

Supplementary Question to Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee – 12 June 2022

Thank you for the information to help parents whose children are not being accepted by provisions due to suspected learning difficulties. However, in regards to health working together with you to get the support for children this is simply not happening.

Nurseries who do support SEN children are being told of incredibly long waits for speech therapy and that when the child will be seen they will be restricted in what support is given. This then does increase the chance of the child not being able to attend mainstream school and so many missed opportunities for these children. When will Surrey stop offering only 2 sessions as standard when many children will need more (some may need less).

Can you also ask for a phone number instead of email to the team who can help regarding nurseries rejecting children?

Roisin Kennedy

Response

To give you an example of how we work to support children across health and education teams, I have included below the offer that is in place across Surrey for early years children. For clarity, Surrey County Council commissions the early years speech and language therapy service in terms of the education provision. Speech and Language therapy services are provided as part of the wider Children Community Health services (CCHS) within Surrey. CCHS are provided via integrated provision between Surrey Heartlands ICB, Surrey County Council (SCC), NHS Frimley ICB and NHS England. The efficacy and quality and safety of these services are overseen via governance processes across all four of the partners mentioned above.

Universal support for all children in under 5 years of age: The Children, Family Health Services Surrey [webpage](#) has advice and resources that are available for all. There are also advice lines listed [here](#), including the 0-19 Surrey-wide advice line.

The Surrey Early Years SEND teams and Speech and Language therapy teams work together on children's two-year checks. There is a strong relationship between the teams with collaborative meetings and numerous chances to liaise with one another. This practice extends into the early years settings, enabling joint working to provide the best possible support for individual children. Therapists make time to meet with the Early Years SEND Advisors in their area and discuss their offers of support.

Joint training is delivered free to the early years settings. These are delivered by Speech Therapists and often joined by the Early Year's Advisors. At the Additional Needs Transformation Board, April 2023 (attended by numerous Head Teachers)

there was a desire expressed by education colleagues to provide more support to help these young children; further and extended opportunities are currently being investigated.

Once a child's needs are identified there is an Advice Clinic for parents following a referral. Children's reports (once consent is given) are shared between the teams and early years SEND team support the setting to carry out the interventions. Regular multi-disciplinary meetings between Health and SEND are scheduled in diaries to discuss children and support. Alongside this, there is an open-door policy between the two teams where contact can be made at any time.

Early Intervention Funding (EIF) is a multi-disciplinary panel made up of both education and health professionals. Children's needs and their support are discussed, and funding is awarded to the early years setting to help the nursery enhance the ratio to allow for any interventions and targets (provided by therapists) to occur within the nursery provision.

Both Health and Early Years SEND teams attend Transition meetings and ensure plans are in place to ensure successful transition into school. Funding through EIF is also available to support the transition arrangements.

I hope that it is clear that there is a robust joint approach to improving outcomes for children in Surrey, across health, social care and education partners. Should you require further information we would be happy to discuss further.

The provision for early years speech and language support is predicated on meeting the needs of the child and family. Speech and Language therapy pathways ensure an individualised offer for children. Therapy sessions are given where appropriate for a child's needs. In Surrey there is no capped offer of two sessions of therapy. This may have been what was thought as appropriate for an individual child and on that we are unable to pass comment.

Post-pandemic there has been an expected increase in the level of need for speech and language support for early years children. Set against the challenging national backdrop (finance, workforce) this has led to children waiting longer to receive speech and language therapy where and if appropriate. Following additional investment there has been considerable improvement in this area. The vast majority of children are now seen within 18 weeks.

From a wider perspective, children's speech, language and communication needs are supported from a systems approach. From the moment a child's needs are identified (no need for diagnosis), our early years settings can provide interventions to support the child's speech and language needs. The early years advisors go into settings regularly to provide advice and guidance; and settings can access training, networks and funding to enable this support. There are resources available that the practitioner in the settings (who know the children) are able to utilise to help move the child forward.

We also provide Portage for young children with more significant and complex needs.

Parents and carers are able to call Surrey's Family Information Service (FIS) on **0300 200 1004** for support with looking for an early years provision/place.

If the child is eligible for Funded Early Education at age Two (FEET), the Early Years Commissioning team provide a brokerage service. All eligible parents who have given consent to share their contact details are messaged via text or email and can reply asking for a call back.

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