

April 2021

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white cardigan over a blue top, is sitting on the floor and smiling warmly at a young child with blonde hair. The child is wearing a light blue dress and is pointing at a colorful book (with green, yellow, and red covers) that the woman is holding open. The background is a bright, blurred indoor setting, likely a classroom or playroom, with a green chair and a whiteboard visible.

**Wirral Communication  
and Language Pathway**  
‘Start the conversation’

**The Wirral communication and language pathway includes guidance and information on how to support a child's speech and language development and identify any possible concerns.**

# Wirral communication and language pathway

## What is communication and language

Communication is a fundamental life skill. Children need to be able to speak, listen, understand language and communicate effectively. Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) is the term given to describe the extensive range of needs related to all aspects of communication – from understanding others to forming sounds, words and sentences to expressing ideas and emotions and using language socially.

The ability to communicate thoughts, feelings, desires and to be understood, is a fundamental human right and need. Yet, for over 50% of children entering school in England, this basic ability is not as well developed as it might be. Some of these children will have complex speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN), a significant number will have needs which if identified and addressed promptly in the early years, can be expected to resolve. Between these groups are the children who have significant SLCN but whose needs can be appropriately met by a well-trained workforce in collaboration with specialist speech and language colleagues.

It is estimated that 10% of all children have long term or persistent Speech, Language and Communication needs. In Wirral, this figure is equivalent to approximately 5,100 children and young people aged 0-19 years, with around 610 under-five year known to the Speech and Language Therapy Service.

At the end of foundation stage children's development is assessed by foundation class teachers. Communication and Language is one of the areas of development that is assessed. For the past 3 years (2017 to 2019) on average 78% of children have achieved their age-related expectation for communication and language, nationally this is 82%. Whilst 78% is good, Wirral strives to achieve this to be 100% to ensure all children can achieve their true potential.

## Who is this pathway for?

The Wirral Communication and Language Pathway has been developed to support anyone who has an interest in children's speech, language and communication development or working with children. It includes guidance and information on how to support a child's speech and language development and identify any possible concerns.

This will ensure children are:

- Supported to develop their speech, language, and communication skills to ensure they can access learning, social interactions and to make a positive contribution to the world around them
- Able to benefit from timely and integrated support and services that can best meet their needs
- Able to achieve their full potential at the end of Foundation Stage.

## How does the pathway work?

The pathway is based upon the triad of support (see page 4), universal, targeted and specialist. All children will access universal support, this is defined as a well-trained early years workforce that provides support to parents to be their child's first educator and develop their communication and language skills. The early years services will also provide opportunities that promote language development and identify any communication and language difficulties as early as possible.

When assessment takes place and a need is identified it is expected that professionals will support children using appropriate tools detailed in the pathway and refer on to targeted services or seek advice on how to support a child from appropriate health professionals. This targeted support may then develop if the need requires specialist intervention. It is expected that children will move up the continuum and down as their need changes.

There is a one-page overview of the pathway on page 5. The pathway details a child's possible journey from pre-birth, 0-1 years, 1-2 years and 2-3 years. For each age range there is a clear pathway, professionals can follow to support a child or where to find advice and guidance. There are four icons used in the pathway to visually identify the appropriate action.



### Review Point:

Details when a specified contact with a universal service will take place for all children and their families for example 9 month development check.



### Assessment:

Details the assessments that take place for the child during this period for example ages and stages questionnaire.



### Action

Details the actions that could take place if the assessment identified a need for example refer to Children's Centre for Baby Babble



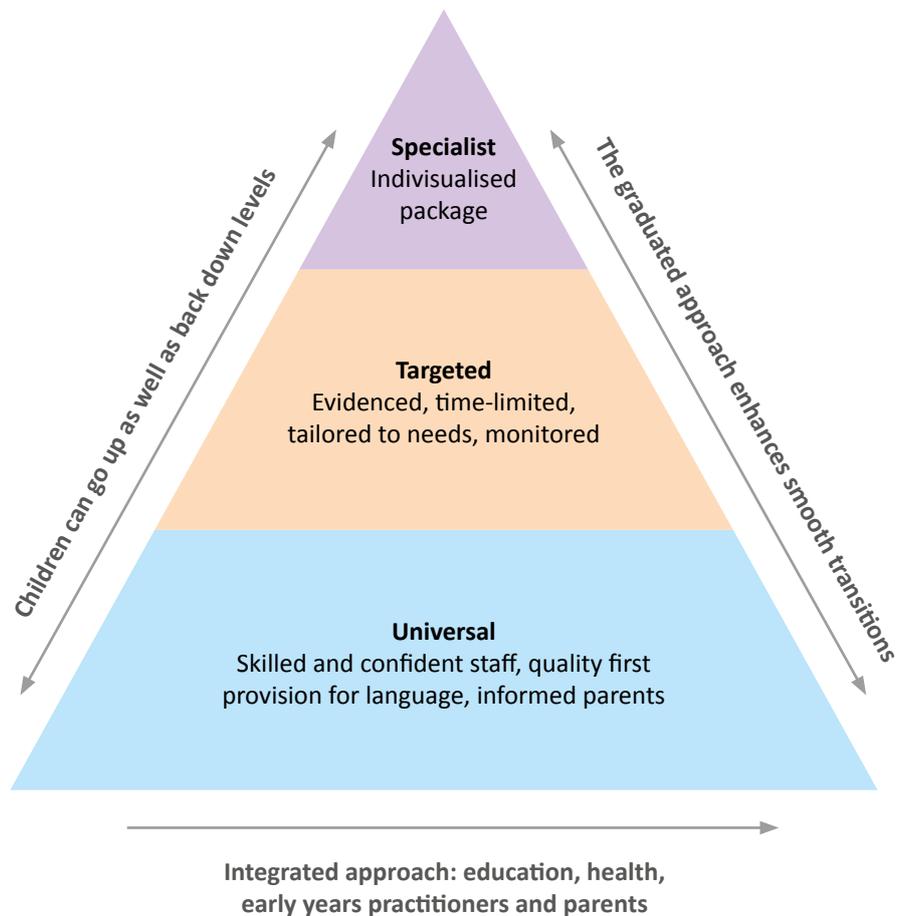
### Key Message

Details the key message we want all professionals to share with parents, other professionals and put into action for example Chat, Play, Read

The aim of this pathway is to **start the conversation**:

- With children following the key messages – working alongside parents
- With parents promoting the key messages at every opportunity as often as possible.
- With practitioners sharing ideas, knowledge, and skills

# Wirral early communication and language triad of support



**SPECIALIST**

	ANTENATAL	BIRTH TO 1 YEAR	1 TO 2 YEAR	2 TO 3 YEAR
	Refer to perinatal mental health midwives and liaison with health visiting services. Continue to promote key messages	Refer speech and language therapy. Continue to promote key messages	Refer speech and language therapy. Continue to promote key messages	Refer speech and language therapy. Continue to promote key messages
	Pre-birth midwifery or health visiting team assessment	Developmental review and WellComm assessment	Developmental review and WellComm assessment	Developmental review and WellComm assessment / sound listening programme
	Minimum 6 weekly	Minimum 6 weekly	Minimum 6 weekly	Minimum 6 weekly

**TARGETED**

	Refer to children's centre. Continue to promote key messages	Refer to children's centre for baby babble. Continue to promote key messages	Refer for WellComm screening. Continue to promote key messages	Sound listening programme / WellComm screening. Continue to promote key messages
	Early Help or Early Childhood Assessment	Developmental Review	WellComm Screening	Developmental Review
	Minimum 6 weekly	Minimum 6 weekly	Minimum 6 weekly	Minimum 6 weekly

**UNIVERSAL**

	STROKE, TALK, SING	LOOK, LISTEN, COPY	CHAT, PLAY, READ	CHAT, PLAY, READ
	Signpost to library, children's centre, community groups. Promote online services	Signpost to library, children's centre, community groups. Promote online services	Signpost to library, children's centre, community groups. Promote online services	Signpost to library, children's centre, community groups. Promote online services
	Holistic health needs assessment carried out by midwife	Holistic health needs assessment carried out by health visiting team	Community Speech and Language Check	2-year shared review or developmental review
	Midwifery contact as per pathway. Health visiting team antenatal review	Health visiting team contact as per routine Healthy Child Pathway	No routine checks	2-year developmental check

# Antenatal

Specialist:



Starting point for each age band



Action:

**Refer to perinatal midwives / health visitors** - If there are concerns around bonding or mum's ability to connect and communicate to the unborn child- then a referral to perinatal mental health midwife would be considered. They would do their own assessment and give the appropriate support or intervention. There would also be liaison with the health visiting team. The health visiting peri-natal mental health health-visitor who would be able to offer 1:1 support. Continue to promote the key messages below.



Assessment:

**Pre-birth assessment** - A pre-birth referral is completed by the midwife; Pre-birth liaison meeting would also be considered.



Review Point:

**Minimum 6 weekly assessment** - Specialist service supporting child and family would determine the review points based on progress.

## Targeted



Action:

**Refer to children's centre** - If you have concerns about a parent's developing bond with their child refer to children's centre or community groups, including Family Support Services if 1:1 support is needed. Support will be provided in relation to bonding and attachment as well as ideas on how to communicate with the unborn would be explored. Continue to promote the key messages below.



Assessment:

**Early Help assessment / Early Childhood Assessment**



Review Point:

**Minimum 6 weekly assessment** - Targeted service supporting child and family would determine the review points based on progress.

## Universal



Key Message

**Stroke, Talk, Sing** - This supports the bonding between parent and child  
**Stroke** - I feel your touch when you stroke your bump, it makes me feel happy.  
**Talk** - I love to hear my special people talking to me and each other.  
**Sing** - It's great to hear you singing along to the music around us.



Action:

**Signpost to Library, Children's Centre, community groups, Promote online resources** see page 13 for more details. • Libraries: [wirral.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives](http://wirral.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives) • Children's Centre: [wirral.gov.uk/early-years-and-childcare/childrens-centres](http://wirral.gov.uk/early-years-and-childcare/childrens-centres) • Hungry Little Minds: [hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk](http://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk) • Tiny Happy People: [bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people](http://bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people)



Assessment:

**Holistic health needs assessment** carried out by midwife. A Lifestyle assessment is completed at each ante-natal appointment. This covers smoking, alcohol, drugs, mood, and domestic abuse. All of which could potentially impact the ability of mother to be able to bond and communicate with the unborn child.



Review Point:

**Midwifery contact as per routine maternity pathway, Health visiting team antenatal review**

- Booking in appointment 8-12 weeks pregnant, Dating scan 8-14 weeks pregnant, Midwife appointment approximately 16 weeks pregnant, Growth scan 20 weeks pregnant
- Midwife appointment approximately 25 weeks, 28 weeks, 31 weeks, 34 weeks, 36 weeks, 38 weeks, 39 weeks, 40 weeks pregnant
- Health visiting team appointment between 32 and 38 weeks pregnant

## Birth to 1 year

Specialist:



Starting point for each age band



**Action:**

### Refer to speech and language therapy

- Contact Speech and Language therapy to discuss advice and monitoring support
- Speech and language referral:  
[www.wchc.nhs.uk/services/childrens-speech-language-therapy/how-to-access-the-service](http://www.wchc.nhs.uk/services/childrens-speech-language-therapy/how-to-access-the-service)
- Continue to share the key messages with parents and provide opportunities to support child's language development.



**Assessment:**

### Developmental review and WellComm assessment

- Health visiting team can complete a developmental review or WellComm assessment
- Children's Centre team can complete WellComm assessment
- Continue to monitor children's development within set time-frames.



**Review Point:**

**Minimum 6 weekly assessment** - Specialist service providing support will determine review points based on progress and share relevant information to services working with the child and family.

## Targeted



**Action:**

### Refer to children centre for Baby Babble - if you have any concerns about a child's communication and language development

- Link to baby babble referral - Baby babble is a parent and child 6 weeks course that promotes appropriate communication between parent and child.
- Continue to share the key messages with parents and provide opportunities to support child's language development.



**Assessment:**

### Developmental review

- The health visiting team can complete ages and stages questionnaire.
- Continue to monitor children's development within set time-frames.



**Review Point:**

**Minimum 6 weekly assessment** - Targeted service providing support will determine review points based on progress.

## Universal



**Key Message**

**Look, Listen, Copy** - Promote to parents the key messages explaining them as example below

**Look:** Point and name things I might find interesting, 'Bobby, look at that bird over there', follow my gaze and tell me what I'm looking at, 'Bobby that's a fire engine'

**Listen:** Tell me sounds I can hear, 'Bobby can you hear the bells', listen to the sounds I make.

**Copy:** Copy the sounds I make and my facial expressions.



**Action:**

### Signpost to Library, Children's Centre, Community groups, Promote Hungry Little Minds & Tiny Happy People - see page 13 for more details

Promote the key messages to parents and provide opportunities to support child's language development. • Libraries: [wirral.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives](http://wirral.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives) • Children's Centre: [wirral.gov.uk/early-years-and-childcare/childrens-centres](http://wirral.gov.uk/early-years-and-childcare/childrens-centres) • Hungry Little Minds: [hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk](http://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk) Tiny Happy People: [bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people](http://bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people)



**Assessment:**

### Holistic developmental checks carried out by Health visiting team

Parent and Health Visiting team will complete Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)



**Review Point:**

### Health visiting team contact as per routine healthy child pathway

- Birth Visit by Health Visiting (HV) team, 4-8-week development check by HV team
- 8-week development check by GP, 9-12mth development check by HV team
- General attendance at healthy child clinics and GP

# 1 year to 2 years

Specialist:



Starting point for each age band



**Action:**

## Refer to Speech and Language therapy

- Link to refer to speech and language therapy - [www.wchc.nhs.uk/services/childrens-speech-language-therapy/how-to-access-the-service](http://www.wchc.nhs.uk/services/childrens-speech-language-therapy/how-to-access-the-service) The therapist will determine suitable intervention that will best support the child's language and communication development.
- Early Years SEND team can support with advice and guidance to early years providers. Contact details can be found at: [localofferwirral.org/children-with-additional-needs-or-send/children-with-additional-needs-or-send-setting-support](http://localofferwirral.org/children-with-additional-needs-or-send/children-with-additional-needs-or-send-setting-support)
- Continue to share the key messages with parents and provide opportunities to support child's language development.



**Assessment:**

## Developmental review and WellComm assessment

- Health visiting team can complete a developmental review and WellComm assessment
- Children's Centre team can complete WellComm assessment
- Continue to monitor children's development within set time-frames.



**Review Point:**

**Minimum 6 weekly assessment** - Specialist service providing support will determine review points based on progress and share relevant information to services working with the child and family.

## Targeted



**Action:**

- Refer for WellComm screening** - Children with an identified vulnerability will be WellComm screened. If you are not aware a child is being screened refer to health visiting team / Children's centre for a WellComm screening assessment, if the child attends an early years provision or school check if they are able to complete a WellComm screening once completed share results with link health professional.
- Refer to children's centre for chatter tots: [wirral.gov.uk/early-years-and-childcare/childrens-centres](http://wirral.gov.uk/early-years-and-childcare/childrens-centres) Chatter tots is a 6-week course that promotes communication opportunities between parent and child. The WellComm toolkit assesses the child's communication and language development.
  - Continue to encourage key messages with children and provide more opportunities to support child's language development. Monitor the child's development within a specified time frame to identify next steps.
  - There is a wealth of information to support practitioners and parents of children with Special Educational Need / Disabilities on the Local Offer site. [localofferwirral.org](http://localofferwirral.org) Signpost parents here.
  - Parents might benefit from attending Little Bee's at Koala Northwest [koalanw.co.uk/little-bees](http://koalanw.co.uk/little-bees) They provide support for parents where there is a concern around the child's social communication.
  - Autism together provide lots of support and information on children who have or may have social communication difficulties [www.autismtogether.co.uk/children-and-family-services](http://www.autismtogether.co.uk/children-and-family-services)



**Assessment:**

## WellComm screening

- Children with identified vulnerabilities will be WellComm screened and next steps determined by the assessment outcome.
- The health visiting team can complete ages and stages questionnaire.
- Children's Centre can complete a WellComm assessment.
- Continue to monitor children's development within set time-frames, complete a WellComm assessment if you have the equipment and training.
- If you are concerned about their hearing or language development liaise with the health visiting team



**Review Point:**

**Minimum 6 weekly assessment** - Targeted service supporting child and family would determine the review points based on progress.

Continued...

## 1 year to 2 years (continued)

### Universal

#### Key Message

**Chat, Play, Read** - To encourage communication and language development our key messages are:

**Chat:** Copy my sounds and words, expand on what I say. 'all gone' to 'all your dinner has gone' Use my name especially when I look at you.

**Play:** Join in my play, build up blocks and let me knock them down, tell me what you are doing for example 'Let's build the blocks 1,2,3 and Mary knock them down'

**Read:** Look at books with me, tell me stories and sing nursery rhymes with me

#### Action:

**Signpost to Library, Children's Centre, community groups, Promote Hungry Little Minds and Tiny Happy People**

- Promote the key messages to parents and provide opportunities to support child's language development.
- Signpost parent's groups or services that can give parents ideas on how to include more conversation and talking with their child/children. See page 13
- Share ideas on how to encourage conversation and talking with their child/children.

#### Assessment:

**Community assessment**

The community assessment is a simple checklist that provides suitable next steps dependent on the outcome. If you are already assessing a child's development, then continue to use that system. Monitor child's development through ongoing observations, ensure there is a review date to determine next steps.

#### Review Point:

**No routine checks**

There are no early years services review points during this time so a community assessment has been devised so that parents or professionals can assess their child's development if they wish to. [Link to community assessment when on website](#)



## 2 to 3 years

Specialist:



Starting point for each age band



Action:

### Refer to Speech and Language therapy

- Speech and language therapy referral link: [www.wchc.nhs.uk/services/childrens-speech-language-therapy/how-to-access-the-service](http://www.wchc.nhs.uk/services/childrens-speech-language-therapy/how-to-access-the-service)  
The therapist will determine suitable intervention that will best support the child's language and communication development.
- Early Years SEND team can support with advice and guidance to early years providers. Contact details can be found at: [localofferwirral.org/children-with-additional-needs-or-send/children-with-additional-needs-or-send-setting-support](http://localofferwirral.org/children-with-additional-needs-or-send/children-with-additional-needs-or-send-setting-support)
- Continue to provide opportunities that encourage the key messages, continue to promote key messages to parents. Liaise with professionals to ensure consistent support for child and family.



Assessment:

### Developmental review and WellComm assessment

- Health visiting team can complete a developmental review and WellComm assessment
- Children's Centre team can complete WellComm assessment
- Continue to monitor and support child's development in line with advice from speech and language.



Review Point:

### Minimum 6 weekly

Specialist service supporting child and family would determine the review points based on progress.

## Targeted



Action:

- **Sound listening programme** - If there are speech sound concerns then progress through the sound listening programme, if you are not able to do this
- **WellComm screening** - If language concerns complete a WellComm screening, if you are not trained and do not have equipment, refer to health visitor / Children's centre for WellComm screening if required
- **Promote Key messages** - Continue to provide opportunities that encourage the key messages, continue to promote key messages to parents. Liaise with professionals to ensure consistent support for child and family.
- Children identified at 1-2 years to be re-screened with WellComm



Assessment:



Review Point:

**WellComm screening** or review sound listening program as per the guidance

**Minimum 6 weekly** - Targeted service supporting child and family would determine the review points based on progress.

Continued...

## 2 to 3 years (continued)

### Universal

#### Key Message

**Chat, Play, Read** - To encourage communication and language development our key messages are:  
**Chat:** Listen and repeat and add on to what I do and say, e.g. I say, 'Teddy hide', you would say 'Teddy is hiding under the table'  
**Play:** When playing with me, link language to the play, for example when we play house, name objects I am interested in and use them in a sentence, 'Let's give the baby a bath'  
**Read:** When we read books, point at the pictures and talk about the pictures and relate this to what we have done. Please give me time to respond this make take longer than you think

#### Action:

**Check child has completed a Two to two- and half-year shared review or two-year developmental check**

- If not, liaise with health visiting team to organise a review or check
- If yes, discuss outcome with health visiting team and any concerns

**Children accessing early years provision outside of Wirral would be offered a 2 year developmental check with the health visiting team.**

#### Assessment:

##### **Two to two-and half-year shared review**

- Parents complete an ages and stages questionnaire
- Early Years providers complete a two-year check
- Health visiting team will weigh and measure child and complete a short observation

##### **Two year- developmental check**

- Parents complete an ages and stages questionnaire
- Health visiting team will weigh and measure child and complete a short observation

#### Review Point:

##### **Two to two- and half-year shared review or two-year developmental check**

- Children attending early years childcare provision will receive a 2 to 2 ½ year shared review where information is shared between parents, health visiting team and early years provider to identify any additional needs for the child.
- Children not attending an early years childcare provision will receive a two year development check through their health visiting team.

# Useful contacts

## Health Visiting Team

**Birkenhead, Wallasey, South & West:**  
0151 514 0219

## Children's Centres

**Birkenhead locality**  
2 Brasseley Street, CH41 8DA  
0151 666 3323

**Wallasey locality**  
St Paul's Road, CH44 7AN  
0151 666 3506

**South and West locality**  
Gratrix Road, CH62 7BW  
0151 666 3246

## Links to specific services / Information

### Online information

Age Range	Service	Contact	Description
All ages	Local Offer	<a href="http://localofferwirral.org">localofferwirral.org</a>	Providing information for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities
0-5	Hungry Little Minds	<a href="http://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk">hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk</a>	Simple fun activities for kids, from newborn to five.
Antenatal to 5 years	Tiny Happy People	<a href="http://bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people">bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people</a>	Tiny Happy People is here to help you develop your child's communication skills. Explore our simple activities and play ideas and find out about their amazing early development.
All ages	ICAN	<a href="http://ican.org.uk/i-cans-talking-point/parents">ican.org.uk/i-cans-talking-point/parents</a>	Provides lots of information on how parents can support their child's language and communication development
All ages	The ESRC International Centre for Language and Communicative Development	<a href="http://lucid.ac.uk/resources/for-parents">lucid.ac.uk/resources/for-parents</a>	Lots of free resources to support children's language development.

## Services

Age Range	Service	Contact	Description
Antenatal-postnatal	Community Midwives	wuth.nhs.uk/our-locations/wirral-women-and-childrens-hospital/maternity-services/labour-care/community/community-midwives	Community Midwives liaise and work closely with the hospital-based midwives and Obstetricians, local GPs, Health Visitors, Social Workers, Physiotherapists and other allied professionals to try to ensure needs are met and families are fully supported.
0-19	Health Visiting team	wchc.nhs.uk/services/wirral-0-19-health-and-wellbeing-service  facebook.com/0219HVHub	Our 0-19 Health and Wellbeing Service is structured around the national Healthy Child Programme and provides support for children, young people and their families. Support begins during pregnancy and continues until the child reaches the age of 19.
Antenatal -5 years	Children's Centre	wirral.gov.uk/early-years-and-childcare/childrens-centres  My Child Can facebook page	Children's Centres bring together a range of services for families and children from pre-birth to five. Although every child will have a named Children's Centre allocated to them, you can go to any Children's Centre in Wirral.
2 to 4 years	Koala Northwest	koalanw.co.uk/little-bees	'Little Bees' is a support group especially for young children where there is concern over their development of social and communication skills.
2 to 8 years	Autism Together	autismtogether.co.uk/children-and-family-services	Autism Together's Children & Family Service focuses on providing autism-specific services for children, young people and their families, helping them to better understand their autism, and any social and communication difficulties.
2 to 5 years	Early Years SEND team	localofferwirral.org/children-with-additional-needs-or-send/children-with-additional-needs-or-send-setting-support	If your child attends a setting there will be advice and support provided through their Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO). Settings can request involvement from Early Years Special Educational Needs (SEND) Officers who can provide further advice and practical guidance about approaches to identification, assessment and intervention.
0-19	Speech and Language Therapy service	wchc.nhs.uk/services/childrens-speech-language-therapy	Specialist service supporting children and young people aged 0-19 with speech, language and communication needs.

## Online information

Age Range	Service	Contact	Description
All ages	Libraries	wirral.gov.uk/ libraries-and-archives  booktrust.org.uk	Libraries offer a selection of children's books that can be loaned and reading groups for young children to attend.  Bookstart gift packs: For 0-4 year olds. Children can pick up a free pack of books and guidance materials for parents and carers from any Wirral library.
0 to 4 years	EY SEND Portage	eysend@wirral.gov.uk  portage.org.uk	The Portage team sits within the Early Years SEND Team and is a well-established service that is known throughout the UK. The team have a vast amount of experience in working with children who have special educational need or disability. They provide a tailored educational package of support for children within the family's home, for children aged birth to five years.
0 to 4 years	EY SEND Team	eysend@wirral.gov.uk  makaton.org	Makaton is a language programme that uses signs, symbols and speech to enable and support children to communicate. It is recognised internationally and is used by television presenters such as Mr Tumble. Wirral's Early Childhood service supports families with children as young as six months to learn key Makaton signs during their baby babble sessions. The service also has access to an experienced Makaton tutor.
0 to 5 years	Foundation Years Trust	foundationyearstrust.org.uk	Foundation Years Trust (FYT) support parents and carers of children 0-5 in their vital role as a child's first and most important educator. At weekly groups in schools, nurseries and in the community, parents find out how the little things they do make a big difference to their child's learning.
All ages	The Communication Trust	thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/ resources/resources/ resources-for-parents	The Communication Trust focuses on supporting children and young people who struggle to communicate because they have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) as well as supporting all children and young people to communicate to the best of their ability.

