The Communication Trust
Every child understood

A Professional Development Video:
Talking to parents about their child's speech, language and communication

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice highlights the importance of parental and family involvement for children with SEND.

Practitioners have a responsibility to identify where they notice that a child or young person's speech, language and communication skills are not developing as expected for their age and parents should be central to the identification and assessment process.

Remember to consider:

Preparation

- ❑ Have you talked to the child's parents before about their child's speech, language and communication development? Remember what those conversations consisted of and build on these when you are discussing your concerns in this area
- ❑ Set aside some time and a space to have your conversation – try to find somewhere with minimal distractions
- ❑ Gather your paperwork – these might be your observation notes, videos, photos, voice recordings or examples of the child's work
- ❑ Revise what you know about the child's home life and family situation – consider the child as a whole, and be mindful of the context in which you're having your conversation
- ❑ Plan for how you would like the conversation to go – what is your end goal? Do you have some advice or information that you can share about next steps?

notes

During the conversation

notes

- ❑ Begin on a positive note, sharing positive examples of how the child or young person has used their speech, language and communication strengths
- ❑ Ask the parents how they feel their child's speech, language and communication skills are progressing. Try questions like, *'do you notice that he can be difficult to understand at home?* Or *'have you noticed that she sometimes finds it difficult to follow instructions that you give her?*
- ❑ Be honest about your concerns. Explain clearly why you wanted to meet and use the evidence that you have gathered to share your concerns
- ❑ Use questions to bring parents in to the conversation, making it clear that their opinion, as the person who knows the child or young person the best, is all part of building the picture of their child's strengths and difficulties
- ❑ Some challenges that you may face during your conversation might include: parents becoming defensive, parents not understanding due to their own language or learning needs, parents not understanding the importance of speech, language and communication or cultural differences, to name a few. Be prepared for these possible challenges that you may come across in your conversation

Next steps

notes

- ❑ Be solution focused. Try to develop action points with parents and begin your 'asses-plan-do-review' response, involving parents every step of the way
- ❑ Be aware of your professional boundaries - there will be some actions that you can take forward yourself, and others that may require different or more specialist expertise
- ❑ Signpost parents to other sources of information – often there are national and local sources of support that parents may be able to draw on
- ❑ Jointly agree the next steps with parents, making sure that they are practical and achievable. Often working towards small steps as part of a longer term goal is more helpful in ensuring that goals are achievable and that progress is made