
SOCIAL COMMUNICATION OUTREACH SERVICE

Purpose of Report

1. To provide School Forum with an update on the delivery of the Social Communication Outreach Service (SCOS) and recommendation in order for the service to continue to meet the needs of Darlington schools.

Background

2. The SCOS provides a consultation, advisory and support service through observation, consultation (including telephone consultation), individual work, attendance at annual reviews and delivery of training in order to support pupils with ASD and Social Communication disorders.
3. The co-ordination of the service is based at Hurworth School and outreach is provided by a team of qualified skilled staff from three bases:

Hurworth – (co-ordination) SENCo (2.5 days per week)

Hurworth – TA (5 days per week)

Beaumont Hill - ASD Teacher (0.5 days per week)

Beaumont Hill – Teacher (0.5 days per week)

Mount Pleasant – HLTA (2 days per week)

4. In October 2015 the School Forum received an information report relating to the 2014/15 review of the SCOS and it was noted that ASD as an SEN Primary need has been increasing. A recommendation from the last School Forum was for the development of an ASD strategy in recognition of the growth of need and impact on future provision needs.
5. It was reported that an approach to embed and sustain support for schools in ASD and social communication difficulties was necessary and ASD Leads have been identified in all schools in the borough. Commencing in April 2015 the SCOS ran phase one of a training programme in order build capacity within schools. Phases two and three are being rolled out over this Academic Year.

Outcomes and Impact of SCOS

6. A survey by the National Union of Teachers of its members showed that 44% of teachers do not feel confident teaching children with autism. In July 2015, all schools in Darlington receiving support from the SCOS responded that the service is 'excellent' and continues to be highly valued and well regarded. The advice, support and consultation available from the service was scored as excellent.

7. The provision of training for ASD leads has resulted in positive feedback after training was completed. Some comments include: *“I appreciate the service has a great number of children that it caters for hopefully with the additional training of ASD leads ... we can reduce the need to call out SCOS for advice and support”*; *“I have begun passing the fresh ideas in supporting the learning of children onto other staff members”*; *“A fabulous training session which has made me feel empowered and confident to become the ASD lead”*.

Issues

8. One of the objectives of embedding ASD leads in schools is that generalist referrals to the SCOS decrease overtime. Whilst the training has been well received the referrals into the service still remain at high levels. In 2014/15 there were 37 new referrals during the year, and in the first three months of this term, there have been 13 new referrals, a third already of the previous year. This shows that it may be some time before the benefits of the training are realised as time is taken to embed whole school approaches to ASD support in school and reliance on the service decreases.
9. As at November 2015, 33 schools (25 primary and 8 secondary) are accessing support for 220 children (125 primary, 95 secondary). The highest level of intervention by SCOS staff is that of consultation visits to schools which clearly take more time. In 2014/15 there were 111 consultation visits, and already this year **85** visits have taken place.
10. The staffing resource covers 10.5 days per week which equates to an average number of 7 hours per child, per term. The actual average being undertaken is approximately 14 hours per child, per term.
11. This is clearly not a sustainable position therefore something needs to be done to ensure the service is continued but adapted to meet both short and long term needs.

Recommendation

12. The SCOS are requesting an increase to the SCOS funding for a part time Teacher with SEND (ASD) experience to co-ordinate the service thus allowing current staff to concentrate on delivering the needed outreach service and embedding ASD leads training.
13. The current budget is £52,500 and an increase of up to £25,000 is being sought (subject to recruitment).
14. This injection of funding will support the SCOS to respond to increasing demands of the service, and to release the support required in order to embed the whole school approach including supporting the training to continue on a cyclical basis. Support to schools to implement whole school approaches/strategies can also be provided.
15. If the training is embedded this should create more inclusive environments, reduce requests for specialist placements and meet needs in mainstream delivering better long term outcomes which will benefit schools and pupils.

16. **The post will be reviewed after one full Academic Year in order to ascertain impact and evaluate future needs to ensure the service is still structured in such a way to meet Darlington school's needs.**
17. **Funding** - To fund this post from this last term of the financial year then this will come out of the unallocated high needs we have in this year, if agreed. With regard to 16/17 there is a small unallocated pot in the high needs and underspend, so there will be the ability to fund through carry forward.

Options

18. In considering this recommendation, the following options have been considered. Option 4 is the chosen option:

Option	Benefit/Dis-benefit	Cost/resource implications incl. on-costs	Impact
1. Do nothing	The service would need to reduce support by half through introduction of a new criteria eg management of referrals on a RAG rating. The service would become a consultative and advisory support service only. Individual support and annual review work will be compromised.	£0	Schools will need to support children that do not meet new criteria, hence putting more pressure on school's SEN budgets. Longer term, this may have an impact on the need for more SEN high needs placements.
2. Recruit for administrative support	As above, will have no impact on reduction of referral numbers. Release co-ordinator of administration up to 0.5 days per week.	£7,500	As above
3. Funding to be delegated through DBC to commission EP service to co-ordinate the service	Will relieve service of any administration, allowing workload of service to be purely on delivery. Will provide an external quality assurance/verification. Will contribute to early identification of children/young people's needs.	£25,000	External quality assurance and early identification
4. SCOS to recruit Co-ordinator	Enable hands-on school management referrals, audit and quality assurance. Challenge of applications, to embed delivery and ensure schools embedding graduated response/ASD leads embedded.	£18-25K	Preferred Option

Summary

19. School Forum members are asked to:
 - Note the significant amount of work that has been undertaken to mitigate the number of referrals through investment in training of ASD leads, however children's support needs continue to rise.
 - Agree to implement the needed changes through funding of a post which would be required for two days per week maximum noting funding paragraph 17.
20. The policy approach underpinning this recommendation will be for schools to ensure ASD Leads can support the delivery and embedding of ASD training. The School Forum are asked to endorse this approach.

Eleanor Marshall
School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer