

Children's Speech and Language Therapy

Information update for Settings and Schools

The past few months have been challenging for all of us, with huge amounts of information to take on board and adapt our services around. With this in mind, we thought it would be helpful to provide an update regarding the current Speech and Language Therapy Service and what to expect in September 2020.

Since the end of March, Children's Speech and Language Therapy has not offered face to face appointments for any children other than those seen on the wards in the hospitals or those needing critical community feeding assessments. Over the past couple of months we have been working hard to keep in contact with families offering half-termly advice phone calls and video consultations. As you might expect the take up of this support has been variable, but well received.

We are currently developing the use of video therapy and as we do this we are gaining a better understanding of when video assessment and therapy works well and when its impact is limited. One positive aspect is the increased working with parents and carers and the style of coaching that can be achieved using video.

We know and understand that planning the return of all students in September is a significant piece of work and all settings and schools have to implement government advice individually based on their specific needs, cohort and building(s).

As we go into September we will continue to use video consultations and therapy for all our children, except those who are in-patients at one of the region's hospitals, who will continue to receive face to face assessments as required, along with children requiring critical feeding assessments. We will review the impact of video provision and establish the next steps for the service in January 2021. We are not planning to start face to face appointments until this time at the earliest. There are several reasons which have contributed to this decision:

1. National Guidance

NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to work at a 'Level 4 Incident' – this is the highest category - meaning that the response to Corona virus is co-ordinated on a national level. As an NHS provider we have to follow this national guidance to ensure public and staff safety is maximised. This includes how and when we reintroduce services.

2. Service re-start – Making sure we get it right

The service is currently establishing which clinical interventions can be carried out via video to help inform the re-introduction of face to face appointments. Our professional body is also readily gathering evidence from services across the country and abroad to help inform local service regarding the ongoing use of video consultations. We expect the use of video consultations to be something that we keep in the long term, re-introducing face to face consultations where necessary and practical after January 2021.

Author: Claire Taylor 15/07/2020

3. The unpredictability of the start of term

Individual settings and schools are not yet able to confirm what provision will look like in September; some schools expect to accept visitors while others do not want other professionals attending on site. Some schools are unable to take all pupils back due to limited space while others are hoping to have all pupils back at the start of term. There are a total of over 1400 settings who will each have very different ways of working and supporting their children, with new routines and processes to establish in the autumn term.

4. Staff Redeployment

A significant proportion of our staff have been redeployed and will not be returning until the beginning of October, at which point the service needs to embed a number of new processes and procedures. Our redeployed staff have been required to take on very different roles over the past few months and will need time to familiarise themselves with returning to Children's Speech and Language Therapy.

Please see our website www.salt.ecch.org which has been extended and revised with new information and video guides. We will also post service updates on the site at the beginning of the autumn term.

In the meantime we hope you all have a chance to have a well-earned break over the summer holiday period.

If you have any queries please ring our parent advice line:

Mondays to Fridays 9am to 12pm on 01502 719830

This is currently open for parents and professionals for general and child specific enquiries.