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# Professional Practice Guidelines

for

## **SPEECH AND LANGUAGE SCREENINGS IN PRESCHOOLS AND SCHOOLS**

### **Ethics and Standards Committee 2023**

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|----------------|--|
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## OVERVIEW

The Ethics and Standards Committee (ESC) recognises the importance of screening for the purpose of identifying delays and difficulties in the domain of speech and language development. The screening process should serve to facilitate the timely provision of appropriate services to those children who require them.

Screenings form part of professional practice, and as such, the ethical regulations regarding client consent and client confidentiality apply to screenings in the same way that they do to the assessment and therapy process. Thus:

- No screening should take place without prior written consent from a child's parent/s or guardian/s, even when the screening therapist is employed by the school.
- Client confidentiality must be preserved.
- The practitioner may not use the screening service as an opportunity to 'canvas' – that is to draw attention to their personal qualities/superior knowledge/quality of service/professional guarantees or best practice...

## APPROACH

- The Speech-Language Therapist (SLT) may approach the head of a pre-school or primary school with a view to initiating a screening programme or may respond to a request to do so.
- A screening should be conducted whenever one is requested by a child's parents/guardians or requested by a child's teacher and approved by that child's parents/guardians.

## INITIAL COMMUNICATION

The following information should be included in the initial communication sent to parents:

- name and contact details of the screening therapist.
- information regarding the importance of screening for speech/ language/ communication difficulties.
- the fact that the screening is non-compulsory.
- that the screening may lead to the recommendation of referral to a speech-language therapist and/or audiologist.



## **INFORMATION REQUESTED**

In addition to the parent/guardian's contact details and the child's name and date of birth, the following information should be requested:

- Languages spoken to and by the child.
- Whether the parent/guardian is in any way concerned about feeding/speech/language/communication development
- Permission to share the screening result with the child's teacher and/or school principal should be formally requested.

## **SCREENING PROCESS**

- Parental concern about feeding, speech, language, listening or social communication development should be considered sufficient reason to refer for a full assessment or diagnostic therapy.
- Teacher concern about feeding, speech, language, listening or social communication development should be gathered before the screening. This information gathering forms part of the screening process.
- Screening should take place in a quiet and dedicated venue.
- Results may not be given to or discussed with the teacher without the written permission of the parent.
- The child's amount of exposure to the language in which the screening takes place should be considered when interpreting the results of the screening.
- If possible, the speech and language screening should be preceded by an audiometric screening.

## **FEEDBACK**

- Parents must receive the results of the screening in writing. Should a child fail the screening, their parent/s should be provided with the reasons for the failure in writing.
- Where the recommendation is a speech and language assessment or diagnostic speech therapy, the names and contact information of three 'viable' service providers – including the screening practitioner – must be provided. 'Viable' refers to speech therapists who have the necessary skill, availability and accessibility (geographical or otherwise) to work with the child.
- It is at the parent/guardian's discretion as to whether the recommendation is followed up, and if so, which service provider is selected.