

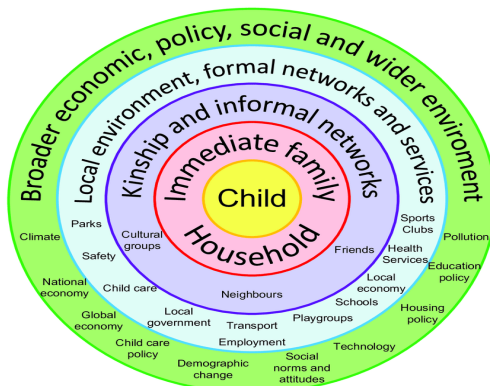
Introduction

The Communication Trust, (2016) states that over one million children in the UK who have speech and language difficulties additionally, Lee (2016) and Redmond (2017) state there are more children with a SLCN than any other disability and is the number one reported additional learning need in primary schools.

The Additional Learning needs code (2018) states that a person has ALN if they have a learning difficulty or disability. ALN includes the ability to understand, behaviour, ability to socialise and communicate. All of these are hard for a child with Speech, Language and Communication difficulties. (Snap Cymru, no date) Early language skills are important for a child's development, confidence and ability to learn. For children to achieve their full potential Law et al, (2009) state language and communication skills are essential. Having difficulties impacts social skills, relationships leading children to an immediate disadvantage to their peers additionally Save the children, (2016) state this may lead to frustration and challenging behaviours.

Children's development is impacted by a range of social, cultural and economic factors. As shown in Bronfenbrenners (2016) ecological model which suggests children develop as a result of interactions between family and childcare settings. It is therefore beneficial for practitioners to work with parents to support children. Research indicates that when parents and practitioners work together environmental influences positively affect language. (Law et al, 2013).

Bronfenbrenners Ecological Model



Source: Research Gate (2016)

Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

Early intervention

Early intervention is important according to the Welsh Government (2018) and Pell, (2020) Identifying an additional learning need in its early stages and implementing appropriate interventions prevents the need for future more costly interventions. Communication and language development involves interaction between children, families and communities it is therefore vital for all those who work with children to identify and support children when needed (McKlean et al, 2017) Some children may show difficulties with communication resulting in frustration and challenging behaviour which may be misunderstood when identifying SLCN

Well comm is an evidence-based tool kit to support children with SLCN (Archibald and Gathercole 2006) It is available to practitioners and teachers for children 6 months-11 years. The aim of the screening kit identifies children who have speech language and social communication needs. Well comm uses a traffic light system of green, amber and red. Amber and green requires a plan of support from setting or schools. Red highlights a need for a referral to the Speech and language team for intervention. The tool kit looks at comprehension (what a child understands and expression (what a child uses) It can highlight other aspects of ALN.

Conclusion

Developing a positive and inclusive environment is beneficial to all and builds a stronger relationship, creating a sense of belonging for children. Being able to communicate effectively is vital for a child's learning and development therefore it is important that children and families are supported. Research demonstrates children's outcomes will improve with early intervention and an equally important aspect is positive engagement with parents. No support can impact on emotional difficulties and peer problems. To conclude social interaction skills have shown to have strong links with language and literacy. Lindsay and (Dockrell, no date).

Strategies

Makaton is a strategy used for children with speech, language and communication difficulties. It positively provides an inclusive environment by allowing all children to communicate, have a voice, be understood or understand. (The Children's Trust, 2020). Spoken slowly to give children the time to understand, It also supports children who are at the early stage of communication and language development. Makaton uses speech, signs and symbols it also incorporates facial expression, eye contact and body language to pass on as much information to the child as possible. (Makaton, date unknown). Makaton signs make spoken words visual by giving them a visual prompt as well as something to listen to. (BBC, no date).

Objects of Reference help support children with their communication. It allows them to make choices and understand what others are saying. Objects are used to show changes in routine and when things will happen. Some children get upset during transitions but with a visual it can be easier understood of what is being asked of them. It makes situations predictable so they understand and anticipate what will happen next (NHS, no date). Furthermore, showing a child two objects allows them to make choices and builds on vocabulary and understanding. (Sense, no date). Visual clues help children build connections between the object and the language spoken. Allowing them to link the word with the object or activity. This strategy has lots of benefits to build on children's independence. It allows them to make their own choices, request items and transition between activities or places by themselves. All these children with SLCN usually struggle with.

Barriers

The Welsh Government, (2020) have aimed to raise more awareness about SLCN, however waiting lists for support are long and Nasen (2020) found that a significant number of settings and schools do not have the provision or relevant trained staff to meet children's speech language and communication needs. When supporting children time is needed for the opportunity to communicate. Importantly children have a voice and a right to be heard and supporting them is time consuming. Nonverbal or other means of communication should be recognised and valued the same way as verbal communication (Shaw, 2016).. Although Well comm has been found to be quick and easy to use and practitioners reporting its ideas were easy to follow and often did not need to involve outside agencies (National Deaf Children's Society no date). Screening takes 20 minutes per child and activities to help need to take place on a one on one or small group basis. This can be hard to plan around ratios and class sizes. Additionally, although permission is not required to complete the screening. Permission is required from parents if a referral is needed which can be upsetting and hard for parents to deal with, as found by Holland and Pell, (2019). A misconception exists that parents are to blame by not talking to children (BBC News, 2012) however Holley, (2018) found that parents can be upset when learning their child has an SCLN and states they often blame themselves. Additionally, evidence suggests parents may also lack time to implement interventions and feel uncomfortable. (Justice et al. 2015). Botting et al, (2016), Conti-Ramsden and Botting, (2008) highlights it is essential families receive help as children are twice as likely to suffer with mental health than those without SLCN. Furthermore, if these are not identified problems will persist into adulthood (Clegg et al, 2005).

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