

Link Therapists in Mainstream Primary and Secondary Settings

What is a link therapist?

A link therapist is a named speech and language therapist who builds a relationship with a school and supports the school to develop Speech, Language and Communication provision at a universal, targeted and specialist levels. This way of working will improve outcomes for all children to access support at the right level at the right time.

The link therapist is the lead point of contact for the school around any of the speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) of children across the school. Link therapist time is allocated based on need with the link therapists thinking holistically about the school setting, environment, training needs and the needs of individual pupils.

What to expect from initial link therapist meeting: (and first meeting of each academic year)

- Before meeting with your link therapist it would be helpful for the SENCo, head teacher and other relevant members of staff to evaluate the provision within school to support speech, language and communication and how outcomes are monitored. It is important to consider the needs of your staff, the environment, wider attainment scores which are impacted on by SLCN (e.g. oracy links to literacy) and individual cohorts of children.
- Complete the referral paperwork for all of the children you would like to discuss and potentially refer to the speech and language therapy service.
- Consider the training needs of your staff. The core training offer can be found here: [Training for Professionals - Children's Speech and Language Therapy | CPFT NHS Trust](#). However, you may want to commission specific pieces of training.
- Other colleagues can be invited by school to this meeting as deemed appropriate (e.g. OT, Educational Psychologist, Autism Advisory Service etc...)

Your school will be mapped on to a Profile document. This is a living document which can be referred to and updated throughout the year.

School Name:		Part of a Trust? Y/N Name:	Demographics:	Languages represented:
Head Teacher:		Key Contact:		Socio-economic:
Deputy Head:		Key TA's:	EHCPs:	Timeframes:
SENCo:				
Safeguarding Lead:		School Nurse:		
Link Therapist:		Feeder Preschools:		
Useful Details: (e.g. speech and language link/welcom etc...)			Annual Reviews:	Due:
Training Received: (include training in last 36 months)		When:	What are the school already great at:	
Training Needs:			School Aims for the next academic year:	
CYP Discussed:	Action Plan:	By Who:	Comments:	

Date:

Signed School:

Signed Therapist: |

Individual pupils:

The school will use the link therapist meeting to discuss individual pupils where appropriate. This could be pupils for whom staff or parents/carers have a concern and would like to seek advice. Together with the link therapist, and specialist teacher if present, staff will agree a plan including universal or targeted provisions offered by the school, alongside more specialist provisions as appropriate.

School will use this opportunity to outline children with EHCPs and SLCN within them to the Link Speech and Language therapist, forecasting dates for annual review to support with service delivery and diary planning to ensure reports are provided in a timely manner where this is required.

Top tips:

- Allow enough time for discussion and complete preliminary work.
- For SENCOs to ensure all paperwork is completed and sent to the service two weeks prior to the meeting.
- **N.b. a meeting should have been arranged prior to sending all referral paperwork to the service.**

Follow up support:

- Dates for subsequent link therapists meetings and visits will be agreed – the frequency of meetings will depend on the size and level of need within the school.
- The action plan/meeting record will clearly state the agreed actions to be completed and by whom, the timeframe for completion and the outcomes to be shared.

What are school's responsibilities?:

- To commit to supporting children with SLCN within the school environment and consider the holistic needs of the setting
- Implement a clear communication plan to parents/carers informing them of the link therapist approach. Information could be provided on the school website as well as in newsletters. Here is some suggested wording:

“Speech, Language and Communication development are important life skills. They are linked to learning, attainment, behaviour, social and emotional development as well as mental wellbeing.

We are committed to supporting the speech, language and communication development of all our pupils. We are working in partnership with our NHS link Speech and Language therapist as well as the Local Authority Specialist Services to continue to improve our practice and provision and help to ensure that all our children reach their potential. Your child may therefore come into contact with a speech and language therapist within their classroom or around the school.

If you have any concerns about your child's speech, language or communication skills, please speak to your child's class teacher in the first instance. We will then work together with you to agree next steps.

You will be kept informed about any plans to support your child.”

What will happen when the Speech and Language Therapy Service is short staffed?

If the Speech and Language Therapy service was in a position of short staffing the link therapist model will be maintained for as long as possible. However, this may require someone other than your link therapist completing 'link therapy' meetings.

Collaboration with other services:

It is the responsibility of school staff to inform the Speech and Language Therapy service where they have referred children and young people to other services either Education or Health to support collaborative working and best outcomes.