

STLS Sensory Service

Summary of the Annual Report: September 2019 – August 2020

The Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) Sensory Service works to ensure the educational needs of children and young people with sensory impairments are met following a request for intervention. As part of this an Annual Questionnaire is available online in June each year to all Service Users. This gathers views of parents, pre-school settings and schools on the delivery of services. The June 2020 questionnaire saw an increase in participation particularly from parents (an increase of over 40% on the previous year). Overall responses on the quality of service, quality of assessments and reports, value of advice, quality of support to learners and impact on outcomes were rated at good to excellent by at least 95% of respondents.

The main issue noted by parents was the difficulty of virtual support during the COVID-19 Lockdown 1. Other development suggestions included improved communication/direct contact with parents when delivering a specialist service in a school and for a Specialist Teacher working with the learner/school/setting to remain consistent. Respondents preferred Record of Visits to be handwritten for the immediacy of advice after a visit. Pre-school settings requested more help in setting outcomes and planning relevant activities.

Requests for specialist intervention or consultation for learners with hearing and vision impairment during 2019-2020 were significantly reduced during Lockdown 1. There were 169 requests (17 being new-born referrals). Response from the service for new referrals are made within five working days although for new-born referrals this was within two working days.

- For hearing impairment 39% of requests were fulfilled by specialist intervention and 61% were fulfilled by advice and information.
- For vision impairment 55% of requests were fulfilled by specialist intervention and 45% were fulfilled by advice and information.
- No new referrals were identified with multisensory impairment/ deafblindness.

The STLS Sensory Service continue to mentor and support ongoing training with 13 teachers undertaking Mandatory Qualifications in Sensory Impairment. Partnership working continues with a range of professionals, agencies and voluntary organisations as well as the provision of training opportunities which are open to a wide range of professionals.

Data provided by Management Information for the academic outcomes in the summer of 2019 have shown the level of hearing and vision impairment directly impacts a young person's achievements. Young people with moderate, severe or profound impairments gain results which are generally lower than the expected standards at all Key Stages. However, each young person is an individual - a number have gained a high level in their examinations and some are now at university. All children and young people have made progress with their individual sensory outcomes which focus on:

- Access to learning activities
- Communication and access to information
- Independence and self-esteem

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From an analysis of academic outcomes, the STLS Sensory Service has focused on:

Hearing Impairment:

- Improved support for access to the curriculum, particularly in Early Years settings.
- Focused work on phonics.
- Working more closely with Specialist Resource Provisions (SRPs).

Vision Impairment:

- A re-focus of support for children with moderate visual impairment particularly in Early Years.
- Support for the phonics approach to literacy particularly for Braille users.
- Improved support for reading and writing for learners with vision impairment especially those using Braille.

Multi-Sensory Impairment / Deafblindness:

- Joined up support for those with multisensory impairment in mainstream schools.
- Improved liaison with Specialist Resource Provisions with any multi-sensory impairment learners.

A significant number of learners with sensory impairment have Education, Health and Care Plans. 50% of learners with hearing impairment have EHCPs although for vision impairment this figure is 69% which reflects the greater number of learners with VI who have Profound, Severe or Complex Learning Needs. Virtually all learners with deafblindness have an EHCP. More students with hearing and vision impairments are successfully educated locally than in previous years. The number of learners attending non-maintained special schools remains low as in previous years.

The STLS Sensory Service delivery is recorded termly. For the first six months of the school year 2019-2020 the number of visits to learners, settings and schools were as expected. The end of March 2020 to August 2020 was dictated by COVID-19 where face-to-face support was postponed, and all service delivery was either online or over the telephone. Advice and information was provided through newsletters or via the website.

The service provided over 5000 actual or virtual visits during the academic year 2019-2020, followed up with Record of Visits giving advice on improving access to the curriculum. 819 annual reports were written to inform parents and school/settings of a learner's impairment, 191 annual reviews were attended, and 284 transitions were planned and supported. Alongside this over 350 hours of training were delivered.

The number of learners with sensory impairment remains consistent with previous years. Whilst hearing, vision and multisensory/deafblindness are low incidence disabilities, they have a high impact on access to learning for children and young people. As a result, specialist interventions are focused on those children and young people with moderate, severe, and profound sensory impairment.