

Using “The Box” training tool in mainstream secondary school settings

More than 60% of young people who are accessing youth justice services present with SLCN which are largely unrecognised¹ so we were delighted when the RSCLT launched “The Box,” a free elearning tool designed by Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) for professionals working in the justice sector. As a service we were not yet commissioned to support our local youth justice system but knew we would be able to utilise this tool across our caseloads within mainstream secondary schools. As we are aware, 81% of children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) have SLCN which is often not identified,² and young people with communication difficulties demonstrate higher levels of disruptive and antisocial behaviour³ which we consistently see within our school settings.

Last summer, we sat and worked through the training together – completing all modules and enjoying the videos and activities. As secondary schools therapists, we felt the message being promoted was one that would be equally useful within our setting.

As some of the areas were quite specific to the justice system, we identified the modules that we felt were most relevant and useful to our colleagues working in secondary schools.

“The Box” Secondary Edition has been rolled out to 5 local secondary schools run in a number of different ways to suit the needs of the school. We have trialed:

- Independent learning carried out by members of staff in allocated CPD time with additional group learning sessions run by a therapist completed at the beginning, middle, and end of the course to introduce topics and consolidate learning.
- All sessions run as a whole group and led by the therapist.
- School staff completed all identified modules independently.
- Therapists led discussion around how individual schools could apply the information from “The Box” into school ethos.

Sessions were aimed at different focus groups including: teachers who opted to be involved in a school specific SLCN interest group, a representative from each subject department, and Teaching Assistants. The therapists advised relevant school staff to complete the identified modules via the RCSLT CPD website (www.rcsltcpd.org.uk). Members of staff were encouraged to complete the additional modules independently if they wanted further information about the Criminal Justice System and SLCN.

We completed pre and post training evaluation forms in order to gather feedback from the users. Initial data regarding the use of the programme across all schools was positive. We asked school staff to identify their level of confidence related to:

- Knowledge about SLCN – 24% increase across all schools
- Supporting students with SLCN: 24% increase across all schools
- Identifying characteristics of SLCN: 21% increase across all schools

100% of users reported they would recommend the training programme to other members of staff at their school and others.

The Box has been an invaluable tool that our schools have embraced due to the significance of the topic, the accessibility of the training and of course that it’s free! As a team, we welcomed this new and innovative training model and will continue to utilise this programme in our local secondary schools to raise awareness of links between the justice system and SLCN.

Charlotte Millward and Erin Bremer
Specialist Speech and Language Therapists
London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust

¹ Bryan K, Freer J, Furlong C. Language and communication difficulties in juvenile offenders. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders* 2007; 42, 505-520.

² Hollo, A, Wehby, J.H. and Oliver, R.M. (2014). Unidentified Language Deficits in Children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: A MetaAnalysis. *Exceptional Children*; 80(2), 169-186.

³ Benner, G. J., Nelson, J. R., and Epstein, M. H. (2002). Language skills of children with EBD: A literature review. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 10 (1), 43-59;

⁴ Snow, P. C. and Powell, M. B. (2011). Oral language competence in incarcerated young offenders: Links with offending severity. *International Journal of Speech Language Pathology*, 13(6), 480-489.