **talkwithme@gov.wales** (mailto:talkwithme@gov.wales)
- Complete our **online response form** (https://www.gov.wales/node/73743/respond-online)

Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

Contact details

For more information:

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Primary Care, Mental Health and Early Years Directorate
Health, Social Care and Early Years Group
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UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

The Welsh Government will be a data controller for any personal data you provide as part of your response to the consultation. Welsh Ministers have statutory powers they will rely on to process this personal data which will enable them to make informed decisions about how they exercise their public functions. Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about or planning future consultations. Where the Welsh Government undertakes further analysis of consultation responses then this work may be commissioned to be carried out by an accredited third party (e.g. a research organisation or a consultancy company). Any such work will only be undertaken under a contract. Welsh Government's standard terms and conditions for such contracts set out strict requirements for the processing and safekeeping of personal data.

In order to show that the consultation was carried out properly, the Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then redact them before publishing.

You should also be aware of our responsibilities under Freedom of Information legislation. If your details are published as part of the consultation response then these published reports will be retained indefinitely. Any of your data held otherwise by Welsh Government will be kept for no more than three years.

Your rights

Under the data protection legislation, you have the right:

- to be informed of the personal data held about you and to access it
- to require us to rectify inaccuracies in that data
- to (in certain circumstances) object to or restrict processing
- for (in certain circumstances) your data to be ‘erased’
- to (in certain circumstances) data portability
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) who is our independent regulator for data protection.

For further details about the information the Welsh Government holds and its use, or if you want to exercise your rights under the UK GDPR, please see contact details below:

Data Protection Officer:
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
CARDIFF
CF10 3NQ

e-mail: **Data.ProtectionOfficer@gov.wales**
(mailto:Data.ProtectionOfficer@gov.wales)

The contact details for the Information Commissioner’s Office are:

Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Tel: 01625 545 745 or
0303 123 1113

Website: **https://ico.org.uk/** (https://ico.org.uk/)

The purpose of the consultation

The Welsh Government's Talk with Me programme launched in November 2020. It was developed to promote speech, language and communication (SLC) development, with a focus on the early years (0 to 5 years).

Talk with Me aimed to promote the SLC skills of babies and young children aged 0 to 5 years in Wales at a universal, population and targeted level. We have been able to demonstrate positive impact and outcomes in all areas covered in **the first delivery plan** (/talk-me-speech-language-and-communication-slc-delivery-plan).

Having delivered the programme successfully for five years, Welsh Government wishes to build on the successes of Talk with Me to extend the workplan and include children aged 5 to 11. We want to ensure that our priorities align with those of our key stakeholders, including babies, children and their families; and our partners within and outside Welsh Government.

The evidence is clear that whilst a focus on prevention in the earliest years continues to be important, children beyond this age range also need access to effective universal and targeted SLC support.

Overview and context

Speech, Language and Communication (SLC): Delivery Plan 2026-2030

> "*The Welsh Government aims to raise awareness of the importance of SLC and ensure that babies and children aged 0 to 11 who need support are identified early and are supported effectively with interventions delivered at the point of need.*"

1 in 5 children and young people are struggling with their speech, language and

communication (SLC)**[1]** (https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/73879#1) and more than 10% have long term speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) which create barriers to communication or learning in everyday life**[2]** (https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/73879#2).

Research shows that children living in poverty suffer disproportionately from delayed language**[3]** (https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/73879#3). By this we mean those children whose language skills are developing significantly more slowly than those of other children of the same age, but who do not have a specific disorder. Language skills are a critical factor in the intergenerational cycles that can perpetuate poverty, as poor communication skills are passed down from parent to child**[4]** (https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/73879#4).

Key facts

- 32% of children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) live in areas of high social disadvantage**[5]** (https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/73879#5)
- 30% of children in Wales with Additional Learning Needs have SLCN, the most common type of Additional Learning Need in Wales**[6]** (https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/73879#6)
- Children with SLCN are more likely to experience mental health problems, and less likely to access support, leading to a double disadvantage**[7]** (https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/73879#7)
- SLC skills are a key indicator of wellbeing in children, helping them to manage emotions, communicate feelings and establish relationships**[8]** (https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/73879#8)
- Investment into supporting language skills has a very high impact on outcomes for a very low cost**[9]** (https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/73879#9)
- The right of children to express themselves is set out in **UNCRC** (https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/).

[1] **Speech and Language UK, 2023** (https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Listening-to-unheard-children-report-FINAL.pdf)

[2] **What Are Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)? - Afasic** (https://afasic.org.uk/what-are-speech-language-and-communication-needs-slcn/)

[3] **CSJ, 2023 Two Nations** (https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/CSJ-Two_Nations.pdf)

[4] **The intergenerational transmission of language skill - Sullivan - 2021 - The British Journal of Sociology - Wiley Online Library** (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1468-4446.12780?msockid=26e2412d8f736acd3f9c57368eef6bd8)

[5] **Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), 2023** (https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Schools-Census/Pupil-Level-Annual-School-Census/Special-Educational-Needs)

[6] **Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), 2023** (https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Schools-Census/Pupil-Level-Annual-School-Census/Special-Educational-Needs)

[7] **Speech and Language UK, 2025** (https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/230625_MHReport_DigitalPDF_V7.pdf)

[8] **EIF, 2017 - Language as a child wellbeing indicator | Early Intervention Foundation** (https://www.eif.org.uk/report/language-as-a-child-wellbeing-indicator)
Language as a child wellbeing indicator | Early Intervention Foundation (https://www.eif.org.uk/report/language-as-a-child-wellbeing-indicator)

[9] **Teaching and Learning Toolkit | EEF** (https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit)

The way forward in Wales

Welsh Government has worked constructively with the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) in Wales, along with a wide range of other

stakeholders, to deliver Talk with Me, the **SLC delivery plan** (/talk-me-speech-language-and-communication-slc-delivery-plan) published in 2020. The delivery plan focuses on universal and targeted support for SLC, and **not** on the delivery of specialist, individual level Speech and Language Therapy.

We have worked to raise the profile of SLC in the early years and to develop effective early identification and intervention pathways to ensure that children are supported at the right time, in the right place and by the right person.

Any baby or child, irrespective of their age, where they live or their family circumstances, might require support in developing their SLC skills. Our aim is to ensure that children throughout Wales have access to high quality universal and targeted support as required, to help develop their SLC skills.

This consultation document, developed in discussion with RCSLT, aims to take our learning from Talk with Me and use it to drive improvement in a way in which more children in Wales are supported to develop their SLC skills.

Ministers and officials have worked collaboratively on the draft plan to ensure that we take a cross-sectoral approach (to include childcare and play, education, health and social care policy) that engages families and builds upon existing successes.

Consultation aims

We are carrying out a consultation with babies, children and their families to ensure that their voice is at the forefront of SLC policy development.

We also invite all those whose work with, and whose responsibilities have an impact, either directly or indirectly, on SLC development, to contribute to the conversation. We want your help to identify any further actions we may need to take to further raise the profile of SLC, and to ensure that effective identification and support are in place. We will need all parts of the system (education, health, social care etc.) to work together to help us succeed.

Our ambition is to do more to support babies and children with, or at risk of, SLCN and to build upon what we know works so that every child gets the best start in life and is able to access effective support as they grow.

The purpose of this consultation document is to inform conversations with key stakeholders; to establish what works to support babies and children with, or at risk of SLCN; and identify what other action we might consider taking in the future. The actions set out below give examples of potential activity under each objective.

Please note that existing commitments underway under Talk with Me are included for context *(in italics*) and are not subject to this consultation.

The list is not intended to be exhaustive and the consultation process will inform priorities.

Proposed objectives are as follows:

Objective 1: Raise public awareness of speech, language and communication

Outcome 1: The families of babies and children, as well as children themselves, will be informed and equipped to understand the importance of speech, language and communication (SLC) and to be able to access support as required.

Key Action: To promote key messages to the families of babies and children to support the development of SLC skills.

New activity may include:

- Undertake a literature review to establish evidence based SLC messages for children aged 5 to 11.
- Undertake a national, bilingual publicity campaign to raise awareness of patterns of typical development and strategies to promote SLC in children aged 5 to 11.

- Promote key messages to practitioners through Curriculum for Wales resources.
- Consider and disseminate information on the impact of screens and technology on children's health and wellbeing, including SLC skills.

Existing commitments under Talk with Me will continue, including:

- *Continue with* ***publicity campaign*** (https://www.gov.wales/talk-with-me) *for children aged 0 to 5 with a focus on specific populations e.g. care experienced children.*
- *Work with Public Health Wales colleagues responsible for Every Child resources to ensure that consistent SLC messages are included.*
- *Promote key messages to practitioners through the* ***Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC) resources*** (https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/early-childhood-play-learning-and-care-in-wales/)*.*

Objective 2: Improve the identification of SLCN in babies and children

Outcome 2: Practitioners will be empowered to identify early signs of SLCN by standardising the identification process for children. This will ensure that babies and children are signposted to effective support with the right person, in the right place, at the right time.

Key Action 2: To ensure that children's SLC skills are monitored at the right time, using the most effective tools**.**

New activity may include:

- Work with education colleagues to consider how effective schools and settings' existing assessment arrangements are in identifying children with SLCN.
- If necessary, commission an independent review of evidence based identification tools for children aged 5 and older in Welsh and English.

Existing commitments under Talk with Me will continue, including:

- *Continue the development of the bilingual early years surveillance and intervention package (**Prosiect Pengwin** (https://www.gov.wales/new-15m-speech-language-and-communication-tool-young-children-under-development)).*
- *Roll out and evaluate **Prosiect Pengwin** (https://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/research/research-and-innovation-centres-and-groups/prosiect-pengwin-research-group/).*

Objective 3: Ensure the workforce supporting babies and children are informed and equipped to provide effective universal and targeted SLC interventions

Outcome 3: Accessible, evidence based universal and targeted SLC interventions will be delivered at the point of need to improve SLC skills and reduce the risk of SLCN impacting on children's development and wellbeing.

Key Action 3: Ensure the workforce supporting babies and children are informed and equipped to provide effective universal and targeted SLC interventions.

New activity may include:

- Carry out a review of evidence based SLC interventions for children aged 5 and older in Welsh and English.
- Scope the provision of evidence based SLC support for school aged children in Wales.

Existing commitments under Talk with Me will continue, including:

- *Continue with the development of interventions within Prosiect Pengwin.*
- *Roll out and evaluate Prosiect Pengwin interventions.*
- *Work with education colleagues to ensure that evidence based interventions are available in Welsh and English for children aged under 5 in line with recommendations from **WIRE** (https://www.gov.wales/interventions-review-supporting-early-years-speech-language-and-communication-slc).*

Objective 4: Upskill the childcare and play, education, health and social care workforce to address SLCN

Outcome 4: The childcare and play, education, health and social care workforce in Wales will be highly trained and equipped with the skills to support babies, children and families where there are identified needs in the development of SLC skills. This will ensure that children receive appropriate support from the people closest to them.

Key Action 4: To ensure the childcare and play, education, health and social care workforce in Wales are highly trained so that SLC identification and support are provided to babies and children at the right time and that interventions are monitored to ensure they are making a positive difference to the child's development**.**

New activity may include:

- Explore opportunities to incorporate SLC into pre-registration training content including Health Visitors, Initial Teacher Education and Social Workers.
- Scope gaps in training resources for different sectors.
- Develop free online short course for practitioners working with those aged 5 to 11 (along the lines of **An Introduction to Speech, Language and Communication** (https://www.elklan.co.uk/Learners/ELearningSessions/ISLC/register)).
- Work with Estyn and Care Inspectorate to develop further training resources to support Inspectors to consider SLC.
- Share effective universal and targeted practice for speech and language therapists (SLTs) and other specialists working with children with identified SLCN.
- Work with colleagues supporting preventative approaches to SLC to share learning in UK nations, Republic of Ireland and internationally.

Existing commitments under Talk with Me will continue, including:

- *Update early years SLC training framework.*
- *Publish the school age SLC training framework and evaluate uptake and*

impact.

- *Continue to roll out and evaluate SLC training for the Health Visiting skill mix (**Talk With Me: training** (https://www.gov.wales/talk-me-training)).*
- *Promote SLC messaging through ECPLC resources, particularly the **ECPLC: Reflective Practice Toolkit*** (https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/early-childhood-play-learning-and-care-in-wales/) *and **ECPLC: Assessment Arrangements for 0 to 3 year olds in Wales*** (https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/early-childhood-play-learning-and-care-in-wales/)*.*

Objective 5: embed preventative SLC support across Wales

Outcome 5: All babies and children in Wales will be able to access effective universal and targeted SLC support regardless of where they live.

Key Action 5: To ensure that effective universal and targeted SLC support is available across Wales.

New activity may include:

- Strengthen links with colleagues working in mental health and wellbeing to ensure that the relationship with SLC is recognised.
- Maintain strong links with colleagues working in literacy to ensure that the relationship with SLC is clear.
- Maintain strong links with colleagues working in Additional Learning Needs (ALN) to consider training needs for Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators (ALNCos) and other ALN specialists.
- Strengthen links with colleagues working in justice services to ensure that the relationship between SLC and prevention/diversion from the criminal justice system is made explicit.

Existing commitments under Talk with Me will continue, including:

- *Take a children's rights approach, highlighting relevant sections of UNCRC in all our work.*
- *Move towards a 'Balanced System' based on recommendations from the*

'understanding' phase of the 'Better Communication' project in Wales.

- *Monitor and update* ***Flying Start SLC guidance*** (https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-05/flying-start-speech-language-communication-guidance_0.pdf) *and* ***outcomes*** (https://www.gov.wales/speech-language-and-communication-outcomes)*.*
- *Contribute to other guidance including children and communities grant to ensure consistency across approaches.*
- *Plan evaluation of Talk with Me activity.*
- *Support specialist Speech and Language Therapy services to consider and implement universal and targeted SLC support beyond Flying Start.*

Consultation questions

The responses to the following consultation questions will be used to drive forward the next steps in the Talk with Me planning and inform the content of the delivery plan.

Question 1: Do you agree with the statement - the name Talk with Me Phase 2 is helpful and relevant to cover the extension of this work to children aged 5 to 11.

If not, can you suggest an alternative?

Question 2: Do you agree that the suggested approach to raising awareness of the importance of SLC (objective 1) will help facilitate better SLC outcomes for babies and children?

Question 3: Do you agree that the suggested approach to improving the identification of SLCN (objective 2) will help facilitate better SLC outcomes for babies and children?

Question 4: Do you agree that the suggested approach to improving support for those with SLCN (objective 3) will help facilitate better SLC outcomes for babies and children?

Question 5: Do you agree that the proposed actions to upskill the workforce to address SLCN (objective 4) will result in better identification of, and support for SLCN?

Question 6: Do you agree that the suggested approach to embedding preventative SLC support across Wales (objective 5) will help facilitate better SLC outcomes for babies and children?

Question 7: Other than the 5 objectives currently suggested in the consultation document, are there any others we should include?

Question 8: Other than the proposed actions contained in the consultation document, are there any others we should include?

Question 9: What, in your opinion, would be the likely effects of the proposed objectives in the consultation document *(*to further promote and support SLC development throughout Wales) on the Welsh language? We are particularly interested in any likely effects on opportunities to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English.

Do you think that there are opportunities to promote any positive effects?

Do you think that there are opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects?

Question 10 – In your opinion, could the proposed objectives in the consultation document, to further promote and support SLC development throughout Wales, be formulated or changed so as to:

- have positive effects or more positive effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English; or
- mitigate any negative effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English?

Question 11 – In your opinion, could the proposed objectives in the consultation document be formulated or changed so as to promote positive effects, or reduce any negative effects, on children's rights?

Please use the consultation **response form** (https://www.gov.wales/node/73743/

respond-online) to respond to the above questions.

This document may not be fully accessible.
For more information refer to our **accessibility statement** (/accessibility-statement-govwales).