##### Speech and language therapists working with children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs: skills specification

This skills specification has been developed by the Social, Emotional and Mental Health (South East) Clinical Excellence Network (CEN).

For the purpose of this document, the term social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) has been used. In England, this term has superseded the terms Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD), Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD), and Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) since the publication of the [2015 SEND Code of Practice](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25). We recognise that terminology varies across the UK. Please visit the RCSLT [web pages](https://www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/clinical-information/social-emotional-and-mental-health) for further information.

*Please note: this is a progressive document – the skills are built upon (and not repeated) at each level ie skills/experience at level 2 are additional to those at level 1.*

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| **The speech and language therapist (SLT) should be a member of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) and must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). They are required to have additional post qualification training, skills and experience to deal competently with children and young people (CYP) with SEMH.**  **The additional knowledge, skills and experience are detailed below.**  **NB. The levels outlined below are a guide and do not align to pay grades.** |
| **Speech and Language Therapist SEMH – Level 1** |
| **Essential** |
| **Experience:**   * Placements and volunteering (SEMH). * Personal experience, processed with therapeutic support. * And/or enthusiasm and engagement within this field.   **Knowledge and understanding:**   * Language and emotional development of children adolescents and young people. * Relevant national, local and regional legislation and policies, including those related to SEMH, including NICE guidelines. * Underlying reasons for behaviour – including autism, learning disabilities (LD), developmental language disorder (DLD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). * Implications on speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) & SEMH. * Safeguarding as it applies to SEMH. * Expectations on teacher’s knowledge and delivery in classrooms, eg quality first teaching. * Emotional literacy and emotional regulation techniques. * Barriers to communication that may be in place for CYP with SEMH. * The impact of attachment and complex trauma. * Transference and counter transference. * Classroom and behaviour management policies. * The role of other professionals.   **Skills and personal attributes:**   * Empathy and non-judgemental attitude. * Ability to see the CYP in their wider family and social context. * Ability to see the positives in a CYP (unconditional positive regard). * Curiosity about the underlying reasons for behaviour. * Strong interpersonal skills to build trusting relationships with other professionals, parents and CYP. * Attunement – being able to contain CYP’s emotion and support them to regulate. * Ability to be attuned to his/her own emotions and seek support where necessary. * Ability to look for solutions rather than focus on the problems. * Ability to have positive interactions with CYP including emotional coaching. * Ability to manage own caseload. * Ability to adapt therapy to each CYP, particularly as regards pace. * Resilience and flexibility. * Good communication and negotiation skills. * Collaborative working and ability to build relationships with schools, parents and students. * Carrying out and interpreting a range of assessments with students with SEMH eg formal and informal for pragmatics, narrative skills, in addition to other language assessments. * Modify a range of therapy programmes and interventions eg adapting narrative skills, training and teaching emotional literacy skills. * Proactive in identifying learning needs and filling knowledge gaps. * Reflective practice and openness to learn and develop including self-awareness. * Ability to use supervision and professional support to enable work in occasional/frequent distressing and/or occasional/frequent unpleasant conditions and occasional highly unpleasant conditions (eg verbal aggression, sputum, physical aggression/threatening behaviour, racism, sexism, sexual harassment). * Understanding the remits/limits of SLT role in SEMH.   **Responsibilities:**   * To be guided by occupational policies and accountable for their own professional actions and work within the codes of practice, professional guidelines and policies. * To develop programmes of care for students with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and SEMH. * To implement and carry out policies relating to SEMH and SLCN.   **CPD and training:**   * Continued opportunities as required. * Access to appropriate supervision is essential (as per RCSLT guidelines). |
| **Desirable** |
| * Member of relevant networks eg SEMH CEN |

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| **Speech and Language Therapist SEMH – additional information for Level 2**  ***[In addition to experience and skills included in level 1]*** |
| **Essential** |
| **Experience:**   * Working in education or multidisciplinary team (MDT) including social care and child, adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) or acute settings. * Delivering standardised training.   **Knowledge and understanding:**   * Specialist knowledge of SEMH and SLCN. * How SEMH and communication influence/affect each other, including recent research links. * Curriculum expectations relevant to setting. * Child mental health disorders. * Relevant assessment and intervention approaches. * Principles of common psychological interventions eg cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), positive behaviour support. * Effective behaviour management techniques including alternatives to rewards and sanctions eg specific differential positive feedback­- describing the behaviour, not the student. * Mental capacity. * Other professional roles. * Differentiation.   **Skills and personal attributes:**   * Able to identify and manage signs of emotional distress, anxiety and excited behaviour. * Assertiveness. * Self-regulation skills. * Working with and supporting families. * Ability to interpret and manage complex facts regarding caseload. * Conflict resolution and negotiation skills. * Modifying range of therapy programmes and interventions eg adapting narrative skills training, teaching emotional literacy skills and conflict resolution. * Creativity and adaptability eg how to contribute to an MDT effectively. * Self-awareness/self-care. * Detailed report writing that compliments reports from other professionals. * Ability to work with interpreters where necessary.   **Responsibilities:**   * To develop specialised programmes of care for students with SLCN and SEMH. * To implement and carry out policies relating to SEMH and SLCN and to propose changes to these. * To supervise assistants and students and provide clinical support to less experienced SLTs. * To contribute to departmental research and development activities, and to undertake own research and development activities. * Training other professionals. |
| **Desirable** |

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| * Youth justice system terminology (if appropriate). * Awareness of current research re. SEMH. * Counselling skills. * Sensory integration. * An understanding of the impact of multiculturalism and multilingualism on SLCN and SEMH. |

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| **Speech and Language Therapist SEMH – additional information for Level 3**  ***[In addition to experience and skills included in previous levels]*** |
| **Essential** |
| **Experience:**   * Significant hands on experience of SEMH. * Working in a wide range of settings including schools, social care, family support, CAMHS or related field * Working with MDT in these settings. * Experience in training other professionals.   **Knowledge and understanding:**   * The role of other services involved to support CYP including social services, CAMHS, mental health support, youth offending teams (YOT), refugees, virtual schools, behaviour specialists, occupational therapy (OT), voluntary services etc. * The law (as relevant to education YOT and CAMHS). * SEMH as a descriptor rather than a diagnosis and the ability to explain this to people. * Approaches to loss and bereavement and how to differentiate them according to SLCN population. * SEMH difficulties (differential diagnosis) and their effect on all areas of development (cognition, emotional literacy, language). * Identifying risk of developing mental health disorders in those with SLCN. * Local care pathways within SLT, CAMHS, education and social care. * Approaches to ‘behaviour’ from a variety of theoretical perspectives.   **Detailed knowledge:**   * Interaction between SEMH disorders and SLCN. * SLCN as linked to co-morbid conditions such as LD, ADHD, oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), anxiety and gender issues. * Attachment, theory of mind, developmental trauma, resilience and their interactions with language and interpersonal relationships. * Child and adolescent neurological development. * Pragmatics. * Interaction therapy techniques. * Relevant training programmes. * Differentiation of curriculum for different key stages, including ‘whole class’ and ‘whole school’ models.   **Skills and personal attributes:**   * Coaching skills. * Advanced observational skills in formal and informal settings to guide assessment. * Individualistic approach to adapt therapy to the child. * Developing packages of care based on modified range of therapy programmes and interventions eg adapting narrative skills training and teaching emotional literacy skills. * Ability to work in occasional/frequent distressing or emotional circumstances and/or frequent unpleasant, occasionally highly unpleasant conditions (eg verbal aggression, sputum, physical aggression/threatening behaviour, racism, sexism, sexual harassment). * Counselling skills. * Awareness of self-care/wellbeing and facilitating this in others. * Manage specialist caseload and contribute to teaching and training of other SLTs and MDT. * Use of family-centred intervention techniques. * Differential diagnosis (eg DLD, ASD, SLCN in LD, selective mutism versus opposition defiance). * Ability to deliver training to larger audiences (teaching staff, MDT, parent groups and ‘whole class’ teaching) * Self-reflection towards speech and language therapy practice eg learn from experience and challenge self. * Self-reflection linked to emotions eg being aware of own triggers, biases and prejudices/judgements.   **Responsibilities:**   * To work within the codes of practice, professional guidelines and policies and be a lead in SEMH. * To develop specialist programmes of care and care packages for students with SLCN and SEMH. * To propose policies relating to SLCN and SEMH with impact beyond own area and to contribute to policy development for own and broader areas. * To supervise SLTs, assistants and students and to teach/train SLTs and members of the MDT. * To undertake research and development in SEMH as major job requirement. * Offer supervision to SLTs working in SEMH.   CPD and training:   * Theoretical training to master’s level or equivalent (eg in SEMH, attachment). * Access to regular supervision by SLT in SEMH role is essential. * Mental health and capacity. * Ability to review own behaviour/interactions and make changes using video eg through Video Interaction Guidance Training (VIG). * Knowledge of current research for population and its application for service development. |
| **Desirable** |
| * Counselling skills for SLTs/solution-focussed brief therapy (SFBT) or CBT training. * Parenting support. * VIG training. |

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| **Speech and Language Therapist SEMH – additional information for Level 4**  ***[In addition to experience and skills included in previous levels]*** |
| **Essential Criteria** |
| **Experience:**   * Significant experience of working in a wide range of settings including schools, social care, family support, CAMHS or related field. * Passion for working with SEMH. * Experience providing expert second opinions on complex cases. * Experience working with education /CAMHs/social care/youth justice at a strategic level.   **Detailed knowledge and understanding:**   * Influencing others and being a change catalyst. * Other services relating to the field. * Relevant national, local and regional legislation and policies, including those related to SEMH. * Supervision processes.   **Skills and personal attributes:**   * Ability to interpret and manage complex and highly complex facts regarding caseload. * Formulation/differential diagnosis and work as part of a multidisciplinary team. * Ability to manage own complex caseload. * Ability to plan MDT activities, research and teaching programmes relating to SEMH. * High degree of emotional literacy. * Ability to work in frequent distressing or emotional circumstances and frequent unpleasant/occasional highly unpleasant conditions (eg verbal aggression, sputum, physical aggression/threatening behaviour, racism, sexism, sexual harassment).  Responsibilities:  * To interpret national policies on SEMH and SLCN. * To propose policy or service changes with impact beyond own area and to implement policies and service development relating to SLCN and SEMH. * Influencing local land national policies in social care, CAMHs education. * To hold a delegated budget. * To manage the work of SLTs, assistants and students and to teach SLTs/MDT members and/or be responsible for devising SLT training on SEMH for department.   CPD and training:   * Counselling or other mental health intervention qualification. |
| **Desirable** |
| * MPhil or PhD * RCSLT advisor |