

COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION REVIEW

ADDENDUM TO APPENDIX B OF PART 1

SUMMARY OF LETTERS

These are the longer replies, which were not summarised in the first spreadsheet.

23rd March 2009

Reference No: 20

Category of respondent: Parent of pupil with SEN

Option: None of these

Ellington successful at bringing my daughter to a point where she can consider returning to mainstream schooling. Without Ellington's unit she would not be in this position. Unconvinced that improvements to the provision of SEN in mainstream school will be sufficient for children with such difficulties. Ellington has an impressive history of understanding these needs. The challenges caused by the ethnicity of the school contributes positively to the understanding by the teaching staff of the speech & language difficulties.

Do not attempt to "lump" together ASD with S&L. This could dilute the service for each at the expense of the other.

Unrealistic to expect teachers and teaching assistants in mainstream school to cope with such difficulties, however honourable this aspiration may be and however well intentioned the teachers.

I propose Speech and Language provision to remain separated from autism provision, with further examination given to the reasons for children's difficulties. They should be catered for in the teaching bases if necessary. Existing Units should remain open.

Alternatively, we should create centres of excellence in cooperation with surrounding boroughs and extend the provision to the admission of children from outside.

Reference No: 21

Category of respondent: Parents of child with SEN

Option: none expressed

Horrified at the proposals, especially proposed closure of the Units. To use the existing funding and spread it more thinly is a cut in funding. At Altwood, fantastic work is done, with children being taught in small groups in a quiet environment where necessary (though not for majority of time as is said in the paper). The Unit builds their self-esteem and confidence, which are at rock bottom. Mainstream lessons inhibit such children from asking for help and thereby showing themselves up. Learn the lessons of the Bercow Review. We are strongly against removing our child from the resource.

Reference no: 35

Category of respondent: Speech and Language Therapist

Option: none expressed

Though current Units offer an excellent service there remains an inequality of provision towards a wider population of children with such difficulties. Option 1 would mean no opportunity to develop this so I would not choose option 1. As a therapist working in education I believe that it is vital that speech and language therapy operates as an integral part of the education system, so wouldn't choose Option 2. Option 3 offers more flexibility, but I also have reservations.

Recognise that this paper is strategic, but practical organisational issues need to be addressed early.

- Bringing specialist services together is welcome. Current independence of services can lead to giving of conflicting advice.
- Proposal to provide more expertise for mainstream welcome. Peripatetic services to schools should enable children with mild and moderate speech and learning impairments to remain in or return to their local schools.
- Mainstream schools will need to offer more central time and general discussion time for an integrated approach. This may be difficult.
- Children with Speech and Language impairment and ASD have very different needs and we can't assume that the same services would be suitable for both.
- Better definition of criteria needed for access to services.
- Comments made about Altwood School are now out of date. Provision there has developed well.
- Should have been more discussion about possibility of moving Units to other schools. Anxiety has been caused.
- Need also to think of how to harness current skills and expertise.
- Acknowledgement needed that some children must receive Unit places as only in such places will they be with others who understand and can support the difficulties.

Reference no. 37

Category of respondent: Voluntary Organisation ICAN

Option 3 (with reservations)

1. Welcome this review. Endorse principle of redesigning provision in the national context, to provide greater cohesion of approach, consistency and efficiency.
2. Acknowledge and applaud understanding demonstrated by RBWM in recent years of SLCN* range of need and provision. ICAN's view is that RBWM also works admirably with parents.
3. Keep the best of the old with the new. Need to consider outcomes for pupils 'academically, socially and personally', as in 290906 Ofsted report on Inclusion.
4. But children with severe SLCN need more than just one or two staff in a school with specialist skills: they need a whole school environment supporting these needs.
5. Option 1 would not meet the stated aims.
6. Option 2 in ICAN's view would move against the national agenda of joined-up health and education services, and against specific recommendations of the Bercow Review for integration of speech and language therapy with educational provision.
7. Option 3 offers the greatest potential but could be a missed opportunity unless *all* schools could increase their capacity to support pupils with SLCN potentially thorough consultancy support, staff training and accreditation. (ICAN can provide this.) This should include schools hosting Units. Also require clarification of criteria for entry, clarity around roles of advisory service and mainstream schools, transition protocols, quality assurance arrangements, specialist training for peripatetic teams.
8. This is timely in view of the Bercow Report: indeed RBWM should be able to put itself forward as a 'Bercow Pathfinder'.

Reference no: 39

Category of respondent: Parents of child with SEN

Option: 1

* Speech, language and communication

To close down AURA would be detrimental to the education of those children with ASD who need the support the unit offers to achieve successful integration at secondary school. An advisory service could not provide adequate support. A teaching base for those children currently served by out of borough schools will not be suitable. In-borough Units will not be able to support the higher level of need.

Mixture of children with SLI and ASD won't work. Despite some similarities of approach, the bizarre behaviour etc of some with ASD would be too much.

There is probably need to upgrade and redevelop the units at Altwood and Ellington, neither of which has been utilised effectively since the demise of Berkshire CC. AuRA gives demonstrably good results: don't try to save money by shutting it. My own son could not have thrived without it. Good balance between inclusion and withdrawal.

But "putting children with severe needs into mainstream settings would be setting them up to fail." Do not do these things just to save money.

Reference no: 40

Category of respondent: PCT Speech and Language Therapy Service (official response)

Option: 3, as having greatest potential

This should enable us to develop a collaboration service working with education staff in the Spirit of the "Children's Plan" and "Every Child Matters". The vision of the speech and language therapy department is that the service for pupils should move away from focusing primarily only on those pupils with statements requiring therapy to a service that can benefit all pupils of schools. We need to deliver "universal, targeted and specialist" levels of service, according to the needs of the pupils and the schools.

The consultation paper does not allow us to visualise in detail how the strategy would be implemented, but we must highlight the following issues.

1. It should enable more pupils to be educated within the borough and must provide a high level of expert teaching and education support, small class teaching groups, intensive SALT support for both staff and pupils, opportunities for collaborative working between teaching staff including SALT, SIS, physiotherapy, OT, Behaviour Support and CAMHS. There must also be time and capacity to deliver individually tailored integrated educational programmes and staff access to training in recent development.
2. Collaborative working partnerships required amongst the above staff for joint planning and differentiation, updated information on progress of needs, ongoing information support and development, and provision of information especially discussing progress with parents and carers.

Acknowledgement of the difficulties experienced by schools in releasing staff from classroom duties to participate in liaison and collaborative working.

3. Services must be phased sensitively, with the ability to maintain current services while new ways of working are introduced. We recognise that it will take time for staff and parents to develop confident.
4. The review greatly underestimates the current service in Altwood. We think pupils spent at least 70% of their time in classes, not in withdrawal. Pupils make very good progress, and the Unit is successful.
5. Essential to ensure that the pre-school services are encapsulated with the similar delivery model for seamless transfer to be possible.

We seek to provide a continuum of provision according to need within a wider team and in settings that are most relevant for children and families. Option 3 is the most likely to provide the opportunity for this.

Also in the spirit of Bercow Report, which recommends making a continuum of provision, including universal, targeted special levels of service, delivered in a framework of joint working.

Reference no: 42
Category of respondent: Parents
Option: 3 with reservation

In theory Option 3 gives the greatest scope of reaching as many children as possible. But we would prefer more of the same within the Borough: this would require extra investment. This is preferable to closing exciting Units, which are clearly already working well.

Reservations include concerns about the transition period, training of staff and logistics. We are asked to make a choice without sufficient information. What will happen to children without a Unit? Teachers and support assistants must be trained sufficiently, but not all will be willing or able to train. Option 3 may work but will take several years to be established, with detriment to the children in the system.

Altwood has have been misrepresented and underestimated. Our son currently attends at least 76% of his time in mainstream, not in withdrawal. Current formula works well. Instead of changing it, we advocate "extending it, perhaps with a new resource on the other side of the Borough whilst finding ways of the different professionals being able to work more closely together."

Reference no: 44

Category of respondent: Speech and Language Therapist (wrongly noted in other list as a parent of a child with SEN)

Option: 1

Options 2 and 3 fundamentally flawed. Concerns are as follows.

1. An advisory service might currently not be adequate for the greater number of schools and children.
2. There will always be a need for individual therapy. But the special schools SALT team is moving towards a more integrated model of service provision, with particular emphasis on adapting the communication environment within the classroom to optimise pupils' understanding and the use of language. This involves changing both the physical surroundings and the behaviour of teaching staff, and a similar approach would be required to support language resource pupils in mainstream classes. Clear that this requires more investment, and is more challenging to implement. The consultation paper does not acknowledge that an essential component is the relationship between the therapy and teaching staff built up over a period of time through close collaborative work on the same site. Hard to see how this could be achieved across all the schools.
3. Options 2 and 3 might also lead to inappropriate referrals to special school of language impaired pupils.
4. The locations of the proposed teaching based should have been given more consideration before publication. On a previous occasion the Schools Adjudicator rejected the notion of moving the Altwood Resource to another school on the ground of there being no other school suitable. I am still not convinced that what is proposed is practical, in though it is more developed than the scheme previously rejected by the Schools Adjudicator. Unfortunate that there is no comparison with other authorities.

Reference no: 47

Category of respondent: Grandparent of a Child with SEN

Option: none

Ellington is working well, do not change it! Mistake to lump all the needs together. Children with severe speech and language disorders needs a constant and consistent environment. Some children will need more. Why not expand Ellington?

Reference no: 48

Category of respondent: Headteacher of Altwood School (on behalf of headteacher, governors and resourced unit staff)

Option: 3

A new fully integrated service would be the best way to ensure the maximum number of young people being supported. It should enable significant increased capacity. Outreach modules is proper for supporting children in their home school. Integration of speech and language therapy is the only way to ensure and holistic response. But the outreach model must not be solely advisory: there must also be direct working with students. Also:

- Concerned that the benefits and abilities of Altwood's resourced unit have been underestimated.
- Planning and implementation period for transition must be suitably prioritised. Young people have one chance only and they must not be ignored while a new service is put in place. Appropriate provision must remain in place during any "down sizing".
- Resource colleagues must have their skill, loyalty, experience and achievement properly recognised.
- Effective communication with students and parents must take place.
- Greater thought needs to be given as to the nature of the young person to be educated in the resourced units.
- Higher level needs may be more difficult to place.
- Bear in mind too the intention for the school leaving age to be increased.

Reference no: 49

Category of respondent: Headteacher of Ellington School, on behalf of staff and governors

Option: 1

Acknowledge the lack of provision within the authority and that more is needed. This must include support for mainstream schools so children can be integrated within their own school and community and not be isolated for a part of their education.

None of the options is outstanding though each has some merit. We prefer Option 1 as it would maintain the resource at Ellington, which is regarded as excellent. It could be modified to concentrate solely on Foundation and Key Stage 1, 'children for whom early specialist intervention in a small group setting is most beneficial'.

A new service being managed by headteacher or other head of service is unnecessary and could confuse management and communication. Develop existing support and review process. The governors and staff do not have a concern about any aspect of the resource, nor should the local authority, which has increased the size over the last few years!

Options 2 and 3 would not work well as the needs of autistic children would overshadow the complex needs of those with speech and language impairments. The latter is where our strength lies. Can options 2 and 3 really be the best management of public funds?

We support Option 1 but with modification to allow the service to be extended to other schools through outreach work. We definitely wish to retain our speech and language resource at Ellington

Reference no: 58

Category of respondent: Headteacher of Furze Platt senior School, on behalf of students, parents, staff and governors.

Option: 1

Endorse need for more training in the development of language and social skills programmes in all schools. However, students supported in AuRA have range of very specific needs and it would be necessary for very comprehensive training to ensure their needs were supported in whatever mainstream school they might attend. AURA meets the needs of students capable of accessing a mainstream curriculum and achieving examination and accreditation success at Key Stage 4 alongside their mainstream peers.

We believe this to be well regarded and effective for the following reasons.

1. Target group of pupils who can function effectively in mainstream with support.
2. Target group attending most mainstream lessons with a small amount of withdrawal specifically for aiding social communication and academic progress.
3. Needs are complex but at a level where most (but not all) can develop socially effective relationships with their peers, with support.
4. Staff and leadership team committed to AuRA's success and to the success of the individual students.
5. Furze Platt Senior School has direct control over leadership and management of the Resource. Its staff are part of the School and share the School's aspirations and targets.
6. Able accurately to identify students who may need to move to more specialist provision. Certain complex needs will not be able to flourish in a large secondary school.

The consultation document describes AURA as being for pupils who could function in the mainstream curriculum without large amounts of additional support. In fact students *do* have very large amounts of support, and it is these that enable them to function well.

We recognise that differentiation for some students at the most needy end of the intake in mainstream classes is a challenge.

We prefer Option 1. "We have a successful resource which is achieving successful outcomes for the young people it serves. We are targeting students for whom inclusion can and does work. Our staff are developing expertise in working with such youngsters, and as the unit is directly managed by the school its practices are absolutely aligned with the school's values and vision and its staff are wholly integrated into the staff body. We also like the expectation that pupils attending the resourced unit at FPSS will be expected to have much the same general profile as at present. It is our belief that the current profile works; we have evidence that it does not, and cannot, work for students with more complex needs. We also prefer this model because management responsibility, apart from joint appointment of the teacher in charge, would reside with the school."

Comments on Options 2 and 3. We accept that the provision is not equitable geographically, and that another model may reach a greater number of students. We recognise that a central outreach service could potentially ensure a higher level of expertise in all the schools.

However, we have significant reservations about the new proposed teaching bases, as follows.

1. Current students in AURA are often challenged by the demands of a large comprehensive school that will support and access lessons and fit in with their peers. They are nonetheless 'high functioning' in ASD terms.
2. Young people with more complex needs have not coped in AuRA, not because of the provision has not been tried but because mainstream secondary education is simply too challenging.

We give a list of some considerations needed for one of the new teaching bases.

1. Health and safety of the students (Including volume of student and staff traffic, enhanced security arrangements for safety)
2. The proposed management arrangements (accountability and inspections)
3. Unrealistic expectations upon mainstream teachers to differentiate and manage more complex students effectively (unreasonable to expect secondary teachers routinely to differentiate for pupils functioning significantly below Key Stage 3)
4. Requirement for specially designed and resourced areas (current building is not designed for pupils with more severe autism)
5. Arrangement for deployment and the management of speech and language therapy (unclear)
6. Transition arrangements needs to be considered in more details.

We would not be looking to host one of the new teaching bases.

Reference nos: 59, 60

Category of respondent: Teachers in charge of Resource, Ellington Primary School (Joint response)

Option: 3 but with reservations

We agree that an inequality of provision exists requiring change. We see some parts of option 3 being beneficial but do not fully agree it is the best option long term for children with speech and language impairment (SLI) and autism.

- Clarification needed of who the children are for the resource since it could too easily become a resource for children with behaviour with ASD and severe behavioural difficulties. This would disadvantage children with SLI
- Children with SLI may receive less support because their behaviour would not attract attention.
- Our experience shows that in Foundation and Key Stage 1, early and collaborative intervention with small group teaching and therapy is essential and can sometimes lead to re-integration to mainstream.
- Support and advice for teachers can benefit many children with SLI and communication difficulties. However, young children with little or no language struggle to access the lessons and usually withdraw even if such strategies are in place. They need a language-restricted classroom and time to respond.
- Continued need for speech and language places at Ellington's resource. Already 15 on roll, with a waiting list.
- We agree that a coordinator is required, but this needs further consideration.
- We question the value of closing effective resources, and propose instead some slimming down with outreach
- It is not the case that resource pupils are fully integrated into class. It is not so for those children requiring a language-restricted curriculum. These pupils are withdrawn until such time as they are ready to gain access to the curriculum.
- The headteacher of Ellington School supports of the retention of a resource and so valuable time and funds would not be wasted in establishing a new base.

Additional smaller teaching bases is for older children exist else where (in Buckinghamshire, for instance) and many of these are very much smaller, and meet needs more effectively. Could this be a model?
