
DSG SERVICES – REVIEW UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to update School Forum on the review of DSG services that the School Forum Monitoring and Support officer has undertaken so far. The project brief is attached at Annex A.

Background

2. To make best use of DSG resources, services need to be regularly reviewed against appropriate specifications, budgets and targets. Ongoing monitoring against these specifications can then identify the extent to which the activities are delivering what is required, enabling the School Forum to be in a better position to make decisions on future funding i.e. which services are to be commissioned or de-commissioned.
3. The high needs budget accounts for £9.24 million of the DSG budget, and the recently published SEN Code of Practice also makes clear that evidence is required about which services, support and interventions are effective (3.30); that there are sufficient services available to meet needs (6.60); and that schools work with the LA to agree the range of specialist local services (6.61).
4. A commissioning plan will lead to School Forum decisions on whether to continue services in the same way and how to better target resources for 2016/17. This feeds into the agreement of budgets for 2016/17 and 'catches up' with the cyclical commissioning process.
5. However, it may be possible to implement some recommendations for improvements to services in 2015/16.
6. The proposed vision for commissioning services is set out in Annex B. This is what each stakeholder expects from the commissioning process.

Progress To Date

7. The School Forum directed the officer to undertake reviews initially for the Low Incidence Needs Service and the Northwood Primary Language Resource Base. The first stage has been a 'light touch' review in order to understand the services, discuss and agree current issues, and gain views and opinions.
8. In order to fully understand the needs of children requiring these services, a range of information and papers were gathered and reviewed, including national articles, guidance and previous review reports and case studies (listed at end of this report).
9. A range of research techniques were employed in order to gain as wide an understanding as possible. These are listed at end of this report, but includes:
 - 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;
 - meetings with other partners including Public Health; NHS England Commissioning; County Darlington and Durham NHS Foundation Trust;
 - meeting with Parents Forum.
10. The officer has spent time to support the services to complete the 'service review' forms (presented to the School Forum in October 2014), in order to summarise performance, evaluate

success and consider key learning points. These will be agreed with service managers/Head Teacher as relevant when complete.

11. The analysis of 2013/14 spend will also be used to assess value for money on a cost per place basis and feed into future School Forum decisions.
12. Service specifications will form part of new SLAs/or contracts as relevant. It is expected that Academy schools hosting services will be required to sign new contracts, and maintained schools to sign updated SLAs.
13. The officer has also assisted the Manager of Resource Provision at Hurworth Secondary School (also ASD/SCD Outreach co-ordinator), to plan for a proposed new model of outreach support. This focuses on the use of a training programme, to build capacity within schools to enable identified staff to implement strategies of support for pupils with ASD/SCD.
14. The officer has also attended joint commissioning events, and meetings, and is a member of the Darlington Joint Commissioning Group for Children's Services. The first action for this group is to map commissioned children's services in Darlington and identify which services are currently joint commissioned, and timescales on existing contracts and commission plans.

Results and Implications

15. The consensus across all research and meetings is that the demand on the services is increasing, requiring different approaches to meet these needs. The need for Speech and Language therapy as part of a programme of support for all special educational needs has been raised on nearly every occasion.
16. Some of the key themes that have emerged, which need to be taken account of are that:
 - The vast majority of interviewees reported that there should continue to be resource bases to support high needs.
 - The outreach functions are in high demand, but capacity is limited.
 - There is a continuing need for professional development and up-skilling. Training has been delivered, and is being considered to, for example, address how Teachers and Teaching Assistants (TA) can integrate good practice in mainstream classes, to use specialist resources in innovative ways for all children, to deliver programmes of support for children with similar needs and/or support to deliver programmes that have been provided by therapists. Recent training ran by the Speech and Language service has been well attended and valued.
 - Schools often pay on an individual basis for additional training (eg for TA's) or employ specialist therapists, indicating that there could be a potential wider need which may benefit from central commissioning.
 - Resources for pupils with sensory impairment are often expensive. Equipment and aids need to be maintained, repaired and kept up to date, which requires specialist knowledge and assessment. The support provided by specialist teaching and technologist staff with expertise is valued.
 - There is an emerging need to more fully involve parents of children with high needs with educational targets and programmes, for example, through involvement in training, and/or more specific one to one support/meetings to enable parents to sustain the levels of learning throughout school holidays.
17. There are some areas of support identified to be important but missing from the current service 'offer' and some areas requiring improvement:
 - dyslexia support was removed due to capacity of service, could it be re-introduced?
 - awareness raising of the services, confirmation of the access criteria and ensuring that referral forms are up to date, and easy to find
 - clarity required on the support for transition from early years
 - capacity of health professionals to 'follow-through' on assessments ie to instruct TAs/Teachers to deliver programmes;
 - waiting times for specialist therapy are hampering children's progress, and liaison with health professionals and professional support colleagues for parental advice is slow
 - the need for services to improve response times in providing feedback from outreach visits.

18. Because use of services is on a needs led basis, the access criteria is not necessarily known in detail. This could impact on the level of intervention that a school provides, as the danger could be that schools do not use routine strategies before calling specialist support. Similarly, at the practitioner level, because network relationships are strong, the specialist teachers are known and well trusted. Whilst this is positive, it could also engender a culture of 'reliance'. The quality of the support is deemed to be good but as local needs are increasing, concern has been expressed that responsiveness and flexibility of outreach support may suffer because of lack of capacity.
19. Areas that have not yet been discussed in detail include:
- Different approaches to delivery of outreach (eg in-reach), and models for the future;
 - Funding of services ie should the funding be devolved to schools to employ own specialist staff and/or training; or continue to be provided centrally for the benefit of all schools;
 - Responsibilities for succession planning.
20. Issues that have arisen in relation to collection of data are:
- performance data and reporting of pupil progress is recorded differently by each service;
 - how the current and any future reporting of academic progress needs to be updated in accordance with the school's adopted methodology under 'Assessing Without Levels'.

Conclusions

21. Throughout the review, there were recurring themes:
- favour for the continuation of specialist services;
 - need to retain a core of expert and qualified staff to keep a knowledge base, flexibility, and delivery of training;
 - need for specialist teachers to undertake direct teaching, specific functional assessments of hearing and vision in a school setting as part of the holistic assessment process;
 - need for audiology and speech and language therapy health support which must be responsive and in co-ordination with education services;
 - training of school staff to improve the universal level of support to all children, and specialist training where required.
22. By strengthening the emphasis on offering help at the earliest possible point, and providing professional development to secure expertise at the universal level then schools will be less reliant on outreach, enabling the focus on individual specialist support to take place in resource bases or in special school/units as appropriate. See requirements by the SEN Code of Practice 2014, (see para 4.32 and chapter 5).
23. As also required by the SEN Code, specialist services should include, but not be limited to specialist teachers or support services (see para 6.61), therefore future work needs to clarify the support role and responsibilities of health services, such as Speech and Language Therapy.
24. It is suggested that some issues be tested through further consultation, perhaps through use of surveys to all schools to ascertain what support they provide through their SEN devolved funding particularly for Speech and Language, and what support they would like to see provided collectively.

Next Steps

25. Immediately:
- Review local offer pages on the LA website/information available on services to ensure access criteria and threshold information is clear, concise and accessible to all.

26. Short Term:

- Further consultation to understand what additional Speech and Language support schools themselves commission;
- Further survey's of parents
- Further meetings with health professionals
- Agree data recording for individual children;
- Conclusion of contract discussions with LA Legal Team and agreement of contracts/SLAs for 2014/15.

27. Mid Term:

- Finalisation of reports on Speech and Language/LINS, providing information on what is working and not working, for agreement at March 2015 School Forum;
- Agree and propose specification of services with options, for agreement at March 2015 School Forum
- Commence review of ASD provision, and by extension Mount Pleasant Resource Base; To undertake review of Heathfield primary Complex Needs Resource Base; Report on progress to March 2015 School Forum.

28. Long Term:

- Commissioning plan for agreement at May 2015 School Forum

Timescale

	Activity	Timescale	Progress
1.	Review of 2013/14 services (initially priority services)	October - December 2014 (priority services)	Complete
2.	Contracting of 2014/15 services – agree reviewed service specifications, outcomes, update of contracts and SLAs etc.	January – March 2015 (priority services)	In Progress
3.	Agree 2015/16 Budgets:	January 2015	In Progress
4.	Data review	January-March 2015	
5.	Review of ASD Base Hurworth and Heathfield	January – March 2015	
	School Forum Meeting	10 March 2015	
6.	2015/16 Commissioning Plan – resource analysis, needs assessment/gap analysis	March - May 2015	
7.	Development and finalisation of 2015/16 service specifications; identification of alternatives and commissioning	June – August 2015	

Recommendation

29. It is recommended that Members of the School Forum:

- Note the progress on review of services;
- Note the next steps
- Note timescales.

Eleanor Marshall
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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

LOW INCIDENCE NEEDS SERVICE

External Literature Reviewed:

NDCS – Advice to LA on making local offer relevant (Dec 2013)

NDCS/Blind children UI/RNIB/sense – Advice to LA on meeting needs of ... with sensory impairments in implementing SEND reform

British Association of ToD

NDCS: Protecting specialist education support services for deaf children

Case studies –Northampton CC Review of VI and HI support services; Leicestershire City Council support services

Various websites: CHSWG / NHS Screening

What	When
- Introduction mtg and follow up discussions	- 10/10; 20/10
- Mtg Public Health Principal	- 20/10
- Review with H/T	- 17/11
- work shadowing and observational visits with specialist teachers	- 10/11 – Longfield; St Augustines 20/11 – Mount Pleasant

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE - Northwood Resource Base

External Literature Reviewed:

ICAN – Commissioning Guide for Schools – SLCN

ICAN – A chance to talk project – report on model for primary schools to support children’s speech, language and communication

Royal College of S&L Therapists – Supporting children ... within integrated children’s services position paper 2006; Better Communication : Shaping speech, language and communication services for children and young people

DFE Research Report – Understanding speech, language and communication needs: 2012

Websites: Hartlepool and Darlington NHS Trust, services for S&L therapy; various Information on Speech and Language – definitions/Glossary

Government Literature including: Bercow Report 2008

Case studies – Kent County Council

What	When
- Introductory mtg & observation at R/B with SALT	- 9/10
- further work shadowing visit (outreach)	- M Raw at Whinfield – 11/11
- S&L therapy further info	- arrange S&L therapy visit
- meeting with S&L NHS NE commissioning unit	- 13/11; 25/11
- interviews with range of staff and who hold key roles within services	- 12/11 Reid St; 17/11 Mowden Junior; 20/11 Mount Pleasant
- Consultation with parents	- 5/12 with CCG Commissioning