



# **Specialist Inclusion Support Service Annual Report for the academic year 2023-24**

## **Communication and Learning Difficulties Team - including the Speech, Language and Communication Disorder Team**

Ruth Beeston – CLD Team Manager

Eileen McGrath – CLD Assistant Team Manager

Hilary Peace – SLCD Outreach Team Lead

Childrens Services and Skills Directorate | SEND 0 – 25 Service: Specialist Inclusion  
Support Service | Communication and Learning Difficulties Team | Elmwood Place  
37 Burtons Way | Birmingham | B36 0UG | Tel: 0121 704 6690  
Email: [specialistinclusionsupportservices@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:specialistinclusionsupportservices@solihull.gov.uk)

## Staffing

Role	Full-time equivalent	Number of staff	Vacancies
Team Manager	1.0	1	None
Assistant Team Manager- CLD traded service	1.0	1	None
Lead for SLCD	0.6	1	None
Specialist CLD teachers	2.4	4	0.5 fte teacher joining September 2024
SLCD ARC and outreach teachers	2.9	4	Full time teacher joining September 2024
SLCD ARC and outreach ISPs	4.4	3	Vacancy 1.6 fte
<b>Total</b>	<b>12.3fte</b>	<b>14</b>	

### Key points:

- A new Team Manager, Ruth Beeston, was appointed in January 2024.
- An Assistant Manager, Eileen McGrath was appointed in September 2023.
- Hilary Peace was appointed as the SLCD Outreach Team Leader in September 2023.
- At the start of 2023, a change was made to the CLD and SLCD team structures which saw them join to become a larger unit and this has further developed over the last year, with the addition of a CLD Assistant Manager and a Lead Professional of the SLCD team.
- A full-time SLCD Specialist Teacher and a part time CLD Specialist Teacher will be joining the team in September 2024 to replace staff who have left the team. There is a vacancy for a full time SLCD ISP and recruitment will begin September 24.
- There has been a SLCD teacher vacancy, covered by the team manager and a fixed term contract specialist teacher, at Valley ARC in the summer term.
- Recruitment to an ARP and Outreach ISP role has been difficult in the summer term and the post will be readvertised in September 24.

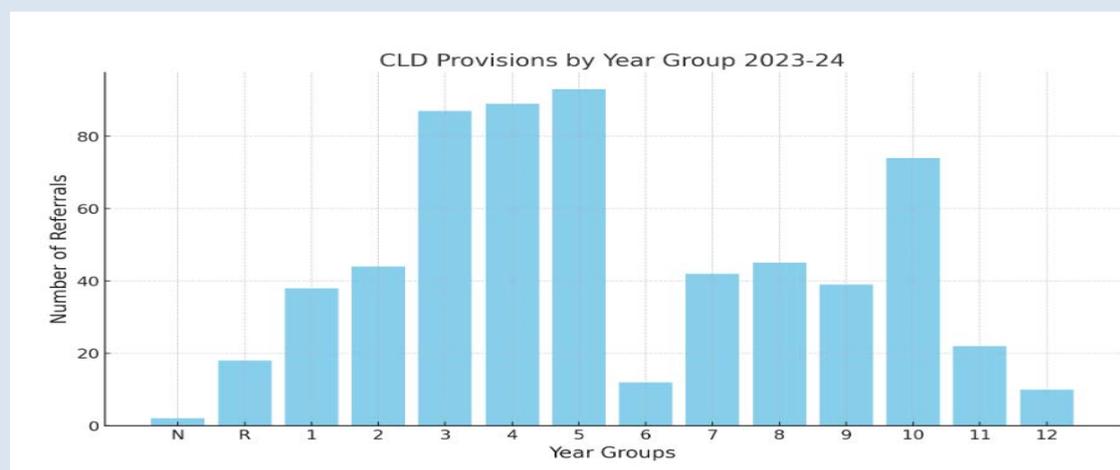
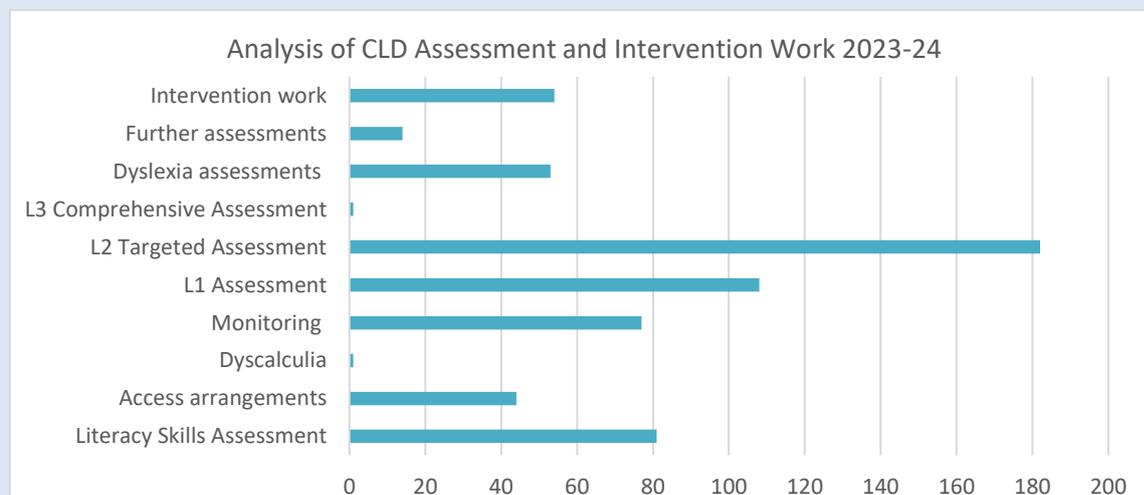
## Caseload Information

	No. of children open to CLD Team in year 2023-24	Number with an EHCP	EHCP under assessment	Number at SEN Support	No SEN or not on COP	Not known	No of new referrals
<b>Communication and Learning Difficulties Team</b>	622	113	26	347	125	5	310

### Key points:

#### Traded work (CLD Team)

- 2023-24 saw an increase in CLD team up-front buyback of 22 hours.
- In 2023-24, 10 schools increased their hours; 4 reduced their hours.
- Three settings were either new to the CLD team, or returning after a period away.
- This year, the workflow process has recorded 615 provisions for the CLD team.
- Access arrangement requests, Level 1 and Level 2 assessments remain the most frequently requested.
- 358 boys have received assessments in comparison with 257 girls.



## Key points:

### Non-traded work (SLCD Outreach Team)

Figures from July 23- July 24

Total Number of children on SLCD caseload 2023 – 24) 2.7.2024	Number of high needs requests accepted	Number with EHC	Number of CYP at SEN Support	Number of new referrals
325	83	117	208	44

- There have been 3 more referrals from Private SALT than from NHS SALT.
- A meeting was held by SLCD Team and Community SALT to review the pathway into the team, but this did not boost referrals. Community SALT are presuming schools will refer pupils to the SISS SLCD team if support is required, rather than referring to the team directly when a speech and language disorder or a severe need is identified, as has historically been the case
- The criteria and process to access the SLCD Team support will be reviewed this next academic due to the issues with waiting time for access to NHS Speech, Language and Therapy assessment and diagnosis of a speech, language, communication disorder.
- All children on the SLCD caseload transitioning into either reception, a new setting at KS2 or KS3 were supported during autumn term 2023 and in the summer term of 2024. Transition support will continue into Autumn term 2024.
- SLCD outreach ISPs have been timetabled to support Valley ARC due to staffing absences during the summer term.
- 1 new SLCD teacher has received intensive CPD support from the team since January 24-July 24 which has enabled children who were on the teams' caseload, but schools had not requested high needs support who had not been re-referred from schools, to be monitored.
- The SLCD team have worked closely with the SISS admin team to streamline systems and processes in place.

## Key points:

### Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs) for children with Speech, Language and Communication Disorders

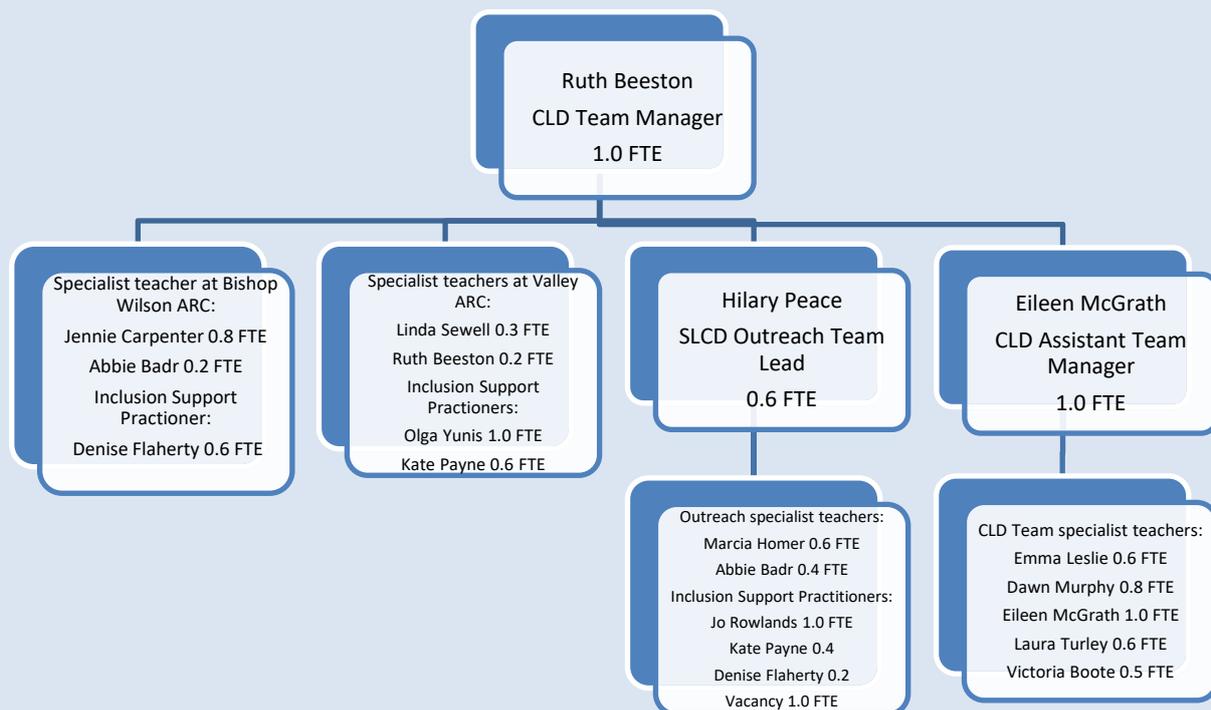
- In 2023-24 there have been 5 pupils on roll at Valley ARC and 6 at the Bishop Wilson provision.
- Valley ARP will be decommissioned in July 2024, when the current year 5 cohort move to Key Stage 3.
- A panel was held in May 2024 and 3 children (1 with an EHCP and one with an application in process) will join Bishop Wilson ARP in September 24. An additional panel will be held in the autumn term to fill the remaining 4 places and the SLCD outreach team currently have several children whom they believe may meet the criteria for an ARP place from January 2025.

- The number of children accessing ARP places in a timely way has been impacted by the wait for children to see NHS Speech and Language Therapists- the current wait time is around 2 years. The criteria for referrals will be amended this year to take this into consideration.
- There are 3 year 6 leavers in the SLCD ARPs who will all be joining mainstream schools for Key Stage 3.
- Three children at Valley ARP have an EHCP in place and one at Bishop Wilson ARP is currently undergoing an assessment of needs.
- The progress and attainment of pupils in the ARC is tracked using a variety of tools, some of which allow very small steps of improvement to be measured. Generally speaking, the children are making commendable gains in all aspects of literacy and language and, in most cases, maths too. The ARC End of Term reports detail progress and attainment very clearly.

## Key developments and achievements for 2023-24

### Restructuring of CLD and SLCD teams

To create a larger team, and to bring it more in line with other SISS teams, the CLD and SLCD teams have joined and are now under the leadership of the CLD team manager, assisted by 2 Team Leads.



**2023-24:**

### **SLCN Universal training**

Over half the schools in Solihull have now accessed the SLCN universal whole school training. The training has been funded by the DBV project and has involved a CLD teacher delivering 2 sessions of 90 minutes to the whole school staff. The training has received incredibly positive feedback from teachers, support staff and senior leaders. The rest of the schools have been encouraged to book the training before Easter 2025. Following on from the training, schools will be invited to develop the role of a 'Communication Lead' within their schools and training for this will be held in the Autumn term.

### **Intervention and teaching approaches for language and literacy**

The CLD traded team have immersed themselves in research and training in a range of teaching approaches for language and literacy. This led to each of them developing two training packages which were shared with the wider CLD team. From this, specialist teachers in the team are now able to make recommendations for schools to use these methods in their settings as part of their 'graduated approach'. Training modules were developed, with associated resources, which will be used as central and traded training packages in 2024-25 and beyond. The approaches can also be used with pupils linked to the traded and non-traded elements of the team. The approaches and methods covered were:

- Word finding
- Developmental Language Disorder
- Motor skills
- Colourful Semantics
- English as an Additional Language
- Alphabet Arcs
- Cued Spelling
- Quality First Teaching/adjustments for Language Difficulties
- Kelly and Phillips 'Conquering Literacy'
- Blanks level questioning

### **Collaborative work on the Graduated Approach**

Like all of the SISS teams, the CLD and SLCD teams have been continuing work updating the Solihull Graduated Approach as we continue to develop the SISS website. This work will continue into the new school year but initial feedback from schools has been highly positive.

### **Continued development of dyslexia assessments**

The CLD team endeavour to keep up to date with ongoing changes to the guidance on SpLD assessments, usually made by SASC. This year, new tests have been bought, as updates and changes to requirements occur and training undertaken to ensure that the reports meet the needs of the students being assessed. Eileen McGrath has undertaken a Level 7 qualification to enable her to identify learners with dyslexia, which will be invaluable to the team moving forward. Next Year 2 other members of the team will begin this course too.

## Traded service: CLD Team

### Buyback

Number of schools purchasing CLD team support in for 2024/25 and for next academic year through an annual Service Level Agreement (SLA):

Year	Primary	Secondary	Independent	Total schools	Specialist Settings	Total
2022-23	25	9	1	35	4	39
2023-24	25	9	1	35	4	39
2024-25	27	10	2	39	8	47

### Key points:

- For September 2024, Castlewood School (specialist SEMH setting), St George and Theresa Catholic Primary School and Kingswood Independent School have commissioned hours from the CLD team. In addition, the Virtual School have increased their hours from 210 to 360 hours.
- Two schools have ceased their CLD contracts for the new year: Coppice Academy have decided to buy within their MAT and Forest Oak.
- Twelve existing schools have increased their annual hours and ten have reduced their buyback.
- The overall change to CLD team SLA hours for the new academic year is 22.
- Additionally, the team has covered 82 hours of spot-purchased assessment time.

### Training

#### Centrally based training

Course name	Delivered to:	Total number of participants trained	% graded course overall good or outstanding
New SENCO training	New SENCOs and those new to Solihull	10	100%
Dyscalculia Training	Teachers and Learning Support Staff	4	100%
TA toolboxes	Learning support staff	9	100%

#### Comments from delegates:

*'Excellent Dyscalculia course giving a good insight, I have taken away a range of strategies and resources. Thank you!'*

*'Amazing and inspiring Dyslexia training! Thank you so much!'*

*'Very knowledgeable and informative Dyslexia training!'*

### Traded training (out of school's SLA hours)

Course name	Delivered to:	Total number of participants trained	% graded course overall good or outstanding
Access Arrangements: Training for Readers, Scribes and PAs	Light Hall Learning support assistants and SENCO	14	100%
Quality First teaching	Hockley Heath School	10	100%
Dyslexia Training: Parts 1 & 2	Coppice Academy	30	100%
	Marston Green Infant Academy	31	100%
	Tudor Grange Academy Kingshurst	13	100%
Introduction to Dyslexia	Light Hall Teaching Assistants	13	100%

### Commissioned and bespoke training

Course name	Delivered to:	Total number of participants trained	% graded course overall good or outstanding
Introduction to Dyslexia and dyscalculia	Education Inclusion Service	23	100%
Universal whole SLCN training	32 schools	400+	100%

#### Comments from delegates:

*'So many useful strategies, explanations and tools to help our children further!'*

*'I enjoyed the research based content of the presentation. Very clear delivery and well paced!'*

*'I enjoyed this course and found it useful to bring awareness of SLCN and now as a TA I can help with this in the classroom.'*

*'Very informative, particularly interesting to learn about DLD as I had not been aware of this before. Good use of tasks for engagement. I will be able to now implement strategies. '*

### Language Link – training and support (delivered by Marcia Homer)

#### During 2023-2024:

- A Primary Newsletter has been sent to school each term highlighting SLCN and the impact on pupils in the educational setting.
- 23 schools subscribed to Infant Language Link.
- 20 schools subscribed to Junior Language Link
- 1 school subscribed to secondary Language Link.

#### Infant Language Link

- 13 of the 23 subscribed schools have carried out assessments with their children.

**Reception scoring – Percentage of students passed:**

Concepts	Verb Tenses	Instructions	Pronouns	Negatives	Questions	Verbal Reasoning
72%	74%	78%	<b>Not Scored</b>	73%	70%	<b>Not Scored</b>

- The data shows the 3 main areas of needed identified in reception children.
- 30% of the children assessed find **questions** challenging.
- 28% of the children assessed find **concepts** challenging.
- 27% of the children assessed find **negatives** challenging.

**Infant Scoring– Percentage of students passed:**

Concepts	Verb Tenses	Instructions	Pronouns	Negatives	Questions	Verbal reasoning	Association
57%	68%	70%	69%	64%	65%	73%	72%

- The data shows the 3 main areas of need identified in years 1 and 2.
- 43% of the children assessed find **concepts** challenging.
- 36% of the children assessed find **negatives** challenging.
- 35% of the children assessed find **questions** challenging.

**Junior Language Link**

- 15 of the 20 schools subscribed to Junior Language Link carried out assessments with their children.

**Junior Scoring– Percentage of students passed:**

Concepts	Verb Tenses	Negatives	Verbal Reasoning	Association	Complex Sentences	Narrative Inferences
76%	74%	75%	74%	70%	70%	72%

- The data shows the main areas of need identified in Key Stage 2.
- 30% of the children assessed find **associations** and **complex sentences** challenging.
- 28% of the children assessed find **narrative inferences** challenging.
- 26% find children find **verb tenses** and **verbal reasoning** challenging.

Three Supporting and Developing Language Link sessions took place this academic year, one per term.

- Autumn Term 2023 - This session took place at Solihull Council House with only 2 delegates attending. It was thought that the low attendance, after the success of the previous session in Summer 2023, may be due to the change in venue and the accessibility. However, parking permits were offered to support with this.
- Spring Term 2024 – This session took place at Sans Souci. Unfortunately, only 2 delegates attended this session.
- Summer 2024 – This session took place online due to the low number of uptake. 2 delegates attended.
- It has been decided that these sessions will not now take place due to low uptake.

### **Secondary Language Link**

- Meetings have taken place between Marcia Homer and 4 secondary schools this academic year to share the Secondary Language Link assessment tool and to raise the profile and benefits of the assessment tool being used to identify pupils with SLCN.
- A Secondary Newsletter aimed at how SLCN impacts Secondary school children has been developed this academic year.

## Evaluation of 2023-24

### CLD Team key points:

- This academic year saw a new assistant team manager from September and a team manager in January. One experienced member of staff returned from maternity leave in January 2024 and one member of staff returned from a period of absence due to an operation, in March 2024.
- Initially, we were able to cover spot purchase; however due to the need to try and cover absences, we were unable to accept any additional work after the Easter break. This was frustrating for some settings, but perhaps served as a reminder that many schools who have reduced the number of hours purchased 'up-front' may need to reconsider their SLAs in future.
- Feedback from the SISS end of year survey indicated that 100% of schools would rate the service they have received this year from the CLD team as 'good' or 'very good'.
- 94% of school staff and 100% of parents rate the support received from the SLCD team as good or better; we have been impacted by the waiting times for Speech and Language Services and we will be revising our pathways next year.
- 100% of parents rated the support from the SLCD ARCs as very good.
- Comments from SENCOs and Headteachers have stated that they valued:

*'Informal professional discussions around SEND issues. Support in difficult meetings. Thorough reports which I wouldn't have time to do. Access arrangements. Critical friend approach to challenge what we do as a school.'*

*'Excellent use of time - feels like we get good value from these hours. Reports which have standardised test scores which are helpful as evidence for seeking further support and identifying very specific needs and a greater understanding of needs.'*

*'Eileen has carried out assessments, staff training and SENCO courses. We have had dyslexia training and SPLD training - all really valuable! All amazing and helpful - Eileen is fab! She has really gone above and beyond to help our school and to help me as a new SENCO!'*

- Outreach SLCD Inclusion Support Practitioners have focused on the upskilling of staff and parents, improving outcomes for the children and families. Parents have stated that they valued:

*'All over care and support.'*

*'The recommendations given were valued.'*

- Survey feedback from those involved with the SLCD team has been overwhelmingly positive with SENCOs most valuing:

*'ISP block of work with the children has been great. Good communication with us and parents.'*

*'Support for individual pupils and support for staff working with these pupils.'*

## SLCD ARC key points:

- After period of change to the staffing and to the management structure of the CLD/SLCD teams, staffing will now be more settled and consistent as the new school year begins.
- The staff in both ARPs work closely with mainstream staff to ensure consistency of support and provision.
- Valley ARP is now entering the final year of running before being de-commissioned. The provision has been re-located to a new room within the school.
- Bishop Wilson ARP is to welcome new children in September 2024 following a successful panel held in May 24.
- Bishop Wilson ARP teaching has been observed to be excellent by SISS managers and Ofsted, and best practice is now being shared with other provisions in the Local Authority
- Two parents of children in the ARCs completed the end of year SISS survey, both rating the service of the ARPs as 'very good'.
- One parent comment that they most valued: 'The onsite and individual support that is tailored to each child's specific needs. Being on hand to support guide the children and help with the support each child needs in the class and support with resources for their Individual learning needs.' Another parents stated that they valued, 'Everything!'
- One parents expressed their wish that Valley ARP was to remain open and also that there was a SLCD secondary ARP in the county.

## Priorities for 2023-24

### Key points:

- Continuing Professional Development: this will continue across the team as we continue to upskill new staff and support staff to complete further qualifications.
- Develop our team knowledge of assistive technology and to share widely with schools.
- Recruitment of an ISP to the SLCD team.
- To continue further collaboration between the CLD, ARP and SLCD sub teams.
- SLCD team to raise the profile of secondary Language Link in Secondary school next academic year.
- To review new SLCN pathway and processes and allocations
- To develop DLD skills and knowledge within the team and update resources/training relating to this.
- To continue panels and review criteria for the Bishop Wilson ARP.
- To ensure practice links to inclusion and is consistently good/excellent within the ARPs.
- Increase members of staff with APC within the CLD team.
- To ensure buy back and review workflow for traded CLD team.
- To train each school to have a Communication Lead.
- To increase the support offered to parents.
- To continue to develop and update assessments offered by the CLD team to meet local demand.
- To review SPLD and SLCD pathway