

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

During May and June 2010 Dorset Deaf Children's Society (DDCS) sent out a questionnaire to members about Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) in Dorset. The following is a summary of the questionnaires returned.

There are currently **474** Hearing impaired children in Dorset.

182 have a Unilateral loss (38.5%)

105 have a Mild loss (22%)

123 have a Moderate loss (26%)

29 have a Severe loss (6%)

35 have a Profound loss (7.5%)

It should be noted that the DDCS membership only represents a proportion of the hearing impaired children in Dorset. Of the 174 DDCS members there are 130 families with hearing impaired children. This represents 27.5% of the hearing impaired children in Dorset.

There are certain factors that should also be considered about the 130 members as follows:

1. Some of these children will have a mild or moderate hearing loss so may not need SALT therefore the questionnaire will not be applicable.
2. Some of these children have glue ear and have been given hearing aids and may not need SALT therefore the questionnaire will not be applicable
3. Some families may have moved house and not informed DDCS so they will not have received the questionnaire.
4. Some of these children will have a unilateral loss so may not need SALT therefore the questionnaire will not be applicable
5. There will always be a proportion of parents who will not complete a questionnaire

Of the 130 families 30 completed questionnaires this equates to a 23% return rate.

The replies have been split between children that currently receive SALT and children that do not currently receive SALT.

The Speech and Language Therapy Service has one part time Principal Speech and Language Therapist for Hearing Impairment who screens the referrals. Following the initial appointment the child's provision is determined by a prioritisation protocol, children will receive different levels of intervention and support depending upon need. Therapy sessions may be delivered by the Principal Therapist or by other therapists via appointments in different locations in Dorset.

Each of the comments given on the questionnaires refer to a child's individual therapist and not just one therapist.

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHILDREN RECEIVING SALT

Does your child receive support from Speech and Language Therapy? **YES/NO**

YES - 18

If your child receives support how much support does your child receive?

JUST HAD INITIAL APPOINTMENT - 1
SUPPOSED TO BE HALF AN HOUR A WEEK BUT IS NOT HAPPENING NOW - 1
SUPPOSED TO BE WEEKLY BUT INVARIABLE DOES NOT HAPPEN - 1
VARIES - FEW SESSIONS THAT LAST 3-4 WEEKS THEN STOP
ONE HOUR ONCE A MONTH - 1
ONE VISIT EVERY 3 MONTHS - 3
ONE VISIT PER SCHOOL YEAR - 2
NOT A LOT - 2
IN PROCESS OF WITHDRAWING SUPPORT - 1
DELIVERED BY STAFF IN SCHOOL AND SALT FROM TIME TO TIME - 1
DELIVERED BY STAFF IN SCHOOL - 2
TWO 1-1 SESSIONS AND ONE GROUP A WEEK IN SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF - 1
PAY PRIVATELY FOR SALT - 1

In a rating of 1 -5 (1 =excellent 5 = poor) are you satisfied with the support your child receives?

1 2 3 4 5

1 - 3
2 - 1 (privately paid for SALT)
3 - 4
4 - 2
5 - 8

If you are satisfied please tell us why?

Not really using service due to child's age but visits have been supportive.
Child is always happy with SALT and enjoys learning the picture cards and puzzles.
Always been fully supported by SALT working closely with child and given lots of ideas and activities to do at home. SALT is caring and supportive.
Big impact on language ability as regular visits. (privately paid SALT)
Work that gets done is great but it should be more regular
Now getting speech therapy at a level that child needs to improve speech (School for the Deaf)

If you are not satisfied please tell us why?

Should be more available appointments and more often.

It would be good for child to receive more support regularly.

Visits are often very short as is the follow up report. No liaison with parents and subsequent visits are often few and far between.

Not notified when child was last seen so not given the opportunity to meet SALT. Only found out about the visit and received a report three months later when school informed us at Annual Review.

Only sees SALT from time to time, teaching assistant at school gives support with language in school.

Not enough support given.

The support should be much more. SALT department need more staff and time to spend with the children.

Child also has verbal dyspraxia - did not get seen by SALT for nine academic months and this only happened after several complaints, phone calls and letters.

Never had regular sessions. Speech Therapy needs were diagnosed about six years ago, in that time SALT had been at best intermittent and quite often non-existent or delivered by TOD.

Have been continually let down. Appointments not made, told we would receive monthly visits after implant - this did not happen. Then told two monthly visits which also did not happen. In total was only seen three times in the first year after implant at a time that we were led to believe it would be very important. After several complaints was then referred to Community Speech Therapist and seen in school once a week by speech therapy assistant who then did not turn up for a whole term!

You have to push and push all the time there should be more staff.

If your child does not receive support from Speech and Language Therapy do you think that they should receive support? **YES/NO**

N/A

What support do you think they should have?

Should be more available when child starts pre-school/nursery rather than school.

More support in understanding actual terminology is needed and also with strategies for listening.

Have you had issues in the past with the support your child received and what were they?

Appointments 3 -6 months apart - no continuity.

SALT does not come to meetings.

Does not seem to be thorough and dismissed too soon.

Get used to one therapist then they change positions and then get a new SALT so child had to get used to a new person. Then therapy stopped completely so school queried it and it was provided again.

Received very little SALT in mainstream school (now in school for deaf)
Support prior to SAL base school was occasional, when in SAL base school support was excellent now in new school and support is abysmal - only once a year.
Have written several complaints to managers of SALT and never received a satisfactory response.
Last year SALT turned up to the statement meeting at the school with no report but used and Implant Centre report that was six months old and had only copied half of the report. This year they were invited to the statement meeting and we waited 20 minutes before deciding they were not coming, and the school is now chasing them for a report.
It took ages to come through.

Please write any other comments you would like to make.

Hoping that this service will come in to play more when my child is older. (parent rating excellent)
Would recommend SALT, as she is excellent.

We are grateful for the support from SALT, she always leaves recommendations/ideas for home and school and informs us if she is concerned about anything.

Decided to pay privately for a SALT as appointments were few and far between. I think this is disgraceful that we have to pay £70 per hour to get the help our child needs.

Very long waiting time to get appointment with SALT. Why is there only one designated SALT for area?

The SALT support is obviously under staffed and it is apparent in the infrequent visits on offer.

SALT are asking that school make recommendation for further support or the support now received will be withdrawn. It seems parents do not have any input into or consultation about this and it needs to change - should be a three way meeting SALT/School/Parent.

My child needs more time with SALT.

Experience has been that in mainstream school SALT support was very limited and left to a Teaching Assistant. As a result our child made very little progress with speech. Our child is now getting good support and now has developed a small repertoire of words over the last nine months. (Now in school for the deaf)

To ensure SALT support I have had to put case strongly to SALT and line manager. Needed to enlist TOD and specialist TA for help with this. Luckily my child has us to fight for him but what about the children whose parents are not able to recognise their child is missing out. All children should be equal and get the support they need.

There is clearly not enough commitment to offering SALT to deaf children with additional problems. There needs to be more funding and training for staff.

Currently having a 'break' from SALT and was to be reviewed after Easter but to date no contact has been made. All the other professionals working with our child are great and it is a shame SALT can't give the same sort of service.

Trying to understand a deaf child in a hearing world takes a lot of working out, although it is not rocket science to know that they are at times in their own world. Life can be difficult and our child should get help regularly. My child gets angry and upset as they can't get me to understand. Deaf children need more help with their speech and it is Speech and Language Therapy's job to do this sooner rather than later.

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHILDREN
NOT RECEIVING SALT

Does your child receive support from Speech and Language Therapy? **YES/NO**

NO - 12

If your child receives support how much support does your child receive?

N/A

In a rating of 1 -5 (1 =excellent 5 = poor) are you satisfied with the support your child receives?

1 2 3 4 5

1 - 0

2 - 0

3 - 0

4 - 1

5 - 1

If you are satisfied please tell us why?

No Answers

If you are not satisfied please tell us why?

It has been documented that our child has difficulty with communication and language skills and yet no support is given.

If your child does not receive support from Speech and Language Therapy do you think that they should receive support? **YES/NO**

YES - 2

NO - 9

NOT NOW - 1

What support do you think they should have?

Regular sessions to improve speech and language.

My child's speech is good so do not think it would be beneficial.

Child lost hearing at seven years old so already had a lot of language input so SALT is not needed.

Have you had issues in the past with the support your child received and what were they?

No problems.

As soon as my child went to special needs school all support was withdrawn.

Requested support but not forthcoming.

Yes - Support from SALT was few and far between and we had to constantly chase support and we were not happy with the sessions when they did happen. We did all the hard work ourselves to help our child to speak well. SALT were too quick to sign us off. At one point we did have one therapist who was covering maternity leave who was excellent - this is what confirmed that the support our child had was insufficient.

Although one child does not need SALT we have two deaf children. The eldest child has a severe to profound loss and received only sporadic appointments and the therapist changed continually. This meant that there was never any continuity or rapport built between child and therapist. We had to fight for appointments and this was wrong especially as the provision was in our child's statement.

There was very little support initially, despite the fact that we were advised not to sign with our profoundly deaf child during visits to audiology. When we did have support, the SALT for the deaf would routinely complain about lack of time available and too many children on her books. This should not be an issue unloaded onto parents at a vulnerable time. Appointments were few and far between and didn't feel very productive. . More time should have been spent simply providing support for our child and giving advice to us, the parents, on how we could support our child further. For us it was a relief to be signed over to our local Salt, who at least gave blocks of support despite not being qualified to support deaf children, We feel the support was more useful and work was provided for both us, the parents, and our child's nursery setting to follow up. Both home, nursery and school settings were visited.

Please write any other comments you would like to make.

Child has ten hours a week teacher support and has come on leaps and bounds with this help.

Very happy with current support from TOD.

The school requested that my child was assessed but this took several months to be done because of the long waiting list. Thankfully my child was assessed and did not require SALT. I do feel however that waiting lists should be reviewed to have a maximum waiting time for assessment. There doesn't seem to be enough funding to provide SALT for deaf children and because of this the children are being signed off too quickly or receiving inadequate number of appointments and time.

I know that the SALT service in our area is massively overloaded with work.

There are not enough Salts for deaf OR hearing children in West Dorset. This means a lot of children are not getting the support they need when they need it. Training for local SALTS to work with deaf children would go some way to improving provision all round. HOWEVER, if the numbers of SALTS are not increased children will continue to miss out on vital support.

CONCLUSION

Of the small proportion of hearing impaired children in Dorset represented by this questionnaire there are some positive remarks but the majority of families are not happy with the amount of SALT their child is receiving.

It is clear that the SALT provision in Dorset needs to be increased and this means more funding. Parents generally are happy with the Therapists, but they need more visits and more support to help develop their child's language.

This is such a vital part of any deaf child's development and plays a very important role to enable communication. Lack of communication can impact on the whole of a child's life, not just education, but social needs and self-esteem.

This needs to be addressed.

Quote from Report of the NHSP Assessment and Quality Assurance Support visit to Dorset

23rd June 2009

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"There should be a review of the amount of dedicated time needed from the specialist SLT to meet the needs of deaf children in the County, and a request to the appropriate authority to increase this time if that is the outcome of the review"