

Temporary changes to the Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service

9 October 2023

Dear stakeholder,

Nationally, referral rates for Children's Speech and Language Therapy have risen at an unprecedented rateⁱ.

In line with this, Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust's Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service is, and has for some time, experienced an increase in the level of demand for services. This has led to growing waiting times for assessment and interventions.

To protect and preserve services for children and young people with the greatest need, we have reviewed our triage and referral acceptance criteria.

On a temporary basis, we will focus support on children and young people with eating and drinking difficulties, speech and/or language disorders and highly complex speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). This includes children who are presenting with disordered communication skills, such those who are speaking but their speech is highly unintelligible even to a familiar listener, who do not have a functional means of communicating their wants and needs, or who are not speaking or minimally speaking where this is not explained by a global developmental delay.

This will mean that some children and young people, who have more low-level speech, language and communication needs or delays will not be accepted for specialist assessment and intervention for a short period.

This will release significant pressure on the service and mean that those with the greatest need will be assessed and interventions put in place much sooner.

Appropriate alternative support is in place for children and young people who will not meet the criteria for this service whilst these temporary changes are in place. For these children, proactive support through family, education providers or other responsible adults will be encouraged in the first instance. They will be referred to a [hub of resources and training on our website](#).

Children in this group may also benefit from universally offered services and/or groups within their local children's centre or family hub: [Find a children's centre – Lincolnshire County Council](#). Family Hubs are located at:

Lincoln North Children's Centre,

Lincoln Birchwood Children's Centre,

Lincoln St Giles Children's Centre,

Gainsborough Children's Centre,

Grantham Swingbridge Children's Centre,

Sleaford Children's Centre,

Skegness Children's Centre,

Mablethorpe Children's Centre,

Norfolk Lodge (Boston) Children's Centre

Spalding Children's Centre

The Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service will continue to have an open referral policy. This means that parents, carers, educational settings or any professional can refer to the service. Our [updated referral form can still be accessed and completed via our website](#).

Referral forms can also be completed via email by contacting:

LHNT.lincschilrenstherapyservice@NHS.NET. Alternatively, you can contact our administration team on 01522 309025 for a paper copy of our referral forms.

This change will be continually reviewed to ensure that the service is supporting as many children and young people as possible, whilst continuing to deliver great care and prioritising those with the greatest need.

If parents are unsatisfied with the outcome of their child's referral, they can contact the service directly on 01522 309025. Alternatively, they can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service at LHNT.Lincs.PALS@nhs.net.

Yours faithfully,



Julie Frake-Harris

Chief Operating Officer

Drop-in sessions for professionals

The Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service is offering virtual drop-in sessions to support professionals with the introduction of the new referral form. The following dates are available:

- Wednesday 15 November, 12:30 - 1pm
- Thursday 7 December, 12:30 - 1pm
- Thursday 11 January, 12:30 - 1pm

If you would like to join a virtual session, please contact our administration team on 01522 309025.

ⁱ (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists 'Building Back Better' 2021).