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The term speech, language and communication needs is problematic because

- The term is used in different ways by different people, that can be confusing and it does not help dialogue across different professionals or with parents.
- The DfE descriptor of SLCN does not do justice to the various types of SLCN (e.g. stammering etc.) that exist within the term.
- Teachers tend to focus on the SLCN category rather than looking at each child's individual profile of needs, strengths and weaknesses to guide their teaching approaches.
- Identification of needs is important because needs, rather than a diagnostic category, should determine resources applied to supporting the child.



The term SLCN has become commonly used over the past decade as an umbrella term for all speech, language and communication needs. This is the case both within the speech and language therapy profession¹⁵ and subsequently in the Bercow Review and Better Communication Action Plan^{16,17}, as well as the through the work of the Communication Champion and during the Hello campaign in the national year of communication¹⁸.

The SEN category 'SLCN' in an educational context refers specifically to children and young people whose primary learning need has been identified as being speech, language and communication. In the SEND reforms, the SEN term SLCN sits within an umbrella term of Communication and Interaction, alongside ASD. The number of children with a primary need of SLCN will represent only a small proportion of those who require support for speech, language and communication.

¹⁵ Gascoigne, M.T. (2006) Supporting children with speech, language and communication needs within integrated children's services RCSLT Position Paper. http://www.rcslt.org/docs/free-pub/Supporting_children-website.pdf

¹⁶ Bercow, J. (2008) The Bercow Report: A review of services for children and young people (0-19) with speech, language and communication needs. Nottingham: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://education.gov.uk/publications/eorderingdownload/bercow-report.pdf>

¹⁷ DCSF (2008) Better Communication Action Plan

¹⁸ Gross, J. (2011) Two years on - the final report of the Communication Champion for children

