

Essex County Council

Early Years and Childcare

Guidance to support analysis of the Early Years Practitioner SLC Confidence Questionnaire

This guidance document has been compiled to aid your analysis of your team's responses and lead to the development of an action plan outlining the areas for further development.

1. Define the following terms:

The expected response should contain this key information:

- Define Speech: Speech is how sounds are combined to form words
- Define Language: Language is about words and how words are combined to form sentences for us to understand and plan what to say in response
- Define Communication: Communication is how we interact with people; either non-verbally or verbally to convey an idea, feeling or need

2. Please give some examples of non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication (NVC) is similar to 'body language' and examples should mention some or all of the following:

- Body movements
- Facial expressions
- Gestures
- Finger pointing
- Eye pointing
- Whole body positions
- Ways of using the voice (i.e. intonation, pitch, volume and speed)
- Context of the moment (i.e. objects, pictures and the whole situation also provide non-verbal clues)

3. What strategies are used to help to identify children's speech, language and communication difficulties?

You should expect to see mentioned some or all of these key strategies:

- Observation: How accurately is the child's speech sounds and language being captured? Sometimes a written observation might say, "Charlie said he went shopping with daddy over the weekend" whilst Charlie's actual language was "Me goed shop"
- Monitoring: It is vital to know about the typical stages of language development in order to become aware of potential delay and then plan effective strategies to better support that individual child
- Nationally available assessment tools might be used to assess specific areas of language development, in order to implement specific strategies to support a particular need.
- Combining observation and monitoring should give an accurate assessment of the child's strengths/weaknesses.
- Parent/Carer involvement: Knowledge of the family and the child's typical behaviours within the home in order to develop a complete picture of the child.

4. Please describe how your setting's environment impacts on children's speech, language and communication:

General points to consider:

- How do the responses given capture the importance of a communication-friendly setting?
- What are the most important features of a communication friendly setting and are all reflected within your provision, can any gaps be identified?
- The role of display: How do the children interact with the displays? How can display impact on children's attention and listening?
- How are resources stored? Are they accessible (e.g. at child height; labelled with pictures or symbols)?
- How well-planned is the environment? Is it clear to the child what happens where? Are there quiet, comfortable areas where children can talk to each other and form relationships, a space where practitioners can also bond with children?
- How are quiet areas used to support reflection and comfort? Where does story telling occur?
- Background noise: There should be no continuous background noise such as radio/music. When is music used?
- There should be equipment outside and inside that encourages a variety of play experiences.
- Consideration of the culture and ethnicity of the children is reflected in the physical environment.
- Human resources: Practitioners are flexible with their plans and responsive to spontaneous events.

5. Please give some examples of the strategies that you use to help support children's listening and attention.

Responses should reflect a broad range of strategies:

- Reduce distractions
- Ideas to support the child in leading the play
- Adult/Child interaction: body position and awareness of eye contact; reduction of the use of questions; second rule (i.e. Adults pause and wait for the child to talk); mirror and repeat language given in appropriate form
- Increase praise for listening and concentrating
- Awareness of the need to reduce background noise
- Making your voice interesting – pitch, tone, intonation accompanied with facial expression

6. Describe some types of play that have the most potential for encouraging development of language and communication.

Potential responses should capture some or all of those mentioned below:

- Exploratory play, and a variety of resources that support such play including a collection of everyday objects particularly important for delayed children
- Symbolic play
- Imaginative play: familiar toys/resources such as large doll and teddy play, small world or other miniature play

- Sequenced and social play: turn taking games, opportunities to embed concept of 'first and then.....'
- Role play, fantasy and super hero play

7. Describe some of the ways you support parents to help them understand the importance of supporting their child's communication and language development

Truly valuing the knowledge that parents have about their child's communication and effectively consulting them is vital, responses should show awareness of:

- Events and opportunities to increase parents' awareness of speech, language and communication (SLC) development and the ways they can support it (e.g. activity ideas labelled with an explanation of how it supports this development)
- Other than learning journals and parent consultation, there should also be mention of other ways to engage parents through everyday activities and in all environments
- Home-setting activities: this should demonstrate and understanding of the role of the key person, ideas of strategies and activities to encourage parents who are not engaged etc
- Resources and information: making sure SLC information leaflets are available, ideas for activities are shared and displays reflect SLC; a specific space been identified as an information area with a wide range of SLC information

8. Give some examples of the strategies that you use to help children develop their understanding of vocabulary, instructions and conversations

Analyse the range of strategies given, what gaps are revealed, are only a few strategies described. Expected strategies should include:

- Gaining and maintaining attention, sharing eye contact or shared gaze
- Non-verbal communication specifically gesture, facial expression and body language to emphasise the meaning of the spoken word
- Pausing between sentences to give children time to work out what has been said, and therefore waiting for their response
- Repeating what has been said but in the expected form
- Commenting on what they are doing using verbs as well as nouns (e.g. "Wow Charlie, you're pushing the car so quickly vroom vroom pushing pulling" (to match their actions))
- Use of a multi-sensory approach, for example chatter boxes, I spy jars
- Systems are in place to assess whether language is really being understood or is there an overreliance on non-visual communication cues to determine meaning? Checks whether a child follows an instruction without any non-visual communication cues
- Assess the level of language understood through the use of information carrying words, for example "Show me bear....." from a group of objects where there is just one bear, "Find me the big bear"...from a group of objects which include two different sized bears, "Where is the spotty big bear"....from a collection of a variety of bears.
- Understanding of prepositional language...."Put horse in the box".... on..... under..... behind etc

9. Describe some of the ways you adapt your language to match the different stages of speech, language and communication development in children

This should include some reference to the level of language used, there may be reference to:

- Blanks Language Scheme, which ensures that questions asked are developmentally appropriate
- The complexity of vocabulary used, compared to that used by the child; one or two word utterances matched by adult with a few words added, for example “My car” “Yes your fast yellow car”. Similarly if a sentence is given the response will extend further.

10. Describe some of the strategies that you use to help children develop their talking skills.

Responses should include some mention of:

- offering regular opportunities for the children to lead the play/activity so that they are talking about something which interests them,
- waiting for the children to speak rather than filling silences with ‘talk’ – some children need time to think and speak.
- reduction of questioning and an increase in commentary
- providing opportunities to communicate through planned shared activities eg: chatter boxes, key person time, review of key moments through the week.
- increasing use of repetition and modelling of language said, re cast in an appropriate model.
- naming actions, objects and describing what’s happening offer opportunities to hear new language which they can after hearing often enough use in their talk

11. Please give some examples of the strategies that you use to help children use their communication skills in a socially skilful way within the setting?

Key strategies most usually used:

- Model ‘good looking’ and ‘good listening’ skills
- Plan for the development of social play and turn-taking
- Maintain through playful experiences eye contact, peep oh, squeeze hands follow the blink etc
- Appropriate body language through various experiences role play, puppets, miming, Board games, parachute games etc.

12. Describe some of the strategies you use to help children with speech sound difficulties.

Responses should include suggestions which indicate an understanding of the following:

- React to what the child has said and not how clearly they speak
- Give correct speech models
- Build the child’s self-esteem particularly by praising other things the child does well
- Don’t pretend to understand, only ask to repeat once, if you still don’t understand apologise for not understanding and blame your “poor listening ears”
- You can also try changing the subject and focussing on something which is a new shared interest
- Be positive if they are really difficult to understand

13. Describe the processes you follow in your setting to ensure children receive effective speech, language and communication support.

This is an opportunity to assess whether the whole team understand and are familiar with the process within your setting to support children with a speech, language and communication delay. Are there any aspects that are less frequently mentioned throughout the completed questionnaires, which might now need to be revisited

Responses should include reference to:

- how information is shared with parents and carers
- the systems in place to support parents to understand issues and the strategies being implemented within the setting to support their child's development
- the signposting to other services and information which is offered
- making sure relevant information materials are made available
- the role of the key person and the way sensitive information and potentially 'difficult' conversations with parents are managed.
- confidentiality and record keeping

14. Describe some of the ways you currently support children with EAL.

Responses should reflect the following:

- How children are encouraged to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home
- The use of visual cues throughout the setting which support all children
- The strategies used to develop partnerships with parents with EAL
- Language building strategies to include: gaining and maintaining attention; use of a multisensory approach; non-verbal communication specifically gesture, facial expression and body language; sharing shared gaze following their gaze and naming what is being looked at/played with etc; pausing between utterances to give children time to work out what has been said; repetition

15. Describe some of the ways you listen to young children and enable their voices to influence your practice?

These could include:

- observation of how children spend their time, taking note of what they are interested in.
- child conferencing for older children, possible use of a short questionnaire and talking to them to gain their views.
- children using a camera and taking their own photographs of things that are important to them.
- tours or walks of a setting guided by the children which can then be recorded and documented in the form of mapping which shows areas of interest to children.
- well-resourced role play and book areas.
- for the very young children and babies – facial expression, body language, gurgling and babbling.
- interpreters (older siblings, family members) for language barriers and continue to develop close relationships with parents for children with SEN and disabilities as with all children.