

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

Denbighshire L.E.A. and Conwy and Denbighshire N.H.S. Trust

Speech and Language Therapy Provision for Children in Mainstream Schools in Rhyl

Background Information

Historically, Speech and Language Therapy Services in Conwy and Denbighshire N.H.S. Trust have been provided in two main ways to children of school age.

- Firstly, a child with a statement of Special Educational Need would be seen either in the special school or unit in which he or she was being educated, or if supported in mainstream school, he or she would receive a once or twice termly 'outreach' visit from the Speech and Language Therapist.
- Secondly, all other children of school age were seen in community clinic.

Why Change?

The reasons for making changes to the existing model of service delivery were numerous:

- Discharge rates due to non-attendance in clinic were high (30% !)
- Opportunities for joint working with colleagues in education were limited
- Children who did attend clinic appointments were missing school
- Strong links exist between speech and Language development and the development of basic skills such as numeracy and literacy (Bird et al (1); Gillon and Dodd (2); Popple and Wellington, (3))
- Research, guidelines and policies identified the need for school based action, inclusive frameworks, and collaborative working (RCSLT guidelines (4); Law et al (5); Reid et al (6); National Assembly for Wales (7))

Joint Flexibilities Funding

In January 2002, Denbighshire L.E.A. and Conwy Denbighshire N.H.S. Trust were awarded a Joint Flexibilities Grant to fund the provision of a Speech and Language Therapy Service to three mainstream primary schools in Rhyl.

In the first instance, the grant funded a 0.6 w.t.e. Speech and Language Therapist and a 1.0 w.t.e. Speech

and Language Therapy Assistant. In September 2002, the funding was extended to cover two additional Rhyll schools by funding a 0.4 w.t.e. Generalist Speech and Language Therapist. This meant that each school could receive the equivalent of 1 day per week from a Speech and Language Therapist and 1 day per week from a Speech and Language Therapy Assistant. The Flexibilities Grant also enabled essential assessment and therapy equipment to be purchased as well as funding the development of a BTEC course for L.S.A.s and Speech and Language Therapy Assistants.

Schools across the rest of Conwy and Denbighshire who have not received Joint Flexibilities funding still receive school based input. However, this is the equivalent of one day per week for one school term only per year.

Setting up and Implementing the 'Joint Flexibilities' service

- Joint planning meetings were held between the Head of Speech and Language Therapy and the Primary S.E.N. Officer in Denbighshire
- A protocol and resource file for service delivery and training was compiled
- Head teachers from each school attended consultation meetings prior to service implementation and agreed that they would become involved in the projects
- Ongoing joint review meetings have been held with representatives from the five schools, the L.E.A. and the Speech and Language Therapy Service
- Training has been delivered to teachers and parents
- Initial Speech and Language Therapy appointments have taken place in clinic with parents present. Following this children are followed up in school
- Follow up intervention in school has taken the form of:
 - Liaison and joint planning with Teachers, S.E.N.C.O.s and Educational Psychologists
 - Implementation of strategies within the classroom
 - Contribution to I.E.P.s
 - Provision of blocks of intensive and/or regular therapy (carried out by the Speech and Language Therapist or the Speech and Language Therapy Assistant on an individual or group basis)
 - Implementation and demonstration of programmes to be carried out by L.S.A.s
 - Classroom based activities and interventions

Outcomes

Outcomes have been measured and monitored in a number of ways. Findings so far are summarised below

- Reduction in waiting times for assessment and therapy (however, due to an increase in demand the waiting times have increased more recently)
- Reduction in discharge rates due to non-attendance

- Increase in accessibility to Speech and Language Therapy Services (as shown by an increase in caseload size)
- Increase in the number of blocks of therapy a child receives per year
- Positive clinical outcomes (formal outcome measures are currently being analysed)
- Increase in teachers' knowledge of terminology related to Speech and Language Therapy (as shown by pre and post training questionnaires)
- Increase in the contribution to I.E.P.s
- Increase in Speech and Language Therapist- Teacher contacts
- Positive feedback from teachers and parents (user satisfaction questionnaires have been distributed regularly to teachers).
- Positive feedback from school inspection reports (8)

References

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