

# HAVE YOUR SAY ON SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS



Parent and Carers and those who work with children and young people in Suffolk have told us that we need to improve the services which support the development of children's speech, language and communication. They told us that we need to reduce the time that children and young people wait to receive speech and language therapy. They also told us that those who work with children and young people in Suffolk should be provided the skills, training and tools so that they can appropriately identify a need and enable them to provide early support with a better understanding of when a child does need to be referred to for therapy.

We also heard that parent and carers want a consistent offer of support wherever they live in Suffolk. We have used these principles alongside the Bercow Report ("Train my parents and my teachers, they know me best") to shape our guiding principles and inform a new model of support for Speech, Language and Communication in Suffolk.

We know that if a child does not get the help they need quickly enough the negative impact on the child and often their family can be significant and enduring. We have acknowledged that we need to ensure the system is fit for purpose now and for the future.

The development of an integrated model for Suffolk aims to draw on the strengths and relationships of all those who work with children, young people and their families in Suffolk. It has been designed with parents and carers, education, health and care and proposes to:

- Give universal settings (e.g. primary schools, nurseries, childminders, health visitors) the confidence, skills, knowledge and tools to identify speech, language and communication needs early and be equipped to provide support and early intervention, and where appropriate make referrals to Speech and Language Therapy. We have already secured the funding to enable us to do this, for example by making Makaton training available.
- Recruit more Speech and Language Therapists to ensure that all children and young people that require speech and language therapy receive it in a reasonable amount of time in a suitable environment for their needs. We have already completed research to inform us how many Speech and Language Therapists we need and the money to recruit them has been committed. An additional £1 million has been agreed over the next two years.
- Improve information for parent and carers by ensuring the Local Offer website features information about the new model, including a flow chart so families can track their journey and know what to expect.
- Provide all mainstream primary schools in Suffolk the ability to use Speech Link and Language Link to screen all children. Speech Link and Language Link will identify whether a child's speech and language is as it should be for their age. If a delay is present the package will recommend a programme of work. It will clearly indicate when a Speech and Language Therapist's opinion is required. Both Speech Link and Language Link will enable schools to track impact. The class teacher, families, and children complete exercises and set targets for improvement.
- Phase out the 3 Speech and Language Units and replace with an extended Specialist Education Outreach Service model which would ensure that the growing number of children that have speech, language and communication needs can, where appropriate, have their needs met in a mainstream school. We acknowledge that for some children a specialist education setting may still be appropriate and this has been included by the Council when planning the specialist education provision as per the SEND sufficiency plan. The extended Specialist Education Outreach Service (a teaching team of 6 staff) would work in partnership with mainstream primary schools, families, Speech and Language Therapists and other professionals to ensure the successful inclusion of children with SLCN. The team would support in various ways, including (but not limited to); curriculum differentiation, modelling teaching strategies, target setting, transition planning, progress monitoring and training delivery. Speech and Language Therapists would deliver therapy weekly / fortnightly / termly according to individual need with therapy targets / activities carried out by school staff in between these visits.

We have three Speech and Language Units in Suffolk, each one offering an integrated and embedded teaching and therapy model with therapy delivered up to 3 times a week either individually or within small or whole class groups. While this approach has benefitted those that have attended, the units are limited in the number of children they support, between them providing only for a maximum of 45 children, from year 1 and year 2, each year. In addition to the benefits afforded to this small group of children there are also some real disadvantages. For example, children are required to transition out of their home school and then transition back in again or on to a different school once their time in the unit has come to an end. (Children starting at the beginning of year 1 have a maximum of 6 terms in the unit, with those starting at the beginning of year 2 having a maximum of 3).

As part of implementing the new integrated model the Council will need to make a decision on the future of the Speech and Language Units and the Extended Education Outreach service. Any views that you express on this model will be shared as part of the decision making. If the proposal to gradually phase out the Speech and Language Units is approved, no child already at the units will have their place withdrawn, but no further places will be agreed.

All of the feedback given by families to Suffolk Parent and Carer Network and our joint visits around the County to speak with parents and carers have informed the new model of support however we would like to hear your views.

- A business case was produced to support the request for more money for therapy from Ipswich and East and West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group. The [business case](#) has been approved and provides a detailed overview of the project and the proposed model. However, this is a long report, so we have also produced a [summary](#) that shows the key elements of the model in more detail.

We have intentionally left our survey open so that you are able to freely express your views on our proposals.