

Baselining the provision of SLCN support across all our Doncaster schools

UPDATE on timings:

Dear Headteachers/SENDCOs,

We have been heartened by a number of replies to yesterday's email that all say that you recognise the importance of this piece of work on SLCN, and that your setting(s) are keen to do it justice and provide a comprehensive whole school response to the survey BUT that you do not feel that the three-week window that was given yesterday provides you with enough time to be able to do this.

Having consulted with colleagues we would like to propose extending the deadline for all settings to Friday 24th January 2025. This would allow the whole three-week window to move after Christmas, or alternatively it to become a longer extended window with the process being extended.

Thank you again for your feedback and we look forward to working with you in 2025 on this important area.

Best wishes,

Graeme and Karl.

Dear Headteacher/SENDCO,

We need your support in the next three weeks to do a really important piece of work on the provision of speech, language and communication support across our city.

Early language development and communication skills are recognised as primary indicators of child wellbeing due to the link between language and other social, emotional and learning outcomes. Language contributes to a child's ability to manage emotions and communicate feelings; to establish and maintain relationships; to think symbolically and to learn to read and write. Without support, children and young people with SLCN are at risk of poor outcomes across the course of their life.

- Approximately 10% of children and young people have long-term SLCN which causes them significant difficulties with communication or learning in everyday life.
- Children from socially disadvantaged families are more than twice as likely to be identified with a SLCN. Due to social clustering, more than 50% of children living in areas of high social deprivation may start school with SLCN.

The Doncaster vision is:

Establishing a Doncaster City speech, language and communication strategy, a clear integrated pathway with agreed system wide roles, responsibilities and governance.



- No one part of the system can tackle the rising level of need on its own, and we need to work together to ensure that school settings support the early identification of children with SLCN, and that interventions should be provided that are proportionate to the level of need with request for support from specialist services where needed – following as always the graduation of support (of the graduated approach.)

Specialist	Speech and Language Therapy Specialist advisory teacher
Targeted	1. Differentiate work and activities 2. Scaffold and support spoken language 3. Manualised SLCN interventions (e.g. on narrative, friendships/interaction, verbal reasoning)
Universal	- Create a communication-supporting environment - Adapt your language - Explicitly teach vocabulary - Encourage children to monitor understanding and ask for help - Plan opportunities to develop and use communication skills

We would like to use “The Balanced System” tools to work with you to understand what you currently provide in school at a universal and targeted level for those children and young people that have an SLCN need in their profile.

The purpose of this survey is to help the wider Partnership establish the current baseline across educational settings in the City of Doncaster. We would like you to map your SLCN support across 5 strands of family support, enabling environments, workforce, identification of need, and effective intervention.



The 5-strand framework* for a comprehensive system includes:

- **family support:** ensuring parents, carers and families have the information, resources and advice to be more confident in supporting their child
- **environment:** ensuring that there are good examples of how to adapt and enhance environments where children live, play and learn to facilitate speech, language and communication
- **workforce:** ensuring that the workforce in a local area has the skills, competences and confidence to support parents, carers and children to develop speech, language and communication skills
- **identification:** ensuring that the local area has consistent and effective early identification methods in place
- **intervention:** ensuring that the local area offer a range of interventions

**The Balanced System® is underpinned by the principle that the 5 strands all need to be addressed if systemic change is to be achieved and sustained.*

Points of action please:

1. We'd like you to share this email and the attached document this week with anyone in your setting who has a role in delivering universal and targeted SLCN provision across your setting. Please ensure they have background above and the intro to the framework and the five strands, and ask them to annotate on an A3 copy of the document what they think your school delivers for SLCN learners and their families.
2. Please hold a setting meeting with all relevant members of staff in week 2, and on a master blank copy of the five strands (attached and entitled the SLCN baseline survey prep document) run off as an A3, gather information about what your setting currently provides across the five strands above. Discuss both what you do and how well you feel as a group the current offer meets the needs of your young people and their families.
3. We would like a school senior leader to then sit with the SENDCO/inclusion lead and complete the Microsoft Form in week 3, both recording the information across the five strands but also to do some analysis on the areas including rating yourself 1 to 5

on each in answer to the question: “How far do you believe as a setting that you meet your learners needs in this area?”

4. As you work through the form you will see it also asks you to explain your rating, “highlighting any setting strengths, barriers or areas for development that you have identified.”
5. The form can be found here: <https://forms.office.com/e/iWbBi4SLbi>
6. Please try to follow the process outlined above (wherever possible.) We would like to give you a three-week window from today to return the form, with the idea being that you could meet as a setting with the wider team in week 2 and then meet as a two to write the submission on the MS Form in week 3. So a deadline of form submission by 5pm on Monday 9th December 2025 please.

On behalf of the wider Doncaster partnership we would like to thank you in advance for the time taken to collate and analyse this information, so that we can establish as detailed and accurate a picture of SLCN provision across our city.

NB. Please can one person from your setting acknowledge receipt of this email to the [@Education Standards and Effectiveness](#) email as above.

Many thanks,

Grame Routledge

School Improvement Advisor (Inclusion and SEND)
City of Doncaster Council

Karl Bower

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