

Collaborative working between Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) and teaching staff in mainstream UK primary schools: A scoping review.

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Abstract

Introduction:

Support for school-age children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) usually takes place within the school setting. Successful outcomes for children with SLCN rely on effective collaborative working between Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs), school staff and families. We need to understand the current evidence regarding the joint working practices, relationships and collaboration experiences of SLT and teaching staff within mainstream primary schools, in order to 1) identify whether sufficient research exists for a systematic review within this field, and 2) inform practice.

The purpose of this scoping review was to:

- identify what research exists regarding collaboration, roles and relationships of SLTs and teaching staff within mainstream UK primary schools
- clarify the nature, participants and concepts described within this literature.

Methods:

A scoping review framework was used, consisting of: identification of the review objectives, identification of relevant studies, study selection and iterative searches, data charting, and reporting of the results. Information regarding the research question(s), participants, data collection and analysis, and terms used for key concepts was extracted.

Results:

14 papers were identified. Of these, collaboration was the primary focus of only five papers. Clarity and perceptions of the roles of other partners in the collaborative process was a key theme within six of the papers. Whilst facilitators and barriers to collaboration were discussed in all 14 papers, only four studies aimed to investigate barriers and facilitators. Teaching assistant (TA) views are underrepresented within the research.

Conclusion:

Drawing conclusions from the body of research is challenging due to the varied ways in which the key concept 'collaboration' is used. Currently, there is insufficient literature to carry out a systematic review. This scoping review highlights the need for research that considers collaboration within the complex social network of school staff (including TAs) and SLTs, in order to ensure that future guidance is rooted in research.