

20 September 2017

**UPDATE ON THE RE- COMMISSIONING OF SPEECH AND LANGUAGE
THERAPY SERVICES**

Report of the Operations Director, Education

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1. Purpose

This report provides a progress update to the Schools Forum on the re-commissioning of speech and language therapy services for children and young people aged 0-25.

2. Summary

Work is underway, in partnership with East & North Herts and Herts Valley Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), to move towards a more integrated model of delivery of speech and language therapy services across education and health. The recommissioned service will come into effect from April 2018. This report provides an update on this work.

3. Recommendations

The Schools Forum are invited to note this report and to comment on proposed service delivery model.

4. Background and progress update

- 4.1 Speech and language therapy for children and young people in Hertfordshire is currently commissioned separately by Hertfordshire County Council (on behalf of the Schools Forum), East and North Herts CCG and Herts Valley CCG. Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust is the single provider which links all partners. Around £5m is spent by all partners in total per year on speech and language therapy services, including around £1.7m of high needs DSG funding.

- 4.2 In July 2016, a report was taken to the Schools Forum proposing that an integrated model of commissioning for speech and language therapy across education and health for children and young people aged 0-25 should be put in place from April 2018. This would involve a re-commissioning and the production of a revised service specification. The Schools Forum welcomed the proposal but wanted to ensure that the proposals were in line with the recommendations arising from the SEND strategy review.
- 4.3 The proposals were considered by the Speech Language and Communication Needs workstream of the SEND strategy review. The workstream recommended that the proposed integrated service delivery model was preferable to current arrangements because:
- there could be agreement on core principles and expected outcomes across education and health;
 - an integrated contract for the commissioning of speech and language therapy services should lead to the development and delivery of a more 'seamless' service, and
 - the model is more in line with the principles underlying the national SEND framework which promotes multi-agency working and development of jointly commissioned services.
- 4.4 At its meeting held on 7 December 2016, the Schools Forum agreed to the proposal to proceed towards a joint contractual arrangement with Health, with the following provisos:
- that robust monitoring arrangements against agreed outcomes are put in place through the future commissioning arrangements, and
 - that the contribution from high needs spending within the DSG towards the contract is specifically accounted for.
- 4.5 The revised service delivery arrangements for speech and language therapy will be in line with the following principles identified by the SLCN workstream as part of the HCC SEND strategy review:
- The development of speech, language and communication skills is 'everybody's business' and requires a partnership approach between parents and carers, education settings and specialist staff;
 - Interventions should be high quality, person-centred, evidence-based and timely;
 - Effective early intervention is critical, with a particular focus on engaging with early years service providers to enable early intervention;
 - Access to support and services should be 'needs-led' rather than 'diagnosis-led';
 - Improving the skills and confidence of staff in educational settings, parents and carers and the wider workforce should form an essential part of service delivery;

- The three- tier model (universal /targeted/specialist) should be used as the framework for planning and delivering services in Hertfordshire.
- 4.6 Initial work has been undertaken on the offer at universal, targeted and specialist levels, to be incorporated into the service specification. This is included as Appendix 1.
- 4.7 Within the service delivery model, it is proposed that there is a specific focus on early intervention and improving the skills and confidence of the wider workforce to meet speech, language and communication needs. This will be achieved through a countywide training programme, effective programmes of intervention in the early years and strong partnership arrangements between speech and language therapists, educational settings and parents. One of the major aims of the service delivery arrangements is to reduce the need for long term direct therapy.
- 4.8 Initial consideration of the funding requirements for the integrated contract, are that efficiencies of 5% could be achieved in the total contract value, with each of the three funding agencies reducing their funding contribution by 5%. This would lead to cost savings to the DSG of approximately £85,000 with potential to re-invest in other initiatives to improve outcomes for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs. This will require further discussion with the Schools Forum and the CCG Boards.

5. Process for taking the work forward

- 5.1 A Project Group has been established with senior representation from HCC and the CCGs. A project action plan, timescales and governance arrangements have been agreed. The group meets on a monthly basis to ensure effective implementation of the project.
- 5.2 An early draft of a service specification has been produced. Comments have been sought from the Project Group and will also be sought from the Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) Reference Group, which has school and parent representation.
- 5.3 A progress report will also go to the SEND Executive on 26 September 2017 and to the two CCG Boards, also in September 2017.
- 5.4 An invitation has been made through the Headteacher forums to seek representative headteachers to take part in a focus group on 10 October 2017. This will be led by the Commissioning Team. This will give an opportunity specifically for schools across all phases to advise on service delivery and monitoring arrangements which should be incorporated into the service specification.

- 5.5 As well as the opportunity for nursery headteachers to be represented at the focus group on 10 October, comments will also be sought from the PVI Consultative Group and the Children's Centre Reference Group.
- 5.6 A final draft of the service specification will be completed in early November 2017
- 5.7 The Schools Forum will make the final financial decision regarding allocation of DSG to the contract at its meeting on 29 November 2017.

Appendix 1: Draft service offer for inclusion in SALT service specification

Universal service offer

- Provide information, advice and guidance to parents and carers, schools, early years settings and other education providers to support speech, language and communication development;
- Work directly with parents and carers to assist in developing awareness, skills and confidence in identifying and meeting speech, language and communication needs;
- Communicate a clear service offer, detailing the support available from the speech and language therapy service, access to the service and pathways at all levels of need;
- Signpost to specialist services, as required;
- Contribute to training and development opportunities for the wider workforce to assist in identifying and meeting the speech, language and communication needs of children and young people.

Targeted service offer

- Provide drop-in sessions for parents and carers and early years workers in a range of accessible settings across the County. Drop in sessions can be used for both universal advice and initial screening at the pre-referral stage of the early years pathway;
- Allocate a named speech and language therapist for each maintained mainstream, special school and College in the County. Attend liaison meetings a minimum of one a term in order to identify children and young people for whom there are concerns regarding speech, language and communication development. Identify and deliver actions to address needs in collaboration with the school or setting;
- Provide information and guidance to enable parents to support targeted interventions;
- Provide support and training for professionals in the delivery of targeted interventions;
- Co-run interventions with school and settings based staff and deliver informal training and coaching to build skills and confidence.

Specialist service offer

- Assess children referred for specialist support within agreed timescales;
- Ensure that interventions are evidence based and that appropriate outcome measures are agreed at the outset;
- Contribute to multi-agency planning and progress reviews, as required;
- Ensure that timely and appropriate feedback is provided to children and young people and their family as well as others involved in providing support so all involved can support the intervention and evaluation of progress;

- Where required according to the specific needs of a child or young person, provide support from a highly specialised therapist to work in conjunction with the link therapist;
- Provide information, advice, training and coaching, as required, to enable others to support specialist intervention.

This list is not exhaustive