



Department
for Education



Department
of Health &
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Ministry
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Dear Bob and Kamini

Bercow: Ten Years On – 1st Anniversary Update

Thank you for providing a copy of the Bercow: Ten Years On – 1st Anniversary update report. A significant amount of progress has been made over the last year, and it is good to see that captured in the report. However, we recognise that there is still more to do, and we would like to use this opportunity to reaffirm our joint commitment to supporting children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

We want to make sure that the funding system for children and young people with SEND is working effectively to get money to the right places at the right time, and in this respect, the Department for Education (DfE) launched a call for evidence on 3 May. The aim is to gather the information necessary to make improvements where they are needed, so that the financial arrangements support head teachers in making provision for their pupils with SEN. The call for evidence will be open until 31 July 2019 and can be accessed at: <https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/funding-for-send-and-those-who-need-ap-call-for-ev/>.

We're pleased to see that the report acknowledges the priority which the Government has given to tackling SLCN in the early years. 28% of children finish their reception year without the early communication, language and literacy skills they need to thrive. It is our ambition to halve this figure by 2028.

Our first area of focus is the home, where we are investing £6.5m in voluntary and charity sector grants supporting the home learning environment; and £5.0m on evidence-based home learning environment programmes. We are also developing a public facing campaign to encourage parents to chat, play and read more with their children to launch later this year. Our second area of focus is on local services. We are investing £8.5m to identify, grow and spread best practice on effective local early years services; £5m to understand 'what works'; and £1.9m on training for health visitors and early years practitioners. Our final area of focus is on early years settings, which includes £50m to develop more high-quality school-based nursery provision for

disadvantaged children; £26m to set up a network of English hubs; and £20m to provide school-led professional development for early years practitioners.

Commissioning

DfE and Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) are keen to support more effective commissioning of communication support. You have seen that the NHS Long Term Plan recognises the importance of speech and language therapists, and proposes that local areas design and implement models of care that are age appropriate, closer to home and bring together physical and mental health services.

Our national workforce group for Allied Health Professionals (AHP) will be making specific recommendations, in particular for those professionals in short supply, such as speech and language therapists. The Chief Allied Health Professions Officer will further develop the national AHP strategy into action to focus on the delivery of the Long Term Plan.

We have now established the new SEND System Leadership Board with the aim of improving strategic commissioning and joint working between education, health and social care partners. Communication support particularly benefits from a joint commissioning approach, and this will be a forum at which we can consider how local areas can better plan, work and commission for all SEND.

A preliminary meeting of the board took place on 13 March 2019 and focused on the board's vision for strategic joint commissioning and the principles which underpin this. Members of the board started to develop this into a 'theory of change' showing how the board will influence and aim to make a difference in the system. Once the permanent chair has been appointed, this will be shared with the sector to demonstrate how the board will help to influence and improve joint working and strategic commissioning for all SEND, alongside the minutes of the board.

The first of the SEND Ministerial roundtables took place on 20 May 2019. We were pleased that Mary Hartshorne was able to attend. We found the meeting very informative and will be using the roundtables to help inform the SEND System Leadership Board.

Support for long-term SLCN

We mentioned in our previous letter of 22 October 2018 that improving children and young people's SLC skills was a priority for all of the Opportunity Areas (OAs). Several of the OAs are specifically focusing activity on children and young people at primary and secondary stage, such as:

- North Yorkshire Coast OA is running a Young Readers Programme for primary-age children in partnership with the National Literacy Trust. The programme will nurture a love of reading across the area by engaging children in fun, literacy-focussed events and providing free books for them to take home. It will also expand the reach of the OA's Literacy Hub.

- **Blackpool OA** is training teachers to identify children with SLCN as early as possible and to deliver interventions and teaching that meets their needs. They plan to reach all 41 primary and secondary schools in the area.
- **Stoke OA** is running a programme called Talk Boost KS2 that helps children aged 7-10 with SLCN. It trains experienced teachers to understand these pupils' needs and deliver intensive, targeted intervention for them. They are also delivering a programme called Philosophy for Children and Communities (P4C), which develops pupils' oral reasoning skills, as well as providing P4C training for early years practitioners, SEN Co-ordinators (SENCOs) and newly qualified teachers.
- **Derby OA** will run a campaign on SLC across the city, alongside the OA's Talk Derby project. Talk Derby is a programme of intensive SLC support across the 7 most disadvantaged Wards and will provide a detailed package of SLC improvement support and training for schools and early years settings. The campaign will raise the profile of SLC development across the city, targeting different audiences, including parents, childminders, early years professionals, health professionals, teachers (both primary and secondary), and businesses.
- **Oldham OA** will run a campaign to promote the importance of SLC. It will be delivered by a national organisation and tailored to local circumstances. The aim would be to bring together all the various local stakeholders – parents, schools, early years professionals, local businesses, local politicians, etc. to raise the profile of SLC and to deliver consistent messages to families and communities about it.

Professional development of those working with children and young people with SLCN

The Early Years Family Support ministerial group is considering how the effectiveness of early years teams can be improved, including health visitors and particularly with regards to early detection of issues and pathways and the balance between universal and targeted services.

The Early Intervention Foundation has recently published the latest in a series of maturity matrixes. This supports a system-wide approach for SLCN services. It is a self-assessment tool that helps measure how advanced local areas are in creating a local system to help children in their early years to thrive, and to guide planning to make the local system more effective. The matrix has a particular focus on SLC skills. The user guide can be accessed at: <https://www.eif.org.uk/resource/eif-maturity-matrix-speech-language-communication-early-years1t>.

Incentivising schools to prioritise SLC

We are reviewing the current SEND content in Initial Teacher Training provision (ITT) and building on our existing SEND specialist qualifications to develop a continuum of learning from ITT, through teachers' early careers and into specialist and leadership roles. The DfE does not dictate the detailed content of the courses, but we do set guidance, which we are updating in line with the Early Career Framework.

Since the introduction of the 2014 SEND reforms, DfE has provided funding to a range of condition-specific organisations to develop resources and training to deliver high quality teaching across all types of SEND. This includes specialist resources in relation to SLC skills: We are now focusing on ensuring that schools are able to identify and meet training needs. This is in line with government policy of school-led school improvement and devolved responsibility for Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

To support this, DfE has contracted with nasen and University College London (UCL), on behalf of the Whole School SEND (WSS) consortium, to deliver a programme of work that will equip the workforce to deliver high quality teaching across all types of SEN. New SEND regional leads will bring together practitioners and networks in their local area to build a Community of Practice, including local SLC champions. This will help identify regional SEN school improvement priorities and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise.

As part of the WSS contract, UCL have undertaken an engagement study to identify the supply, demand and drivers for resources, training and strategies in relation to SEND, and to consider how demand could best be stimulated and met. A number of organisations, including The Communication Trust, were invited to input to this work. This study will inform future activity, including the development of a suite of condition-specific videos and materials across the four broad areas of need to support newly qualified teachers.

In addition, we are funding the WSS Consortium to develop a SENCO Deployment Guide for school leaders which will be supported by an induction pack for new SENCOs. We are also reviewing the learning outcomes of the mandatory Masters level National Award in SEN Co-ordination (NASENCO) to ensure the qualification reflects the changing needs of the educational system. These resources will help SENCOs provide the necessary strategic and operational support to teachers in relation to SEN. We are also reviewing the learning outcomes for mandatory qualifications for teachers of classes of children with sensory impairments, to ensure these qualifications equip specialist teachers with the skills and expert knowledge required of them.

Vulnerable groups

Where children are at risk of harm, it is particularly important that they are supported to communicate their needs and feelings. The statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) is clear that special provision should be put in place to support dialogue with children who have communication difficulties. This child-centred approach is supported by the Children Act 1989 and emphasised further in the interim findings of the Children in Need (CIN) review.

In December, following a broad programme of evidence gathering, we published the interim findings of the review. They place a strong focus on the importance of sensitive and appropriate communication, including adaptive communication where necessary, in order to properly identify and address the needs of vulnerable children, including those with SLCN. This is alongside the use of reasonable adjustments and behaviour

management strategies, which recognise that sometimes, behaviour is the only way a child can communicate. We advise practitioners to use a graduated approach to providing support, starting from strong leadership and multi-agency working.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has also been working to improve the outcomes for children with SLCN. The MoJ and the Youth Justice Board (YJB) have sought to provide SLCN training opportunities for sector professionals. Working with DfE, SEND awareness training was delivered to the youth justice workforce, and an online portal offering free training was created and is available to all practitioners (Youth Offending Teams and the Secure Estate). Further, a new youth justice foundation degree, which will be offered by Unitas to all Prison Officers and Supervising Officers in the Youth Custody Service, includes detailed material and resources on SEND with case studies and assignments in all modules.

The YJB have worked with the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) to develop guidance for practitioners and managers working with children with SLCN in Youth Offending Teams and secure accommodation. As local authorities are responsible for delivering youth justice services, the YJB have created additional guidance to support Youth Offending Services staff to use the AssetPlus screening tool, supporting practitioners to identify and analyse concerns regarding speech, language and communication. Further, an evaluation of the AssetPlus model is being undertaken, as per the updated recommendations.

Providing the right support for vulnerable people, including children, forms an important feature of Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service's (HMCTS) future organisational capability. Our courts provide reasonable adjustments for all users with disabilities, and intermediaries are available to support anybody with SLCN to allow them to participate fully in court proceedings. HMCTS also produces easy read formats of its' forms and leaflets. HMCTS now uses a new method for communication, "The Human Voice of Justice". We want users to experience a human empathetic approach and recognise that the justice system can be daunting and confusing. This new method of communication works on the principle of listening to users, explaining everything clearly and guiding users to the right support. This is being incorporated into staff training to increase the capability of staff to respond to users' needs.

We are also taking action in our custodial estate. Her Majesty's Young Offender Institution (HM YOI) Feltham has received the internationally recognised Autism Accreditation from the National Autistic Society. Feltham were able to achieve this through a holistic effort across the whole establishment, in order to meet the standards set by National Autistic Society (NAS). Accreditation means that we are able to offer a more autism-focused service and engage with experts from the NAS to support a stronger foundation for informing strategic planning, which results in better outcomes for these children. HM YOI Werrington became the first secure establishment to receive the Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark Award from the British Dyslexia Association. We recognise that there is still progress to be made in this area and plan for all our custodial establishments to gain accreditation.

In respect to mental health, the first wave of trailblazing mental health support teams, proposed through the mental health green paper, will be fully operational by the end of 2019. They will provide a trained workforce linked to groups of schools and colleges and supervised by NHS staff to be able to deliver evidence-based interventions that meet the needs of children and young people with mild to moderate mental health issues. As part of this, we will test how the new mental health support teams can work with other professionals such as speech and language therapists, in support of delivering schools' responsibilities for pupils with SEND. The aim will be to improve identification of mental health needs so that they can be addressed as part of wider packages of support. The NHS Long Term Plan also includes significant transformation plans for children and young people's mental health services.

There is a substantial amount of work going on in relation to SLC skills, as this letter demonstrates. We hope that this conveys our commitment to this area, and we will continue to ensure that a framework is in place that enables children and young people with SLCN to get the support that they so vitally need.

Yours sincerely



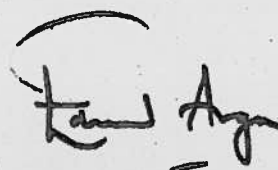
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