



## **Health and Care Bill: Committee Stage briefing – January 2022**

### ***Issues affecting babies, children and young people***

- The Government recognises the importance of ensuring appropriate support for babies, children and young people. This is very welcome.
- It also recognises the importance of supporting speech, language and communication development at the population level in delivering better health outcomes. This is also very welcome.
- The Government also recognises the importance of ensuring appropriate support for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (communication needs). This is especially welcome.
- If accepted these amendments would build on that recognition, helping to deliver the Government's ambitions of ensuring the best possible support for babies, children and young people, including for those with communication needs and their families, some 10% of children in the United Kingdom.
- It would also help to ensure equitable support across England, reducing the risk to of unwarranted variation, with babies, children and young people not being at risk of a postcode lottery of access to support depending on where they live, rather than on their need.
- For children and young people with communication needs, the amendments would help to reduce the risks to their educational attainment, physical and mental health, employment prospects and overall life chances. It would also reduce the risk of their potential involvement in the criminal justice system.
- The amendments would also support speech, language and communication development at the population level which in turn would deliver better health outcomes for children, better education outcomes and would also tackle health inequalities.

- The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, I CAN, the children’s communication charity, and Association of Youth Offending Team Managers believe that to maximise outcomes for children and young people with communication needs:
  - the national accountability framework in Amendment 141 should include metrics on:
    - speech, language and communication development at the population level; and
    - outcomes for children and young people with communication needs.
  - the integrated care partnership’s strategy in Amendment 151 should include:
    - plans to support speech, language and communication development at the population level; and
    - plans on how children’s communication needs are going to be met.
  - the statutory guidance in Amendment 177 should include specific guidance on:
    - supporting speech, language and communication development at the population level; and
    - how the needs of children and young people with communication needs are going to be met.

***Supporting speech, language and communication development and better outcomes for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs: Amendments 141, 151 and 177***

**Amendment 141**

BARONESS TYLER OF ENFIELD, BARONESS FINLAY OF LLANDAFF, THE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON, LORD SHINKWIN

Page 25, line 31, at end insert—

“(3A) In conducting a performance assessment, NHS England must assess how well the integrated care board has identified and met the needs of children and young people aged 0-25.

(3B) For the purposes of carrying out the assessment in subsection (3A), NHS England must publish a national accountability framework for children and young people.”

**Explanation:** This amendment would require NHS England to assess how well an integrated care board has met children and young people’s needs in relation to a national accountability framework they have responsibility for publishing.

**Why this amendment matters for children and young people with communication needs**

- The Government **recognises the importance** of ensuring support for babies, children and young people – that is why its pledge to produce **bespoke guidance** for Integrated Care Systems on meeting the needs of babies, children and young people is so welcome.
- The Government also recognises that **speech, language and communication skills** are a **primary indicator of child wellbeing** – this was highlighted in a response to a written question tabled by Lord Ramsbotham in July 2019 and is very welcome.
- The Government also recognises the **importance of ensuring appropriate support for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs** – its pledges on these issues during the passage of the **Domestic Abuse Act** clearly demonstrate that and are very welcome.
- Sadly, however, the **reality on the ground** is that children and young people are **not always prioritised** by decision makers in the health system.
- Children and young people with **speech, language and communication needs** are **often even less of a priority** – this has been demonstrated by decisions taken during the pandemic, when speech and language therapy services to children were stopped and speech and language therapists redeployed in many areas. As a result, a survey conducted by the Royal

College of Speech and Language Therapists found that 81% of children and young people received less speech and language therapy during the first lockdown, with 62% not receiving any.

- In **areas of social disadvantage, children can be at particular risk.** Research has found that in these areas around 50% of children can start school with delayed language or another identified communication need. This can have a significant impact on their health outcomes and on their education outcomes. It can also **exacerbate health inequalities.**
- **NHS England** has also recognised **that early language development is a significant health inequalities issue.**
- The **2010 Marmot Review on health inequalities** emphasised ‘giving every child the best start in life’ as a high priority recommendation. The Review identified reducing inequalities in the early development of physical and emotional health, and cognitive, linguistic and social skills as a priority objective, **noting communication skills as crucial for ‘school readiness’.**
- Research by Save The Children found that by the age of three, more disadvantaged children are, on average, 17 months behind their more affluent peers in their early language development.
- Save The Children also found that poor language skills at age 5 affects reading and numeracy at age 11:
  - one in four children who struggled with language at age five did not reach the expected standard in English at the end of primary school.
  - one in five children who struggled with language at age five did not reach the expected standard in maths at the end of primary school.
- It’s vital therefore **that Integrated Care Boards are held to account** to ensure they give children and young people the priority they deserve, with a clear set of outcome metrics, including outcomes for:
  - children with speech, language and communication needs; and
  - speech, language and communication development at the population level.
- This accountability should be grounded in a **national accountability framework.** This would help to deliver **equitable support** across England

and **reduce the risk of unwarranted variation** and babies, children and young people and their families facing a **postcode lottery of access** to services, the service they receive being based on where they live rather than on their actual need.

**How to strengthen support for children and young people with communication needs**

- *For those children and young people with communication needs and their families, it is essential that the national accountability framework should include metrics on outcomes for children and young people with communication needs.*
- *The framework should also include a metric related to speech, language and communication development at the population level.*

**Amendment 151**

BARONESS TYLER OF ENFIELD, BARONESS FINLAY OF LLANDAFF, LORD FARMER, LORD SHINKWIN

Page 29, line 30, at end insert—

“(1A) In preparing a strategy under this section, an integrated care partnership must include specific consideration of how it will meet the needs of children and young people aged 0-25.”

**Explanation:** This amendment would require an integrated care partnership to specifically consider the needs of babies, children and young people when developing its strategy.

**Why this amendment matters for children and young people with communication needs**

- Again, as with Amendment 151, to ensure the Government’s very welcome ambitions for babies, children and young people, including for those with communication needs, are achieved, it is essential that an integrated care partnership’s strategy specifically consider the needs of babies, children

and young people.

- This would help to deliver a holistic local approach to supporting babies, children and young people and their families, including for those with communication needs.
- It is also essential that the strategy includes plans to support speech, language and communication development at the population level.
- This would help to deliver better health outcomes for children as well as help to tackle health inequalities.

**How to strengthen support for children and young people with communication needs**

- *For those children and young people with communication needs and their families, it is essential that the integrated care partnership's strategy includes specific reference on how their needs are going to be met so they can achieve the best possible outcomes.*
- *The strategy should also include the integrated care partnership's plans to support speech, language and communication development at the population level.*

**Amendment 177**

BARONESS MEACHER, BARONESS TYLER OF ENFIELD, BARONESS WALMSLEY, LORD SHINKWIN

Insert the following new Clause—

“Regulations and statutory guidance on babies, children and young people

(1) The Secretary of State must publish regulations on how integrated care systems must meet the needs of babies, children and young people aged 0 to 25.

(2) The Secretary of State must publish guidance on how integrated care systems should meet their obligations under subsection (1).

(3) The Secretary of State must lay a copy of the guidance before each House of Parliament.

(4) Integrated care systems must act in accordance with the guidance in subsection (2).”

**Explanation:** This Clause would require the Secretary of State to lay regulations and publish guidance on how integrated care systems should meet the needs of babies, children and young people aged 0-25. This would also require integrated care systems to act in accordance with guidance.

**Why this amendment matters for children and young people with communication needs**

- It is **encouraging - and very welcome** - that the Government has committed to producing **bespoke guidance** for integrated care systems (ICSs) on meeting the needs of babies, children and young people.
- However, it is **essential** that this guidance is on **statutory footing**.
- This would ensure the **strongest possible support** for babies, children and young people, including for those with communication needs and their families.
- It would also **reduce the risk of ICSs** considering babies, children and young people’s needs as optional, potentially leading to unwarranted variation between different areas and a postcode lottery in access to services and support.
- Given that **10% of children and young people have long-term communication needs**, it will be important that the guidance includes specific reference to speech, language and communication needs.
- The **impact of not supporting children and young people** can be significant – for example, children and young people with communication needs are at greater risk of worse educational attainment, mental health problems, unemployment and potential involvement in the criminal justice system if their needs are not identified and adequately supported.
- Given the **links between early speech, language and communication skills and health inequalities**, it is also essential that this guidance also includes details on communication skills are going to be developed at a population level.

- So it is in **everyone's interest** that ICSs give due regard to meeting the needs of babies, children and young people, including those with communication needs as well as those who would benefit from a population level approach being undertaken to speech, language and communication development.

**How to strengthen support for children and young people with communication needs**

***For those children and young people with communication needs and their families, it is essential that the statutory guidance includes specific guidance on how the needs of children and young people with communication needs are going to be met, as well as guidance on supporting speech, language and communication development at the population level.***

For more information, please contact:

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