



**A report to look at Speech and  
Language Therapy Services for children  
and young people in Barnsley**

**January 2017**

## Introduction

### About Healthwatch Barnsley

Managed by Voluntary Action Barnsley (VAB), Healthwatch Barnsley is a community led, community driven organisation with a Strategic Advisory Board, responsible for determining the direction of the organisation. We are also assisted by volunteers (Healthwatch Champions) whose role is to gather information and prioritise areas of work, ensuring engagement with all sections of the local population. This also enables us to be representative of as many health and social care service users as possible. We are part of a national network of Healthwatch organisations that involve people of all ages and from all sections of the community in local health and social care services.

We gather views from the community, report these views to the people responsible for local services, engage people in decisions about services and monitor services. We have an online feedback centre that allows members of the public to leave feedback on any health and social care service in Barnsley (anonymously if they wish), as well as a five star rating based on their experience of the service they have accessed. The online system is quick and easy to use and also has the facility for service providers to reply to any comments and feedback their service receives. This allows for better two-way communication between service users and service providers and ensures that service providers can see what members of the public are saying about their service.

As part of our work to gather views, we also can exercise our right to visit services through a process known as Enter and View. We also have a role in providing people with information about health and social care services available in the area.

In some areas, Healthwatch organisations provide advocacy for people making a complaint about NHS services. In Barnsley, this service is provided for us by DIAL and their details are at the end of this report. DIAL is not limited to dealing just with health service complaints and can also look at problems with social care services. Through our partnership with DIAL, we have been able to successfully

close a number of complaints from our clients regarding their experiences of local services.

## **Why look at the Speech and Language Therapy Service for Children and Young People?**

Healthwatch conduct a 360 review every year to give the public and stakeholders a chance to comment on the work we have been undertaking and what they feel we should focus on in the forthcoming 12 months. Within the last review we received comments asking us to focus on the Speech and Language Therapy Service (SALT) for children and young people within Barnsley. When we contacted the service commissioner we were advised that the service was currently under review and that this piece of work could be included within the review (the commissioners are also looked at Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy as part of their review, however Healthwatch are just concentrating on Speech and Language Therapy services). We also received feedback from a parent of an individual who uses the service also asking us to look into the service provision and how therapy is allocated to the children and young people who receive it.

At this current time South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SWYFT) provide the service in Barnsley on behalf of Barnsley Council, who procure the contract within the borough.

## **What is Speech and Language Therapy?**

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists define Speech and Language Therapy as:

“Speech and language therapy provides treatment, support and care for children and adults who have difficulties with communication, or with eating, drinking and swallowing.



“Speech and language therapists (SLTs) are allied health professionals. They work with parents, carers and other professionals, such as teachers, nurses, occupational therapists and doctors.”<sup>1</sup>

## **The current SALT service for children and young people**

There are currently 23 Speech and Language Therapists working across the Barnsley borough that are employed by SWYFT. At the moment waiting times for the service are currently three weeks from referral. This is a large reduction from the historic waiting times of between 14-18 months in 2010. This large waiting time led the service to introduce measures and interventions to ensure that they were seeing children and young people as quickly as possible. The referral forms were altered to ensure that partners knew exactly what was, and what wasn't, a speech, language and/or communication need. Having an improved referral form led to a drop in the appointments that were not attended, which had an impact on the waiting times and the amount of people therapists could see in clinic. The service also looked at the discharge process to ensure that the children and young people who have used the service, and who the service believes are no longer in need of an intervention from a Speech and Language Therapist, are now discharged into the care of their school and/or family for ongoing support. Even after discharge parents, carers or school settings can re-refer a child or young person to the service if they feel they need further intervention.

The service has seen an increase in referrals from school settings due to a rollout of training that has been done recently with Teaching Assistants and other teaching staff, this has led to the staff in schools feeling more confident in identifying any communication needs of the children and young people they are working with. Similarly the service has seen an increase in referrals for children with a stammer due to the quarterly reminders they have sent to general practices, as historically general practices have not referred children with a stammer to the service. This increase in stammering referrals is positive as this means that strategies can be put in place at an early age to ensure the children are supported appropriately.

An example of the current referral paperwork can be seen in appendix 1.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.rcslt.org/speech\\_and\\_language\\_therapy/explained](https://www.rcslt.org/speech_and_language_therapy/explained), Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists



## **Gathering the views of children, young people and families who access SALT services**

We wanted to ensure that as many parents, carers and service users who access the service had the opportunity to have their say on the service they receive. We decided to do the following to try and speak to as many people as possible:

- held two open days so parents and carers could speak about their experiences, we advertised this in local media
- we posted updates on social media asking people to get in touch with their comments
- we attended clinics so we could speak to people before or after their appointments
- we attended training and information days to speak to any parents in attendance, along with school staff who refer to the service, or work with the service to support additional needs
- worked with the SALT service who promoted, and signposted people to, our feedback centre.

Sadly the Parents and Carers Forum in Barnsley is no longer running so we were unable to ask them for their views. We did, however, promote the work we were doing in Voluntary Action Barnsley's ebulletin and website to try and ensure that other voluntary and community groups were able to promote it to the parents and carers who use their services.

The most successful of the outreach activity was receiving comments via the online feedback centre. We currently have 57 comments on the system relating to SALT services. We did receive email feedback which we tried to follow up but did not receive any further information and we spoke to 16 people within the clinic setting.

## **Feedback that we received**



On the whole the feedback was positive. We received 57 comments on the feedback centre, 3 of the comments did not rate the service, the remaining 54 all rated the service five or four stars out of a possible five. The comments were from parents and/or carers, patients or professionals who refer into the service and work with the service. Comments were split in the following ways:

- 26 comments from parents/carers
- 1 comment from a patient
- 29 comments from professionals
- 1 comment from someone who described themselves as a visitor to the service and could be a carer or professional.

The spread of comments is quite even between parents/carers and professionals and given the age range of people who receive the service it is understandable that the children and young people have not left more comments.

### **Comments from parents and carers**

Of the 23 comments that rated the service out of five stars, 87% of the parents/carers rated the service 5 stars out of 5, with the remaining 13% rating it four stars. When asked how likely they would be to recommend the service to friends and family (this question is similar to the question asked on the NHS Friends and Family Test), 87% said that it was extremely likely they would recommend the service and 13% said that they were likely to recommend the service.

We did receive one email that suggested that they had experienced difficulties with the service, however, when we contacted the parent/carers to see if we could gain more insight into the issues we did not get a response.

We spoke to one parent face-to-face who has a child currently accessing the service with complex communication needs. The parent had a number of issues with how the service is currently commissioned and how the providers are using an 'episodes of care' model to deliver currently SALT services. This parent felt that it was not appropriate for the service to be delivered in this way, or that young



people were being discharged after a set period of time, to the care of, mainly, teaching assistants that the parent felt were not properly qualified to be able to identify needs in order to refer to the service. This parent said that a number of parents with children and young people with complex needs felt this way, however, they did not attend the feedback sessions, or complete the online feedback. Therefore, this report is based upon the feedback we received, which was on the whole positive, which is at odds with what the parent told us

All feedback provided by the parents and carers can be seen in appendix 2 at the end of this report. This includes the feedback received via our online feedback centre, the feedback received at outreach clinics, the email we received and feedback one parent gave us face-to-face.

### **Comments from professionals**

The professionals who left feedback via the online feedback centre rated the service highly with 93% giving the service 5 stars out of five and the remaining 7% giving the service four stars out of five. The comments from the professionals were based around the way that the service works with them, as well as the usefulness of the training they had received. All feedback can be found in appendix 3, it is all positive and shows that the service has a good relationship with referral agencies and other professionals. The comments also seem to show that the training that is provided ensures that the professionals feel more confident to spot potential communication issues and that they know how to work with those children and young people to support them.

### **Other comments**

We also received two comments on the feedback centre, one from someone who identified themselves as a visitor to the service, one who described themselves as a patient. Both people rated the service 5 stars from a possible 5. Their feedback was positive and can be seen in appendix 4.



## **Questions asked by Healthwatch Barnsley and responses given by the service**

Once we had reviewed the feedback we had received and looked at the service specification we had some questions that we wanted to ask the current service managers. Our questions, and the responses given can be found below:

### **How does the service manage referrals?**

All referrals are sent to our central base. We ask referrers to complete a referral form to ensure we have the right information about the child and family so as to offer them the best support from their very first contact with our service. This includes information about safeguarding and risks to staff as well as any additional needs the family may have that may make accessing appointments difficult for them e.g. mobility issues, mental health difficulties, literacy difficulties, English as an additional language, learning disabilities.

The referrals are screened on a daily basis by the clinical manager. We screen to see if the referral is complete and the reason for referral meets service criteria - (see attached referral checklist for information on this). Once screened and accepted, our admin team send a letter to the families to request they contact to make an appointment within 3 weeks. Where we know that this will be difficult for families, we make alternative arrangements e.g. contacting them by text, ringing them directly and arranging appointments through 3rd parties such as school and social workers.

We are piloting a new way of working in areas where we know the take up of appointments via a letter request is poorer e.g. the Dearne. We are also investigating using a free phone number so that families are able to ring in without incurring any costs.

### **Will you accept a referral from a parent or carer or does it have to be through the school?**

We operate an open referral system - this means anyone can make a referral to children's speech and language therapy subject to the consent of the person with parental responsibility or the young person (where they are able to give their own





consent). We do, however, encourage families to involve other professionals as this gives us more information about a child's skills and a more complete picture about the child and their family.

### **What training do you deliver/offer to families and professionals?**

Where appropriate to a child's care, we offer a rolling programme of free training to parents and carers including:

- Elklan under 5's,
- Elklan 5-9's
- Elklan for verbal children with ASD
- Recognising and managing stammering
- Building vocabulary skills
- Speech pronunciation difficulties and management
- Language ladder (for supporting children with very early language development)

We also offer a rolling programme of training for professionals. Where this training is necessary as part of a child's clinical care, the training tuition is free.

- Elklan language support for 3-5's
- Elklan language support for 5-11
- Elklan for verbal children with ASD
- Elklan communication friendly schools
- Language ladder
- Recognising and managing stammering
- Building vocabulary



- Speech pronunciation difficulties and management
- English as an additional language.

Please note: Elklan is a nationally recognised training programme and participants, whether parents or professional, can receive accreditation for participation. There is a charge should the participant wish to receive accreditation. This goes to the accrediting body and not to the service.

Most courses have both parent and professional attendees so that all are receiving the same information.

**Is there an order you would expect individuals to follow the training?**

Parents/Carers: Training is offered on a needs-led basis and will be recommended to them, as appropriate, by their treating therapist.

Professionals: As with parents/carers, training that is linked to a child’s clinical intervention is recommended on a needs-led basis. However, the Elklan practitioner course, verbal children with ASD, requires participants to have previously completed one of the 10 week Elklan training courses. In addition, where schools wish to gain “communication friendly schools” accreditation and status, they must have at least two members of staff who have completed a 10 week Elklan course at accreditation level 3 (NVQ equivalent).

**Are the training courses you provide evaluated with an evaluation form?**

We take feedback at all our training events. We ask participants to give the following information:

Questions    Not at all                      Some                      Mostly

Did you enjoy the course?

Was the course useful?

Did you learn new information from the course?

Was the course clear and well presented?

Was the course a good use of your time?

Yes No

Will your practice change as a result of this training? Tell us how and why?

Would you attend another course in the future?

How confident did you feel identifying and knowing how to help with this kind of speech, language and or communication difficulty?

Before the course: unconfident 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 confident

After the course: unconfident 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 confident

Rate this training. Think about content, presentation, use of your time etc.

very poor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 excellent

How likely are you to recommend this training to someone else like you?

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 definitely recommend

What did you like least about the course?

Tell us one thing you would change.

What did you like most about the course?

**How is the programme of training communicated to participants? Especially parents?**

Where training is recommended by a therapist as part of a child's intervention, the therapist will discuss this directly with families and schools and will provide them with information and the application form. They will support families to complete the application form, where necessary.

Details of our training programme are also available on our website, Facebook, Twitter and in our termly newsletter which goes out to all schools in the Barnsley borough.



How do you assess individuals learning at the end of the courses and check competency?

Professionals attending Elklan training complete a portfolio of work and their competency is assessed through this submission. They do not receive accreditation unless they achieved the requisite level of competency.

Participants who attend our in-house training courses now complete a quiz at the end of the training session to check the key learning points. Some courses require participants to complete an action plan, this is something we plan to extend to all our in house courses. In addition, we ask participants to self-evaluate their own competency pre- and post- course. Professional participants have already had employment checks that deem them suitably qualified to work with children. However, in schools, individual therapists ensure that school staff carrying out practice with a child understand how to do this practice. They do this by observing the person working with the child and offer further support, if required.

**If an individual is not at the level you would expect after attending a course, what action, if any, would you take?**

If we have concerns about any individual supporting a child, whether noted in training or in a setting, we would discuss this with the school/setting. As an NHS provider, we are aware of the importance of whistle blowing and where we feel that the actions of or omission by an individual may put a child's health and well-being at risk, we are duty bound to take action. We are very clear with schools that, when we provide therapy into a setting, there is an expectation that a staff member will be assigned to support the child and carry out the practice. If this is not done or there are concerns that the individual is not competent we would escalate it. We would not discharge a child where we felt that those around the child were not competent to carry out the practice.

**If a parent/carer works with their child on the skills they have learned either in a session or on a course, is there anyone on hand from the Speech and Language Therapy Team for them to contact should they get stuck or have questions? If yes, how is this contact provided to the parent or carer?**

We are always very happy to answer any questions or concerns. We actively encourage families to contact us if they need more information. For those families who might struggle to do this, we often follow them up with a call to check how things are going.

Parents/carers and professionals can contact the service via the departmental telephone or by the departmental email. Individual therapists also let families and other service users have their work mobile numbers or email addresses. More recently, since October 2016, we are also available via Facebook and Twitter.

**If an individual feels that they need a refresh can they access this training at any time?**

We run a rolling programme of training. We do not restrict access so where parent/carers or professionals would like a refresher, they can attend the next available date.

**Is this training free for schools and others to access, or is there a payment expected?**

Our in-house training is free to parents/carers who live in the Barnsley borough or whose child receives therapy from our service. For the parent Elklan courses, tuition and course manuals are free. If the parent/carer wishes to gain accreditation for Elklan training, there is an accreditation fee payable to the accrediting body.

For professionals, our in-house training is free where it is recommended as part of a child's therapy. With respect to Elklan, where this training is recommended as part of a child's care, settings pay only for the manual and accreditation. All tuition is free.

**How do you use the service evaluations (FFT) (Training), can you provide one or two examples of when an individual's feedback has been listened to and acted upon?**

We actively encourage service users, whether parent/carers or professionals, to give us feedback. We view this as an essential part of service improvement. As a service, and in comparison to most other services, we receive a very high number of returns.

Parents/carers receive a friends and family test card (FFT) at, at least two points in their child's intervention: when we first engage with a family, very early in the therapy process, we complete an assessment report about the nature of their child's difficulty and the help they require. We send them a FFT along with this report. We also send them a further FFT with the report we complete when we discharge a child from the service.

Course participants are also asked to complete a FFT.

The FFTs are freepost and go direct to our patient experience team who collate responses. The clinical manager receives a quarterly report on the results and takes action, as appropriate, on feedback given.

The following are two examples of changes made as a result of feedback received:

- We have amended our discharge report template to prompt therapist to include information on how and when to refer a child back to the service
- We now send out a pack of materials including leaflets, game templates and vocabulary pictures in response to requests from participants on the "building vocabulary" course.

**After receiving the information you provided, on the Elklan website, I was able to take a look at the course you ran today, are the groups you teach able to access Elklan resources or any other resource after their training?**

Participants who register to do an accredited course are able to access Elklan resources for a time limited period. Elklan provide details of this in their FAQs (frequently asked questions).

**Do you have issues with “did not attends” (DNAs) for the speech and language services and if yes, what were your DNAs in the last quarter across the service.**

Our current DNA rate is consistently below 5%, typically around 3-4%. This is exceptional and exemplary. We believe this is due to us getting the right information at the right time from the referrer and supporting families who might otherwise find it difficult to attend. We also have a text reminder system and if necessary, we ring families who have a history of non-attendance. We work very closely with settings and other health care providers, such as health visitors and will make sure other professionals are kept in the loop regarding appointments, if required.

**If DNAs are an issue, What action are you taking to reduce them?**

Whilst DNAs are very low, we continue to try and improve further (see previous information about trialling a different approach to some areas which have higher DNAs)

**What impact does a DNA have on your service, is there a cost associated, what is that cost and how is it quantified.**

This does not have a significant impact. However, as per details above, we continue to try to improve our DNA rate.

**One of the concerns that have been raised with us is about the discharge of children with long term, complex speech and language therapy needs. Can you advise what support is provided to staff in schools so that they are confident and able to re refer a child into speech and language therapy services?**

It is important that we make a distinction between children with complex long term conditions and children with complex speech and language needs. These are not necessarily the same population. Whilst some children do have complex long term conditions, they do not have specific speech and language difficulties. Conversely, there are children who do not have complex long term conditions but whose speech and language difficulty is extremely complex and requires specialist Speech and Language Therapy.

We see all children according to their speech and language needs. This will vary according to the nature of their diagnosed speech and language condition, their family and educational circumstances. Therapists discharge children when they are confident that those supporting a child are able to complete practice appropriately. Shortly before discharge, we also hold “practice and discharge” meetings with school staff and parents. At these meetings, we discuss the practice that needs to be done, who will do the practice, for how long they should do the practice, when a referral should be made again (if necessary) and who will be responsible for making the referral.

In addition, we provide training sessions on making a referral and we provide a referral checklist which gives referrers information about when a referral is recommended. We are also available to answer any specific queries that referrer may have.

**Can you advise how you would check their competency and confidence? Is this your role?**

If we felt that the person who we were asking to carry out the practice was not competent, we would escalate as indicated above. We would not discharge a child under these circumstances. It is important to note, however, that the class teacher is ultimately responsible for ensuring that they understand the SEN support that the child requires and that it is delivered appropriately (SEND Code of Practice, 0-25, 2014). A class teacher would therefore be responsible for dealing with any staff management issues and for ensuring that work is carried out as recommended by the speech and language therapist.

**Do you have a Speech and Language Therapist linked to every school?**

With the exception of our work with children who have eating and drinking difficulties, we work in localities. This means that staff work in geographic areas of the borough and they provide a service both in the local clinic and any schools within that area. This means that a number of staff may visit each school. We do not have a named therapist for each setting.



## **What schools if any have a resident Speech and Language Therapist?**

Schools which have a resourced provision have speech and language therapists associated with this resourced provision. However, in general, schools do not have a resident Speech and Language Therapist.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, it would seem that, on the whole, parents and carers are happy with the service that is provided to their children and young people. Professionals also seem to be happy with the referral system and the training that it provided to them to help them within their role, especially in education settings.

The service has greatly reduced the waiting time for children and young people to see a therapist and the service also receives higher than average FFT results that they review and act upon.

Although we did receive information that some parents were unhappy with the service they did not attend any of our outreach sessions or provide any feedback so we are unable to gauge exactly what these issues are and how the service can address them.

## **Recommendations**

Below are a few recommendations based on the feedback that was received:

- Ensure that the name of the child, or the child's initials, are included in any text message appointment reminders to help parents who have more than one child receiving the service.
- Offer initial meet and greet sessions for the children and parents/carers to see if they 'gel' with the therapist, this would allow parents to feedback straight away on the rapport between them and the therapist that can be addressed from the beginning, including being referred to another therapist if appropriate.

- Continue to provide training to teaching assistants to ensure that they feel confident to recognise any potential communication needs, also offer periodic refresher training.
- Ensure that all parents/carers and teaching assistants are aware of how to re-refer to the service if necessary. Maybe use social media to reinforce the message.

## Special thanks

We would like to thank all the parents and carers who provided feedback, along with the professionals who also provided feedback. We would also like to thank the Speech and Language Therapy team for allowing us to attend training and clinic appointments in order to hold outreach sessions.

## Contact us

If you would like to contact us about anything in this report, or about any health or social care issue in Barnsley, you can do so in the following ways:

**Address:** The Core, County Way, Barnsley, S70 2JW

**Telephone:** 01226 320106

**Text/SMS:** 07870 599445

**Email:** [healthwatch@vabarnsley.org.uk](mailto:healthwatch@vabarnsley.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.healthwatchbarnsley.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchbarnsley.co.uk)

**Facebook:** Healthwatch Barnsley

**Twitter:** @HWatchBarnsley

## **Appendix 1 - checklist and referral form**

Copies of the referral form can be downloaded from the Barnsley Children's Speech and Language Therapy Team's website:

Referral checklist: [http://www.southwestyorkshire.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/SLT\\_Referral-Checklist-\\_01.09.16.docx](http://www.southwestyorkshire.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/SLT_Referral-Checklist-_01.09.16.docx)

Referral form: [http://www.southwestyorkshire.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/SLT\\_Referral-Form-\\_01.09.16.doc](http://www.southwestyorkshire.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/SLT_Referral-Form-_01.09.16.doc)

## Appendix 2 - parent/carer feedback

Please note that the comments have been presented how they appear on the feedback centre. They have only been edited to remove any identifiable information

- I attend the clinic at the Roundhouse and have been coming here since April, I have two children under the same speech and language therapist, the therapist is lovely, our son has learning difficulties so there are times when he won't cooperate, she is patient, and she will always try different approaches. The therapist has just done a report for my son's school and she has also e mailed my sons paediatrician, we find this really helpful as it is another individual involved with our son, who has experience of him who is able to underpin with professionals our own observations. You often get a text telling you when your appointment is which we find helpful, but they may need to look at adding a child's name to the text so you know which child they are referring to when you have more than one child using the service. Might also need to look at text allocation during bank holidays as I missed an appointment due to a bank holiday and not receiving a text (although normally I would also log the appointment on my calendar on this occasion I had not). So in all a good service.
- I have had two appointment over 2 months at St Georges, I was referred though my health visitor. Out of the blue my son had a stammer which is an immediate referral, we had our first appointment within 2 weeks. The therapist is great, really lovely and she is good with my son, this is local to me and he is comfortable to do what asks him to do. There is nothing I dislike about the service and nothing that I would change.
- Overall the service we have received has been excellent, the therapist has been exceptional with our son J, even though the first time our son would not even look at the therapist, she took time with J and this has paid off. Speech was always an issue and will still be for some time but the progress he is making can only be put down to the level of commitment our Speech and Language worker has put into help our son. Thank you for everything is what I'm certain my son will say eventually.
- This has helped me to be able to break down information but to have a good understanding

- Our son's progress with the therapist was such that he reached a point where it was identified that he would benefit more from being placed in a school with access to a full time speech therapist which has been done and he is continuing to make good progress.
- I have been with this service for four years. My child is seven, he has been in the service, discharged and I have recently re-referred him to the service because of his stammering. The lady who took the call was very kind, they were super quick and everything they said was going to happen and on time. It was just really reassuring as a parent to know something was going to be done sooner rather than later. My therapist is excellent I see her at New Street and we cannot thank her enough.
- I have been engaged with this service for one and a half months, we rang the speech and language therapy services ourselves because we raised the concerns we had with our health visitor who said that they had referred us but nothing ever came forward so we obtained the number and called the service who responded a day or two after we called. We had two appointments at the surgery, White Rose Medical Practice and the therapist has been out to the home. We are now trying Makaton with our child and have been left some activities to do at home. So far I would say my experience has been absolutely fantastic.
- I have been with this service for three months. This is a brilliant service, I was referred in by the school. It took a week for me to see someone for a first assessment, which took place at my child's school, which was good because it was a comfortable environment for her, and I was able to choose this option. The therapist that we work with is brilliant, she really opened up our eyes to things we would not have thought of including hints and tips for games and activities to do at home.
- It was a bit of a long time waiting to get the first appointment but the therapist that we know have is great and we see her at the New Street Clinic in Barnsley. The therapist has also been in to school and modelled some strategies with school staff so child is supported in school and will be modelling some strategies for me in the New Year. We expect to be discharged from this service in the new year but we are clear on the processes for discharge and we know that we or the school can re-refer our child at any time, if we feel that this is appropriate.
- The Speech and Language Therapist came recently to assess my son's speech and language for his up and coming autism spectrum disorder assessment.



The therapist was very thorough in helping me talk through and establish my child's history, everything was covered thread to needle. After my child's observations the therapist took her time to explain to me what she had picked up on, the issues she could see, and reassured me throughout. She gave a very thorough and unbiased explanation of what she saw in him and how we could move forward to help him. Although her professionalism was impeccable, she also was supportive on a personal level which to me is always important to a parent in turmoil. The service we have received, both before and after my son's diagnosis has been 5\* and the therapist has gone above and beyond to ensure he continues to access the correct services to bring out the best in him and to assist us in our journey. Thank you to the therapist and the team for your support during the most difficult time; thank you for being patient, kind and reassuring.

- My daughter worked with (professional named) on her severe speech problems. (Professional named) came in to school every 2 weeks to update the activities given as my daughter progressed really well. Anytime we needed advice she was on hand and very clear with any instructions given. If more support was required (Professional named) would gladly attend, eventually we progressed to move my daughter to a S&L provision at (school provided) on (Professional named) advice and recommendations. Again we have not been disappointed as the progress my daughter is making is phenomenal. I really cannot speak highly enough of the service provided to us.
- I have been with the speech and language therapy service with my child for the past 2 and a half years, and I was referred through a consultant at the hospital. This service has been excellent, we have not been discharged from the feeding therapy side but the discharge process has been discussed and is understood. My child is seen either at home or in a nursery setting, the nursery setting sessions are brilliant as my child tolerates it more in this setting.
- Nothing is too much trouble and they are so friendly and accommodating.
- I was first referred to the service when my son was a baby as he was having trouble with feeding. We were discharged because he had improved with his feeding but we were able to call them back to visit our son again when we began having problems with eating solids. He also had chest problems which led the therapist to refer our son to Sheffield Children's Hospital to make sure his swallowing was fine. We feel that this service has been better



than the health visiting service. We have had so much interaction with them and the therapist has been fantastic in what she has done with them. Because it's hard when you are a parent with three other children who have been fine and then having a child who needs more support they have just been great and without them I would not know what we will have done.

- The regular Twitter updates offer sound, practical and succinct advice about child communication and learning
- I have been taking my son to see the Speech and Language Therapist for over 18 months. She has been to his nursery and now into school. She is fantastic and goes out of her way to make suggestions and to help my son. I could not be happier with the service and support received
- My son has improved a lot with his speech family who we haven't seen for a while can't believe how he has come along
- Fantastic advice and help for parents
- This is an excellent service, the only thing I would say is that the different agencies need to get better at communicating. I first of all asked to be referred by my health visitor, and nothing materialised, my child was then sent to Northern General for another health issue and referred to speech and language therapy again, and it transpired that there was some information missing from the referral form prepared by Northern General. If agencies had contacted me I could have filled in the blanks that they were looking for as the mother but they did not, so after 2 months of waiting I decided to take things into my own hands and refer my child myself. My child is now with the Speech and Language Service and we attend clinic at New Street which is a nice facility. Once in, our appointment came really quickly, I have had an excellent experience of this service and have been referred on to undertake a course to help me to support my child.
- Weekly visits, supportive I rated 4 as I believe they always room for improvement
- Had 4 appointments with this service, I like the advice I get, and there is nothing that I would change. They are good with my son and as I am Turkish I have access to the services of an interpreter. I did not have to wait long for a referral and am never left waiting long at appointments.
- As it is our first visit here today, I do not have much to go by so have rated the service 4 stars. Our grandson was referred through the health visitor and my daughter asked for this practice. I'm not sure how long she waited



for this appointment so could not comment. The today has been smashing and the therapist lovely. I have been given some things to take back to my daughter but we will all take notice of what to do at home. Today I felt I walked away knowing what to do and we have been given another appointment for one months time which I think is very good. Our next appointment will be to see how he is progressing with the activities provided for home, so we will be able to practice over the Christmas period.

- I have been coming here for three years and was referred through a health visitor. I feel that there are more assessments than, actual strategies for support and feel that my son is quite delayed in his progression. He has come on in the last three years but not to a level that I would want. I think the therapists should be looking more towards doing one on one within nursery settings to prepare for primary, support was provided to an extent but was mainly left to the school to manage and they are not qualified in speech and language therapy. It was also concerning for me that I did not really see evidence of his being supported within the school if I had I may have been more assured. The school tell you they are doing things, but I have never seen it.
- Referred to speech and language about 4 years ago, we had to wait about 8 or 9 months to be seen, our first initial appointments were not great, we felt our son was continually being assessed but not actually receiving any strategies or things that were to help our son. We asked to be re-assigned, because our son was discharged and the school asked that he be reinstated. They discharged our son because we were missing appointments, we had missed only two appointments and we're going through a difficult period in our lives with the loss of a family member and a spell in hospital. When the school reinstated the referral, we were referred to a clinic at St Georges Medical Practice under a new therapist, we have been coming here for two and a half years. We have such a good relationship with the therapist, she helps us and our son, she is accommodating and understanding. Since our son has been with this therapist he is significantly improving. Due to our own personal experiences with the previous therapist, and the fact that we did not have a rapport, we feel it would be beneficial for the service to offer a meet and greet, so parents can see if they gel with the person they will be assigned to. In this process for parents and the child rapport is so important if we had had the opportunity to meet the therapist before being assigned we would have known that we were not suited and could have





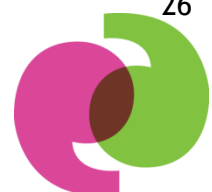
asked to be referred to another. If we had have had the chance to meet and greet when we first started this process perhaps my sons progress would have been implemented more quickly. We also feel that the service should not be so quick to discharge. Speech and language is a holistic approach which involves the whole family. But having said that the current therapist is great, and even if we need additional support we can ring her anytime, she has worked well with school to give them advice and supported the school in supporting my son. One area which I need to check up on is the support that is being provided to my son within the school, as I am not sure the TA working with him currently is trained in speech and language support strategies, I will be checking this with the SENCO. My son had a stammer and it's getting much better, we cannot praise our current therapist enough she is fantastic.

- I was told by my son's speech therapist that I 'should be worried' if my son was not talking by 2 years old. As he has Down's Syndrome, I think that this was a ridiculous remark to make, and never want to see that speech therapist again. I also don't think she should have any contact with children or the families of children with Down's Syndrome.
- My child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs and complex communication needs which the speech and language service work with my child on. I have concerns about the way that the service is commissioned and that the current model of delivery is not adequate for children with complex needs. Discharging children and young people from the service about a set number of interventions seems wrong and, although they can be re-referred to the service, the teaching assistants within schools are not adequately trained to know how to support the child, or when to re-refer. It feels like these decisions are being made purely for financial reasons and that the service specification has not considered the views of parents of carers. As the service specification is also being looked at by Barnsley Council I would like to know how they intend to consult with parents and carers to find out their views. I know of other parents who feel the same as me and are not happy with the way the service is provided to their children.

### Appendix 3 - comments from professionals

Please note that the comments have been presented how they appear on the feedback centre. They have only been edited to remove any identifiable information

- The presentation was excellent, it was very informative and hands on. It has given me a breadth of knowledge that will help my practice in developing children's speech and language skills in nursery.
- Deepened knowledge and understanding of speech and language and developed understanding through practical activities.
- As a teacher in an early years unit, we have needed strategies to support a large number of pupils who are coming with very poor speech and language skills.
- I feel I have learnt a lot of new practices to aid my performance in class with the children.
- This course has taught me different things in which I will take into my work environment and everyday practice.
- I have found the course extremely informative. lots of opportunities to ask questions and voice opinions thank you very much.
- I found the course very informative and relevant to my role.
- I feel that the information I have learnt has really helped with the way I support children within pre-school.
- Really good well planned clear sessions, manageable work load and lots of ideas tools and strategies to take away to put into practice.
- I have found the course to be supportive and informational. I feel I will be able to support children better within class and use the skills and knowledge we have learnt to support individual children who may be struggling in certain areas.
- It was helpful, informative & helpful. If we needed help all I had to do was ask.
- Friendly and helpful tutors always on hand to give support and advice. Lots of strategies provided to use in the classroom.
- I found course really useful and will be putting in to practice a lot of what I've learnt. The tutors were really helpful and friendly.



- The information that was given was delivered really well and was easy to understand, the information was also very useful and I will be able to use it in my work.
- All information was helpful and well explained.
- The course was really beneficial and informative. I believe it helped that the tutors were so engaging and the content so relevant. It will really help me in my role working with children and parents.
- I feel that this course was well delivered and the informative provided was clear. I feel much more confident now to deliver speech and language support to children within my setting.
- The information given on the course was very thorough
- Child recently brought food to mouth for first time, and is now tasting foods by choice, 12 months ago was sick at the smell of food
- Relaxed environment. Practical learning.
- I have had a good experience of the service as my role as SENCO requires me to have easy access to outside services. I know I can make an easy referral, put a plan of action in place and re-refer once the plan has been carried out.
- The simplicity of the courses but in practice it works
- As SENCO I have sent a number of staff on the training events run by the service. The training provides high quality, targeted information which staff can quickly begin to use in the classroom setting. All staff who have attended training have been very positive about their experience. Training materials are user friendly and the application process is easy.
- Building vocab skills training very useful
- This training was excellent with a great balance of theory and practical ideas. For the majority of delegates their needs were well met. However, some practitioners were looking for more practical ways of supporting early language in normally developing children rather than supporting older children who were struggling specifically with vocabulary. Possibly the course details could be more explicit
- All experience I have had with this department have been fantastic from all training course I have attended to the quality of care they offer to the children within my setting.
- Work very closely with the SALT service whose quality of delivery is always excellent. Relationships with the setting is always good offering

effective/positive advice to staff to enable and empower adults to offer support to all children identified with Speech and Language Needs. The service offer a variety of training courses to skill professionals in our mainstream setting. These training courses are always well organised, delivered and offer practical information and strategies.

- As a setting we access training courses for staff. Whenever we apply for courses, either by phone or email, the entire staff team are very helpful and informative, always replying promptly to messages left for them. The courses themselves are excellent and greatly enhance the knowledge of staff, which enables them to enrich the lives of the young children with whom they work.
- I have used the service for the last 3 years in my role as SENCO and have appreciated all of the support that the service have given. I am particularly impressed with how accommodating staff have been in ensuring that schools have the very best support.

## Appendix 4 - other comments

Please note that the comments have been presented how they appear on the feedback centre. They have only been edited to remove any identifiable information

- Excellent course tutors: knowledgeable, friendly, informative and supportive.
- This is one of the best courses I have been on. It was fun from start to finish. J, the leader was very informative and the way it was delivered was fun and knowledgeable.