

## RUTLAND HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

16 January 2024

### RUTLAND SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY PERFORMANCE REPORT

#### Report of the Portfolio Holder for Adults and Health

Strategic Aim:	Healthy and well	
Exempt Information	No	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Councillor Diane Ellison, Portfolio Holder for Adults and Health	
Contact Officer(s):	Janet Harrison, Head of Service, Families, Young People, Children's, Learning Disabilities and Autism Directorate, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust	Telephone 07789 176169 email janet.harrison23@nhs.net
Ward Councillors		

#### DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

1. Notes the current demand and waiting list position for Speech and Language Therapy in Rutland.
2. Supports the service's improvement plans and future reporting arrangements to the Rutland Children and Young People's Partnership.
3. Notes the plans for strengthening SLT participation and impact in the response to the LGA mini review, aligning this with the Early Language Support for Every Child (ELSEC) pathfinder and SEND Change Programme Partnership.

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) Service is commissioned by Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland NHS Integrated Care Board and provided by Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT). LPT participates in the Rutland Children and Young People's Partnership and the SLT service presented a performance update at the meeting held in September 2023. Due to capacity and staffing issues within the LPT Business Information and Data teams, LPT has not been able to provide Rutland-specific reliable performance data for the SLT Service and concerns from the partnership have therefore been escalated to the Rutland Health and Wellbeing Board.

1.2 At Rutland Children and Young People's Partnership held on 07 December 2023, additional concerns were raised in relation to the SLT Service. These concerns related to parental dissatisfaction about SLT waiting times and the availability of information for families to support their children's speech, language, and communication needs.

1.3 This report provides a response to five specific themes raised by the December 2023 meeting of the Rutland CYP Partnership in relation to the SLT Service.

## **2. SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY PERFORMANCE DATA FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE REGISTERED TO A GP PRACTICE IN RUTLAND.**

2.1 The SLT Service receives approximately 10 referrals each month for children and young people with identified speech, language and communication needs in Rutland. Children referred to the service are currently offered an initial assessment within 18 weeks of receipt of referral as per the agreed key performance indicator. If the referral indicates eating, drinking and swallowing needs, families are contacted to gather more information and an earlier appointment offered according to the presenting clinical need and level of risk.

2.2 Following initial assessment, families are provided with a written report and relevant information to support their child's needs, with signposting to speech, language and communication resources, online workshops, the SEND Local Offer and relevant charitable and voluntary sector organisations. Following the initial assessment, children are allocated to the most appropriate clinical pathway based on their likely diagnosis and primary presenting need for further SLT intervention.

2.3 Refer to [Appendix 1](#) for Rutland-specific SLT performance and waiting time information.

## **3. WAITING TIMES AND IMPROVEMENT PLANS**

3.1 The SLT Service consistently meets the required key performance indicator for seeing children and young people within 18 weeks of referral.

3.2 There are however long waiting times between a child's initial assessment and direct intervention and subsequent follow up. This waiting time trend has been a feature of the service's performance over a number of years; there has been a consistent mismatch between the ongoing demand for the service and the capacity within the available budget to achieve sustainable improvements to waiting times. This risk to outcomes and experience is detailed and managed through the trust's risk register, both at directorate and corporate level, and risks, controls and mitigations are regularly reviewed and assessed for impact and improvement.

3.3 To minimise the impact of potential harm for children while waiting, the service holds a monthly meeting to review waiting times for children and young people active on Speech and Language Therapy caseloads. As a result of these tracking meetings, children and young people may be prioritized for earlier contact for further intervention, particularly where additional information from families and schools indicates an increase in the level of risk for the child or young person.

3.4 There are significant workforce supply issues relating to the Speech and Language Therapy workforce and this has worsened since COVID 19. The current vacancy

rate for SLTs is reported at 25% across services for children and young people in England.

- 3.5 In terms of attraction, recruitment and retention of the Speech and Language Therapy workforce, this service performs much better than most comparable children's SLT services in England (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists' workforce survey 2022-23). The current staff turnover rate for the service is very low at 4.48%. Therefore, the service has maintained a position of very low vacancy rates set against much more significant workforce supply challenges nationally. This has been achieved through a combination of supportive and compassionate service culture and leadership, attractive career progression and professional development opportunities and robust opportunities in place for SLTs' peer support, supervision and learning.
- 3.6 The service has also undertaken a highly successful workforce skill-mix programme in recruiting, training and developing a significant number of SLT support worker posts. The service staffing model is now comprised of approximately 25% support worker roles, working under safe delegation and supervisory arrangements with qualified SLTs. This had created significant and additional levels of increased capacity for local SLT caseloads.
- 3.7 However, the service is now experiencing lower numbers of SLTs applying for posts across all bandings from newly qualified to specialist clinical posts. To attract people into the profession, the service excels in its offer of work experience opportunities, alongside a comprehensive programme of SLT student placements, and routes for support workers to undertake SLT apprenticeship degrees, as part of the trust's workforce strategy for maximising opportunities to "grow our own."
- 3.8 In terms of the workforce challenges described, it is important to note that the SLT service is consistently fully staffed, utilising all of the available budget provided through the contract with LLR ICB. There has been no additional investment in this service from the ICB over the last 10 years.
- 3.9 Some non-recurrent investment has been allocated from within LPT in the previous and current financial year for 6 wte additional posts and this has positively impacted on caseload management and waiting times.
- 3.10 A service development plan is in place for 2023-24. The table below provides a summary of this improvement work:

# LPT Speech and Language Therapy Service Development Plan

## What has been done?

- \* Language & Living SEND Integration Project delivered over 2 years to develop universal and targeted assessment and intervention for speech, language and communication needs in settings and schools (ending in March 2024).
- \* Development of an evidence-based clinical needs analysis tool to better understand needs and risks on SLT caseloads and determine clinical priorities.
- \* Communication support plans introduced to support safe discharge of children from the service.
- \* Development of digital workshops and resources for families and staff in schools and settings.
- \* Recruitment and training of therapy support workers to increase workforce capacity.

## What is underway?

- \* Implementation of an alternative pathway for low-moderate speech, language and communication needs as a regional pathfinder for Early Language Support for Every Child (ELSEC), SEND Change Programme Partnership for LLR.
- \* Development of a new service specification to clarify specialist assessment and intervention as the service's remit and contribution within a more balanced system for SLCN.
- \* Updating referral guidelines and screening processes in line with the new service specification.
- \* Introducing centralised booking system and clinic appointments to maximise SLT -specific resource.
- \* Developing the targeted and universal training offer.
- \* Development of the SLT apprenticeship offer within the service.

## 4. SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)

- 4.1 As highlighted in Appendix 1, there are currently forty-seven children and young people on Speech and Language Therapy caseloads who are registered on LPT's SEND SystemOne unit, as they have a new or existing Education, Health and Care Plan. These children have access to all clinical pathways described in the service model and specification commissioned by the Integrated Care Board.
- 4.2 Information about the service model can be found here: <https://www.leicspart.nhs.uk/base/childrens-speech-and-language-therapy-service/> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqSVKh33qMI&feature=youtu.be>

## **5. SERVICE OFFER AND CLARITY OF INFORMATION TO PARENTS AND CARERS**

5.1 There is a range of resources provided by the service for parents and families to support children's speech, language, and communication needs and also to provide more general information about the service offer.

5.2 These resources are available on LPT's websites, with a range of high-quality videos demonstrating strategies to support children's development across a range of speech, language, and communication needs. Appointment letters and documentation produced by the service all contain links and QR codes for families to easily access this information and this information is available in a wide range of languages.

5.3 An Expert by Experience has been appointed this month to work with LPT services. The person appointed is a local parent with children who have special educational needs, and she will be supporting services to improve the availability and accessibility of service information and connection with families.

## **6. SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY CONTRIBUTION AND RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE LGA EARLY YEARS MINI REVIEW IN RUTLAND**

6.1 The Speech and Language Therapy Service participated in the LGA review and some of the subsequent meetings.

6.2 Service leads are connected with the recommendations from the review and have recently recruited an Early Years Specialist SLT post. It is the service's intention for this SLT to join relevant Rutland planning and delivery groups to take forward the recommendations from the review, alongside the Speech and Language Therapy contribution commissioned from Rutland's School Support Partnership.

6.3 The service will contribute to the next LGA mini-review progress update at Rutland Children and Young People's Partnership planned for March 2024, in line with the identified LGA recommendations as follows:

- To explore opportunities for parental feedback and co-production (e.g., on information services).
- To develop nested strategies with clear lines of reporting, accountability, and evaluation of impact.
- 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.
- 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.
- To develop an integrated review for 2-year-olds, including use of the 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.
- To identify useful evidenced intervention programmes and offer support so that these can be delivered by early years settings.

- 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 work with commissioners to ensure that Rutland's voice does not get lost when allocating and monitoring health services.
- To ensure services can be accessed where needed by military service families.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The SLT service is now able to report on access and waiting times for children and young people in Rutland and will provide quarterly updates to the CYP Partnership in 2024 at time intervals to be agreed by the partnership.
- 7.2 The SLT Service will participate in the work to respond to the LGA mini-review and will provide a more detailed response to the recommendations at the CYP Partnership meeting in March 2024.

## **8 APPENDICES**

- 8.1 Appendix A – Rutland Speech and Language Therapy Performance Summary