



DEBATE PACK

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Speech, language and communication support for children

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Summary

On 4 July 2018, there will be a Westminster Hall debate on Speech, language and communication support for children. The debate, sponsored by Rebecca Pow MP, will start at 9:30am and finish at 11am.

This debate pack summarises some of the major literature in this field and outlines the support provided in education and health services in England.

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. Background

Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) is the umbrella term for a variety of disorders in which an individual can struggle to listen, understand and communicate.¹ It is thought to be one of the most common disabilities amongst children: estimates vary from between 7 to 10% of children.²

Research has indicated that children from a disadvantaged background are more likely to have communication issues: for instance, pupils entitled to free schools meals are 1.8 times more likely to be diagnosed with SLCN.³ Furthermore, children with SLCN do not tend to perform as well as their peers in school: for instance, it has been calculated that in 2017 only 15% of pupils with SLCN achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of primary school – for other pupils, 61% achieved this rate.⁴

Life chances for children with SLCN are impacted in other ways. Analysis has suggested that 81% of children with emotional and behavioural disorders have undiagnosed SLCN and that 60% of young offenders have poor language skills.⁵ Research also suggests a link to problems with literacy, mental health and employment in adulthood.⁶

There are a number of charitable organisations and websites that can provide further information and advice about SLCN amongst children, including:

- [Afasic](#)
- [I Can](#)
- [Talking Point](#)

The [Communication Trust](#) is a coalition of practitioners who help children with SLCN. The organisation has resources both for professionals and parents. The [Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists](#) also provides information for practitioners.

¹ [What are speech, language and communication needs \(SLCN\)?](#) Afasic, accessed 28 June 2018

² [What are Speech, Language and Communication Needs \(SLCN\)?](#) Communication Trust, undated; [What are speech, language and communication needs \(SLCN\)?](#) Afasic, accessed 28 June 2018; [What are speech, language and communication needs?](#) Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, undated

³ [The links between speech, language and communication needs and social disadvantage](#), APPG on Speech and Language Difficulties, February 2013

⁴ [Bercow: Ten Years On](#), I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, March 2018

⁵ [Bercow: Ten Years On](#), I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, March 2018

⁶ [The links between speech, language and communication needs and social disadvantage](#), APPG on Speech and Language Difficulties, February 2013

1.1 2008 review: the Bercow Report

The last Labour Government asked John Bercow MP to lead a review of services in England for children and young adults with SLCN. The resulting report was published in 2008. Using a combination of questionnaires, consultation groups, site visits and commissioned research, the Bercow report found the following:

Although there are some skilled professionals and good facilities, the overall position in terms of speech, language and communication services is highly unsatisfactory. Access to information and services is often poor, services themselves are very mixed, continuity across the age range is lacking, effective joint working between the health and education services is rare and there is something of a postcode lottery across the country. Above all, local commissioners attach a low priority to the subject and we believe that this must change.⁷

The report also found that parents were unfamiliar about language development and how they can help.

The Bercow report made several recommendations⁸, organised into themes:

How to improve understanding that communication is crucial

- The Government should “raise the national profile of speech, language and communication and all forms of SLCN by **creating a Communication Council** to monitor and support implementation of this Review’s recommendations.” This council should include a **Communications Champion** who takes responsibility for awareness raising, and acts as the main lead during a **National Year of Speech, Language and Communication**.
- **Parents should also be provided with information** about the “importance of speech, language and communication to all children and young people”, including how to monitor and help their children’s development. Information should be **readily available throughout a child’s education**.
- Government should also **re-emphasise local authorities’ duties** to provide information to families, including about publicly funded provision. The Government should also consider “**funding national, regional and local support services for parents**”.

How to ensure that early identification and intervention are recognised as essential

- Health services and local authorities should “work together to undertake **surveillance and monitoring of children and young people** to identify potential SLCN across the age range, and particularly at key transition points”
- Prioritising speech, language and communication in **Sure Start Children’s Centres**

⁷ [The Bercow Report: A Review of Services for Children and Young People \(0–19\) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs](#), Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008

⁸ [The Bercow Report: A Review of Services for Children and Young People \(0–19\) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs](#), Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008

- Strengthening “the focus on speech, language and communication in the **primary curriculum**”
- Exemplifying, in the **secondary curriculum**, how to remove barriers for those with SLCN.
- Guidance to local authorities should **emphasise the need to adequately fund services for SLCN**.

Commissioning

- The Government should create a “**joint framework for commissioners**, including Children’s Trusts and schools, on the commissioning of a continuum of **universal, targeted and specialist services for children and young people with SLCN** across the age range 0-19.”
- The Department of Health should emphasise speech, language and communication to **the Children’s National Service Framework**.
- A review of the **Dedicated Schools Grant** should “take account of how the school funding system supports the delivery of universal, targeted and specialist services for children and young people with SEN.”

Workforce

- As well as including **advice in the commissioning framework** on how to recruit and develop a workforce, the report also recommends a variety of ways of **improving the training of the practitioners**.

Strengthening the evidence base

- The report recommends a Government sponsored “**programme of research to enhance the evidence base** and inform delivery of better outcomes for children and young people with SLCN.”

Improving access to communication aids

- The Government should adopt a **‘hub and spoke’ model of regional provision**, coordinated by a national organisation.
- The Communication Champion should investigate provision of **Augmentative and Alternative Communication**.

Young offenders

- “The Government’s forthcoming **Youth Crime Action Plan**, and the strategy for the health needs of children and young people subject to the Criminal Justice System due in late 2008, should consider how best to address the SLCN of young people in the criminal justice system, including those in custody.”

How to promote more and better joint working

- The report made several recommendations for more **integrated working with Children’s Trusts**. Each trust should also make a senior member of their board a lead on communication issues in the locality.
- **Ofsted** should review “the joint provision of services for children and young people with SLCN.”

How to ensure greater consistency and equity for families

- The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department of Health should work more closely with local leaders by
 - **Promoting the national professional development framework** (then called Leading and Managing Children’s Services in England (April 2008))
 - Supporting the development of appropriately **skilled and experienced clinical leaders**
 - **Retaining national early years targets**, and perhaps introducing “**a national indicator specifically for SLCN**”
 - Ensure that a commissioning framework requires local agencies to **monitor performance and publish their findings**.
- The Government should **open up as much data as possible** regarding SLCN “to allow it to be held accountable.”

1.2 Changes to the SLCN landscape

Later in 2008, the Government published an action plan, [Better Communication](#), which accepted many of the recommendations of the Bercow report. Aspects that were acted upon included:

- the creation of the Communication Council and the post of Communication Champion
- there was a National Year of Speech, Language and Communication in 2011
- the building of a better knowledge base via the Government funded Better Communication Research Programme. The Government has also helped to fund the Communication Trust, a consortium of not-for-profit organisations compiling a [database of resources](#) for practitioners.
- The Government created a national service specification for Alternative and Augmentative Communication
- Language and communication became one of the three prime areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.

I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) also point out that since the Bercow report, the Government has ‘consistently’ funded workforce development in SLCN and that SLCN is now better recognised in the justice system.⁹

However, since the Bercow Report, subsequent Coalition and Conservative Governments have brought about significant reforms in education and health services. I CAN and the RCSLT argue that there have been several subsequent negative developments:

⁹ [Bercow: Ten Years On](#), I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, March 2018

Austerity and resulting cuts to services.

Loss of senior and specialist speech and language therapy posts.

Removal of speaking and listening from the National Curriculum.

Removal of a judgement of communication from the Ofsted Framework

No assessment in spoken language after age five within the curriculum.¹⁰

These criticisms are outlined in I CAN and the RCSLT's report, [Bercow: Ten Years On](#) (March 2018).

[Bercow: Ten Years On](#) principally looks at how the sector is perceived by practitioners, patients and families today. The authors state that over 2,500 people were consulted through surveys, oral and written evidence, focus groups, in-depth analysis of three local authority areas and a review of research. The authors find that:

- Despite some progress since the first Bercow report, public awareness of the importance of speech and communication is still not good enough. High quality information is available but it is not reaching all professionals or families when required. Children's services are still not communicating the importance of speech and language for cognitive development.
- SLCN rarely features in national policies which leads to "inconsistent and ineffective" services on the ground. With more decisions being taken in localities by a wide variety of commissioners (schools, NHS, local authorities), and no 'steer' from Government, there is still a 'postcode lottery' of services.
- A lack of joint-commissioning means that parents and carers feel 'let down' and often experience "insufficient support, irregular appointments and support being indiscriminately withdrawn."
- Services are not integrated enough: 42% of respondents to a survey were unsure who held responsibility for SLCN services in their area. Only 3 out of the 44 Sustainability and Transformation Plans in 2016 mentioned SLCN. The authors add that

[...] restructuring of NHS speech and language therapy services over recent years has resulted in the downgrading or removal of senior posts, meaning there are fewer speech and language therapists working at a strategic level with the ability to influence decision-makers.¹¹

Areas with 'strong strategic leadership', the authors write, are much better at joint-working.

- Research into speech, language and communication disorders has improved thanks to the Better Communication Research Programme. This has helped the Communication Trust to create the '[What works](#)' database, a useful resource for practitioners and commissioners, although the authors think that many more professionals need to use this knowledge base.

¹⁰ [Bercow: Ten Years On](#), I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, March 2018

¹¹ [Bercow: Ten Years On](#), I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, March 2018

- There is also concern that data being collected is not focussed enough on the impact on children: it is overly concerned with metrics such as ‘waiting times’ or the number of children treated. Moreover, after age 5, there is no requirement to measure or report on children’s spoken language. Furthermore, service structure is still not guided by evidence of what works: currently the SLCN landscape is usually adapted according to other factors, particularly when resources are tight.
- Many specialist services are reducing their package of support. Strategies include:
 - Limiting services to only the highest needs children, or particular age groups
 - Dropping services due to a lack of progress with patients, despite some very severe casework
 - and reducing the number of specialist roles
- Early diagnosis has improved since the first Bercow report, but despite knowledge of the signs of communication disorders, “screening tools are not sensitive enough to pick up on these.” The authors believe that more than half of children’s SLCN are not being picked up: this is due to “insufficient knowledge and skills in the workforce” although the Communication Trust and its consortium has been some progress on spreading awareness amongst professionals.
- Even where a child is diagnosed as requiring support, over half of parents surveyed had to wait over six months for an appointment: 34% had to wait over a year.

The authors make many recommendations, based on 5 themes. They can be read in full in pages 40-45 of the report. In summary:

Communication is vital

- The Department for Education (DfE) and Public Health England (PHE) should play a bigger role in developing a national strategy for social mobility and sending clear messages to families.
- Local authorities should bear in mind the evidence presented in this report when tackling health inequalities.

A strategy for system change

- The Department for Education and Department of Health (DH) should consult on a cross-governmental strategy for children, which should emphasise the importance of speech, language and communication. SLCN should also be better incorporated into their efforts to improve mental health provision in a number of ways outlined in the report.
- Ofsted should incorporate the teaching and monitoring of spoken language into its next framework for inspections. Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission should also “continue their inspections of local areas and SEND beyond the current initial five-year cycle”
- A system leadership group should be set up to enact the recommendations of the *Bercow: Ten Years On* report.
- Schools’ special educational needs information reports should specifically look at SLCN.

An accessible and equitable service for all families

- PHE should use its Fingertips tool to provide data on SLCN to local areas, and it should incorporate data from the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile at five years of age.
- Effective joint commissioning should be a part of local area SEND reviews and also be open to challenge from Ofsted and Care Quality Commission inspectors.
- NHS England and DfE should define joint-commissioning and train commissioners about how to commission services for SLCN.
- SLCN should be part of the effort to join up commissioning in the NHS and local authorities.

Support that makes an impact

- The Education Endowment Foundation “should make a 5-10 year commitment to work closely with language experts to design and fund a school-based SLCN evaluation programme, in order to develop and evaluate innovative models, and to mobilise the evidence already available.”
- Providers of SLCN services should be instructed and helped by NHS England and other commissioners in order to collect useful data regarding indicators of successful interventions.
- The DfE and DH should “work together on guidance to support a consistent approach to the development of evidence-based integrated care pathways for children and young people with SLCN”.
- DfE should continue to fund initiatives such as the [‘What Works’](#) database compiled by the Communications Trust.

Early identification and intervention are essential

- DfE “should make speech, language and communication and identification of SLCN a core requirement of Level 2 qualifications for the early years assistant. They should also incorporate SLCN knowledge into their efforts to strengthen Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).
- Local Area SEND inspections should evaluate how effectively local data is collected to better monitor children with SLCN.
- Improving guidance from PHE to support better commissioning and training of practitioners. The DfE should also fund a national programme of training for education staff.
- The Youth Justice Board should ensure their staff are trained to identify communication issues amongst young offenders and delineate referral pathways.

2. Special Educational Needs (SEN) support in education in England

Children with SLCN are classed as having Special Educational Needs (SEN). The Library briefing [Special Educational Needs: support in England](#), SN 7020, provides an overview of the system of support for those with SEN.

The statutory [SEND Code of Practice](#) sets out in detail the support that may be provided and the relevant processes that should be in place.

2.1 Levels of support

The type of support that children and young people with SEN receive may vary widely, as the types of SEN that they may have are very different. However, two broad levels of support are in place: SEN support, and Education, Health and Care Plans.

SEN Support

This will be support given to a child or young person in their pre-school, school or college. In schools, it replaces the previously existing 'School Action' and 'School Action Plus' systems.

The [gov.uk website](#) sets out that SEN support for children under 5 includes:

- a written progress check when your child is 2 years old
- a child health visitor carrying out a health check for your child if they're aged 2 to 3
- a written assessment in the summer term of your child's first year of primary school
- making reasonable adjustments for disabled children, e.g. providing aids like tactile signs

For children of compulsory school age, the following indicative [list](#) is provided of the type of help a child might receive:

- a special learning programme
- extra help from a teacher or assistant
- to work in a smaller group
- observation in class or at break
- help taking part in class activities
- extra encouragement in their learning, e.g. to ask questions or to try something they find difficult
- help communicating with other children
- support with physical or personal care difficulties, e.g. eating, getting around school safely or using the toilet

A young person of 16-25 in further education would need to contact their school or college before starting a course, to ensure their needs can be met.

Education, Health and Care Plans

Education, Health and Care Plans are for children and young people aged up to 25 who need more support than is available through SEN support. They are the replacement for SEN statements and Learning Difficulty Assessments (LDAs). They aim to provide more substantial help for children and young people through a unified approach that reaches across education, health care, and social care needs.

The [gov.uk website](http://gov.uk) sets out that parents can ask their local authority to carry out an assessment if they think their child needs an EHC Plan.

A request can also be made by:

- anyone at the child's school
- a doctor
- a health visitor
- a nursery worker

A local authority has 6 weeks to decide whether or not to carry out an EHC assessment.

Further requirements on local authorities relating to EHC Plans are discussed in more detail in section 2.4 of this note.

2.2 Funding: current system and reform

Background

Funding for SEN in England is not allocated as a separate amount per pupil. SEN funding is part of the overall Dedicated Schools Grant allocated to each local authority to fund their schools budget. It is for local authorities, in consultation with their schools' forums, to determine the individual allocation to schools.

The following PQ response provides information on SEN funding for maintained schools:

Steve McCabe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether special educational needs coordinators are able to request funds from his Department for extra assistance with SEN students in maintained schools. [201299]

Mr Timpson: The Department for Education does not give funds directly to local authority maintained schools. Funds for extra assistance with students with special educational needs (SEN) come from schools' budgets and, if the extra cost is more than £6,000 per year for an individual student, from local authorities in the form of top-up funding for the school. Local authorities can also give extra funding to schools with a disproportionate number of pupils with SEN. Special educational needs coordinators should therefore seek any additional funds required from the relevant local authority.¹²

¹² [HC Deb 23 Jun 2014 c83W](#)

Mainstream academies are in a similar position, as the [gov.uk website](#) sets out alongside funding information for special academies:

Mainstream academies (leaving aside any special units within them) are expected to contribute towards the cost of the additional educational support provision for high needs pupils and students, up to £6,000 from their school budget share. Their notional SEN budget is indicated in table A of their funding allocation pack.

If your academy receives a post-16 funding allocation, your statement will show how much of the formula funding the LA has attributed to meeting SEN support costs. [...]

Top-up funding above these levels, based on the assessed needs of the pupil and the cost of meeting these, should be agreed between the commissioning LA and the academy. Top-up funding is paid on a per-pupil basis, in or close to the real-time movement of the pupil. It is paid directly to academies by the LA. Top-up funding for pupils in AP can be paid directly by other academies and schools if they commission the places for those pupils.

The charity Independent Parental Special Education Advice (IPSEA), have produced a [helpful briefing](#) on changes to SEN funding that were introduced from April 2013, which provides more background on SEN funding.¹³

Reform: a national funding formula

The Government is undertaking major reforms to the way schools in England are funded. As part of this, the Government proposed the introduction of a national funding formula to allocate 'high needs' funding to local authorities – largely, this is for special educational provision.

On 7 March 2016, the then Education Secretary Nicky Morgan announced initial consultations on funding reform, with further consultations to follow later in the spring. The first of these proposed a national school funding formula to include a basic per-pupil amount, and factors reflecting pupil characteristics, school and areas costs. The Library briefing [Implementation of the national funding formula for schools in England](#), CBP 8106, provides up-to-date information on the progress of these reforms.

Separate [consultations](#) were conducted on high needs funding. [The national funding formula for schools and high needs](#), published by the Department for Education in September 2017, described how the Government intended to proceed following those consultations.

Local authorities would receive high needs funding through a national formula derived from, among other factors, a basic unit of per-pupil funding for pupils in specialist SEN provision, historic spend, and also proxy measures such as population, school attainment, and numbers of children in bad health. More detail is provided in chapter 4 of the [Policy Document](#).

¹³ IPSEA, [School Funding Reform: SEN Funding](#), May 2013

In July 2017, the Government [announced](#) £1.3bn of additional funding for schools, including high needs, over 2018-19 and 2019-20.¹⁴ The subsequently published funding [consultation response](#) stated that this had the effect maintaining the schools and high needs blocks of the Dedicated Schools Grant in real terms per pupil up to 2019-20.¹⁵

Transferring funding between blocks

Prior to 2018-19, the Dedicated Schools Grant has been split into 3 blocks: the schools block, the high needs block and the early years block. These blocks were notional, with local authorities free to move funds between them.¹⁶

Following the formula changes, this position is now more restricted:

131. The second stage of the consultation recognised that a degree of flexibility between the DSG funding blocks would be needed to ensure that local authorities could manage their high needs budget. Local authorities will therefore be able to transfer up to 0.5% of their schools block funding into their high needs budget, with the agreement of their schools forum.[...] [T]here will be a process for considering any reasonable requests for exceptions to these rules.¹⁷

These formula arrangements apply in 2018-19 and 2019-20, with future spending decision subject to future Spending Reviews.

The Library briefing [School funding reform in England from 2018-19: Implementation of the national funding formula](#), CBP 08106, provides more information on the reforms.

2.3 Impact of the reforms

Section 5 of the Library briefing [Special Educational Needs: support in England](#), SN 7020, provides research on the impact of the reformed system.

¹⁴ Department for Education, [£1.3bn for core schools budget delivers rise in per pupil funding](#), 17 July 2017

¹⁵ Department for Education, [The national funding formula for schools and high needs Executive summary](#), September 2017, p35

¹⁶ Department for Education, [School revenue funding: Current funding arrangements](#), March 2016, p4

¹⁷ Department for Education, [The national funding formula for schools and high needs Policy document](#), September 2017, p38

3. Health services

The commissioning landscape around SLCN services on the NHS is complicated. The majority of speech and language therapy clinical services are commissioned by local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), with specialised speech and language services, such as for patients with cleft lip/palate or severe burns, are commissioned nationally by NHS England.¹⁸

As well as responsibilities related to SEND, local authorities also have some health commissioning responsibilities, including the five mandatory health visits for mothers and children (the Healthy Child Programme). The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) quality statement on [promoting health and wellbeing in under 5s](#) states that children should have their speech and language skills assessed at the final visit, when the child is between two and two-and-a-half, and be referred on to further assistance if required.

Children's Services Directors, CCG leaders and Public Health Directors are required to be members of local Health and Wellbeing Boards, which produce joint strategic needs assessments for their area's health needs. [Bercow: Ten Years On](#) argues that joint commissioning between organisations is the best way to organise services, but the effectiveness of this varies significantly between areas. It also argues that some healthcare bodies do not have sufficient awareness of certain SLCNs:

Our evidence also found that many commissioners do not have sufficient understanding of speech, language and communication, particularly for low-incidence, high-need conditions where they are unlikely to have detailed knowledge: conditions like selective mutism, hearing impairment and stammering. Given their competing priorities, increasing commissioners' understanding is crucial, with strong leaders in local services who can work with and help to inform their commissioning decisions.¹⁹

There is no NICE clinical guideline specifically on speech and language services, although it is referred to in conditions for children where SLCNs are sometimes present, such as [cerebral palsy](#) and [autism spectrum disorder](#). There are no national waiting time targets: it is up to local commissioners to ensure children can access services in a timely manner. *Bercow: Ten Years On* found more than a third of surveyed parents waited over a year to access services, but the report criticised a focus on waiting time targets over service outcomes in some areas.

The report also criticised some of the training provided for speech and language health professionals. In terms of workforce numbers, the [Health Education England draft workforce strategy to 2027](#) notes that the number of speech and language professionals employed in England grew by 12.4% between 2012 and 2017. The vacancy rate for speech and language professionals is also one of the lowest for all allied health professionals, and was at 2.5% in March 2017.

¹⁸ NHS England, [Manual for Prescribed Specialised Services 2017/18](#), September 2017

¹⁹ [Bercow: Ten Years On](#), I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, March 2018

4. Press releases

[New measures to support children with SEND](#) (29 March 2018)

Announcement of sponsors for 14 new special free schools which will help children with multiple learning needs in England. This includes a number of establishments that will help children with SLCN:

- Astrum Multi Academy Trust will open a 64-place special free school for children aged 2-7 with speech, language, and communication needs and social, emotional, and mental health needs in Redbridge, Ilford; [...]
- Nexus Multi Academy Trust will open a 100-place special free school for children aged 5-19 with complex communication and interaction needs, autism spectrum disorder and other social and mental health needs in Doncaster [...]
- Catch22 Multi Academy Trust will open a 125-place special school for children aged 4-16 with autism spectrum disorder and social communication needs in Basingstoke, Hampshire;
- Samuel Ward Academy Trust will open two new special free schools: one with 60 places for children aged 3-16 with communication and interaction needs and social, emotional and mental health needs in Romford²⁰

[Pilot launched to boost early language skills and cut teacher workload](#) (22 June 2018)

In September, 25 schools will trial revised early learning goals, measures used to decide how prepared children are to begin year 1. According to the Government,

The pilot will help to address the problem of children arriving at school struggling with language and social skills, helping to close the so-called 'word gap' – the gap between disadvantaged children's communication and that of their peers when they start school.

[...]

The pilots build on two schemes [announced](#) by the Education Secretary in April that will improve children's early language and literacy skills at home before they start school.²¹

[Applications open to create 1,600 new special free school places](#) (27 July 2017)

This includes a 100-place school in Doncaster which will help with "complex communication and interaction needs, Autism spectrum disorder and other social and mental health needs." Applications are also invited to establish a 125-place school for children with social communication needs and Autism spectrum disorder in Hampshire.

²⁰ [New measures to support children with SEND](#), DfE press release, 29 March 2018

²¹ [Pilot launched to boost early language skills and cut teacher workload](#), DfE press release, 22 June 2018

5. News Articles

Background

[Developmental Language Disorder: The most common childhood condition you've never heard of](#), *Guardian*, 22 September 2017

- A brief, 'myth-busting' synopsis of DLD.

[Hidden disorder hinders speech of 860,000 children](#), *Times*, 22 September 2017

- An article about Developmental Language Disorder.

[Cases of four-year-olds arriving at school unable to speak properly on the rise](#), *Telegraph*, 6 September 2017

- Headteachers warn that increasing numbers of school starters cannot speak properly.
- This survey of headteachers is also picked up in [Shortage of funding barrier to school readiness](#), *Nursery World*, 6 September 2017

[Children With Language Disorders: Missed Or Mis-Identified?](#)
Huffington Post, 13 January 2017

- An article considering why, when it is estimated that 7.58% of children in year 1 have a significant language disorder, it seems only 3.04% are identified by schools.

SEN and Education, health and care plans

['People give up': the crisis in school support for children with special needs](#), *Guardian*, 5 September 2017

- According to this article, families are finding it more difficult to get support from schools

Current assistance for speech problems

[What next for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs?](#) Open Access Government, 6 June 2018

- Mary Hartshorne, I CAN's Head of Evidence, writes about the *Bercow: 10 years on* report.

[Ten Years On From The Bercow Review, Speech And Language Needs Are Vital To Mental Health And Social Mobility](#), *Huffington Post*, 20 March 2018

- Seema Malhotra MP writes about the *Bercow: 10 years on* report.

[Support for speech and language problems still limited](#), Pre-school Learning Alliance, 20 March 2018

- An article about the *Bercow: 10 years on* report.

[Bercow: 10 years on parents face 'postcode lottery' of support](#), Nursery World, 20 March 2018

[Reviewing SLCN provision 10 years after Bercow](#), SecEd, 25 April 2018

[Equip teachers to support children with language disorders in the classroom](#), *Guardian*, 1 November 2016

Ending Communication Trust funding

Until recently the Government provided the bulk of funding for the Communication Trust, a consortium of SLCN professionals, hosted by I CAN. However the Government has decided not to continue their contract with I CAN after March 2018. It is reported that this represents a loss of 95% of its funding.²² There is currently a [petition](#), hosted by Change.org, to reverse this decision.

When asked about the reasons why this funding has been cut, the Government responded

The department's current one-year contract with I CAN, on behalf of The Communication Trust (TCT), is due to end as planned at the end of March 2018. The contract was for £650,000 to develop sustainable resources and programmes to support the education workforce to develop their skills in supporting children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). We are in discussion with TCT about how best to ensure that all practitioners are able to make continued use of the materials and training developed through this contract.

We remain committed to upskilling the workforce to support those with SLCN, and want to do more to embed knowledge and ensure good practice is disseminated and understood widely. Our Social Mobility Action Plan (SMAP), 'Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential', prioritises work in the early years to close the word gap and improve early language acquisition for disadvantaged children. The SMAP includes proposals for continuing professional development training; and an early language assessment tool for health visitors and early years practitioners, to ensure that any language delays can be picked up and the right support put in place quickly. We expect to invite tenders for this work in due course. The value for this work has not yet been finalised. Further information on SMAP, 'Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential', is available

at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/667690/Social_Mobility_Action_Plan_-_for_printing.pdf.²³

Several commentators have expressed concerns about this loss of funding:

²² [Alarm over 'dramatic' funding cut for speech and language charity](#), TES, 30 January 2018

1. ²³ WPQ 128063 [[Communication Trust: Finance](#)] 27 February 2018

[DfE's removal of specialist contract puts 1.4 million children and young people at risk](#), Education Executive, 7 March 2018

[The Communication Trust lobbies for reprieve](#), Nursery World, 19 February 2018

[Alarm over 'dramatic' funding cut for speech and language charity](#), TES, 30 January 2018

[Children's language charity faces uncertain future](#), Nursery World, 25 January 2018

6. Parliamentary material

6.1 Parliamentary questions (PQs)

Written PQ HL8428 [[Special Educational Needs: Speech and Language Disorders](#)], 26 Jun 2018

Asked by: Lord Shinkwin | **Party:** Conservative Party

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to fund a national programme of training for education staff working with children and young people with speech, language and communication needs, similar to that previously funded for autism.

Answering member: Lord Agnew of Oulton | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

Since 2010, the department has funded the development of training and resources to ensure that the schools' workforce is equipped to support pupils with specific types of special educational needs and disability (SEND), including speech language and communication needs (SLCN). These are hosted on the SEND and Education Foundation Gateway.

Our focus is on enabling education professionals to access and navigate these resources. We have agreed a new schools' workforce contract with the National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN), to encourage schools to prioritise SEND within their CPD and school improvement plans, and to equip them to identify and meet their training needs. This contract will look across all types of impairment, including SLCN.

We are also continuing to fund The Communications Trust and are undertaking a gap analysis of training and resources for the schools' workforce. The findings from this research will inform what programmes might be required in the future.

Written PQ HL8430 [[Speech and Language Disorders: Children and Young People](#)], 20 Jun 2018

Asked by: Lord Shinkwin | **Party:** Conservative Party

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to commission research into the effectiveness of speech and language therapy interventions for children and young people with mental health needs and speech, language and communication needs.

Answering member: Lord O'Shaughnessy | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department of Health and Social Care

There are currently five active projects funded by the National Institute for Health Research on effectiveness of speech and language therapy interventions for children and young people. There are no current plans to commission further research at this stage.

Public Health England has formed a partnership with the Department for Education to improve early language acquisition; this will enable health visitors and early years practitioners to identify and support children's early speech, language and

communication needs through training guidance and an enhanced early language assessment tool.

Written PQ HL8429 [[Special Educational Needs: Speech and Language Disorders](#)], 20 Jun 2018

Asked by: Lord Shinkwin | **Party:** Conservative Party

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that the trailblazer areas proposed in the Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: a Green Paper (Cm 9525) have embedded, or have access to, dedicated speech and language therapy services.

Answering member: Lord Agnew of Oulton | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

The government is considering the responses to the consultation on the green paper 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision' and plans to publish a response before summer recess. The response will set out more information on how the trailblazers for new mental health support teams will work. The trailblazers will test how teams can link to the work of other professionals to enhance the support for vulnerable children and will consider how this can include speech and language therapists.

Mental health support teams will work closely with schools and colleges. They can build on the steps the government has already taken to improve access to speech and language therapy. The government introduced through the Children and Families Act 2014, a framework for ensuring that children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including those with speech language and communication needs, are identified early and receive the support they require to succeed in education and move into independent adult life.

The department has also funded I CAN, on behalf of The Communication Trust, and several other specific impairment organisations, to produce materials for use by schools, colleges and others. These materials and resources are freely available on the SEND and Education Training Foundation Gateway.

The Department for Health and Social Care is also working with the department and Public Health England to enable early years professionals to identify and support children's early speech, language and communication needs.

Written PQ HL8427 [[Special Educational Needs: Speech and Language Disorders](#)], 20 Jun 2018

Asked by: Lord Shinkwin | **Party:** Conservative Party

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to include someone with expertise in speech, language and communication on the external steering group working with the Department for Education on updating the mental health and behaviour guidance for schools.

Answering member: Lord Agnew of Oulton | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

The external steering group for the mental health and behaviour, chaired by Tom Bennett, includes members with a wide range of experience and expertise on behaviour, mental health and vulnerable groups. It includes a range of senior teachers and head teachers as well as special educational needs specialists, such as the Council for Disabled Children. The department will continue to consult experts as the work progresses.

Written PQ 153420 [[Children: Speech and Language Disorders](#)], 18 Jun 2018

Asked by: Gill, Preet Kaur | **Party:** Labour Party · Cooperative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans the Government has to establish a system leadership group to promote the recommendations of the I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapist report, Bercow: Ten Years, published on 20 March 2018.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

The recommendations of the 'Bercow: Ten Years On' report are very timely. They come at a time when we are considering the All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism's report 'Autism and education in England 2017'; and considering our response to Dame Christine Lenahan's review of residential special schools, 'Good Intentions, Good Enough?'

We shall consider all of these reports carefully and will take that opportunity to set out how the government will continue working to achieve the vision of a reformed special educational needs and disabilities system, underpinned by the Children and Families Act 2014.

Written PQ 153419 [[Young Offenders: Speech and Language Disorders](#)], 18 Jun 2018

Asked by: Gill, Preet Kaur | **Party:** Labour Party · Cooperative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that his Department's response to the consultation Facing the Facts, Shaping the Future – a draft health and care workforce strategy for England to 2027, will take into account the recommendations of the Bercow: Ten Years On report published on 20 March 2018.

Answering member: Caroline Dinenage | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department of Health and Social Care

Health Education England (HEE) published 'Facing the Facts, Shaping the Future' in December 2017. The consultation is now closed and HEE is working with its partners across health and social care to develop a final strategy, which they will publish later this year. 'Bercow: Ten Years On' references the important role that speech and language therapists play in delivering services for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs. HEE's workforce strategy will ensure that there are enough staff, with the right skills and experience, to deliver high quality health and care services over the long term.

Written PQ 153418 [[Young Offenders: Speech and Language Disorders](#)], 18 Jun 2018

Asked by: Gill, Preet Kaur | **Party:** Labour Party · Cooperative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions his Department has had with representatives of (a) I CAN and (b) the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists on the Bercow: Ten Years On report, published on 20 March 2018.

Answering member: Caroline Dinéage | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department of Health and Social Care

Officials are arranging a meeting with I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists to discuss 'Bercow: Ten Years On'.

Written PQ 151438 [[Speech and Language Disorders: Children](#)], 14 Jun 2018

Asked by: Pow, Rebecca | **Party:** Conservative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with (a) NHS England, (b) NHS Improvement, (c) Health Education England and (d) the Care Quality Commission on the recommendations of I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists' report, Bercow: Ten Years On, published on 20 March 2018.

Answering member: Caroline Dinéage | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department of Health and Social Care

Officials from NHS England, the Department for Education and the Department for Health and Social Care, who are in regular contact on policy to support children with speech, language and communication needs, have been in discussion as to how best to respond to the recommendations of 'Bercow: Ten Years On', and will be engaging with all relevant organisations to develop a response.

Written PQ HL8075 [[Young Offenders: Speech and Language Disorders](#)], 05 Jun 2018

Asked by: Lord Ramsbotham | **Party:** Crossbench

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Youth Justice Board about the recommendations in the report by I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, Bercow: Ten Years On, published on 20 March.

Answering member: Lord Keen of Elie | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Ministry of Justice

To date, we have not discussed the 'Bercow: Ten Years On' report, with the Youth Justice Board. We acknowledge the findings of the report and we are clear that all young people should be able to effectively engage with the justice system, regardless of their particular needs.

Over the past three years MoJ and the YJB have supported a national project, led by the Department for Education, to deliver special educational needs and disability (SEND) awareness training to the youth justice workforce. The Youth Justice SEND Bubble programme offered free training to Youth Justice System professionals, supporting them to effectively identify and meet children's special educational and disability needs and allowing them to work towards more effective engagement and positive long-term outcomes.

Written PQ HL8074 [[Speech and Language Disorders](#)], 05 Jun 2018

Asked by: Lord Ramsbotham | **Party:** Crossbench

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to review the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Health Assessment Tool in identifying speech, language and communication needs.

Answering member: Lord O'Shaughnessy | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department of Health and Social Care

The Government has no current plans to review the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Health Assessment Tool to identify speech, language and communication needs in the children and young people's secure estate.

NHS England has commissioned Manchester University to review use of the Tool across 14 Secure Children's Homes, three Secure Training Centres and four Young Offender Institutions. This includes consideration of the quality of the assessments being completed and the processes and procedures set up to support the Comprehensive Health Assessment Tool. The review will report on overarching themes and individual site reports, each containing an action plan and recommendations. It is intended that this process will enable identification of key themes for NHS England to consider as well as individual site reports, each containing an action plan and recommendations.

Written PQ HL8073 [[Special Educational Needs](#)], 30 May 2018

Asked by: Lord Ramsbotham | **Party:** Crossbench

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Secretary of State for Education has discussed the recommendations in the report by I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, Bercow: Ten Years On, published on 20 March, with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, particularly the recommendation that there should be a new cross-government strategy for children.

Answering member: Lord Agnew of Oulton | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

Officials from the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) are in regular contact and are working together to implement the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) reforms underpinned by the Children and Families Act 2014. Effective joint working between DHSC and DfE is at the heart of these reforms, at national and local level.

The recommendations of the 'Bercow: Ten Years On' report are very timely. They come at a time when we are considering the All

Party Parliamentary Group on Autism's report 'Autism and education in England 2017'; and considering our response to Dame Christine Lenehan's review of residential special schools, 'Good Intentions, Good Enough?'

We shall consider all of these reports carefully and are committed to responding to Dame Christine Lenehan's review. We will take that opportunity to set out how the government will continue working to achieve the vision of a reformed SEND system, underpinned by the Children and Families Act 2014.

Written PQ HL7925 [[Children in Care: Health Services](#)], 30 May 2018

Asked by: Lord Watson of Invergowrie | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that the integrated physical and mental health assessments for looked-after children announced during the passage of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 are able to identify speech, language and communication needs.

Answering member: Lord Agnew of Oulton | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

We are due to award contracts for the management and the independent evaluation of the pilots next month. The pilots will begin later in the year, once pilot areas have been selected. They will test improved approaches to the mental health and wellbeing element of the health assessments looked-after children receive on entry to care.

The pilot proposals were tested with the expert working group (EWG) commissioned by the government to look at how to improve mental health support for looked after and previously looked after children and young people. They will take forward the group's recommendations on assessment of need. The EWG consisted of looked after and previously looked after children and young people, their carers (including foster and adoptive parents) and professionals from the health, social care, academic and voluntary sectors. This included, amongst others, representatives from the Care Leavers Association, the Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health, the Fostering Network, the British Psychological Society and Coram Voice. In addition, the proposals were tested with the Children in Care Alliance – a coalition of organisations that work to support children in care and care leavers.

The organisation that manages the pilots will be required to support pilot areas to identify and meet speech, language and communication needs. We want the pilots to explore the range of professionals that should be involved in the assessment process.

Written PQ 136790 [[Speech Therapy](#)], 27 Apr 2018

Asked by: Burden, Richard | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on the role of speech and language therapy services in developing communication and literacy skills.

Answering member: Caroline Dinéage | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department of Health and Social Care

The Department of Health and Social Care are working with the Department for Education and Public Health England to enable early years professionals to identify and support children's early speech, language and communication needs. In an exchange of letters with the former Minister of State for Children and Families (Robert Goodwill MP) last November, the Department agreed to ensure that we and Public Health England prioritise the required activities to support the social mobility action plan launched in December 2017. Detailed work is ongoing between the Department for Education and Public Health England.

Written PQ 136789 [[Speech Therapy: Children](#)], 27 Apr 2018

Asked by: Burden, Richard | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of recent trends in waiting times to access children's speech and language therapy services.

Answering member: Caroline Dinenage | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department of Health and Social Care

No assessment has been made of recent trends in waiting times to access children's speech and language therapy services as this data is not reported centrally. There are no mandated referral to treatment times for speech and language therapy services. Local commissioners have responsibility for assessing the needs of their local population, and arranging services to meet those needs.

Written PQ 136761 [[Speech Therapy: Children and Young People](#)], 24 Apr 2018

Asked by: Gill, Preet Kaur | **Party:** Labour Party · Cooperative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that every child and young person who stammers will be able to access speech and language therapy when needed; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Caroline Dinenage | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department of Health and Social Care

The universal Healthy Child Programme includes a number of child development reviews at specific ages. The review at age 2 – 2½ is a crucial stage when problems such as speech and language delay or behavioural issues become visible and can be addressed by the health visitor before the child starts school.

Clinical commissioning groups and local authorities have a legal duty to make joint arrangements for assessing the needs of children likely to have special educational needs.

Since May 2016, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission have been inspecting local areas on their effectiveness in fulfilling these new duties.

Written PQ 133375 [[Young Offender Institutions: Speech Therapy](#)] 26
Mar 2018

Asked by: Malhotra, Seema | **Party:** Labour Party · Cooperative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) full-time and (b) part-time speech and language therapists are employed to provide services for each young offenders institution in England and Wales; and how many hours of service provision are scheduled at each such institution each week.

Answering member: Dr Phillip Lee | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Ministry of Justice

The table below shows how many young people (under 18) are in each Young Offender Institution (YOI) in England and Wales:

Under 18 YOI	Year ending March		
	2016	2017	2018 ⁽¹⁾
Cookham Wood	135	136	144
Feltham	129	124	133
Parc	49	45	42
Werrington	101	100	95
Wetherby	242	225	219
Total	656	630	632

Notes:

These data are provisional. The 2017/18 figures will be finalised in the 2017/18 Youth Justice Statistics which will be published in January 2019. The 2017/18 figures are based on 10 monthly snapshots (Apr-17 to Jan-18) only.

These figures are averages of 12 monthly snapshots of the custodial population in the secure estate for children and young people, taken on the last Friday of the month or first Friday of the following month, depending on which is nearer to the actual month end.

These figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing and can be subject to change over time.

The table below shows how many young adults (18 -20 years old) are in each YOI in England and Wales.

18 - 21 dedicated YOIs As at 31 December 2017

Aylesbury	313
Cookham Wood	29
Deerbolt	315
Feltham	325
Werrington	11
Wetherby	28
Total	1,021

Notes:

The data in the table is drawn from a different administrative IT system. Like any large scale recording

system, is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

There are a number of young adults (turned 18) in the under 18 YOIs who are awaiting transition to the adult estate.

In the Children and Young People Secure Estate (under 18s), speech and language therapy is integrated into the overall commissioning of health services. We are committed to supporting all young offenders in custody and provide a range of services for children with special educational needs. Within the under 18 YOIs, each establishment has a Special Educational Needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and a team of LSA's (Learning Support Assistants) to support the young people. The Senco keeps a register of young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, including their individual needs, and shares the information with the establishment. All young people have Individual Learning Plans set up and reviewed by the education provider, regardless of whether they receive mainstream or outreach education. We do not collect data centrally relating to speech, language or communication needs.

[Prime Minister's Questions](#), HC deb 21 Mar 2018, 638 c280

Asked by: Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab) | **Party:** Labour Party

The Bercow review made a big difference in improving services for children with communication needs—communication is the key life skill for children to learn and thrive—yet, a decade on, the latest report shows that much more needs to be done. Will the Prime Minister commit to a cross-Government strategy that puts this issue at the heart of policy and gives all our children the best possible start in life?

Answered by: The Prime Minister | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Prime Minister

The hon. Gentleman has raised a very important issue. We welcome the report, and the Department for Education is going to be considering it carefully. We do not want to see any child held back from achieving their potential, and that includes ensuring that children with speech, language and communication needs are given the support they need. There has been particular training for teachers to support children who require additional help to communicate, and we will be introducing the education, health and care plans to make sure that children with additional needs receive the right support to succeed in school in the future, but we will look very carefully at what the report has said and obviously respond to it in due course.

Written PQ 128337 [[Special Educational Needs: Speech and Language Disorders](#)] 27 Feb 2018

Asked by: Platt, Jo | **Party:** Labour Party · Cooperative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding his Department plans to allocate to Speech Language and Communication Needs in 2018.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

Specialist speech, language and communication support is not funded directly by the Department for Education. It is commissioned locally, for example by local authorities using their high needs funding budgets, and also via clinical commissioning groups. Separate funding to provide these services is not allocated from the department's budget.

The department's current one-year contract with I CAN, on behalf of The Communication Trust (TCT), is due to end as planned at the end of March 2018. The contract was for £650,000 to develop sustainable resources and programmes to support the education workforce to develop their skills in supporting children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). We are in discussion with TCT about how best to ensure that all practitioners are able to make continued use of the materials and training developed through this contract.

We remain committed to upskilling the workforce to support those with SLCN, and want to do more to embed knowledge and ensure good practice is disseminated and understood widely. Our Social Mobility Action Plan (SMAP), 'Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential', prioritises work in the early years to close the word gap and improve early language acquisition for disadvantaged children. The SMAP includes proposals for continuing professional development training; and an early language assessment tool for health visitors and early years practitioners, to ensure that any language delays can be picked up and the right support put in place quickly. We expect to invite tenders for this work in due course. The value for this work has not yet been finalised. Further information on SMAP, 'Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential', is available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/667690/Social_Mobility_Action_Plan_-_for_printing.pdf.

Written question HL5553 [[Special Educational Needs: Speech and Language Disorders](#)], 22 Feb 2018

Asked by: Lord Watson of Invergowrie | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask Her Majesty's Government what response they intend to make to the petition signed by 22,000 teachers, early years practitioners and speech and language therapists opposing the cuts in funding announced by the Department for Education; and whether they will communicate the reasons for their funding decision to those working in the sector.

Answering member: Viscount Younger of Leckie | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

In March 2017 the department agreed a one year contract with I CAN, on behalf of The Communication Trust (TCT), to develop sustainable programmes and resources to help the workforce develop their skills in supporting children and young people with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN). That contract is due to end, as planned, at the end of March 2018.

The department is currently procuring a new Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) strategic workforce contractor, to help schools develop improved knowledge and skills among their staff, in relation to specific impairments. This contract will include work to promote existing resources and training, as well as identifying and filling any gaps in provision.

The government is committed to supporting those with SLCN and will do more to embed knowledge and ensure good practice is disseminated and understood widely. The new Social Mobility Action Plan (SMAP), 'Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential', attached, prioritises work in the early years to close the word gap and improve early language acquisition for disadvantaged children. The SMAP includes proposals for continuing professional development training and an early language assessment tool for health visitors and early years practitioners, to ensure that any language delays can be picked up and the right support put in place quickly. The department expects to invite tenders for this work and welcomes bids from all suitably qualified organisations or consortia.

The department is also encouraging bids for the Strategic School Improvement Fund and the Teaching Leadership Innovation Fund, which focus on improving provision for pupils with SEND. The Education Training Foundation is also being funded to increase the capability and capacity of the workforce to respond to the needs of students in further education.

The department will continue to respond to all correspondence on this issue, setting out how the department will ensure that children with SLCN have the right support in place.

The government wants to ensure that all practitioners continue to be able to make good use of the wealth of materials, resources and training that the TCT have developed. It is expected that the member organisations of the TCT will share the training and materials, supported by our new SEND strategic workforce contractor. The department is in regular discussion with TCT about how best to achieve this beyond March 2018.

Written PQ 125419 [[Special Educational Needs](#)], 01 Feb 2018

Asked by: Brabin, Tracy | **Party:** Labour Party · Cooperative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether there will be any change to specialist speech, language, and communication needs support available after March 2018; and which organisation will provide that programme.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party
| Department: Department for Education

The department let a one year contract with I CAN, on behalf of The Communication Trust (TCT), in April 2017 to support the workforce to develop their skills in supporting children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). That contract is due to end as planned at the end of March 2018.

We recognise the important contribution this contract played in upskilling the workforce and supporting children and young people with SLCN and we remain committed to supporting those with SLCN.

The department is in the process of tendering for the provision of strategic support to the workforce in mainstream and special schools, enabling them to deliver high quality teaching which meets the needs of an increasingly broad range of special educational needs (SEN). The successful contractor will be expected to monitor any gaps in provision, and propose ways to meet those, working with relevant SEN organisations. This contract will run in 2018-19 and 2019-20.

In addition to this, as part of our drive to improve social mobility through education, we announced in our recent report, 'Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential' https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/667690/Social_Mobility_Action_Plan_-_for_printing.pdf, our intention to work with Public Health England to support children's early SLCN. Further details will be announced in due course.

Written PQ 110325 [[Young Offenders: Speech and Language Disorders](#)], 02 Nov 2017

Asked by: Malhotra, Seema | **Party:** Labour Party · Cooperative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of how many and what proportion of young offenders in young offenders institutes have speech, language and communications difficulties; what proportion of such offenders are receiving support services; and what proportion of those not receiving such support services are in a waiting list to receive them.

Answering member: Dr Phillip Lee | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Ministry of Justice

There are high numbers of young people with special educational needs including speech, language and communication needs in youth custody.

Data collected to inform the custody placement decision for young people shows that 32% were recorded as having 'learning disability or difficulty concerns' between April 2014 and March 2016.

Both health and education partners fulfil key roles in meeting the needs of young people with speech language and communication needs but we do not collect assessment data centrally.

NHS England screen and assess every child and young person that enters the secure estate using the Comprehensive Health Assessment Tool (CHAT) that assesses any neurodisabilities. Following this assessment individual care plans for all children and young people are put in place.

Education providers are also required to assess the educational needs of young people and their contracts require them to provide support services for young people with special educational needs or disabilities.

We are committed to strengthening health services and special needs support as part of youth justice reforms. Reforms include implementing the NHS-led Secure Stairs project, an integrated framework of care for the Secure Estate for Children and Young People and investing in Enhanced Support Units, smaller units to provide specialist interventions, mental health and psychological support, in under-18 YOIs.

Written PQ HL5842 [[Young People: Speech Therapy](#)], 20 Mar 2017

Asked by: Lord Ramsbotham | **Party:** Crossbench

To ask Her Majesty's Government which agencies are responsible for commissioning speech and language therapy services for

young people aged 18 to 25 who (1) have, and (2) do not have, an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Answering member: Lord Nash | **Party:** Conservative Party |
Department: Department for Education

We are committed to supporting children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and recognise the importance of identifying SLCN early to enable the right support to be put in place and reduce the impact that they may have in the longer term.

The Children and Families Act 2014 places a renewed focus on the early identification of needs and focuses the system on the impact of the support provided to the child, rather than on how children access support according to categories of need.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (EYFS) sets out the key areas of learning which every provider must follow. For communication and language, the EYFS requires practitioners to give children the opportunity to experience a rich language environment, to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves and to speak and listen in a range of situations. Communication and language is a prime area of learning, within which it is expected that all children attain an expected level in the *listening and attention*, *understanding* and *speaking* early learning goals.

The EYFS profile results tells us that children's development in these areas are improving year on year. In 2016, 81.6% of children achieved at least the expected level in communication and language compared to 72.2% in 2013.

The government recognises that the quality of the workforce has the biggest impact on children's outcomes. We have recently published our workforce strategy which sets out our plans to remove the barriers to attracting, retaining and developing staff in the early years workforce. One of the planned actions is to provide training through voluntary and community sector grants on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), speech and language development and effective business management.

We have allocated £223 million to local authorities (LAs), since 2014 to support them to implement the SEND reforms. We published, in December 2016, seven Invitations to Tender for contracts totalling up to £4.8m to support children and young people with SEND in 2017-18.

One of the resulting contracts will specifically support those with SLCN and comes in addition to £1.7m that has already been invested in SLCN since the implementation of the SEND reforms in 2014. This funding is improving support for children and young people who have SLCN both with and without an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. One of the contract requirements will be to improve the quality of referrals and the effectiveness of commissioning specialist support for children and young people with SLCN, whether or not they have an EHC plan.

We are also delivering, through our strategic partners, a range of support for joint working between LAs and health bodies, including: self-assessment tools to jointly monitor progress with meeting responsibilities and briefings to support commissioning. In addition, from 2017-18, for the first time, NHS provider contracts will include a requirement that health professionals provide input into EHC plans within six weeks. We are working

with NHS England (NHSE) to make best use of resources to support joint working, including NHSE-led workshops this spring, and to support the delivery of the Transforming Care Programme to improve services for children, young people and adults.

The Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on Clinical Commissioning Groups and LAs to deliver integrated support to improve children and young peoples' outcomes. This means that local governance arrangements must be in place to ensure clear accountability for commissioning services for children and young people with SEND from birth to the age of 25, whether or not they have an EHC plan.

In addition, nurseries, schools and colleges must use their best endeavours to secure the necessary special education provision needed by those with identified SEND, which includes commissioning speech and language therapy services. Local authorities can also use their high needs budget to fund support without the need for an EHC plan if it is appropriate to do so.

Government, local areas and the professionals working with children and young people with SLCN all have their part to play in the commissioning of services and highlighting where challenges remain. To this end, we have put in place a new Ofsted and CQC inspection framework for assessing local area effectiveness with meeting their SEND responsibilities. We are working closely with the Department of Health and NHSE to respond to findings and support local areas to improve services and build on their strengths.

We expect details of services to meet SLCN, including how they can be accessed, to be included in the local offer, which every LA is required to publish in consultation with children, parents and young people. This enables families to hold LAs to account for any provision they feel has not been available as specified in the Local Offer, and to suggest new services they consider necessary.

Written PQ 63908 [[Speech and Language Disorders: Children and Young People](#)], 20 Feb 2017

Asked by: Smith, Nick | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the findings of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists' report, entitled The SEND reforms in England: supporting children and young people with speech, language and communication needs.

Answering member: Edward Timpson | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

I welcome RCSLT's report. It is encouraging that the majority of speech and language therapists, feel that parents and carers have been effectively involved in the decision making process and that they feel confident delivering the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) reforms effectively.

However, we know there is still work to do, which is why we have invested £1.7 million in supporting children and young people with speech, language and communication needs since 2014, and we are currently procuring a contract focusing on improving the support provided.

Written PQ 61046 [[Cerebral Palsy: Children and Young People](#)], 30 Jan 2017

Asked by: Durkan, Mark | **Party:** Social Democratic and Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what guidance his Department provides on the use of (a) paediatric speech and language therapy, (b) paediatric physiotherapy and (c) paediatric occupational therapy for children and young people with cerebral palsy.

Answering member: David Mowat | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department of Health

The Department does not provide specific guidance on the use of paediatric speech and language therapy, paediatric physiotherapy and paediatric occupational therapy for children and young people with cerebral palsy.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guideline on the management of spasticity in under 19s includes recommendations on the provision of physiotherapy and/or occupational therapy.

In addition, at the request of the Department, NICE published, on 25 January 2017, the clinical guideline Cerebral palsy in under 25s: assessment and management.

Written PQ 48752 [[Teachers: Training](#)], 19 Oct 2016

Asked by: Powell, Lucy | **Party:** Labour Party · Cooperative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to include training on selective mutism and other speech, language and communication needs in initial teacher training.

Answering member: Nick Gibb | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

All initial teacher training (ITT) courses must ensure that trainee teachers can meet the Teachers' Standards in full. The standards require trainees to have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Teachers must also be able to adapt teaching to the needs of all pupils, and have an understanding of the factors that can inhibit learning and how to overcome them.

In July 2016, the Government published a new framework of core content for ITT, developed by an expert group chaired by Stephen Munday CBE. The new framework includes detailed content on SEND training, with emphasis on speech language and communication needs (SLCN). It specifies that: "Providers should ensure that trainees understand the principles of the SEND Code of Practice, are confident working with the four broad areas of need it identifies, and are able to adapt teaching strategies to ensure that pupils with SEND (including, but not limited to, autism, dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), sensory impairment or speech, and language and communication needs (SLCN)) can access and progress within the curriculum."

The new framework of content will help to ensure that all trainee teachers are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to meet the Teachers' Standards at the appropriate level.

The new framework of core content for ITT can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536890/Framework_Report_11_July_2016_Final.pdf.

Written PQ 26792 [[Young Offender Institutions: Staff](#)], 25 Feb 2016

Asked by: Stevens, Jo | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February 2016 to Question 23824, whether any staff in young offender institutions are (a) qualified speech and language therapists, (b) registered with the Mental Health and Care Professions Council and (c) qualified social workers.

Answering member: Andrew Selous | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Ministry of Justice

The information requested is not held centrally, and could only be provided at disproportionate costs.

The Youth Justice Board is responsible for the commissioning and oversight of the secure youth estate. The Youth Justice Board funds dedicated social workers at each under-18 Young Offender Institution (YOI). All young people undergo a health and education assessment upon arrival into custody, whilst all staff undergo training in child and adolescent development and safeguarding.

Under-18 YOI providers should ensure that they meet the needs of all detained persons including those with Special Education and Needs (SEN) requirements, and that all staff are suitably qualified to support young people and make referrals to other specialist support where this is appropriate.

Written PQ 23825 [[Secure Training Centres: Staff](#)], 02 Feb 2016

Asked by: Slaughter, Andy | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of staff employed in each secure training centre are qualified speech and language therapists.

Answering member: Andrew Selous | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Ministry of Justice

The information is not held centrally. However, certain roles within Secure Training Centres (STC) must be filled by qualified social workers. Qualification requirements for staff in Secure Children's Homes (SCH) are set by the Department of Education.

All young people undergo a health and education assessment upon arrival into custody, whilst all staff undergo training in child and adolescent development and safeguarding. STC and SCH providers should ensure that they meet the needs of all detained persons including those with Special Education and Needs (SEN) requirements, and that all staff are suitably qualified to support young people and make referrals to other specialist support where this is appropriate.

Written PQ 23221 [[Youth Custody: Staff](#)], 22 Jan 2016

Asked by: Slaughter, Andy | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of staff employed in each young offender institution, secure training centre and secure children's home (a) are qualified speech and language therapists and (b) are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.

Answering member: Andrew Selous | **Party:** Conservative Party |
Department: Ministry of Justice

This information could only be obtained at disproportionate costs.

Written PQ 8177 [[Pre-school Education: Special Educational Needs](#)], 07 Sep 2015

Asked by: Smith, Nick | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what legal duties local authorities have to support early years settings in the identification of, and support for, children with speech, language and communication needs.

Answering member: Edward Timpson | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

The development of all children's speech, language and communication during their early years is a priority for government. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the prime areas of learning that early years providers must follow and this includes a focus on communication and language. The EYFS requires providers to have arrangements in place to support children with special educational needs or disabilities. In England the Early Years Educator Criteria and the Teachers' Standards (Early Years) also require the staff in question to deliver the EYFS.

The Teachers' Standards (Early Years) requires early years teachers to demonstrate a clear understanding of the needs of all children, including those with speech, language and communication or other special educational needs or disabilities. It requires teachers to be able to use and evaluate distinctive approaches to engage and support children and to have the skills and awareness to know when a child is in need of additional support. The Department for Education provides grants to a number of expert organisations so that they can support the early years workforce to meet the needs of children with speech, language and communication difficulties. This includes providing access to best practice, tools and training. A range of organisations and bodies also provide advice and support to their members on this issue.

Where Ofsted inspectors have identified areas of improvement it is the responsibility of the early years setting to put an improvement plan in place. Local authorities are required by legislation to secure information, advice and training for early years providers judged less than good on their last Ofsted inspection report, including to help the provider meet the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Under section 22 of the Children and Families Act 2014 local authorities in England are required to identify all the children and young people in their area (i) who have or may have special educational needs, and (ii) who have a disability. Section 23 places

a duty on clinical commissioning groups, NHS trusts or NHS foundation trusts if they are of the opinion that a child under compulsory school age has (or probably has) special educational needs or a disability, to tell the local authority and child's parents.

Local authorities in England must ensure that all providers they fund are aware of the requirement on them to have regard to the special educational needs and disability - code of practice and to meet the needs of children with special educational needs or disabilities.

Written PQ 6285 [[Speech and Language Disorders: Health Services](#)] 13 Jul 2015

Asked by: Johnson, Diana | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what guidance he has issued to local authorities on including the speech, language and communication needs of their local population in their joint strategic needs assessment.

Answering member: Alistair Burt | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department of Health

In March 2013, the Department published statutory guidance to support health and wellbeing boards in undertaking Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies (JHWS).

The guidance focuses on the methodology for producing comprehensive and high quality assessments and strategies, and emphasises the importance of understanding and addressing the needs of the whole local population at all stages in the lifecourse, with a particular focus on vulnerable sub-groups and those likely to experience health inequalities.

The guidance does not specifically discuss the inclusion of speech, language and communication needs of the local population in the JSNA. It would not be appropriate for the Department to highlight any particular care group or area of need over another as this would risk undermining the purpose of JSNAs and JHWSs being objective, comprehensive and locally-owned.

A copy of the guidance is attached.

Attachment: [Statutory Guidance on JSNAs & JHWSs March 2013](#)

6.2 Debates

[Early Years Development and School-Readiness](#), Westminster Hall debate, HC Deb 12 July 2016, 27WH – 53WH

[Speech, Language and Communication Education](#), Adjournment debate, HC deb 19 Jun 2013, 564 cc223-245WH

7. Further reading

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)

[The SEND reforms in England: supporting children and young people with speech, language and communication needs](#), 2017

- A survey of members' experiences of the SEND reforms. It finds that "children without EHC plans are not getting the support that they need" and that joint-commissioning is 'patchy.' Therapists have capacity issues although most were confident that they had been able to implement recent reforms.
- The report finishes with several policy recommendations to resolve these problems.

[Joining the dots: have recent reforms worked for those with SEND?](#) 2015

- This report finds that SEND support is 'fragmented', making it difficult to share knowledge. Local autonomy has engendered some large improvements in some areas as it has allowed new stakeholders to contribute. However while some schools thrive, others struggle.

[Better Communication: shaping speech, language and communication services for children and young people](#), 2012

- A compilation of practical advice for stakeholders.

Save the Children

[Early language development and children's primary school attainment in English and maths: new research findings](#), undated

[Ready to read: Closing the gap in early language skills so that every child in England can read well](#), 2015

- A report that outlines the risks to children's language development and what support is available. The authors recommend that the Government should invest further into the nursery workforce so that "every nursery in England [is] led by a trained teacher or early years graduate by 2020." They also want to see greater support for parents and better tracking of children's progress nationally.

The Communication Trust

[Written Evidence from The Communication Trust](#) to the Education Committee's [Life Chances inquiry](#) (ongoing)

- Recommends improving training of the nursery workforce, particularly in disadvantaged areas.
- Recommends better support and advice for families. Professionals that come into contact with families should be better trained to share information with parents and identify issues.

Academic sources

Jane Harley et al., [Why closing the word gap matters](#), Oxford University Press, 2018

- The ‘word gap’ refers to the “children in Early Years’ settings or pupils entering primary school with a vocabulary far below age-related expectations.” The report considers four questions:
 - What proportion of children are affected by the word gap in UK primary and secondary schools?
 - What are the root causes of the word gap?
 - How does the word gap impact on pupils’ academic achievement, 3 as well as their wider life chances?
 - What successful strategies have schools put in place to close the word gap?

Julie Dockrell, Geoff Lindsay, Sue Roulstone and James Law, [Supporting children with speech, language and communication needs: an overview of the results of the better communication research programme](#), *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 2014

- An overview of the results of the Better Communication Research Programme, began after the 2008 Bercow report. The authors conclude that

The Bercow review (Bercow 2008) was a major landmark in raising of the profile of the needs of children and young people with SLCN. The BCRP has provided extensive evidence with direct and indirect implications for both practice and policy development. Unusually, the government, through the DfE, is now funding (2013– 15) the dissemination and embedding of our research into practice and also making our findings available to inform the development of national policy. The journey from undertaking research to inform the Bercow review, to undertaking a major research programme, to providing evidence and working with the voluntary and community sector provides an important example of the development of evidence-based practice and policy.²⁴

²⁴ Julie Dockrell, Geoff Lindsay, Sue Roulstone and James Law, [Supporting children with speech, language and communication needs: an overview of the results of the better communication research programme](#), *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 2014

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