



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# Flying Start Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) guidance summary

A summary of what Flying Start practitioners should do to ensure they support SLC development

March 2024



## **Flying Start SLC guidance summary**

This summary document provides an overview of the Flying Start Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) [guidance](#), and is for those who have responsibility for providing services which promote and facilitate SLC development within Flying Start.

### **Core purpose**

The guidance provides the underpinning principles that should be used to develop and deliver Flying Start SLC services to support families and practitioners<sup>1</sup>.

The document is intended to provide guidance on:

- the requirement for and role of Flying Start Speech and Language Therapists
- enhancing practitioners' SLC knowledge, skills, and practice
- identification of children with, or at risk of, SLC needs (SLCN)
- evidence based SLC support at universal, population and targeted levels
- measuring outcomes to demonstrate the impact of SLC support.

### **Speech, language and communication (SLC) evidence base**

**All Flying Start practitioners across all entitlements should understand children's SLC development and be able to provide, or signpost to, appropriate support.**

Language is the unique attribute that defines us as humans. It is the key skill that we use in shaping our understanding of the world and transmitting our culture from generation to generation. Well-developed speech, language and communication skills are fundamental to the ability to form and maintain social relationships with family, peers and friends. These skills are essential for future learning in school.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'practitioner' is used throughout the guidance to mean any member of staff working in any capacity with children accessing Flying Start services, including (but not limited to) those working in Early Childhood Play Learning and Care (ECPLC), Health Visitors, Midwives, Family Support Workers and members of the Early Language Development team.

**SLC interventions delivered in Flying Start should include strategies to promote positive, responsive adult child interaction.**

A key finding in the literature is that living in poverty does not determine long term outcomes. It is the behaviour of the parent and not their background that makes the biggest difference to child outcomes. Parents who are responsive to their children and who use contingent talk (that is, commenting on the child's focus of interest) have children with better developed SLC skills. It is widely recognised in the literature that what parents **do** to foster language development is more important than who they are.

**All families should be made aware of the benefits of bilingualism from birth. Practitioners should actively offer early SLC support in the preferred language(s) of the family.**

Bilingualism refers to a person understanding or using two or more languages. A person is described as bilingual regardless of their level of ability in either language.

Children's SLC skills have an impact on a wide range of outcomes including wellbeing, educational attainment, behaviour, mental health, and employability. See [SLC infographics](#) for further information.

### **Requirement for Speech and Language Therapists (SLT) in Flying Start**

**All Flying Start teams should include a Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) registered SLT.**

The *'review of practice in the implementation of the early language development support element within Flying Start'* stated that 'All local authorities should employ Speech and Language Therapists as part of their core teams'. See sections on the Flying Start SLT's roles and responsibilities in the guidance.

## **Identification of children with, or at risk of, speech language and communication needs (SLCN)**

See section 6 of the guidance document for detailed information on the review of early language screening, and risk and protective factors for early SLCN.

**All practitioners should meet at least the ‘core’ training level on the [SLC training pathway](#).**

The [training pathway](#) is designed to support practitioners to identify and meet the SLC training needs appropriate to their role, with all Flying Start practitioners requiring the core level of training specified in the pathway as a minimum.

**Flying Start SLTs should provide evidence-based training (in line with the All Wales SLC training pathway) and advice to support the identification of SLCN for all Flying Start practitioners.**

SLT’s within Flying Start should provide advice for practitioners and training in line with the All Wales SLC [training pathway](#).

## **Speech, language and communication (SLC) interventions at universal, population and targeted levels**

**SLC interventions in Flying Start should include evidence based strategies to promote responsive interactions.**

See section 7 of the guidance document for detailed information on the roles of practitioners and SLTs in providing SLC interventions at universal, population and targeted levels.

## **Statutory considerations**

See section 8 of the guidance document for information on Additional Learning Needs; antiracism and cultural considerations, and SLCN in children who are looked after.

## **Evaluation and monitoring**

Flying Start SLC outcomes collected by Welsh Government were revised in 2023. See SLC [outcomes](#) and [guidance](#).

## **Resources and references**

See sections 11 and 12 of the guidance document for a glossary and links to relevant resources.