



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

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HOSPITAL | COMMUNITY | HOME

Giving Voice

Identifying communication needs of looked after children

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Key Messages

- Prevalence of SLCN in looked after population
- Links with SEMH
- Sources of support
- Understanding communication needs
- Identifying children with SLCNs
- Communication and behaviour

The size of the problem

- **Communication impairment** is commonly seen in children and young people in residential care
- **Looked after children with communication needs** overrepresented in the care and criminal justice systems
- HMIP and YJB – **1/3 young men in YOIs** had been looked after
- No Wrong Door – **62% of looked after children had communication needs**

SEMH and Communication

- **81%** of children with emotional and behavioural disorders have **significant language deficits**
- People with a **primary communication impairment** are at greater risk of a **secondary mental health disorder**, commonly anxiety or depression
- Between **40% and 54%** of children with behaviour problems have **language impairment**

Environment

Social
Disadvantage

Attachment
difficulties/
abuse/ neglect/
trauma

SLCN +
other
difficulties
e.g. autism

DLD

Identifying the 10%

In toddlers who are late talkers, notably poor comprehension as well as small vocabulary, or failure to use gesture to communicate (Catalise 2 Project)

Children with complex communication needs including social interaction/communication; repetitive play; loss of skills

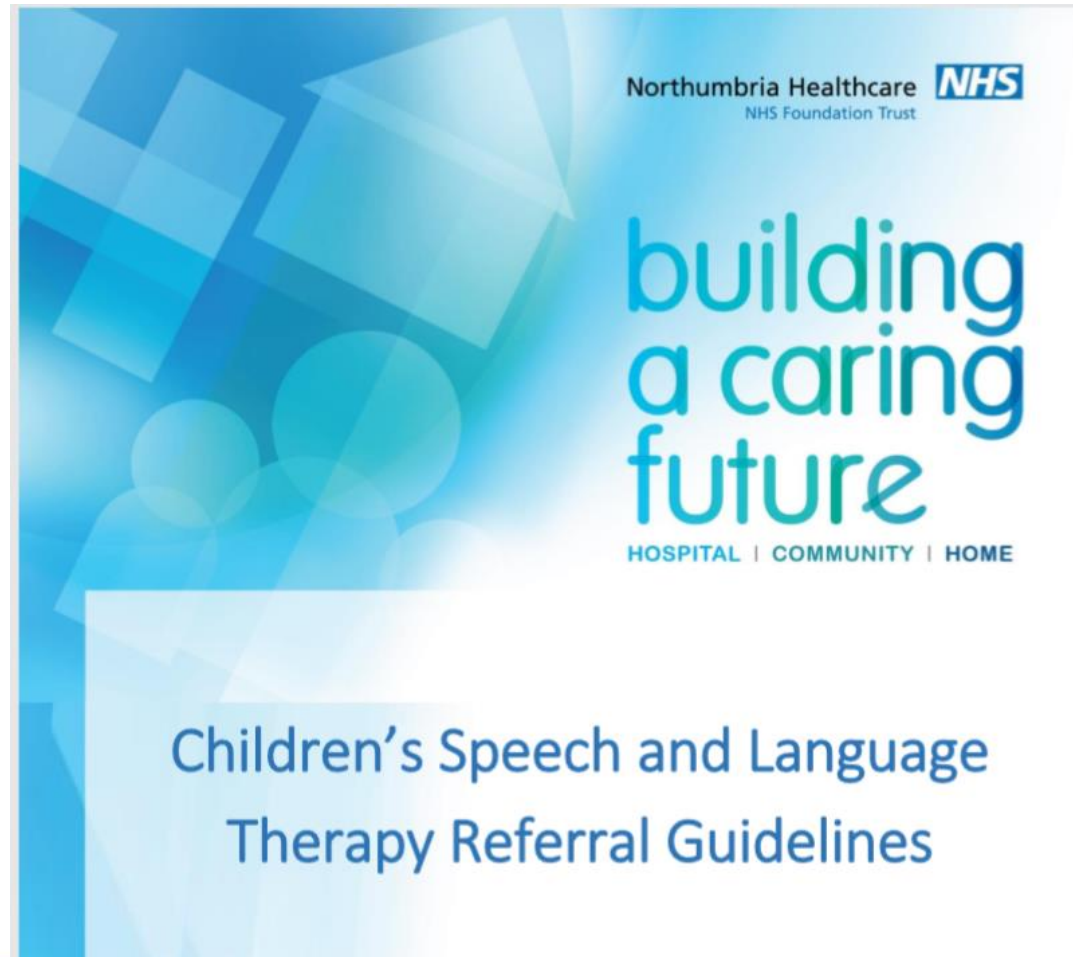
Information for parents carers and partners

- www.northumbria.nhs.uk
- Children's Services
- Speech and Language Therapy

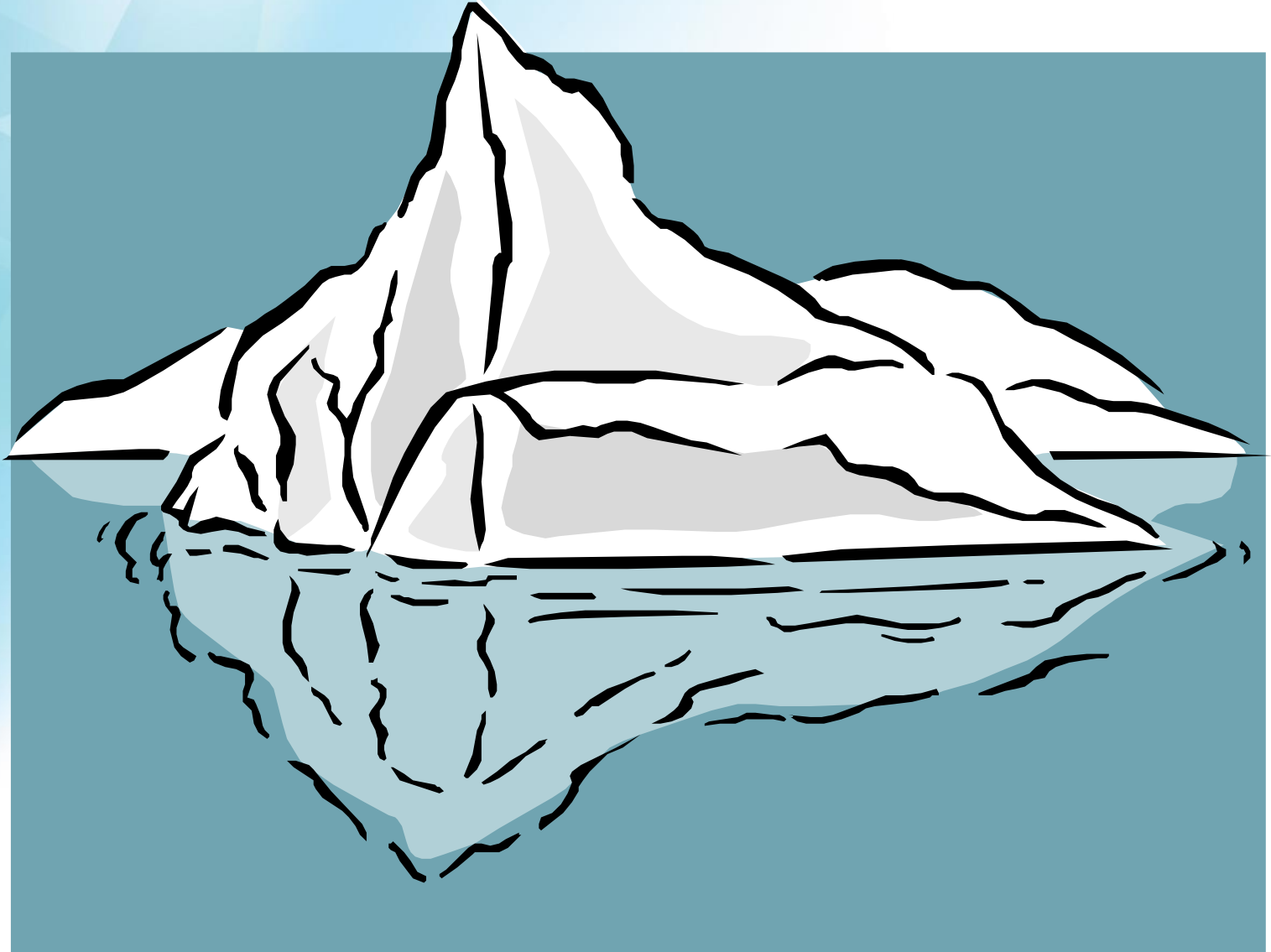


- Links on Northumberland Local Offer

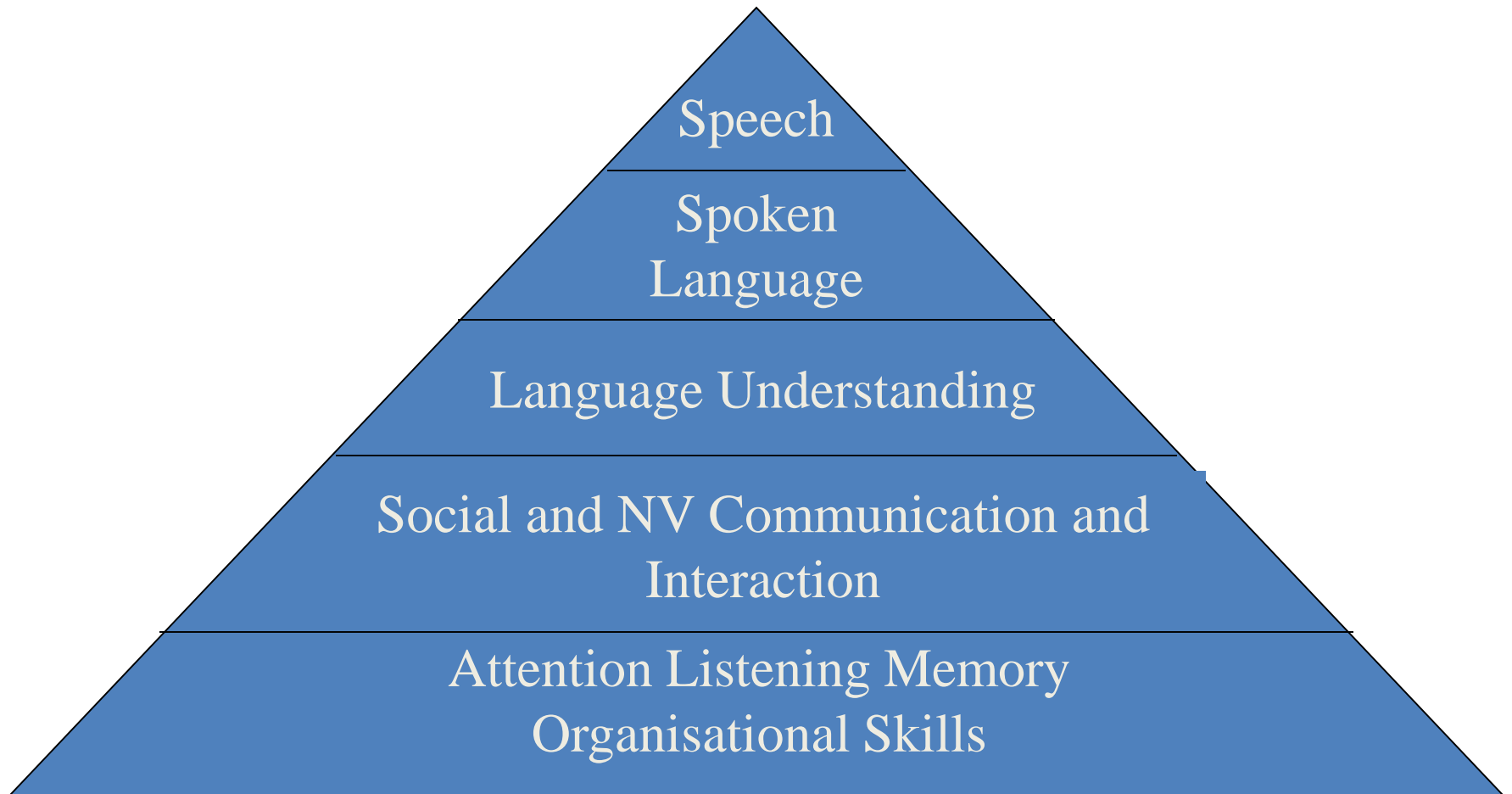
Referral to Speech & Language Therapy



What lies below . . .



Communication Pyramid



Sequencing & organisational skills

- spoken language/communication disorganised
- disorganised and chaotic.
- regularly forget what they are supposed to be doing.
- may ask for the time constantly or what's happening for the rest of the session/group/day
- forget to bring things to school/take things home
- forget what's happening next
- order of events

Understanding Spoken Language

**Avoid 1:1
conversation**

Laugh along with others in a group, without understanding the meaning of the joke

Follow what everyone else is doing rather without understanding the instructions or what is going on

Overreact to comments

Break rules again and again despite constant reminders

Watch out for . . .

- **Long sentences** with lots of parts
- **'Linking' words** such as 'because' and 'therefore'
- **Concepts** such as 'before' and 'after'
- **Complex sentences** such as 'the man that ate the doughnut was fat'
- **Reversible sentences** such as 'fish was eaten by the crab'
- **Abstract words**
- **Unfamiliar or unusual words**

Non literal language

Police help dog bite victim

Dog for sale: eats anything – is fond of children

If you love your kids belt them

We dispense with accuracy

I think Mary should get a life

Get your skates on

Can you?

Difficulties with using language

- The child or young person may have difficulties:

Using the right words

Explaining *why* something happened

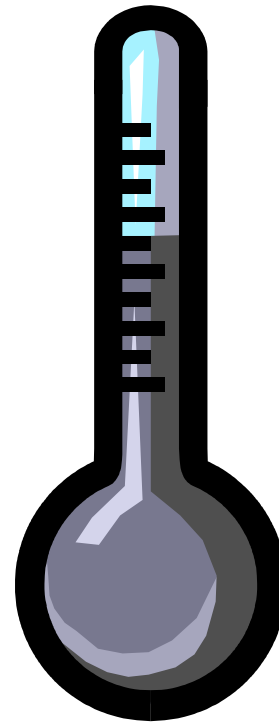
Organising sentences so that they are in the right order

Using long sentences

Difficulties with emotional vocabulary

The young person may have difficulties:

- Saying how they *feel*
- They may only have the basic emotion words (happy, sad, angry, scared)



Furious

Angry

Cross

Irritated

Fine

Difficulties with the social communication

A person may be **unable** to:

Vary language according to the situation



Difficulties with the social use of language

A person may be **unable** to:

Take **turns** in conversation

(may 'hog' all the chat, make lots of interruptions, or seem unaware that someone wants to change the subject)

Stick to one **topic** for long enough

Start **conversations**

Make appropriate **eye** contact



Difficulties with speech

A person may also have difficulties with speech sounds.

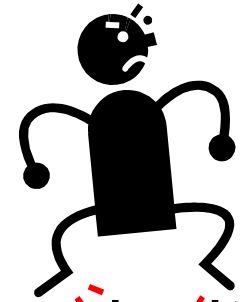
They may:

- Stammer
- Speak unclearly
- Have difficulties varying volume
- Substitute some sounds for others
- Find it hard to pronounce longer words



Behaviour as communication

- I don't understand what you want me to do
- I can't understand my feelings or do anything about them
- I know you don't understand me and it makes me anxious
- I can't explain what I mean
- This work's too hard for me
- I'm in a fight again; I don't know how to make it better



Communication and Behaviour

Understanding language

Spoken language

Memory and concentration

Emotional regulation

Social interaction

Things to try

Try some of the following in your communications with the young people you work with.

- ❖ Use simple language
- ❖ Use short chunks of language
- ❖ Speak slower than you would normally do
- ❖ Ask the young person to repeat back in their own words what you have said
- ❖ Give pointers for what they should listen to
- ❖ Give an overview first
- ❖ Give extra time for the young person to listen and process
- ❖ Use visual aids to support understanding
- ❖ Give a variety of tasks
- ❖ Give positive messages
- ❖ Ask them what would help them
- ❖ Say when you have not understood what has been said
- ❖ Make written materials simple and clear

Resource Links

[The Communication Trust](#)

[NAS](#)

[ICan](#)

[BSA](#)

[RADLD](#)

[RCSLT](#)



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