Speech, language and communication therapy action plan

Foreword

Welcome to the first update on the Speech, language and communication therapy action plan, which provides information on the progress made so far in its implementation.

Background

The action plan was developed by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) with the aim that all children and young people at risk of or presenting with speech, language or communication needs will be able to benefit from timely support and integrated services that best meet their requirements.

The Public Health Agency (PHA), in partnership with the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), has been tasked with implementing the action plan.

Progress

I am delighted with the progress made to date on the actions we have been set. A number of action points have been followed up, such as:

- promoting the early development of speech, language and communication through *Healthy child, healthy future: A framework for the universal child health promotion programme in Northern Ireland;*
- a one website approach to the online provision of speech and language therapy information.

We continue to work in a number of other areas, including the education sector. Page two provides further details of our progress.

Next steps

Engagement was integral to the development of the action plan and it is our aim that parents, carers and children help us carry out the remaining actions. I believe passionately in listening to and acting upon your views, and I hope many of you will respond to our invitation on page three.

I hope you enjoy this first update and look forward to keeping you informed as we deliver the necessary changes to improve services for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs in Northern Ireland.
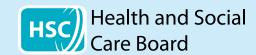
Best wishes,

Michelle Tennyson
Assistant Director Allied Health Professions and Personal and Public Involvement

Contents

HSC Public Health Agency

HSC Health and Social Care Board

What is the action plan?

Speech, language and communication are crucial in giving every child the ability to succeed in life. The ability to communicate is an essential life skill for all children and young people and underpins a child's social, emotional and educational development (Bercow report).

The *Speech, language and communication therapy action plan* was developed and agreed by a multi-agency project team established by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) to drive improvements in partnership working between health and education, and to help support early identification of children's needs. The implementation of this action plan is led by the PHA and Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) through the project implementation team.

The aim of the action plan is that all children and young people at risk of, or presenting with, speech, language and communication needs will be able to benefit from timely support and integrated services that best meet their requirements.
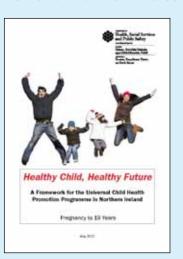
Progress to date

The action plan is well underway, with work completed or ongoing in all areas. Through this work:

- the parent child health record has been amended to promote earlier identification of child development concerns;
- a model to standardise speech and language therapy (SLT) input into SureStart has been developed with recommendations for implementation;
- early development of speech, language and communication is being promoted by working with parents through *Healthy child, healthy future: A framework for the universal child health promotion programme in Northern Ireland.*

Work continues in the development of care pathways and a scoping exercise to determine the current provision of communication aids for children and young people.

We are also working with education authorities on the most effective ways to distribute awareness-raising materials in school settings and assessing how to collaboratively deliver appropriate training for qualified nursery, Year 1 and Year 2 teachers.

Family Support NI website

You can now find SLT information on the Family Support NI website. The website has been set up to help families, young people, children and practitioners in Northern Ireland find local services provided by statutory, voluntary and community organisations.

Visit the website at: www.familysupportni.gov.uk

If you are having difficulty finding the service you need, please contact the Family Support NI team by telephone on 0845 600 6483 or via e-mail at: info@familysupportni.gov.uk

Get involved

Do you want to get involved with the action plan? Then we would like to invite you to be part of a parents' focus group.

What does it involve?
We are looking for parents and carers from each Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) to establish a focus group. This group(s) will meet once or twice over the next year and be in regular contact to discuss important issues within the action plan. Out of pocket expenses incurred as a direct result of participating will be reimbursed.

How do I volunteer?
If you are interested, please complete your details in the form on the following page and return to:

Julie Mawhinney (Projects Support Manager)
Public Health Agency
12-22 Linenhall Street
Belfast
BT2 8BS

Alternatively you can email:
Julie.mawhinney@hscni.net

Useful links and information

Family Support NI
www.familysupportni.gov.uk

Southern HSCT
www.southerntrust.hscni.net/1689.htm

Northern HSCT
www.northerntrust.hscni.net/services/405.htm

South Eastern HSCT
www.setrust.hscni.net/dlt%20services/SpeechandLanguageServices.html#TopOfPage

Western HSCT
www.westerntrust.hscni.net/services/2042.htm#SALT

Belfast HSCT
www.belfasttrust.hscni.net/services/SLT.htm

Public Health Agency
www.publichealth.hscni.net

Health and Social Care Board
www.hscboard.hscni.net

Volunteer registration

Name: ....

Address: ....

....

....

Contact phone number: ....

Email address: ....