

SCHOOL CASE STUDY:

Commissioning Speech, Language and Communication Services

AN EXAMPLE OF COMMISSIONING PRACTICE IN SCHOOLS

ROLE: SPECIALIST TEACHER (SECONDARY SCHOOL)

What was commissioned?

We were looking for a speech language therapist (SLT) to deliver services to our special support class for students with literacy and language needs. All students in this special support class had statements or Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and were allocated places through Local Authority admissions. Most had speech language and communication support (SLC) as part of their provision.

What process did you use?

Due to time constraints we utilised our Local Authority (LA) speech and language service to find an SLT that was available. We commissioned this SLT's time to deliver direct intervention for students and advice to staff. In addition the school has an allocation of time from the same Local Authority SLT service for the main school caseload.

How has it gone?

The SLT works with students in our Specialist Support Centre during the time that we commission. She comes in half a day per week to both deliver direct intervention for students and accompanying administration. Using the commissioned time to do both can be a challenge for the SLT and the school, as it does result in a small proportion of contact time with students.

Progress against SLT targets is monitored by the SLT and fed back to the SENCO. Assessing impact of the intervention against functional language skills in the curriculum and in learning is harder.

Please Note:

This case study was developed from an interview with schools staff BEFORE TCT's 'One Stop Guide' for schools commissioning speech and language therapy services was written. Its inclusion is to demonstrate an example of schools commissioning practice. It does not provide an example of how practice may/ should look after using TCT's 'One Stop Guide'.

What have you learned from the commissioning process?

If we had more time and the freedom to put a commissioning advertisement out to tender, we would have factored in experience of working within a mainstream school and the KS 3/4 curriculum when looking for an SLT. We've found this to be a challenge as the SLT that we've commissioned is more familiar with specialist settings and clinic based work, so does not work in the classrooms alongside subject teachers so her recommendations and targets are not always closely enough linked to the development of skills in the context of the curriculum. Ideally we would have liked the SLT to observe in class and work alongside subject teachers, to develop staff understanding and expertise, and improve functional skills in the learning environment.

Ideally I would like to see schools more involved and working collaboratively with Local Authority SLT services in training, for example training on school processes and tips on working within a classroom environment. This would have a positive long term effect on outputs from the SLT and relations with school staff.

With regards to Local Authorities (LA), our LA commissions a consultative monitoring service for SLTs to work in mainstream schools. There are increasing numbers of pupils/ students with complex SLCN in mainstream schools who require direct and specialist interventions as a provision in their statement/ EHCP and this cannot be met from a consultative monitoring service. So I would like to see Local Authorities carrying out more detailed audit of the caseload to inform commissioning, ensuring that the commissioned service had the capacity to deliver specialist interventions as well as more general consultative services.