

Using co-production to identify priorities for future research in collaborative working to support primary school children with SLCN

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Abstract

Our scoping review (Mathers et al., 2024) has identified the need for further research into collaborative working between school staff, Speech and Language therapists (SLTs), and families, in order to best support children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) attending mainstream primary schools. This research should be co-produced, to ensure that the resulting research reflects the needs of, and supports the joint working of SLTs, school staff and families. This lightning talk will present the process we have been following to co-produce a research question within this field, and discuss important considerations and learning from this project so far.

A research group was established in December 2023, consisting of two parents of children with SLCN attending mainstream schools, an assistant head and Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), and an SLT (the first author). Recruitment is underway to identify a teaching assistant to join our group. The primary focus of the group (January – August 2024) is to identify a specific research question within the broad area of collaborative working in mainstream primary schools. Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) activities were identified to support the development of the research question; focus groups, an online questionnaire/discussion board, and one-to-one child interviews.

At the time of submission, the four co-researchers have met in person once, to establish the aims of the group, and to begin to develop the co-working relationship. This included:

- sharing and beginning to develop an understanding of each other's experiences, such as the parents' experiences of communication with SLTs and schools, and consistency of therapy provision.
- identification of training needs, such as running focus groups
- identifying and valuing the individual skills of team members. For example, knowledge of the research process (SLT), and experience with graphic design (parent). The research and training activities were then allocated by the group together.

Learning points so far relate to establishing equal power and responsibility, supporting all members to participate, and sharing an understanding of the aims of the PPI. Expressions of interest from members of the research group have already been made for co-producing the next stage of the research.