



Government response to 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: a Green Paper': RCSLT response

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists welcomes the Government's response to the consultation on 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: a Green Paper' (Cm 9525). As it recognises, 'we need to do much more to support children and young people with mental health conditions.'

A key theme in the consultation responses was ensuring that groups with particular barriers to accessing services, or higher prevalence of mental health problems, would be able to benefit from the proposals. In our consultation response, we highlighted that one such group is children and young people with speech, language and communication needs. There is an important relationship between these needs and mental health: communication needs are themselves a mental health risk factor and they often co-exist with other mental health risk factors. Crucially, left unidentified and unmet, which they often are, communication needs can create barriers to accessing mental health support, referrals, assessments and interventions, particularly those that are verbally delivered. This risks failed interventions, the waste of public money, and children and young people's mental health worsening.

Our submission was echoed in the *Bercow: Ten Years On* report which highlights the links between communication needs and mental health and makes a series of recommendations of how they might be better supported within the context of the Green Paper.

The Government's Green Paper response does not specifically state how speech, language and communication needs will be identified and met. Nor does it reference the role of speech and language therapists in promoting better mental health. However, in response to a series of parliamentary questions and in a debate on speech, language and communication support, the Government has recognised the importance of identifying communication needs and the role speech and language therapists have to play. It is crucial that these commitments, detailed overleaf, are reflected in the implementation of the Green Paper proposals, so that:

- Designated Senior Leads for Mental Health liaise with speech and language therapists to ensure that children with speech, language and communication needs receive the help they need;
- Mental Health Support Teams work with speech and language therapists to provide more comprehensive support for children and young people's full range of needs; and
- Trailblazer areas test how teams can link to the work of speech and language therapists to enhance the support for vulnerable children.

Responding to the publication of the Government's response to the Green Paper, Kamini Gadhok, the Chief Executive of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, said: 'Now is the time for us all to work together to help improve children and young people's mental health. We look forward to discussing with the Government how we can contribute to the roll-out of their plans; and to our members being able to make their full contribution locally to trailblazer areas, to supporting Designated Senior Leads for Mental Health, to Mental Health Support Teams, and to specialist NHS children and young people's mental health services.'

26 July 2018

NOTES

RCSLT's response to the Green Paper is accessible: <https://bit.ly/2F1SAtu>

Bercow: Ten Years On is accessible here: <https://www.bercow10yearson.com/>

For more information, please contact: Peter Just on peter.just@rcslt.org or 020 7378 3630.

Communication needs and the role of speech and language therapists: parliamentary mentions

Responding to Rebecca Pow's Westminster Hall debate on 4 July, Nadhim Zahawi, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, commented:

The Green Paper creates clear expectations about the changes every area should seek in order to improve activity on prevention, partnership working between children and young people's mental health services and schools, and access to specialist support. As part of that, we are incentivising every school and college to train a designated senior lead for mental health to co-ordinate a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing. We expect the designated senior lead to liaise with speech and language therapists to ensure that children with SLCN receive the help they need.

See: <http://bit.ly/2KUidLy>

Replying to written question tabled by Edward Argar in May, Nick Gibb commented:

The Department is currently considering the responses to the consultation on the green paper 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision'. It will be determined how new mental health support teams, proposed in the green paper, can work with other professionals such as speech and language therapists, including support of delivering schools responsibilities for pupils with SEND. The aim is to improve identification of mental health needs, and to provide more comprehensive support for their full range of needs.

See: <https://bit.ly/2L1XAO7>

Replying to a written question tabled by Lord Shinkwin in June, Lord Agnew of Oulton commented:

The government is considering the responses to the consultation on the green paper 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision' and plans to publish a response before summer recess. The response will set out more information on how the trailblazers for new mental health support teams will work. The trailblazers will test how teams can link to the work of other professionals to enhance the support for vulnerable children and will consider how this can include speech and language therapists.

See: <https://bit.ly/2sE6hqd>

On two specific areas mentioned in the Green Paper – looked after children and the special interest group convened by Public Health England to identify key mental health prevention evidence and its relevance to practice and to highlight gaps and make recommendations for these to be addressed through further research – the Government have highlighted the importance of identifying and in the case of looked after children meeting any speech, language and communication needs that children and young people in care might have.

Responding to a series of written questions from Lord Watson of Invergowrie in May, Lord Agnew commented:

The organisation that manages the pilots will be required to support pilot areas to identify and meet speech, language and communication needs. We want the pilots to explore the range of professionals that should be involved in the assessment process.

See: <https://bit.ly/2J1KXRH>

Responding to a written question from Rebecca Pow earlier this month, Jackie-Doyle Price commented:

The Special Interest Group will meet for the first time on 25 July with representation from research/academia, Government Departments, arm's length bodies, local commissioners, public health professionals and young people. The aim of the Special Interest Group will be to identify the best evidence for improving public mental health and reducing inequalities in children and young people in England.

The terms of reference and membership will be discussed at the first meeting and PHE will draw on expertise from a speech, language and communications expert to inform this work.

See: <https://bit.ly/2LoEZPh>