



Children and Education Select Committee
26 January 2015

**Joint Commissioning Strategy for Speech and Language
Therapy for Children and Young People**

Purpose of the report: Policy Development

To endorse the key principles and the realignment of commissioning responsibilities detailed in the proposed joint commissioning strategy

1. A consistent joint commissioning strategy for the Speech and Language Therapy service has been developed between the Council and the NHS. Surrey County Council (SCC) works with the 6 Surrey Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG), with Guildford and Waverley CCG taking the lead responsibility for commissioning services for children and young people. This strategy has been developed in collaboration with Guildford and Waverley CCG. It is recognised that the proposed strategy may require an increase in the speech and language therapy budget, though alternative service delivery models are being explored which could realise better value for money. The strategy is due to go to Cabinet in March once the funding arrangements are in place.
2. Joint Commissioning is a strategic approach to planning and delivering services in a holistic joined up way. It provides local area partners with an opportunity to redesign services across education, health and care in order to operate more effectively, both improving the experiences of children, young people and their families and making best use of local resources¹.
3. SCC and the Surrey CCGs have initially focused on establishing joint commissioning arrangements for speech and language therapy. Work is also underway to agree joint commissioning arrangements for Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy. The Council and Surrey CCGs have jointly commissioned the College of Occupational Therapy to undertake a review of the Occupational Therapy service and to make recommendations around future joint commissioning arrangements and a new service deliver model.

Current Arrangements

4. CCGs are responsible for commissioning speech and language therapy provision for 0-4 year olds. The Council's Early Years service also provides support to the service through early years advisers, up skilling staff in early years settings through such initiatives as 'Every Child a Talker' and the marketing of such initiatives. Families and early year's settings have expressed dissatisfaction on current waiting times for assessments and access to provision in some areas.

¹ SEND Pathfinder Information Pack, Version 5 October 2014 Joint Commissioning, Mott Macdonald
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5. Both the NHS and the Local Authority have responsibilities to commission speech and language therapy for school aged children, with the Local Authority focusing on commissioning provision for children and young people with statements of Special Educational Need (SEN)/Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP).
6. A fixed allocation of resource for speech and language therapy goes into maintained special schools and specialist centres in Surrey. The core level of speech and language therapy going into Surrey special schools has evolved based on historical arrangements. These allocations have not changed over time to reflect the changing needs of children and young people in Surrey. This has resulted in a disparate set of commissioning arrangements which means pupils are receiving varying levels of therapeutic input depending on the school which they are placed in. To add further to this complexity, seven of the eight special schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties have speech and language therapy that is commissioned solely by Surrey CCGs with no Local Authority funding.
7. SCC also commissions a service for pupils in mainstream schools who have a level of therapy provision specified in their Statement of SEN/ (EHCP) as an educational need that is above the core level of provision offered by providers at the school the pupil is being placed in. CCGs are responsible for commissioning provision for those children who do not have therapy specified as Education in their statement of SEN (EHCP).
8. Adult health services have been responsible for providing speech and language therapy to young people aged 19 years plus who have an identified need. Feedback from families and colleges is that this service is not provided in post-16 education settings.

Case for Change

9. The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice have provided new guidance and clarity regarding commissioning arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Section 9.74 of the SEND Code of Practice states: 'since communication is so fundamental in education, addressing speech and language impairment should normally be recorded as special educational provision unless there are exceptional reasons for not doing so.' This represents a hardening of the position that this provision should normally be treated as 'education' rather than 'health'.
10. A key feature of the emerging Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) strategy is to reduce Surrey's reliance on non-maintained and independent schools and develop local provision in Surrey for children and young people with SEND. The Council currently spends £37m on placing 725 children and young people into non-maintained and independent schools (NMs). In addition to this, it spends £5.2m on placing 85 young people aged 16-25 into independent specialist colleges. Placement numbers and costs increase year on year.
11. Feedback from the Area Education Team and Post-16 Commissioning team for SEND tells us that an increasing number of Tribunals entered in to are in large because of the paediatric therapy offer at Surrey maintained schools.

Proposed Strategy

12. A joint therapy forum was set up in February 2014, which is jointly chaired by SCC and the CCGs. Representation on the forum includes families, schools, CCGs, Education and therapy providers. The therapy forum has developed the five key principles that this strategy is based on: the right support at the right time; an open and transparent service; seeing the bigger picture; therapy for children and young people is everyone's business and an outcome focused approach.
13. Based on the principles of both Early Help (early intervention) and the Children and Families Act 2014 with associated revised SEN Code of Practice, the strategy proposes that:
 - Surrey County Council becomes responsible for commissioning a specialist level of speech and language therapy for school age children to enable them to progress in their learning and as they get older to be well prepared for adulthood.
 - CCGs are responsible for commissioning services to meet health needs (2006 NHS Act: 2014 Mandate and 2014 NHS Outcomes). The focus of CCG commissioned services will be the early year's population working alongside SCC's early year's team and those with specific clinical, health related issues such as dysphagia.
 - Early years settings, schools, academies and colleges are supported to meet the universal and sometimes targeted Speech, Language and Communication Needs of children and young people who require input in order to progress with their learning and access the curriculum.
 - It is proposed that joint funding should be provided in the instances listed below:-
 - Initial assessments for school/college-aged children and young people
 - Intervention to children in nursery/reception year
 - Training and advice to education settings for providing universal and targeted offer
 - Children who require both Health and Educational related speech and language therapy: commissioned seamlessly (i.e.: children with severe or profound learning disabilities).
14. It is recognised this approach may require an increase in the speech and language therapy budget, though alternative service delivery models are being explored which could realise better value for money. These models would support Surrey's strategy to reduce placements in non-maintained and independent schools, by strengthening the speech and language therapy offer at special schools and specialist centres and reduce the need for an Education, Care and Health plan in order to access the level of speech and language therapy provision required. Investment into early identification and timely provision in Early Years will reduce the number of children starting school with speech, language and communication needs. Any increase in expenditure on SLT may be balanced by reductions in the paediatric nursing therapy budget (also funded through the High Needs Budget) as providing this service is a responsibility of the CCG.

15. A working group which has officer and School Forum representation has been set up to establish a financial business model for Surrey County Council that supports the proposed joint commissioning strategy for the speech and language therapy Service in Surrey.
16. The SEND Governance Board will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of this strategy. A SEND Operations group is currently being established which will oversee the operational aspects of implementation. In addition to this the Health and Wellbeing Strategy is the key partnership document underpinning this work and the Health and Wellbeing Board will be the lead partnership forum responsible for this strategy.

Recommendations

17. The Children and Education Select Committee is asked to endorse the five key principles set out in the joint commissioning strategy, and make recommendations as appropriate. It is also asked that the Children and Education Select Committee endorses the proposed realignment of commissioning responsibilities subject an appropriate finance model being agreed.

Next steps		
Year	Month	Action
2015	Jan - March	Business model group establishes costing model for the new service and supports negotiations between Council and CCGs
	Jan - March	Design of the new service specification through co-design with families, schools and services
	Jan - March	Pilots in place with schools
	April	Finance and service model agreed by Cabinet and CCGs
	April	Council tender process begins
	April	CCGs start negotiations with current providers to deliver new service specification
2016	April	New contract issued
	September	New speech and language therapy service in place

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Annexes:

Annex 1 – Joint Commissioning Strategy for Speech and Language Therapy Services