

Case Study One – ‘Harry and Daisy’

Eastern and Coastal Kent Community Health NHS Trust Developmental Verbal Dyspraxia Specialist Service

Context

Eastern and Coastal Kent Community Health NHS Trust is focused on delivering care to children, families and adults, which includes supporting and protecting vulnerable adults and children, reducing health inequalities and early intervention. As part of their core services, there is a specialist service for children with developmental verbal dyspraxia (DVD). DVD is a neurological childhood speech sound disorder in which the precision and consistency of movements underlying speech are impaired. (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, ASHA 2007).

Problem - Unmet need

The service was set up following identification by the team managers and service lead that the needs of the children with DVD were not being met. In the East Kent area, the number of specialist schools and nursery placements for children with DVD decreased and responsibility for these services were transferred to the local authority, special schools and unit reviews. This meant children with significant needs were dependent on mainstream provision and were receiving therapy through the ‘traditional’ clinic-based intervention, which included 30 minute sessions, once a week, for six weeks. After this intervention, children were then added to the waiting list for further therapy.

Solution - Service re-design

Based on clinical experience and research, children with DVD require intensive intervention, which was not provided for children in mainstream settings.

The DVD specialist service commenced in January 2009 to enable children and young people to express themselves as clearly as possible by providing an intensive therapy package tailored to their unique requirements. By meeting these needs, children were enabled to access the national curriculum; reduce their frustration; and ensure long-term well being.

In summary this was achieved by:

- Working directly with children to identify suspected DVD.
- Therapy delivered by a highly specialist speech and language therapist and carried over on a daily basis by school staff and parents.
- Offering more flexibility to reduce barriers to access (e.g. taking the service to the service users and meeting clients’ and families’ needs – bringing therapy to children directly in their home or school).
- Providing regular reviews to monitor a child’s progress and ensure packages are tailored to the individual child’s speech, language and communication needs.
- Reviewing progress on a quarterly basis and monitoring against the East Kent Outcome System.

Therapy is ongoing and children only exit the service when no further therapy is required – that is if their speech errors are resolved or there is a satisfaction with the level of progress.

Outcome measures – did it work?

Harry and Daisie

Based on a recent evaluation report, the DVD specialist service showed it is not only clinically effective but also cost effective. To demonstrate effectiveness, a service example describing two very similar cases with two very different outcomes is provided below.

Harry

As set out above, prior to this specialist service being available, children with DVD received therapy in a clinic once a week for six weeks and then their name was added to the waiting list for further therapy. Under this system, Harry was referred to the speech and language therapy service at two years, six months years of age. He presented with DVD and expressive language difficulties. Harry received clinic-based intervention until he was nine - by that time he had received 124 direct therapy contacts. At the age of nine, he was transferred to the newly-established DVD service. There, he received further 60 direct contacts.

Up to that point the total cost calculated was approximately £23,000. Harry continues to require therapy.

Daisie

Daisie was referred at two years, 10 months years of age and she also presented with DVD and expressive language difficulties - very similar characteristics to Harry. Daisie received 29 direct contacts in clinic and she was transferred to the new DVD Service when she was five years old. She received further 42 direct contacts and now, a year on; her case is due to be closed.

Total cost calculated was approximately £9,000.