The links between communication and school exclusion

The most common reason for pupils being excluded from mainstream education is disruptive behaviour; research shows that many children and young people who are excluded or at risk of exclusion have behavioural difficulties which co-occur with communication needs that are often unidentified and unsupported.

The size of the issue

- 71% of children formally identified with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs experience clinically significant language deficits, according to a review of 26 studies (Benner et al, 2002).
- 2/3 of pupils at risk of exclusion from school were found to have SLCN in one study (Clegg, 2004).
- 90% of pupils in a large secondary alternative provision assessed by an independent speech and language therapy service had communication needs.

The risks of not identifying and supporting communication needs include:

- Literacy difficulties impacting on educational attainment
- Difficulties forming friendships, peer rejection and isolation
- Increased risk of being bullied or being a bully
- Verbally based behavioural interventions are ineffective

How speech and language therapy can help

- **Identifying needs:** Speech and language therapists have a key role in identifying speech, language and communication needs which may be an underlying factor in behaviour.

- **Training:** Speech and language therapists can provide training to staff in alternative provision on creating communication friendly environments and how to adapt both teaching and behaviour management strategies.

- **Direct support:** Helping the young person to understand the behaviour that is expected in a way that is meaningful for them, and teaching them the communication skills necessary to behave in the required way.

To find out more about the links between communication and behaviour, see the RCSLT factsheet: [https://bit.ly/2XIKBdo](https://bit.ly/2XIKBdo)