Professional development in speech, language and communication:

FINDINGS FROM A NATIONAL SURVEY

Contents

Foreword

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Huge progress has been made in supporting the children and young people's workforce to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of speech, language and communication, and speech language and communication needs. We know that there is much more to do and that all support must be driven by the needs of the workforce and what they can tell us about their skills, understanding, preferences and constraints.

The quality of our support and the advice that we give to policy makers and commissioners is dependent upon a sound understanding of the workforce and a commitment to ensure our work is always driven by what is happening in practice.

With our consortium and partners, we decided to embark on this large-scale survey because, as we enter a new strategic period and plan further programmes, the time is ripe for up-to-date feedback. There has also been so much change to the landscape within which the workforce operates that we must ensure we get a full picture of their opportunities and challenges.

Over one million children and young people in the UK have a long term and persistent speech, language and communication need (SLCN) and many more will experience difficulties communicating at some point in their life. All children and young people benefit from adults with a strong understanding of what to expect from a child and young person's speech, language and communication (SLC) development, how issues can be identified and the further support that is available. Because of this, the children and young people's workforce – that is everyone who works with children and young people – needs the right support, at the right time, as well as ongoing opportunities to develop and improve their skills.

Undertaking this important survey has been a hugely informative piece of work for The Communication Trust, our consortium and the wider speech, language and communication sector. We were delighted to receive over 1200 responses from a very wide range of people working across different education and health sectors and representing a diversity of roles. We were disappointed by the extent to which respondents had not had initial or ongoing training in SLC or SLCN but heartened by the extent to which the workforce considered it as important to their role.

The need for support for the workforce to engage with parents stood out and we were also struck by the need to provide support for the wider workforce, for example health visitors and those in the FE sector. We look forward to adapting our own programme to reflect the practical constraints faced by the workforce and to working with the wider sector to implement the findings over the coming years.

Many thanks to all respondents and partners for making this survey such a success and helping to create such an important piece of work.

Executive summary

This report provides a detailed summary of the findings from a national survey into speech, language and communication (SLC) support for the children and young people's workforce. It is intended as a bank of evidence and source of detailed information for The Communication Trust and our Communication Consortium, as we plan future programmes of work, and will also be a useful resource for organisations supporting the workforce with SLC across a broad range of sectors.

The landscape within which the workforce operates has changed so significantly that it is essential for everyone who supports the workforce to have an up-to-date understanding of their needs. A raft of developments, including an increasingly autonomous schools' landscape, SEND reforms and an increased focus on childcare have led to profound changes for the workforce and their training needs and preferences will have been affected. We need to understand more about the issues in order to plan our programmes effectively. For these reasons, we decided to embark on a large-scale survey of the workforce, to gain a thorough understanding of their needs and to hear directly from them about the challenges they are facing.

We received over 1200 responses to the survey, with all regions of England covered, as well as every educational phase (early years, primary, secondary and further education) and also a range of roles in health and youth justice. Across sectors, respondents were both qualified and unqualified. We publicised the survey extensively and our consortium was fundamental to this. The sample was self-selecting but the number of responses provides credibility to the conclusions.

The findings in their entirety are important, and will have particular relevance for different audiences, but a number of key findings stand out and are worth emphasising.

CROSS-SECTOR FINDINGS:

LACK OF BUDGET AND TIME were highlighted as the top two barriers to accessing opportunities, with a lack of suitable opportunities emphasised as the next obstacle

ONLY A THIRD OF RESPONDENTS FEEL VERY CONFIDENT supporting speech, language and communication development

Two thirds of respondents had **HAD LITTLE TO NO INITIAL TRAINING** in identifying and supporting SLCN

Around half of respondents had had **LITTLE OR NO TRAINING IN SLC**

ONLY 4% FELT THEY HAD SUFFICIENT TRAINING

SUPPORTING PARENTS was widely highlighted as a key area for training

RESPONDENTS FAVOURED FACE TO FACE TRAINING over online opportunities and at the least preferred 'blended' learning approaches that combine face-to-face and online elements

SECTOR SPECIFIC FINDINGS:

ALMOST 60% OF HEALTH VISITORS had little or no training in SLC

70% of early years respondents felt that **LACK OF BUDGET WAS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT BARRIER THEY FACED**

ONLY 25% of respondents from the primary sector felt very confident in their ability to support SLC development; a third had had no initial training

An even higher proportion **(ALMOST HALF)** of respondents from the secondary phase had had no initial training in SLC. A third of teachers across sectors had had no training in SLC

A very high proportion of respondents from the FE sector felt that there were **NOT ENOUGH RELEVANT OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE**

The youth justice sector had the **LOWEST LEVELS OF CONFIDENCE** in their ability to support speech, language and communication accompanied by a very strong acknowledgement of its importance to their role

Clearly, these findings provide an extremely valuable insight into the extent of expertise within and attitudes of the workforce. Some of the findings are very concerning – for example, the high numbers of staff in schools and early years settings who have not had any training – and others demonstrate how we need to shift our thinking to adapt to a changing landscape. Health visitors, for example, are a crucial source of support for SLC and SLCN in the early years but they need adequate opportunities to develop the expertise that is essential.

We also held a seminar with key academic, sector and practitioner representatives where we discussed the findings in detail and developed recommendations which the expert attendees felt would address the issues raised in the responses. The recommendations which are included in this report are consistent with the policy proposals we have promoted as a sector and will provide a framework for our future influencing work.

During 2017/18 we will develop sector specific briefings to set out how the findings should be followed up and to develop the recommendations further – we will involve the workforce and our consortium and partners in this follow up work. The findings presented in this report are also drawn upon in our forthcoming Talking About A Generation report, which provides further analysis of the background to the recommendations included. They are also a source of information for the 2018 *Bercow – Ten Years On* review.

Key recommendations which these findings support include:

- Working with Ofsted to ensure school and early years reports better reflect SLC and SLCN provision, so that its importance is clear and good practice is highlighted

- Ensuring that all SLC and SLCN training includes working with parents and ensuring that nationally this is reflected in relevant strategies as this is a key concern across the workforce

- Promoting the use of the Pupil Premium (PP) and Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) before to support SLC and SLCN and share best practice examples

- Working with the DfE to set out what should be included on SLC and SLCN in initial teacher training

- Ensuring that workforce support provided across the consortium is delivered in such a way that it meets the practical needs of the audience

- Continuing to raise concerns about the budget constraints the workforce is facing in developing the skills to support all children and young people and especially the disadvantaged.

We look forward to working in partnership to develop the recommendations further.

Background

The Communication Trust

The Communication Trust (TCT) is a consortium of over 50 members who work together to maximise the impact of the voluntary sector and collaborate with government to devise effective solutions and improve the support that is provided to children and young people. Together we have raised the profile of speech, language and communication (SLC) and speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) over the last decade.

Working closely with the wider sector (referred to as 'the sector'), including government and national organisations, we have raised awareness of the importance of SLC and SLCN within the children and young people's workforce (referred to as 'the workforce') and provided extensive practical support.

Why do speech, language and communication matter?

Evidence shows that speech, language and communication are fundamental life skills and have a profound impact on life chances. The development of speech, language and communication skills affects academic achievement, behaviour, mental health and employability in later life. Speech, language and communication needs are extremely common, yet often invisible:
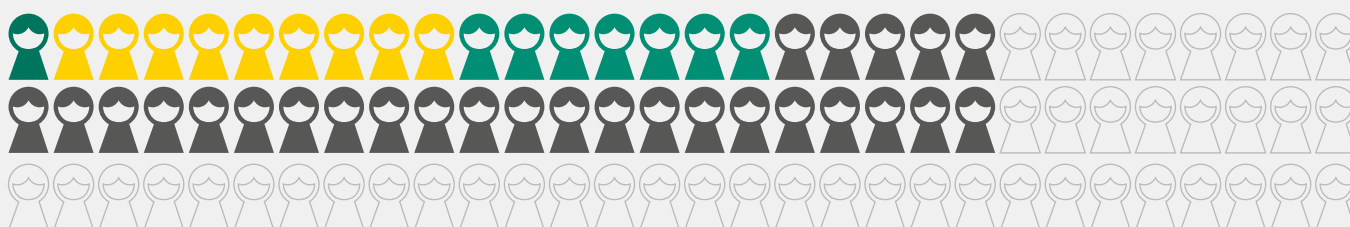
1% OF ALL CHILDREN
have the most severe and complex language and communication needs

(I CAN, 2014)

10% OF ALL CHILDREN
have long-term, persistent speech, language and communication needs

(I CAN, 2014)

7.6% OF ALL CHILDREN
start school with an unexplained language disorder. That's two children in every classroom

(SCALES, 2016)

UP TO 50% OF ALL CHILDREN
in some areas of the country have delayed language

(I CAN, 2014)

The relationship between SLCN in the early years and the longer term life chances of children and young people is well documented but often overlooked.

We know that all children and young people benefit from the support of adults who have strong knowledge, understanding and skills in SLC and SLCN and know where to go for further support when it is needed. The workforce has a crucial role to play in supporting children to develop their potential.

Language disorders are seven times more prevalent than other developmental conditions such as autism

(NORBURY, 2016)

5 YRS OLD

11 YRS OLD

Children who did not achieve the expected standard of early language and communication at five years old were
OVER FOUR TIMES MORE LIKELY TO HAVE BELOW LEVEL 4 READING AT AGE 11
THAN FIVE-YEAR-OLDS
WHO DID MEET THE STANDARD

(SAVE THE CHILDREN, 2016)

IN 2014/15 ONLY 16% OF PUPILS WITH SLCN ACHIEVED THE EXPECTED STANDARD OF 5+ GCSES AT GRADES A* TO C. This was compared to 64% of pupils with no identified SLCN or additional need.

(DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION, 2016)

The wider landscape

The landscape within which the children and young people's workforce operates has undergone a period of extensive change and turbulence. In striving to support the workforce, some of the key policy and practice developments which we need to consider are set out below.

A period of sustained cuts to local authority provision and public services has led to challenges for the workforce and requires innovative approaches to ensure children and young people receive the support they require. Some provision has been reduced, for example Children's Centres, as a greater focus has been put on childcare. In in other parts of the workforce, for example, within the schools' sector, financial pressures are widely reported. The budget and service reductions that are faced by the workforce have an impact upon the extent to which they can access support.

In the early years the focus has been upon the free childcare offers for two-year-olds, three and four-year-olds, and in particular how childcare can support work. Health Visitors continue to have a key role in supporting young families, but report that they are stretched, and we also know that practice is variable, including the extent to which they screen for SLCN. Developments in the early years have largely related to the funding and supply of the free childcare offers; despite this, Ministers have made a commitment to focus on the quality of childcare and early education and the early years workforce strategy is forthcoming. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile has remained in place, providing a measure of progress of SLC in the early years: communication and language is one of the prime areas of learning in the framework and is a statutory requirement. However, the commitment to retain the framework has been made in relation to 2017-18 only.

The education system has become considerably more diverse, with high numbers of academies and the opportunity to establish free schools; this changing landscape requires new approaches from local and national government, the voluntary sector and providers and a greater role for schools as commissioners. The role of local authorities has changed considerably and the extent to which they provide a school improvement function has been reduced and varies from area to area. The most recent development has been to propose greater selection in admissions and grammar schools and there are widespread concerns about the impact of this policy on children with SEN.

A focus has been put upon a more traditional set of subjects at secondary school (the E-bacc consultation response is awaited). Changes to the English Language GCSE and the emphasis on testing in reading and writing in the primary years (rather than speaking and listening) have also underlined the ongoing need for support with SLC and SLCN for the workforce.

There is an increasing awareness that initial teacher training (ITT) in its current state does not provide a sufficient grounding in support for pupils with SEN. Within the new core content framework for ITT, the government has set out that all trainee teachers must understand the principles of the SEND code of Practice and the four broad areas of need, and that they need to be able to support children with SEND, including SLCN, to access and progress within the curriculum. The findings from the Carter Review suggested that SLCN is only covered in a minority of courses and recommends that ITT should address children's speech and language development.

During the same period of change, the Children and Families Act 2014 introduced the SEND reforms, setting out clear aspirations for joint commissioning and collaboration across health and education and involving children and young people in the development of their own care plans. The SEND Code of Practice identifies 'communication and interaction' as one of the four broad areas of need, and states that:

- Providers must have arrangements in place to support children with SEN or disabilities. These arrangements should include a clear approach to identifying and responding to SEN.

- All those who work with young children should be alert to emerging difficulties and respond early.

- The quality of teaching for pupils with SEN, and the progress made by pupils, should be a core part of the school's performance management arrangements and its approach to professional development for all teaching and support staff.

Underpinning all of the above is the government's clear commitment to supporting the 'just about managing' and announcement that a Social Justice strategy will be published during early 2017. This focus on social reform and mobility invites arguments about the importance of effective support for speech, language and communication and the impact it can have on children and young people's longer term outcomes academically and socially and their life chances.

Methodology

In July 2016, TCT embarked on a consultation with the children and young people's workforce – everyone who works with children and young people – to investigate their knowledge, skills and confidence around SLC and SLCN as well as their opportunities for learning in this area. As part of this consultation we also engaged our consortium members to find out more about their experiences of providing workforce support and what they felt the key issues were.

The aims of the consultation were to:

- Gain an accurate and representative overview of the initial training and professional development experiences of the workforce as well as an understanding of the support available to enable continued professional development

- Identify strengths and gaps across the workforce's skill set and compare this with the information from our consortium members to inform areas for improvement

- Gain a better understanding of how we can support the workforce to engage with development opportunities around SLC development and SLCN

- Provide information to relevant local and national decision makers seeking to improve the accessibility of CPD opportunities around SLC and SLCN

- Develop a set of recommendations to take forward through sector specific briefings

There were two key components to this consultation directed at our two primary stakeholder groups:

1) A survey targeting the children and young people's workforce to establish their knowledge, skills and confidence levels supporting children and young people's SLC as well as barriers to accessing opportunities, and preferences

2) A survey targeting our 53 consortium members to investigate the development opportunities they offer to the workforce around SLC and the barriers they perceive to affect access to these opportunities.

Within the children's and young people's workforce the following professional groups were identified as primary stakeholders:

- Early years practitioners
- Primary school teachers
- Secondary school teachers
- Middle leaders in primary school
- Middle leaders in secondary school
- Further Education staff
- Teaching assistants
- SENCOs
- School nurses
- Health Visitors

Secondary stakeholders, such as wider providers of development opportunities in SLC, were also invited to take part. These included local SLT (speech and language therapy) Departments, Local Authorities and independent providers who were considered useful to help build the gap analysis.

Both surveys were hosted on Survey Monkey and a range of methods were used to attract respondents. The workforce survey offered an incentive to be entered into a prize draw to win a £50 Amazon voucher and was disseminated through the following channels:

- The Communication Trust Website

- Internal contacts, project contacts and networks – such as the Communication Consortium, TCT's Local Champions network, I CAN Licensee network, No Pens Day Wednesday schools, the *What Works* database

- External websites and contacts – such as the Department for Education, Autism Education Trust, Public Health England, NASEN, National Association of Head Teachers

- External newsletters – such as those of I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

- Press and media contacts – Teach and Special magazines

- Social media – Twitter and Facebook

Dissemination of the Consortium survey was via direct email contact, the weekly newsletter and through the Consortium quarterly meeting held on 5th July 2016.

Both surveys opened to respondents on the 13th June and closed on the 15th July 2016.

We received responses from over 1200 members of the children and young people's workforce and from more than twenty of our Consortium members. In the workforce survey, all regions of England were represented as were all phases of education (early years, primary, secondary and further education). We received responses from a range of sectors and organisations including health, education, maintained, independent and voluntary and had a range of both qualified and unqualified members of the workforce.

In November 2016, we conducted further face-to-face consultation with stakeholders. At one of the regular meetings of the Communication Consortium we presented our survey findings to members and invited discussion about the findings and their impact for the sector.

We also held an early findings seminar which was attended by experts including government representatives, members of the workforce, academics, and representatives of with the voluntary and community sector and training providers, to share the findings and discuss top priorities for policy and practice in light of the findings. Through these discussions we developed the recommendations which are included at the end of this report, which are consistent with the policy proposals which as a sector we have supported. The findings presented in this report are also drawn upon in our forthcoming Talking About A Generation report, which provides further analysis of the background to the recommendations included. They are also a source of information for the 2018 *Bercow – Ten Years On* review.

You can access the complete survey findings at:

www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/workforcesurvey

Survey Findings

In this section you will find a detailed description of the findings of our survey with the children and young people's workforce. We first present the overall findings, from the whole workforce, with the key themes that arose from an analysis of all responses.

In later sections, we break the results down by the following sectors of the workforce and key roles:

- 💬 Education sector – early years
- 💬 Education sector – primary
- 💬 Education sector – secondary
- 💬 Education sector – further education
- 💬 Youth justice sector
- 💬 Key role - Health visitors
- 💬 Key role - Childminders
- 💬 Key role - Teachers
- 💬 Key role - Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs)

Overall findings

WHO RESPONDED?

| TOP ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Early Years Practitioner	9.66%	118
Teaching Assistant in primary school	7.53%	92
Health Visitor	7.45%	91
Speech and Language Therapist	6.78%	83
SENCO	6.72%	82
Early Years Leader	5.49%	67
Primary school teacher	4.50%	55
Advisory teacher	4.26%	52
School nurse	4.18%	51
Youth justice sector staff	3.52%	43
Other	25.96%	318

The 'other' category included specialist learning support assistants, those with multiple roles, educational psychologists, and nursery nurses, among others.

Key themes

In several key areas of the survey there was a degree of consistency in responses across the workforce and some cross-cutting themes stood out.

The importance of SLC skills for children and young people was recognised almost unanimously (99%) but there were significant gaps in knowledge, skills and confidence levels as well as in learning opportunities for both initial training and continued professional development (CPD). The confidence levels here do not necessarily reflect the levels of training and development opportunities accessed by the workforce; it is important that confidence is based upon a sound understanding and level of expertise.

CONFIDENCE SUPPORTING SLC

⬤ VERY   ⬤ SOMEWHAT   ⬤ NEITHER CONFIDENT OR NOT   ⬤ NOT VERY   ⬤ NOT AT ALL

5% 1%
10%
36%
48%
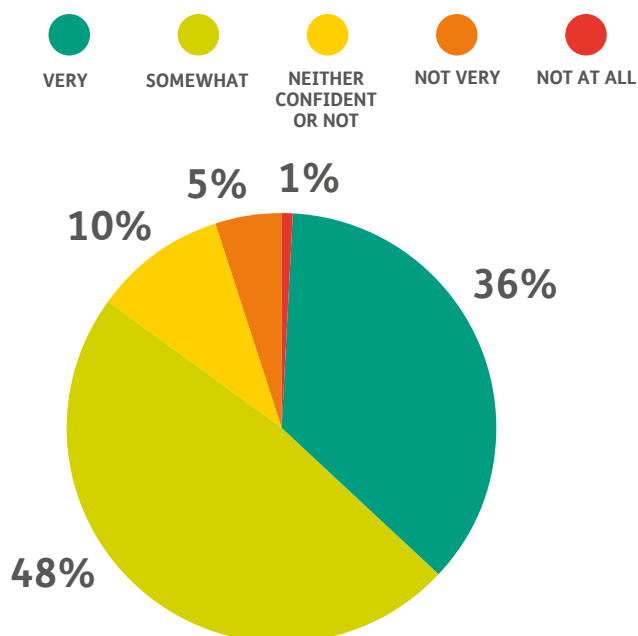
Only a third of the workforce reported they felt 'very' confident supporting children and young people's SLC development. Considering that the workforce has a crucial role to play in supporting the development of SLC and can make a huge difference this is a worrying finding.

Initial Training and CPD

Approximately half (53%) of the workforce who responded to our consultation reported that they had received little or no learning in their initial training around typical SLC development. This increased to nearly two thirds (60%) when asked about learning around identifying and supporting children and young people with SLCN. Although this is not hugely surprising, it is a cause for concern. The workforce is a key source of support for children and young people and some respondents also acknowledged that in their daily role they work closely with a child or young person with an identified SLCN, yet significant numbers lack the basic knowledge around SLC to support even typical development. This makes not only prevention but early identification and early intervention very challenging.

When asked whether they had any CPD in these areas, the figures are slightly lower – 43% had received little or no training around typical SLC development and 45% in identifying and supporting SLCN. However, a quarter of respondents reported they have received 'a lot' of training in SLC and in SLCN.

Of those who have received some form of training so far, either as part of their initial qualification or as CPD, a wide range of topic areas were accessed including, but not limited to: supporting all children and young people with SLC, training around a specific SLCN, such as Autism or hearing impairment, and supporting and identifying children and young people with SLCN.

99% of the workforce recognise the importance of SLC

Barriers

The survey also included questions to explore the barriers and challenges that practitioners face in accessing learning and development opportunities. Although these varied across key roles the common themes are illustrated in the graph below.
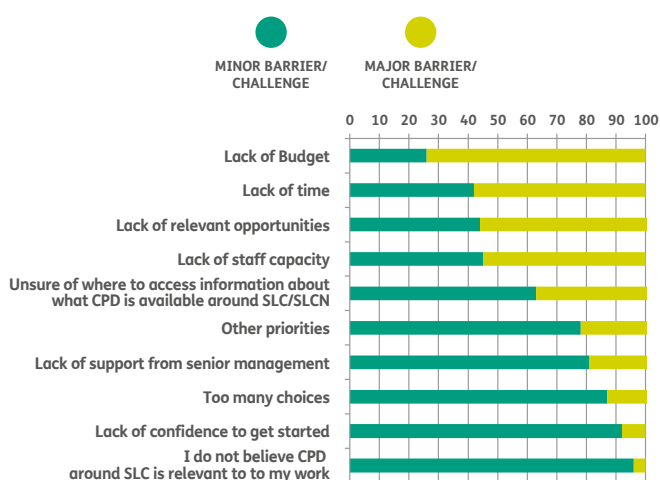
Although the majority of the workforce (81%) did not report 'lack of support from senior management' as a major barrier, this in itself was insufficient in overcoming the other barriers highlighted above, such as lack of budget and time. This highlights that there is work to be done to overcome these barriers and to find innovative, creative solutions to improving access to training and development opportunities.

Motivation and Preferences

The majority of respondents (92%) reported that their most significant motivation for engaging in CPD opportunities was to improve their practice, with significant numbers also being motivated to gain a better understanding of SLC (75%). Encouragingly 78% also saw this learning as essential to their role. This highlights an awareness across the workforce of the importance of SLC skills and suggests we have a motivated workforce, keen to extend their knowledge and skills to better support children and young people in this vital area. This provides an excellent basis upon which to develop and deliver future programmes.

Respondents were also asked to select their top three preferred formats for undertaking professional development, the results of which are outlined below.

TOP THREE PREFERRED FORMATS FOR UNDERTAKING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The most preferred training formats were those that involved a face to face aspect or learning from a specialist. Surprisingly, the formats that would potentially address, or at least limit, barriers such as cost, time etc, for example, webinars or online courses, were the least preferred options overall for the workforce. There are some exceptions to this when looking at the preferences of particular groups of practitioners as set out later in this report. TCT and the Communication Consortium need to further embed the practice of consulting with the target workforce before delivering training and also continue to deliver training programmes through a range of models.

Respondents were also asked about other factors that influence them when seeking CPD opportunities. Unsurprisingly the strongest influence identified was the relevance of the development opportunity to their role as well as cost, benefit, and location. Overall, there did not appear to be significant concerns around the quality of training opportunities already available.

Training Needs

Only 4% of the workforce felt they had accessed sufficient training to fulfil their SLC training needs, with the remaining 96% aware of the gaps in their knowledge and skills around SLC and SLCN. Respondents were asked about specific areas of learning, and two stood out as significant needs for many – half of respondents (50%) expressed a need for learning around 'supporting children and young people who are learning English as an additional language with their SLC development' and 42% feel they need support around 'talking to parents about their child's SLC/SLCN'.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
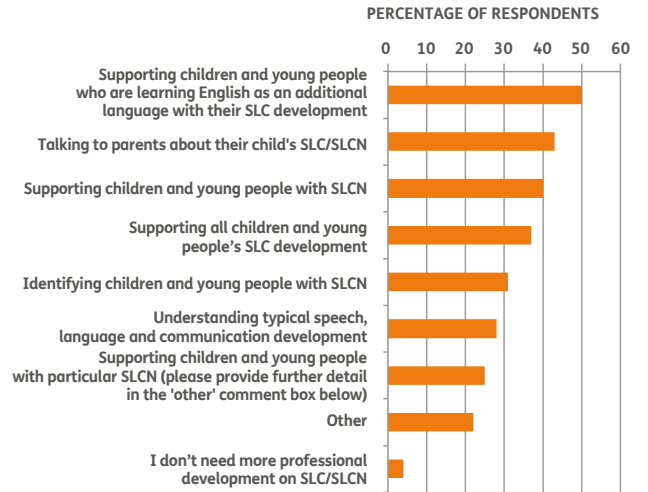
Some respondents indicated that the support they require is in relation to EAL as opposed to supporting children with EAL who have or may have SLCN. In terms of SLCN programmes of work, there is a clear need to provide information and guidance for the workforce in relation to identifying and supporting children who have EAL and SLCN.
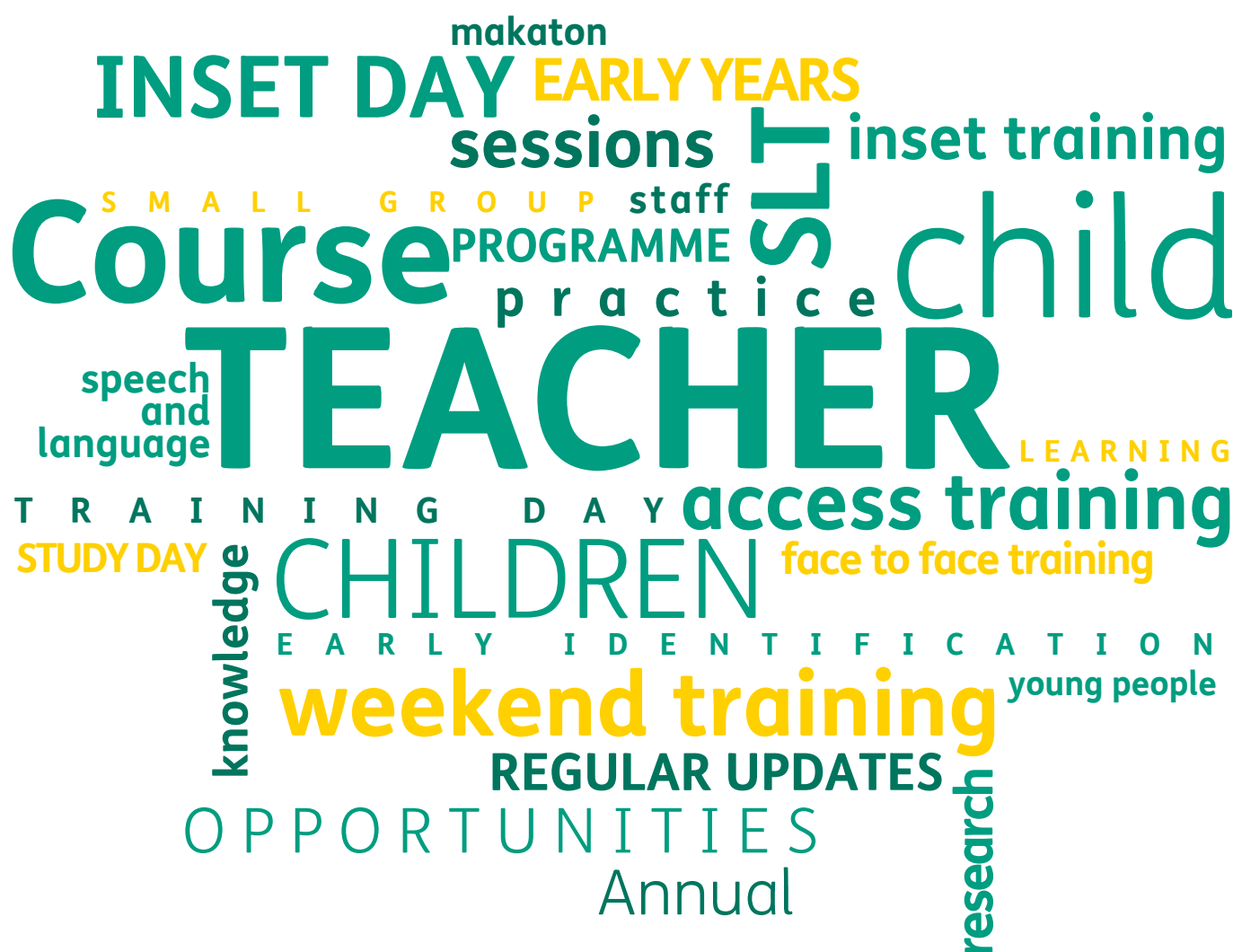
Some comments from respondents:

"Identifying if there is a SLCN with EAL child"

"I would like to be able to offer professional support to both the children and parents where needed".

Respondents were also asked to imagine that the barriers to accessing training and development opportunities didn't exist and in that scenario what their professional development experience around SLC/SLCN look like. The word cloud below illustrates the top responses. The bigger and bolder the word, the more it was reported by respondents.

Another key finding was that the Local Offer appears to be rarely used by practitioners looking for training and development activities. Most respondents reported that management was the most popular route to finding out about these opportunities (45%) with the Local Offer being the least popular route (8%). Practitioners in certain roles do tend to access the Local Offer more than others; 20% of SENCOs reported finding out about training in this way but less than 1% of leaders in schools use this route. Although this needs to be considered in the context of the fact that the local offer is intended to provide information about services available to children and young people, it is being used to some extent as a source of information about training opportunities. Going forward clarity should be provided about its scope and how local information should be accessed.

makaton INSET DAY EARLY YEARS sessions SLT inset training SMALL GROUP staff Course PROGRAMME practice child speech and language TEACHER LEARNING TRAINING DAY access training STUDY DAY knowledge CHILDREN face to face training EARLY IDENTIFICATION young people weekend training REGULAR UPDATES OPPORTUNITIES Annual research

Education sector

Education Sectors

The following graph shows the breakdown of respondents from each sector:

EARLY YEARS   PRIMARY   SECONDARY   FE

36%
12%
13%
39%
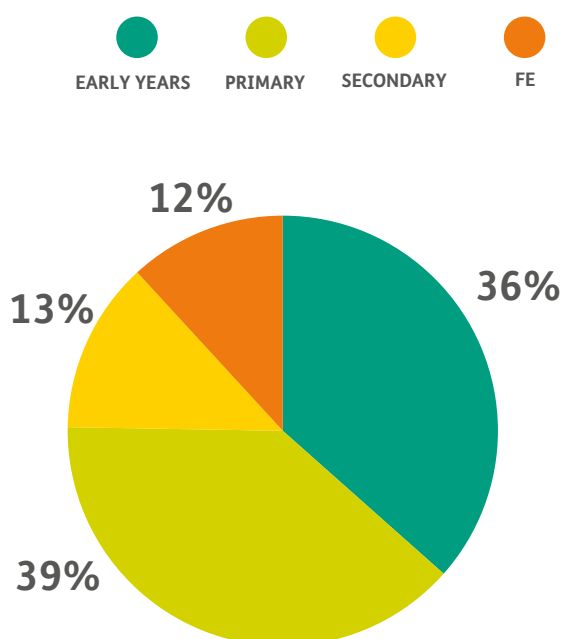
## Early Years Workforce

A third (36%) of respondents from the education sector were from the early years workforce and held a variety of roles, including early years leaders, practitioners, teachers and teaching assistants, working across a broad range of organisations including private, voluntary and independent (PVIs), maintained settings and Children's Centres. Childminders have been excluded from this analysis due to the cross over with early years and primary sectors, unless they indicated that they only work in the early years.

EARLY YEARS SECTOR

PRACTITTIONERS   LEADERS   OTHER

9%
58%
33%
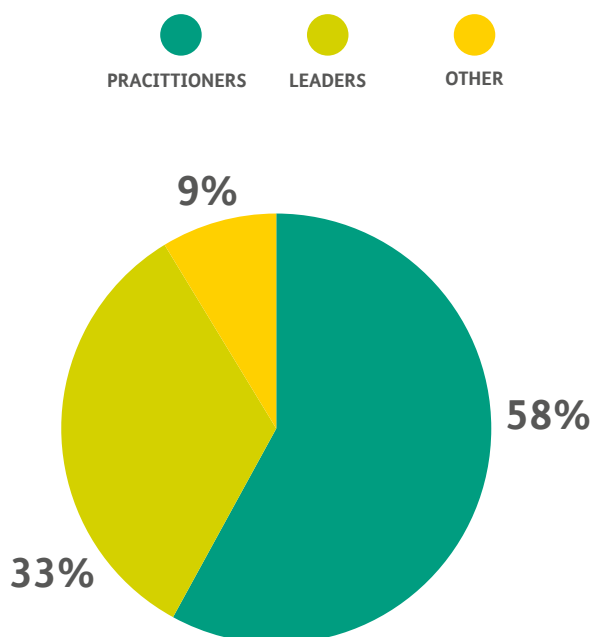
Respondents in the early years reported the highest levels of confidence across the sectors in supporting the SLC development of the children they work with; nearly half reported they feel 'very confident' and only 7% making up the lower confidence categories . This is really encouraging given the importance of prevention and early intervention, however there is a long way to go.

- VERY
- SOMEWHAT
- NEITHER CONFIDENT OR NOT
- NOT VERY
- NOT AT ALL

4% 3% 0%

47%

46%
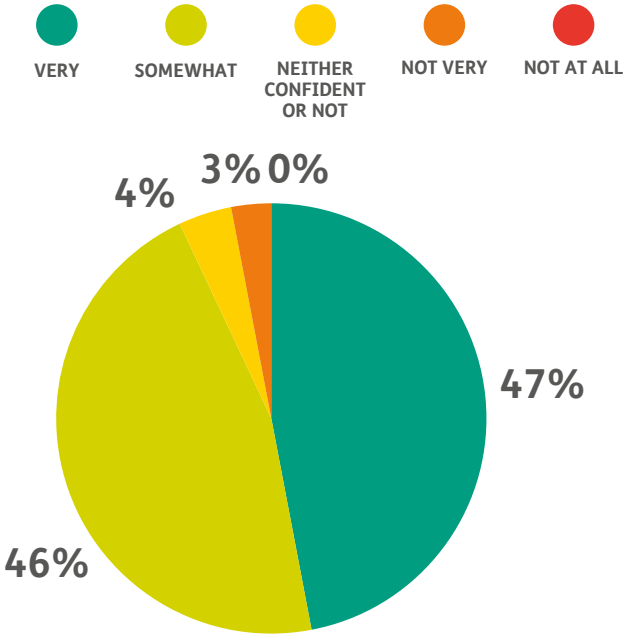
AMOUNT OF INITIAL TRAINING RECEIVED
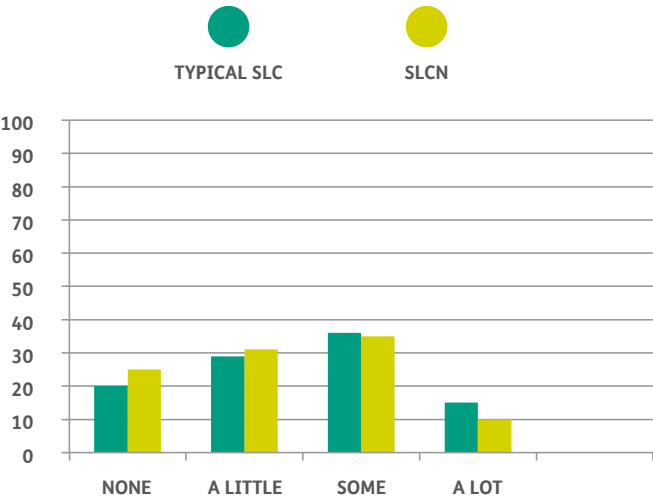
- TYPICAL SLC
- SLCN

Initial training and CPD

Nearly half of respondents (49%) reported they received little or no learning around typical SLC development in their initial training; this is despite SLC being made a mandatory part of the Early Years Educator (Level 3) qualifications criteria in 2010. These figures rise to 56% in learning about identifying and supporting children with SLCN, a subject area not covered in the Early Years Educator qualification and also recognised as a gap by respondents.

AMOUNT OF CPD AROUND SLC
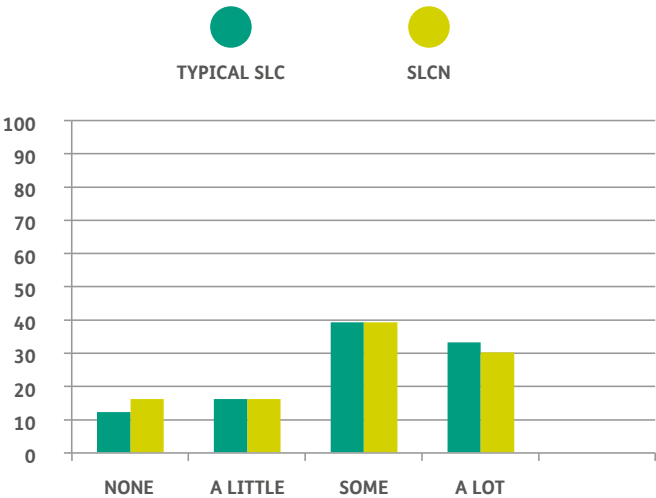
- TYPICAL SLC
- SLCN

Nearly two thirds (72%) have received 'some' or 'a lot' of CPD around typical SLC, and 69% received training in identifying and supporting children with SLCN, the highest CPD levels in this area across sectors. This still leaves significant gaps in knowledge of the workforce in these critical areas when the opportunity for narrowing the gap is most great, particularly for the socially deprived populations.

Barriers

Seventy percent felt lack of budget was the most significant barrier with 63% also feeling lack of time was a challenge. Lack of relevant opportunities (57%) and staff capacity (57%) were also cited as barriers and there was strong indication of conflicting priorities.

Motivation and Preferences

This sector identified their top preferences for CPD delivery as being through face-to-face training (68%) and formal, accredited training (60%), with webinars (6%) the least favoured.

Ninety percent of respondents indicated that they participated in training because they were motivated to improve their practice, with 82% of the workforce seeing it as essential to their role, highlighting a hugely motivated early year's workforce.

"Other work commitments take priority i.e. safeguarding"

"Mandatory training prioritised"

"Leadership responsibilities"

"Conflicting priorities"

"There are a lot of priorities on health visitor time and safeguarding takes precedence"

"Staff turnover"

Training Needs

The top three training needs identified by respondents in this sector were:

1. **Supporting children who are learning English as an additional language with their SLC development (49%)**

2. **Talking to parents about their child's SLC/SLCN (45%)**

3. **Supporting children and young people with SLCN (39%)**

Being able to work with parents to inform them about SLC, how to support its development and identify concerns is critical to children making good progress in the early years. The number of practitioners who indicate that they need more training in this area should be addressed as a priority, considering the impact it could have upon children's progress.

"Strategies we can use whilst waiting for a SALT referral"

"Understanding which sounds to be concerned about when they are not pronounced appropriately"

"I think Early Years initial training should have a bigger focus on SALT"

"Identifying if there is a SLCN with EAL child"

Primary School Workforce

The primary school workforce made up the largest proportion (39%) of respondents from the education sector, and these included senior and middle leaders, teachers and teaching and learning support assistants. The majority (62%) were based in maintained primary schools with 18% based in academies and 5% in independent schools.

NB: SENCOs are excluded from this analysis as it wasn't possible to identify which sector they worked within.

Only a quarter (25%) of the primary school workforce felt 'very' confident in their ability to support SLC development, with slight growth in the lower confidence levels as compared with the early years sector, increasing to 16%.

CONFIDENCE IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S SLC DEVELOPMENT

VERY   SOMEWHAT   NEITHER CONFIDENT OR NOT   NOT VERY   NOT AT ALL

25%
0%
5%
11%
59%
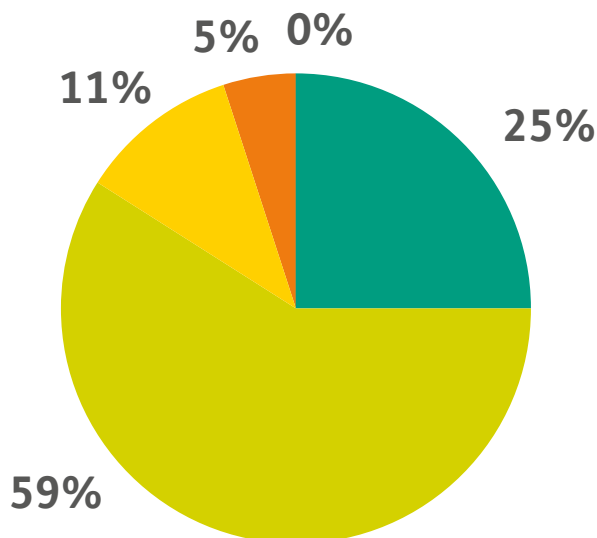
Initial Training and CPD

Perhaps unsurprisingly given what we know from the Carter Review (2015), more than a third of respondents (38%) reported that they had received no learning at all around SLC development in their initial training, rising to 45% in learning around how to identify and support children with SLCN. This also reflects the significant number of teaching assistants within this category (43%) as qualifications and previous training experiences vary significantly.

Only 10% indicated that they had received 'a lot' of initial training in SLC development and this fell to 8% with regards to training to identify and support children with SLCN.

AMOUNT OF INITIAL TRAINING RECEIVED

TYPICAL SLC   SLCN
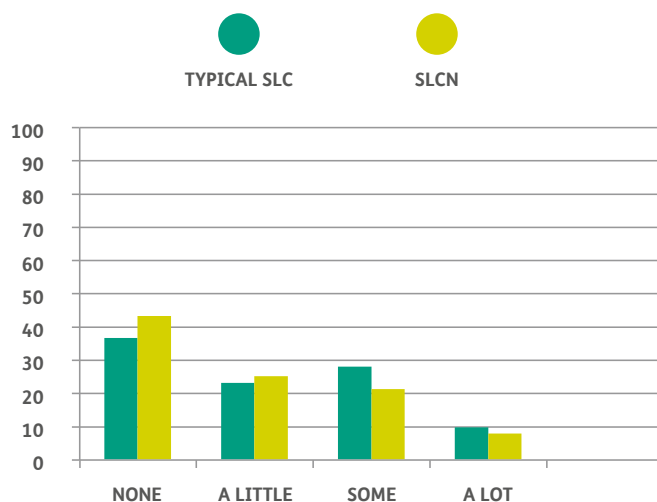
Whilst nearly a quarter of respondents in this sector reported that they have received 'a lot' of CPD in SLC development, the same number again are yet to receive any training at all. The same is also true for CPD in supporting and identifying children and young people with SLCN, where although 20% have received 'a lot' of CPD in this area, still 24% are yet to receive any.

TYPICAL SLC   SLCN
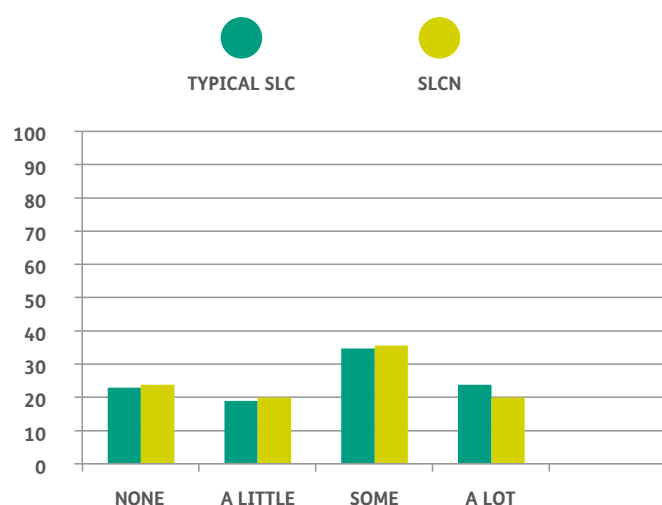
Barriers

The most significant barrier highlighted by respondents was 'lack of budget' (76%) followed by 'lack of time' (51%) and surprisingly 'lack of relevant opportunities' (62%). Forty-two percent also felt unsure of where to access information about available CPD opportunities so it seems there is an opportunity for training providers to promote their development opportunities more widely to this sector.

Other comments around barriers included:

"Constant curriculum changes - major barrier"

"Mandatory training at the school takes up a lot of training time"

"Maths is school's main focus for the year"

Motivation and Preferences

Face to face training (63%) and formal, accredited training leading to a qualification (65%) were the preferred formats for the majority of this sector. Shadowing professional colleagues (48%) and opportunities to try out strategies in practice (45%) were also highlighted. Whilst 18% of respondents favoured online learning with tutor support, only 10% preferred self-directed online learning and even fewer (5%) preferred webinars.

Ninety-seven percent of respondents reported that they were motivated to improve their practice with 74% wanting to gain a better understanding of SLC and SLCN. Surprisingly however, only 65% of the workforce saw training in this area as essential to their role. This suggests that the primary school workforce is either failing to appreciate the importance of understanding SLCN or is unable to prioritise considering other demands. Relevance, cost and need were reported as the most common factors that influence decisions around which CPD opportunities to undertake; location is also a consideration for the primary school workforce.

Training Needs

Over half (53%) of the workforce identified a need for training around supporting children learning EAL with their SLC development and 47% would like support around talking to parents about their child's SLC and SLCN. This sector was also keen for CPD on identifying (34%) and supporting (41%) children with SLCN as well as improving their understanding of all children's SLC development (37%).

A number of respondents suggested INSET training days could be used for development opportunities and specific support around supporting young children on entry into reception. The results from this sector highlight an overwhelming need for a shift in prioritising SLC learning for primary school staff, especially considering that SLCN is the most common SEN need across state funded primary schools.

Secondary school workforce

The secondary school workforce was represented by a smaller percentage of respondents (13%) from the education sector. Respondents' roles included senior and middle leaders, teachers and teaching and learning support assistants.

Note: SENCOs are excluded from this analysis as it was not possible to identify which sector they worked within.

The majority of respondents (40%) were based in academies and maintained secondary schools (39%), with 6% from independent schools and 1% from pupil referral units. One hundred percent of this sector recognised the importance of SLC skills to the young people they work with but only a quarter of respondents (26%) felt 'very' confident in their ability to support SLC development. The lower levels of confidence reflect those of the primary workforce.

CONFIDENCE IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S SLC DEVELOPMENT

VERY   SOMEWHAT   NEITHER CONFIDENT OR NOT   NOT VERY   NOT AT ALL

6%   1%
10%
26%
57%
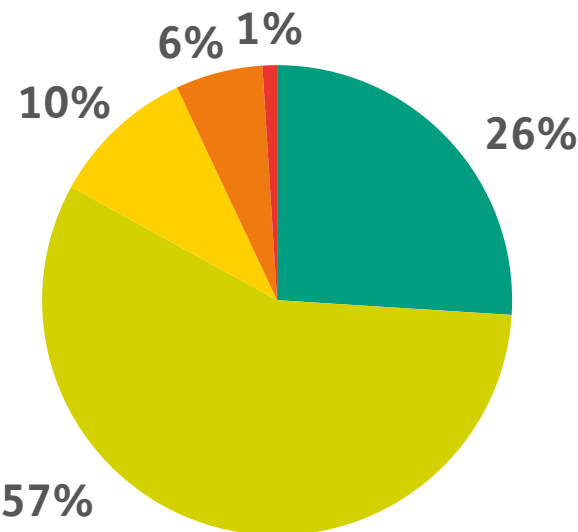
Initial Training and CPD

In accordance with responses from the primary workforce, nearly half of respondents (46%) reported they received no learning at all around SLC development in their initial training, rising to 57% for training to identify and support young people with SLCN. Only 9% reported they had received 'a lot' of initial training in SLC development, rising slightly to 10% for initial training in identifying and supporting those with SLCN. Although these findings are to be expected given the findings from the Carter Review (2015) and the high number of teaching assistant respondents, the figures are still concerning, considering the critical impact of the workforce.

AMOUNT OF INITIAL TRAINING RECEIVED

TYPICAL SLC   SLCN

NONE   A LITTLE   SOME   A LOT
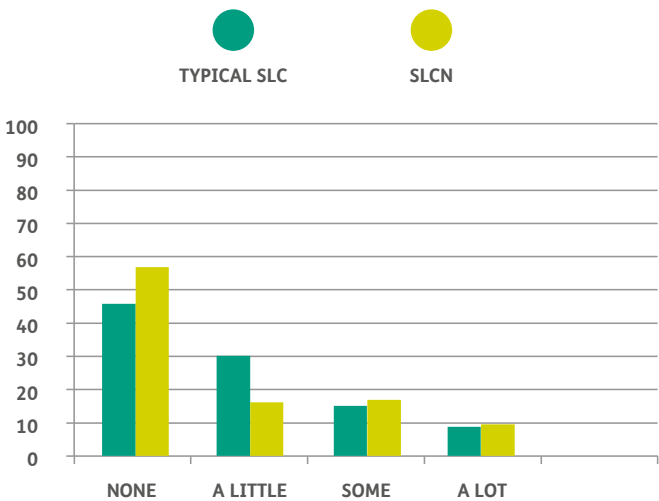
Given the importance of SLC skills for children and young people, particularly as they approach GCSEs and the transition into Further Education, it is alarming that more than a quarter (28%) of our survey respondents had received no CPD at all in SLC development. This figure rises to nearly a third (31%) with regards to learning around identifying and supporting children with SLCN, despite the fact that SLCN is the fourth most common primary SEN in secondary schools.

● TYPICAL SLC   ● SLCN
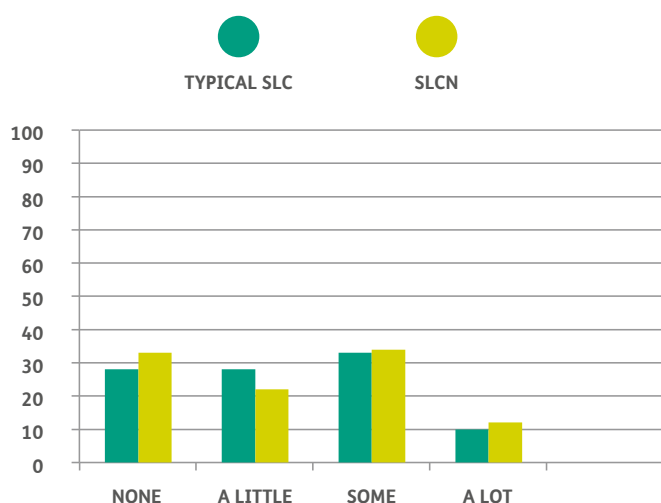
Barriers

Lack of budget (78%) and lack of time (74%) were reported to be the most significant barriers to accessing training and development opportunities, but nearly a third (29%) of respondents also reported that lack of support from senior management was a major challenge to accessing development opportunities.

Lack of relevant opportunities (64%) and staff capacity (60%) were also highlighted as slightly less significant barriers with 48% unsure of where to access information about available CPD opportunities.

Comments about barriers included:

Motivation and Preferences

This sector reports face-to-face training (52%) and formal, accredited training leading to a qualification (73%) as the preferred formats of CPD. Shadowing professional colleagues (41%) and opportunities to try out strategies in practice (50%) were also cited.

Whilst 20% of respondents liked to engage in online learning with tutor support only 16% like self-directed online learning and even less (2%) prefer webinars.

Ninety-one percent of respondents were motivated to improve their practice with 77% seeing it as essential for their role. Sixty-four percent felt that they need to gain a better understanding of SLC and SLCN whilst only 42% were motivated to engage in professional development because they work directly with a young person with SLCN.

The most important factors reported by respondents when considering which development opportunities to undertake included relevance to the role and cost. The individual needs of the young people they work with was also a significant influencing factor, as were location and quality of training.

"There are too many other CPD topics to cover therefore time becomes the biggest barrier"

"There are so many areas in SEN that I need to stay current in, SLCN CPD is for our speech therapist to cascade".

Training Needs

Half (53%) of the workforce feel they need learning around how to support children with SLCN and 47% feel they need learning around supporting young people who are learning EAL with their SLC development. Talking to parents about their child's SLC or SLCN was also identified by 43%, with only 5% of the workforce feeling there were no gaps in their learning. With this sector in particular, contact with parents is increasingly less and less, so raising a discussion around a child's SLCN is understandably a challenge, particularly if you lack the background knowledge on SLC.

This sector suggested INSET training days are prime opportunities for training in SLC but also wanted practical solutions (such as classroom strategies and progress measuring tools), accredited qualifications and blended or flexible learning options.

Other comments included:

These comments from respondents highlight the fundamental shift needed to make SLC integral to school practice and an essential part of the initial training process for all secondary school staff.

> **"I feel it should be part of initial teacher training"**

> **"How to embed good practice in school curriculum"**
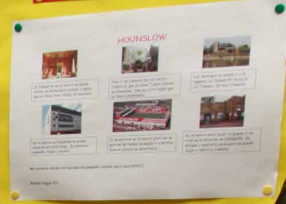
> **"How to monitor good practice and ensure progress"**

Further Education

The further education (FE) workforce made up a smaller proportion of respondents within the education sector (12%) with sixty three individuals working in FE. This included FE teachers and lecturers, leaders and support staff working mostly within independent (42%) and maintained (32%) FE Institutions.

One hundred percent of this sector recognised the importance of SLC skills to the young people they work with and a quarter (25%) of respondents reported they feel 'very' confident in their ability to support young people's SLC development, which mirrors the responses from primary and secondary. However, a higher number of respondents reported lower confidence levels, increasing to more than a quarter (28%), the highest across the education sectors.

CONFIDENCE IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S SLC DEVELOPMENT

VERY   SOMEWHAT   NEITHER CONFIDENT OR NOT   NOT VERY   NOT AT ALL
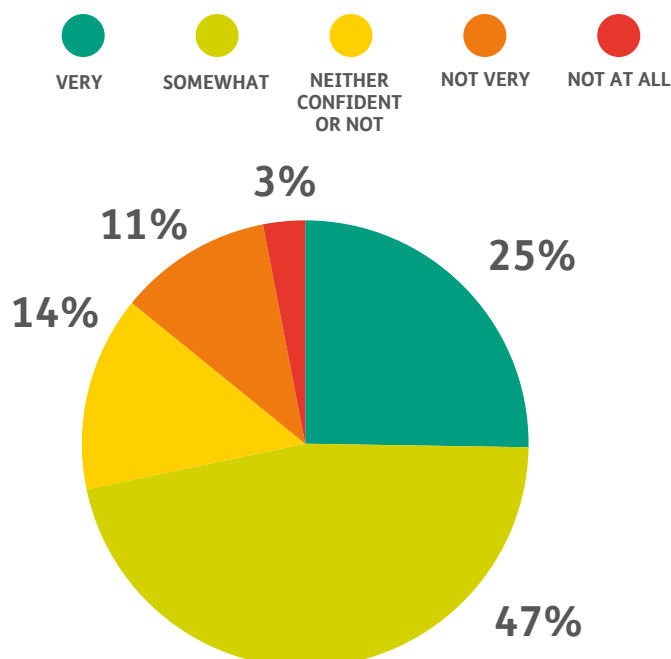

Initial Training and CPD

Consistent with the other education sectors there were significant numbers of the workforce that reported having received no training at all in typical SLC development (45%) in their initial training, increasing to (52%) for learning around SLCN.

AMOUNT OF INITIAL TRAINING RECEIVED

TYPICAL SLC   SLCN
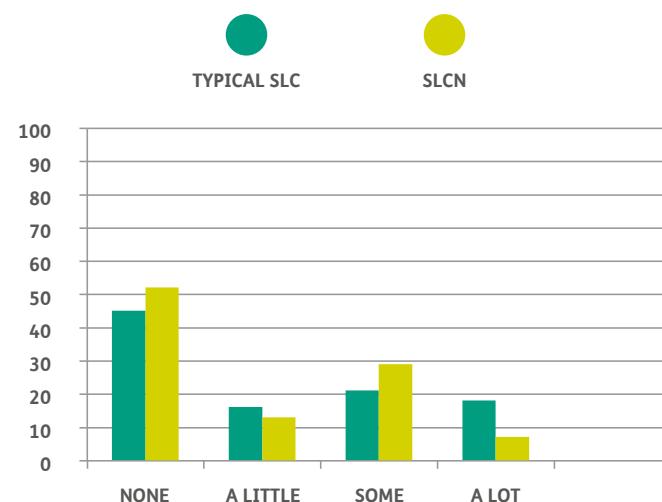
Furthermore, nearly half are still yet to receive any CPD around SLC (48%) or SLCN (49%) which are the highest levels across the education sectors.

AMOUNT OF CPD RECEIVED

TYPICAL SLC   SLCN
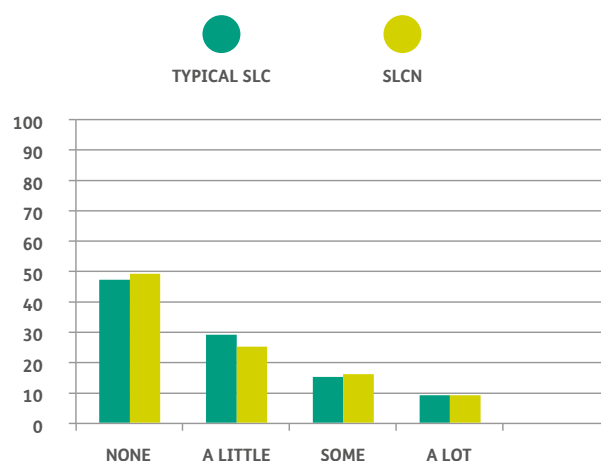
Barriers

Four key barriers to accessing development opportunities were highlighted in the FE sector. These were lack of budget (74%), lack of time (72%), staff capacity (70%) and lack of relevant opportunities (70%).

Motivation and Preferences

Eighty-eight percent of respondents seek out development opportunities in order to gain a better understanding of SLC and SLCN, with nearly two thirds (62%) recognising it as essential to their role. Webinars (6%) and online learning routes (16%) were the least favourite formats for learning, with face to face training days the favourite for two thirds (66%) of respondents.

Training Needs

The training needs of this sector were slightly different to other sectors in that only a few respondents highlighted 'talking to parents about SLCN' and 'supporting children learning EAL with SLC' as areas they need support with. Instead, this sector highlighted 'supporting children with SLCN' (52%) and 'supporting all children's SLC development' (48%) as their top two training priorities. It is clear from our knowledge of the training and development sector that there is a specific lack of opportunities for the FE sector. This was also reflected in our survey of our consortium members.

**Comments from respondents about their training needs included:**

"How to develop the speech, language and communication of Post 16 students" and "Working with people in real environments"

Education Sectors Summary

The graph below shows the proportion of the various parts of the education workforce who have received CPD in SLC. It shows a clear trend of reduced uptake of SLC CPD as we progress across the education phases, with early years having received the most and FE having received the least.

COMPARISON OF AMOUNT OF CPD RECEIVED ACROSS THE EDUCATION SECTORS

EARLY YEARS   PRIMARY   SECONDARY   FE
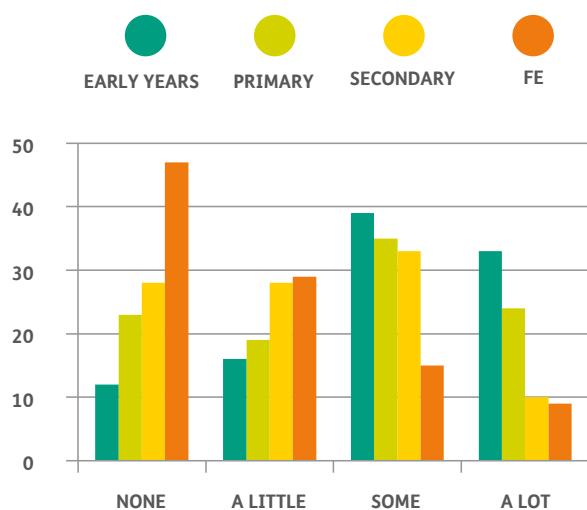
There were also some consistent themes in terms of access and preferences for training:

Barriers:

Lack of budget

Lack of time

Lack of relevant opportunities

Preferred training formats:


Face to face day training

Formal accredited training that leads to a qualification

Mentoring/coaching /observation

Overall, the findings from the education sectors are disappointing given that SLC skills underpin children and young people's learning across the whole curriculum and throughout their schooling and are a key determinant of future life chances. Creating solutions to overcome the budget and time barriers is crucial, as well as working with the training and development sector to promote existing opportunities and to ensure there is enough relevant provision to meet the needs of the workforce. This is essential to ensure that children and young people get the most out of their schooling.
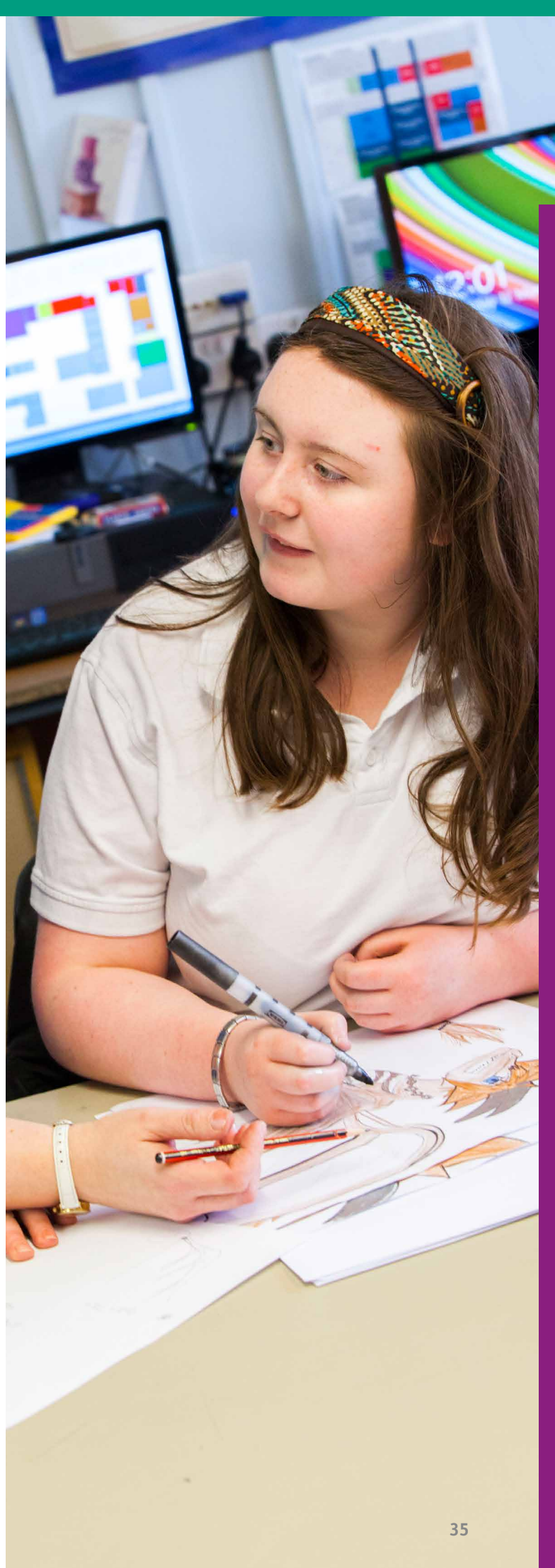
Youth Justice Sector

The Youth Justice Sector was made up of forty-seven respondents. These included youth support workers, supervisors, social workers and some leaders working mostly within a youth justice setting.

Ninety-eight percent of this sector recognised the importance of SLC skills to the young people they work with - just one person was unsure about whether or not these skills are important to young people. This group had extremely low levels of confidence in supporting SLC development with less than one fifth (19%) 'very' confident in their ability to support SLC development and a significant number of respondents reporting low confidence levels (40%).

CONFIDENCE IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S SLC DEVELOPMENT

● VERY   ● SOMEWHAT   ● NEITHER CONFIDENT OR NOT   ● NOT VERY   ● NOT AT ALL

19%
41%
30%
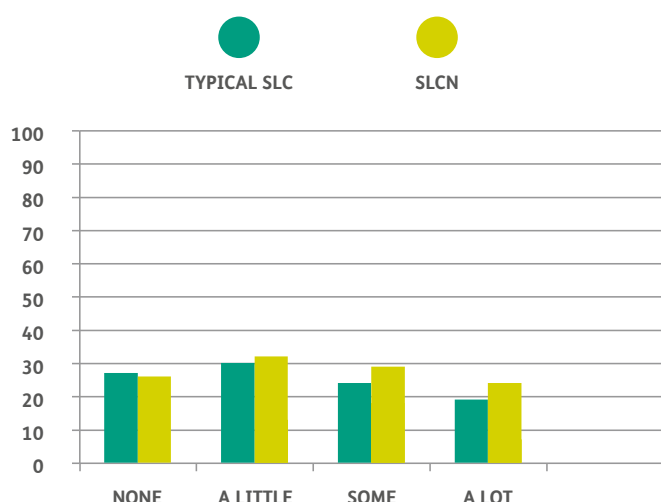5%
5%
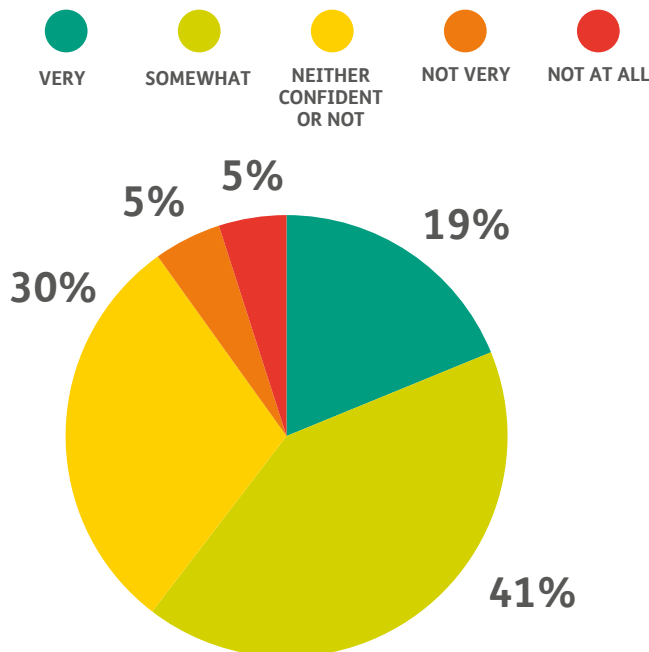
Initial Training and CPD

Significant numbers again (55%) had received no learning at all in typical SLC development in their initial training, increasing to 58% for learning around SLCN. This is not necessarily surprising given the multiple routes into and roles within the youth justice system. TCT has previously undertaken work with the youth justice sector, to improve support for the many young people within the youth justice system who have SLCN, and future programmes should look to develop this further.

AMOUNT OF INITIAL TRAINING RECEIVED

● TYPICAL SLC   ● SLCN
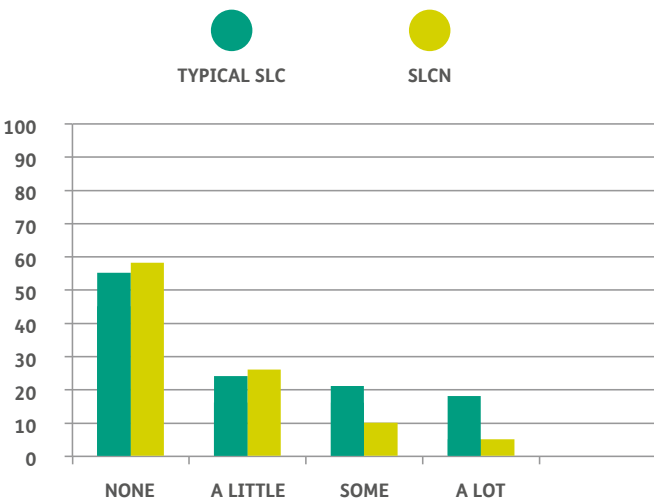
More than a quarter of respondents are yet to receive any CPD around SLC (27%) or SLCN (25%), despite the evidence of the prevalence of SLCN amongst this group. This is disappointing given the effort that has gone into raising awareness around the extremely high prevalence of SLCN in this population over recent years.

● TYPICAL SLC   ● SLCN

Bar chart showing amount of CPD received (Typical SLC and SLCN) across categories NONE, A LITTLE, SOME, A LOT.

Training Needs

Respondents in this sector of the workforce felt their training priorities included 'talking to parents about SLCN' (62%) and 'supporting young people with SLCN' (50%).

The suggestions by this sector for bridging the training gaps were diverse. Some individuals suggested whole training days or inset days, but specialist training, regular updates and supportive strategies were also put forward by this part of the workforce.

Consistent with the FE sector, there is a clear lack of training and opportunities available to this sector. It is critical that this gap is bridged considering the significant impact that this could have on life opportunities and the risk to reoffending.

Barriers

Lack of budget was recognised by the vast majority (84%) as a significant barrier to accessing learning in this area. More than half (57%) felt that staff capacity was an issue as well as a lack of relevant opportunities (56%). Again 86% felt that support from senior management to access CPD opportunities was only a minor barrier or challenge.

Motivation and Preferences

Consistent with most other sectors, webinars were selected the least (4%) preferred training formats. Face to face training (85%), formal, accredited training (63%) and mentoring, coaching and observation opportunities with specialist colleagues (41%) were the most selected options. Ninety-two percent of this sector reported they were motivated to engage in CPD opportunities to improve their practice and three quarters (73%) saw it as essential to their role. Whilst 30% reported that they work closely with a young person with SLCN, this does not correlate with what we know about prevalence of SLCN amongst this population of young people, which suggests much higher numbers.

"I would ideally like to have training days that focus on specifics as opposed to cramming lots of bits into a half day slot"

"Regular training with SLC professionals who could demonstrate new strategies/approaches, talk about current research etc"

"Specific to teenagers who have had undiagnosed difficulties"

Analysis by key roles:
HEALTH VISITORS

Health visitors made up approximately 7% of all respondents to the consultation. The vast majority (85%) were employed by the NHS with smaller numbers employed by a local authority or social enterprise.

A unanimous 100% of respondents recognised SLC skills as either 'very important' or 'somewhat important' for the children they work with but only one fifth (21%) of this part of the workforce reported they feel 'very' confident in their ability to support children's SLC development.

CONFIDENCE IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S SLC DEVELOPMENT

● VERY ● SOMEWHAT ● NEITHER CONFIDENT OR NOT ● NOT VERY ● NOT AT ALL

21%
0%
5%
10%
64%
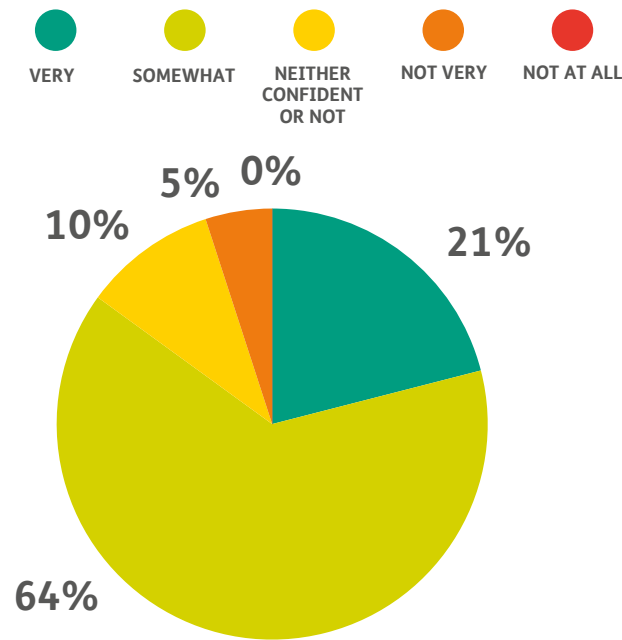
Initial Training and CPD

A surprising 44% of respondents reported that they had received little or no learning around SLC development in their initial training, rising to 46% with regard to training in identifying and supporting children with SLCN. This is concerning given the training routes into the profession (i.e. child nursing or midwifery) and their crucial role in the early identification of children with SLCN in the early years.

● TYPICAL SLC ● SLCN
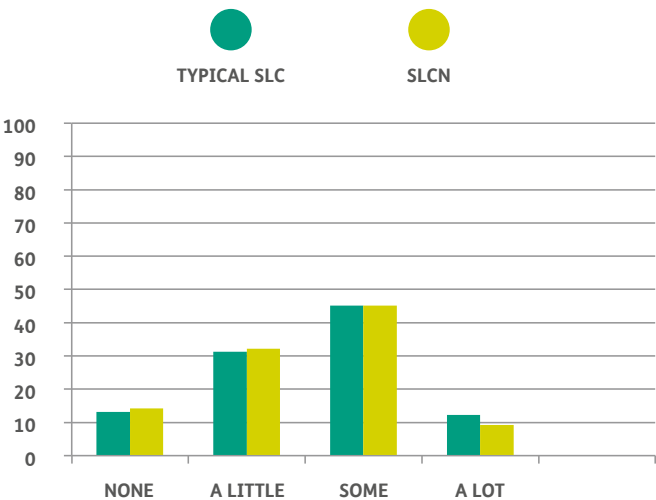
Even more concerning is that 59% of Health Visitor respondents reported that they have received little or no training around SLC development in their current role, increasing to 64% for training relating to identifying and supporting children with SLCN. Given that we know that children with SLCN are under identified and that referral rates to specialist SLT services are much lower than national prevalence figures, this highlights a prime opportunity missed.

AMOUNT OF CPD RECEIVED

● TYPICAL SLC ● SLCN
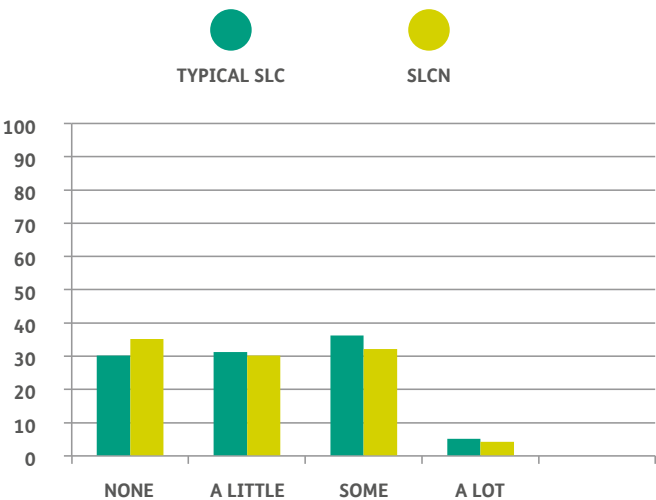
Barriers

The biggest barriers to accessing CPD were identified as lack of staff capacity (73%), lack of budget (72%) and lack of time (71%). This reflects the known pressures that health visiting services face across the country. This group also felt there was a lack of relevant opportunities (65%) and uncertainty as to where to access training (47%).

Most Health Visitors felt that support from senior management in accessing opportunities was not a significant barrier or challenge but a third (33%) felt other training and CPD was being prioritised, such as safeguarding, mental health and breastfeeding.

There were also some wider workforce issues highlighted:

There also appears to be confusion around local referral criteria and when to refer to specialist services.

Motivation and Preferences

Face to face training was the most preferred format for training and development with 95% of Health Visitors favouring this option. Half (49%) also reported they like formal, accredited training leading to a qualification (60%) with twilight sessions the least favoured (4%).

Ninety-six percent of Health Visitors reported they were motivated to improve their practice with 91% of the workforce seeing it as essential to their role. This highlights a clearly motivated workforce with a clear understanding of how critical these skills are at this early stage to later development.

Cost, time and relevance were identified as influencing factors when deciding on which CPD opportunities to undertake. Location and workload pressures were also considerations.

"Bank HVs are largely expected to undertake the role of a permanent member of staff but do not have the same opportunities for CPD"

"Staff morale is at rock bottom"

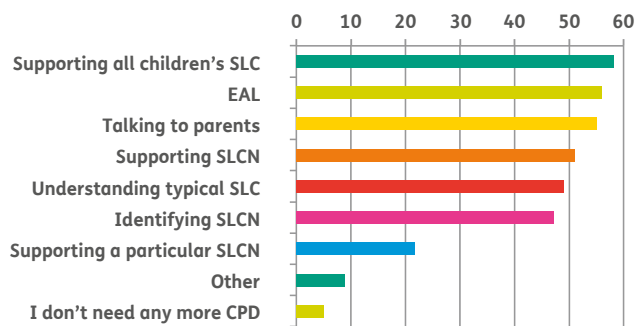**"Staff are lacking motivation"**

"Regular mandatory training updates for HV staff [needed]"

Training Needs

In contrast to the previous sector analyses, in which two or three areas of training clearly stood out, there were quite a number of areas that were highlighted as training needs by Health Visitors, as outlined in the graph below. Only 5% of Health Visitors felt that they had received sufficient training in SLC .

	0	10	20	30	40	50	60
Supporting all children's SLC							
EAL							
Talking to parents							
Supporting SLCN							
Understanding typical SLC							
Identifying SLCN							
Supporting a particular SLCN							
Other							
I don't need any more CPD							

Some of the suggestions for solutions to bridging the learning gap from this workforce are outlined below:

"Regular refresher training yearly"

"Away days"

"Blended learning"

"Inset training"

CHILDMINDERS

The survey attracted a small cohort of 16 respondents from the childminding workforce. This role was analysed separately from the early years workforce as a number of childminders work across both early years and primary phases and, as the survey found, they have quite different training preferences compared to practitioners working in nurseries or schools.

One hundred percent of childminders felt SLC skills for the children they work with were very important but only just over a third (38%) felt very confident about their ability to support the development of these skills.

Initial Training and CPD

More than two thirds (69%) of childminders reported that they had received little or no learning around typical SLC development in their initial training and this figure rises to a concerning 81% when asked about learning around identifying and supporting children with SLCN. This is a reflection of the varied routes into childminding and the lack of a amandatory SLC element.
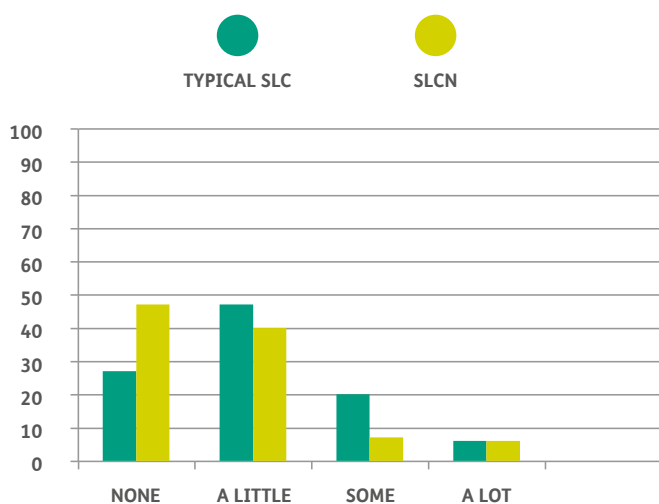
Furthermore, 20% of respondents reported they had received no CPD in their current role around typical SLC development, but this doubled to 40% when asked about CPD activities around identifying and supporting SLCN.
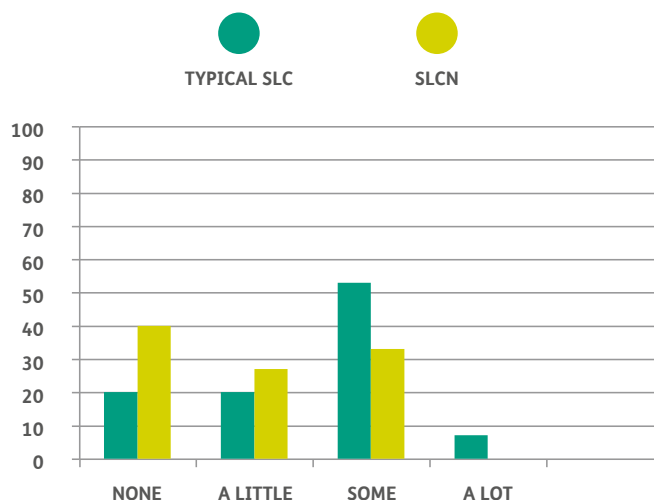
Barriers

Two thirds of respondents (62%) felt that the most significant barrier to accessing learning opportunities in their current role was a lack of budget, and 40% cited lack of time.

The barriers and challenges faced by this population of the workforce in accessing CPD opportunities are possibly greater than in other roles or sectors. This is likely to be due to the nature of the childminding role, which often involves working alone and therefore with very limited scope for being released from the setting.

> "Being a childminder I have found many opportunities are not available to me compared to those who work in nurseries, schools and bigger settings"

Motivation and Preferences

Contrary to the responses of the majority of other sectors or roles, online self-directed learning (67%) was the preferred format for undertaking CPD for childminders, followed by informal activities, such as reading around a topic of interest (56%), and face to face training (33%). This is a reflection of the barriers childminders face and shows flexibility as well as a clearly motivated workforce to overcome these challenges.

One hundred percent of respondents reported that they felt training in this area was essential to their role, with 89% of them ranking 'to improve my practice' as a motivating factor for undertaking CPD opportunities. More than three quarters (78%) felt they needed a better understanding of the area despite only 11% of respondents working closely or directly with a child with SLCN. This last point is a concern given what we know about the prevalence of SLCN, particularly in areas of socio-economic deprivation, and suggests a need for further training and support.

Relevance, time and cost were all major influencing factors when choosing CPD opportunities.

Training Needs

Consistent with the early years and the primary sector, supporting children learning EAL with SLC was highlighted as a training need by more than half (56%) of childminders and 44% felt they needed more learning around understanding typical SLC development. Only one person felt they had received sufficient CPD in their current role.

This particular group were the only cohort to suggest that weekend and evening training opportunities would improve access to opportunities. There was also the suggestion that financial support would help improve access to CPD as it would allow cover to be brought in whilst training opportunities were accessed. This is an important consideration for government as they roll out the free childcare offers and attempt to drive up quality in the early years settings.
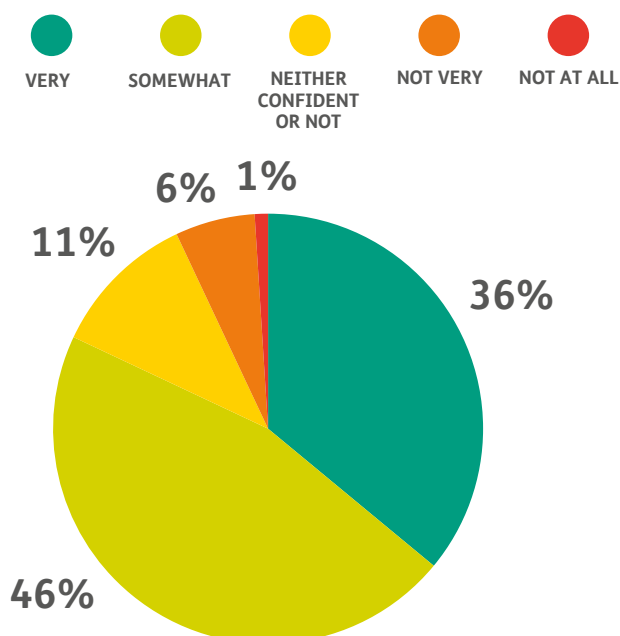
TEACHERS

Teachers play a vital role in a child's learning and development across the phases and their skills in supporting children and young people with SEND were brought under the spotlight following the SEND reforms (2014) and the recent Carter Review (2015). It was therefore felt necessary to analyse this group separately.

Teachers made up nearly one fifth (18%) of the respondents in this consultation and included both teachers and lecturers, working across a range of educational institutions, including maintained, Local Authority, and independent provision. It also included teachers working with children and young people across the entire age range.

Note: SENCOs were excluded from this data set as they have a specific role around supporting children with SEND. An analysis of SENCOs' responses can be found later in this report.

One hundred percent of teachers recognised the importance of SLC skills for children and young people but only a third (35%) reported that they feel 'very' confident in their ability to support the development of these skills. Quite remarkably nearly one fifth (18%) of teachers reported a significant lack in confidence in being able to support these crucial skills which underpin children's learning. This is disappointing given the central role teachers play in the learning and development of children and young people and impact teachers can have on their life chances.

CONFIDENCE IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S SLC DEVELOPMENT

VERY   SOMEWHAT   NEITHER CONFIDENT OR NOT   NOT VERY   NOT AT ALL
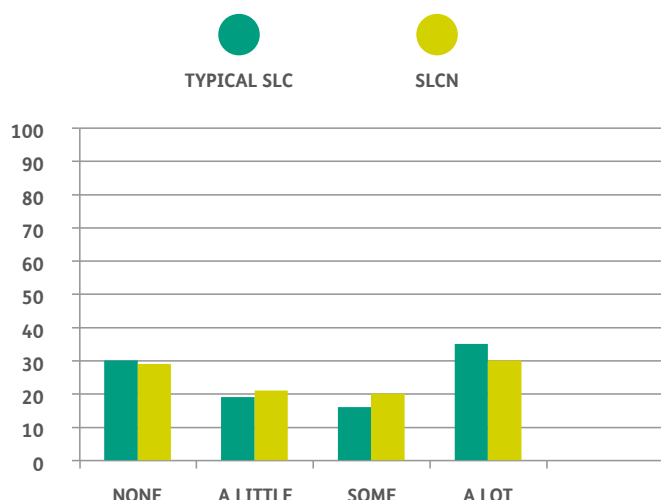
6% 1%
11%
36%
46%

Initial Training and CPD

More than a third (39%) of teachers reported they received no learning at all around typical development of SLC in their Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and disappointingly this figure rises to 42% when asked about learning around identifying and supporting children and young people with SLCN.

AMOUNT OF INITIAL TRAINING RECEIVED

TYPICAL SLC   SLCN

NONE   A LITTLE   SOME   A LOT
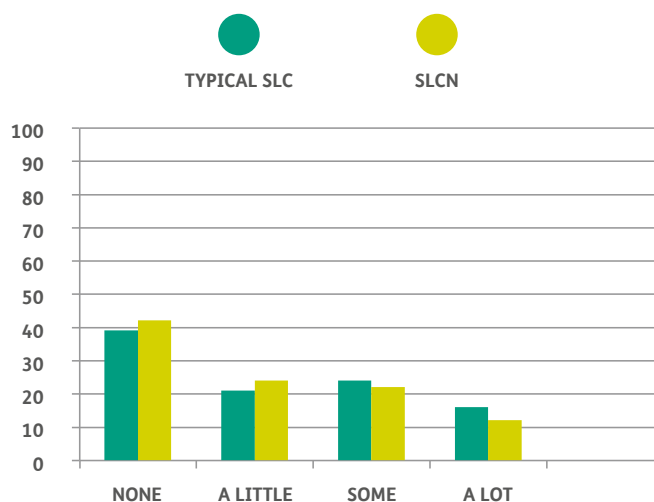
Similar findings are reflected in teachers' responses about CPD opportunities in their current role with a third (30%) reporting that they have received no learning whatsoever around typical SLC and 29% having received no training in identifying or supporting children with SLCN. This highlights a significant knowledge and skill gap in the teacher workforce, given what we know about the importance of SLC skills in underpinning learning and development.

TYPICAL SLC   SLCN

[Bar chart: Amount of CPD received by category. Y-axis 0–100. Categories: NONE, A LITTLE, SOME, A LOT. NONE: Typical SLC ~30, SLCN ~29. A LITTLE: Typical SLC ~19, SLCN ~21. SOME: Typical SLC ~16, SLCN ~20. A LOT: Typical SLC ~35, SLCN ~30.]

Training Needs

A significant number (41%) of teachers felt there was a gap in their learning around supporting children and young people learning EAL with their SLC development, a third (37%) reported they would like more learning around supporting all children and young people's SLC development and a third would like training around talking to parents about their child's SLC and SLCN. Only 3% of teachers felt they had received sufficient CPD in their current role.

INSET and whole class approaches to training were suggested as potential opportunities for CPD in this area with a number of respondents highlighting ITT as a missed opportunity for introducing learning in this area.

Barriers

More than three quarters (78%) of teachers felt that lack of budget was the most significant barrier to accessing CPD opportunities; backing from senior management was not a significant challenge. Lack of time (61%), lack of relevant opportunities (62%) and lack of capacity (59%) were also cited as barriers preventing teachers from developing their knowledge and skills in SLC.

Motivation and Preferences

Face to face (63%) and formal, accredited training leading to a qualification (61%) were by far the most popular formats of CPD for teachers and the least favoured formats were online learning (15%), self-directed or with tutor support, and webinars (9%).

The biggest motivating factor for undertaking SLC development opportunities for teachers was to improve their practice (93%), with an encouraging 80% of the profession seeing it as essential to their role. Three quarters (77%) felt they needed a better understanding of SLC/SLCN despite only 30% of teachers reporting that they worked directly with a child or young people with SLCN. This raises concerns about teachers' awareness of the prevalence of SLCN.

The relevance of training content, learning needs of children and young people and cost were all strong considerations when making decisions about CPD opportunities.

"This should be introduced as a module in the PGCE. It would have impacted massively on my practice had I been more aware of it"

"Initial teacher training is totally inadequate regarding SEN, SLC & SLCN…"

"SLCN awareness in ITT is essential and needs to be prioritised"

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS COORDINATORS (SENCOS)

SENCOs made up 7% of respondents in this consultation and included individuals working in this role across all age ranges and across a wide range of organisations including maintained schools, academies, and PVIs. They were separated from teachers for separate analysis due to their particular role in coordinating and delivering support for children and young people with SEN, and therefore their critical role with SLCN.

One hundred percent of respondents recognised the importance of SLC skills for children and young people but worryingly only a quarter (24%) of SENCOs reported they felt very confident about their ability to support the development of these skills. This leaves a gap of three quarters of the SENCO workforce (76%) not fully confident in their ability to support and identify children and young people with SLCN. Given that often the responsibility for referrals to specialist services is passed to the school SENCO this may be a contributing factor to the under identification of children with SLCN.

CONFIDENCE IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S SLC DEVELOPMENT

● VERY ● SOMEWHAT ● NEITHER CONFIDENT OR NOT ● NOT VERY ● NOT AT ALL

24%
0%
3%
10%
63%
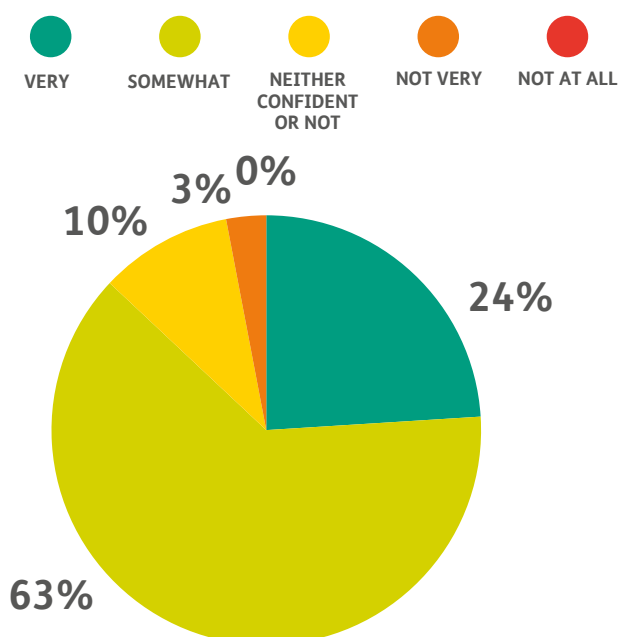
Initial Training and CPD

Nearly two thirds of SENCOs (62%) reported that they had received little or no learning at all in typical development of SLC in their initial training, increasing to 67% who lacked learning around identifying and supporting children and young people with SLCN.

AMOUNT OF INITIAL TRAINING RECEIVED
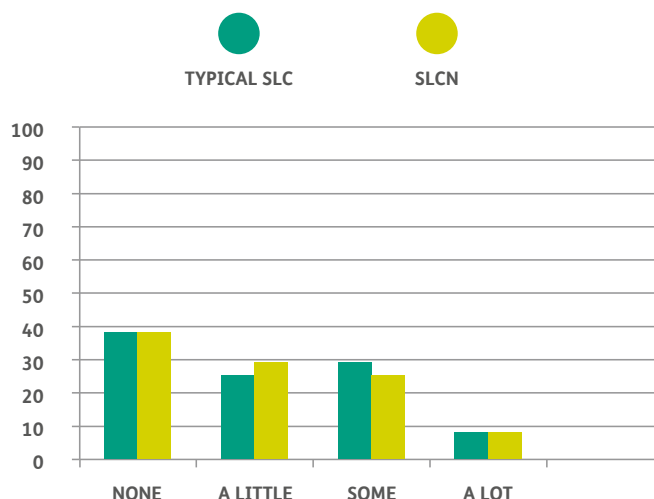
● TYPICAL SLC   ● SLCN

Reassuringly however three quarters (73%) have received 'some' or 'a lot' of CPD in typical SLC in their current role and two thirds (64%) in identifying and supporting SLCN. This still leaves a significant knowledge gap of nearly one fifth (17%) of SENCOs yet to receive any training or learning around SLC or SLCN; this is a concern given their specific role in cascading their knowledge, skills and support to teachers and other school staff.

AMOUNT OF CPD RECEIVED

● TYPICAL SLC   ● SLCN
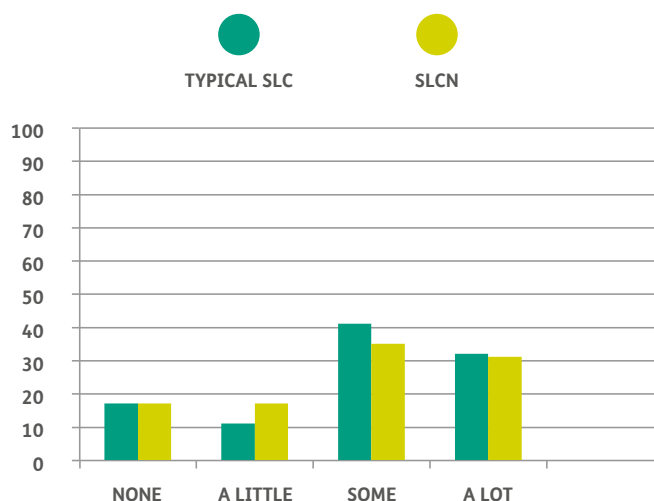
Barriers

Lack of budget was reported by two thirds (69%) of SENCOs as a significant barrier to accessing CPD opportunities despite most respondents feeling that support from management wasn't a significant barrier. Lack of staff capacity (51%) was also identified as a challenge as well as time (43%) and lack of relevant opportunities (41%). SENCOs were the one group that did however access the Local Offer for information about development opportunities, with 20% reporting this was the case.

Motivators and Preferences

Three quarters of SENCOs (74%) identified face to face training as their preferred format of CPD with half also preferring:

- Formal, accredited training leading to a qualification (55%)
- Opportunities to try out approaches in practice (50%)
- Mentoring/shadowing/coaching opportunities with specialist colleagues (48%)

Nearly a third preferred to engage in informal professional development opportunities such as reading around a topic in their own time (30%) but surprisingly none of the respondents favoured webinars and only 10% liked online learning routes
(self-directed or with tutor support).

Nearly all of SENCOs' major motivation for undertaking CPD in SLC was to improve their practice (89%) with an encouraging 85% of respondents seeing it as essential to their role. Eighty-one percent also felt they needed a better understanding of SLC/SLCN, despite only 30% of SENCOs working closely or directly with a child or young person with a need. Given that SLCN is the most common primary SEN in primary schools and the fourth most common in secondary it is worrying that only 30% of SENCOs believe they work closely with a child or young person with SLCN.

Training Needs

Supporting children learning EAL with SLC development was highlighted as a training need with nearly two thirds (61%) of this group, in accordance with responses across the education sector. Approximately half (46%) of SENCOs felt they also needed more professional development around talking to parents about SLC and SLCN. None of the respondents felt they had received sufficient CPD in their current role.

Over a quarter of SENCOs also suggested INSET and whole school or class training as opportunities for CPD.

> "We have more and more children every year with significant speech and language difficulties. It is becoming a priority training area."

> "There are pressures to support children with a variety of barriers. The general perception around SLCN is that it is a developmental issue that will just need time to address itself"

> "Expensive for courses, not a huge choice either"

MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE WORKFORCE

We also ran a parallel survey with our Consortium, a coalition of more than 50 not-for-profit organisations, with whom we work collaboratively to support the workforce around SLC.

Twenty-two of our 53 members responded to the survey, in which we asked them about the training and professional development opportunities that they offer to the workforce around children and young people's SLC and SLCN. A significant number of our members do provide training opportunities, with thirteen providing direct training opportunities as part of initial training, and twenty providing continuing professional development opportunities.

Members also told us that their main target audiences included teaching assistants, teachers (both primary and secondary), SENCOs and early years practitioners. A significant number also targeted further education staff, but very few considered senior leaders, health visitors, or youth justice to be a target audience.

The majority of our Consortium respondents reported that they provide face-to-face training delivered by staff or by licensed trainers or partners, which aligns with workforce preferences.

When asked what they felt the possible barriers to providing training to the workforce could be some themes aligned with the children and young people's workforce consultation, such as lack of budget, time and staff capacity. They did however believe that practitioners sometimes lacked support from senior management. This conflicts with the findings from the workforce survey who mostly reported this wasn't a significant challenge.

Nearly all members (95%) reported that they promote opportunities directly to their target audiences with much smaller numbers using channels such as the Local Offer or via management.

What next:

TAKING THE FINDINGS FORWARD

The evidence shows that a knowledgeable and skilled workforce can make a huge difference to children and young people's SLC development and maximise the chances of early identification of SLCN. These workforce survey findings make clear that training and development around SLC and SLCN are often not being given the priority they require and that we need to collaborate across sectors to continue to raise awareness and upskill the workforce.

It is encouraging that significant numbers of the workforce consider SLC and SLCN important areas for their professional development and this provides a strong base from which we can seek to continue to provide effective support. With financial and time constraints reported as major barriers to accessing training it is essential that TCT, our consortium and the wider sector collaborate with the workforce to devise innovative solutions and tailor our approaches to meet their needs.

We will continue to work alongside the workforce to understand their training and support needs and to collaborate to overcome the barriers they face.

Recommendations

We have developed these recommendations through discussion in the expert seminar we held. The recommendations are supported by the consultation findings and are consistent with previous proposals we have promoted; they will be explored further through sector specific briefings over the coming eighteen months. The findings of this report are also an input to both Talking About A Generation and the *Bercow – Ten Years On* review and the background underpinning these recommendations will be explored further in those reports.

Central government and health and education national bodies should:

- Promote and support the ambition to ensure that all members of the children and young people's workforce have entry level training in SLC and SLCN. Specific strategies and frameworks should be identified to support this

- Ensure that working with parents to develop their knowledge and understanding of SLC and SLCN is an essential part of any relevant training and workforce strategy, across education and health

- Ensure that support for SLC and SLCN provision is routinely reported on in Ofsted school inspection reports, and that inspectors have the knowledge and understanding to evaluate the effectiveness of the support available

- Provide clear information about how the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) and Pupil Premium (PP) can be used to support the development of SLC and SLCN and provide best practice examples

- Commission further research and practical guidance around support that is needed for children with EAL who may have SLCN

- Ensure that initial teacher and early years training includes supporting typical SLC and SLCN

- Set out an expectation that all early years settings have at least one member of staff with a Level 3 qualification in SLC. Government should set a timeframe within which to achieve this

Local Authorities and commissioners should:

- Provide clearer information to settings, including through advice to SENCOs and governing bodies, about professional development opportunities and support to develop skills and understanding in SLC and SLCN

- Where appropriate, provide clear information about how the EYPP and PP can be used to support the development of SLC and best practice examples and signpost to what exists already

The voluntary and community sector and training providers should:

- Collate and share examples of schools and settings prioritising SLC and SLCN, and of how they ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge they need to support children and young people's SLC and SLCN

- Ensure that the delivery of training is flexible and tailored and developed in consultation with target audiences to meet their needs. Where possible a range of options should be provided, for example daytime and/ or twilight, online and/or face to face, etc

- Develop and provide access to more information about the relationship between EAL and SLCN

- Share and promote existing resources for working with parents more widely and ensure that working with parents is always included in SLC and SLCN training and support

- Identify and share examples of where the EYPP and PP are being used to effectively support SLC and SLCN

- Regularly evaluate the impact of their training offers, as far as possible, on outcomes, for children and young people

Workforce and providers should:

- Commit to ensuring that all staff have basic SLC and SLCN training

- Appoint, support and train a language leader in every setting whose role is to support colleagues in recognising effective practice, and developing their confidence in effectively supporting children's SLC and SLCN

- Adopt a whole setting approach to SLC and SLCN and ensure commitment to professional development at every level

- Support and develop practitioners to work effectively with parents in relation to SLC and SLCN

- Have a strategic approach to planning and developing workforce skills in supporting SLC and SLCN, using an audit tool, such as the Speech, Language and Communication Framework, to audit practitioner skills and plan future, on-going learning opportunities

- Evaluate the effectiveness of any professional development, as far as possible, on outcomes for children and young people
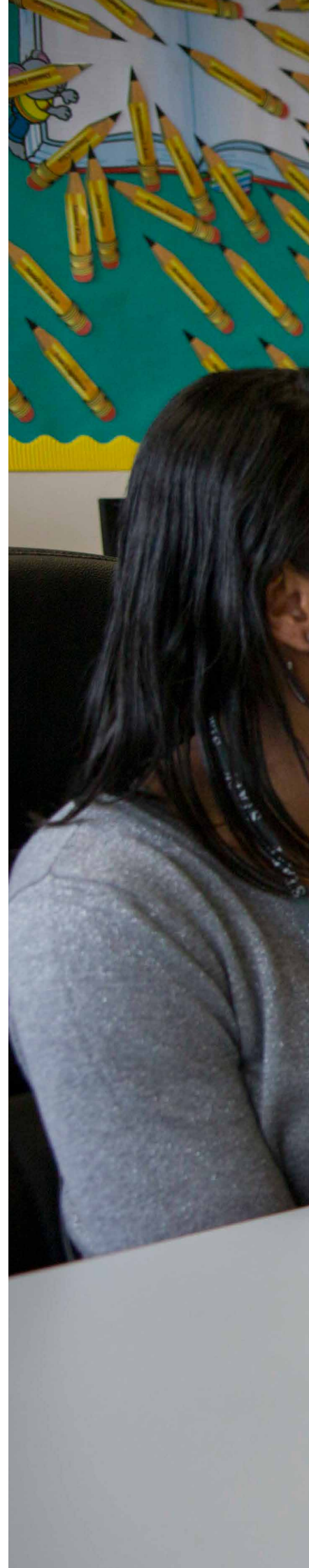
Conclusion

We believe that every child and young person should be enabled to communicate to the best of their ability, and by working in partnership with our consortium we strive to support the children and young people's workforce to build the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to help the children and young people they work with reach their potential.

By consulting directly with the workforce we have gained valuable insight into their professional development needs and preferences, and the ways in which the sector can improve our support to all those who work with children and young people. It is clear that there is still is a great deal of work to be done in promoting the fundamental importance of speech, language and communication, and reducing the barriers that prevent the workforce from accessing good quality professional development in this area. The knowledge we have gained from this consultation will be essential in informing our work going forward, and ensuring that the needs of the workforce are kept at the forefront.

The Communication Trust
Every child understood
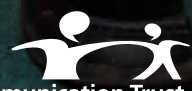
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