

# Speech, Language and Communication Needs of Looked After Young People

Stuart Cook

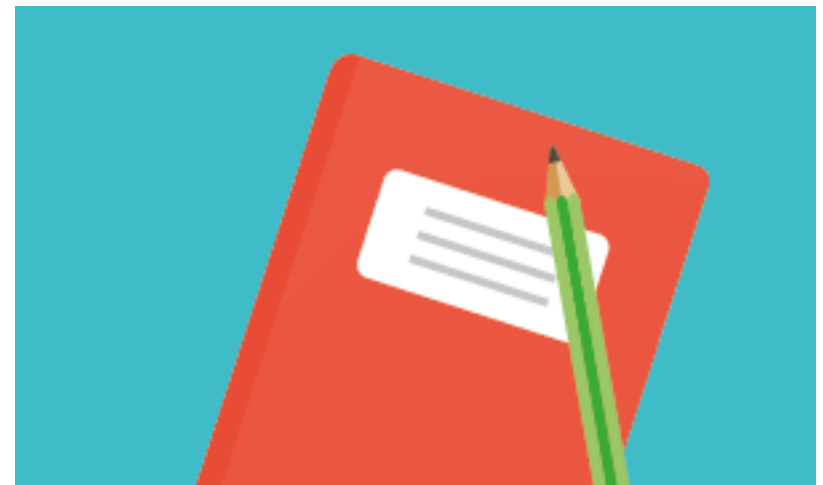
Speech and Language Therapist

Bath and North East Somerset Community Health Services

# Introduction to Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

Impact of SLCN on looked after young people

Strategies for communicating with young people with SLCN

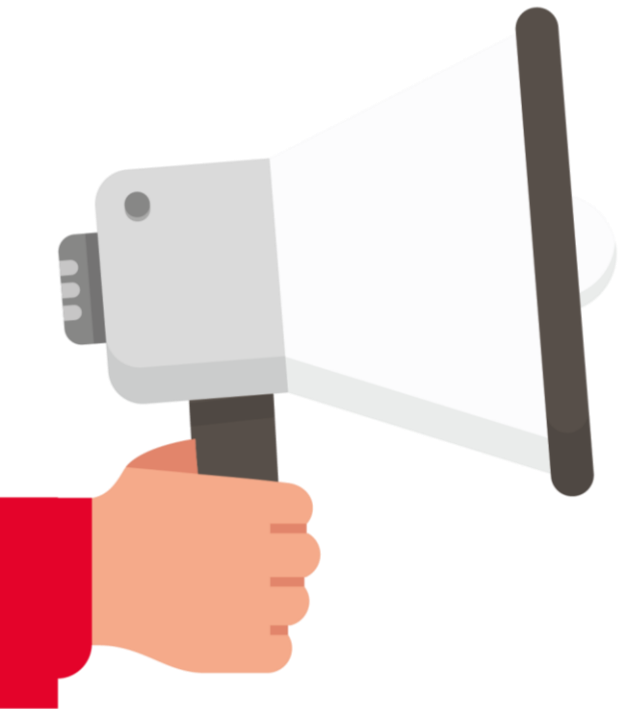


# Speech, Language, and Communication Needs

At least 10% of children have SLCN

Communication problems can impair the ability to interact, manage behaviour, learn and think (Melanie Cross, 2004)

50-90% with a persistent SLCN have reading difficulties (Stothard et al 1998)

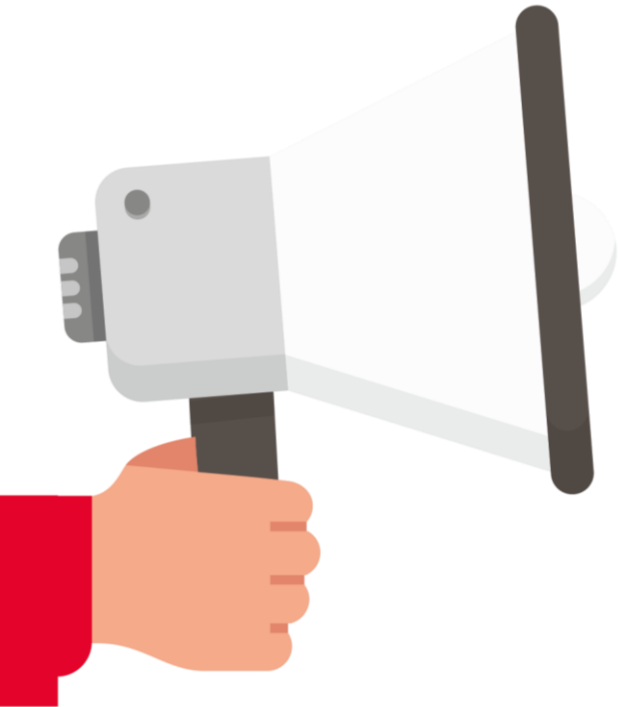


# Speech, Language, and Communication Needs

Those with SLCN gain half as many GCSEs A\*-C/9-4 as their peers

Strong links between SLCN and mental health difficulties later in life (Don't get me wrong – The Communication Trust)

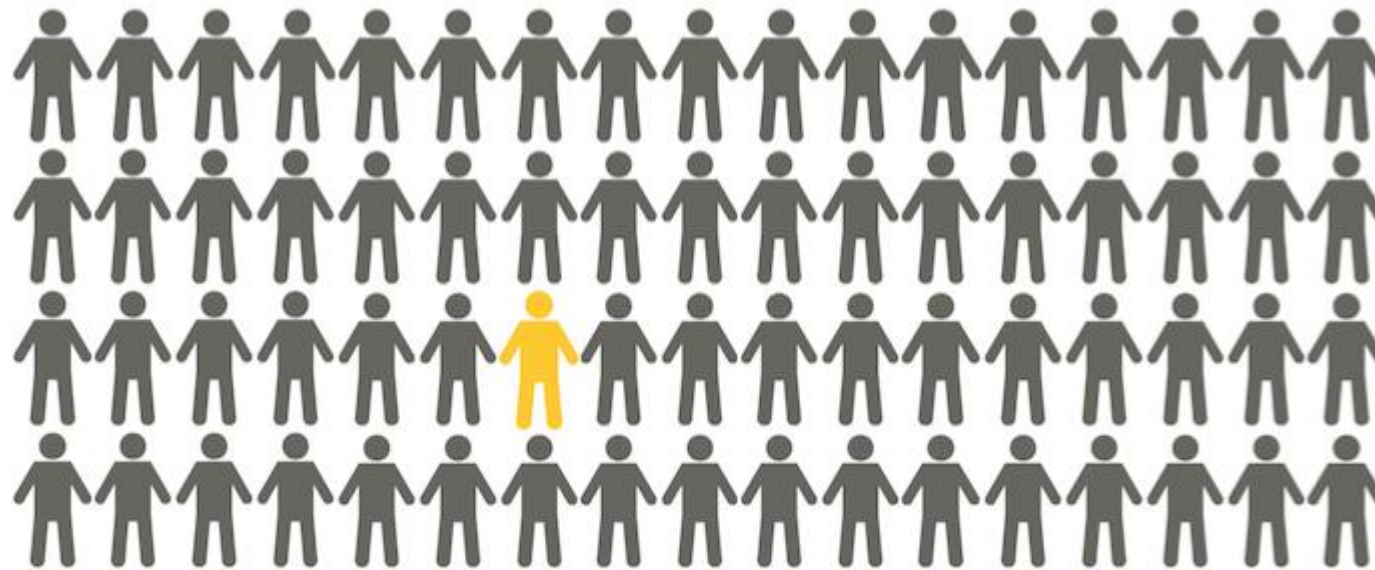
60-90% of those in contact with youth justice services have SLCN (Bryan 2004)



# Prevalence of SLCN



# Prevalence of ASD



Approximately 1.5%

# Possible Communication Difficulties

Vocabulary and Word Finding

Narrative and Sequencing

Higher Level Language

Social Communication

Emotional Literacy



# Impact of SLCN

Social isolation

Falling behind with work

Presenting as less able than they truly are, due to difficulties with explaining themselves

Not answering the question that was asked, or answering it literally, both of which can lead to getting into trouble

Being disorganised

Mental health difficulties



# Impact of SLCN

Frustration and stress

Employment opportunities

Misunderstanding jokes and 'banter'

Unable to talk your way out of a problem; difficulty with negotiation

Struggle to maintain friendships through communication

# Looked After Young People and SLCN

Higher than average levels of SLCN amongst children in care (McCool and Stevens, 2011, Prison Reform Trust, 2016)

In areas of high social deprivation around 50% of children start school with limited language (Locke, Ginsborg, and Peers, 2002; Law, McBean, and Rush, 2011)

Two-thirds of 7-14 year olds with severe behavioural difficulties also have communication needs (Hartshorne, 2006)

'No Wrong Door' a service for LAC in North Yorkshire found 62% of the children had SLCN but only two had previously seen a Speech and Language Therapist



# Strategies for working with SLCN

Frequently check they're understanding what you've said. Ask them to explain it in their own words.

Use short simple language when asking questions, using real life examples where possible

Where possible seek out a video to explain these potentially confusing concepts, or provide simple alternative vocabulary.

# Strategies for working with SLCN

Build rapport

Be direct with your questions; avoid using idioms where possible

Be visual; never go anywhere without a sharpie and some blank paper



# Children and Social Work Bill

Children should “*express their views, wishes and feelings*”

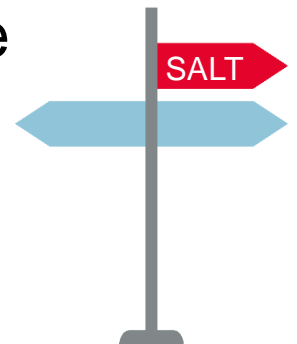


# RCSLT Recommends

**SCREEN** – Children and young people should be routinely screened when entering care, this should be followed up by a full language assessment by a speech and language therapist if required

**TRAIN** – those working with LAC should be trained in awareness of communication needs and how to respond to them

**SUPPORT** – direct speech and language therapy should be provided to those who need it



# Benefits of Speech and Language Therapy



## **PROMOTING POSITIVE OUTCOMES**

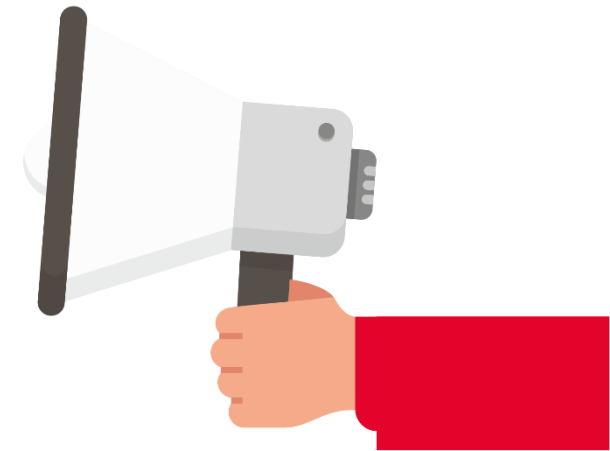
Supports social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing and future life chances by helping to remove barriers to forming attachments and relationships and supports education, training, future employment, and participation in society. It supports looked after children through transitions.



# Benefits of Speech and Language Therapy

## **REDUCING THE RISK OF NEGATIVE OUTCOMES**

Supports staff to manage behaviour verbally and calm potentially risky situations rather than having to resort to physical intervention. It also reduces the risk of communication needs leading to negative consequences, including involvement in the criminal justice system.



# Take-Home Message

Be aware of Speech, Language, Communication Needs

Be simple with your language

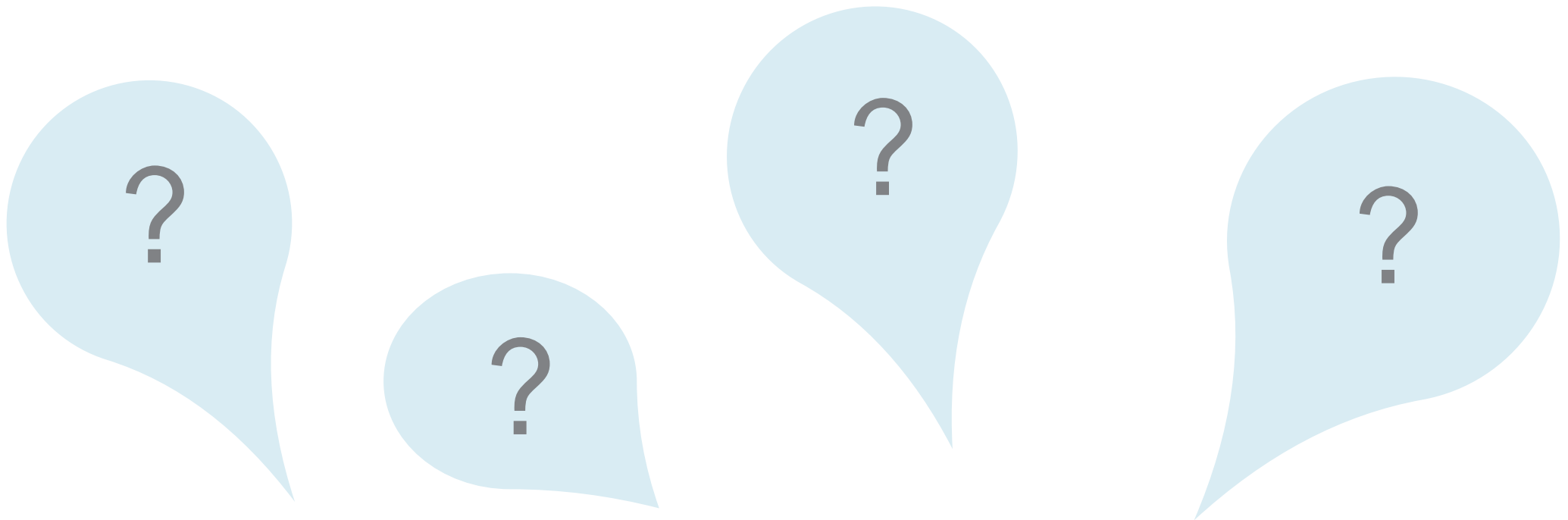
Be ok spending time building rapport

Be direct

Be visual



# Questions



# References

- Bryan, K. (2004). Prevalence of Speech and Language Difficulties in Young Offenders. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 39, pp.391-400.
- Bryan, K., Freer, J., and Furlong C. (2007). Language and Communication Difficulties in Juvenile Offenders. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 42, pp.505-520
- Clark, A., and Fitzsimons D. (2016). Unidentified and Unmet. *RCSLT Bulletin: May* pp.16-17
- Clegg, J., Hollis, C., Rutter, M. (1999). Life Sentence. *RCSLT Bulletin: 571*, pp.16-18
- Hartshorne M. (2006). The Cost to the Nation of Children's Poor Communication, ICAN Talk Series - Issue 2, London: ICAN
- 'In Care, Out of Trouble', (2016). The Prison Reform Trust
- McCool, S., and Stevens, I. (2011). Identifying Speech, Language and Communication Needs Among Children and Young People in Residential Care. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 46(6): pp.665-74



**Stuart Cook**

**Speech and Language Therapist**

**Bath and North East Somerset Community Health Services**

**[stuart.cook@virginicare.co.uk](mailto:stuart.cook@virginicare.co.uk)**