

## Consultation on the review of Youth Justice National Occupational Standards (NOS)

The Communication Trust is delighted to comment on Skills for Justice's proposed amendments to the Youth Justice National Occupational Standards (NOS), which would replace the current standards from both the Youth Justice and Resettlement of Offenders suite.

We warmly welcome the specific mention of speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in the NOS. The Trust has undertaken pioneering work with young people with communication needs in the youth justice sector through Sentence Trouble and its partnership with the Youth Justice Board. Research shows how young people with communication needs are disproportionately represented in the youth justice system, often due to the fact that their needs have not been identified or met<sup>1</sup>.

We are very pleased therefore that SLCN is recognised in both the performance and knowledge and understanding criteria. We would be delighted to work with Skills for Justice further to discuss how we can ensure the workforce is supported to meet these criteria.

Please read below for our comments on the specific standards relevant to The Communication Trust.

### **SFJ EA6 Obtain information from the individual regarding their behaviour (amended version)**

The Communication Trust very much welcome a performance criteria specifically relating to SLCN - this is a very positive step forward, particularly as it is underpinned by two specific areas of knowledge and understanding (K13 and 14). We would be keen to see that these criteria are included in any other NOS which have a particular focus on behaviour, particularly given the intrinsic links between communication and behaviour. We would also like to highlight that it's important that both employers and employees have access to information and training which will enable them to develop knowledge in this area, and that we have some resources which may be useful in this regard.

### **SFJ EA7 Visit families to identify the factors impacting upon problematic behaviour (amended version)**

There is often a cycle of SLCN within families, particularly those within areas of social deprivation, so reflecting communication development as part of performance criteria 15 (15.1 or 15.2) would be useful and appropriate.

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<sup>1</sup> At least 60% of young people who enter the youth justice system have communication needs. Bryan, K and Mackenzie J (2008), *Meeting the Speech, Language and Communication Needs of Vulnerable Young People*.

In P25, it would also be helpful to include being able to identify the communication strengths and needs of the families, as this will impact greatly on working with families.

In terms of knowledge, it would be very useful for there to be specific reference to the prevalence and nature of SLCN in relation to socio-cultural and economic factors.

**SFJ EA8 Assess individuals for the principal types and levels of risk associated with their problematic behaviour (amended version)**

As this relates closely to behaviour, the points of SLCN being a factor and/or trigger of problematic behaviour would be useful to include.

**SFJ EB5 Supervise and enforce interventions in the community**

Where it says ‘communicate at a level and pace appropriate for the individual’ we would like to also see ‘specifically accounting for speech, language and communication needs’ and an associated knowledge standard: knowledge of the varying types of speech, language and communication needs and how to accommodate these.

**SFJ EC8 Support and encourage individuals in addressing their problematic behaviour**

Where it says ‘communicate at a level and pace appropriate for the individual’ we would like to also see ‘specifically accounting for speech, language and communication needs’ and an associated knowledge standard: knowledge of the varying types of speech, language and communication needs and how to accommodate these.

When it says understand physical, social, psychological, emotional and intellectual development of individuals and ways such development can be affected, we would request that this standard also includes ‘communication’.

These standards need to be underpinned by knowledge about behaviour as a mean of communication, as per some of the other behaviour ones. It would be useful to include the exploring SLCN performance criteria in EA6 and that K10 includes taking into account specific SLCN.

**SFJ BB2 Model pro-social behaviour when working with individuals**

For this NOS, we would welcome a much more clear and explicit reference to SLCN. It’s important to reflect that behaviour is a means of communication. Prosocial behaviour relies on good communication skills, so the implications for the many individuals with SLCN on understanding and being able to develop these behaviours are significant. We feel it is essential that this relationship is well understood within the standards for modelling and supporting prosocial behaviour.

We therefore feel it is essential for people to understand:

- the impact of slcn on prosocial behaviour;
- the barriers to developing prosocial behaviours which SLCN can provide;
- effective ways to help people with slcn develop prosocial behaviours ;
- the specific impact of slcn on an individuals' understanding of appropriate/prosocial/antisocial behaviours.

Key areas to achieve this would be:

- including SLCN as a specific factor in P12, or developing an additional standard which specifically relates to SLCN;
- underpinning the section on maintaining effective relationships with a K standard about a clear understanding of the role of SLCN in developing prosocial behaviour;
- for K5, adding as per bullet 2 above.

#### **SFJ BB3 Identify individuals at risk of committing anti social behaviour or offending**

In K5, we feel it would be important to recognise explicitly that SLCN may often be a strong factor which may contribute to problematic behaviour (or in fact that the problematic behaviour is indeed an indicator of SLCN)

#### **SFJ EC9 Address the challenging behaviour of individuals**

These standards are really most effective when underpinned by effective skills in understanding SLCN. Many challenging behaviours may result from or be part of SLCN, so it's essential that this is recognised within these standards. We feel that the performance and knowledge criteria part of EA6 would be most appropriate within this set of standards too. It would also be useful to include communication as one of the factors in P19.

There is particular relevance for K13 where language and communication are crucial in terms of escalation and defusing – so we feel it is highly important that practitioners know how common SLCN are and how significant a feature communication is in these situations, so that practitioners are able to be skillful in the ways in which they manage such situations. A specific knowledge criteria around understanding the role of SLCN in managing challenging behaviours would add great value.

#### **SFJ ED5 Develop intervention plans for individuals which address risk factors and enhance protective factors (amended version)**

K14 - When it says understand physical, social, psychological, emotional and intellectual development of individuals and ways such development can be affected, we would request that this standard also includes 'communication'.

K16 – we very much welcome this standard.

**SFJ ED6 Assist in developing intervention plans for those at risk of offending/ reoffending (amended version)**

K11 - When it says understand physical, social, psychological, emotional and intellectual development of individuals and ways such development can be affected, we would request that this standard also includes 'communication'.

K13, seems to have the SLC segment missing (it's like K16 above).

**SFJ ED9 Monitor and evaluate the impact of interventions for individuals (amended version)**

When it says 'understand physical, social, psychological, emotional and intellectual development of individuals and ways such development can be affected', we would request that this standard also includes 'communication'.

**SFJ GA7 Communicate and engage with children, young people, and their families and carers (amended version)**

This would benefit from the exploring how SLCN is recognised in EA6 – there's a lot assumed but SLCN isn't specifically identified. K8 should read as 'know why it's important to check understanding AND HOW TO DO THIS'. K2 should also include references to strategies as well as styles – better still the EA6 ones about varying types of SLCN and how to accommodate is much better and ways to alter.

**SFJ GB12 Work with families and carers towards addressing individuals' problematic behaviour (amended version)**

Please see response to SFJ EA7

**SFJ GB13 Support families following a death in custody**

We would like to see 'developing communication skills' along with 'social skills' included in P6.

We would be very happy to discuss this response or any of the issues it raises in further detail.

The Communication Trust

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