

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

16 January 2024

EARLY LANGUAGE PATHWAY TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

Strategic Aim:	Healthy and Well	
Exempt Information	No	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Cllr T Smith, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families	
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Ward Councillors		

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Board:

1. Notes the contents of the report.
2. Requests the information from the Speech and Language Therapy Service as detailed at 4.2 and schedules this for discussion at a future Health and Wellbeing Board.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To brief members of the Rutland Health and Wellbeing Board on the progress of the recommendations from the Local Government Association (LGA) peer review of Speech, Language and Communication in the Early Years completed in December 2022.

2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 The LGA completed an Early Years (Speech, Language and Communication) Remote Mini Peer Challenge in December 2022 which made recommendations about how the early years speech and language pathway in Rutland could be improved including:
 - a. **To work with partners, parents and wider stakeholders to create and test a speech, language and communication pathway. Ensure that this is**

communicated clearly to parents and other stakeholders through a range of appropriate systems, including the Family Hub.

Less progress with this recommendation. Existing pathway in place for Leicester City, Leicestershire and Rutland but needs more nuanced version to meet need in Rutland.

- b. To be clear about what outcome measures will be part of every piece of work and ensure that data is gathered and shared so that impact is identified and shared.**

Need to be able to measure distance travelled and positive outcomes and to provide an understanding of the impact of various interventions. Work in progress.

- c. To develop an integrated review for 2-year-olds, including use of the Early Language Identification Measure (ELIM) tool, to ensure that children in need of support are identified appropriately at the earliest stage possible and to enable planning for individuals and cohorts of children.**

There is a need to understand why ELIM is not implemented in Rutland. Picture in terms of integration is fragmented with different arrangements across locations.

- d. To ensure more effective use of resources and partners to deliver universal and targeted support e.g. libraries, health visiting teams, Sunflowers linking with the Children's Centre. This may require additional training.**

To progress through SSP appointments as described above with support to settings, for example, audits to support the development of communication friendly environments.

- e. To work with commissioners to ensure that Rutland's voice doesn't get lost when allocating and monitoring health services.**

Exploratory discussion around establishing a multi-agency steering to provide oversight to the taking forward of recommendations from the peer challenge.

- 2.2 To further progress the peer review recommendations, the following tasks have been identified:

- To improve/develop a speech and language pathway / strategy and to consider the impact of this refreshed strategy on the commissioning of services.
- To develop a system of outcome measurement which clarifies the impact of support on individual children and cohorts in the area
- To review 2 year old checks and assessment tools used
- To review early language interventions

- 2.3 All to involve parents/carers and professionals as key stakeholders.

- 2.4 As parents had reported dissatisfaction with what they perceived as a 'wait and see' approach during the peer review, the mapping of services is intended to identify any gaps in provision or communication between services, as well as opportunities to better support children earlier at home and in the community, especially in Early Years settings, and in response to the integrated two-year-old review.

- 2.5 Work is already happening in this regard, particularly through the Supporting

Schools Partnership (SSP) and the appointment of a specialist EY teacher, but the group will focus on the potential for other improvements. Referral guidance issued by the SSP in late November will also help with a shared understanding of where and when to seek support but does not, of itself, offer reassurance to parents who are not always clear how to access support.

3 MOVING FORWARD

3.1 It is intended to hold a stakeholder meeting in January 2024 prior to the creation of an Early Language Pathway Task and Finish Group, who will work together to identify potential improvements which could lead to the achievement of outcomes identified by the peer review as follows:

- a) Multi-agency sign-up to a nested speech, language and communication strategy and pathway for the Early Years which is aligned to the new Early Years SEN Pathway and informs all commissioning in this area.
- b) Robust engagement with parents/carers about the design of the new pathway and co-production of a countywide plan for agreed mechanisms of intervention and support e.g. ELIM
- c) A refreshed, multi-agency response to the identification of SLC needs through the two-year-old integrated check programme.
- d) Identification and implementation of outcome measures that support an understanding of the impact of support and intervention for all children along with establishment of a mechanism for identifying and supporting children who do less well.

3.2 The pathway group will be asked to contribute to a paper to be brought to a Children and Young People's Partnership meeting in the spring of 2024. The paper will outline the improvements that have been identified in response to the peer review recommendations and following discussion, it is hoped there can be multi-agency agreement to their implementation.

4 CHALLENGES

4.1 There are challenges in working together across agencies to follow up on the peer review, not least the existing pressures in health services post pandemic. It has been noted that RCC cannot lead this work without engagement from its partners and a joint commitment at partnership level to taking things forward. There is also a parallel commitment for Rutland to engage in the 'Early Language Support for Every Child' (ELSEC) programme which was launched by the Department for Education, with NHS England, in September 2023. There is a need to ensure that work is not being duplicated with the national SEND and Alternative Provision (SENDAP) change programme.

4.2 The Children and Young People Partnership has requested the following information from Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) colleagues to enable progress:

- Rutland Speech and Language Therapy data including the waiting times from referral to assessment and waiting time between a child being assessed and then receiving treatment

- Information about what is being done to reduce the waiting times and targets for reducing these
- Progress on the recommendations from the LGA Early Years mini-review and commitment to an Early Language Pathway Task and Finish Group

4.3 Unfortunately Rutland specific data has not been provided to the Children and Young People Partnership to date.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1 Not applicable.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct implications from the decisions request in the report.

7 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None

8 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 Not required as report is for information only.

9 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There is a risk that the speech and language therapy needs of Rutland children are not met in a timely way. It is difficult to quantify or mitigate this risk without accurate local information.

10 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The Children and Young People Partnership met on the 7 December 2023 and agreed to escalate Speech and Language Therapy to the Health and Wellbeing Board. This is due to limited progress with actions identified as a result of the LGA peer review and SALT colleagues being unable to provide Rutland specific data to enable a full understanding of the scale of the current capacity issues and whether mitigating actions are having an impact. Unfortunately a representative did not attend this meeting to discuss.

10.2 The Children and Young People Partnership recommend that the Health and Wellbeing Board make a formal request for the information as detailed at 4.2 above so that we can progress this area of work.

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 There are no additional background papers to the report.

12 APPENDICES

12.1 There are no appendices to the report.

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.