

Speaks clearly in home language and is easily understood by adults

The early years of childhood are a highly significant stage in terms of speech and language development. With increasing numbers of children starting school with poor levels of communication, it's vital that early years settings are providing all the support they can.

Typical development

3 to 4 year olds will be learning to:	Develop their pronunciation but may have problems saying: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some sounds: r, j, th, ch, and sh • Multi-syllabic words such as 'pterodactyl', 'planetarium' or 'hippopotamus'
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Why is speech and language development important?

Speech and language development includes the ability to listen, understand and communicate verbally and non-verbally. There are many ways in which this skillset is beneficial to children, including helping to build their confidence and have their needs understood.

For some children, English is an additional language so adults should be aware of the child's fluency and level of understanding in their home language.

How can practitioners support children?

- Speak clearly and calmly
- Use age-appropriate language
- Make eye contact (get down to the child's level if necessary)
- Repeat sentences back to children, replacing mistakes with corrections
- Repeat sentences back to children, expanding on the words they've used
- Describe and comment on what you're doing
- Describe and comment on what the children are doing
- Label objects and actions
- Listen carefully when the children are talking to you – be patient and give them plenty of time to find their words

Activity ideas

- Read books – offer a variety of books in a range of languages
- Show and tell – offer opportunities for families to share cultural differences
- Sing songs
- Role-play and pretending games

Useful Links

Speech and Language Therapy: <https://www.ghc.nhs.uk/our-teams-and-services/childrens-slt/> The Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service is a countywide specialist service for children and young people aged 0 – 18 and their families and carers. We work within a variety of locations including mainstream schools, community clinics, preschool settings, special schools and client's homes. You can access a range of information including, SALT toolkit, handouts and resources, useful links, training etc.

Every Child a Talker: <https://talk4meaning.co.uk/every-child-a-talker/>

Elklan: <https://www.elklan.co.uk/>

English as an additional language: [English as an additional language \(EAL\) - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](#)