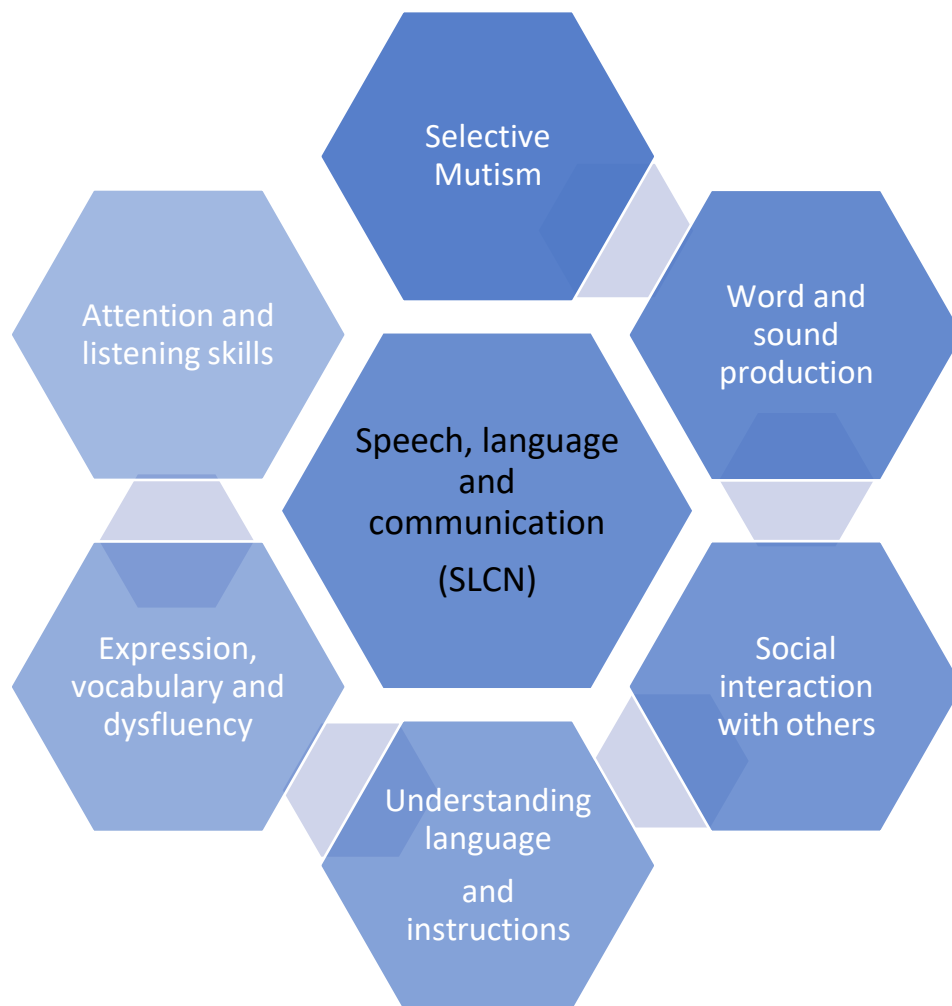


## Communication and Interaction Needs Overview for Parents and Carers



### Helpful strategies

*All of these strategies will help to support speech, language and communication needs in your child and support their development. Your child may need support in more than one area. **If you have concerns about your child, you should speak with your child's teacher or school SENCO about your concerns.***

### Attention and listening

- Try to use a quiet environment to increase attention.
- Follow your child's lead and talk about their interests.
- Praise often and emphasise what they have done right.
- Play or work in short bursts so they can feel successful and let them know how long then need to concentrate for.
- Offer some movement breaks before or after needing to focus.
- Give them a reason to listen (e.g. a special job or word they have to listen out for).

### Receptive Language - Difficulty understanding language and following instructions

- Get your child's attention first by saying their name.
- Show and tell through objects, pictures and gestures.
- Keep your sentences short.
- Use familiar routines to help them understand instructions and what might be happening next.
- Using the positive, e.g. 'Good walking' rather than 'don't run'.

## **Expressive language and vocabulary strategies**

- Offer choices or ways for them to show you what they mean.
- Play vocabulary games (see Tiny Happy people and the Babcock site in the resources section at the end).
- Remember that specific questions- Who? What? Where? How and why can be tricky, so try to think about other ways to find out this information.
- Extend what your child has said by repeating back and adding in some extra information (e.g. yes, we saw a *yellow* car)

## **Difficulties with word, or sound production**

- Show them that you are listening.
- Tell them to show you instead if you aren't sure what they have said.
- Syllables and clapping games.
- Do not correct speech but repeat back in the correct way.
- Sound games e.g. I spy.

## **Dysfluency - Disruption to the flow and timing of speech**

- Model slowing down your own speech and pause between phrases.
- Give processing time and don't overuse questions.
- Maintain eye contact and show you are listening by giving your full attention

## **Social skills and interaction**

- Notice different styles of communication at different times. Your child may be able to communicate much better in some situations than others, when they are most relaxed for example.
- Support skills which will help with turn taking or expectations within groups. This may involve talking about or role playing what might happen beforehand at home, or getting involved to support any turn taking to help reduce any worry.
- Talk about it being ok to feel shy in new situations or with new people, and what might help them with that.
- Talk about emotions in the moment (e.g. I wonder if you are feeling a bit...shy/nervous/worried) to help your child understand and communicate how they feel.
- Reassure your child that non-verbal communication is ok e.g. smiling and waving.
- Let other people around them know not to put them under pressure to speak.
- If helpful:
  - Give your child a set phrase to say.
  - Sensitively prompt to say hello or stay on topic (e.g. by modelling this yourself, practicing this in beforehand or using a code word to help them get back on topic).

## **Autism and neurodiversity**

- Promote understanding and self-advocacy to support your child to learn how to develop new skills for themselves, using the following workbooks and neurodiversity-affirming resources:
  - <https://ausometraining.com/product/standing-up-for-myself-digital-book/>
  - <https://ausometraining.com/products-autism-books-social-skills/>
  - <https://bridgeslearningsystem.com/?fbclid=IwAR2qSxCbvNeRkjDfXldfwzvI1mWZ8bCwZ5ATmtjGXmTDmu95KRjtGZGa8s>
- Develop collaboration skills alongside your child, using the following resources:
  - The Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) model: [PARENTS & FAMILIES – LIVES IN THE BALANCE](#)
  - EST of the NEST approach: <https://www.barrierstoeducation.co.uk/meltdowns>

*Other helpful resources include:*

- Spectrum Gaming's Padlet: <https://padlet.com/spectrumgaming/AutismResources>
- This comprehensive book list for children, teens and adults: <https://notanautismmom.com/2020/07/20/autism-books>

## **Selective Mutism**

- Avoid pressuring your child to speak and reassure them you know they find it hard. Selective mutism is not a choice, and your child is likely to feel comfortable to talk with you but may be not when in certain situations or around other people.
- Accept their current communication and always respond positively to it (but don't make a 'big deal' in front of others if they do speak, just carry on with the interaction and celebrate in private).
- Don't offer lots of praise (or consequences) for speaking or not speaking, as this will add to feelings of stress and draw attention to them.
- Talk to the others to help them understand your child's difficulties so other people can help to make your child feel comfortable and ensure they can get involved without the need to talk. The SMiRA Website has lots of helpful resources that you can share with other family members and school staff. There is also guidance on how you can work with your child to think about how they want to information about their selective mutism to be shared with other people: [Information - SMIRA \(selectivemutism.org.uk\)](https://selectivemutism.org.uk)
- Spectrum Gaming have also created a resource for neurodivergent young people which are saved here: [Selective Mutism Created Resources - Google Drive](#)

## **Further resources**

[Speech and Language Therapy - Pediatric Community Services](#)

[Tiny Happy People](#) has lots of tips and ideas for supporting communication at home.

The [Babcock site](#) provides information and training for parents/carers on how to support their children's needs.

[Afasic](#) produces free downloads with vital information for parents and professionals about talking, understanding language and getting the right help. They offer free downloads, free parent support days and workshops, and useful links to mobile apps and other support.

[Selective Mutism Information & Research Association \(SMIRA\)](#) produces free information and resources and runs an active Facebook Group.

[British Stammering Association](#) provides a range of information, resources and advice to support those with a stammer, as well as their families and carers. The website includes recommended therapies and courses, as well as 'Everyday Tips' and apps and devices.

[Michael Palin Centre for Stammering](#) offers a range of support services for children, young people and parents and training courses for professionals.

[National Autistic Society \(autism.org.uk\)](#) the UK's leading charity for autistic people and their families provides a range of information and resources.

[Spectrum Gaming](#) is an online community for autistic young people which aims to build friendships, increase self-acceptance and advocate on behalf of the autistic community. Spectrum Gaming are developing [Barriers to Education](#), a Neurodiversity Affirming Guide for parents and professionals..