

STLS Sensory Service

Summary of the Annual Report: September 2020 – August 2021

The service works to ensure preschool settings, schools and colleges are able to meet the educational needs of children and young people with sensory impairments.

The number of learners with hearing impairment (HI), vision impairment (VI) and multi-sensory impairment/deafblindness (MSI) remains consistent with previous years. Whilst HI, VI and MSI 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.

The service uses an annual online Questionnaire to gather the views of parents, pre-school settings, schools and colleges on the delivery of services. The quality of the service was rated as good to excellent by 100% of the preschool settings, schools and colleges and by 99% of parents and young people over 16.

Most parents indicated no change was needed to the service, but some areas of development including improved advice on specialist equipment and IT support were requested as well as the suggestion of group meetings/play sessions for parents and young children to meet and get to know other parents and their sensory impaired children. A number of parents and schools requested more visits.

Preschool settings, schools and colleges indicated there was no need for change, but some areas of development including more support for staff confidence, clear targets to achieve before the next visit and more support of self-advocacy and independence for children and young people were suggested.

There were a total of 191 HI and VI requests for professional consultation and/or intervention, this included 21 from the newborn hearing screening programme. Response from the service for new referrals are made within five working days although for newborn referrals this was within two working days.

- For hearing impairment 51% of requests were fulfilled by specialist intervention and 49% were fulfilled by advice and information.
- For vision impairment 45% of requests were fulfilled by specialist intervention and 55% were fulfilled by advice and information.

There were 6 requests for children and young people with multi-sensory impairment/deafblindness.

During 2020-21 the service continued to mentor and support ongoing training for teachers undertaking Mandatory Qualifications in HI, VI or MSI. Eight teachers qualified at the end of their two-year training in 2021. 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.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, academic outcomes were not required to be reported to the local authority, however, Specialist Teachers were able to gather information from schools. The data for KS4 was limited by the number of schools who were able to

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provide this information. For learners with HI, the academic achievement showed a significant increase when compared to 2019, the last year with reported data. This increase was across EYFS, KS1 and KS2. For VI there was a similar increase in academic outcomes in KS1 and KS2. In KS5 the young people remaining in school for 6th Form demonstrated high levels of academic achievement and entry to University courses.

From an analysis of academic outcomes, the STLS Sensory Service will continue to focus on:

Hearing Impairment:

- Communication and language in EYFS and KS1.
- KS1 English writing where results were lower than reading and maths.

Vision Impairment:

- Communication and Language for current EYFS and KS1
- Specialist support for phonics approaches to continue

For learners with the enhanced level of sensory support, 98% made progress towards their sensory outcomes with 66% achieving or on track to achieving all or more than 50% of their sensory outcomes.

A significant number of learners with sensory impairment have Education, Health and Care Plans which outline their Special Educational Needs and/or Disability.

For HI: 50% of learners with hearing impairment have EHCPs. For those attending mainstream schools including SRPs 48% have EHCPs.

For VI: 69% of learners with vision impairment have EHCPs which reflects the greater number of learners with VI who have Profound, Severe or Complex Learning Needs. For those with VI attending mainstream schools including SRPs 47% have EHCPs. Almost all learners with deafblindness have an EHCP.

More students with hearing and vision impairments are successfully educated locally than in previous years. Over the last 15 years there has been an 80% reduction in learners attending out-of-county special schools for HI and VI.

The STLS Sensory Service advice, support and intervention continued to be delivered during the pandemic. Regular visits were provided to preschool settings, schools and colleges in Terms 1, 2, 5 and 6. In Lockdown 3 (Terms 3 and 4) support was provided virtually. Home visits were provided in terms 1 and then in terms 5 and 6. In Lockdown 2 and Lockdown 3 support was provided to families by a range of different approaches.

The service provided over 5000 in-person or virtual visits during the academic year 2020-2021, each supported by a Record of Visit giving advice on improving access to learning activities. 776 annual reports were written to inform parents and settings/school/colleges, 308 annual reviews were attended, and 304 transitions were planned and supported. 180 hours of training was delivered with high levels of improved confidence in meeting sensory impairment needs reported.