

Youth Offending Service Speech and Language Therapy



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Introduction / Background

In March 2018, a 12 month pilot of Speech and Language Therapy into Hillingdon Youth Offending Services (YOS) was started.

The aim of the pilot project is to investigate the speech, language and communication needs of young offenders accessing Hillingdon YOS.

A separately funded project ran concurrently to provide speech, language and communication training to staff, volunteers and sessional workers based within Hillingdon YOS.

What was the equality issue?

Speech, language and communication difficulties can create significant challenges for children, young people and adults. These difficulties are often hidden and can prevent individuals from making and maintaining meaningful relationships and reaching their full potential.



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Current research states that speech, language and communication needs are more prevalent in the youth offending population (Gregory and Bryan, 2009; Bryan et al, 2015).

Evidence also suggests that young people with speech, language and communication needs find it more difficult to access or benefit from interventions that are delivered verbally e.g. drugs/alcohol rehabilitation programmes (Bryan et al, 2004).

How was this addressed?

By delivering training and undertaking speech and language assessments

During April and May 2018, training was delivered to Hillingdon YOS to provide staff with information on speech, language and communication needs and the role of the Speech and Language Therapist.

This training was divided into two components; general awareness training and strategies awareness.



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When young people become known to Hillingdon YOS they are able to access a speech and language therapy assessment via the therapist based in the YOS.

This assessment looks at the young person's speech, language and communication skills using observations, discussions and informal/formal assessments.

Once the assessment is complete, the therapist talks through the findings with the young person and parent/carer (if available). This discussion aims to support the young person to understand their own strengths and needs.

It also provides an opportunity to talk the young person through possible reasons why education may have been difficult for them.

Following assessment, a report is written outlining strengths, needs, adaptations that need to be made to support the young person and recommendations for the future.



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This report aims to outline relevant information to ensure that the young person can be supported to access education, training or employment, develop meaningful and positive relationships with others and reduce the likelihood of re-offending.

What was the outcome?

In January 2019, preliminary findings suggested that:

- 65% of young people assessed have moderate-significant speech, language or communication needs.
- 30% have mild speech, language or communication needs
- Of the 43 young people assessed so far, only 4 have been identified and received input (assessment/intervention) from Hillingdon Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy Service in the past.
- Staff understand better how to adapt the way they work with young people on their caseloads
- Young people have also informally reported that they now have a better understanding of their strengths and needs in relation to their speech, language and communication skills.



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