



**REPORT TO: EDUCATION, CHILDREN'S AND LEISURE SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**SUBJECT: SPEECH AND LANGUAGE CONTRACT AND SUPPORT
(EDUCATION)**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the status of the service delivery of the Speech and Language Contract (SALT) for children and young people with complex needs who require specialist input and the proposed changes to address the impact thereof.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (D) (1) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to all the functions of the Council as an Education Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee:

- i) consider and note the historic support from SALT for Children and Young People with complex needs across Moray;**
- ii) consider and note the previous spend allocation for SALT for Children and Young People;**
- iii) consider and agree the proposed reallocation of current budget for Children and Young People with complex communication needs across Moray;**
- iv) agree the proposed approach for the communication needs of Children and Young People with complex needs across Moray; and**
- v) agree as part of the proposed approach for the communication needs of Children and Young People with complex needs across Moray the underspent budget is allocated to recruit Pupil Support Worker (PSW)**

3. **BACKGROUND**

Contract background

- 3.1 As requested at ECLS committee on 19 April 2023 (para 10 of the minute refers) this paper details the Speech and Language contract and how the contract document and related support has evolved.
- 3.2 Across Moray the NHS Speech and Language Service (SALT) have a paediatric team who meet the needs of children and young people outlined in their staged intervention. This report pertains to the commissioned service contract to deliver communication support for children and young people with complex needs. The contract is specifically for these children and young people many of whom have lifelong conditions affecting communication and who are non-verbal.
- 3.3 Currently, the number of young people who are non-verbal with complex needs in Moray sits at 35. The majority attend enhanced provisions in Primary and Secondary schools across Moray, within in their own ASG. Two attend their local primary school and there are an additional 15 who are currently in ELC settings.
- 3.4 Children and Young people in Moray who have complex additional support needs which affect their communication, require specialist input from the Speech and Language Service. This provision is in addition to the service which is delivered by the paediatric team Speech and Language and is available within Universal service provision and stages 1 and 2 intervention support services (see table below). This support is accessed by parents, carers and educational settings through referral by the Team Around the Child/Child planning processes.

Universal	Stage 1	Stage 2
Universal (=Level 1) support ensures all children have appropriate language and communication opportunities. We want to provide information and guidance to families, and those working with children and young people about how to identify and support SLCN.		Targeted (=Level 2) support offers help for children and young people who are felt to be vulnerable in relation to speech, language and communication. It includes training for interventions such as Talk Boost as well as coaching for parents and staff around evidence-based interventions.
Stage 3		
Specialist support provides intervention for children and young people whose needs cannot be fully met through provision from universal or targeted offers. It will aim to ensure joint working with the multi-disciplinary team and parents.		

- 3.5 As part of the [Additional Support for Learning Act \(2009\)](#) local authorities are required to make provision for children and young people with complex communication needs as outlined in their [Co-ordinated Support Plans \(CSPs.\)](#)

Most local authorities commission this service from NHS Speech and Language Paediatric Service.

- 3.6 The service commissioned by the contract in Moray provides targeted support (as defined within the Moray Council Staged Intervention model) to children and young people with severe and complex communication needs (aged 2-18). These needs may be due to a number of difficulties or conditions:

Dysphagia, Swallowing and Feeding Difficulties
Complex Needs and Disabilities (mainly comprising of children with Exceptional Support Needs)
Neurological Conditions
Hearing Impairment
Severe Social Communication Needs, including Autism and Autistic Spectrum Conditions
Augmentative and Alternative Communication Needs

- 3.7 Since 2011 the Council has had a contract with NHS Speech and Language Paediatric team to deliver support to children and young people identified as having complex needs affecting communication, most of whom access enhanced provision or ELC specialist settings and who are non-verbal.
- 3.8 In 2020 the contract was renewed for a further 3 years and there were specific actions regarding how support was provided and how this would be measured to address some of the concerns about staff confidence and levels of implementation and sustainability. The concerns which had been identified were the level of impact of the visits by speech and language therapists. Practice by staff working within enhanced provisions was not consistent in implementation and some practice was weak due to level of staff confidence, experience and knowledge.
- 3.9 The service delivery included direct input with children and young people, training, assessment and written programmes. These were all delivered under the direction of specialist SALT personnel and access to provision of low and high technical resources to support communication was provided. There were two level 7 SALT specialists who each covered an area (East and West). Visits were regular to all provisions with coaching and input to programmes as part of the contract.
- 3.10 The contract outcomes are summarised below.

Outcomes as per contract 20-23
Outcome 1 Joint working to identify communication needs and supports
Outcome 2 Children and young people achieve their educational objectives
Outcome 3 Children and young people are identified as early as possible with early interventions
Outcome 4 Review of support
Outcome 5

SLT resources are directed to greatest impact

- 3.11 In 2020 staffing to deliver the contract was costed and agreed at £200,208.
- 3.12 Communication is key to supporting the development of children in order that they can access learning through Foundation Milestones and pre-early literacy and numeracy as well as supporting communication which is vital for their wellbeing. The contract outcomes were developed to ensure that both receptive (understanding what is being communicated) and expressive (can be understood by those they are communicating with) communication, was in place for all our complex needs children. It was important that training was supported by modelling and coaching to embed the approaches for each child. A pilot was undertaken at the start of the 3 year contract 2020-23 where two settings (Seafield Nursery and Primary, Elgin) were selected to undertake training, coaching and modelling by SALT.
- 3.13 In this pilot the SALT team worked alongside enhanced provision and nursery staff to create a communication pathway for all identified children and supported the implementation with training related to the strategies required. They also coached and modelled techniques to further develop the skills and confidence of the staff. The pilot was evaluated and the impact was evidenced as effective both in developing communication skills for our young people and also embedding practice and consistency. Parents reported impact at home and worked with staff to adopt some of the strategies at home. Key learning was identified with regard to ensuring staff availability and building in planning time. The intention had been to roll out across the provisions over a two year period but this was interrupted by the staffing crisis within the SALT service.
- 3.14 Since April 2021 the SALT service delivery has been affected by significant staff shortages with difficulties to recruit alongside maternity cover not being filled. It was agreed that the contract payments would be reduced to £81,059 with reduce costs noted in the budget monitoring report to the ECLS Committee on 19 April 2023 (para 10 of the minute refers) . The input was revised to focus on Coordinated Support Plans (CSP) as these related to the children with the highest level of need and provided the support for the educational objectives within the plans. It is a legislative requirement that if a young person requires significant support for communication from SALT then this is provided via CSP.
- 3.15 In June 2022 when the service was further depleted to a level of 50% capacity in the paediatric team, the providers (NHS SALT) withdrew from the contract delivery until such times as they had capacity to re-engage. The paediatric team of Speech and Language therapists continued to support and respond to requests for advice and in some cases input with specific cases. The SALT service also provided an enquiry line for parents and all educational settings which was open twice a week and staffed by a therapist.
- 3.16 During 2022-2023, the CSPs were reviewed with limited input from SALT. Settings were able to use their experience and knowledge to agree strategies and next steps and, high need cases where support was required, received visits from the SALT team.

3.17 Staff were able to refer to the [CALL Centre](#) for guidance and training and to access on line signing and use of visual resources from providers. The CALL Centre is government funded to support all local authorities. The CALL centre is a resource for all practitioners where knowledge and experience can be increased and consultation and support accessed.

3.18 The impact of these changes to the contract included:

Outcomes as per contract 20-23	Current delivery	Impact
Outcome 1 Joint working to identify communication needs and supports	Joint working limited and on request using dedicated help line staffed by SALT Reliance on knowledge and experience of ASN staff-some staff sought support from peers	Inconsistent practice Confidence on moving forward with progression was dependent on level of experience
Outcome 2 Children and young people achieve their educational objectives	Education staff sourced training for Makaton and Talk boost and followed previously identified programmes	Most objectives were partially or fully met but staff reported a clear need for support to develop the next steps
Outcome 3 Children and young people are identified as early as possible with early interventions	ELC teaching team provided training to settings and supported communication	Early intervention for some children and staff benefited from awareness raising but collaborative assessment with the SALT team and the settings are required
Outcome 4 Review of support	Undertaken 2020-21 Specific concerns identified regarding Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) roll out and halting of the pilot model of coaching and mentoring	Overview of communication supports evidenced a limited range of AAC and a lack of specific detail relating to strategies for our young people in some settings
Outcome 5 SLT resources are directed to greatest impact	Reduced capacity and then suspension	Without training and development within settings individuals needs not fully met

3.19 Outcome 4 refers to [AAC](#)- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is a range of strategies and tools to help people who struggle with speech. These may be simple letter or picture boards or sophisticated computer-based systems. AAC helps someone to communicate as effectively as possible, in as many situations as possible.

4. SALT REVISED DELIVERY PLAN

- 4.1 In May 2023 the NHS SALT managers reported a readiness to consider reinstating the contract with a phased input matched to their capacity. Children and young people requiring specialist provision were identified using a scoping exercise looking at communication and current approaches.
- 4.2 It was agreed that the most effective model to build capacity and impact, is to continue with the SALT coaching model. This embeds the identified methods to enable educational objectives to be achieved and for young people to be heard and understood. The coaching from Speech and Language specialists working alongside staff in our education settings enables skills to be developed and adjustments of approaches to be made on site as they arise. Training is targeted to match staff development needs and the needs of the young people. Parents and carers are able to be supported in transferring approaches to their home setting.
- 4.3 In the first term the proposal prioritises the young people who meet the criteria for CSPs and specifically young people who are currently due for a review and an interim review where specific concerns and needs have arisen.
- 4.4 In the subsequent schools terms (2023-2024), the capacity of the SALT team will have increased and input will extend to targeting identified settings where staff training and coaching is a priority. These settings will have significant support to review, assess and deliver communication action plans to their cohort. This will build capacity and confidence in these settings where the needs are identified from the scoping as being the highest needs.
- 4.5 An area of urgent development is the requirement for embedding of AAC resources for some of our young people and specific input to build overall capacity and sustainability. The initial scoping exercise highlighted a specific issue regarding AAC and the supports in place relating to high end technology and use of digital supports. There are two types of communication supports referred to as AAC Low tech symbols, signing and high tech using software and digital supports. Some parents and carers had contacted organisations and charities to enlist their help to assess and identify potential enabling software and digital supports which they had researched and are keen to have in place for their child. There is a risk of referral to ASN Tribunal unless we address this gap in provision. This is addressed through the re-activation of the service as noted below in this report.
- 4.6 The CALL Centre Edinburgh is a national service open to all authorities either through service agreement or on a case by case basis. This service would enable some of the unmet needs regarding AAC to be addressed and would build capacity and sustainability into our planned service delivery to meet complex needs in our settings.
- 4.7 It is proposed to seek a 20 day contract, with CALL, per year for the next two years at a cost of £15,000 per year where two specialists and a speech and language therapist can work with identified schools to support development of skills relating to AAC. CALL provide generic training and on line webinar and

courses. The provision would be for 1 week blocks each term to target urgent unmet needs where assessments, equipment loans and training is provided as well as advice and support for the programmes provided. The costs include estimates for accommodation and travel as the service provider is based in Edinburgh. This would enable the risk of referral to Tribunal due to unmet need to be addressed, which could otherwise be more difficult to defend if of the type relating to AAC using technology.

- 4.8 AAC at both high and low tech require skills in technology and inputting to software for individual needs as well as updating as communication develops. A PSW post similar to those in place in our sensory service is required. This post would support the preparation of resources in settings across Moray to ensure the programmes are fully in place and resourced following input from SALT and CALL. This would be an essential component of the strategy to ensure all our young people have a secure communication pathway tool which enables their voices to be heard and for them to understand those who are teaching and supporting their development.

5. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) **Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

The report links to 'Building a better future for our children and young people in Moray' from the LOIP.

(b) **Policy and Legal**

Failure to comply with meeting the communication needs of our children and young people could lead to a rise in referrals to Tribunal Add link

(c) **Financial implications**

Year	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Spend SALT	£200,000	£81,059	£40,000	£ 33,497	£77,476	£77,476
Proposed Spend providers	none	none	None	CALL £15,000 BoardMaker £12 000	CALL £15,000 BoardMaker £12 000 PSW	CALL £15,000 BoardMaker £12 000 PSW
Pupil Support Worker post				£15,000 (approx)	£30,000 (approx)	
Total spend/ projected spend	£200,000	£80,000	£40,000	£75,497	£134,376	£104,376
Available Budget	£200,000	£200,000	£200,000	£ 140,000	£140,000	£140,000

(d) Risk Implications

There is evidence that there is a potential impact regarding the ongoing absence of the contract and service. Without the input from SALT the progress of communication skills for our non-verbal children and young people is at risk. Some strategies and approaches for non-verbal young people are not consistently deployed by Moray Education staff within the Enhanced Provisions. Parents and carers have expressed concerns about the absence of input and guidance from the SALT team for their needs at home. Specific concerns relating to AAC have been raised. It should be noted that failing to deliver the coordinated support plan education objectives could result in reference to the ASN Tribunal. By developing a resource from two sources SALT & CALL there will be access to AAC to support assessed communication needs. Together with provision of coaching and training we will mitigate the identified risk of being unable to deliver our legislative requirements and will be meeting the needs of our most vulnerable young people.

(e) Staffing Implications

It is proposed to allocate budget to create a post of Pupil Support Worker to support the preparation of resources in settings across Moray to ensure the programmes are fully in place and resourced following input from SALT and CALL as outlined in the report above. The cost of this post is approximately £30k including oncosts and will be met within the current budget.

(f) Property

There are no property implications arising directly from this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

An EIA was completed when the contract was reduced in April 2023.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

There are no climate change or biodiversity implications arising directly from this report.

(i) Consultations

Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development), Head of Education (Chief Education Officer), Early Years Service Manager, Nicky Gosling, Accountant, Quality Improvement Officer (ASN) and the Democratic Services Manager have been consulted.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Committee is asked to note the historical background to the service and the challenges in securing delivery and to agree the proposed approach for the communication needs of Children and Young People with complex needs across Moray as set out in the report.

Author of Report:

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Background Papers:

Ref: