

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

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	25 April 2014
Subject:	Sensory Education and Support Service

QTHI – Qualified Teacher of Hearing Impaired Children
QTVI – Qualified Teacher of Visually Impaired Children
QTMSI – Qualified Teacher of Multi-Sensory Impaired Children
ESCO – Early Support Care Coordination
TAC – Team Around the Child
OOC – Out of County
LAC – Looked After Children
CIN – Child in Need
CP – Child Protection

Summary:

SESS – The Sensory Education and Support Service

Core Offer

The Sensory Education and Support Service (SESS) is funded through the central Designated School Grants and offers county-wide support and specialist teaching to children with a sensory impairment (Hearing Impairment (HI), Visual Impairment (VI) and Multisensory Impairment (MSI) from birth to school leaving age. SESS aims to ensure that young people with a sensory loss gain access to their educational environment and make progression in order to raise aspirations and maximise their development.

SESS has extensive experience of working in homes, early years settings and schools and can offer bespoke assistance to children, families and school staff, ensuring consistent involvement throughout a child's education. Highly skilled qualified teachers and specialist sensory support staff provide support to a significant number of children with a sensory impairment in Lincolnshire.

Actions Required:

The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the contents of the report.

1. Background

Children and young people

The service supports 400 children per month on average, with an approximate spread of 250 HI children, 110 VI, 40 MSI – these numbers reflect the national prevalence of sensory impaired children. Referrals are generally received from Health or Education agencies, requiring only a medical diagnosis/confirmation of the sensory loss. SESS does not operate a waiting list and immediately allocates cases with contact made the same week to the family to advise of the name of the allocated teacher. Following an assessment, reports are submitted to the family and child and all other involved parties as agreed with the family. If assessed as requiring further work by the service, a Planning Meeting is arranged with the family and key partner agencies to discuss the assessment, agree support levels, targets, outcomes and the reviewing mechanism. Birth to five year olds are monitored using the Early Years Foundation Protocol and school age children are supported alongside the National Curriculum using specialist testing and assessments as required for the particular sensory loss.

Case examples

VI children with significant sight loss have increased within the service and often require a team of 3 teachers and support staff to support the child and school staff. The recent increase in funding enabled a much needed enhancement to VI teaching staff who provide essential Braille teaching within the schools. A recent year 7 child suffered a drastic deterioration to his sight and within a week the team were able to respond and provide assessments and training for staff and ensure the child's reading materials were modified to ensure access.

A VI child registered blind moved to Lincolnshire in 2012 at Year 1 and has been receiving weekly school visits from a team of 4 VI staff teaching Braille, mobility, independence and supporting school staff and the family. Teaching staff supply teaching materials in preparation of lessons and the SESS VI Technical Resource Officer modifies to Braille, whilst the QTVI prepares work a week in advance to teach the child outside of the classroom to help her understand concepts before they are introduced. This young lady is successfully integrated in her local primary school, fully accessing her educational environment and becoming proficient in Braille at age 8.

HI children are now routinely screened before leaving hospital through the National Newborn Hearing Screening Programme and SESS works collaboratively with ULH to provide a 24 hour response to parents with a newly diagnosed baby and then a 24 hour face to face contact to provide on-going support. QTHIs very often follow the education life of children from birth to school leaving age depending on their hearing loss and education needs. Please see the HI case in Appendix F – County News Article p 6.

The Voice of the Child

Children contribute to every SESS teaching sessions by adding comments to the SESS contact sheets, they are also invited to add comments to the annual service questionnaire sent to families and SESS works hard with schools to ensure the full participation of pupils in Education Reviews and Individual Education Plan Reviews.

SESS works closely with the Council's contracted service, SILCS (Sensory Impairment Lincolnshire County Services), providing social care support to children and adults across Lincolnshire with a sensory impairment. SILCS and SESS have worked together to provide social support to children and families and through consultation of what families wanted in county now provide quarterly information of news around the county and provide social outings to date that have included: very well attended PGL activities, bowling, Easter and Christmas parties and in April 2013 we jointly facilitated a multi-agency 'Sensory Showcase' day providing workshops for parents, activities for children and the chance to meet with all the professionals in county involved in sensory impairments support in one place. The day closed with a DVD of children filmed around the county detailing their experiences and aspirations. The day received 100% positive feedback.

Criteria

A number of children with mild hearing and/or sight loss do not meet the SESS criteria of support but with classroom management and information sheets for schools and parents these children can be supported without the SESS service. For this group of children and with parental consent, SESS keeps details of the child and family and will issue an annual letter to the school setting and home to ask if there have been any changes and advise how to refer if required.

The service support levels are set against the National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) criteria, these levels will help agree a plan of work for the academic year. Assessments and teaching takes place through the year and staff attend and contribute to annual reviews, IEPs, transition plans and statement requests.

Following a SESS teaching/support session, contact sheets are completed to inform the child/school/parent/carers of the work undertaken, by whom and contact details and where age appropriate the child is encouraged to contribute their feedback.

Training for school settings

Training from SESS for school setting staff is a key element of the work to help prepare and cater for the sensory impaired child; SESS delivers a substantial amount of bespoke training to school settings around the county to equip and empower staff. Pupil awareness sessions are also delivered to help the child's peer group understand the pupil's needs, for example why the child wears hearing aids, why a child uses a cane in school and how to support the child.

Staffing establishment and roles

X1 Team Manager

X1 FTE Senior Teacher (QTHI and QTVI) Lead for HI

X1 FTE Senior Teacher (QTHI and QTVI) Lead for VI

X1 FTE Senior Teacher (QTHI and QTVI) Lead for Early Years HI and VI

X9 FTE QTHI (x2 funded to train from the increased service budget)

X3 FTE QTVI (x2 funded to train from the increased service budget)

X1 FTE QTMSI

X2 FTE Specialist Sensory Support Teaching Assistants – for school age pupils (funded through the increased service budget).

X2 FTE Specialist Sensory Support Teaching Assistants – for birth to five (funded through the increased service budget).

X1 Education Rehabilitation and Mobility Officer for VI children

X1 Technical Resource Officer for VI children (funded through the increased service budget).

Designated School Budget

The service receives a Designated School Grant budget which was increased by 30% in 2012/13 to increase staffing levels to meet need. Lincolnshire is one of the very few Local Authorities to have invested in their education sensory service and was recently commended in the House of Commons.

The increase in budget enables the service to recruit:

X2 QTHIs and provide training

X2 QTVIs and provide training

X4 Specialist Teaching assistants and provide training in BSL and Braille

X1 Technical Resource Officer and provide training in specialist ICT and Braille.

The increase in budget followed concerns that teachers were not able to respond to the intensive teaching packages of support required for many children to work towards the key service objective of narrowing the educational gap.

Since the increase, teachers' caseloads have decreased to on average 25 children per caseload; an Early Years Team has been established identifying all 0-5 years children, their needs and support packages and provides a termly report for senior meetings to inform provision mapping. Through this work we have been able to provide most young people and their families with weekly support work, support parents with diagnosis, signpost to support service, work closely with the ESCO service to ensure good care coordination and inform strategic management decisions regarding expected provisions for the future. For example, the year 2015 will see a higher than usual cohort of young children with significant hearing loss

starting schools. The Early Years team is able to support families in education establishments and secure good transition planning.

Equipment

The service provides the specialist equipment required by children to access their educational environment such as:

Braille
BSL Teaching
Radio Aids
IPads
Sensory Toys
Magnifiers
Hearing Receivers
Hearing Transmitters

The equipment is regularly monitored and training delivered. An inventory of all equipment is kept in service and the budget ensures the regular updating of equipment to ensure optimum access for the child.

SESS Staff Training

All staff are trained to the mandatory requirements, all teachers must hold a teaching qualification and the post graduate QTHI, QTVI or QTMSI qualification. All Teaching Assistants have training or are currently being trained in BSL and Braille.

The service delivers free training to school setting staff at Horncastle College x1 year in October for staff with children with a sensory impairment in the school. The training is generally oversubscribed and year on the service adds additional days. The VI and HI days help colleagues understand about what it is to have sensory loss, what that means in the school setting and what colleagues can do to help support the child. 100% positive feedback is received.

All SESS staff receive regular supervision, appraisals link to the annual service delivery plan, case audits take place and reports are read and authorised by the senior team.

Termly meetings take place alongside INSET days and training planned at the beginning of each academic year.

Staff details their case load details in each supervision sessions and children OOC, TAC/ESCO/CIN/CP/LAC/privately Fostered are detailed as a priority of discussion and evidence required pertaining to educational progress and developments within in their care.

All staff have completed mandatory training requirements for LCC and Children's Services and specialist training specific to the requirements of this staff group are identified within the staff appraisals and training provided through the service training budget.

Collaborative working

SESS does not operate in isolation and requires excellent working partnerships with the child, family, schools, support groups, health and education.

Each teacher covers a locality area and has built close links with partner agencies in the area. Many teachers initiate TAC and ESCO service and ensure full participation with colleagues to ensure families receive a coordinated and holistic approach to the care of their child.

Strategic Developments

The senior team work closely with groups such as the CHSWG (Children's Hearing Services Working Group) a national group held locally between Health/Education/Support groups to look at the local need and listen to parents/carers young people and plan for meeting need.

Equally the locally health-led strategic group for eye care in Lincolnshire works to ensure a robust multi-agency approach to meeting the eye care needs of adults in children in county.

SESS forms an intrinsic component to these groups and has led on some significant areas such as the joint testing clinics and the eye care pathway developments.

The service is currently reviewing with partners the Hearing Enhanced Support Resources in school, which currently operate from three schools – discussions are currently being considered to consolidate this provision to one primary and one secondary joining with Speech and Language to ensure better service provision.

Service Development Plan

An annual plan is agreed and delivered by the Senior Team at the beginning of each academic year and every member of staff takes an area of responsibility to work to deliver for the year. The key areas and responsibility are agreed and shared with the whole team and then monitored through termly supervisions and appraisals. For 2013/14 the three main areas of focus were:

- Targeting provision and narrowing the gap
- Early support
- Developing leadership roles across the staff cohort

SESS Aspiration week

At the end of this academic year, one of the senior teachers is focusing on resilience in children with a sensory loss and is facilitating a day for children and young people around the county to meet together to share and showcase their achievements, skills and talent – from children able to tie their shoe laces for the

first time, independently managing audiology equipment to successfully gaining a place at University or in Jade Etherington's case – winning Silver and Bronze at this year's Paralympic games. Jade was supported by SESS and her family remain involved with the service, sitting on interview panels for recruitment of new staff and contributing to DVDs telling their stories for other families to hear.

2. Conclusion

SESS successfully supports 90% of children and young people with a sensory loss within their local mainstream school and ensures access to their educational environment. The increase in budget in 2012/13 has enabled the service to focus on early preventative work ensuring children in the early years receive intensive support to help them begin their school career at expected levels; last year a significantly sight impaired young man successfully began at Cambridge University at the same time a pupil with a profound hearing impairment began his placement at Oxford University.

However, whilst we are aware of our impact on positive outcomes, we constantly review how we can continue to better our service. In 2014/15 we will focus on enhanced hearing resources in county and aim to reduce our out of county placement. Lincolnshire out of county placements are comparable with neighbouring authorities however we are not complacent and are already discussing efforts to reduce this number.

'The support we have received from SESS has been 'outstanding'. We could not have managed without the technical advice and training that the service has provided for our staff and perhaps even more importantly it has been delivered with a real understanding of the constraints placed on teachers within a classroom situation'. – Stephen Tapley, Head Teacher, Isaac Newton Primary School

'The service has been a fantastic support to myself, my son and his primary and future secondary school. Their involvement has been life changing for my son and he now gets the support he needs.' - Parent

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	Service Delivery Intents – 2013/14
Appendix B	SESS Leaflet
Appendix C	HI Leaflet
Appendix D	VI Leaflet
Appendix E	MSI Leaflet
Appendix F	County News Article p6

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 Michelle White, who can be contacted on 01522 553368 or michelle.white@lincolnshire.gov.uk.