



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# Siarad Gyda Fi

## Talk With Me



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Audience: All professionals working across the children's sector with a focus on Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) including:

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, Early Years Public Health Clinical Excellence Network (CEN), Wales Early Language Pathway Task and Finish Group, DLD Task and Finish Group, Multilingualism Clinical Excellence Group, Wales Speech and Language Therapy Advisory Forum (WSLTAF), Midwifery, All Wales Health Visitors Forum, School Health Nurses, Public Health Wales, Psychology & Infant Mental Health Leads, Flying Start Leads – Health Leads & Education Leads, Families First Leads – Health Leads & Education Leads, Foundation Phase Professionals from Local Authorities and Regional Education Consortia, ALN Transformation Lead, Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer, ACES hub, Third Sector – Children in Wales, Barnardos, Save the Children, Bookstart, Mudiad Meithrin, Social Care Wales, Cwlwm, PACEY, National Day Nurseries Association, Early Years Wales, Clybiau Plant Cymru Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales, Estyn, All Wales Head of Children's Services (AWHOCS), The Fostering Network, Pupil Development Grant (PDG) Advisers and Regional Education Consortia.

Overview: This document covers the Welsh Government's national drive to promote SLC development, primarily aimed at children from 0–4 years, 11 months, but it does have relevance for the age range 0-25 years as covered in the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Act.

Action Required: This document describes the Welsh Government's programme of work and arrangements to further promote and support SLC development throughout Wales.

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Additional Copies: This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at <https://gov.wales/talk-me-speech-language-and-communication-slc-delivery-plan>

Acknowledgment: The Welsh Government would like to thank Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and Scarlet Design for the use of its 'Talk with me' images within this document.

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# Ministerial Foreword

The Welsh Government's ambition is for children from all backgrounds to have the best start in life and to reach their full potential.

It is widely recognised that a child's development in the early years is vital. This includes children's acquisition of speech, language and communication (SLC) skills and oracy which underpins a child's ability to read and write and to problem-solve. Positive cognitive development is strongly associated with a child's success in school and entry into the workforce.

Any child, irrespective of where they live or their family circumstances, might require additional support to address delays or difficulties with SLC. Our aim is to ensure that children throughout Wales have access to high quality universal, population, targeted and specialised support<sup>1</sup> in the early years, if required, to develop their SLC skills. Embracing Wales as a bilingual country, we also need to ensure that we provide the best possible start for all children to develop Welsh as well as English SLC skills in line with the vision set out in Cymraeg 2050.

The consequences of not supporting children's early language skills, and not identifying long-term or persistent SLC needs are harmful enough to necessitate an overarching, cross-cutting response with strong leadership.

There are a number of drivers for SLC as a high profile policy area for the Welsh Government and we are taking steps to raise awareness of this crucial life skill.

A major step forward is the publication of Talk With Me: Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) Delivery Plan which seeks to drive improvement in the way in which children in Wales are supported to develop their SLC skills.

This cross-cutting SLC delivery plan is the first of its kind in the United Kingdom.

We have worked constructively with a wide range of stakeholders and they have helped us identify actions to better support our children's SLC development. This would not have been possible without the invaluable help of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) and the Early Years Public Health Clinical Excellence Network (CEN) for Speech and Language Therapists.

This cross Government delivery plan which includes a wide range of policy areas from Health to Employability and Skills, will lead to a more joined-up approach to engaging with families, and builds upon existing policies and what works.

We are proud to endorse the actions set out in this delivery plan that need to be taken collectively to tackle the challenging issues which exist and drive up improvements at pace.

Close collaboration at Ministerial level is essential to delivering improved outcomes. Ministers and officials have worked collaboratively on this plan, and we will ensure that continues through the implementation arrangements.

Children must reach their full potential. We should not settle for anything less.



**Vaughan Gething MS**  
Minister for Health and Social Services



**Ken Skates MS**  
Minister for Economy and Transport and North Wales



**Julie Morgan MS**  
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services



**Eluned Morgan MS**  
Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing and the Welsh Language



**Kirsty Williams MS**  
Minister for Education



**Jane Hutt MS**  
Deputy Minister and Chief Whip

<sup>1</sup> See Glossary for definitions

## Overview: Talk with me

### Speech, Language and Communication (SLC): Delivery Plan 2020 to 2022

The Welsh Government aims to raise awareness of the importance of SLC and ensure that interventions are delivered universally at the point of need.

Giving every child the best start in life is a key factor in reducing health inequalities. Speech, language and communication (SLC) skills are essential for positive health, wellbeing, education and employment outcomes. Promoting SLC in the early years can reduce the impact of social disadvantage across the life course<sup>2</sup>.

**“Effective oral language skills are the building blocks on which subsequent literacy and numeracy development is based. Without solid foundations in language and communication skills, children run the risk of school failure, low self-esteem and poor social skills. Yet up to 80% of children in some areas of the UK are starting school without these vital skills.”<sup>3</sup>**

The ability to understand and use language is a fundamental life skill unique to humans which is partly innate and partly learned<sup>4</sup>. Communication is a complex process consisting of a number of skills: Receptive language (understanding) typically precedes expressive language (spoken language or talking); speech clarity is the way that words are spoken and communication is how we interact with each other<sup>5</sup>.

More than 10% of children and young people in the UK have long-term SLC needs which create barriers to communication or learning in everyday life<sup>6</sup>.

Research shows that children living in poverty suffer disproportionately from delayed language<sup>7</sup>. 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<sup>8</sup>.



2 Beard, 2018  
3 ICAN, 2009  
4 Bercow, 2018  
5 Beard, 2018  
6 Norbury *et al.*, 2016  
7 Law *et al.*, 2013  
8 Hart & Risley, 2003

## Key facts

- Over **50%** of children in socially deprived areas may start school with impoverished speech, language and communication skills<sup>9</sup>.
- **One in four** children who struggled with language at age five did not reach the expected standard in English at the end of primary school, compared with one in 25 children who had good language skills at age five<sup>10</sup>.
- Researchers have found that children who had normal non-verbal skills but a poor vocabulary at age 5 were, at age 34, one and a half times more likely to be **poor readers** or have **mental health problems** and more than twice as likely to be unemployed as children who had normally developing language at age 5<sup>11</sup>.
- Vocabulary at age 5 is found to be the **best predictor** (from a range of measures at age 5 and 10) of whether children who experienced social deprivation in childhood were able to ‘buck the trend’ and escape poverty in later adult life<sup>12</sup>.

9 Locke *et al*, 2002

10 Save the Children, 2016

11 Law *et al*, 2010

12 Blanden, 2006

# SPEECH, LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION SKILLS: WHY DO THEY MATTER?



<p><b>SCHOOL READINESS</b></p> <p><b>50%</b></p> <p><b>50% OF CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY MAY START SCHOOL WITH SPEECH, LANGUAGE &amp; COMMUNICATION NEEDS</b></p> <p><small>LOCKE A, GINSBOURG J, PEERS L. (2002) DEVELOPMENT AND DISADVANTAGE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EARLY YEARS AND BEYOND. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION DISORDERS, 37(1), PP. 3-15.</small></p>	<p><b>SCHOOL READINESS</b></p> <p><b>1 IN 4</b> CHILDREN WHO STRUGGLED WITH LANGUAGE AT AGE 5 DID NOT REACH THE EXPECTED STANDARD IN ENGLISH AT THE END OF PRIMARY SCHOOL</p> <p><small>SAVE THE CHILDREN (2016) EARLY LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND CHILDREN'S PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTAINMENT IN ENGLISH AND MATHS: NEW RESEARCH FINDINGS. LONDON: SAVE THE CHILDREN.</small></p>
<p><b>MENTAL HEALTH</b></p> <p><b>81%</b></p> <p><b>81% OF CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONAL &amp; BEHAVIOURAL DISORDERS HAVE SIGNIFICANT LANGUAGE DEFICITS</b></p> <p><small>HOLLO ET AL (2014) UNIDENTIFIED LANGUAGE DEFICITS IN CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DISORDERS: A META-ANALYSIS</small></p>	<p><b>MENTAL HEALTH</b></p> <p>WITHOUT EFFECTIVE HELP, <b>1 IN 3</b> CHILDREN WITH SPEECH, LANGUAGE &amp; COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES WILL NEED TREATMENT FOR MENTAL HEALTH</p> <p><small>CLEGG, J., HOLLIS, C., MANWIKKI, L. AND BUTTER, M. (2000) DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDERS - A FOLLOW UP IN LATER ADULT LIFE: COGNITIVE, LANGUAGE AND PSYCHOSOCIAL OUTCOMES. JOURNAL OF CHILD PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY, 46, 128-149.</small></p>
<p><b>UNEMPLOYMENT</b></p> <p><b>88%</b></p> <p><b>OF LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED YOUNG MEN HAVE SPEECH, LANGUAGE &amp; COMMUNICATION NEEDS</b></p> <p><small>ELLIOTT N (2011) AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED MEN. UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH WALES</small></p>	<p><b>YOUTH JUSTICE</b></p> <p><b>UP TO 60%</b> OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE YOUTH JUSTICE ESTATE HAVE SPEECH, LANGUAGE &amp; COMMUNICATION NEEDS</p> <p><small>BRYAN K, FREER, J, FURLONG C. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES IN JUVENILE OFFENDERS. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES 2007; 42, 505-520.</small></p>

## Introduction

Children’s development is impacted by a range of social, cultural and economic factors which can be explained using Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) bio-ecological model<sup>13</sup> (Figure 1.1). The model suggests that children develop as a result of interactions between their family, childcare settings and communities.

The majority of children develop language with few difficulties, but some children present with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). These needs can vary and include the following definitions:

- **‘Late Talkers’:** children aged 18 months to 35 months who develop expressive language at a slower rate than their peers, with the absence of any underlying neurological or sensory deficits<sup>14</sup>.
- **‘Late Language Emergence’ (LLE):** children who are late to develop both receptive and expressive language skills. However, not all late talkers or children with LLE go on to have language difficulties when they are older as some go on to follow a ‘typical’ pattern of development by age 4<sup>15</sup>.

- **‘Developmental Language Disorder’ (DLD):** children who have language difficulties that are unlikely to resolve by five years of age and that create barriers to communication or learning in everyday life. These language difficulties are not associated with known biomedical conditions<sup>16</sup>.
- **‘Speech, Language and Communication Needs’ (SLCN):** an over-arching term to include all children with communication difficulties, including DLD, LLE and speech sound disorders<sup>17</sup>.

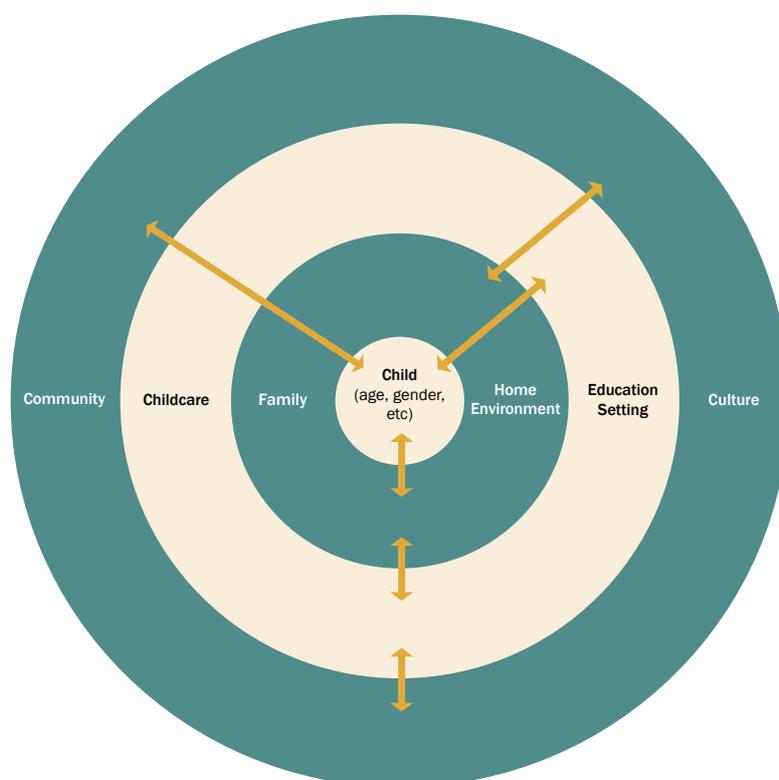


Figure 1.1 Bronfenbrenner’s adapted bio-ecological model

13 Bronfenbrenner, 2005  
 14 Hawa & Spanoudis, 2013  
 15 Reilly *et al*, 2014  
 16 Bishop *et al*, 2017  
 17 Bishop *et al*, 2016

## Incidence and Prevalence of SLCN

ICAN propose that up to 50% of children have SLCN when starting school in some areas of the United Kingdom (UK)<sup>18</sup>. Most of these children have 'transient' language needs such as late talkers or LLE i.e. if appropriate support is provided universally, there is a high likelihood that they will catch up with their peers. However, 10% of children will have 'persistent' language needs and are more likely to require referral into specialist services to receive support to enable them to reach their potential. (Figure 1.2)<sup>19</sup>. There has been limited research into the incidence of SLCN in the UK i.e. the number of new cases occurring in a population over a given period of time. The incidence rate of referrals into specialist Speech and Language Therapy services in the UK in 2004 was 85,000 to 90,000 children per year (14.6% of births). Law *et al* (2013) found that two thirds of children with SLCN do not present for help, suggesting that the actual incidence may be much higher than this figure<sup>20</sup>.

The current data in Wales for the prevalence of SLCN is limited, however the 2020 schools census data found that 63,422 children aged 0 to 11 years in Wales had Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision. This represents 20% of all pupils in Wales. According to the census, 31.4% of all children with SEN were reported to have SLC difficulties.

## Long-term impact of SLCN

The long-term impacts of SLCN are profound. Poor vocabulary skills at school entry are associated with poorer adult literacy levels at 35 years<sup>21</sup> and these individuals are twice as likely to be unemployed as adults. Communication difficulties in the workplace can impact on effective practice. Loss of production through poor communication is estimated to be £8.4 billion a year by the end of 2020<sup>22</sup>. Individuals with SLCN are also at greater risk of mental health difficulties, offending and entering the criminal justice system, with over 60% of young offenders having SLCN<sup>23</sup>.

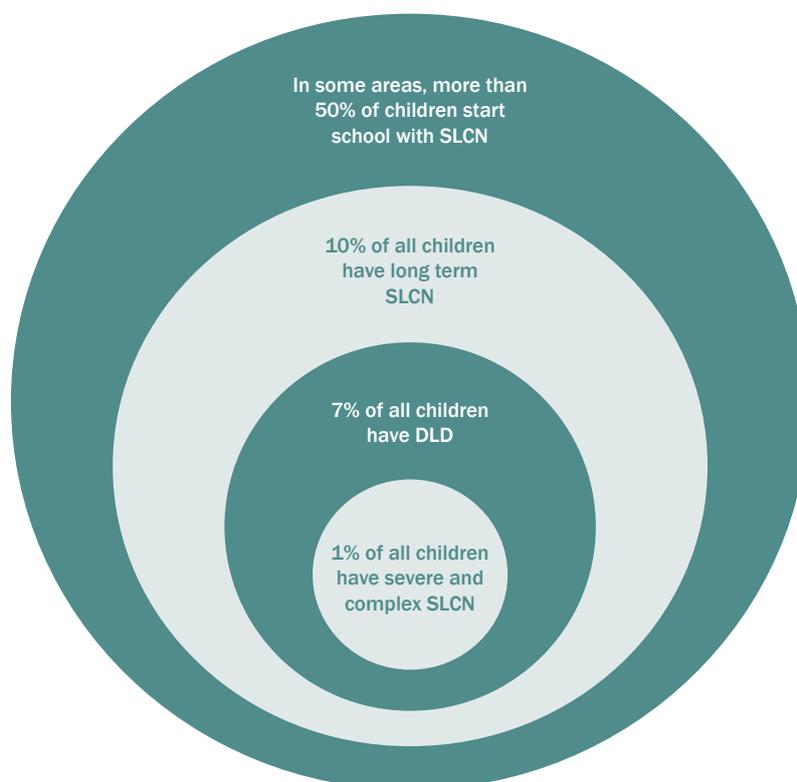


Figure 1.2. The prevalence of speech, language and communication needs in children<sup>19</sup>

18 ICAN, 2009

19 Beard, 2018

20 Broomfield & Dodd, 2004

21 Law *et al*, 2017

22 Bercow, 2018

23 Law *et al*, 2017

## Risk factors for SLCN

No single risk factor predicts the language development of preschool children but there are a range of factors that could potentially influence this development, both positively and negatively.

Individual and family risk factors may include prematurity; persistent hearing difficulties such as glue ear; additional learning needs (ALN); family history of SLCN<sup>24</sup>.

Parental and environmental risk factors may include socio-economic status and exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACES). The Millennium Cohort Study found that 11 year old children from low-income households performed considerably lower on language development measures than those from higher-income households. Nearly half (46%) of children from low income households were placed in the bottom quartile, compared with 24% of those from higher-income households<sup>25</sup>.

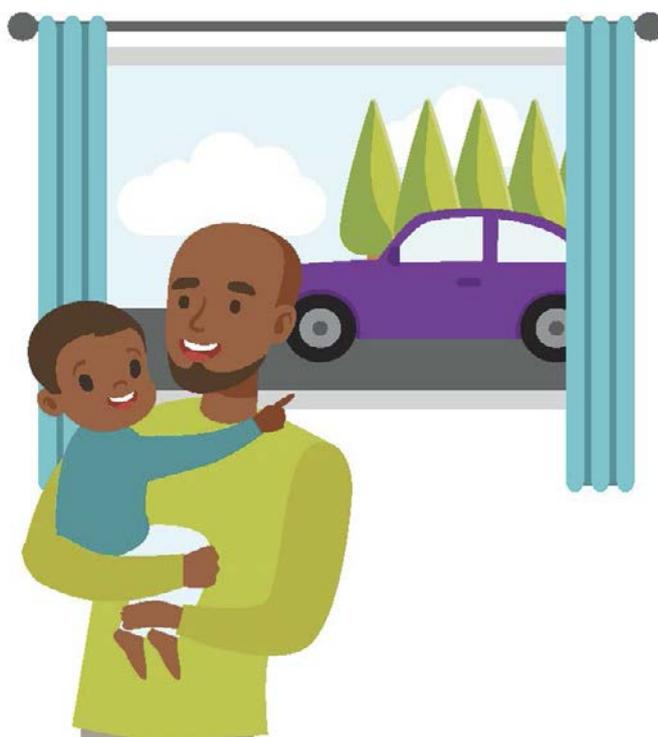
Preventative factors have been found to include responsive parenting, daily book reading opportunities and quality childcare<sup>26</sup>.

## Bilingualism<sup>27</sup>

The population of Wales is made of up a diverse range of cultures and languages. In 2020, 7.7% of pupils aged 11 years and under had a language other than English or Welsh as their first language with over 100 different languages reported.

The RCSLT states that bilingualism does not cause communication disorders and can potentially result in cognitive, social and economic benefits<sup>28</sup>.

The SLC delivery plan is designed to support children and families with their home language (which may be neither English nor Welsh) to ensure it is fully inclusive.



<sup>24</sup> Harrison & McLeod, 2010

<sup>25</sup> Save the Children, 2017

<sup>26</sup> Roulstone *et al* 2011

<sup>27</sup> See glossary for definitions of bilingualism

<sup>28</sup> Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists Wales, 2014

## Strategic Context

'Talk with Me' is the Welsh Government's 2 year cross-policy delivery plan to improve speech, language and communication support for children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months. It aims to increase awareness that SLC is 'everybody's business', with families, childcare settings and communities playing an important role in supporting children's development.

The SLC delivery plan sits within the context of a wide range of cross cutting strategies and pieces of legislation. Some examples are summarised below:

### **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** <sup>29</sup>

In 2011 Wales became the first country in the UK to incorporate children's rights into domestic law with the introduction of the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 (the Measure).

Section 1 of the Measure places a duty upon the Welsh Ministers to have due regard to the UNCRC and optional protocols when exercising any of their functions.

The Children's Rights Scheme 2014 sets out the arrangements that we have in place, or propose to make, to comply with this duty and reflects our on-going commitment to children's rights.

In keeping with these principles, the primary aim of the SLC delivery plan is to ensure that all young people are given the opportunity to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances.

### **Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**<sup>30</sup>

The Act sets out the need for a long-term focus, and five 'ways of working' to guide the Welsh public services in delivering for people. The SLC delivery plan will ensure it follows the principles in the Act such as thinking about the long-term, working with communities and each other, looking to prevent problems and taking a joined-up approach.

### **Prosperity for All**<sup>31</sup>

The Welsh Government's national strategy highlighted the early years as one of five priority areas which have the greatest potential contribution to long-term prosperity and well-being.

### **A Healthier Wales**<sup>32</sup>

In 2018, the Welsh Government published 'A Healthier Wales: Our Plan for Health and Social Care'. The plan sets out the long-term vision of a 'whole system approach to health and social care', focused on health and well-being, and on prevention. In order to realise this vision 'A Healthier Wales' is shaped around the 'Quadruple Aim', which describe four themes that help develop a shared understanding of how the whole system approach should develop and how change will be prioritised (Figure 1.3). The objectives within the SLC delivery plan will be aligned with the Quadruple aim, with a focus on transforming SLC services through whole system planning and implementation.

### **Allied Health Professions Framework for Wales Looking Forward Together (2020)**<sup>33</sup>

The vision highlighted in 'A Healthier Wales' aligns with the values, expertise and interventions of registered Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) and their skilled support staff. The AHP Framework uses the Quadruple Aim to describe the changes required based on these principles in order to guide AHPs working in partnership with citizens to achieve longer, healthier and happier lives.

### **Prudent Healthcare**<sup>34</sup>

The actions that will be delivered through the SLC delivery plan support the principles of prudent healthcare with its focus on integrated, person centred care.

<sup>29</sup> United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

<sup>30</sup> Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015

<sup>31</sup> Prosperity for All, 2017

<sup>32</sup> A Healthier Wales, 2019

<sup>33</sup> Allied Health Professions Framework for Wales Looking Forward Together, 2020

<sup>34</sup> Prudent Healthcare, 2016



Figure 1.3. Quadruple Aim, A Healthier Wales, 2019

**UK Allied Health Professions Public Health Strategic Framework (2019)<sup>35</sup>**

The aims highlighted in ‘A Healthier Wales’ and the ‘AHP framework for Wales’ are further expanded in the AHP Public Health Strategic Framework. Each of the objectives within the delivery plan can be closely aligned with the model described in this framework (Figure 1.4).

**Cymraeg 2050**

There are clear and important links between SLC and the vision set out in Cymraeg 2050<sup>36</sup> – the Welsh Government’s Welsh language strategy. Around a quarter of children in Wales are currently in Welsh-medium-education and the aim is to increase that number over the coming years. Welsh Government also want to transform how Welsh is taught to all learners in order that at least 70% of those learners report by 2050 that they can speak Welsh by the time they leave school. Supporting SLC development must therefore be fully aligned with these aims. As well as specific actions related to the development of Welsh language skills, the Cymraeg 2050 agenda will be embedded into the development and implementation of all aspects of the delivery plan.

<sup>35</sup> UK Allied Health Professions Public Health Strategic Framework, 2019

<sup>36</sup> Welsh Language Strategy

## Flying Start<sup>37</sup> and Families First<sup>38</sup>

Flying Start is the Welsh Government's targeted Early Years programme for families with children under 4 years of age living in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Wales. The Families First programme promotes greater multi-agency working to ensure families receive joined-up support when they need it by placing an emphasis on early intervention, prevention, and providing support for whole families. Whilst this delivery plan is for all children in Wales, it is set in the context of the current provisions within Families First and Flying Start and should therefore be read in conjunction with the Welsh Government guidance relating to Flying Start and Families First, specifically the 'Flying Start Annex, Guidance on Speech Language and Communication'<sup>39</sup>

## Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act, 2018 (ALNET)<sup>40</sup>

This delivery plan aligns with the principles of the ALNET Act and covers the age range 0 to 25 years while retaining a focus on the early years. While the focus of this delivery plan is the strengthening of universal, population and targeted SLC provision; improvements in those areas will mean earlier and more accurate identification of children with additional learning needs (ALN). Actions in the delivery plan to upskill the workforce will also allow for specialist resources to be reserved for children with persistent SLCN or ALN.

## Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act, 2020 (ADRP)<sup>41</sup>

The Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020 abolishes the common law defence of reasonable punishment in relation to corporal punishment of a child taking place in Wales. The delivery plan includes actions to promote positive parenting and on raising awareness of the links between SLCN and challenging behaviour.

Adapted from UK Allied Health Professions Public Health Strategic Framework (2019)

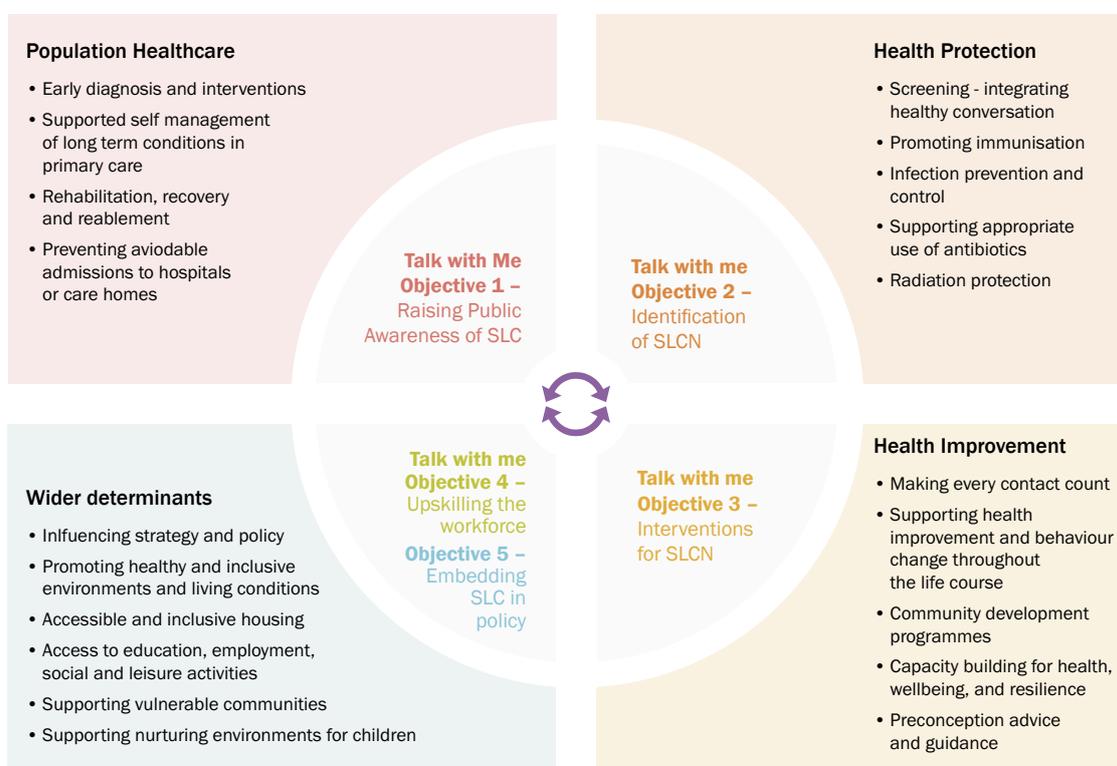


Figure 1.4 Model of Public Health for AHPs

37 Flying Start

38 Families First

39 Welsh Government, 2015

40 Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act, 2018

41 Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act, 2020

## Covid-19

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges to children, families and the services that support them. Covid-19 has undoubtedly had a detrimental impact on children and families, particularly those living in the most deprived and disadvantaged communities, where services have had to be withdrawn or paused as a result of the pandemic. For children and families living in these communities, this means they are likely to be doubly disadvantaged in comparison to their peers. Babies in lockdown (2020)<sup>42</sup> report suggests three key findings from its survey

- COVID-19 has affected parents, babies and the services that support them in diverse ways
- Families already at risk of poorer outcomes have suffered the most
- The pandemic will cast a long shadow

In March 2020 the Welsh Government issued emergency guidance to Families First and Flying Start services to support the appropriate delivery of these programmes during the COVID-19 outbreak period. The guidance emphasised the need to deliver services in a way that was consistent with the expert scientific advice being provided by the Welsh Government.

Services adapted quickly to delivering support during the restrictions through the adoption of digital and virtual technologies which has allowed families to access support remotely. However, there is increasing concern regarding families who are unable to access these services due to 'digital exclusion' i.e. lack of access to technology, poor internet connectivity, motivation or lack of digital skills

The SLC delivery plan has therefore been adapted to align with the current innovative practices which are being implemented whilst considering the implications of these upon the most disadvantaged communities.

The Covid-19 pandemic is a constantly evolving situation and all recommendations and actions within the SLC delivery plan will be carried out in accordance with Welsh Government and Public Health Wales regulations.



42 Babies in Lockdown: listening to parents to build back better, 2020

## The way forward in Wales

The Welsh Government continues to work constructively with the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) in Wales to raise the profile of SLC in the early years and put in place measures to remove the barriers which prevent younger children from progressing with early language acquisition.

The RCSLT highlighted the need to take a fresh look at the way in which SLC support is offered and delivered across Wales to ensure that services are equitable and reach all children who may need help.

The Welsh Government recognises the importance of a child's development in the early years. This includes acquisition of speech and language skills and oracy which underpin their ability to learn to read and write and to problem-solve. This development is strongly associated with a child's success in school and entry into the workforce<sup>43</sup>.

Any child, irrespective of where they live or their family circumstances, might require additional support to address delays or difficulties with SLC. Our aim is to ensure that children throughout Wales have access to high quality, universal, population, targeted and specialised support in the early years, if required, to develop their SLC skills.

To progress this, Welsh Government are exploring how the learning from the Speech and Language Therapy services within Flying Start and generic provision can be embedded more widely.

This delivery plan aims to drive improvement in the way children in Wales are supported to develop their SLC skills. It has been developed in consultation with the RCSLT and the Early Years Public Health Clinical Excellence Network (CEN) which has helped identify the actions that need to be taken over the coming years.

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

It is recognised through commissioned research<sup>44</sup> that Wales does not need to invent a new model for delivery. Instead, there needs to be a more strategic approach to achieve the objectives across Wales.

The necessary programme governance will be put in place to ensure that all partners discharge their responsibilities in delivering the commitments in this plan. Regular progress updates will be provided to all Ministers to ensure this important work remains firmly in the spotlight.



<sup>43</sup> EIF.ORG.UK

<sup>44</sup> Study to map the current educational provision of speech, language and communication support in Wales, for learners aged 0-25

## Consultation Process

All those whose work and responsibilities have an impact, either directly or indirectly, on SLC development were invited to contribute to the consultation and identify any actions needed to further raise the profile of SLC. All key stakeholders (education, health, social policy etc.) were encouraged to collaborate in order to agree the objectives.

Consultation<sup>45</sup> on the delivery plan took place through two methods 1: Two regional stakeholder workshops in Llandudno and Swansea during March 2020; 2: An online consultation between 30th January 2020 and 23rd April 2020.

A total of 158 responses were received: 107 from individuals participating in the stakeholder workshops and 51 responses to the online consultation.

Analysis of these responses enabled the delivery plan to be adapted and developed with a focus on actions and commitments required of all key partners to ensure children and young people with SLC needs receive appropriate support in order to fulfil their potential.



<sup>45</sup> People and Work - Summary of the consultation report

## The delivery plan

This delivery plan is based upon Prudent Healthcare<sup>46</sup> and follows a tiered model to ensure children and families receive the right support by the right person at the right time and place<sup>47</sup>. Having Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) integrated into teams at universal, population and targeted levels<sup>48</sup> allows a graduated response to level of need and reduces the risk of unmanageable demand on specialised Speech and Language Therapy services.

### Aims of the plan

- To support children and families at universal, population and targeted<sup>49</sup> levels therefore reducing the demand on specialised services whilst also referring children who need these at the appropriate times.
- To make it 'everyone's business' to identify and support children's SLC development.

### What is the timeframe for the plan?

- The plan is scheduled to run until March 2022.

### Who the plan is for?

- Families with children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months
- All children irrespective of where they live (not just Flying Start areas)
- All members of the workforce working with children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months and their families.

### Who the plan is NOT specifically for?

- Children over the age of 4 years 11 months.
- Children with ALN such as hearing or sight loss, disabilities or ASD. These children will be supported under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (ALNET).
- Children with persistent SLCN such as DLD or stammering who are already known to relevant specialist services.

However, many of the objectives, actions and outcomes will benefit these groups of children.

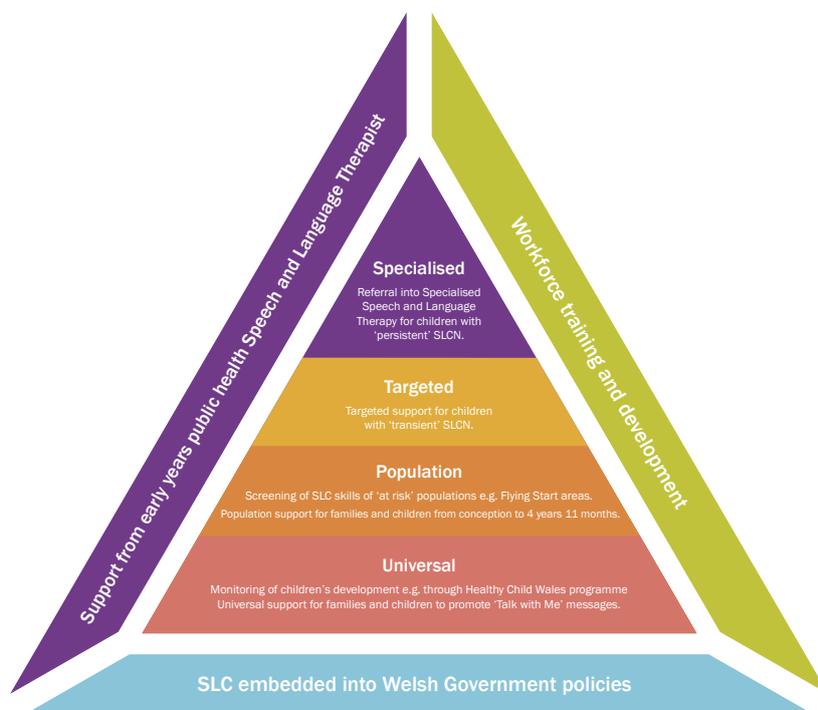


Figure 1.5 Tiered model of provision

46 Prudent Healthcare, 2016

47 Law *et al*, 2013

48 See Glossary for definitions

49 See Glossary for definitions

## 5 key objectives:

The delivery plan incorporates 5 objectives each with an overall intended outcome, as follows:

**Objective 1: Raise Public Awareness:** describes how we will reach parents and carers with our key messages about the importance of talking, engaging and playing with babies and young children.

**Objective 2: Improve the identification of SLCN in children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months:** describes how we will standardise the assessment process and identify SLC issues early.

**Objective 3: Provide evidence-based interventions:** ensure timely, evidence-based interventions are implemented for children with identified needs.

**Objective 4: Upskill the childcare, health and social care workforce in Wales to address SLC needs:** describes how the childcare workforce will be highly trained and equipped with the skills to support interventions for children and families where there are identified needs in the development of SLC.

**Objective 5: Embed SLC in Welsh Government policies:** describes how we will review our policies and strategies to ensure they highlight the importance of SLC in the early years and beyond.

### Objective 1: Raise Public Awareness

Supporting parents to foster a 'communication rich' home environment is fundamental to supporting children's early SLC development. The Effective Provision of Preschool Education Project stated that 'For all children, the quality of the home learning environment is more important for intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education or income'<sup>50</sup>. A national campaign will be developed to ensure a consistent brand is used throughout the whole of Wales.

The campaign will utilise a variety of mediums, both digital and more traditional methods such as posters and leaflets. Images used will be inclusive and bilingual with a focus on accessibility for all. The resources will be evidence-based and co-produced with Public Health professionals, Speech and Language Therapists, Early Years Practitioners and families. A training package for professionals will be developed which will focus on a 'Making Every Contact Count' approach to support them to help parents make positive changes during their existing interactions<sup>51</sup>.

The campaign will raise awareness of patterns of normal development, with a focus on stages not ages, when to be concerned and what to do when concerned utilising a graduated response to support services at universal, population and targeted levels.

### Objective 2: Improve the identification of SLCN in children

The process of screening children's language skills to identify those with SLCN has been widely debated. A systematic literature review concluded that there is insufficient evidence to recommend one off screening at a whole population level, as it is not financially efficient or necessary<sup>52</sup>. Research also suggests that screening purely for language delay is insufficient, as late talking is not a reliable indicator of persistent language difficulties<sup>53</sup>. However, assessing 'vulnerable' populations as part of a tiered or systematic screening programme may be a more cost-effective way to identify risk factors which can then be the focus of the intervention<sup>54</sup>.

No methods currently exist to reliably identify children who are likely to have persistent language needs<sup>55</sup>. Two systematic literature reviews have found no current standardised list of risk factors for SLCN available to allied health professionals (AHPs) despite a wide scope of studies<sup>56</sup>. WellComm Early Years<sup>57</sup> is a published screening tool completed by early-years practitioners utilising a combination of observation, direct assessment and parental or carer report. It is one of the tools currently recommended in the Flying Start SLC guidance to identify SLCN in preschool children<sup>58</sup> and is widely used across Flying Start settings.

The SLC delivery plan will review the evidence for screening and develop a clear pathway for identification of children with SLCN for all those working with children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months, including parents and carers, AHPs, General Practitioners, Health Visitors, Paediatricians as well as Childcare Practitioners, Childminders and Early Years Practitioners. The pathway will consider how identification would take place for children with ALN and for bilingual families.

50 Sylva *et al*, 2004

51 MECC, 2020

52 Law *et al*, 1998

53 Reilly *et al*, 2014

54 Pickstone, 2006

55 Law *et al*, 2017

56 Gurgel *et al*, 2014; Wallace *et al* 2015

57 Hurd & McQueen, 2010

58 Welsh Government, 2015

## Objective 3: Provide evidence-based interventions

Children and families need accessible, appropriate services to support them, across the age range and spectrum of need. The Bercow report (2008) states that this requires a broad and varied continuum of universal, population, targeted and specialised services, delivered by an appropriately skilled and supported workforce<sup>59</sup>.

The SLC delivery plan aims to develop a clear, graduated, evidence-based pathway from identification, to intervention, to transition to specialised services. The delivery plan is designed to be integrated with the All Wales Early Language Pathway for specialist Speech and Language Therapy services but is not designed to duplicate services offered at a specialised level.

## Objective 4: Upskill the workforce

The Education Endowment Fund's (EEF) report states that 'all professionals need to be aware of how to identify early language delays and confident about what they can do to enhance language skills'<sup>60</sup>. The EEF early years toolkit demonstrates that the use of 'communication and language approaches' in early years education result in a high impact for a very low cost<sup>61</sup>.

The early years workforce is diverse and includes practitioners from health, education and social services. The SLC delivery plan aims to develop a training pathway that enables practitioners to identify their personal training needs and empowers staff to access training to promote SLC skills and identify those needing early access to intervention.

## Objective 5: Embed SLC in Welsh Government policies

It is acknowledged that SLC skills do not develop in isolation but are a key component of health, education and wellbeing throughout the whole life course. For example, the delivery plan incorporates action points for joint working between the SLC workforce and those developing the New Curriculum for Wales.

The cross-policy approach adopted in the SLC delivery plan should result in a more joined-up approach to engaging with families, building upon existing policies which in turn should result in affecting change and driving improvements in SLC in the early years and across the whole life course.



59 Bercow, 2008

60 Law *et al*, 2013

61 EEF, 2018

## Objective 1: Raise Public Awareness

**Outcome 1:** Parents and Carers will be better informed and equipped to understand the importance of speech, language and communication (SLC) in their child's early years so that they can provide language rich home learning environments for their children

**Key Action 1:** To promote key messages to parents and carers about the importance of talking, engaging and playing with children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months to support language development.

Activity	Timeline	Lead for Delivery
1.1 The Welsh Government will undertake a national, bilingual publicity campaign to raise awareness of patterns of normal development and strategies to promote SLC.	November 2020 to 2021	Welsh Government: Children and Families Division
1.2 Aneurin Bevan University Health Board will develop and pilot a physical and digital version of the co-produced SLC key messages.	May 2020 to January 2021	Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
1.3 The BBC is delivering its flagship programme Tiny Happy People <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people">www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people</a> over a 5 year period. A number of Welsh Local Authorities have been identified to work with the BBC in the next stage of their development of hyper-local hubs. Further resources will be commissioned by the BBC to reflect the Welsh context.	Official launch July 2020	BBC
1.4 Public Health Wales is producing a suite of parental information resources with a view to replacing Bump, Baby and Beyond. We will seek to ensure that SLC awareness will be part of the new resources.	Review December 2020	Public Health Wales
1.5 Welsh Government launched a pilot for 'Baby Bundles' in Swansea Bay UHB in September 2020 providing a bundle of resources to new parents. The pilot is being evaluated and if a decision is made to roll it out, we will ensure that SLC awareness will be included in the resources.	March 2021	Welsh Government: Childcare, Play and the Early Years
1.6 The Early Years Public Health CEN for SLTs will continue to work with Public Health Wales to ensure that an evidence based approach to SLC is considered in their 'First 1000 Days' initiative.	March 2022	Public Health Wales
1.7 The Healthy Child Wales Programme (HCWP) has a specific focus on SLC at the 15 month health visitor family health review. As part of the proposed expansion of the HCWP, opportunities to incorporate SLC will be considered.	Review March 2021	Welsh Government: Population Health

## Objective 1: Raise Public Awareness

Activity	Timeline	Lead for Delivery
1.8 Whilst Cymraeg for Kids messages regarding Welsh language development are shared with parents and prospective parents through a number of methods, we recognise that there is an opportunity to develop these messages and tailor them to the needs of different audiences. We will consider how these messages can be strengthened over the coming year so that families understand their role in developing their child's Welsh language skills, as well as the support available to them.	By the end of the financial year 2020 to 21 (March 2021)	Welsh Government : Welsh Language
1.9 The Welsh Government's Parenting Give it Time (PGiT) campaign will include SLC within its overall communications approach and help disseminate key messages.	Review March 2021	Welsh Government: Children and Families Division
1.10 Continued delivery of the Time to Talk, Play and Listen campaign which encourages parents, carers and guardians to take time to talk, play and listen to their children to help their language development and communication skills (targeted at 3 to 7 year olds).	Review March 2021	Welsh Government : Education
Each outcome under this objective will be subject to baseline and change measurement. The impact will be monitored and evaluated.	Review March 2021	Welsh Government: Children and Families Division



**Objective 2: Improve the identification of SLCN in children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months**

**Outcome 2:** We will identify early signs of SLCN by standardising the identification process for children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months. This will ensure children are signposted to the right person, in the right place, at the right time.

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

Activity	Timeline	Lead for Delivery
2.1 The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) and Early Years Public Health CEN working with the Welsh Government, will review early language screening tools including WellComm, as well as reviewing the evidence for screening within different populations.	From April 2020	RCSLT Early Years Public Health CEN
2.2 To ensure there is consistency in the identification of children’s SLC needs, following the review of WellComm, any decision to either continue with WellComm or introduce a new screening tool will be consulted on with the aim of developing a consistent approach throughout Wales.	Following review at 2.1	Welsh Government : Children and Families Division
2.3 The Multilingualism SLT’s CEN, working with Cardiff Met and Bangor University, will undertake work to develop a screening tool suitable for use in the Welsh language.	Following review at 2.1	Welsh Government: Early Years & Welsh Language Multilingualism SLT’s CEN
Each outcome under this objective will be subject to baseline and change measurement. The impact will be monitored and evaluated.	Review March 2021	Welsh Government: Children and Families Division



**Objective 3: Provide a Summary of Evidence-Based SLC Interventions**

**Outcome 3:** Appropriate, evidence-based SLC interventions will be delivered at the point of need in order to improve SLC skills and reduce the risk of SLCN impacting on children’s development and wellbeing.

**Key Action 3:** To ensure that any necessary interventions are put in place in a timely manner..

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Lead for Delivery</b>
<b>3.1 Universal/ Population:</b>		
3.1a Summarise the available intervention resources that make clear the links between SLC, perinatal mental health and infant mental health.	Review March 2021	Welsh Government : Children and Families Division
3.1b Summarise the available intervention resources that make clear the links between SLC and positive parenting.	Review March 2021	Welsh Government : Children and Families Division
<b>3.2 Targeted:</b>		
3.2a Summarise the evidence on targeted approaches to SLC, available to practitioners in Wales.	Review March 2021	Welsh Government : Children and Families Division
3.2b Develop targeted resources incorporating adult-child interaction (ACI) strategies developed from the universal Talk with Me messages.	From Jan 2021: review March 2021	Early Years Public Health CEN
3.3 Work with academia to identify and evaluate relevant SLC interventions.	To March 2022	Welsh Government : Children and Families Division
Each outcome under this objective will be subject to baseline and change measurement. The impact will be monitored and evaluated.	Review March 2021	Welsh Government: Children and Families Division

**Objective 4: Upskill the childcare, health and social care workforce to address SLC needs**

**Outcome 4:** The childcare, health and social care workforce in Wales will be highly trained and equipped with the skills to support 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 Actions 4:** To ensure the childcare, health and social care workforce in Wales are highly trained and motivated so that SLC support is provided to children at the right time and that interventions are monitored to ensure they are making a positive difference to the child's development.

Activity	Timeline	Lead for Delivery
4.1 A SLC training pathway for practitioners in the childcare workforce has been designed to align with the ALN transformation programme and the SLC Framework. The pathway is intended as a tool that childcare practitioners can use to determine their own training needs. The pathway will be set in the Welsh context and translated into Welsh for implementation across Wales.	March 2021	Welsh Government: Children and Young People
4.2 In December 2017, the Welsh Government published its 10 year Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan. A key action of the plan is to build capacity across the sector and for the importance of SLC to be recognised as one of those core elements within the Early Years sector. SLC content is included in all the qualification levels. Welsh Government have worked with Social Care Wales, Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) and the wider sector to develop a level 4 professional practice qualification in speech, language and communication as part of the suite of new Children's Care Play Learning and Development (CCPLD) qualifications. This is available from September 2020. SLC will be considered in national conversations about the impact of the CCPLD qualifications.	March 2021	Social Care Wales
4.3 The Early Years (EY) Pathfinders will develop a more integrated and joined-up approach for practitioners working with young children and families. This will ensure that identification of children's development needs, including SLC needs, will be identified early on through improved early intervention and access to services.	By March 2021	Welsh Government: Children and Families Division
4.4 Support the Healthy Child Wales Programme (HCWP) workforce to share strategies to promote language development and identify SLCN.	Review March 2021	Welsh Government: Population Health
4.5 It is recognised that specific skills are required for practitioners in Welsh-medium childcare settings. Workforce development will be a key component of any further steps undertaken to strengthen the skills of practitioners supporting children's SLC development in Welsh-language provision.	Review March 2021	Welsh Government : Welsh Language
4.6 Childcare and Play inspectors will be offered annual/ online training in children's early language development, facilitated by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.	Next session to be held in March 2021	Care Inspectorate Wales RCSLT Early Years Public Health CEN

## Objective 4: Upskill the childcare, health and social care workforce to address SLC needs

Activity	Timeline	Lead for Delivery
4.7 The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists to facilitate Estyn inspectors access to training in children's early language development.	Training package to be made available by March 2021	Estyn RCSLT Early Years Public Health CEN
4.8 Social Care professionals and Foster Carers will be offered annual/online training in children's early language development, facilitated by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.	To be delivered in 2021 to 2022	All Wales Heads of Children's Services (AWHOCS) The Fostering Network RCSLT Early Years Public Health CEN
4.9 Staff working for translation services in Wales will be offered annual/ online training in children's early language development, facilitated by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.	Training package to be made available by March 2021	RCSLT Multilingualism SLT's CEN
4.10 An online training package is being developed for the Speech and Language Therapy workforce to help them to be ACE aware and provide advice on working with people whose lives have been affected by ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences).	Review March 2021	Welsh Government: Children and families
4.11 Sharing of best practice for Speech and Language Therapists and Early Language Development Practitioners.	Ongoing	RCSLT Early Years Public Health CEN
4.12 Ensure Speech and Language Therapists working with early years children at universal, population, targeted and specialised levels have access to appropriate evidence-based training or workshops.	By March 2021	Early Years Public Health CEN Wales Early Language Pathway group
4.13 Allied health professionals (AHPs) work with children, young people and their families to help them protect and improve their health and well-being; including speech, language and communication development. The actions contained in the 'Talk With Me' delivery plan will be mapped onto the 'Looking Forward Together' AHP framework for Wales; and to the UK Allied Health Professions Public Health Strategic Framework This will assist in clarifying the focus on universal, population and targeted level provision within the delivery plan.	Review December 2020	Welsh Government: Health
4.14 The actions within the delivery plan will be considered against the evaluation framework developed by the AHP rehabilitation group in Wales. A Results Based Accountability approach will be used to consider how the outcomes of implementing each action within the plan are captured.	Review December 2020	Welsh Government: Health
Each outcome under this objective will be subject to baseline and change measurement. The impact will be monitored and evaluated.	Review March 2021	Welsh Government: Children and Families Division

## Objective 5: Embed SLC in Welsh Government policies

**Outcome 5:** The Welsh Government will ensure that relevant policies and strategies reflect the importance of SLC from the early years and beyond. All future policy initiatives will encompass an aim to support citizens in Wales to address adverse issues around SLC, where they are identified. This will help to spread the message that SLC is ‘everyone’s business’.

**Key Action 5.** As standard practice, the Welsh Government’s policies and strategies will be subject to regular review to ensure, as far as possible, they highlight the importance of SLC in the early years and beyond.

Activity	Timeline	Lead for Delivery
<p>5.1 The Welsh Government is developing an integrated play-based approach to early childhood education and care (ECEC) which will be based on key principles of child development. The aim of the single system is to ensure a consistency and coherency for children, providers and parents and carers.</p> <p>This work is cross-cutting covering provision and workforce and related to actions listed in this document such as enabling practitioners to support children with SLC needs and extending quality principles across all settings.</p>	Review March 2021	Welsh Government : Childcare, Play and the Early Years
<p>5.2 Supporting the development of SLC is essential to realise the four purposes of the new curriculum. Descriptions of learning for early oracy development, including the systematic development of phonological awareness, have been developed as part of the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience. The refined Literacy Framework will provide further detail regarding listening and speaking. Overarching guidance will support settings and schools to develop their curricula and will include information on accessibility and Additional Learning Needs (ALN).</p> <p>To ensure the new curriculum supports the development of SLC and reflects evidence in this area we will consider the needs of younger children who might have early SLCN in the development of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• arrangements before Progression Step 1 in the new curriculum;</li> <li>• new curriculum guidance for funded non-maintained settings; and</li> <li>• materials for education practitioners on child development to support the implementation of the new curriculum.</li> </ul>	Review March 2021	Welsh Government: Education
<p>5.3 As part of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) terms and conditions (under EY 2. Strategic Targets and Outcomes):</p> <p>Ensure that Foundation Phase providers address priorities for the EYPDG when planning and setting targets for early speech and language development.</p>	Review March 2021: PDG Support Plans are currently being reviewed including the targets around SLC. An update will be available in the next reporting period post-publication of Talk With Me Delivery Plan.	Welsh Government: Education
<p>5.4 Welsh Government through our Digital Communities Wales: Digital Confidence, Health and Well-being procured programme and policy will ensure support for parents and carers of preschool children is embedded in our delivery. This will help ensure that parents and carers are able to access relevant SLC key messages and interventions through digital technology.</p>	March 2022	Welsh Government: Digital Inclusion

## Objective 5: Embed SLC in Welsh Government policies

Activity	Timeline	Lead for Delivery
<p>5.5 'Together for mental health' delivery plan will be working with a number of Early Years Transformation pathfinders across Wales to explore how early years services can be delivered in a more integrated and systematic way to ensure children and families get the right help for mental health, at the right time and in the right way.</p>	March 2021	Welsh Government: Children and Families Division
<p>5.6 Working Wales provides employability advice and guidance services to individuals in Wales. The service, which is delivered by Careers Wales and was launched in May 2019, provides one access point to further appropriate employability support, with qualified careers advisors ensuring that individuals are directed to the right place at the right time depending on their needs.</p> <p>Advisers will use an advice and guidance-led enhanced needs assessment of the individual's circumstances and barriers preventing them from progressing to employment, education or training, to enable them to refer the individual to the right support.</p> <p>The Working Wales service holds a wealth of information and links closely with other advisory services that will provide an all-Wales entry point to employability support.</p>	Review March 2021	Welsh Government: Employability and Skills
<p>5.7 The current suite of employability programmes, Traineeships, ReAct, Jobs Growth Wales, Access and the Employability Skills Programme remain in place until March 2021. The Welsh Government is currently reviewing this provision to ensure it meets future demand and need.</p> <p>Jobs Growth Wales supports people into employment. It is responsive to individuals' needs to ensure they receive the right support to enter employment.</p> <p>As part of this support, assistance will be provided to help overcome barriers to participation including essential skills and additional learning needs.</p>	March 2021	Welsh Government : Employability and Skills
<p>5.8 Offender Learning: The Welsh Government funds the education and learning provision and prison libraries in Welsh public sector prisons through a joint Memorandum of Understanding with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). HMPPS are responsible for commissioning all education and learning delivery in Welsh public sector prisons to achieve sustainable employment prospects. The funding supports training in essential skills; WEST is currently operational in HMP Cardiff and HMP Swansea and will be rolled out as an assessment and development tool to all prisons in Wales by the end of 2020. The Welsh Government will be engaging with HMPPS in developing a new curriculum for prisons by summer 2020, as part of the curriculum development consideration will be given to supporting prisoners with speech, language and communication needs. The funds also provide library services in prisons providing resources for offenders to access to further enhance their speech, language and communication skills.</p>	Review March 2021	Welsh Government: Employability and Skills

Objective 5: Embed SLC in Welsh Government policies

Activity	Timeline	Lead for Delivery
<p>5.9 On the 21 May 2019, the Welsh Government published the Female Offending and Youth Justice Blueprints, which were developed jointly with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and Youth Justice Board Cymru; to help identify the additional support required for the delivery of appropriate justice services in Wales.</p> <p>The Blueprints are predicated on the basis of early intervention and prevention; considering how we can further divert people away from crime in the first place, but when people do offend, they are supported in a holistic and rehabilitative way.</p> <p><b>The Blueprints aim:</b></p> <p>To divert women, where appropriate, away from crime and into women-centred, community-based, sustainable support services. Options for trauma-informed services to be explored.</p> <p>To align preventative services offered to children with a joint framework model and shared risk or intervention trigger factors to improve outcomes for children.</p> <p>To Develop effective monitoring of prevention activity to demonstrate impact and to align reporting to Welsh Government, Youth Justice Board and Police and Crime Commissioner.</p> <p>In light of the impact that the COVID-19 outbreak has had on project delivery timescales and resource, a review of current Blueprint priorities has been undertaken to identify and prioritise key areas of work in the short term (up to March 2021).</p> <p>Under the Female Blueprint activity will include progressing the development of the residential women's centre, which was announced on the 5 May 2020, establishing clear referral pathways for vulnerable women in the community, and developing and involvement model to ensure the voices of service users are considered in development of Blueprint activity.</p>	2024	Welsh Government : Crime and Justice
<p>For the Youth Blueprint there are three main areas recommended as priority. These consist of enhancing prevention activity, particularly in view of the potential impact of the current crisis on children's health and well-being; the development of a trauma-informed approach and the development of options on the secure estate in Wales, which meets the needs of children in the justice, welfare and health systems.</p> <p>The overall Blueprint programme is expected to run up to 2024.</p>	Ongoing	Welsh Government : Children and Families Division
<p>5.10 Welsh Government will link with the other UK nations to learn about their models of service delivery and share best practice</p>	Review March 2021	Welsh Government: Children and Families Division

## Conclusion and Next Steps

Investment in SLC through the delivery plan will ensure that children from all backgrounds in Wales have the best start in life and are able to reach their full potential. The delivery plan aims to develop a culture of empowerment to ensure that all those supporting children in the early years have the skills to be able to promote SLC and identify those needing early access to support.

The SLC delivery plan provides an overview of the 5 key objectives and the actions within each of these objectives. An implementation plan is being developed with expert working groups for each of the objectives in order to ensure the actions are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. Each outcome will be evidenced using measurements for each of the actions within it (e.g. 4.1 Number of childcare practitioners in Wales having completed the Welsh version of The Communication Trust online course by March 2021). The implementation plan will be used to baseline current performance and then introduce a more robust data collection mechanism to monitor progress throughout the duration of the delivery plan and beyond. Monitoring of outcomes is integral to ensure that the changes in the child, the family and the environment are recorded and evaluated across the whole of Wales.

The SLC delivery plan will be led and monitored by the Programme board who will provide clear, realistic, evidence-based advice and recommendations to Ministers on how to achieve the ambition and vision set out in the plan.

The SLC delivery plan sets out a clear commitment by the Welsh Government to improve SLC outcomes of children in Wales which must be owned by all key stakeholders including local authorities, health boards and practitioners working in the early years. The case for action is compelling to ensure that the system works in greater partnership and at pace to truly make a difference.

The SLC delivery plan and emerging implementation plan are designed to drive considerable progress in the field of SLC in Wales as we embrace even greater ambition for our children's future development.

## Glossary

**Additional Learning Needs (ALN):** A learner has ALN if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for additional learning provision (ALP).<sup>62</sup>

**Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE):** Describes a broad range of adverse childhood experiences that can be stressful or traumatic events for children and young that significantly affect their health and well-being. These experiences range from suffering verbal, mental, sexual and physical abuse, to being raised in a household where domestic violence, alcohol abuse, parental separation or drug abuse is present.<sup>63</sup>

### Bilingualism Terminology:

- **Bilingualism or multilingualism:** when a child or adult understands or uses two or more languages. A person can be described as bilingual regardless of their level of ability in either language.
- **Home language:** this term describes the language a child hears in their home environment. Within literature the terms mother tongue, first language and language 1 (L1) are also used.
- **Additional language:** this term describes the language a child hears in addition to their home language. Within literature the terms second language and language 2 (L2) are also used.

**Developmental Language Disorder (DLD):** (previously known as Specific Language Impairment or SLI) a persistent type of speech, language and communication need that cannot be explained by an obvious cause.<sup>64</sup>

**Late talker:** children between 18 to 35 months who acquire language at a slower rate than their typically developing peers. These children have limited expressive or receptive vocabulary. This term excludes children with identified neurological, socio-emotional, or sensory difficulties.<sup>65</sup>

### Levels of Provision Terminology:

- **Universal:** Public Health initiatives available to everyone in a specified region with the aim of improving the general public's knowledge of SLC e.g. Healthy Child Wales Programme.
- **Population** (or "targeted-selective"): Public Health campaigns focussed on specific groups within a population, e.g. specific age range, groups at particular risk. Support is offered for a population known to be disadvantaged and at possible risk if the issue is not addressed e.g. Flying Start.
- **Targeted** (or "targeted-indicated"): Approaches tailored for an individual to reduce the risk of a preventable condition. This will address the specific needs of a child or adult who requires more focussed and structured direct intervention e.g. targeted groups for children with identified SLCN.

- **Specialised:** Services for those with specialist needs requiring a greater level of knowledge and skill to diagnose, consider treatment options, deliver intervention and monitor progress. This aims to reduce the impairment and improve the well-being of the child or adult e.g. formal assessment by a SLT in 'core' service<sup>66</sup>.

**Speech, Language and Communication needs (SLCN):** an umbrella term to describe the full range of communication difficulties in children, irrespective of origin or presenting features.<sup>67</sup>

- **Speech** comprises of:

- **Articulation:** the ability to pronounce sounds. This relates to the movements of the articulators; tongue, soft palate, jaws, teeth, lips.
- **Phonology:** the study of speech sounds, their patterns and sequences and the rules that dictate sound combinations to create words.

- **Language** comprises of:

- **Receptive language:** the comprehension of spoken (or written) language, includes an understanding of vocabulary and grammar.
- **Expressive language:** the use of vocabulary, grammar, and morphology using words, signs or symbols.
- **Syntax and Grammar:** the way that words are put together to form phrases and sentences.
- **Morphology:** the study of internal word structure. This includes small changes to words e.g. plural's.
- **Pragmatics:** the study of the social use of language. This includes the capacity to interact effectively, to use the right word in the right place and to take the listener's perspective into consideration when talking.

- **Communication** (sending and receiving messages) comprises of:

- **Verbal communication:** involves communication with spoken words.
- **Non-verbal communication (NVC):** involves communication without words. It includes facial expressions, eye contact, gestures and tone of voice, as well as less obvious messages such as posture and spatial distance between individuals. Babies, young children and many children with speech, language and communication difficulties use NVC to communicate.

<sup>62</sup> Welsh Government, 2020

<sup>63</sup> PHW, 2020

<sup>64</sup> Afasic, 2020

<sup>65</sup> Hawa & Spanoudis, 2013

<sup>66</sup> Enderby & Law, 2019

<sup>67</sup> Bercow, 2008

