

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 16 SEPTEMBER 2003

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY CONTRACT

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1** To seek approval for an extension of the contract with Ayrshire and Arran Primary Care NHS trust.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Since the early 1990s education authorities have commissioned speech and language therapy (SALT) services from the NHS to support children's educational progress. This arrangement followed a governmental change which moved SALT services from councils to the health service in order to put them on a similar basis to other therapeutic services such as physiotherapy. As a consequence, councils were required to purchase SALT services from the health service.

- 2.2** East Ayrshire inherited a contract between the former Strathclyde Region and Ayrshire and Arran Primary Healthcare Trust. This has been the basis of service provision since that time. In line with the contractual requirements the only uplift of costs has been in line with inflation.

3. THE MAIN ISSUE

- 3.1** Since 1996 there have been significant changes in the way special educational needs is managed, mainly through the legal presumption of mainstream education introduced by the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000. However, more significantly there has been a rise in the number of children requiring speech and language therapy. This is due to a rise in the numbers of children with communication disorders, particularly related to the autistic spectrum. Where speech and language therapy is provided, parents are expressing a clear wish to see the extent and depth of provision to be enhanced. In summary, it is a highly valued service.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1** In order to extend provision it is proposed to ask the NHS to provide an additional speech and language therapist and an additional speech and language therapy assistant. The therapist would be based at the Crosshouse Communication Centre but would work in support of establishments across East Ayrshire. The Speech and Language Therapy Assistant would work across East Ayrshire. This would represent a 40% enhancement of present services.
- 4.2** This enhancement will have an impact in the following areas:
- a greater number of children will be able to benefit from the service
 - the number and duration of SALT sessions will be able to be enhanced for individual children.

- enhance support for parents
- improve services available to voluntary agencies
- enhance inter-disciplinary working and co-ordinated planning to the direct benefit of individual children

4.3 This is a very important and valued service for parents of children with special educational needs. East Ayrshire would wish to seek the same involvement of parents in reviewing and evaluating this area of provision that we use for our own Council services.

5. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This change in arrangements will require an amendment to the existing speech and language therapy contract, and will therefore require extensive consultation with Legal Services.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 This proposal will require an additional expenditure of £44,000. This, together with the Council's existing expenditure on the contract of £105,000 in Financial Year 2003/04 will bring the annual value of the contract to £149,000 at current rates.

6.2 The Council has been allocated additional resources by the Scottish Executive specifically for enhancement of Speech and Language Therapy.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that Members :

- (i) approve an enhancement to the current speech and language therapy contract in line with the proposals in this report;
- (ii) ask the Director of Educational and Social Services and Head of Legal Services to conclude a variation of the contract with Ayrshire and Arran Primary Care NHS Trust; and
- (iii) otherwise note the contents of this report

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services

GRS/GRS
28/8/03

Members requiring further information should contact Graham Short, Head of Service: Quality Improvement, (01563-576089).

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Implementation Officer: Graham Short