

Dear Parent/Guardian

Information about Speech and Language Support in school

We are writing to you as Dorset HealthCare's Children and Young People's Speech and Language Therapy Service (CYP SALT Service) is working in partnership with schools and families in a new way. This letter tells you about how we will be doing this.

BCP Council, Dorset Council and NHS Dorset have been working together to introduce a new way of supporting children's speech, language and communication, this is called The Balanced System ©. This means that children will have access to the right support, from the right person at the right time.

Your child's school will have a Link Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) from September 2024. The SLT, SENCO and school staff will work together. There will be support at universal, targeted and specialist levels. Children will receive support that meets their individual needs.



The Balanced System © M Gascoigne (<https://pathway.thebalancedsystem.org/>)

Universal support	This is for all pupils in the class. The speech and language therapist or assistant will support the school with helpful advice, resources, and signposting to useful websites. These things will help all children and young people with their communication skills.
Targeted support	This is for pupils who need targeted help with a known need. This support is provided in partnership with others. Support may be led by school staff, the speech and language therapist, or the speech and language therapy assistant. This might be a group, using approaches in the classroom, or one-to-one activities. Most children with a known need will find this level and universal support will meet their needs.
Specialist support	A small number of children will need more than universal and targeted support. They will have a speech, language or communication need that cannot be met within existing interventions. This specialist support may be led by school staff, the speech and language therapy team or other professionals e.g., Specialist Teachers. This level of support will be offered at different times, as needed, as part of their support plan.

The school's Link SLT will have regular meetings with the school. They will talk about pupils with identified or suspected speech, language and/or communication difficulties. Together they will agree how to support that pupil best.

How will I know if my child is identified as having difficulties?

Sometimes the next step in assessing the best type of support is for your child to be observed by the Link SLT whilst they are in class or playing in the playground. If targeted level support is identified for your child, your child's teacher will let you know and give you information about it. Some children will be offered an individual appointment if they need a more in-depth assessment. This will take place in school and during the school day. Your child's school will notify you about this. You are always welcome to attend with your child or speak with the therapist before or afterwards.

What happens next?

When we work directly with a child at the specialist level, we will register the child with our service for an episode of care. We will work with your child, your family, school, and other key people in their life. We will lead or support an intervention or short series of interventions. Once these are completed and ongoing support is in place, we will close the episode of care. Your child's school will monitor their progress. If more support is needed in the future, your child's school will talk to their Link SLT and agree the next steps. Most children will not need specialist level support. They will be well supported at universal and targeted levels.

If your child needs to be registered with our service to access the specialist level of support, we enter their details and record our contacts with them on an Electronic Patient Record (EPR) system called SystmOne. This system is also used by their GP. It has been specially designed to hold your child's health information confidentially in one place. Please see the enclosed leaflet about your child's electronic health record. At the start of each school year we are asking all parents/carers to give consent for their child to be supported in this new way of working.

Please complete the form (this could either on the next page or an electronic one depending on how schools collect consent)

Children and Young People's Speech and Language Therapy

CONSENT, CONFIDENTIALITY AND SHARING INFORMATION

Consent is a continuing process rather than a one-off decision. You will have continuing opportunities to ask further questions and to review your decisions.

Please only return this form should you wish to opt out of any of the below to enable us to amend your child's electronic patient record to reflect your decision.

1. Consent to Children and Young People's Speech and Language Therapy Support and Intervention

Written information has been given to you about the Speech and Language Therapy Service and how we will be working in schools.

If you **do not** wish us to provide support and intervention to your child, please tick this box. ☐
and return the form to your child's school.

2. Consent to share information with health and non-NHS professionals

We may wish to share information about your child's speech, language, or communication skills with

- The staff at your child's school
- Any other professionals who are providing support for your child e.g., Educational Psychologists, Paediatrician, Specialist teachers

We will only share the relevant information that each organisation needs to know to allow them to support your child appropriately.

If you **do not** wish us to share relevant information about your child, please tick this box. ☐
and return the form to your child's school.

Please be aware that there may be times where we might share your information without your consent. This will only happen when we are legally required to do so, or the law allows us to, to protect your child or other people.

To be completed by the person with parental responsibility*

Full Name:

Signed:

Relationship to patient:

Date:

* You are entitled to agree to treatment on behalf of a child up to age 18 for whom you have what is called "parental responsibility". For further information and advice on parental responsibility please visit the gov.uk website <https://www.gov.uk/parental-rights-responsibilities>.

Please only return this form if you wish to opt out of any of the above to your child's school.