



ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

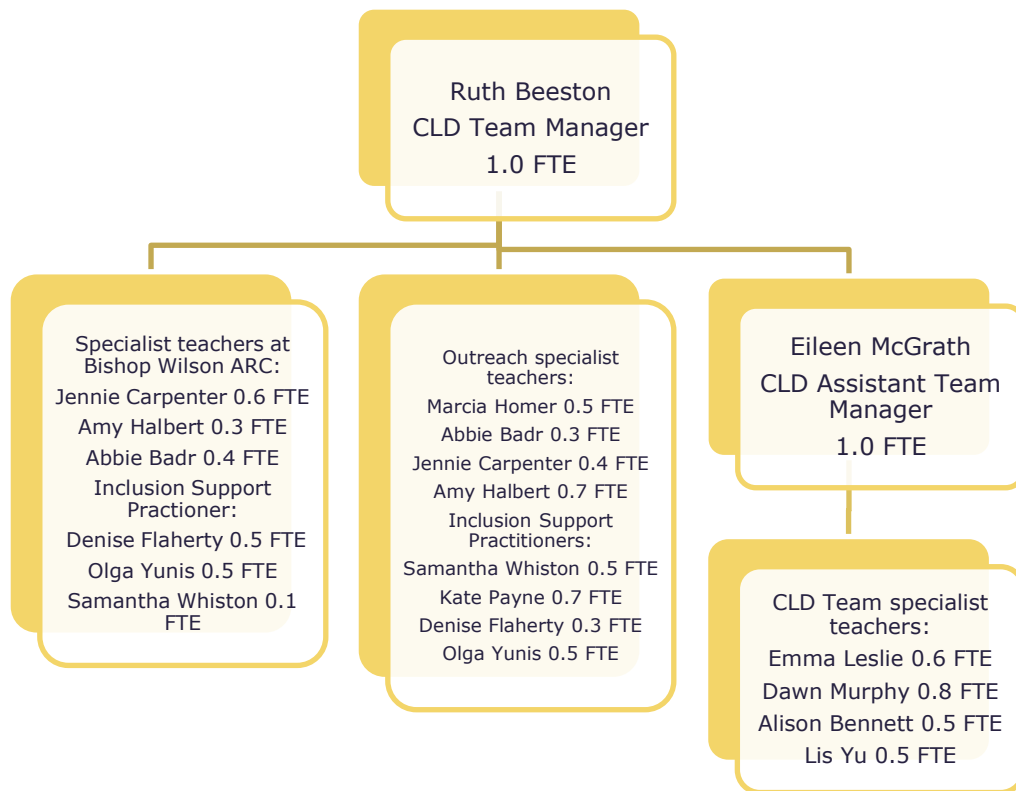
**Specialist Inclusion Support Service
Communication and Learning Team
Including the Speech, Language and
Communication High Needs Team**

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1. STAFFING STRUCTURE

Role	FTE	Staff in Post	Vacancies
Team Manager	1.0	1	0
Assistant Team Manager (CLD Traded Service)	1.0	1	0
Specialist CLD Teachers	2.4	4	0
SLC HN ARC & Outreach Teachers	2.4	3	0
SLC HN ARC & Outreach ISPs	3.8	4	0
Total	10.6	13	0



KEY POINTS

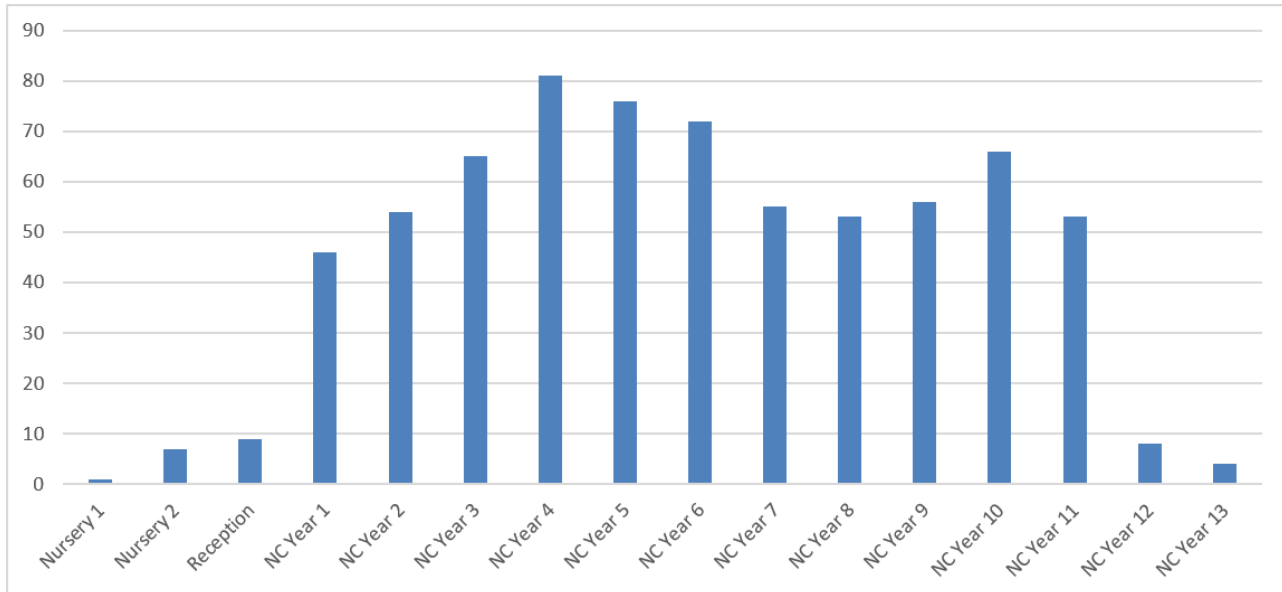
- The **Communication and Learning Difficulties** (CLD) Team continues to be led by Ruth Beeston (Team Manager) and Eileen McGrath (Assistant Team Manager). Eileen leads the traded service, while Ruth manages the High Needs Speech, Language and Communication (SLC HN) Team and oversees the team.
- Collaboration** between the CLD and High Needs SLC Teams has continued to strengthen, supporting a more integrated and consistent service offer.

1. CASELOAD INFORMATION – CLD TRADED TEAM

- **Increased Buyback:** Schools, settings and partner agencies purchased an additional **177 hours** of CLD support compared with the previous academic year.
- **Changes in Engagement:** **Eleven** schools/settings increased their commissioned hours, **seven** reduced their allocation, and **six** were new or returning purchasers.
- **Service Delivery:** The team delivered **772** provisions through the workflow system, with **Level 1 Assessments, Level 2 Targeted Assessments and Literacy Skills Assessments** remaining the most frequently requested services.
- **Assessment Profile:** A total of **749** children and young people received assessments (**424 boys** and **325 girls**).
- **Commissioned Work:** The team delivered **360 hours** of commissioned work, including **75 hours** supporting the Families Together Social Care team, **126 hours** commissioned by the Youth Justice Service (YJS), and **50 hours** supporting the EHCP Team. Demand remained consistent with the previous academic year, and these partnerships have been secured for 2026–27.

'We value the relationship with our 2 teachers; they know our school, pupils and families and work together with us. They are very flexible and knowledgeable and happy to help at any point. Excellent communication with us!'

WHICH YEAR GROUPS HAVE WE SUPPORTED?



COMMUNICATION AND LEARNING DIFFICULTIES TEAM

Current Caseload Profile



This infographic provides an overview of the current Communication and Learning Difficulties (CLD) Team caseload and SEND status breakdown.



No. of children open to CLD Team

772



Number with an EHCP

173



EHCP under assessment

17



Number at SEN Support

385



No SEN or not on COP

194



Not known

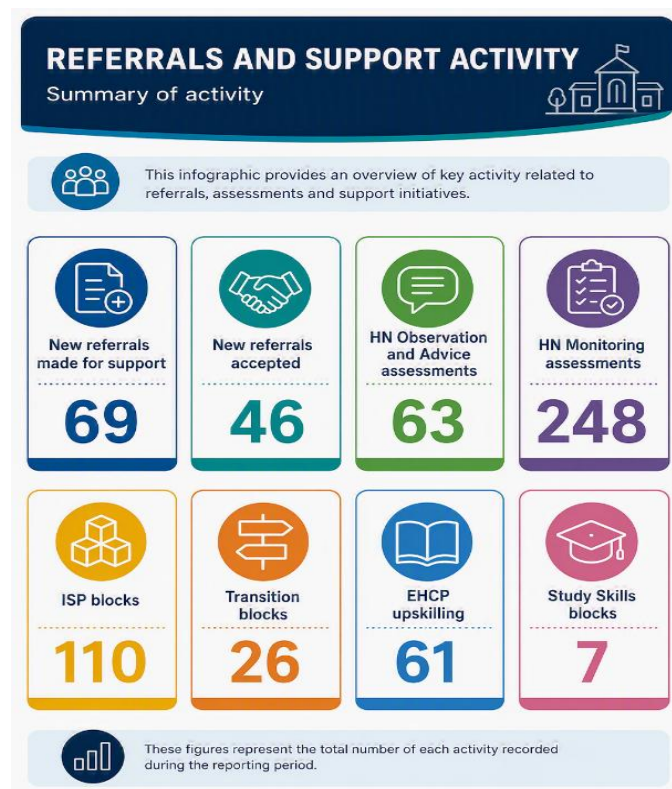
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Of the 772 children open to the CLD Team, the largest group are receiving SEN Support (385), followed by those with an EHCP (173).

2. CASELOAD INFORMATION – SLC HIGH NEEDS TEAM

- The **revised High Needs Speech, Language and Communication (SLC HN) referral criteria** and pathway have been successfully embedded, with positive feedback received from SENCOs.
- Three ARP-based **specialist teachers** were trained to deliver outreach, extending capacity to provide CLD traded support and specialist speech and language interventions within schools.
- Partnership working with Community **Speech and Language Therapy** (SaLT) strengthened following the appointment of a new Paediatric Team Lead. This has included regular strategic meetings, termly support within the SLC ARP and jointly delivered half-termly training for Communication Leads.
- All pupils on the SLC HN caseload transitioning into Reception, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 received **targeted transition support** during Autumn 2025. Study skills support was also introduced for pupils transitioning to Key Stage 4.
- Staff absence within the High Needs SLC Team increased during the academic year due to long-term sickness. Whilst this affected capacity, the team responded with **flexibility and professionalism** to maintain service delivery.



BISHOP WILSON PRIMARY SLC HN ADDITIONALLY RESOURCED PROVISION

- In September 2026, **one Year 6 pupil** will transition from the ARP to a specialist secondary MLD provision.
- Of the **12 pupils** allocated places this year, **6 pupils** currently have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), with **one further application** in progress.
- Pupil progress is monitored through a range of assessment tools, demonstrating positive progress in speech, language, literacy and, in most cases, mathematics.
- **End-of-term reports** provide a comprehensive summary of each pupil's progress, attainment and next steps.
- ARP provision has been showcased throughout the year as part of CLD training and Communication Lead training, including the development of a dedicated Padlet and examples of effective specialist provision.
- All ARP teachers contribute to the **High Needs SLC HN Outreach Team**, and support the delivery of the Communication Lead training, extending **specialist expertise and sharing effective practice** with schools across Solihull.
- **Termly family celebration events** continue to be well attended, providing opportunities for parents to develop their understanding of speech and language strategies, engage in activities with their child and celebrate progress.



'ISP support has been amazing and they have worked with our staff to offer fantastic training that we can then use following their input with children. The initial teacher input has been great too.'

'We have valued blocks of intervention and support, advice for staff, targets to work on and great resources. We want longer blocks and more frequent support.'

3. KEY WHOLE TEAM DEVELOPMENTS

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- The team has continued to strengthen **specialist expertise** through an ongoing programme of professional development, including training in updated **psychometric and achievement assessments**.
- Two additional team members achieved the **Assessment Practising Certificate** (APC), increasing the team's capacity to deliver diagnostic dyslexia assessments.
- Significant work has been undertaken to embed the updated national definition of **dyslexia** following Specific Learning Difficulties Assessment

Standards Committee (SASC) guidance, including revised assessment processes, report formats and recommendations.

- Consultant support has enhanced the team's diagnostic practice in **Specific Math's Difficulties** and **dyscalculia**.
- NHS **Speech and Language Therapy coaching** has helped to continue to further develop assessment and intervention for children with speech sound differences.

INNOVATION AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

- The team has continued to develop its use of assistive technology and AI, embedding evidence-informed recommendations within assessment reports and expanding training for schools. This has contributed to increased demand for technology-focused traded support, particularly for training in schools and through the termly **SENCO Network Meetings**.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- Partnership working with the **Families Together** social care team and the **Youth Justice Service** (YJS) continued throughout the year, delivering specialist training, consultation and direct support to practitioners working with vulnerable children and young people. Feedback from partner agencies highlighted the value of specialist communication expertise in improving engagement and educational outcomes.

COMMUNICATION LEAD NETWORK

- The jointly delivered **Communication Lead Network**, delivered in partnership with NHS Speech and Language Therapy, engaged **over 200 delegates** across the academic year.
- The programme covered key areas of speech, language and communication, including **Communication-Friendly Classrooms, Colourful Semantics, Stammering, Speech Sound Difficulties, Situational Mutism**, and **Supporting Language Development and Bilingualism**.

- The network has strengthened collaboration between education and health services, supporting schools to develop confidence and consistency in identifying and meeting the speech, language and communication needs of children and young people.

'The CLD team has been INVALUABLE! From Level 1 or 2 assessments to Assessments for access arrangements to specialist interventions or dyslexia assessments and training. All of this has allowed us to put things in place to make the mainstream classroom/curriculum more inclusive for all!!'

'We have benefitted from direct work with pupils. Advice and recommendations to school for supporting pupils. Meetings with staff and parents to feedback following ISP work.'

'ISP support - direct work children is invaluable, particularly when it upskills staff supporting those children. Enables us to support children who have significant speech and language needs but won't be assessed by the NHS for 1-2 years.'

PARTNERSHIP FOR INCLUSION OF NEURODIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS (PINS)

- The CLD Team played a significant role in delivering the second year of the Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) programme. Through coaching, audits and workforce development, the project **strengthened inclusive practice** across mainstream schools and increased staff confidence in supporting neurodivergent learners.
- The success of the programme has resulted in continued traded support for both mainstream and specialist settings, supporting the implementation of inclusive practice aligned with the national SEND and AP reforms.

4. CLD TRADED BUYBACK 2025-26

	Primary	Secondary	Independent/OOB	Total schools	Specialist settings/ AP	Total
23/24	25	9	1	35	4	39
24/25	27	10	2	39	8	47
25/26	28	13	2	43	5	48
26/27	27	10	2	39	5	44

KEY POINTS:

- From September 2025, **The Heights, Grace Academy, Streetsbrook Infant School, Berkswell C of E Primary School, Yorkswood Primary School, and Tudor Grange Academy Solihull** commissioned new Cognition and Learning (CLD) support.
- The continued partnership with the **Youth Justice Service (YJS)** resulted in **126 hours** of commissioned assessment and specialist support during both **2024–25** and **2025–26**.
- Through the **Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) Project**, funded by the Integrated Care Board (ICB), the Team Manager delivered **297 hours** of coaching, training, audits and provision development across **10 schools**. Feedback from participating schools was consistently positive.
- **Families Together** commissioned **75 hours** of targeted assessment and specialist support for children supported by Social Care and those out of education. This successful partnership will continue into **2026–27**.
- Demand for traded support continued to grow, with **eight schools increasing** their commissioned hours. Although **seven schools reduced** their allocation, this represented an overall **net increase of 358 commissioned hours** across the service, comprising **55 secondary hours, 126 primary hours and 177 specialist setting hours**.

- A further **16.5 hours** of spot-purchased specialist assessments were commissioned by schools during the year.
- Specialist support was also provided to **five specialist schools and alternative provisions: Daylesford Academy, Solihull Academy, The Heights Specialist School, Castlewood School, and Triple Crown Centre**, reflecting increasing demand for specialist outreach and consultancy.

'The SLC HN teacher has been in to assess the child and provided us with detailed reports and advice so that we can implement support and address the targets set. She has been key to developing our understanding of the child's complex needs since we are not speech therapists and lack the knowledge and training to deliver interventions without support. Our ISP was great at delivering weekly sessions for the child and practising those key sounds and she spent time with staff members training them and sharing resources so that we could sustain the intervention for the rest of the week.'

5. CLD TRAINING DELIVERED THROUGH TRADED HOURS

Course Name	Delivered To	Participants
Assistive Technology and AI Training	Marston Green Junior School	35
	Berkswell C of E Primary School	8
	Langley Secondary School (TAs)	15
	Meriden Primary School	6
	TGA St James School	15
Universal Design for Learning (UDL) – Inclusive Classrooms	Alderbrook Secondary School	70
	Castle Bromwich Infant School	35
	Marston Green Junior School	35
	Marston Green Junior School (follow-up)	20
Multisensory Learning	Triple Crown Specialist AP	15
	Castlewood SEMH Specialist Provision	35
	Bishop Wilson Primary School	40
Colourful Semantics to support language development	St Augustine's Primary School	20
	The Heights Autism Specialist School	8
	Peterbrook Primary School	12
	Olton Primary School	30
Dyslexia Training	Castlewood SEMH Specialist Provision	30
	St James School (TAs)	10
	Widney Junior School	30
	Virtual School	12
Universal Support for Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)	Castle Bromwich Infant School	40
	Families Together Social Care	25
	Berkswell C of E Primary School	8
Using Clicker to support writing	Meriden Primary School	12
Study Skills Support for Parents	Heart of England Secondary School	50
Supporting Learners with SEND in the classroom - TAs	Heart of England Secondary School	9
Dyscalculia	Kingswood Independent Primary	12
Understanding and Supporting Neurodiversity in the Classroom	St Peter's Catholic Secondary School	85
How to Support my Child at Home with Dyslexia and Dyscalculia	St Peter's Catholic Secondary School	15
Understanding and supporting Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD)	Berkswell Primary School	8

TRAINING HEADLINES

- **868 participants** attended 33 training sessions during 2025–26, compared with 11 sessions in 2024–25, demonstrating a **significant increase in workforce development activity**.
- The largest programmes were Universal Design for Learning (160 participants), Multisensory Learning (90), Neurodiversity in the Classroom (85) and Assistive Technology & AI (119).
- These sessions were also delivered to 10 schools as part of the **Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS)** project, extending their reach and supporting whole-school inclusive practice. Further information is included within the Service Impact Report.
- Delegate feedback was consistently positive, with participants reporting increased confidence and practical strategies to implement within their settings.

YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE AND FAMILIES TOGETHER – TRAINING SERIES

- The CLD Team manager delivered bespoke training sessions for over 40 practitioners working within the **Youth Justice Service (YJS)** and **Families Together (Social Care)**, strengthening workforce knowledge of speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in vulnerable children and young people.
- Training has also focused on **trauma and communication, neurodiversity and hidden learning needs, identifying speech, language and communication needs within context, supporting children through effective communication strategies**, and the use of **assistive technology and AI** to improve communication and access to learning.
- The programme has **strengthened multi-agency understanding** of communication needs, supporting practitioners to identify barriers earlier and adapt their practice to improve engagement and outcomes for children and young people.

Comments from delegates:

'This training was clearly communicated, helpful to support staff too. Will help me to support and signpost to parents.'

'Clear understanding. Useful classroom tips e.g. dual coding, mind maps. Very visual training.'

'The strategies for supporting dyslexic pupils well explained and thought out.'

WHAT DO SCHOOLS VALUE?

“

'Specialist advice on the use of communication aids to help with children in mainstream that are pre-verbal and non-verbal'

”

“

'Direct work with pupils.
Advice and recommendations to school for supporting pupils.
Meetings with staff and parents to feedback following ISP work.'

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“

'Advice offered is of a very high standard.
Reports are very good. Recommendations made are impactful and helpful without added pressure on staff.'

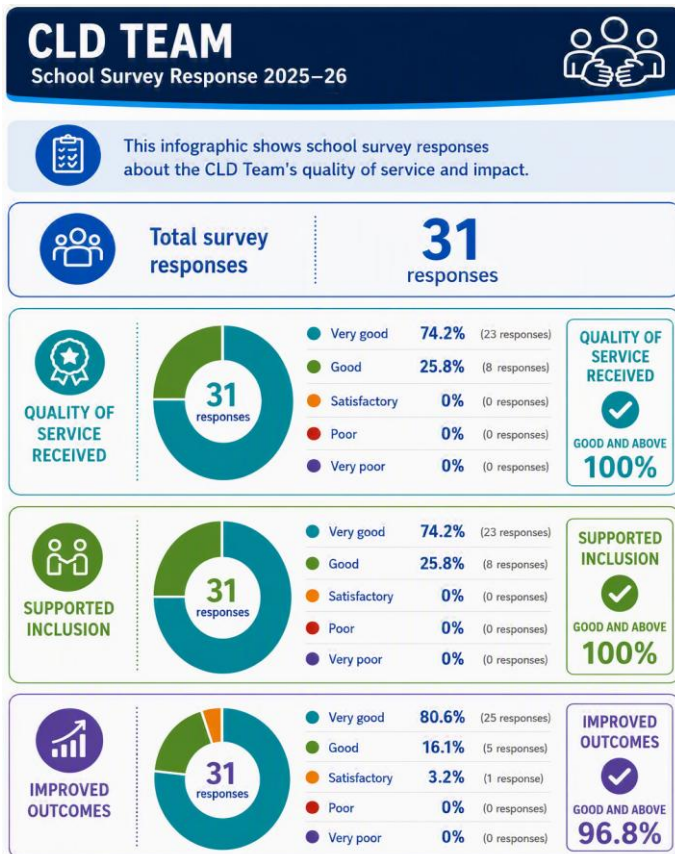
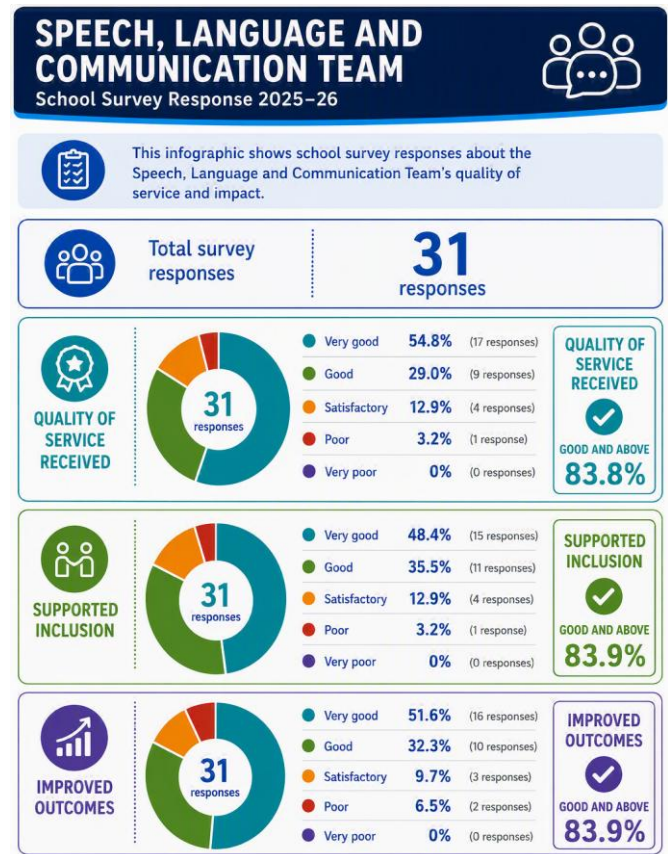
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6. KEY OUTCOMES AND SERVICE IMPACT

- **Maintained service delivery** despite staffing pressures within the High Needs SLC Team through flexible deployment and collaborative working.
- **Increased demand for the service**, with further growth in traded hours and a significant increase in school-based training, reflecting schools' confidence in the **team's strategic support**.
- **Strengthened inclusive practice** across Solihull through the successful delivery of the PINS project, SENCO support, audits and workforce development.
- **Enhanced partnership working** with NHS Speech and Language Therapy, the Youth Justice Service and Families Together, supporting a more coordinated, communication-focused approach across education, health and social care.
- **Expanded specialist expertise** through investment in workforce development, updated assessment processes and nationally aligned diagnostic practice.
- **Positive outcomes for pupils** accessing the Bishop Wilson Speech, Language and Communication ARP, with continued progress in speech, language, literacy and maths.
- **High stakeholder satisfaction**, with schools continuing to rate the quality of support, assessment and training as Good or Very Good.

FEEDBACK FROM SCHOOLS:



Where feedback was rated below 'good', comments reflected schools wanting greater access to services, or not realising that support can be requested directly. These schools will be contacted individually and signposted to the Local Offer to ensure they are aware of how and when to access support.

FOR THE CLD TEAM, WHAT DID SCHOOLS VALUE ABOUT THE QUALITY OF ASSESSMENT AND SPECIALIST ADVICE? *sample quotes*

- "Assessments, small group teaching."
- "Assessments for individual children including dyslexia assessments."
- "CLD team in terms of dyslexia assessments and observations/reports."
- "We have valued having the assessments being completed for our learners and the reports that they provide."
- "Level 2 report writing is invaluable in accessing pupil needs."
- "Detailed and thorough assessments helping us better understand children's needs, with advice and next steps."

- "Literacy skills & dyslexia assessments."

Schools highlighted the expertise, knowledge and personalised support provided

- "The specialist teacher doesn't rush in and out. She liaises well with school to get the full picture of the child. Feedback from her is always welcomed."
- "Personalised response to our need, flexibility from the team, knowledgeable staff and up to date information."
- "Relationship with staff member."
- "Early years knowledge of staff member."
- "Foundational skills knowledge of staff member."
- "Teachers have valued her knowledge and advice."
- "The quality of their advice for our pupils, some new suggestions/resources offered. The communication has been very good regarding visits to school."
- "Expertise and knowledge; identification of strategies to support; recommendations for suitable interventions; running interventions with young people."
- "As a school and a communication and interaction lead, I have highly valued the expert advice and support from the SISS, CLD and AIM team."

Schools valued the relationships and responsiveness of the team

- "A named contact to run ideas by, even if this is not related to purchased hours or organised assessments."
- "A consistent team, who therefore know how to navigate school and the wider colleagues within SEND."
- "Strategic suggestion on how to plan hours."
- "Necessary 'nudges' around hours left to use."
- "Input on classroom audit was professional, positive and encouraging."
- "Our specialist teacher has been an amazing support to us at school and is always on hand when we need."

- "The relationship with our 2 teachers, they know our school, pupils and families and work altogether with us. They are very flexible and knowledgeable and happy to help at any point. Excellent communication."
- "Close liaison with our allocated teacher to decide which assessments are most appropriate for specific children."
- "I have valued the professional dialogue and advice and being able to talk through my concerns, worries and ideas. Advice and recommendations are always supportive and enable me to work and act in a proactive way."
- "I value being able to request the support I need at times that work for my school. I also value being able to choose how much support I require and the flexibility I have in how I use the support."

Schools recognised the impact of training and capacity building

- "CPD for staff."
- "Support with access arrangements."
- "Great training delivered — this has impacted QFT."
- "The observations and advice to continue to support children with relevant targets. The option to have staff training as part of package as required."
- "Reports and advice given to support children in the classroom. Training from CLD team to upskill staff and increase their understanding of how to support children with SEND."
- "Support to target more bespoke provision for individuals."
- "Training for all staff."
- "Staff training and assessments."

Schools highlighted the impact on pupils and whole-school SEND provision:

- "The CLD team has been INVALUABLE! From Level 1 or 2 assessments to assessments for access arrangements to specialist interventions or dyslexia assessments. All of this has allowed us to put things in place to make the mainstream classroom/curriculum more inclusive for all!!"

- "The CLD Team have been invaluable to our school this year. Through numerous CLD Level 1 assessments and Level 2 assessments, we have been able to identify pupils who require further support, targeted intervention, and additional specialist assessment. This has strengthened our provision mapping and ensured that pupils' needs are recognised early and accurately."
- "The team — Dawn, Ruth and Eileen — have provided exceptional CPD for staff and have supported me personally in my first year as SENCo. Their guidance has helped us embed consistent approaches, improve staff confidence, and ensure our SEND systems are robust and evidence-based."
- "Our pupils have also benefited from high-quality access arrangement reports, which have supported them during exams and ensured they could demonstrate their true abilities."
- "During our recent Ofsted inspection, inspectors commented on the strong, positive relationships the school has built with SISS this year, highlighting the invaluable recommendations and support provided for our pupils. This external recognition reflects the impact of the CLD team's expertise, responsiveness and commitment to improving outcomes for our learners."
- "Overall, the CLD team have played a crucial role in strengthening our SEND practice, supporting staff development, and ensuring our pupils receive the tailored support they need to thrive."

Schools' suggestions for further development

The majority of respondents reported that they were happy with the service and had no suggestions for improvement. Representative comments included:

- "I'm really happy with the support and have no additional suggestions."
- "The team are flexible and very understanding of the children's needs. In terms of improvement I have no comments on this."
- "I do not feel that support from the CLD Team needs to be changed in any way. I feel that the way in which the team works is effective and supportive."

- "I honestly don't think it could have been improved this year but I feel this TEAM are invaluable to our schools and pupils and going forward this TEAM needs to continue to be available for our pupils who need more support."

Where suggestions were made, they focused on the following areas:

Capacity and access

- "More CLD hours and staff – our experts at hand really make a difference."
- "More hours allocated to support the increasing numbers of learners who need to be referred."
- "Additional time and funding for more support."
- "Offer more direct work with pupils."
- "More in school support and training offered to upskill staff."
- "Quicker time from referral to initial contact."

Report development and quality assurance

- "Possibility of targets in Level 2 reports which could then be used as part of the APDR process."
- "Often recommendations can be things which school already offer as part of their universal provision."
- "Time to proofread the reports could be quicker."

Service development

- "Online referral forms."
- "Flexibility from other teams - availability to support parents with workshops out of school hours."
- "If costs were minimised."

Feedback demonstrates a high level of satisfaction with the CLD Team, with most schools reporting that no changes to the service were required. Where suggestions for improvement were made, they primarily reflected a desire for increased capacity and greater access to support, rather than concerns about the quality of the service itself. A small number of responses also highlighted opportunities to further promote the full breadth of the traded offer, as some schools were unaware of the strategic support available beyond pupil assessments, such as coaching, audits, staff development and wider SEND consultancy. Minor suggestions were also made regarding report formatting and administrative processes. One comment

related to costs; however, traded service prices have remained unchanged for several years despite the continued expansion of the service offer.

WHAT SUPPORT HAVE SCHOOLS VALUED FROM THE SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION HIGH NEEDS TEAM?

Direct specialist intervention with pupils – sample quotes

- "Direct work with children, specific target identification and how staff can support this effectively."
- "Blocks of intervention and support."
- "Interventions and reports."
- "ISP support – direct work with children is invaluable, particularly when it upskills staff supporting those children."
- "Interventions for KS4 pupils with revision techniques suitable for their needs."
- "Offering invaluable support to our SEMH pupils who have speech and language difficulties."

Specialist advice, reports and recommendations

- "Reports are very thorough and personalised to each child."
- "Some really informative reports and intervention information."
- "Advice offered is of a very high standard."
- "Reports are very good."
- "Recommendations made are impactful and helpful without added pressure on staff."
- "Guidance for class teachers."
- "Guidance for students in challenging situations."

Upskilling staff and building school capacity

- "Advice and support with upskilling staff and working with pupils."
- "Support to prioritise targets provided by SALT."
- "They have been open to providing advice to staff when they have asked."

- "Advice for staff, targets to work on, great resources."
- "ISP support has been amazing and they have worked with our staff to offer fantastic training that we can then use following their input with children."
- "She spent time with staff members training them and sharing resources so that we could sustain the intervention for the rest of the week."

Working in partnership with schools and other professionals

- "Timely response and input was arranged quickly."
- "Eagerness to engage in the wider support the learner is receiving from our commissioned SALT team."
- "Worked well with my SALT TA and the speech and language therapist we have been employing for 2 days a week."
- "Consultations with staff."
- "Meetings with staff and parents to feedback following ISP work."

Supporting children whose needs cannot yet be met by NHS services

- "Seeing children who are on long waiting lists for NHS speech therapy! Discussions about what further support might be appropriate."
- "Enables us to support children who have significant speech and language needs but won't be assessed by the NHS for 3–4 years."

Practical strategies, resources and specialist expertise

- "Different strategies to cater for the different needs of our children."
- "Resources shared."
- "Specialist advice on the use of communication aids to help with children in mainstream that are pre-verbal and non-verbal."
- "Direction on how to support pupils."
- "Transition support for pupil moving to high school."

Comments highlighting the overall impact

- "Some really high-quality intervention work with some of our high needs pupils."

- "Targets are set which supports a graduated approach within school."
- "Strategies via their reports are shared with staff to provide better outcomes for our learners."
- "Our specialist teacher has been key to developing our understanding of the child's complex needs since we are not speech therapists and lack the knowledge and training to deliver interventions without support."

SUMMARY:

Feedback demonstrates that schools particularly value the team's specialist intervention with pupils, high-quality reports and recommendations, and the way staff work alongside schools to build confidence and capacity. Schools also recognised the importance of the service in providing timely support for children awaiting NHS Speech and Language Therapy, ensuring that specialist strategies, targeted interventions and staff training can begin without delay. This collaborative approach enables schools to embed communication support within everyday practice, improving outcomes for children with speech, language and communication needs.

Schools' suggestions for further development:

The majority of respondents reported that they were happy with the service and did not identify any areas for improvement. Representative comments included:

- "Nothing. It is a fantastic service."
- "The team offer high levels of support and guidance."
- "Already excellent."
- "I don't feel that it needs changing."
- "Keep it going."

Where suggestions were made, they focused on the following areas:

Increasing capacity and access

- "Like everything, we just need more of it! The lack of NHS SALT support is hard, and the SLCN team are vital to help fill this gap."

- "Again, more hours need to be allocated to this service to bring waiting times down so more learners can get support in order for them to make progress."
- "More ISPs available to deliver the interventions and train our staff in school so that we can carry them on."
- "Lack of hours makes it difficult to support pupils more regularly in school."
- "Right now they only meet with high needs cases—if there is a way for other pupils to access the service on a discretionary basis it would be helpful."

Communication and collaboration

- "More ongoing support and monitoring visits."
- "More visits to setting and checking on child progress."

Consistency of intervention and reporting

- "Outcomes on reports during reviews are often down as achieved but then comments would show that this may not be the case."
- "Check which phonics scheme is used by the school. Using Jolly Phonics when the school uses a different scheme can be confusing for the child."

Developing school capacity

- "A demonstration lesson of what equipment/strategies could be used effectively with different groups of children."
- "More training and support for teachers to upskill and increase confidence."

Parent feedback – Speech, Language and Communication High Needs Outreach Team

Parent feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with families highlighting the personalised nature of the support, the expertise of staff and the significant difference the service had made to their children and families. Parents particularly valued detailed reports, practical advice, and collaborative working with schools to identify needs and implement appropriate support.

Parents described the team as:

- *"Positive, knowledgeable and supportive."*
- *"Great advice."*
- *"The support and reports."*

Several parents commented that the support had filled an important gap where NHS provision was limited, recognising the value of specialist educational support alongside health services.

One parent described the team's impact as transformational:

"They've gone above and beyond to ensure he matters and has a say in his life... before the team worked with him he was at risk of suicide, now... he's bright and bubbly again... I can never begin to express my gratitude for this team."

Where suggestions for improvement were made, these focused on increasing the amount of support available rather than changes to the quality of the service. Parents requested more frequent sessions, additional communication groups and increased capacity to enable children to receive support over longer periods.

Parent feedback – Bishop Wilson Speech, Language and Communication ARP

Parents consistently rated the quality of support provided by the ARP highly and described the positive difference it had made to their children's confidence, communication and enjoyment of school. Families particularly valued the specialist teaching, individualised support, strong communication with staff and opportunities to work collaboratively with the ARP team.

Parents highlighted:

- Increased confidence and communication skills.
- Children feeling happier and more settled in school.
- The personalised support provided for speech, language and communication needs.
- Strong relationships between staff and families.
- Opportunities to understand and reinforce strategies at home.
- Regular communication through email and Padlet updates.

Suggestions for improvement were minimal and related to practical communication about providing greater notice of parent events.

These responses demonstrate a high level of parent confidence in the ARP, with feedback reflecting not only improved communication outcomes for children but also the value parents place on the strong partnership between home and school.

Parent Feedback about the SLC HN ARP at Bishop Wilson:

'Good communication with ourselves as family. Wonderful to be able to see pictures on Padlet of lessons and activities at the ARP. This helps to keep us informed and prompt discussion at home. I really value the opportunity that has been given to my child to have this specialist input to help with his education. I truly believe it will make all the difference to his future educational journey. My child has grown in confidence during the time he has been at the ARP and no longer cries in the morning and says school is too hard.'

CASE STUDY

Early Specialist Intervention Through the Graduated Approach

PUPIL: Jack* (Year 1)

PRIMARY NEED: Speech, Language and Communication Needs (Severe Speech Sound Disorder)

PROVISION: Bishop Wilson Speech, Language and Communication ARP

**Name anonymised*

BACKGROUND

Jack was identified during Reception as having significant speech, language and communication needs that were affecting his ability to communicate, participate in learning and develop early literacy skills by NHS Speech and Language Therapy Services. Through Solihull's graduated approach, education and health services have worked together to assess his needs and progressively increase support. Initial assessment by NHS West Midlands Speech and Language Therapy (June 2025) identified a severe Speech Sound Disorder, with speech that was difficult to understand even at single-word level, alongside limited connected language and significant difficulties blending phonics sounds. Further assessment by the SISS Speech, Language and Communication High Needs Team identified wider difficulties with expressive language, vocabulary, understanding language and phonological awareness. A subsequent assessment by the SISS Cognition and Learning Difficulties Team (September 2025) identified strengths in auditory memory, receptive vocabulary and engagement, while confirming ongoing communication needs affecting learning.

THE GRADUATED APPROACH

Jack initially accessed high-quality universal classroom strategies alongside targeted intervention delivered through the SISS Speech, Language and Communication High Needs Team. This included support for speech sound development, vocabulary, phonological awareness and expressive language.

Progress was reviewed jointly by school, specialist teachers and NHS Speech and Language Therapy.

Despite making progress, assessment evidence demonstrated that Jack continued to require provision beyond that ordinarily available within mainstream school. Rather than waiting for statutory processes to conclude, the Local Authority responded through the graduated approach by allocating Jack a place within the Bishop Wilson Speech, Language and Communication ARP in April 2026, prior to an EHCP being issued.

Within the ARP, Jack receives specialist provision delivered by SISS Specialist Speech, Language and Communication High Needs Teachers, working collaboratively with NHS Speech and Language Therapy. His provision combines daily targeted literacy and language teaching with specialist speech sound intervention and personalised communication targets using evidence-based approaches including Colourful Semantics, Nuffield Speech, Cued Articulation and Concept Cat.

IMPACT

Since joining the ARP, Jack has made good progress across speech, language, communication and early literacy.

His speech intelligibility has improved, progressing from being described by NHS Speech and Language Therapy as *"very difficult to understand even at single-word level"* to successfully discriminating and producing an increasing range of speech sounds. He now communicates using longer, grammatically accurate sentences with support, confidently names and categorises vocabulary, explains relationships between objects and uses pronouns appropriately within conversation.

Alongside improvements in communication, Jack early reading skills have accelerated. He now confidently recognises high-frequency words, blends Phase 3 phonemes within reading and demonstrates increasing fluency.

Staff report equally significant social and emotional progress. Jack is described as an enthusiastic learner who arrives each day ready to learn, participates

confidently in small-group discussions, initiates conversations with adults and peers and demonstrates increasing independence across daily routines.

OUTCOMES SO FAR

Jack's journey demonstrates the effectiveness of Solihull's graduated approach. Early multi-agency assessment, coordinated planning and timely access to specialist provision enabled support to be matched to need without waiting for an EHCP. Close collaboration between NHS Speech and Language Therapy, the SISS Speech, Language and Communication High Needs Team, the SISS Cognition and Learning Difficulties Team and the Bishop Wilson Speech and Language ARP has resulted in measurable improvements in communication, literacy, confidence and participation within a relatively short period.

CASE STUDY

Collaboration with Youth Justice Services Through the Graduated Approach

PUPIL: Freddie* (Year 12)

PRIMARY NEED: Communication and Interaction

PROVISION: Solihull College

**Name anonymised*

BACKGROUND

Freddie was first referred to the SISS Communication and Learning Difficulties (CLD) Team during Year 2 due to concerns regarding his attention, concentration and engagement in learning. During the assessment, the specialist teacher observed a range of behaviours including movement-seeking, sensory differences, difficulty following instructions and challenges sustaining attention. These observations highlighted a pattern of needs consistent with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), several years before a formal diagnosis was then received.

As a young person, Freddie was referred back to the CLD Team through the Youth Justice Service (YJS) to better understand his learning profile and identify strategies to support his education, wellbeing and future employment. At this stage, Freddie had received a diagnosis of ADHD and was experiencing significant challenges with motivation, college engagement and emotional wellbeing following GCSEs. Multi-agency involvement included the Youth Justice Team, SOLAR/CAMHS and Children's Services. Following the assessment, Freddie's family described the SISS specialist teacher as *"encouraging, calming"* and praised her ability to quickly build rapport, commenting that she *"had the ability to get the measure of Freddie after a few minutes chatting."* They also recognised the time taken to complete a detailed assessment and report and thanked the team for helping Freddie feel relaxed and engaged throughout the process.

THE GRADUATED APPROACH

Rather than focusing solely on attainment, the CLD Team completed a comprehensive cognitive and learning assessment to understand the underlying strengths and barriers influencing Freddie's learning and participation. Assessment identified age-appropriate vocabulary, reasoning, auditory memory and working memory alongside strengths in receptive vocabulary. Difficulties were identified in processing lengthy spoken information, processing speed and interpreting some visual information, with findings demonstrating how these interacted with his ADHD profile.

The assessment enabled practical recommendations to be developed for college, home and partner agencies. These included adaptations to teaching, use of assistive technology, structured routines, movement breaks, visual supports, career guidance and opportunities for work experience aligned with Freddie's interests in construction and apprenticeships. The report also recognised the importance of meaningful daily structure to support both engagement and emotional wellbeing

IMPACT

The assessment provided a shared understanding of Freddie's strengths, needs and aspirations, allowing professionals and family members to move away from viewing his difficulties as a lack of motivation and instead recognise the impact of ADHD and his underlying learning profile. Recommendations informed planning across education and wider services, supporting Freddie to explore an apprenticeship pathway better matched to his interests and strengths.

Throughout both assessments, the emphasis was placed on building positive relationships, recognising strengths and developing practical strategies that promoted independence, confidence and successful participation in education.

OUTCOMES SO FAR

Freddie's journey demonstrates the value of the graduated approach across childhood and adolescence. Early specialist assessment identified neurodevelopmental differences several years before a formal ADHD diagnosis, enabling appropriate strategies to be recommended from an early stage. The later reassessment through the Youth Justice Service demonstrates how specialist teacher assessments can continue to play a vital role beyond compulsory schooling, helping young people understand their learning profile, access appropriate educational pathways and make successful transitions into further education and employment.

Parents shared with YJS that, *"We want to thank Eileen for the time she spent with Freddie and compiling his report... If you could please pass on our gratitude."*