



What is Specific Language Impairment?

My child has been diagnosed with SLI. How can I get help?

Specific Language Impairment (or SLI as it is often called) is a term that is used to describe difficulties with learning and using language. Children are described as having SLI when they are as clever as other children their age, but they struggle to understand and use language to communicate and learn. Sometimes children can have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) that are caused by another condition, for example autistic spectrum disorder, hearing impairment or cerebral palsy; children with SLI have no other condition, their difficulties are specifically to do with learning to understand and use language.

SLI looks different in all children and is really complicated to understand because we don't really know the cause. We do know that the speech and language part of the brain does not develop in the right way, even though there are no other problems. We also know that genes play an important part in causing SLI, but there is no medical test to see if a child has it or not. Studies have shown that in 5 year olds, SLI affects about 2 children in every classroom (about 7%) and that it is more common in boys than girls.

Children with SLI usually struggle at school, despite the fact that in lots of ways they are as clever as their classmates. This is because so much learning depends on being able to understand and use language. Children with SLI won't just 'pick up' language; they will need to be taught language skills in a specific way. They will need the right support in order to reach their full potential. This support will be from a speech and language therapist, along with other specialists like a language advisory teacher.

Often children with SLI will be taught in their local schools. Sometimes they may go to a speech and language resource, and occasionally they will go to a special school. With the right support, many children with SLI progress well. Without the right support SLI may cause a child lifelong difficulties.

I CAN Help enquiry service www.ican.org.uk/help

Call 020 7843 2544 to arrange a free phone call from one of our speech and language therapists or email enquiries@ican.org.uk

Talking Point www.talkingpoint.org.uk

Visit this website for information about children's communication.

Your local speech and language therapist will be able to talk to you about the services available locally to you. The support your child gets will depend on the type of difficulties they have, how severe their difficulties are and the types of provision near you.

You can find out more information about SLI in “The SLI Handbook” available from I CAN’s online shop (icancharity.org.uk/resources/sli-handbook).

For more help and advice you can contact Afasic (www.afasic.org.uk)

I CAN also run the [Enquiry Service](#), an information line run by qualified speech & language therapists. If you have any questions about the speech, language or communication skills of a child you know, call us on 020 7843 2544 to book arrange a call back at a time convenient for you.

You can also email your questions to help@ican.org.uk .

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