

Post-16

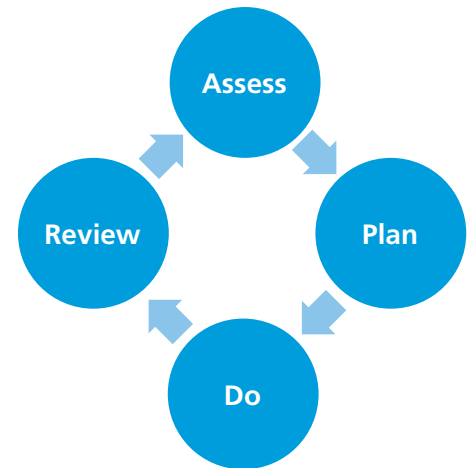
College should be ambitious for young people with SEN.¹

What does the Code say²?



The Code now applies to children and young people aged between 0 and 25 years, and so has implications for the further education (FE) sector.

- When a child or young person is identified as having special educational needs (SEN), settings should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place.
- This SEN support should take the form of a four-part cycle of: assess-plan-do-review. This is known as “the graduated approach” and replaces school action and school action plus, early years action and early years action plus categories. All settings should adopt this approach.
- Provision should be **needs-led**.



The requirements around identifying need at FE level are less detailed than in other phases. Section 7.11 outlines that:

- Some needs may emerge after a student has begun a programme. Teaching staff should work with specialist support to identify where a student may be having difficulty because of SEN.
- However, once a student has been identified as having a learning difficulty or disability that calls for special educational provision, the college must use its best endeavours to put appropriate support in place.
- Young people should be supported to participate in discussions about their aspirations, their needs and the support that they think will help them best.
- Support should be aimed at promoting student independence and enabling the young person to make good progress towards employment and/ or higher education, independent living, good health and participating in the community.
- Chapter 8 of the Code of Practice outlines in more detail requirements relating to transition, including the importance of sharing information well.



What are the Key Issues for SLCN?

- There are substantial challenges for the workforce in terms of: being able to identify SLCN; knowing how to provide optimal universal support for speech, language and communication; as well as being skilful in involving and young people with SLCN and their parents/carers within the graduated approach.
- There may be issues in accessing support from other agencies and services, in terms of identifying and supporting SLCN, as well as in accessing training and continuing professional development (CPD) support.
- Practitioners need to be aware of their own role in identifying and supporting SLCN, and build up confidence in doing this.
- Practitioners and settings need to have skills in evaluating progress and know what good and expected progress looks like for children and young people with SLCN.
- Settings may not be fully aware of what constitutes a positive communication supportive environment, yet this forms the foundation on which to build additional support for children and young people with SLCN.
- There may be a lack of confidence in recognising, planning and delivering appropriate interventions for different SLCN.
- This is a key time for young people with SLCN and research shows often the time things go wrong with transitioning. This may relate to anxiety about the move, as well as support systems that had been in place falling away. In a climate of funding changes also, it is often not clear to schools or families what post- school provision is, and what choices are available.
- The key change from the reforms here is that now young people post 16 can make decisions independent of their family if they so wish. This has implications for practitioners being certain of young people's capacity in this regard.

- From year 9 there should be an increased focus on future plans in annual reviews for young people, and on their aspirations. Yet, talking about the future can be especially difficult for young people with SLCN because in order to do this you need both the language and cognitive skills to conceptualise the future and to formulate ideas. Abstract concepts for young people with SLCN such as “growing up”, “in the future” and “when you’re an adult” are often very difficult to understand because the individual has no experience of these concepts to link the words to.
- It can be challenging for young people with SLCN to acquire skills for work and for life. Their needs can impact on all aspects of learning, social interaction and self-esteem. Good language skills and communication are vital work skills any yet often taken for granted. A focus on supporting young people’s continued communication development is essential in post-16 institutions but few colleges offer specialist support for young people with SLCN. Yet, research points to the positive impact that such support can have on psychosocial³ outcomes and on successful transitions to employment or further training.⁴



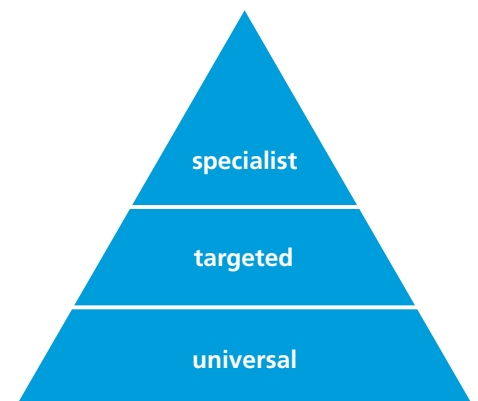
What are the Key Strategies for SLCN?

Describing support for SLCN using the terms 'universal', 'targeted' and 'specialist' has become common over recent years. These terms were used, for example, to identify different evidenced approaches to supporting SLCN as part of the Better Communication Research Programme.⁵ However, how these terms are used or represented in different areas may vary in practice.

Here, when we talk about universal support, we mean the support that should be available to all young people to promote speech, language and communication development; and to enable effective early identification of children who may be struggling.

We use targeted support to describe additional or different support or intervention for **all** young people who are struggling with elements of speech, language and/or communication; this may be individual or group support.

The specialist level includes individualised assessment, intervention and support from specialist practitioners such as speech and language therapists in order for the young person to make progress.



- **It is very important to understand your roles and responsibilities** in relation to identifying and supporting SLCN.
- **Find out what your professional development needs are** and look for ways to gain further professional development in this area. For settings, it's really useful for a **professional development plan that includes communication and SLCN to be in place** *The Speech, Language and Communication Framework (SLCF)* can be used to gauge practitioner knowledge and plan training to meet any gaps.
- **Ensure you're confident about gaining the views of young people with SLCN** and their parents. This is important for setting person-centred outcomes but also often young people are able to say what helps them, and what strategies others should use. See section on children and young people at the centre for things to consider. To enable participation, young people with SLCN require **accessible language** to be used with them and a **sufficient allocation of time** for the process. Time is likely to be required for the young person to process questions in order to formulate a response.

- **Find useful tools and resources to enable you to effectively identify SLCN.** There are a number of useful tools available to do this, for example *Universally Speaking 11-18*. *The Progression Tools* can help with identification but also provide a clear means of monitoring progress. Be aware that young people with SLCN may have become very adept at masking their difficulties, this can be the case especially with difficulties understanding spoken language. Look out for indicators such as waiting for you to rephrase open questions to closed question, and overreliance on others' nonverbal communication to read the situation.
- **Post-16 settings should consider how they support young people with SLCN effectively,** what good practice looks like for them at a universal level, and what support they can offer at a targeted level. This provision should include ongoing staff training around communication skills and knowing how to access specialist support.
- **Develop effective ways of working with other professionals** such as Speech and Language Therapists. Locally, they may also be able to offer useful staff training, or signpost to such training.
- This is a time of change for the individual, so the practitioner's task is to **make concepts around the future more concrete and meaningful** so that they can be understood.
- **Choice-making also needs to be informed.** This is true for a young person at any age, but particularly in the context of future life decisions, and a young person making decisions independently. The young person needs to experience any potential options, preferably a number of times.
- **Helping the young person to prepare for new stages** in their lives is essential for smooth transitions.
- **Sharing information between school, parents and FE provision is key,** particularly information about language levels and communication methods.

For example...

"Growing up" could be illustrated by collecting together photos of the young person at different ages and arranging them on a timeline. The practitioner could talk about different skills acquired at different ages as a way to introduce the concept of future skill development.

For example...

FE settings need to know:

- Any behavioural support or transition systems in place (e.g. "traffic light system", importance of using now/next symbols)
 - Levels of understanding of the student and how to assist with this (e.g. importance of "thinking time", using visual supports)
 - About any augmentative systems that the student uses (use of signing, or symbol communication systems) – and to arrange for staff to be trained prior to the student attending
 - About any alternative communication systems in use (VOCAs, iPads, PECS etc), and how to programme/provide new words, build on a student's use of these, embed into college life and ensure access to these systems.
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- It is good practice for future settings to spend time with the student and staff in the school, meet with parents, and observe what works prior to the transition. Also, schools and post-16 settings who use pen pictures/communication passports can help greatly in sharing salient information on what is important to the young person.
- **Enabling participation remains a key objective at this stage, alongside promoting independence and functional living skills.** Communication skills are integral to success. As with schools, post-16 settings need to consider how they are ensuring young people can participate in decision-making (see [schools](#) information), and participate in setting their own meaningful outcomes. This is true whether the young person has an Education and Healthcare (EHC) plan or not. The setting must demonstrate SEN support provided and its effectiveness in order to remain within funding rules.⁶
- **FE settings may play a key role in preparing a young person for employment.** It is important that young people with SLCN are given the same opportunities as others, but dependent on the individual's needs, they may require personalised support to manage applications, interviews, awareness of different language registers, social language skills and so on.

Research snapshot...

The Better Communication Research Programme (BCRP) found that it was essential to monitor and profile children over time particularly at key transition points (entering school; year 3; year 7; year 10). This is because children's needs change over time, but also the linguistic challenge becomes even greater as a child moves through education.

The curriculum already by year 1 relies almost exclusively on verbal skills, and these demands increase exponentially further up the school.⁸

What does success look like?



This is what success looks like for the practitioner:

- Universal communication practices are in place to benefit all young people.
- We know how to access targeted support and specialist support for our students, and how to use Speech and Language Therapy services effectively to benefit our students with SLCN.
- We use personalised approaches to find out what matters for our students with SLCN, what is going well, what could be better, and to set meaningful targets together.
- Person-centred reviews take place for each young person with SEND in our setting, and lead to positive change for the individual and family.
- We work in partnership with parents, to share skills, information and decide on joint outcomes.
- Our curriculum is person-centred, and we use this to inform our SEN information report.
- We have good transition systems in place, we prepare our students well, and we share information effectively with other settings.
- Choice-making is embedded within our daily practice.
- We have a programme in place for ongoing workforce development.



References



1. SEND Code of Practice section 7.4
2. SEND Code of practice section 6.44, 7.11, 7.13, 8.27
3. Ansorge L (2009) *Life Outcomes in adults with childhood histories of severe and complex communication difficulties who attended a special residential school*: Unpubl PhD Sheffield Uni
4. Dawn House *transition case study* at <http://www.transitionsupportprogramme.org.uk>
5. J Law, W Lee, S Roulstone, Y Wren, B Zeng & G Lindsay (2012), *“What works”; Interventions for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs*; Better Communication Research Programme, p21
6. SEND Code of Practice chapter 7: 7.25-7.26



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
