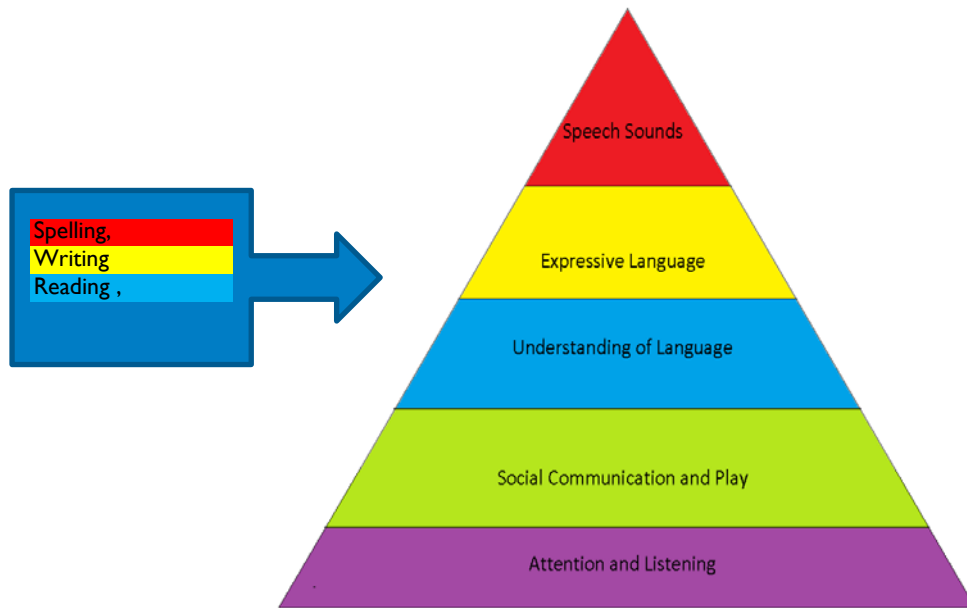


Speech, language and communication needs support for pre-school children in Bexley

Q1. What are Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)?

The ability to communicate with others requires a variety of skills and the opportunity and motivation to communicate. Children learn these skills through play and listening to other people. Some children find it difficult to listen, understand and communicate and may need support to develop the surprising number of skills involved.



Speech: includes speech sounds, use of your voice and fluency (stammering).

Language: includes talking, understanding and verbal reasoning.

Communication: includes speech, language, and social interaction. If speaking is difficult, other ways of communicating can help – signs, symbols, communication aids.

Children with SLCN may have difficulty with only one area of communication, or with several. Speech and language skills support children to learn to read and to write.

Q2. Are speech, language and communication needs common?

It is estimated that around 10% of children starting school have SLCN – that's approximately 2-3 children in every classroom.

Q3. Who provides support for preschool children?

Support for children under 5 who have speech and language needs is provided by Bexley Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service, Oxleas NHS Trust. We see children who are registered with a Bexley GP. If you do not have a GP, and you live in Bexley, you can still see a Speech and Language Therapist or call us for advice.

The Under 5's speech and language service is for children:

- aged 6 months and above, with swallowing (dysphagia) difficulties
- aged 18 months and above, with complex developmental or medical needs
- aged 2 years up to the age they start school

Q3. How is a referral made?

Referral to the service can be made by a professional or by parents/carers by completing the Preschool Speech and Language Therapy Referral Form. You can ask for a Speech and Language referral form by emailing oxl-tr.bexleySCS-SPA@nhs.net. Referrals usually come from parents, carers, Health Visitors, GPs, Consultants or Pre-school staff. If a professional is making a referral parent / carer consent must be gained in order for a referral to be made.

When a referral is made a professional completes the referral form in discussion with the parent/carer. The referral information is then sent to Acorns, Children and Young People's Services. The administration team will then contact parents/carers by post to arrange a suitable appointment time for the child.

Children are seen for a first appointment with a Speech and Language Therapist at one of our community clinics for example: in Sidcup, Erith, Northumberland Heath or Bexleyheath.

Children with complex developmental needs, a swallowing impairment, hearing impairment or autism may be seen by our specialist therapy teams, or a multi-disciplinary team. A multi-disciplinary team is made up of a group of professionals (e.g. Physiotherapist, Paediatrician, Occupational Therapist and Speech and Language Therapist, Portage Team) some or all of whom may be involved in a child's care.

Q4. What happens during an assessment?

Initial appointments last approximately an hour. The Therapist will ask questions to help the assessment, for example about your child's birth, development, your views on your child's abilities and needs. The therapy staff will provide a play-based assessment to assess your child's development across the following areas:

- Skills needed to develop communication - such as listening, attention, turn taking, play
- Understanding spoken language
- Vocabulary development
- Talking in sentences
- Speech sounds and Voice
- Fluency eg: for stammering
- Social communication eg: use of language when interacting with others

Q5. What happens after the assessment?

The therapist will discuss their findings with the parent/carer and the next steps will be agreed. Parents/carers are provided with a written report or summary on the assessment finding, and advice about how parents/carers and others can support the child.

If a child's communication skills are developing and do not require specialist support, we will provide the parents/carers with advice for home or pre-school and discharge the child from the service. Alternatively, based on the assessment findings, a child may be offered either a review appointment or a course of therapy. Advice is given for home and for other professionals e.g.: nursery staff, childminder etc. if required.

Q6. What is a Speech and Language Care Plan?

A care plan contains goals and activities to develop a child's communication. The assessment, together with parents/carers views and the views of early years education staff, are combine to form the care plan. The care plan is reviewed at the end of therapy, showing a child's progress and the agreed next steps.

A care plan may also contain advice and activities which have been suggested and demonstrated to parents/carers or early years settings to help a child's communication skills develop in everyday environments.

When a child no longer needs advice from this service, communication can continue to be developed at home and at pre-school. A re-referral can be made at any time if further needs arise.

Q7. How will my child make progress?

Pre-school children learn through play and by interacting with the people around them. We know that if a child gets help early on, supported by parents/carers, together we can make a difference. We help parents/carers to understand their child's communication strengths and difficulties.

Working in partnership with families, carers and staff in early years settings we help child to play, listen well, interact, understand spoken language and express themselves. We provide practical advice and support and offer training for families and early years staff.

Drop in sessions

Parents of pre-school children, who have not been referred to the service, can attend a drop-in session. At these sessions parents/carers who are worried about their child's communication can talk to a speech therapist. Parents don't need an appointment and will be seen on a 'first-come, first-served' basis. To find out the dates and times of these drop in sessions please visit <http://oxleas.nhs.uk/services/?bexley=true>

Q8. My child has difficulties with communication what will help them?

The films, 'Through the eyes of a Child' (Communication Trust) narrated by comedian Kathy Burke, are full of useful advice on how parents can help a child, from birth to 3 years. There are 4 films for parents and these can be viewed by visiting the following the link below.

<https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/resources/resources/resources-for-parents/through-the-eyes-of-a-child.aspx>

Q9. Who can parents contact for advice?

The pre-school speech and language therapy service can be contact on:

Tel: 0203 004 0092 - **Email:** oxl-tr.bexleySCS-SPA@nhs.net

Post: Acorns, Children and Young People's Services, Frogna Avenue, Sidcup DA14 6LT

Useful Websites:

www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk Advice and fun activities to help your child's speech and language development

www.talkingpoint.org.uk Parent advice and Resources / General information about children's speech and language development

www.ican.org.uk Information about speech and language needs for parents and practitioners

www.stammering.org.uk Information and support on stammering

www.afasic.org.uk Information and support for children and young people with speech and language needs

www.autism.org.uk National Autistic Society

www.downs-syndrome.org.uk Down Syndrome Association

www.ndcs.org.uk National Deaf Children's Society

www.bexley.gov.uk/bexleylocaloffer Bexley Local Offer

[Speech and Language Therapy Pre-School](#) Speech and Language Therapy Service Preschool Leaflet