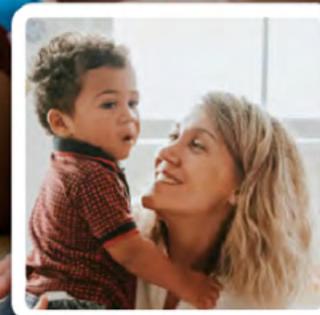


Talk with me

Speech, Language and Communication (SLC): Delivery Plan



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



The Welsh Government wants every child to have the best start in life. Supporting children in their early years makes a real difference to their futures. That includes developing speech, language and communication skills.

These skills are important for wellbeing and learning. Without them, children can face lifelong challenges and inequalities.

About speech, language and communication needs

Most children develop language skills with few problems. They do this through play and spending time with family and other people in their lives. Some children need more support:

Late talkers – Children aged 18 to 35 months who start talking at a slower rate than others their age.

Late language emergence (LLE) – Children who are late to understand and use language skills.

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) – Children who have language difficulties which carry on beyond the age of 4.

This Delivery Plan sets out how we want to support all children to develop these skills.



Writing the plan

We wanted to explore ways to improve the support children get for speech, language and communication. So, we talked to:

- Speech and Language Therapists
- professionals from across childcare, education and health services
- families.

158

people took part.

The ideas and feedback helped us develop this plan.

This plan works with other laws and plans for Wales:

- **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** – This sets out the right of all children to reach their full potential.
- **Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** – This asks services to work together to support children's needs.
- **Prosperity for All** – This has early years as one of its five priority areas.
- **A Healthier Wales** – The plan is a whole system approach to health and wellbeing that focuses on prevention.



About the plan

Our aims:

- We want to make people aware of the importance of speech, language and communication.
- We want to make sure children get the right support quickly, no matter where they live in Wales.

This plan is for:

- families with children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months
- all children across Wales (not just Flying Start areas)
- people who work with children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months.

This plan doesn't cover the specific needs of:

- children aged 5 and over
- children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)
- children with specific speech or language disorders like stammering.

COVID-19

The coronavirus pandemic has brought many challenges for families. Lots of services have been paused, stopped or changed. These changes might affect young children's development. This plan aims to find the best ways to help all children and families.



**This plan has
5 objectives** ↓

1 Raising awareness

We want parents and carers to understand how important it is to talk to and play with their children.

Action

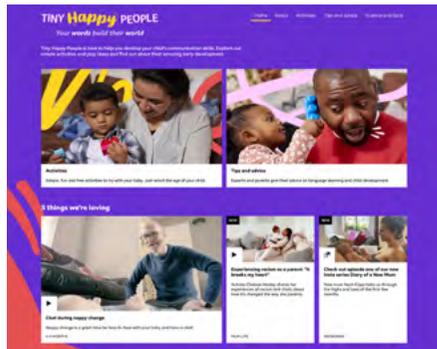
We will promote how important speech, language and communication skills are across Wales.

We will:

- deliver a national awareness raising campaign on how children develop skills at different ages and how we can all help children to learn these skills
- add speech language and communication information to the **Parenting: Give it Time** campaign
- encourage Health Visitors to focus more on language skills at the 15 month health visit
- use the **Time to Talk, Play and Listen** campaign to encourage families to talk, play and listen to their children more
- use **Cymraeg for Kids** to help families develop their child's Welsh language skills
- include speech, language and communication in our new **Baby Bundles**.

We will work with Public Health Wales to include speech, language and communication in:

- the **First 1000 Days** campaign
- all information and resources given to parents.



The BBC has a great 5 year project called **Tiny Happy People** bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people. Several Welsh communities are involved in developing and piloting these resources.



Outcome:

Everyone understands the importance of speech, language and communication for children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months.

2 Improving how we check for speech, language and communication difficulties

Different parts of Wales have different ways of checking for difficulties. Some of them work better than others. We want to look at all the evidence, work with professionals and develop one clear screening pathway across Wales.

Action

We will find the best screening pathway for children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months in Wales.

We will:

- work with the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
- review all early language screening systems used in Wales and other countries
- collect all the evidence and research
- decide on the best system
- make sure it's available in Welsh and English
- make sure everyone follows the pathway when checking for difficulties.

Outcome:

There is one clear screening pathway to check for speech, language and communication needs for children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months across Wales.



3 Using evidence of what works

Speech, language and communication needs can affect other areas like learning or wellbeing unless children get the right help at the right time. Our support systems and programmes must support families based on evidence of what works.

Action

We will make sure the right systems and programmes are in place.

We will:

- look at the links between speech, language and communication development and mental health
- look at evidence around positive parenting
- gather information and research to help us make decisions
- work with universities and professionals to review new approaches
- develop resources that link with the national 'Talk with Me' campaign.



Outcome:

Wales has the right systems in place to support speech, language and communication needs for children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months.

4 Training and developing the workforce

Everyone needs to know how to check for speech, language and communication difficulties and be confident about what they can do to help. Lots of different people work with children in the early years. It's important they have the training they need.

Action

We will make sure the early years workforce get the training they need.

We will:

- set out a new speech, language and communication training pathway for people working with children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months
- work with Social Care Wales to review the impact of the **Level 4 qualification in speech, language and communication**
- connect this plan to the **Looking Forward Together** framework so everyone is working to the same aims
- train and develop the skills of people working in **Welsh-medium early years settings**
- use the **Early Years Pathfinders** to develop the skills of people working with families.
- help the **Healthy Child Wales Programme** workforce to promote language development.

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists and Early Years Public Health Clinical Excellence Network will share best practice and learn from each other.

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists will offer training to:

- Care Inspectorate Wales inspectors and Estyn inspectors
- interpreters and translators
- social care professionals and foster carers.

Outcome:

Everyone working with children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months in Wales will be trained and equipped to support speech, language and communication development.



5 Including these skills in all our policies and plans across Wales

Speech, language and communication is a big part of everyone's wellbeing. All Welsh Government plans and policies need to consider this.

Action

We will review all our plans and policies, as far as possible, and include the importance of speech, language and communication.

We will:

- develop a new play-based approach to learning these skills
- support these skills in the new curriculum
- have guidance for schools and early years settings on supporting language skills
- make sure places getting a **Pupil Development Grant** support speech and language development
- make sure **Working Wales** assess and refer people with speech, language and communication needs
- make sure **Jobs Growth Wales** help people overcome these barriers
- continue to make sure offenders with speech, language and communication needs can access training programmes
- use the evidence from **Female Offending and Youth Justice Blueprints** to step in early and check for speech, language and communication needs
- support families through the **Digital Communities Wales: Digital Confidence, Health and Well-being** programme
- continue to help families through the **Together for Mental Health** delivery plan
- work with England, Scotland and Northern Ireland to share good practice.



Outcome:

All policies and plans in Wales reflect the importance of speech, language and communication skills.

Moving forward

Investing in this plan will help children across Wales to have the best start in life and reach their goals.

A group of professionals on the Programme Board will be checking this plan over the next 2 years. They will give clear advice, recommendations and help with future planning.

Thanks for reading this

You can read the full plan at:

gov.wales/talk-me-speech-language-and-communication-slc-delivery-plan

