



Consultation on future provision of dedicated speech and language/primary units

9th March 2016

Contact details

This consultation proposal is published by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC), County Offices, Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YQ regarding the closure of three dedicated speech and language units which are provided through Fosse Way Primary, Lincoln, Monkshouse Primary, Spalding and Mablethorpe Primary, Mablethorpe. Fosse Way Primary and Mablethorpe Primary are Academy Schools and Monkshouse Primary is maintained by the Local Authority (LA)

Implementation

The proposal is to discontinue the Speech and Language Unit services from all three primary schools with effect from 1st September 2016 and to provide Speech and Language services to children requiring interventions in the school which they are on roll.

Objectives and reason for closure

The proposal detailed in this document is to discontinue the provision of three dedicated speech and language units across Lincolnshire and to provide Speech and Language services to children requiring interventions in the school which they are on roll. This is not related to any other school organisation proposal. Local Authorities (LA) are under a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area, promote high educational standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential whilst at the same time meeting the aim of enabling children to take up a school place within their local community. This proposal recommends the discontinuance of the three dedicated speech and language referral units and to provide Speech and Language services to children requiring interventions in the school which they are on roll. It is considered that this provision to be in the best interests of Lincolnshire's children. It reinforces the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan and supports the Council's aim of ensuring that as many children as possible can reach their full potential through an integrated service model.

Lincolnshire Community Health Service (LCHS) currently supports over 3150 children with a speech and/or language impairment from birth to leaving school age. Children who do not make progress through targeted speech and language therapy (SLT) provision are provided with additional therapeutic services through an 'enhanced model'. If they fail to make progress they may be referred for more intensive support and warrant specialist provision to progress their listening, language and literacy skills within a specialist speech and language unit.

For children at primary age, Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) commissions three schools to provide educational and therapeutic support to children with complex speech and language difficulties. At present there are approximately 21 children in the three units receiving intensive SLT and educational support services.

The three mainstream primary school sites who provide these dedicated units are Monkshouse Primary (Spalding), Mablethorpe Primary (Mablethorpe) and Fosse Way (Lincoln).

The purpose of the service is to target SLT provision early and begin to close the gap between the speech and language of the child against their peers. This early years work aims to withdraw the support at the point where they are able to be fully integrated back into a mainstream local community school. However, as the child is on the roll of the school where the dedicated provision is provided, transfer to a nearer or more local school is not always possible when they need to return as the nearer or more local school may not have any places available.

All three sites have and are currently being funded to provide Specialist Teachers and Teaching/Support Assistant(s) from devolved budgets. The schools are required to provide adequate space for specialist teaching and learning for the following pupil numbers:

Monkshouse, Spalding	Commissioned for 12 places (currently have 8 pupils on roll)
Mablethorpe	Commissioned for 10 places (current have 7 pupils on roll)
Fosse Way Lincoln	Commissioned for 12 places (currently have 6 pupils on roll)

Many parents prefer to keep their child in their nearer/more local school than being transported to a dedicated unit due to the travel time which may result.

Referral Process from Lincolnshire Health and Community Services (LCHS)

The current process for referral into a unit is as follows:

- Any child may present with speech and/or language difficulties at any time. At this point an LCHS Speech and Language Therapist may be engaged to provide therapeutic strategies to support parents/carers and educationalists in being able to support and develop the child's communication difficulties
- Where a child fails to make progress a Speech and Language Therapist may identify a need for a child to receive additional SLT support within a school setting. This is initially provided through outreach (enhanced provision) with 20 additional therapy sessions being provided
- In some cases a child does not make progress to the required level with this enhanced provision and at this point a specialist therapist will then work with the main therapist to assess the child and determine their needs
- The specialist therapist subsequently makes a recommendation to parents/carers and the current local mainstream primary school that the child may benefit from attending one of the specialist units
- The specialist therapist will liaise with the local mainstream primary school and the specialist unit primary school and a discussion will take place with the later about taking the child. There is currently no oversight of this pupil allocation process by Children's Services
- The child will be removed from the pupil roll of the local mainstream primary school and placed onto the roll of the specialist unit primary school. The funding for the pupil moves to the school with the specialist unit
- Each unit has a dedicated full time teacher focussing on speech and language, with additional funding provided for teaching/learning support. The teachers spend

approximately up to half of their teaching time within the units supporting the children and for the remainder of the time the children will attend mainstream classes for core curriculum subjects

- Once the child has progressed sufficiently to be able to return to local mainstream school, the specialist therapist will work with parents and carers to find a school placement for the child. This may not result in a return to their original school, which is the usual parental preference, but may be another local school
- Most children in the units are Reception/Year 1 and 2 but in some cases the child may remain in the unit until Year 6 when they move into secondary provision
- The duration of time the child spends attending the specialist unit varies depending upon individual needs and can range from a period of six months to a number of years.
- There are no dedicated units within secondary provision. This is provided by outreach through the LA's ECLIPS service

Current cost of provision

Whilst consideration is being given to providing this service in the most cost effective way this is not the sole driver for this proposed change. Both the LA and LCHS are committed to ensuring we provide the best support to meet the needs of children within their local community.

At present the LA funds the units to the sum of approximately £360,022 p.a. (2014/15). In addition Children's Services incurs costs for transport in the region of £125,755 p.a. The current costs for Speech and Language therapy services are about £68,674 p.a. resulting in a total cost of this service of around £554,451 p.a.

Where a child has an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) under the 2013/14 School Funding Formula schools providing enhanced provision will also receive £10,000 per pupil and schools are expected to make adequate provision for children with identified special education needs. None of the children based in the units have an agreed EHCP.

Drivers for Change

It is important to continually review our services to ensure they meet the needs of children. Whilst some authorities provide educational and therapeutic services to children through dedicated units some prefer to support children within their local community based schools and target the support provision in line with a child's individual needs. Many parents prefer to keep their child in their nearer/more local school than transported to a dedicated unit due to the travel time which may result.

Development of a local based approach

Not all children with identified complex speech and/or language difficulties are placed within the units. In fact some parents and carers object to this and support is then provided into the local community primary school. Many of our primary schools are successful in supporting children with these complex needs without having to refer to a specialist unit. The review of this SLT provision has taken into account the need to meet children's needs as much as possible within a mainstream setting. In addition the recommendations promoting inclusion

for children within their local community and their local school, the proposal ensures more localised provision reducing unnecessary travel.

It is essential that we build on the requirement for improved partnership working within school localities to ensure that children's needs are met. Our recommendation is to strengthen the current SLT outreach support model that is provided by LCHS into mainstream primary schools to provide children with intensive support, where required.

Increased accessibility and choice

At present a child with an identified need for intensive SLT would be referred to a specialist unit. If accepted, they are removed from the roll of the local mainstream primary school and placed on the roll of the intake school (i.e. the primary school with the unit provision). Some parents/carers are reluctant for this to happen as they wish for their child to remain on roll at their current mainstream primary school due to locality or siblings attending the school. Also once the child is taken off roll there is no guarantee they can return to the original school if a place is no longer available, and they do not have preferential status for a place as they do not have an EHCP.

As there are only three units across the county this also impacts on both travel time for pupils and transport costs. Increased local support provision (education and therapy) within mainstream primary settings would provide a solution to address such concerns.

Adoption of a commissioned approach

The feedback from the providers of this service (both LCHS and schools) was they are not robustly held to account in respect of performance or outcomes for these children. LCHS track progression of pupil's speech and/or language against a range of outputs, but these are not declared to the LA and progression is not overseen through clear Service Level Agreements.

It is essential that the LA has oversight of commissioned outcomes from the services it funds and clear accountability frameworks and reporting on outcomes for education and health progress are demonstrated and evidenced.

Review findings on current provision

The review of the current model of provision has evidenced a number of issues, including:

- Transport issues due to the distance for the child to travel (as we only have three units across Lincolnshire)
- Parental resistance to wanting to move their child from their local primary to a specialist unit which may be a significant distance from home
- There are no guarantees that a child can or will return to their local mainstream primary school (or the school from which they were originally on roll) and may have to be placed within another school
- The children do not have EHCPs so they do not get priority when being reintegrated back into a mainstream setting
- Some children are found to have more complex needs other than Speech and Language and this may lead to involvement of Educational Psychology for assessment to possibly move into a special school via an EHCP

Proposed Future Model

The proposed alternative model recommends pupils with complex or severe speech and/or language needs remaining within their local primary school and continuing to be educated in this setting, whilst receiving short term intensive therapeutic services to support them in fulfilling their potential.

This model addresses a number of parental concerns as stated above including the removal of their child from the local school roll, the ability to place back at the same school and the significant travelling requirements placed upon young children.

With effective partnership working; LCHS, the four Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and the LA will work together to enhance the current SLT outreach support service into mainstream primary schools which supports children with complex speech and/or language needs to enable them to flourish in a mainstream school setting. This will be reinforced by strengthening the resources within LCHS for specialist speech and language support to meet the required demands across the county. At the same time the Specialist Teaching service will also be strengthened to provide outreach teaching support services into local primary schools to support the children.

New referrals would be supported using the new model so there would be no further placements made into the units. The current funding arrangements would cease. However subject to the views of parents of children currently in the units, transition arrangements will be developed and the three provider schools may continue to be funded in the interim on a commissioned basis. This would be dependent on the views of the pupils and their families currently attending the units. If pupils and their parents wish to remain at one of the three schools highlighted, this will continue to be supported or alternatively, the LA will help parents apply for an alternative school place nearer to their home.

Where necessary; focused SLT and school admission support would be required to reintegrate current pupil placements back into their local community primary schools.

Under this option the specialist teachers in each of the units would need to be consulted with on a potential transfer to or TUPE into the Local Authorities Specialist Teaching service. As these staff are direct employees of the provider schools it will be necessary for these schools to obtain advice from their own HR providers to progress any required consultation with affected staff.

In future, local mainstream primary schools would be responsible for providing support to pupils through their notional special needs funding as some of these pupils unless the child's needs were such that they required an EHC plan. Where the needs of the child are unable to be met by the school, they can follow the pathway for assessment for an EHCP, which if approved, would provide appropriate additional resources and funding to the school to support the child's needs. Schools would be required to work with LCHS where intensive support is required and obtain advice and guidance on specialist teaching strategies from the Specialist Teaching service.

This model aims to provide support for children with complex speech and/or language needs within their own local community school and for those pupils with more complex educational support needs to follow the appropriate pathway for an EHC plan.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Keeps children within their local community school and educated with friends and/or family. This also supports transition to secondary provision</p> <p>'Enhanced Plus' model of intervention complements and enhances the current 'Enhanced' provision which is already provided into primary settings</p> <p>Removes the requirement for significant travel time across county for some children</p> <p>Reduces transportation costs</p> <p>Removes parental concerns that when their child is ready to be reintegrated back into their local primary school that they will have a place on roll</p> <p>Schools would not struggle to recruit to specialist teachers roles</p> <p>Supports the EHCP pathway more clearly for those children with complex needs</p> <p>Encourages local primary schools to develop support to meet needs of children with complex SLT needs with LCHS, so increasing their knowledge and skills in employing strategies for the future</p> <p>Improved accountability for commissioned LCHS services in targeting achievement against agreed outcomes and progression</p>	<p>Removes intensive support provision where half of a child's school time is based in the unit receiving specialist teaching and SLT support</p> <p>Increased travel for professionals including Speech and Language Therapists and Specialist Teachers</p> <p>Change of role for specialist teachers working for Local Authority</p> <p>Possible loss of knowledge and skills if current teaching staff leave or are retained in school setting</p> <p>Local primary schools are required to fund supporting resources from allocated special needs funding block for those children with complex speech and language problems</p>

Business Case for Recommendation

Visits to each of the units took place in the summer of 2015 and discussions on the current operational model were held with the units Specialist Teachers, allocated Speech and Language Therapists and in some cases support staff to gain their views on the benefits and drawbacks of the current model of provision. Head Teachers also had the opportunity to input into these discussions.

The recommendation to discontinue the units and to provide intensive speech and language therapy services back into local primary schools is based on the following business reasons:

- The Education Act 1996 states " In exercising or performing all their respective powers and duties under the Education Acts, the Secretary of State and local education authorities shall have regard to the general principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents, so far as that is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure". This recommendation supports this statutory responsibility.
- In addition within the Education and Inspections Act 2006 it states "A local education authority in England shall exercise their functions under this section with a view to (a) securing diversity in the provision of schools, and (b) increasing opportunities for parental choice. This recommendation secures diversity within its provision of education across Lincolnshire and increases parental choice in enabling a child to remain placed within their local community school.
- In the summer of 2014, ISOS Partnership undertook a review of SEN provision in Lincolnshire including the enhanced provision of Speech and Language. The recommendations from this report were for the LA to undertake a full review of the service provision as there were fundamental concerns around the current commissioning arrangements. This report was shared with all schools with specialist provider units (Speech and Language and Hearing Impairment) at the time.
- It was stated at all three units by the Specialist Teachers that only up to half of their time is allocated to providing education provision to children in the unit. The remaining time of the students is spent within mainstream classes with peers, being supported by support staff/teaching assistants. The Specialist Teachers remaining time is spent either performing roles such as the school SENCO or teaching mainstream classes. This provides evidence that elements of the LA's funding is being used for other school activities that what the funding was intended for. The revised future model ensures the funding is fully utilised for its intended purposes in providing specialist teachers and speech and language therapy services to support children with complex speech and language needs.
- As there are only three dedicated units in the county this results in significant travel time for some children who are being transported long distances. The revised proposal removes this concern.
- The current model results in transportation costs of approximately £125,755 p.a. By placing children in their local community primary school this would significantly reduce transport costs by approximately 70% resulting in a saving of £88,000 p.a. to the Local Authority.
- By implementing the revised model, the three provider schools would not be adversely affected financially. The pupils in the units are above the schools normal pupil roll and the funding provided from the LA is in addition to their base funding. Therefore closing the units would be cost neutral.
- Feedback was received from the Specialist Teachers and the allocated Speech and Language Therapists that whilst funding is provided to the three primary schools (circa £360,022 p.a.) there is currently no framework for accountability back to the LA on progression of the children. By commissioning this intensive enhanced speech and language service through LCHS, the LA will have the ability to oversee the progress and

outcomes for children with SLT complex needs, holding LCHS to account for the therapeutic interventions provided, thereby strengthening the Local Authorities position as a commissioning authority.

- The alternative model removes uncertainty within the process around those children who require additional support. Where a child is not making speech and/or language progress both parents/carers, schools and LCHS would be required to follow the defined EHCP pathway to request an appropriate package of support and funding to be provided to meet the child's needs. Going forward it is proposed that any child with complex SLT needs would be required to have an EHCP in place before being able to access the 'Enhanced Plus' service so ensuring the support provision is appropriate to need.
- Whilst the requirement to make savings is not the sole driver for the proposed change, by placing children within their local community primary school and strengthening the provision of speech and language support from LCHS and specialist teaching services through the LA schools budget would result in a saving of approximately £237K p.a.

Proposed timetable for consultation and implementation

The proposed consultation timetable is outlined below. These timescales have been determined by seeking a reasonable balance between allowing adequate time for schools and affected staff to consider the proposals and the need to move toward the implementation of the changes in a timely manner.

Date	Action
09 March 2016	Start consultation with mainstream primary schools
19 March to 16 April 2016	Undertake planned engagement sessions with parents and carers to seek their views on revised proposal
15th April 2016	Consultation proposal to be presented to Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
22 April 2016	Consultation with mainstream primary schools closes
April/May	Consider all feedback and responses to consultation and engagement events
27 April 2016	LCHS to provide final business model for Enhance Plus SLT services
27 May 2016	Final paper providing recommendation on future model provided to Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Date	Action
10 June 2016	Decision by Executive Councillor
w/c 13 June 2016	Communication of approved model to mainstream primary , provider schools and parents/carers
June 2016	Commence transition arrangements to admit children into requested local based community primary schools. Assess impact on those children remaining on roll at a primary schools with a unit proposed to close
04 July 2016	Confirm to parents/carers allocated school places for children
June/July 2016	Unit provider schools undertake consultation with affected staff on staffing impacts. Support from LCC for those posts recommended to be transferred/TUPE into LCC
01 September 2016	Go live date for the new operational model

It is recognised that whilst the proposed go live date is 1 September 2016 that transition during Autumn Term 1 and 2 will possibly be required for pupils, schools and staff, including the finalisation of any required consultation process by the provider schools affected.

Consultation Feedback

Any person or organisation may provide feedback or make comments on these proposals by sending them marked **'Private and Confidential'** to Sheridan Dodsworth, Children's Services Manager, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), 9/11 The Avenue, Lincoln, LN1 1PA or by emailing BS_SEND@lincolnshire.gov.uk to be received by the deadline of 22nd April 2016.

Under current legislation the LA is the decision maker for the proposal and is co-ordinating the process before making the final decision. The LA as decision maker, must be able to show that all relevant issues raised are taken into consideration in the decision making process. Points raised can be considered unpersuasive must not be ignored altogether.

At the close of the consultation period on 22nd April 2016 responses will be collated and analysed and a further report will be presented to the Children and Young people Scrutiny Committee for comment, before going to the Executive Councillor for a final decision on the discontinuance of the units. This decision is likely to be taken in June 2016 but must be no later than 2 months after the end of the consultation period. The stated consultation period is the final opportunity for the people and organisations to express their views about the proposal and ensure that they will be taken into account by the decision maker.

School Feedback Form

Consultation on future provision of dedicated speech and language/primary units

Please note that if you do not provide your name and address your views will not be counted as legitimate responses to this consultation. Names and contact details will remain confidential.

Name:

email (optional):

Postal Address:

Head Teacher ☐ Teacher/School Staff ☐ School Governor ☐

Other (please specify):

Which school do you represent?

Having read and considered the proposal please indicate your view below by ticking one of the boxes:

I am in favour of the proposal ☐ I am against the proposal ☐

I am neither for nor against the proposal ☐

Why have you decided this in your view? Please tell us below:

Is there anything else you would like us to consider?

Please return the completed form by 5pm on Friday 22nd April 2016.

Email to BS_SEND@lincolnshire.gov.uk or by post marked **Private and Confidential** to Sheridan Dodsworth, Children's Services Manager, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), 9/11 The Avenue, Lincoln, LN1 1PA

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