



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

CRG Research Ltd Evaluation of Speech and Language Service Pilot Projects – Response to Recommendations

Audience:	Speech and Language Therapists, Interested parties and all bodies concerned with education and training in Wales.
Overview:	This document presents the Welsh Assembly Government response to the recommendations noted in CRG Research Ltd report on the Evaluation of Speech and Language Service Pilots
Action Required:	For information. No further action required.
Further Copies:	This document is available in electronic format only on the National Assembly for Wales www.learning.wales.gov.uk

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CRG Research Ltd Evaluation of Speech and Language Service Pilots

Background

The Speech and Language Therapy Action Group (SALTAG), was established by the Welsh Assembly Government in August 2002 in response to concerns over the escalating demand for speech and language therapy (SLT) services in Wales and the lack of a coherent approach by the statutory agencies to meet this demand. The group comprised representatives of all the key stakeholder groups from across Wales and established a number of sub-groups to tackle specific issues.

The 'Working Together' consultation document was a result of this group's work. It was a joint consultation document issued by the Department for Training and Education and NHS Wales and formed the basis of guidance to LEAs and Local Health Services on the future delivery of speech and language services to children and young people aged 0-19 years across Wales. Its aim is to ensure that all professionals involved in the provision of such services, as well as the service users, parents, carers and related voluntary organisations have an opportunity to comment on any proposed recommendations for change. The consultation received over 180 responses.

The report was generally well received and there was support (over 50% in agreement) to all the recommendations suggested. Amongst there are the desire for a National Communication Strategy developed to renew the emphasis that speech, language and communication plays in a child's development and the need for services to work together to resolve inequalities in service delivery and develop appropriate mechanisms to address these inequalities.

A bi-lateral meeting was held in June 2004 between Jane Hutt, as former Minister for Health and Social Care and Jane Davidson, the former Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning and Skills and a way forward agreed. The summary of the recommendations agreed at this bi-lateral are as follows:

- Guidance is issued to LHB's and LEAs on the joint commissioning of services for speech & Language difficulties.
- Work needs to commence on the National Guidance.
- The establishment of pilot projects working across health and education to develop joint commissioning arrangements and a pooled budget approach to the delivery of Speech and Language services for children and young people in Wales.
- The appointment of a co-ordinator to implement pilot projects and draft future guidance materials.
- The development of integrated teams of Speech and Language Therapists, teachers with a specialist qualification in Speech and Language and LSAs working together to jointly assess and meet needs.

Objective achieved:

The former Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills allocated £3m over a three year period (April 2006 – March 2008) to provide support to LEAs in their contribution to the pooled budget.

A Speech and Language co-ordinator was appointed following a tendering exercise at the end of January 2005. This was a jointly funded post across Health and Education which came to an end in March 2008.

The co-ordinator established pilot projects of Speech and Language services from April 2005 to ensure jointly commissioned services using a pooled budget approach as part of the Health Act 1999. This entails joint assessment and intervention teams operating across health and education and wherever possible intervention provided in schools. Priority is given to meeting the statutory requirements of statements of Special Educational Needs thus alleviating prime and ultimate responsibility difficulties.

Letters were sent out to CEO's, LHB's, NHS Trusts and DoE asking for expressions of interest in relation to the Pilot Projects during December 2004. After careful consideration against the selection criteria, Bridgend/Neath Port Talbot, Gwent, Ceredigion and Conwy/Denbighshire were selected as the first four successful pilot projects.

Projects have established strategic partnerships on a regional basis to consider local needs and develop integrated teams of professionals working across health and education.

Phase 2 of the pilot scheme commenced in June 2006 in which all other bids submitted by LEAs, LHBs and Health Trusts were successful.

An evaluation of the pilot projects was carried out by CRG Research Ltd in October 2007 and ran until February 2008.

The evaluation report contains 5 recommendations for the Welsh Assembly Government to consider. Those recommendations are listed below along with the Welsh Assembly Government's response.

Recommendation 1

The good practice shown e.g. communication forums, training (with a particular emphases on ELKLAN) and the ability to combine a more strategic approach to joint working with operational outcomes, should be shared widely among the different pilot areas in order for the innovation shown in some areas to be adopted elsewhere.

Reaction: Several meetings of the Pilot Project areas were held over the duration of the scheme to share progress and good practice. During the Autumn term the Welsh Assembly Government will commission guidance to Local Authorities, Local Health Boards and Trusts to facilitate better joint working based on evidence contained within this report and evaluation of the Pilot Projects.

The Welsh Assembly Government is also considering the possibility of translating ELKLAN materials. ELKLAN is a small training consultancy whose core business is to design and deliver courses mainly to teaching assistants and pre-school educators but also teachers, parents and other members of the community who work with children. The aim of these courses is to provide knowledge and skills to promote the communication skills of all children but particularly those with speech and language difficulties. All ELKLAN courses are accredited through the Open College Network South West and have been well received by Authorities in Wales. Translating these material into Welsh would assist in the developing the knowledge and practical skills of those for whom Welsh is their first language.

Recommendation 2

The Assembly should consider extending the contract of the Speech and Language Co-ordinator to ensure that the good practice produced in the pilots is disseminated effectively and built upon.

Reaction: The Speech and Language Co-ordinator was brought in to:

- Identify available resources for speech and language services at a local level across Education and Health Services in Wales
- Establish viable pilot project areas to develop joint commissioning and pooled budget approaches to sustainable service delivery
- Develop Strategic Partnerships across pilot areas as part of the children and young people partnership frameworks
- Develop draft protocol agreements/service level agreements to be used across partnerships, which will include details on service delivery and the management of pooled budgets
- Co-ordinate the establishment of joint intervention teams across health and education co consist of speech and language therapists, specialist teachers, SLT assistants and learning support assistants.
- Establish baseline of children's needs and attainment and monitor progress throughout the lifetime of projects
- Provide Ministerial advice on the progress of the pilot projects via officials in Health and Education

- Prepare national guidance setting out criteria for assessment, intervention, support and advice.

The terms and conditions of the tender contract state that the co-ordinator be in post until December 2007 to carry out the objectives listed above. These were achieved during this time scale.

Recommendation 3

Follow-up by the Assembly is required once the pilot programme has ended to ensure that pilot areas continue to build on the foundations laid by the pilots

Reaction: An all Wales meeting of the Speech and Language Service Pilot Projects will be arranged for sometime in the Autumn to consider this report and the next steps

Recommendation 4

Due to logistical concerns over the practicalities of running training such as ELKLAN the Assembly should actively support the ongoing training of teachers, assistants and parents. The Assembly should therefore consider:

- Making additional funds available to facilitate training
- Whether it is appropriate to mandate that such training be incorporated into joint working strategies.

Reaction: Funding has been made available through the Better Schools Fund, Priority 4A – ‘Awareness raising and training on inclusion and specific duties relating to discrimination and equal opportunities’ and Priority 4B ‘Working in partnership with pupils and parents’. £3m was made available during 2007-08 and a further £3m is available for 2008-2009.

Recommendation 5

The long term impact and social cost of speech, language and communication difficulties is not proportionally represented by its priority within Health. The Assembly should consider raising the priority of speech, language and communication difficulties within Health through the setting of appropriate SaFF targets

Reaction: We are working with policy colleagues across DCELLS and DHSS to consider devising a service specification for Speech and Language Therapy Services.