

REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL, COMMUNICATION OUTREACH SERVICE – REPORT

Contents

Introduction.....	2
Vision.....	2
Review Methodology.....	3
Terminology.....	3
Key Findings.....	4
1. Service Purpose and Objectives	4
1. Service Management.....	5
2. Access and Referrals to the Service.....	6
3. Data.....	6
National Data	6
Darlington Data.....	6
SEN Primary Need.....	6
Outreach Data	7
Support by involvement 2013/14.....	8
School and Parent Feedback	9
Budget/Value for Money	10
Conclusions.....	10
Recommendations.....	11

REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL, COMMUNICATION OUTREACH SERVICE – REPORT

Introduction

The last few years, particularly since 2011 has been a period of change for Local Authorities and their SEN duties. The review has taken place within the context of the changing national and local context which includes:

- The SEN reforms – which have extended SEN provision from birth to 25 years of age. The new system extends rights and protections by introducing a new Education, Health and Care plan. The SEN Code of Practice explains that speech and language therapy and other therapy provision can be regarded as either education or health care provision, or both. It could therefore be included in an EHC plan as either educational or health provision. However, since communication is so fundamental in education, addressing speech and language impairment should normally be recorded as special educational provision unless there are exceptional reasons for not doing so.
- The Children’s and Families Minister, Edward Timpson invited OFSTED, on 17 December 2014, to formally inspect local areas on their effectiveness in fulfilling the new SEN duties.
- Funding – the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) high needs funds this provision. As reported at the School Forum meeting on 13 January 2015, it is clear that unless future years DSG grant allocations are increased then it will be difficult to balance the budget without the need for reduction in provision in some budget areas.
- Monitoring – it is necessary to have a contract and detailed specification in place for all DSG funded services. This will allow the School Forum to monitor the service in future years.

Vision

All Children and young people should expect to be educated in their local mainstream school. Therefore all mainstream schools should have the capacity, competence and confidence to provide for pupils with additional educational needs and/or disabilities, with resources allocated to ensure maximum value for money. Services should be focused, flexible and responsive to local needs, they should be fit for purpose, monitored for impact and performance, and open to change where needed.

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) high needs funds this provision. As reported at the School Forum meeting on 13 January 2015, it is clear that unless future years DSG grant allocations are increased then it will be difficult to balance the budget without the need for reduction in provision in some budget areas.

The School Forum have recognised the value of the SEN support services funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant, and have commissioned a review of these, including the Social and Communication Outreach Service provision.

REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL, COMMUNICATION OUTREACH SERVICE – REPORT

Review Methodology

The initial stage of the review required that in order to fully understand the needs of children requiring these services, a range of information and papers were considered, including national articles, guidance and previous review reports and case studies.

A range of research techniques were employed in order to gain as wide an understanding as possible. These include:

- desk based research;
- work shadowing and observational visits to schools;
- interviews with a range of staff and who hold key roles within services;
- interviews with heads of schools to gain views;

The officer has spent time to support the services to complete a 'service review' form (presented to the School Forum in October 2014), in order to summarise performance, evaluate success and consider key learning points. This has provided a summary benchmark of the current service position, and fed into development of current service specifications.

Initial themes and areas of concern were highlighted which have been further investigated, alongside a review of service indicators, budget and a consideration of national and local data.

Terminology

Individuals who are considered to be on the autism spectrum are in many ways very different from each other. The range of intellectual ability extends from the severely learning disabled range right up to normal or even superior levels of intellect.

Similarly, linguistic skills range from those who are mute to those who display complex, grammatically correct speech. All such individuals have difficulties in three main areas.

The concept of the 'triad of impairments' is widely used.

Impairment of social interaction

This refers to an impaired ability to engage in reciprocal social interactions. The most severely affected individuals seem aloof and uninterested in people. Others desire contact, but fail to understand the reciprocal nature of normal social interaction. In consequence their attempts at social interaction are clumsy, awkward and one-sided. Some passively accept the attentions of others but do not reciprocate.

Impairment of social communication

The whole range of communicative skills may be affected. A significant proportion of individuals with classic autism fail to develop useful speech. Even when the mechanics of language are mastered, the person with autism has difficulty using it for the purpose of communicating with others. Intonation is inclined to be abnormal and the non-verbal aspects of communication such as eye-to-eye gaze, use of gesture and facial expression can be impaired. On the other hand, some have good grammatical language (often termed 'high functioning', but this is often used to talk about their special interests. Individuals who exhibit high functioning language skills, particularly related to areas of their special interest,

REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL, COMMUNICATION OUTREACH SERVICE – REPORT

as well as weaknesses in social interaction and flexible thinking are often diagnosed as having Asperger's Syndrome.

Impairment of social imagination

People with autism have great difficulty thinking imaginatively. This is demonstrated by pretend play, which will be absent or repetitive in children with autism spectrum disorders. Whether this is directly related to the development of rigid and repetitive behaviours has not been established.

Key Findings

1. Service Purpose and Objectives

The Social Communication Outreach Service (SCOS) provides relevant professional consultation and educational support to mainstream primary and secondary schools with regard to children with significant and complex social communication difficulties and/or children on the Autistic Spectrum (ASD).

The means by which support is provided is varied, either through individual work with pupils, telephone consultation with teachers, general consultation with parents, staff and other agencies through meetings in school, initial observation followed up by advice, or the provision of training specific to the school's needs. The service share resources and offer shadowing opportunities to staff to embed such practices and strategies in the classroom.

Many children with autism benefit from having a diagnosis. Some people prefer not to pursue a formal diagnosis, sometimes feeling that their child will make greater progress if they do not think of themselves as having a disability.

These difficulties are pervasive (ie life-long developmental difficulties). They may not manifest until social capacity is exceeded by the challenges of daily interaction with others.

Social communication difficulties are one of the 3 impairments which together form a diagnosis of autism. Therefore, children supported by the service do not necessarily need to be diagnosed with ASD.

It is also possible for a diagnosis to be easily missed. Only by asking the right questions, including taking a developmental history and observing the child in different settings, does it become clear. The service will work with the multi-disciplinary team to assist in the professional diagnosis and understanding of a child's needs.

Children with a social communication need will have difficulty understanding and using verbal and non-verbal language, and their thinking and behaviour will often be shown by restricted, obsessional or repetitive activities. Often their sensory processing affects their ability to interact effectively, this can be shown by difficulties in concentration, organisation, lack of self-esteem, self-control, self-confidence, and affects capacity for abstract thought and reasoning.

REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL, COMMUNICATION OUTREACH SERVICE – REPORT

These children can be misunderstood as having behavioural problems, therefore, strategies and advice that the service provides will support children to understand the subtleties and demands of social interaction evidence in their behaviour. Strategies are advised to school staff to manage potential triggers and to make effective use of practical resources within the resources of the school, for example at specific times of the day, eg either in playground or class.

1. Service Management

The Service is co-ordinated from Hurworth School by a full time specialist teacher, supported by a full time TA and three remote specialist advisory teachers.

The co-ordinator has responsibility for ensuring referrals from schools are assigned to advisory staff according to their skills base and their knowledge of individual school practice. Each advisory staff member completes a report to schools and parents to provide a detailed summary of work undertaken. The co-ordinator is responsible for checking the quality and accuracy of all reports before they are sent out and maintains a database to record the numbers of pupils being supported by the service.

The whole SCOS team meet each half term with the aim to review, plan and evaluate the service and practice. The day to day workload is organised and quality assured by the co-ordinator through regular team meetings.

The time allocation for each advisory teacher is defined below:

Helen Whitten, Hurworth - ASD Resource Base, 5 sessions (18.5 hours per week)
 Solmaz Daneshmand, Hurworth - ASD Resource Base, 10 sessions (37 hours per week)
 Nicky Lupton, Mount Pleasant - ASD Resource Base, 4 sessions (14.148 hours per week)
 Becky Stead - Education Village, 1 session (3.42 hours per week)
 Lesley Hattle - Education Village, 1 session (3.42 hours per week)

The co-ordinator reports to the LA Management Group for the ASD Service: Head Teacher (Hurworth School); Head of Education Services (or delegated authority); there is an annual management meeting in July of each year. The group plans, monitors and reviews provision and reports annually.

SCOS staff complete monthly time-sheets to record their commitment to individual cases and schools. These are sent to the SCOS coordinator and are used to inform the data within the end of year report. Each member of SCOS advisory staff should be timetabled to be released to 'Outreach ' according to the agreed contracts within their own settings.

Staff are line managed by the Head Teacher from each school where they are based and feedback will be provided to the Head Teacher's via the Annual Review on service delivery.

Whilst the Head Teacher of each SCOS advisory staff has overall responsibility for control of outreach staffing costs within their own setting, it is also the responsibility to liaise with the SCOS co-ordinator to agree working hours to ensure maximum capacity is given to the outreach service.

REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL, COMMUNICATION OUTREACH SERVICE – REPORT

2. Access and Referrals to the Service

Children will be receiving SEN support in schools (previously SA/SA+) as a minimum, some children may have been being diagnosed with ASD as a primary need, and could have a One Plan, Statement, or EHC Plan.

The service works in collaboration with parents/carers, teachers, support staff and relevant agencies (including CAMHS, SALT, Social Services, Darlington BC Life Stages Team, Child Development Centre) in order to ensure pupils' needs are identified and supported as the child or young person passes through the various Key Stages of their education.

Referrals to the service are generally completed by the school SENCo or ASD Lead in the school and parents are asked to complete their views as part of the referral process. CAMHS may also recommend referral into the service following a child's new diagnosis of ASD but this should always be done in consultation with the school's ASD Lead or SENCo who completes the referral form on behalf of the school.

All referrals are reviewed by the outreach co-ordinator, and each agreed caseload is then allocated to a member of SCOS advisory staff.

3. Data

National Data

The National Autistic Society estimates a prevalence rate of people with autism spectrum disorders of 11 in 1000 people (1.1% of the population [f](#)). For an average list size of 2,000 people, each GP is likely to have around 22 people on the autism spectrum on their list. This means that over 695,000 people in the UK may have autism. The estimate of the population of children aged 0-17 with ASD is 1.1%.

Interestingly, to show the severity of this disorder, children and young people aged 5 to 16 who have a clinically diagnosed mental disorder (9.8% of all children), 1.3% have other less common disorders including autistic spectrum disorder (DFE Departmental Guidance, March 2015).

Darlington Data

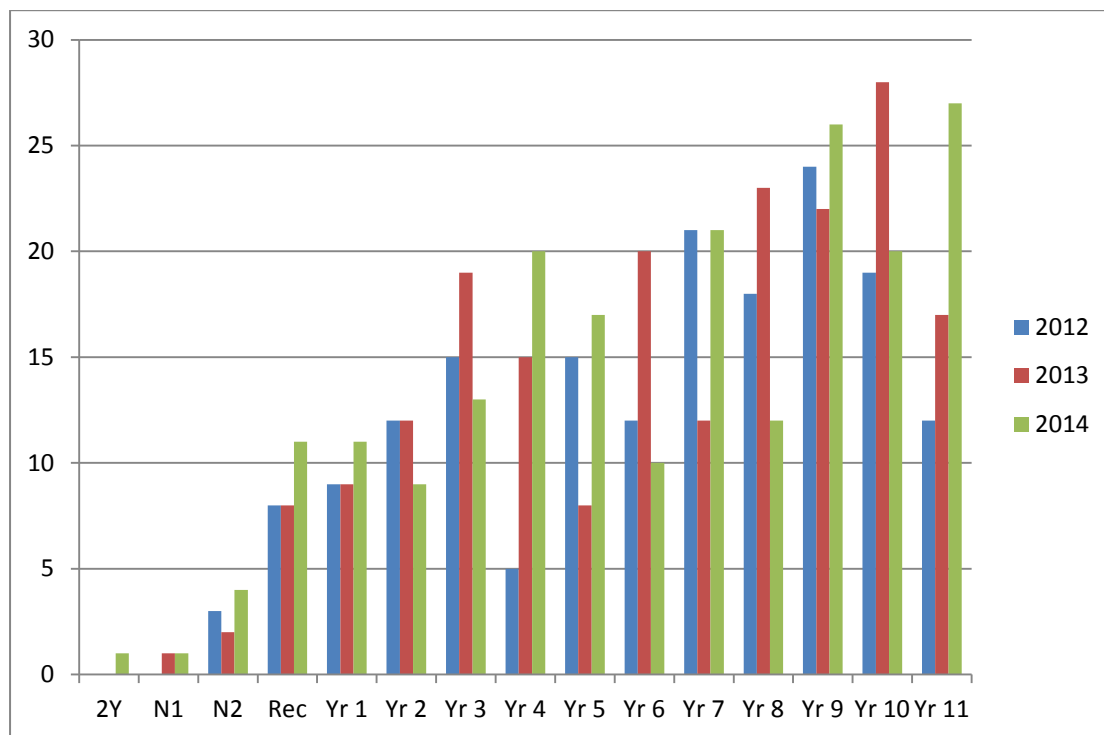
The SEN national school census data (Academic year 2013/14 - Spring 2014) indicates that the primary need of 203 (14%) of school age pupils in Darlington is Autism, just above the national average of 11%.

2 YR – Reception	Years 1-6	Years 7-11
17	80	106

SEN Primary Need

REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL, COMMUNICATION OUTREACH SERVICE – REPORT

The occurrence of children having Autism diagnosed as a primary SEN need is increasing in general, with incidence increasing significantly after year 6:

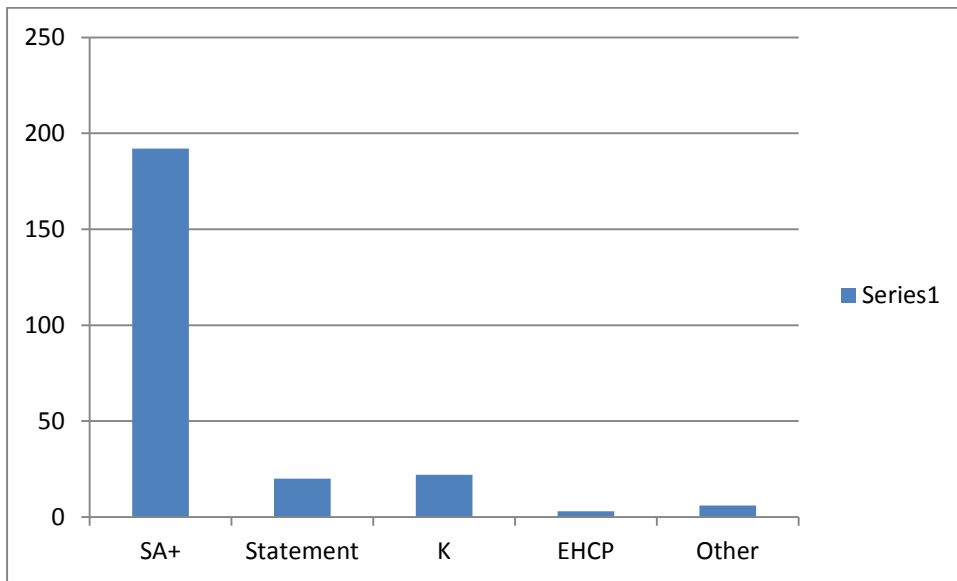


Outreach Data

In the year 2013/14 the average number of pupils with a social communication and/or ASD diagnosis/disorder known to the service between Sept 2013- July 2014 was 210, this is an increase on last year's figure of 186. Whilst not all children receive termly support, they may require future support especially during transition. Hence all children at risk of requiring further intervention are known to, and reviewed by the service.

51% children on the current SCOS database have a confirmed diagnosis of ASD, and 49% have social communication needs without a firm diagnosis of ASD. A proportion of those without a confirmed diagnosis may be on the ASD Pathway at CAMHS to identify whether or not they require a diagnosis. 5 children on the database have a statement or EHC Plan, therefore the majority of children supported are in receipt of SEN support within school.

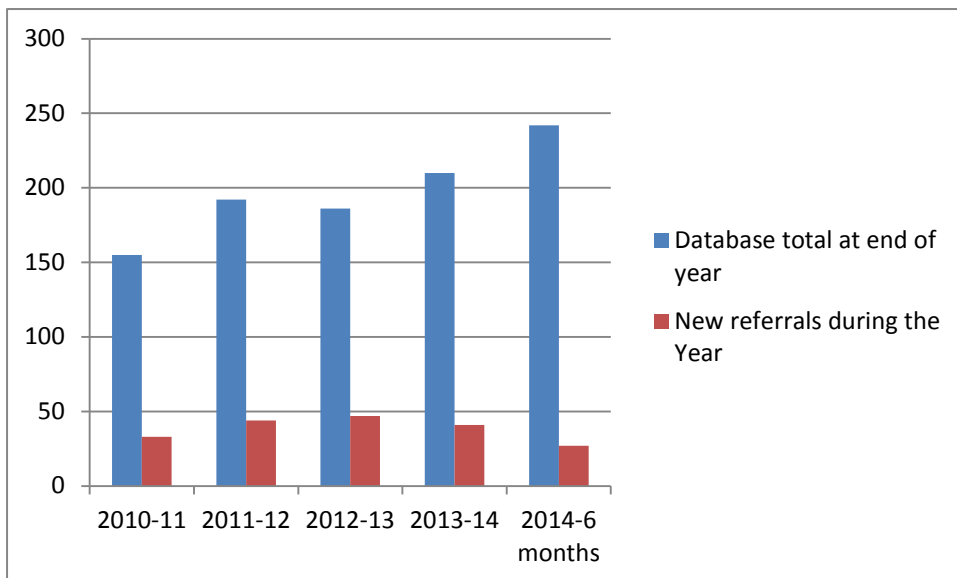
REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL, COMMUNICATION OUTREACH SERVICE – REPORT



Referrals

In 2013/14 there were 41 new referrals to the service. All of these children were consulted on with school staff. Late referrals (ie those which were referred towards the end of the academic year) would be consulted on in the following academic year. 29 children received further action during 2013-14.

The total number of referrals have increased over the past 5 years, see below.

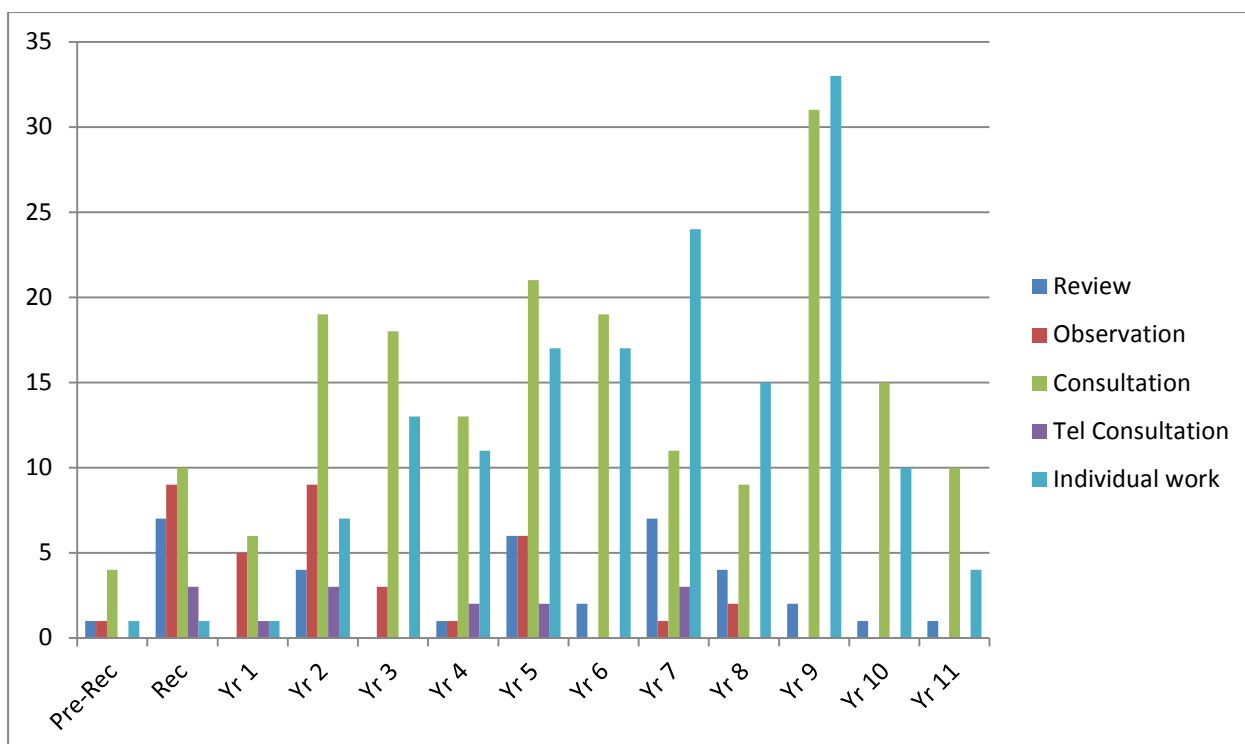


Support by involvement 2013/14

- The largest number of pupils accessing support were in Year 9 [28], Year 10 [22] and Year 5 [20].

REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL, COMMUNICATION OUTREACH SERVICE – REPORT

- The largest number of ‘involvement types’ has been for ‘individual work’ in the Year 9 group [33]
- The second largest number of ‘involvement types’ has been for ‘individual work’ in the Year 7 group.
- In all year groups except Year 7 the largest number of involvements has been on ‘Consultations’ with school staff or parents.
- 26 Primary schools and 7 Secondary schools have accessed Outreach Support from the service in 2013-14. This is the same figure as the previous year. The majority of support is in secondary schools, particularly in Year 9.



School and Parent Feedback

Evaluation questionnaires were forwarded to parents of pupils who were asked whether the support and advice from SCOS has had a positive impact on their child in school and at home, asking them to rate on a scale of 1-5 (1= poor, 5=excellent). 13 responses were received, 11/13 responses were that the service was above average or excellent.

Schools would like the service to attend more review meetings, and a quicker turn around of reports, but recognise that time capacity doesn't always allow for this. Parents also believe more regular meetings and communication with schools would help identify stress points at school, particularly around transition times.

REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL, COMMUNICATION OUTREACH SERVICE – REPORT

Budget/Value for Money

The income received by Hurworth School for the outreach provision is £52,500. Hurworth staff costs are in excess of this income. The school funds the difference along with other items, including resources, training, management costs, premises costs etc. Based upon total spend, the cost per child is £352.

Conclusions

The SCOS is one of the outreach services provided to all schools that forms part of the continuum of support for children and young people with ASD/Social and Communication needs.

- It should be recognised that the outreach service is reliant on extra support from the Hurworth School.
- There have been a large number of new referrals in the first 6 months of 2014/15 Academic Year (more than that of the previous year already). This has put a strain on capacity. As a result, the total time spent for co-ordination has increased from 2.5 days of the co-ordinator's hours for outreach to almost the full hours. Other SCOS staff's co-ordination has also increased in line with the need to compile additional data for reports as well as increased parental liaison for children supported.

The incidences of children being referred with more generic/lower levels of support required are increasing. The reasons for this increase could be due to an increased awareness by schools of the service's provision and/or an increase of the incidence of autistic spectrum / social communication support required. To address this, the service has delivered training in Summer term 2015/16 which has been very well received. The service have also worked with Beaumont Hill Academy to pass relevant children to the cognition and learning support service.

- In general, the number of referrals are also increasing year on year. Pressure points are particularly around the increasing number of secondary transitions and the increased demand for support from Year 6 through to Year 10 pupils, as well as for the children moving into Reception Year.
- An analysis of the 2013-14 system used to record hours of work completed did not reflect the total amount of time involved for each advisory staff member. Therefore the figures recorded are below the actual time committed to outreach work as a whole. For 2014-15 onwards the team has re-evaluated the system being used in order to produce a more realistic time figure which is reflective of the varied tasks to be completed within each advisory teacher's role.

REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL, COMMUNICATION OUTREACH SERVICE – REPORT

Recommendations

1. Complete ASD lead training (Summer 2015), evaluate and review training programme for 2015/16 by Autumn Term 2015/16. (Lead: Hurworth)
2. Develop training for 2016 and agree. (Lead: Hurworth)
3. Review referrals to the outreach service alongside referrals to Beaumont Hill outreach service by end of Summer term 2014/15. (Lead: DBC; with Hurworth and B Hill)
4. Review outreach support hours Autumn term 2015/16, using new recording system. (Lead Hurworth; Review DBC)
5. Finalise reviews of Mount Pleasant and Hurworth ASD SEN Provision to develop a strategy for Autism and Social and Communication support. (Lead: DBC)