

14th July 2026

Subject: Temporary Changes to Speech and Language Therapy Service Delivery

Dear Headteacher,

As part of the ongoing transformation programme the Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) Service have been improving timely access to the service for all children and young people with speech, language and communication needs. As a result, activity levels in the service have increased, there are significantly improved timelines for initial health assessments, and EHCP assessments and vacancy rates have reduced:

- 85% of initial health assessments seen within 10 weeks
- EHCP assessment waiting list size reduced by 79% over the last 2 years despite an 8% increase in requests for SaLT advice, and majority of CYP receiving timely responses and/or SaLT reports
- Successful recruitment, forecasting minimal vacancy from September 2026 (excluding Experts at Hand funding)

Now as part of the transformation, we have two important updates to share with settings.

The first update is to inform you of a targeted programme of work being undertaken by the SaLT service to reduce waiting times for speech and language interventions.

This work will support the transition to a new *school caseload model*, which will enable support to be delivered to more children with speech, language or communication needs, and which we anticipate will launch in schools at the start of the new term in September 2027. The new proposed model has received positive feedback from both schools and staff through recent engagement activities.

The proposed school caseload model would see each school allocated a link therapist who will hold a caseload of children requiring specialist support with and without and EHCP. The model would also incorporate the Experts at Hand approach, providing targeted support within educational settings and enabling Speech and Language Therapists to support a greater number of children and young people more efficiently.

Over recent years, increasing demand for speech and language therapy has resulted in a growing number of children and young people without an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) waiting extended periods for intervention. The waiting times for intervention remain unacceptably long. This has created inequity in access to support and reduced opportunities for timely intervention.



To address this, the service has carefully considered a range of options to increase intervention capacity, reduce waiting times and support a sustainable transition to the future school caseload model.

Following consideration of demand, clinical risk and service capacity, it has been agreed that a time-limited recovery programme will be implemented to support the transition to a new school caseload model. The programme has support from the Integrated Care Board, local authority commissioners and the SEND Partnership Assurance Board.

The recovery programme will operate as follows:

- **20 July to 11 September 2026:** During the summer holiday period, all SaLT clinical time will be dedicated to delivering assessment and interventions for children and young people without an EHCP. As schools are closed during this period and routine school-based EHCP activity is significantly reduced, this provides the most appropriate opportunity to focus resource on improving access to intervention. Any clinical activity identified as urgent or high risk, will continue in this period.
- **From 14 September 2026:** The service will move to a revised approach whereby 30% of total SaLT team time will focus on intervention for children and young people without an EHCP who have been waiting the longest time or have a high complexity of SaLT needs; as a result some children without EHCPs might be prioritised over those with EHCPs. We will achieve this by temporarily prioritising and adapting support according to need and risk.

We recognise that a temporary change in Speech and Language Therapy input for some children and young people with EHCPs may cause concern for schools and families. This decision has not been taken lightly and has been informed by careful consideration of clinical need, risk and the wider needs of all children and young people accessing the service. These arrangements are intended as a defined recovery measure and do not represent the intended long-term model of service delivery. The impact of the changes will be closely monitored, including progress against intervention waiting times and service demand.

A formal review will take place in early September 2026 to assess and confirm arrangements for the autumn term. Any changes arising from this review will be communicated to schools and other stakeholders.

We are finalising FAQs for parents, carers and professionals, which will contain further information about the programme and how to access support. These FAQs will be available in September 2026. In the meantime, parents, carers and professionals can get general information and advice from our Speech and Language Therapy webpages: www.hct.nhs.uk/children-and-young-people-speech-and-language-therapy



We greatly value the role that schools play in supporting children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and appreciate your continued partnership as we work to improve timely access to intervention and achieve the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families.

The second update is to inform you of a revised referral form and guidance for professionals wanting to make a referral to the SaLT service. We have worked closely with Hertfordshire Parents Carers Involvement and school representatives to improve and further simplify the referral process for schools, and we hope you will find these changes helpful. The new guidance and referral form is available to access via www.hct.nhs.uk/cypt-referral-form from this week.

Please can you share the information included in this letter with your SENCO and other relevant staff.

If you have any questions regarding anything in the letter, please contact the Speech and Language Therapy Service either by calling 01923 470 680 or by e-mailing your school SaLT link e-mail.

Yours sincerely,



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