

**Getting it right for communication - right support, right place, right time:  
our response to the Department for Education's SEND Review Green Paper  
July 2022**

**Action area 1: Funding**

**What we've heard from parents and carers**

"Our local speech and language therapy service is not fit for purpose. They don't have the resources to adequately support children. It's reached crisis point as the service has discharged hundreds of children with severe speech and language difficulties."

"It needs to be properly funded so people and services aren't just playing hot potato with the kids all the time."

"More money! Especially if the government genuinely wants SEND children to survive and thrive in mainstream."

**What we've heard from speech and language therapists**

"The impact of budgetary restrictions is the elephant in the room. There are large numbers of children and young people who are not eligible for services they desperately need because the referral threshold has been changed in order to avoid overspend."

"Services have been diluted down to the point where many children miss out on intervention altogether because the threshold for input is so high, and the intervention that some do receive is so little that it's not enough to make a meaningful difference or improve the outcomes of children and young people."

"There is a huge lack of funding in local authorities, schools, health and NHS services."

"All services are severely, chronically underfunded. The SEND process will never work without realistic cost analysis and investment."

"Therapists are having to slim down services to fit the increasing commissioning cuts with the rapidly increasing needs for services, in part related to the pandemic and in part related to the effects of the austerity measures of the past decade or so and the effects of widening societal inequalities."

"The funding that currently goes into tribunals would be much better spent meeting children and young people's needs in the first place."

As the Children and Families Minister, Will Quince, stated in his response to [a letter to the Prime Minister and Chancellor from over 20 All-Party Parliamentary Groups ahead of last year's Budget and Spending Review \(PDF\)](#), ["We know how important it is for children and young people to access the speech and language therapy that they need, and that the right funding is fundamental to that."](#) (PDF)

We agree. But for too long, too many speech and language therapy services have not been funded in the way that they need to be to meet the needs of their local populations. It is not just us saying that.

[In 2017, Ofsted and the CQC found that \(PDF\)](#):

*"Too often, therapy services were too overstretched to deliver what was needed in their local areas. In nearly all local areas where inspectors identified access to therapy services as a weakness, it was because of this. Typically, services were being reduced because of challenges to funding and difficulties in filling vacant posts. This funding did not keep up with the rising number of referrals. This led to unacceptably long waiting times for the children and young people and their families."*

In the five years since, the situation has only worsened with [services' ability to meet need being significantly impacted since the pandemic](#). Data that is emerging on children's early language and communication skills suggests that the level of need is only likely to increase in the next five years. [Latest figures published by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities](#) found that, of the children who received a two-to-two-and-a-half year review during the period October – December 2021, only 85.3% met the expected standard for communication and language. [The average for the previous 14 quarters was 88.1%](#). One service has told us that there has been a 25% increase in their number of referrals in comparison with their pre-COVID referral rate. They now have 1000 extra children on their caseload compared with 2019. All this at a time when the public purse is under pressure.

**Action required: funding for speech and language therapy services must be improved, both locally and nationally.**

**This must include:**

- **commissioners allocating sufficient funding to enable services to identify, assess and meet local needs. This includes funding and specifying that services should work in ways which:**

- **support prevention and early intervention, including for children and young people on SEN support, and through working with families and the wider workforce.**
- **ensure speech and language therapy for those children and young people who need it longer-term;**
- **ensure support for those with low incidence, high need conditions or those who require specialist support, such as augmentative and alternative communication.**
- **Government providing sufficient funding both for commissioners to do this and for the wider system that supports children and young people, including local authorities, early years providers, schools and colleges.**

**[Read the full RCSLT and ASLTIP joint policy statement](#)**