

**Summary Interim Report on Findings and
Interim Themes from Phase 1 of the review
of Allied Health Professions (AHP) support
for children/young people with a statement
of special educational needs (SEN)**

Table of Contents

Introduction and case for change	P2
Project Definition	P3
Strategic Direction	P5
Agreed Principles	P6
Project Management	P7
Engagement in phase 1	P8
Interim Themes	P10
Appendix A- Strategic Links	P14

Introduction and case for change

The Public Health Agency is leading a review of Allied Health Professions (AHP) support for children/young people with statements of special educational needs.

It is a child/young person centred review, focusing on the levels and models of AHP provision for children/young people with a statement of special educational needs.

This review was initiated due to a number of queries about the levels of AHP provision, particularly from the special education sector. In discussions related to these queries there was anecdotal evidence that changes were required in order to meet the AHP assessed needs of these children/young people.

It was recognised that it is important that AHP services meet the assessed needs of children/young people with statements of special educational needs, regardless of what school they attend.

It was also acknowledged, however, that throughout the years services have developed in the absence of a regional model.

It was agreed that there was a need to establish the current levels and models of AHP service provision throughout the region for children/young people with statements of special educational needs and to hear views from key stakeholders.

When current levels and models of provision have been established and views have been heard, issues and themes will be identified and recommendations will be made for further action.

This interim report is outlining the service principles agreed by the Project Board and the themes identified throughout engagement and information gathering. These principles and themes will help to move towards the agreement of a proposed regional model of AHP support for children/young people with statements of special educational needs.

Project Definition

The purpose of this regional review is to establish the current level and models of AHP provision and support for children/young people with statements of special educational needs in special schools and mainstream schools, with the ultimate aim of agreeing a proposed regional model to best meet the AHP assessed needs of these children/young people.

The proposed model should ensure that the AHP assessed needs of children/young people with statements of special educational needs are met, irrespective of what school they attend, represent value of money and ensure the most effective use of resources.

The review is mainly focusing on services for these children/young people from:

- Physiotherapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Dietetics
- Orthoptics
- Podiatry

We also took this opportunity to seek views on the other AHP Professionals who may work with children/young people. The other AHP services are:

- Radiography
- Orthotics
- Prosthetics
- Art Therapy
- Drama Therapy
- Music Therapy

It is envisaged that the review will be carried out in three phases:

- Phase 1 involved a scoping exercise to establish the current levels and models of AHP provision and support for children/young people with statements of special educational needs enrolled in special schools. This stage has been completed; common themes have been identified and are outlined in this interim report. A paper is being

produced proposing how we intend to proceed in relation to these themes.

- Phase 2 is a scoping exercise to establish the current levels and models of AHP provision and support for children/young people with statements of special educational needs enrolled in mainstream schools. It will end with identification of common themes and how we intend to proceed on each of these themes will be outlined.
- Phase 3 will involve an analysis of identified common themes and the agreement of a proposed regional model and an implementation plan.
- The envisaged timescales are as follows:
 - Phase 1 April 2013-March 2014
 - Phase 2 April 2014- March 2015
 - Phase 3 April 2015- August 2016

This review requires collaboration and a partnership approach with all key stakeholders especially Parents/Carers, Children/Young People, Health & Social Care, Education and Political representatives to ensure that appropriate, relevant and accurate information is gathered and analysed and that the maximum number of children/young people receive the support they require.

Strategic direction

There are many strategic drivers for this review. It is important to recognise that children/young people with statements of special educational needs are children and young people first and should as far as possible be offered the same opportunities as their peers.

Within the ten year strategy for children and young people in Northern Ireland it is acknowledged that we want all children and young people in Northern Ireland to fulfil their potential (Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge A TEN YEAR STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND 2006 – 2016) . We must help them get the best possible start in life and do as well as they can. This strategy requires us to deliver for all children and young people in Northern Ireland, and it states that we must take actions to improve the lives of those children and young people and their families who need our help most.

As stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child “Every child has the right to an education, to be healthy, to grow up safe and to be heard”. The terms of the convention require that the basic needs of children are met and that they are helped to reach their full potential. Central to this is the acknowledgment that every child has basic fundamental rights.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises that children/young people with disabilities should have full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children/young people. It states in Article 7 that the best interests of the child/young person shall be a primary consideration.

Agreed Principles

These principles sit within the wider context of strategic direction and legislative requirements.

This review will ultimately reach the agreement of a proposed regional model for AHP support for children/young people with statements of special educational needs. The following principles, which were shaped by learning in phase 1, should be integral to the proposed model. These principles have been agreed by the Project Board.

- The AHP assessed needs of these children/young people must be met, within timeframe of agreed AHP access target, regardless of which school the child/young person attends.
- Children/Young people with similar AHP assessed needs should have similar level of provision and standards of service irrespective of where they live.
- The needs of children must be paramount and service providers must ensure that AHP working patterns are designed in such a way that services can continue to be provided to meet the AHP assessed needs of these children, irrespective of the time of the year including school holidays. Whilst an appropriate balance needs to be struck between the wishes of staff to work flexibly and the needs of the child the overall inclination must be towards improving outcomes for children and the needs of the services.
- AHP services for these children/young people should follow regional care pathways, so that services are regionally consistent.
- There must be effective communication between AHPs and Children/Young people with statements of special educational needs regarding their assessed AHP needs and therapy plan.
- There must be effective communication between AHPs and Parents/Carers of Children/Young people with statements of special educational needs regarding their child's/young person's assessed AHP needs and therapy plan.
- AHP staff should work in partnership with parents/carers to outline the child/ young person's developmental needs. Aims and objectives of intervention should be agreed according to these

identified needs, in discussion and consultation with parents/carers, school staff and where appropriate the child/young person. The impact and outcomes of intervention should be monitored and service delivery should be amended as deemed necessary

- There is a need to ensure the most effective and efficient use of current AHP resource
- Appropriate skillmix of AHP staff must be in place in order to meet the AHP assessed needs of these children/young people
- Evidence based innovative practice should be welcomed in order to effect change and best meet the AHP assessed needs of these children/young people. New, evidence based, ways of working need to be explored eg, the use of technology.
- Collaborative working is required across health & education in order to best meet the needs of these children/young people.
- AHPs should be involved in preparing for transition from Children's to Adult services so that the AHP assessed needs of these children/young people continue to be met as required.

Project Management

The Project Chair, Eddie Rooney, Chief Executive of the Public Health Agency, chaired regular Project Board Meetings during phase 1. The Project Chair takes responsibility to ensure that the project produces the required outcomes and deliverables, to the required standard and within the specified constraints and time-frame of the project.

The Project Chair is supported in the delivery of this work by the Project Lead; Mary Emerson, AHP Consultant PHA. The Project Lead chairs the Professional Stakeholder Reference Group. The Project Lead's role is to drive the project forward and to monitor the outcomes of the project throughout its lifespan.

Engagement undertaken

In order to identify issues and common themes relating to AHP support for these children/young people, significant engagement was required with all stakeholders.

This engagement included:

- Engagement with children/young people enrolled in special schools. This engagement with children/young people was commissioned by the Public Health Agency and carried out by Barnardos Disabled Children and Young Peoples Project. This involved direct engagement with children/young people enrolled in special schools. Five schools across the region were selected in order to provide variety, in terms of categorisation of special school and geographical area
- Engagement with parents/carers of children and young people enrolled in special schools. Engagement with parents/carers was planned in order to hear views from as many parents/carers as possible. All special schools were contacted and provided with details of an online questionnaire for parents/carers and asked to make parents/carers aware of this. The questionnaire was also sent by email to Principals so that parents/carers could also choose to complete a hard copy. In total 353 questionnaires were completed by parents/carers online and in hard copy. In addition to seeking views of all parents of children/young people enrolled in special schools by questionnaire, there were also a number of engagement events with parents/carers. Six schools were selected across the region to represent variety in terms of categorisation of schools and geographical areas.
- Engagement with AHPs. Engagement with AHPs took place throughout. This review was mainly focusing on services for these children/young people from Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Podiatry, Orthoptics and Dietetics. Engagement included regional meetings with each of these individual six professions, in the form of meetings with

Heads of Professions or Paediatric Heads of service, depending on which each profession felt was most appropriate. The Trust AHP Leads are also key members of the review's Professional Stakeholder Reference Group which meets regularly. In addition to meetings, quantitative and qualitative data was gathered from the individual AHP professions in order to establish levels and models of provision and to hear any issues.

- Engagement with Teachers in special schools. Engagement with Special School Principals was planned in order to hear views from Principals of special schools where AHP services are required. All appropriate special schools were contacted in order to arrange visits to meet the Principal and discuss AHP services for the children enrolled in the school. Principals made the decision if it was appropriate to include other members of their staff. In total, 38 Special schools were visited across NI
- It is also recognised that there are many other relevant stakeholders in this review of AHP support. Hence, there were also a number of meetings with other appropriate organisations, including Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY), Children's Law Centre (CLC), Children in Northern Ireland (CINI), Patient Client Council (PCC), Equality Commission and Human Rights Commission.
- Throughout engagement in the first stage of this review, it was relayed from stakeholders, including Parents/Carers, Education colleagues and others that AHPs are a very valued resource in their contribution to these children/young people.

Interim Themes

These are themes which were identified through engagement and information gathering in phase 1. These are areas which will require focussed attention.

Interim Theme 1

Effective and efficient use of current resource:

There is a need to ensure that AHP support for children/young people enrolled in special schools is being used in the most effective and efficient way.

Throughout the years services have developed without a regional plan and so there is not regional consistency in how services are used and delivered to these children/young people.

There is a need to standardise care pathways to facilitate regional consistency and the most effective and efficient use of resource.

Interim Theme 2

Collaborative/partnership working between Health & Education:

It is vital that AHP and teaching staff working with children/young people in special schools work together in partnership in order to improve outcomes for children/young people.

Health and Education already work in partnership but it is recognised that there are challenges faced by professionals in Education and Health in working together. Many of these challenges are related to communication, systems and processes operating in different organisations.

Interim Theme 3

Strengthened joint working between AHPs and Parents/Carers:

Parents/Carers spend most time with their children/young people and the care they provide is invaluable.

It is vital that Parents/Carers and AHPs have a common, shared understanding of the child's needs in order to agree likely outcomes and best hopes for the child and how to work together to help the child.

Interim Theme 4

Referral pathways:

Children/Young people enrolled in special schools are currently being referred to AHP services in a variety of ways.

Children/Young people should be referred in the same way, regardless of where they live and which special school they attend.

Regional consistency in referral pathways will also facilitate monitoring of adherence to the ministerial 9 week AHP access target.

Interim Theme 5

AHP input to statutory assessment and review of statement:

Phase 1 of the review identified variations in how AHPs are involved in the statutory assessment and statementing process.

There is a need for regional consistency and clear communication.

Interim Theme 6

Delivery of AHP services in the best environment for the child/young person:

Children/Young people should receive their AHP services in the best place for them.

Where the best place is will depend on the child's/young person's needs

Interim Theme 7

Strengthened communication between AHPs and children/young people in special schools

It was reported by children/young people that they would like to be more involved in decisions regarding their treatment, including when it is appropriate for treatment to end.

Interim Theme 8

Competency framework for AHPs working with these children/young people:

There is a need to agree the knowledge and experience an AHP must have in order to work with these children/young people.

These children/young people often have complex needs and AHPs working with them should be supported in developing and maintaining the appropriate level of competency in order to meet the AHP assessed needs of these children/young people. For example, this would include disability awareness training for AHPs, as requested by children/young people in stage 1 of the review.

Interim Theme 9

Accommodation and equipment:

Space is a challenge in many special schools and Health and Education need to work together to agree minimum requirements to allow appropriate therapy provision.

Health and Education also need to work together to ensure that children/young people receive the equipment they require when and where they require it.

Interim Theme 10

Data and monitoring:




Currently there are many different data systems and many different ways in which information is being gathered in relation to AHP services for children/young people enrolled in special schools. This makes it difficult to establish what level of service there is and how it is being used.

Monitoring by Performance Management would ensure that the number of referrals is known and length of time from referral to treatment can be monitored against the agreed AHP access target

Accurate data and monitoring will allow better planning and flexibility to meet demands.

Strategic Links

The Children (Northern Ireland) Order (1995)	 The Children NI Order 1995
Code of Practice for Identification & Assessment of Special Education Needs (DENI, 1998)	 Code of practice for identification & Assessment of Special Needs
Supplement to the Code of Practice for Identification & Assessment of Special Education Needs (DENI, 1998)	 Supplement to the Code of Practice for Identification & Assessment of Special Education Needs
The Education (Northern Ireland) Order (1996)	 The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1996
Review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion: Every school a good school – the way forward for special educational needs and inclusion (2009-2012)	 Review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion:
A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (OFMDFM, 2006-2016)	 Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006-2016
Healthy Child, Healthy Future (2010)	 Healthy Child, Healthy Future (2010)
The Disability Discrimination Act (1995)	 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland Act, 1978)	 The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1978
Speech, Language and Communication Therapy Action Plan: Improving Services for Children and Young People (DHSSPSNI 2011/12 – 2012/13)	 SLCT Action Plan
The Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order (2005)	 The Special Educational Needs and Disability NI Order 2005
Transforming Your Care: A Review of Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland (DHSSPSNI, 2011)	 Transforming Your Care: A Review of Health and Social Care in NI

<p>Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge A TEN YEAR STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND 2006 – 2016</p>	 <p>Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge A TEN YEAR STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND 2006 – 2016</p>
<p>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)</p>	 <p>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)</p>
<p>UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)</p>	 <p>UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)</p>