



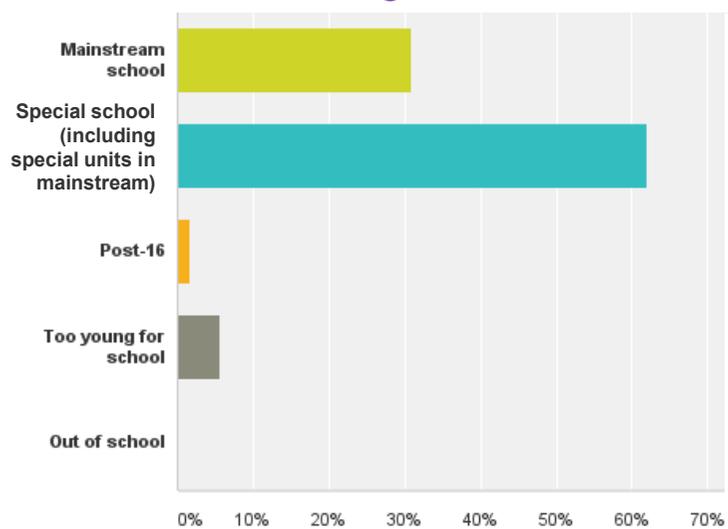
# Speech and Language Therapy Service Survey 2016

November 2016

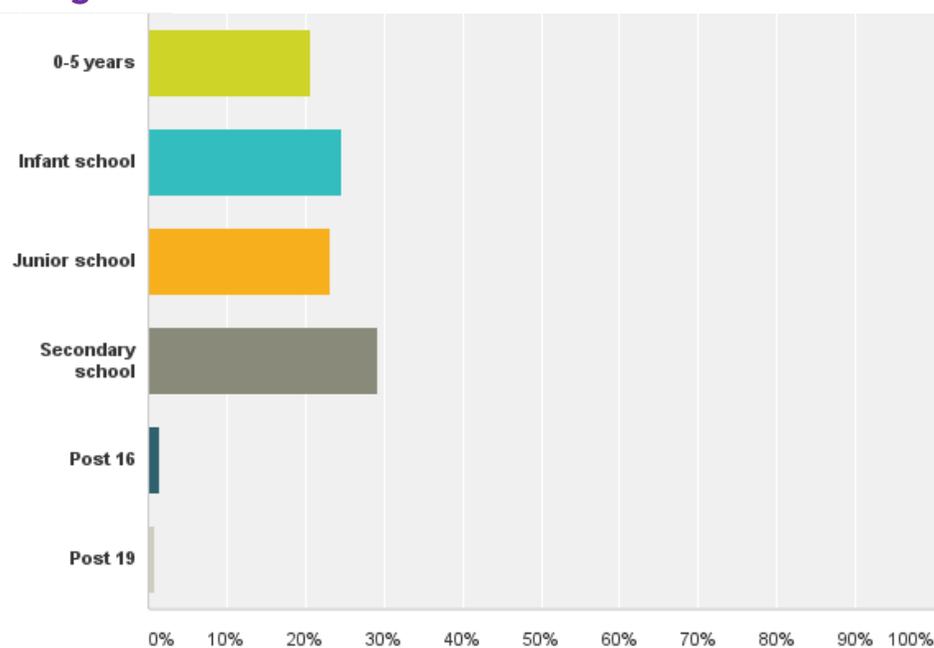
T. Moroney and B. Symcox

## About the child

### Educational setting

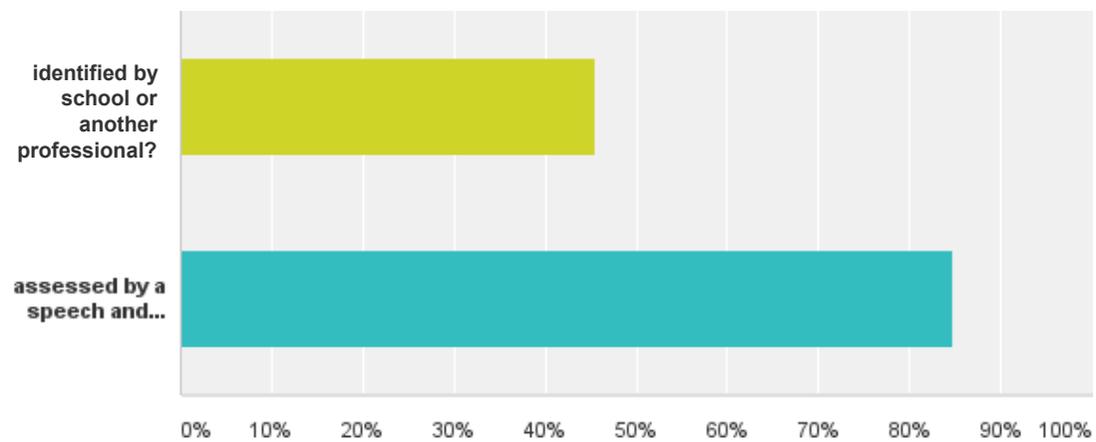


### Age of child



**61% of children had an EHCP;  
39% did not**

## Has your child's SLT needs been...



## Length of wait for an assessment by a speech and language therapist

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12.5 % of respondents were waiting to be assessed at the time they took the survey. Of those who'd had an assessment:

- Approximately 1/3 said they waited less than 3 months
  - Another 1/3 waited less than 6 months
  - Another 1/3 waited between 6 months and 2 years
  
  - 1/3 chose to go privately.
  
  - A number of families described having to go to tribunal in order to have their child's SaLT needs recognised.
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## How long did you wait for an assessment by a SaL therapist?

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- **Three months and under - respondents' comments:**

“Not as long as I was initially advised as my son’s nursery chased his assessment as they were concerned about his progress. Approx. 3 months.”

“Initially about 8 weeks. Case was closed then reopened when he got ASD diagnosis... Assessment process at that point took nearly 18 months. More recently requested another assessment (4 years since the last) and that took 4 weeks.”

“We have had SaLT since my son was a baby.”

- **Three to six months:**

“6 months [and] now I have to attend an evening course before I can get an appointment with therapist.”

“Months, 4 plus plus!”

“The report that was carried out was very basic and didn’t reflect my son’s needs at all - we waited over two years for that.”

- **Six to twelve months:**

“After waiting over 11 months for even an initial appointment we had to Employ an independent therapist”

- **Over a year:**

“When son was in mainstream I waited 2 years ”

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## How long did you wait for an assessment by a SaL therapist? Continued

Other responses included:

“The local NHS SLT did not assess Oliver until he was 2 years old”

“We went to tribunal and moved county to ensure our child would receive speech and language therapy otherwise we knew there would be little chance”

“Initially assessed by VirginCare only as part of the tribunal process; they refused to assess before then”

“Too long! Have really only just started getting anywhere and he is 4 years old ”

“My daughter was assessed in a quiet room when her problems stem from Auditory processing disorder and therefore occur in classroom/busy situations. Somewhat predictably she was therefore discharged as having no problems.”

“Still waiting for a revised programme as the latest therapist has left.”

“Was receiving excellent therapy but had summer holidays and five weeks in new school and yet to be stated!”

“The first assessment was years ago, then yearly but nothing recently”

“I had to attend three appeals to get my son a statement for SaLT post reception age. He has a language disorder”

“Surrey has never arranged for a SaL therapist to see my child. When I got a statement for my child I appealed it and then had an independent Speech and Language assessment done. My son now has SaL therapy on his EHCP and this is provided by his independent specialist school.”

## Why did you seek private advice?

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1/3 of respondents sought assessment or diagnosis by a private therapist.

Reasons for taking up private advice included:

- NHS / State services was not personalised enough for their child's needs
- The wait on the NHS / State was too long
- There was no therapist or reports available
- Private reports used to support at tribunals

A green speech bubble with a white border and a tail pointing towards the bottom left. It contains a quote in white text.

“I went private because we weren't getting the support my son so desperately needed.”

Comments included:

“Went privately but the lady already works at the school so we could be assessed quickly.”

“We went private, no wait”

“When in nursery we paid for specialist nursery (little group) and got partial funding from 2nd test. No NHS SLT as seen by SLT based in nursery.”

“We had private assessment to inform EHCP. No input from NHS SLT as school did not identify the autism.”

“After waiting over 11 months for even an initial appointment we had to employ an independent therapist”

“We went private in the end as the report that was carried out was very basic and didn't reflect my son's needs at all- we waited over 2 years for that”

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## Why did you seek private advice? Continued

- **NHS / state services not personalised enough for child's needs**  
“Felt that the SaLT provision was poor and too formula driven. Not taking account of the child and their own learning and a rigid approach.”  
“I feel like I may need to seek private advice as the SaLT recommendations are inadequate with no direct intervention provided.”
- **The wait on the NHS / state was too long**  
“It has taken a very long time to get my daughter's issues even recognised by the school and doctors. We had waited plenty long enough and it was unfair to my daughter not to help her via the private system.”
- **There was no therapist or reports available on the NHS / State**  
“I needed a therapist who would get to know my child. Also we didn't have an EHCP at the time and therefore there was no therapy for him so we paid for a year privately. Now the state is picking up due to EHCP but the provision is not enough and we are going to tribunal.”  
“No report available for transfer meeting”

“Support seemed to stop when he started school.”

“Initially when our son was diagnosed with learning difficulties we paid for private lessons as there was such a long waiting list.”

“Faster, comes to school and home, more personal”

## Why did you seek private advice? Continued

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- Used private advice to support at tribunals

“For Tribunal as provision thru' education not entirely open and comprehensive”

“Evidence for tribunal”

“Had to seek re-assessment for tribunal as LA refused to re-assess.”

- Minimal details in NHS / State reports

“I feel like I may need to seek private advice as the SALT recommendations are inadequate with no direct intervention provided.”

- Got the child's needs wrong

“Change of diagnosis, previously had been ASD, he was not, he had SLI”

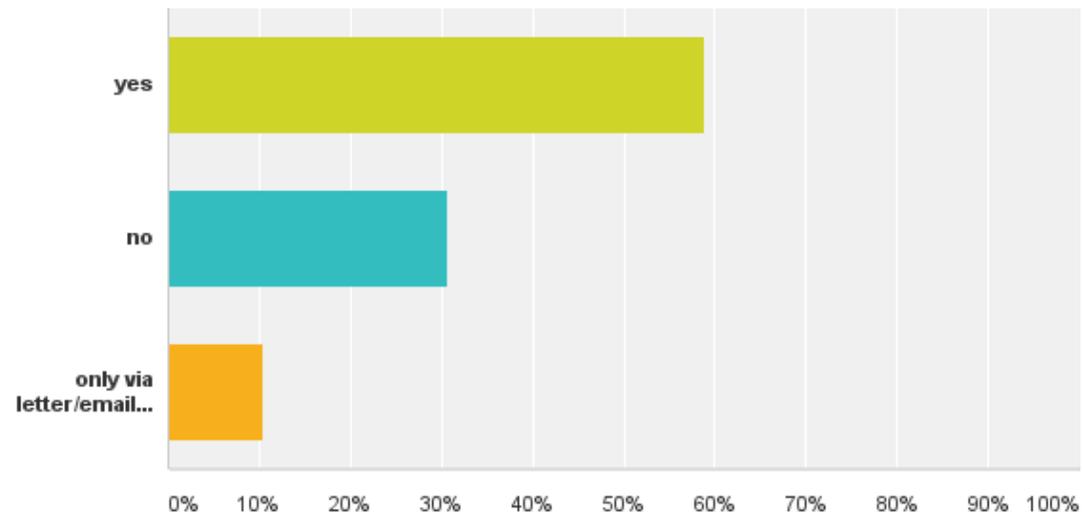
“My child's expressive language was at the 0.4 percentile but the Central Surrey Health therapist put in the report his language was in the average range and therefore he received no therapy, just a programme delivered by the TA. I went to Tribunal and now he receives an hour and a half therapy a week.”

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## About your child's speech and language therapy

61% of respondents said they knew who their child's speech and language therapist was.

We asked respondents if they had met them:



*"I know them  
but they change  
with astounding  
frequency"*

## What 'package' of speech and language therapy does your child receive?

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There were mixed responses from both therapy received in the private sector and from the NHS /State and we couldn't make a judgement about the amount of therapy received compared to the level of need.

Comments we received could be grouped broadly under the following headings (in order of response):

- Monthly or more frequent
  - None - children had either been seen and discharged with and without receiving therapy and those had never had any access to therapy
  - Didn't know or not informed / kept up to date
  - Privately which includes in-house therapy at non state maintained specialist schools
  - Less than monthly/Termly
  - Less than once a term
  - Privately which includes in house therapy at non state maintained specialist schools
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## What 'package' of speech and language therapy does your child receive? Continued

- **Didn't know or not informed / kept up to date**

"I don't know! She is seen at school but parents not kept informed as to how often she is seen or what strategies are in place."

"Not sure some within EHCP but rarely get feedback."

- **None**

"Despite being assessed as 'significantly' delayed the recommendations made rely on us as parents and a TA to provide support for my child. No direct intervention has been provided which is completely unsatisfactory."

"For feeding/dysphasia not seen for over a year. For communication about 3 sessions over 6 weeks then discharged despite permanent severe speech difficulty due to rare disease"

- **Monthly or more frequent**

"An alert programme every day run together with OT together with this class and 45 minutes a week in a group run by school SLT on site at his school"

"He only received 7 appointments and then his case was closed with a 6 month timescale imposed on me and nursery until we could try to re-refer him again. This is despite him having been assessed as having "severe delay" in all areas of speech language communication and complex needs related to this developmental area."

"Nothing now but it boosted her language a lot when it was done."

## What 'package' of speech and language therapy does your child receive? Continued

- **Less than monthly - Termly**

“Termly visits to school to supervise groups set up...lego therapy and language for thinking. Support for his two LSAs”

“Twice a term visits they do a report that the teachers follow in a special school it's not enough”

“His Statement states six sessions per term but this is currently being disputed by the SaL therapist.”

“Ongoing input from teacher/TA, termly assessment from SaLT at school. Uses pecs, Makaton and communication device.”

- **Less than once a term**

“Once/ twice a year ”

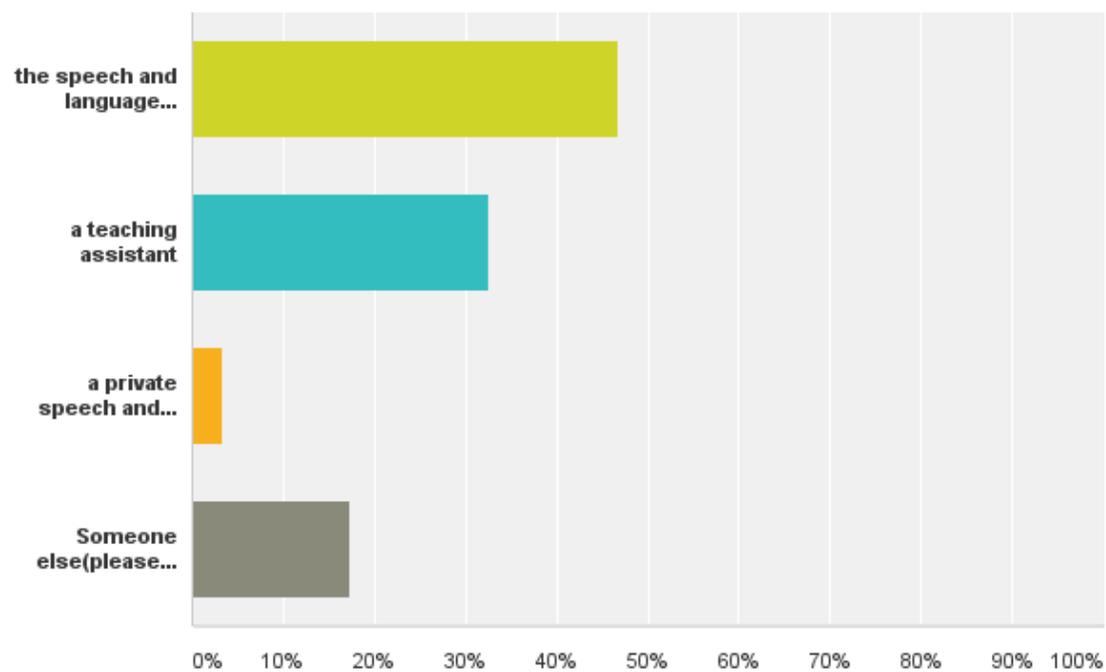
- **Privately**

“Nil from state. Six week bursts of once weekly from private.”

“As specified on EHCP, direct therapy/social, skills on a weekly basis provided by independent specialist school.”

“Fully integrated package within a specialist SLT school - Moor House. He has individual, group therapy. social comms SLT support during high language based lessons.”

## Who delivers your child's speech and language therapy?



## How often does the speech and language therapist see your child, and for how long? Continued

- Didn't know or not informed / kept up to date

"I don't know"

"Briefly, rarely."

"Not sure, not invited to class to see!"

- Never seen a therapist

"No direct intervention provided"

"Not at all "

- Discharged with or without therapy

"Yet to start at new school placement, not impressed!"

"As and when school or medical professional or myself request"

"Only for assessment, roughly 1 hour"

- Therapy delivered but not via a speech therapist

"delivered by staff in school. Should be delivered as directed by EHCP."

Only seen at school. Not sure of the frequency.

Not sure if a therapist actually visits my child.

Our daughter has moved to a new special needs school in September so SaLT agreements are still being ironed out but in state primary she received practically nothing.

## How often does the speech and language therapist see your child, and for how long? Continued

- Monthly or more frequent

“Three times a week for 20 minutes”

“Once a week. 20 mins 1:1 and 30 mins group therapy. ”

“45 mins in a group a week”

“An hour and a half each week.”

- Less than monthly - Termly

“Half termly”

“A block of therapy for about 6 weeks every 6 months”

- Less than once a term

“It used to be once a term or once a year”

“Less than once a term for 45mins”

“2 out of 3 terms ”

- Privately which includes in house therapy at non state maintained specialist schools

“Everyday - varies from 30 mins to 1 hour”

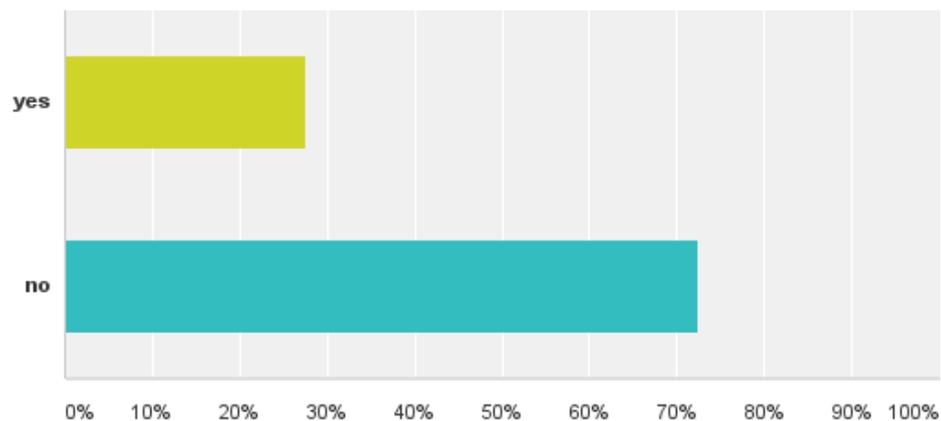
“Once a week, 1 hour - SaLT at independent specialist school”

“Once a week. I have yet to determine how long she actually spends with him as it isn't written in his EHCP which is why we are going to tribunal.”

“Each term for a few mins I believe except when requested.”

“Termly assessment”

## If your child is in an independent setting, do they employ an SLT?



Answer Choices	Responses
yes	27.59% 8
no	72.41% 21
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>



## Please tell us what you think of the speech and language therapy service

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Respondents comments fell under the following headings - with the most common responses first:

- The service that's delivered is generally good and helps
  - There isn't enough therapy on offer to meet needs and demand
  - The reports are too short and/or do not fully reflect needs as children are not fully assessed/thresholds too high
  - The service is inconsistent between areas and therapists
  - There is not enough feedback to parents/carers
  - Therapy is too impersonal and formula/package driven
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## Please tell us what you think of the speech and language therapy service Continued



- **There isn't enough therapy on offer to meet needs and demand**  
“Minimal - but the school make very good use of their limited resources ”  
“Not enough people to cover the service. Ever since my daughter was 5yrs old we've had to wait for SLT. She's now 15”

“It could be more often, we would certainly love more sessions”

“There is a very long wait to be seen and there does not seem to be a structured programme. It is left with teaching assistants to deliver”

- **There is not enough feedback to parents/carers**  
“Don't know. Not enough information is passed on to parents ”  
“They do not communicate with parents!”  
“I think the feedback from school is inadequate.”  
“Very slow, no information comes to parent unless they chase. Not proactive.”  
“Terrible, he was assisted without me being there and was told after the event.”

“Not enough resources. My child needs more therapy as she is completely non verbal. Parents not kept informed as to when she is seen or what strategies being used. I would also welcome ideas or things to try at home.”

## Please tell us what you think of the speech and language therapy service... Continued



- The service that's delivered is generally good and helps

“They are very valuable to children who need it”

“Our SsLT is good but they are overstretched and cannot give enough time to individual children”

“I think it's been amazing for my two boys with ASD in helping them interact with peers etc.”

“It is an excellent provision which really makes the difference, but is very impersonal and SaLTs change very frequently so have no time to establish better relationship with the child and know him really well. TAs are the ones who really deliver this service and either make it a success or not in each individual case.”

“I am very pleased that my son has been lucky enough to have had the same therapist for the last six years in school. The annual report I receive at review time is extensive and informative. The SaLT also attends parent consultations & contributes to them so overall I am very happy with the service my child receives currently.”

“I think the therapists are good, experienced and dedicated. They are overworked and overstretched, however, and often do not have enough time to give more therapy, plan bespoke therapy fitted to the individual child's needs, talk with parents etc.”

## Please tell us what you think of the speech and language therapy service Continued



- The service is inconsistent between areas and therapists

“There is a very long wait to be seen and there does not seem to be a structured programme. It is left with teaching assistants to deliver.”

“It feels that some families get better service than others if they make a fuss and demand input and feedback.”

“Mainstream experience: not integrated; not coordinated; no progress comparison; no consistency; insufficient provision.

Independent education: none of the above ”

“I was once told by a SaL therapist that my daughter who has a diagnosed chromosome condition couldn't talk because I gave her free access to her toys so she never learnt to ask for them.”

“I had a lot of dealings with the London Borough of Sutton SLT. Now my daughter has transferred to a school in Surrey and the SaLT is delivered with the school she attends, I have not had any dealings; which is a great shame.”

## Please tell us what you think of the speech and language therapy service Continued



- The reports are too short and /or do not fully reflect needs as children are not fully assessed /criteria is too high

“Long waiting lists. Poor reports. Too quick to discharge as only tested very minimal areas. Not enough personalised input, programme too general. Reports too general.”

“I am disappointed with the SaLT service. My adopted son was assessed 2-3 years ago and classed as within 'normal' percentile for his speech. He was clearly delayed at that time and now after a re assessment he is classed at 'Significantly' delayed. If the correct assessment had been provided 2-3 years ago and some intervention put in place he wouldn't be in the situation he is in now. He is suffering socially and emotionally which I believe is exacerbated by his communication difficulties.”

“Absolutely rubbish. Both my children were unable to communicate with speech without SaLT, but were turned down /still awaiting respectively. With just a few sessions of private SaLT per term they have both made amazing progress and are both now understandable even by people who haven't met them before.”

“I was being told his language was OK even though his expressive language was at the 0.4 percentile...”

## Please tell us what you think of the speech and language therapy service Continued



- Therapy is too impersonal and formula /package driven

“Not meeting my child's needs as recommendation of package does not apply to my child's ability”

“Good but too fixed in how they work”

“Very stretched and don't seemingly take into account parents views and knowledge of the child and the way different children learn. ”

“Individual therapists good but system very rigid 'we can only see you for a few visits' then have to be discharged despite having permanent issues due to disability. Relies on parents to do all the therapy themselves based on small amount of input from professionals.”

## What changes would you like to see made to the service?

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“I am happy with things, so far!”

“Lower case load for each SaLT so they can spend more time with each child to make a real difference.”

“The fact that all deaf children should see a therapist, not wait till they start to speak and problems arise.”

“More personal service, better links with parents, less turnover in SaLT staff, spend more time with the child to really make an impact.”

“More meetings with parents”

“Shorter waiting lists and better information about what they can offer in respect of social communication difficulties”

“To be seen quicker on referral ”

“An actual service that provides what is needed, reduce waiting times and stop cutting corners.”

“Much quicker initial assessment”

“I would like to see them working with children who have high functioning autism - working on their social skills, theory of mind, understanding etc. throughout their primary and secondary education. I would like Surrey to be arranging assessments when asked by parent so that parents do not have to have to commission their own independent assessment.”

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## What changes would you like to see made to the service?

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“Bring it back in house into the NHS or local authority and manage the service better, prioritise the therapy going to the children most in need. Supply clear information for parents, perhaps a good website which has easy to navigate information links and leaflets to enhance our understanding of how to put into practice the strategies recommended.”

“More done by speech and language therapist rather than unqualified school staff.”

“Assessments completed within 6 months. Also work over school holidays as my daughters was completed in July so no action until September.”

“Clearer criteria for when sessions would be appropriate. My daughter was signed off still only using two-word sentences at the age of 10.”

“More easily and quickly accessible, with funding for ALL children who would benefit.”

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## What changes would you like to see made to the service? Continued

“Needs to be more open and transparent about what is going on as parents are always the last to find out”

“I would like it funded by the NHS so the reports are more honest.”

“More transparency around access. More consistency and regularity about when you see a SLT ”

“More training for LSAs and parents.”

“More SaL therapists who specialise in deaf children.”

“More speech therapists. Early intervention and speech therapy by actual trained therapists (not just a few sessions with TAs as this caused problems) Shorter waiting lists Not automatically discharging after a certain number of sessions.”

“In mainstream schools speech and language I believe should be provided by a trained and qualified speech and language therapist. Contributing to a plan delivered by a teaching assistant is both unhelpful and ineffective for children.”



Thank you to all the parents and carers who took part in this research.

If you would like to discuss this report, please email  
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[www.familyvoicesurrey.org](http://www.familyvoicesurrey.org)

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