

Experts at Hand - Support for Mainstream Schools and Settings

Helping children communicate, learn and thrive

The Leeds Children's Speech and Language Therapy Expert at Hand service provides timely advice, guidance and practical support to help schools identify and meet speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) earlier, without requiring a diagnosis or referral to specialist therapy services. The service works alongside school staff to build confidence, develop inclusive practice and support children in their everyday learning environment.

What Expert at Hand Is	What Expert at Hand Is Not
✓ Early help and advice ✓ Collaborative problem solving ✓ Support delivered alongside school staff ✓ Time-limited specialist input ✓ Capacity building for school teams ✓ Observation and recommendation of strategies ✓ Training, coaching and modelling ✓ Support based on need rather than diagnosis ✓ Bespoke support for settings ✓ NHS SLT's with access to clinical systems	✗ A replacement for specialist Speech and Language Therapy ✗ A diagnostic assessment service ✗ An EHCP assessment service ✗ Long-term direct therapy ✗ A replacement for statutory provision ✗ A service requiring a diagnosis before support can be accessed The national guidance makes clear that Experts at Hand will complement existing services and statutory support rather than replace them.

How Can We Help?

Speech	Understanding Language	Expressive Language	Social Communication
Needs may present as: Being difficult to understand Missing out or substituting speech sounds Having unclear speech compared with peers Becoming frustrated when communicating	Needs may present as: Difficulties following instructions Needing information repeated frequently Finding it difficult to understand questions Having difficulty learning new vocabulary Appearing inattentive when language demands are high	Needs may present as: Finding it difficult to explain ideas Using limited vocabulary Producing short or immature sentences Difficulties retelling events or stories Having difficulty participating in discussions	Needs may present as: Finding conversations difficult Misinterpreting social situations Turn-taking differences Having difficulty understanding non-literal language Experiencing challenges with developing friendships
How we can help ✓ Targeted learning environment strategies ✓ Small-group intervention recommendations ✓ Staff coaching and modelling ✓ Training on speech sound development and impact on phonics/literacy	How we can help ✓ Learning environment observation ✓ Support to adapt instructions ✓ Vocabulary teaching strategies ✓ Environmental adaptations ✓ Whole-class and targeted intervention advice ✓ Staff training and coaching	How we can help ✓ Learning environment observation ✓ Strategies to develop spoken language ✓ Narrative and vocabulary support ideas ✓ Advice on scaffolding communication	How we can help ✓ Learning environment observation ✓ Practical learning environment strategies ✓ Advice on developing social understanding ✓ Support with communication-friendly environments

✔ Support to use screening tools to determine whether specialist SLT referral may be required	✔ Support to use screening tools to determine whether specialist SLT referral may be required	✔ Group intervention recommendations ✔ Support to use screening tools to determine whether specialist SLT referral may be required	✔ Staff consultation and coaching ✔ Inclusive approaches that support participation ✔ Support to use screening tools to determine whether specialist SLT referral may be required
Whole Class/School Support			
Develop Communication Friendly Learning Environments • Communication Friendly environments checklist – review how well the environment supports SLCN • Learning environment observation – adult/child interactions and use of strategies to support communication • Visual support systems – check how they are being used and the effectiveness • Improve language-rich learning opportunities • Adapt curriculum delivery	Workforce Development and Staff Confidence • Coaching and modelling • Workshops and training sessions • Drop-in advice sessions for practitioners • SENDCO consultations • Highlighting and sharing good practice	Inclusive Teaching and Curriculum Support • Whole-school communication strategies • Universal approaches benefiting all pupils • Support with graduated response planning • Development of communication champions • Develop awareness and reflective practice around classroom talk.	Strategic Leadership and SEND Development Supporting leaders to develop sustainable systems, policies and whole-school improvement in speech, language and communication. • Establishing communication champions • Evaluating the impact of interventions • Supporting transitions between key stages • Developing a speech, language and communication strategy • Reviewing Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) • Developing parent partnership approaches

Strategies to support levels of engagement and regulation			
Parents/Carers and Community			
- Drop-in session for parents/carers to discuss strategies and advice - Facilitating parental engagement - Deliver parent workshops in setting - Signposting to 3rd sector groups and relevant resources - Linking in with parent/carer forums			

Our Aim: To work alongside schools and settings so that children and young people with speech, language and communication needs receive the right support, at the right time, in the place where they learn every day

Request for Support: Please complete the following information

Leeds School/Setting/Cluster/Academy Group:	
Name of person requesting support:	

Role:			
Email:			
Telephone:			
Date of request:			
Tick	What Support Are You Looking For?	Tick	Nature of Concern – tick all that apply
	Advice regarding an individual pupil		Speech sounds/articulation
	Class or group support		Understanding language
	SENDCO consultation		Expressive language
	Staff coaching		Vocabulary development
	Whole-school support		Social communication
	Communication-friendly environment review		Listening and attention
	Training request		Emotional regulation and communication
	Parent workshop request		Communication impacting learning
	Other (give details)		Communication-friendly environment
			Staff confidence/support
			Emotional regulation and communication
			Other (give details)

Brief Description of Concern

Please tell us:

What is working well?	
What are your main concerns?	

What support has already been tried?	
What impact is the difficulty having on learning, participation or wellbeing?	

Desired Outcome

What would you like to achieve through support from the Expert at Hand service?

What Happens Next?

1. Request received.
2. Triage by an SLT Expert at Hand practitioner.
3. Appropriate support offered, which may include:
 - Advice and guidance
 - Observation
 - Coaching

- Resource recommendations
- Group or whole-class support
- Signposting to other services where appropriate

4. Strategies agreed and reviewed with setting staff.