

Early language: Facts and Stats

- **By 22 months** – a child's language development can predict outcomes at age 26¹.
- **By 2 years** – 75% of a child's brain growth has occurred².
- **By ages 3-6 years** - a child's narrative skills are a powerful predictor of literacy skill at 8-12 years.³
- **By 4 years** – the difference in the number of words children from disadvantaged backgrounds hear is 19 million⁴.
- **By 5 years** – a child's vocabulary will predict their educational success and outcomes at age 30⁵.

Key messages: Language and literacy development

- **Literacy depends on language:**
 - Speaking and listening, together with reading and writing are prime communication skills that are central to children's intellectual, social and emotional development.
 - There is no dispute about the impact of poor language skills on reading performance - children need to have good oral language skills as a foundation for literacy.
 - A landmark longitudinal study, found that by age 8 children whose language difficulties had been resolved by 5½ had developed good reading and spelling skills compared to children whose language difficulties were not resolved.⁶
 - Oral language development during Foundation stage predicts educational achievement through to school leaving age.⁷
- **Literacy supports learning:**

¹ Feinstein, L. (2003) 'Very Early Evidence', Centrepiece <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/CP146.pdf>

² (Hodas, G.R (2006) *Responding to childhood trauma: the promise and practice of trauma informed care*. Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services).

³ Wellman R.L., Lewis B.A., Freebairn L.A., Avrich A.A., Hansen A.J., and Stein C.M. (2011) *Narrative Ability of Children With Speech Sound Disorders and the Prediction of Later Literacy Skills* LSHSS 42;561-579

⁴ Hart, B., & Risley, R. T. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes

⁵ Leon Feinstein and Kathryn Duckworth (2006) *Development in the early years: its importance for school performance and adult outcomes*

⁶ Bishop DVM and Adams (1990) *A Prospective Study of the relationship between specific language impairment, phonological disorders and reading retardation* Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry 31

⁷ Snowling M, Hulme C, Bailey A, Stothrad S and Lindsay G (2011) *Better communication research programme: Language and Literacy Attainment of Pupils during Early Years and through KS2: Does teacher assessment at five provide a valid measure of children's current and future educational attainments* DfE RR 172a



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- Pupils need vocabulary, good communication skills and the ability to organise their thoughts and ideas to cope with the demands of **all** subjects⁸.
- Reading depends on more than decoding words and phonics. Children need to have a good vocabulary to understand what they are reading and read for meaning.
- Supporting children's oral language and developing their vocabulary helps develop their overall competence in literacy - **supporting language development will support reading skills.**
- **Literacy and Language underpins life chances:**
 - Children who have communication difficulties beyond the Foundation Stage will go on to have subsequent literacy difficulties affecting educational achievement, life chances and mental health⁹.
 - 50-90% of children with persistent communication difficulties go on to have reading difficulties¹⁰.
 - Children who have reading difficulties often have an undiagnosed underlying difficulty learning and using language.
- **Children from disadvantaged backgrounds often have poorer language skills:**
 - Children from disadvantaged backgrounds enter school at a lower starting point than children from other socio economic backgrounds¹¹. This puts them at risk of literacy difficulties.
 - In fact, children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds are more than twice as likely to have lower language skills¹²
 - A child's communication environment influences language development. The number of books available to the child, the frequency of visits to the library feature as important predictors of the child's expressive vocabulary at 2 years¹³.

⁸ Ofsted (2013a) *Improving literacy in secondary schools: a shared responsibility*

⁹ Snow P.C. and Powell, M.B. (2004) *Developmental Language Disorders and Adolescent Risk: A Public-health advocacy role for Speech Pathologists?* *Advances in Speech Language Pathology*, 6 (4) 221-229

¹⁰ Stothard S.E., Snowling M.J., Bishop D.V.M., Chipchase B.B and Kaplan C.A. (1998) *Language Impaired preschoolers: a follow up into adolescence* *Journal of speech, language and hearing research* Vol41 No 2

¹¹ Roulstone et al (2011) *Investigating the role of language in children's educational outcomes*; Locke A., Ginsborg, J. and Peers I. (2002) *Development and Disadvantage: Implications for Early Years* *IJCLD* Vol. 27 No 1

¹² Dockrell J, Ricketts J and Lindsay G (2012) *Understanding SLCN – Profiles of need and provision* DfE RR227 BCRP4

¹³ Roulstone et al (2011) *Investigating the role of language in children's educational outcomes*



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- A child's communication environment (books, toys, responsive adults) plays more of a role than social background¹⁴.

Where can people go for help?

Information and advice can be found at:

- www.ican.org.uk
- www.ican.org.uk/achancetotalk
- www.ican.org.uk/help
- www.talkingpoint.org.uk
- www.talkboost.org.uk
- www.ican.org.uk/primarytalk

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www.ican.org.uk

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¹⁴ Roulstone et al (2011) *Investigating the role of language in children's educational outcomes*