

Developing Outcomes

Planning should start with the individual and take account of their wishes and aspirations, the outcomes they seek and the support they need to achieve them. It should enable parents, children and young people to have more control over decisions about their support.¹



What does the Code say²?

- There is a strong emphasis on delivering better outcomes for children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- Outcomes should be set for every child and young person on the Special Education Needs (SEN) register, whether they have an Education and Healthcare (EHC) Plan or not.
- Outcomes must be SMART, (i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) which means they should be clear and progress against them can be measured.
- Outcomes should be developed and agreed with parents and the child or young person and be valued by and meaningful to all.
- The Code is also calling for some blurring of boundaries between professionals to enable a shared vision of more holistic outcomes, which look at the child or young person's whole life.

A little more about...

There can be different definitions of what is meant by "outcome" but simply put, an outcome is what is achieved by an individual, or by an intervention or group of interventions. The outcome is the end result of what happens; it is why something is being done. Therefore, describing what is going to happen and how often is not an outcome.

Research snapshot...

Previous research has highlighted the lack of shared vision between stakeholders, with families and students generally playing no role in developing outcomes, and with outcomes selected that hold little interest or importance to the individual.

Work carried out by The Better Communication Research Programme and the Council for Disabled Children in particular, demonstrates that higher-level outcomes prioritised by children, young people and parents were emotional well-being and involvement in community and social life.

Relationships with friends and family were a priority for children and young people, and gaining independence appeared to be a more important outcome for parents. Academic outcomes were valued by parents as a route to economic independence.³



What are the Key Issues for SLCN?

- The nature of Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) for many children and young people may raise issues for ensuring they are effectively involved in developing and evaluating outcomes. These issues and strategies to support them are outlined in more detail in the section on children and young people at the centre.
- Preferred outcomes for professionals, parents, children and young people with SLCN may vary considerably and this may require changes in how settings think about outcomes and targets.
- For parents, often what is most important is an increase in knowledge about, and attitudes towards SLCN of those around their child. Also, parents want their children to develop meaningful communication that increases their ability to be accepted, included and independent. So practitioners need to ensure that outcomes selected are functional, for everyday life.
- In terms of children and young people with SLCN, research literature shows that they generally tended not to identify themselves as someone with SLCN and outcomes around communication were not identified as important to them per se.
- The child or young person's focus was often more on how the environment could support them better through becoming more inclusive, and through a better understanding of their needs.
- Also, due to the nature of some SLCN, children and young people may find it particularly difficult to consider future aspirations apart from in very broad terms.
- Within the process, the child or young person should be involved in deciding what is important for them in their lives and what they would like to improve; it is then important to develop outcomes focusing on equipping them to achieve this.

For example...

Settings may be used to linking targets to attainment e.g. "Sam will be able to count 1 to 10" without needing to factor in why this is important to Sam right now, and how this will be important to him in the future.



What are the Key Strategies for SLCN?

- There may be a need to **think differently about how you decide on outcomes**. The Code of Practice sets out a new way of working in terms of involving children and young people in outcome-setting, and requires a new way of thinking. Outcomes can be arrived at creatively, and no longer need to be tied to educational or developmental objectives.
- It's important for children and young people to be able to see the smaller steps towards **achieving their longer term aspirations** for outcomes. Make sure that it's clear how working on communication skills will help them towards other outcomes.
- **Keep a long-term view**. What are we trying to achieve with the child or young person, and why? Keep a focus on functional life skills for the future, and steps to achieve this.
- Look at ways to **ensure your setting is as communication-supportive and as inclusive as possible**. The knowledge, attitudes and inclusiveness of the environment should be considered when setting goals.
- Children and young people with SLCN are at risk of social and emotional difficulties. **Ensure that emotional needs also receive attention**.
- **Use general good practice** in supporting children and young people with SLCN, such as using visual support, keeping information short and clear, removing distractions, etc.
- **Involve the child or young person as much as possible** in setting his or her own outcomes. This will require settings to consider how best to go about this depending upon the learning level and communication needs of the individual. Therefore the approach needs to be highly individualised (see the section on children and young people at the centre).
- **Draw together information** from what the child or young person has told you (through consultation), or from detailed observation and discussion with people who know them well.

Research snapshot...

"Practitioners working with these children need to consider carefully how any short term targets position a child on the road to eventual independence and social inclusion."⁴

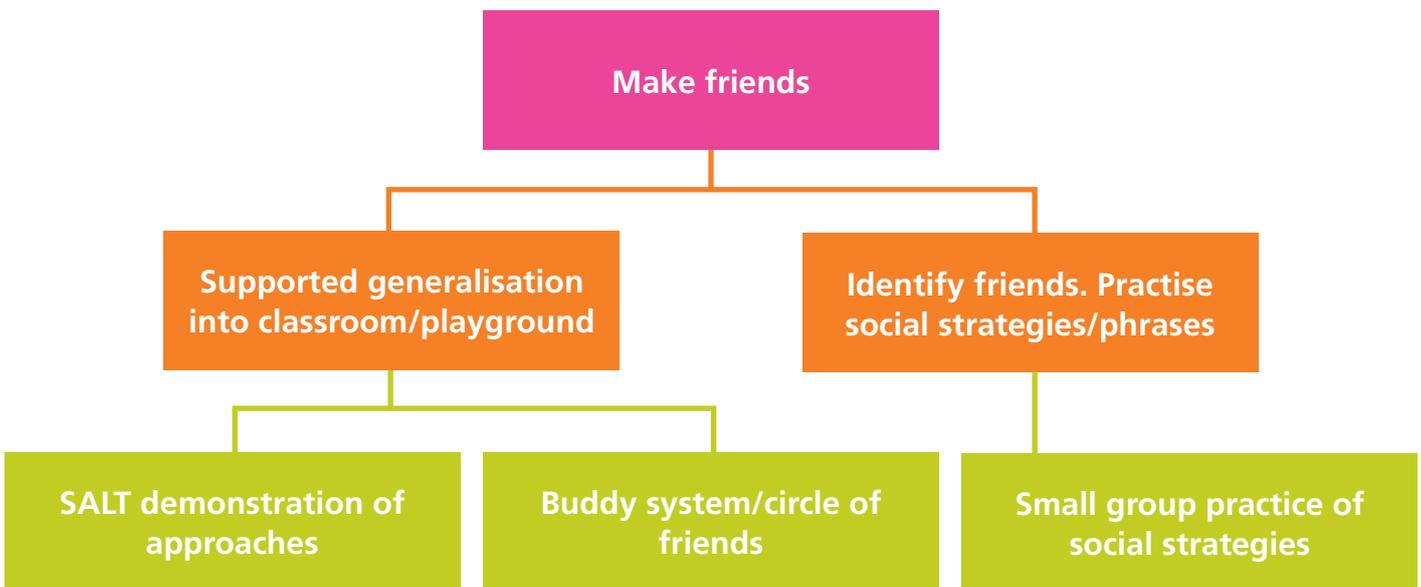
Research snapshot...

The Better Communication Research Programme found that outcomes for children and young people with SLCN valued most were around: time for fun and laughter; feeling supported by those around them; and support with difficult emotions such as sadness and anger. They also valued support with building friendships, and other people monitoring their own behaviour, by not teasing, interrupting or shouting at them.⁵

- **Often it is easier for the child or young person to talk about the present** and what they value now than to talk about future projections. The practitioner can then use this information as clues for putting together relevant outcomes.
- **Check** that the information you have gathered is correct. You could go back with potential outcomes in an accessible format (e.g. using symbols if appropriate) for the child or young person to consider or choose between.
- There may be professional development needs to support developing outcomes for SLCN. A number of additional resources can be found [here](#).

For example...

It could be, for example that a child or young persons' top outcome is to "make more friends", and this then needs all involved professionals to consider together, how this can be best achieved, and what role each should play in working towards this outcome, for example: *see diagram below*



What does success look like?



For the child or young person:

- I have been directly involved, as far as possible, in deciding what is important for me.
- I am motivated by what I am working to achieve.
- I am included and involved in the process.
- My outcomes are useful for me in my life right now and in the future.
- School and home are involved in supporting me in achieving these outcomes.



References



1. SEND Code of practice Section 9.21
2. SEND Code of practice Sections: 9.21 – 9.26
3. SEND Code of practice Section: 8.17
4. Roulstone S & Lindsay G (2012), The perspectives of children and young people who have speech, language and communication needs, and their parents, BCRP
5. Roulstone S & Lindsay G (2012), The preferred outcomes of children with speech, language and communication needs, and their parents BCRP



There is a wide range of other guidance available to help practitioners deliver the Reforms which Communicating the Code seeks to add to rather than duplicate. Follow [this link](#) to find additional resources and support and [this link](#) to see examples of good practice and case studies relating to the Code of Practice.

This document can also be downloaded from our website at www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk
