

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, Executive Director of Children's Services

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	15 April 2016
Subject:	Consultation on Future Provision of Dedicated Speech and Language/Primary Units

Summary:

This report sets out a consultation which recommends the discontinuance of the three dedicated speech and language referral units across Lincolnshire 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.

Actions Required:

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider and provide feedback on the consultation document.

1. Background

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 aim is to target provision early and begin to close the gap with their speech and language against their peers. This early years work aims to withdraw the support at the point where the child is able to be fully integrated back into mainstream. This process of reintegration back into mainstream brings additional problems as detailed in the consultation document.

All three sites have and are being funded to provide Specialist Teachers and Teaching Assistant(s) from devolved budgets. The schools are required to provide adequate space for specialist teaching and learning.

Consultation

The consultation document, attached at Appendix A, proposes an alternative model recommending pupils with complex or severe speech and/or language needs remain within their local primary school and continue to be educated in this setting, whilst receiving short term intensive therapeutic services to support them in fulfilling their potential.

The proposed model addresses a number of parental concerns 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 Local Authority (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 the proposed model 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 Education, Health and Care (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 EHC plan, 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.

2. Conclusion

The consultation started on 9 March 2016 and will end on 22 April 2016.

The Committee is invited to provide any comments to Cllr Mrs P A Bradwell, Executive Councillor for Adult Care and Health Services, Children's Services to enable her to make a decision.

The report to the Executive Councillor will be considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 27 May 2016.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Consultation on future provision of dedicated speech and language/primary units
Appendix B	Q&As future provision of dedicated speech and language/primary units

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Andrew Hancy, who can be contacted on 01522 554031 or andrew.hancy@lincolnshire.gov.uk

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