



PARENT TOOLKIT

Speech, Language and Communication



Children with speech, language, or communication needs (SLCN) may find it hard to understand language, express themselves, use clear speech sounds, or navigate social communication. With the right support and a communication-rich environment, children can make strong progress. This toolkit gives you practical strategies and points you towards helpful organisations and services.

Understanding Speech & Language Needs

SLCN can include:

- Delayed or limited vocabulary
- Difficulty forming or linking sounds
- Trouble understanding instructions
- Challenges organising sentences
- Stammering or fluency differences
- Social communication difficulties
- Language differences linked to neurodiversity

These are **developmental differences**, not caused by parenting. Every child develops at their own pace.

Supporting Your Child at Home

Supporting Understanding (Receptive Language)

- Give **short, simple instructions** and support with gestures or visuals.
- Break tasks into **first–then** steps.
- Offer choices using pictures, objects, or pointing.
- Ask your child to “show you” to check understanding rather than asking them verbally.

Supporting Talking (Expressive Language)

- Comment on what your child is doing instead of asking lots of questions.
- Add one extra word to what they say (“big ball,” “more juice”).
- Model correct language naturally instead of correcting mistakes.
- Use everyday routines to build language (cooking, shopping, bath time).

Play-Based Communication

- Follow your child’s lead — join in their play rather than directing it.
- Use pretend play to encourage longer sentences (“Teddy is sleeping,” “Teddy wants juice”).
- Repeat words and phrases often; repetition helps learning.

Supporting Speech Sounds

- Stay focused on communication, not perfection.
- Repeat the word back clearly (“Yes, it’s a *cat*”).

- Keep the tone relaxed so your child feels confident practising

Supporting Social Communication

- Play simple turn-taking games.
- Use role-play for greetings, asking for help, or sharing.
- Narrate emotions: “You look frustrated — you wanted another turn.”

Supporting Confidence & Emotional Wellbeing

Children with SLCN may feel anxious about speaking.

Support them by:

- Praising effort: “I love how you tried to tell me that.”
- Giving extra time to respond — slow conversations help processing.
- Accepting all forms of communication (gestures, pointing, visuals).
- Avoiding pressure to repeat or “say it properly.”
- Celebrating progress, no matter how small.

Working with Schools

You can ask the school for:

- Support from the SENCO
- Language-rich classroom strategies
- Visual timetables and “now and next” boards
- Extra processing time and simplified instructions

- Small-group language sessions
- Access to a Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) via the school

Accessing Speech & Language Therapy

Speech and Language Therapists (SALTs) can be accessed through:

- Local health services
- Schools or early years settings
- GP referral routes
- Private therapists (ensure they are **HCPC-registered**)

Therapists may offer:

- Assessment
- Parent workshops
- Targeted therapy
- Home practice programmes

Consistency between home, school, and therapy sessions makes the biggest difference.

Useful Tools & Approaches

- **Widgit Symbols** for visual support
- **Makaton** signing for communication and language development
- **Talking Mats** for supporting choices and emotional understanding

- **NELI (Nuffield Early Language Intervention)** and **WellComm** screening tools used in many early years settings
- Speech and language apps such as **Splingo**, **Speech Blubs**, or **Articulation Station**
- Simple voice recording and playback apps for practising sounds and sentences

Helpful Organisations & Charities

I CAN (Children's Communication Charity)

Provides advice, resources, and a phone line for families.

ican.org.uk

AFASIC

Supports parents of children with speech and language difficulties, offering groups, information, and helplines.

afasic.org.uk

The Communication Trust

Offers guidance on language development, milestones, and SLCN support.

thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

National Autistic Society

Resources and guidance for children with social communication needs or autism.

autism.org.uk

The Makaton Charity

Training, resources, and information on signing to support speech and understanding.

makaton.org

Recommended Books & Guides

- *Small Talk* – Nicola Lathey & Tracey Blake
- *It Takes Two to Talk* – The Hanen Centre
- *The Early Communication Handbook* – Anna Stacey
- *Time to Talk* – Speechmark Publishing

Children with speech and language needs learn best when communication feels relaxed, supported, and meaningful. With the right tools, patient modelling, and strong collaboration between home, school, and therapists, they can grow into confident communicators who feel listened to and understood.

You are a central part of that journey — and you're doing brilliantly.