

Bercow: Ten Years On

Audit of Local Offers: how do these signpost support for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN): A Summary

As part of the evidence collection for *Bercow: Ten Years On* an audit was carried out on a selection of Local Offers. The Local Offer is an expectation of the SEND reforms of 2014: each Local Authority should have a central place online for parents to find information about SEND provision in their area including education providers, social groups, health services and third sector organisations. The Communication Trust has created a single Local Offer webpage which is designed to supply information about services and resources available to families with children who have SLCN. This information is included in the Local Offer of 124 Local Authorities.

Firstly the responses from the *Bercow: Ten Years On* Parents and Carers Survey were used to see if any participants had referred to the Local Offer. Of the seven parents (1.1% of those who had completed the survey) who did, six stated they could not find the information they needed and one said they could get the information but not the support. Two parents reported that the Local Offer did not give them useful information so they had to make contact with other people to try and access the information they needed.

Using the post codes of these participants, where provided, we looked at the Local Offers from their area along with the Local Offers from another 14 regions. A mixture of city, rural and coastal locations were selected, representing a range of socio-economic status.

The Local Offers were explored for information about support available for SLCN. Further information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Search Criteria for Local Offer Audit
Website link/information services regarding SLCN
Information about local speech and language therapy services
Information about Independent speech and language therapy services
SLCN specialist provision in schools for example resource base/specialist school
Information about programmes/interventions for SLCN
Information about or service providing specialist equipment such as communication aids
Information about/links to support groups for parents/carers

Local groups for children and young people
Information about impact/outcome data
Summary statement about the overall Local Offer- ease of use, accuracy of information

The key findings from the audit were:

- The majority of the Local Offers were difficult to navigate. None of them had a specific heading around communication or SLCN resources and so a great deal of searching had to be done.
- Much of the information was found by typing into the search function. This would mean that parents would need to know what they were searching for before using the Local Offer in order to use the right search terms.
- Most of the Local Offers listed information about NHS speech and language therapy services (16 out of 20) however often this information was not clearly labelled and had to be found by using the search function.
- In many cases the search function returned a long list of responses, many of which were unrelated to the search (for example searching for NHS speech and language therapy services and getting information about adapted cycling).
- There was little information on SLCN interventions, and what there was had to be searched for so parents would need to know what they were looking for in order to input the correct search terms.
- None of the information about support for carers was SLCN specific.
- All of the Local Offers had links to social activities but none were SLCN specific. In some cases you could filter the responses by type of difficulty but the results were not always accurate. The Local Offers used various terms to describe SLCN (communication difficulty, communication impairment) in these filters. In one case the link to Leisure Activities directed the user to the local tourism website so the user would need to start searching all over again.
- All of the Local Offers had links to local schools but only 8 out of 20 had information about special schools or resource bases supporting SLCN.
- Seven local offers referred to specialist equipment; however in some cases this was only a link to a report or information about specialist equipment not how to access it.
- None of the Local Offers made any reference to the impact of the interventions.

This audit showed that on the majority of the Local Offers it was difficult to find information about SLCN, it required using the search function and often the results that were returned were not accurate. Sometimes users were then directed to another website where they needed to resume searching again. Many of the Local Offers were long lists of services that were not well filtered. Although most of the Local Offers



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provided information about NHS speech and language therapy; not as many provided information about independent speech and language therapists, interventions to support SLCN or specialist equipment. They all had links to support for carers and leisure activities but very few of these were SLCN specific support.