



## Spotlight on Physical Needs

### 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024 10 – 12 via Teams

#### Speakers

Marcia Emmott – Occupational Therapist, Paediatrics

Laura Dent – Physiotherapist, Paediatrics

Deborah Craig - Team Leader, Physical Needs Team, Children’s Sensory and Physical Needs Service and Specialist Teaching and Support Service

Julie Vaughan – Specialist Teacher

Julie Bruce – Manager, Parents’ Forum Bradford and Airedale

Question	Answer
<p>My son is 5. He has a diagnosis of autism and he's currently under a paediatrician at St Luke's. At the beginning of the year she said she would refer him for dyspraxia. Would it be you ladies that he would come via, or would it be somewhere else? And do I have to chase it because I've not actually had a letter to say she has put in the referral. I'm just a bit worried it might get missed.</p>	<p><b>Marcia &amp; Laura:</b> Yes it would be to our team. Best thing to do is to contact the secretary and check that the referral has gone through. If not, it's the children's therapy service at St Luke's and it should come straight through to us. But in the meantime, the website has got some good information on if you've got some concerns about your child with coordination difficulties. We've put some things on there that you can start having a little go at and sometimes children need skills breaking down for them. There's actually quite a lot involved with learning the skills, so trying to break it down and doing it in a bit of a staged approach can help them. There's some tips on the website, but we recommend lots of activity and know some children don't always tolerate things like soft play areas or swimming because of the environment. But if you do something that your child really likes, that keeps them active, it will help with development of their coordination.  <a href="https://www.bradfordhospitals.nhs.uk/childrens-therapy/">https://www.bradfordhospitals.nhs.uk/childrens-therapy/</a></p>
<p>How can parents make their views known regarding staffing? My son has accessed the early explorer's intervention. It was great but I understand it's not sustainable to offer longer term due to staffing.</p>	<p><b>Marcia and Laura:</b> We've presented facts and figures to the budget holders but we are told there's still no further funding available. We need to gather as much parent feedback as we can through services like PFBA but the PALS team at the hospital might be a good start. The more</p>

<p>How can we let people who allocate funding know that our children need more? The departments require more funding to meet the needs of children that it supports. Staff are fantastic, but there is a shortage of staff.</p>	<p>parents that contact them means they're going to have to stop and listen at some point.  <b>Julie Bruce:</b> PFBA has a seat at the Local Area SEND Strategic Partnership Board and this is something that we can bring up there.</p>
<p>Do you see more children in mainstream school or in a specialist setting?</p>	<p><b>Marcia and Laura:</b> More in mainstream but we've also got children in mainstream who are awaiting a placement in a specialist setting. We do work with special schools as well but they are equipped to do a lot of the things already anyway. We do see children who we know are not in the right setting and we know that parents and children are doing everything possible and it must be so hard for parents because it's a big thing deciding on a special school but then knowing you have to wait for a place.</p> <p><b>Deborah and Julie:</b> From our teams perspective we only see children in mainstream school because special schools already have teachers who have a different kind of expertise. We do help with the transition across though.</p>
<p>What input do you have with a child that is moving to high school? Do you attend annual reviews?</p>	<p><b>Marcia and Laura:</b> From an Occupational Therapy point of view definitely, especially if they've got any needs that we've been addressing in primary. We need to make sure the same course will be undertaken in the new school, so liaise on what they're going to do with the new SENCO. What parts are they going to hand over and if there's equipment needs, how's that going to work and what's it going to look like?</p> <p>We try to make meetings and reviews but if we can't, we would always provide support like a written report before, and we'd probably do our own visit. So if we can't make the meeting that's been set by the whole team, we always do provide input and support.</p> <p><b>Deborah and Julie:</b> I think for us, transition starts as early as possible. So when we're looking at primary to secondary, we're having talks with families and we'll attend if their child has a physical need and an educational healthcare plan with physical as their primary need, where they're on our active caseload.</p> <p>So we'll stay with that child, attend annual reviews and visit them in school. But we're talking with families in schools around transitioning in year five in preparation for</p>

	<p>moving up in year seven because it needs to be done as early as possible.</p> <p>We can't go and see every school with every family, but if we've got a family that we know needs the support, we will certainly look at primary schools, if they're going from nursery to primary school, sometimes nurseries as well and secondary schools, just to make sure that they've got the all of the information to make that decision because it's a really big decision for families. We attend transition meetings, we help solve problems to hopefully make the transition as smooth as possible and that the earlier we have children referred to us, the earlier we can have those conversations. We all know how long it takes for things to be set in motion and if the school needs to make bigger adaptations, we need to look at the feasibility of that with them. We need to look at that schools individual accessibility plans and what they've planned for for the future.</p> <p>And so we have those conversations as early as we can really.</p>
<p>Do you see children who are not attending school? Those who are home schooled or can't access school anymore?</p>	<p><b>Marcia and Laura:</b> We have lots of children that are homeschooled in our caseloads. If they can't attend school we would see them at home.</p> <p><b>Deborah and Julie:</b> The other group of students that we sometimes get referred in are students who have maybe been in a school, but then have had a change in the medical condition and are unable to access anymore. We work closely with medical needs and hospital education service and help that transition back into mainstream school and what that might look like.</p>
<p>What would you say was the biggest barrier for you for your service with mainstream schools? Do schools usually work well with you?</p>	<p><b>Marcia and Laura:</b> I think it's a mixture. Deborah's team obviously get involved with this and jointly as well. I think I feel like there are some schools that are ready and setup. I suppose if they've had more children previously with physical needs they're in a better position. If I recommend maybe a physio programme is carried out in school or using a standing frame in school, sometimes that can be a bit of a barrier if the child hasn't got an EHCP and that's not right. I work with the children under 6, children going into early years and that's one of the barriers</p>

	<p>really, something that they would benefit from doing within school. But there isn't the staff to support that child. I think there's that balanced discussion that we've got to have between the amount of time it takes as well to get children in and out of equipment and then trying to get school and parents come together and agree on when they want that equipment to be used. But sometimes, you know that that's going to help inclusion by them having that piece of equipment but it's just got to be that discussion and trying to look at that individual child and family and what's going to work best for them and most schools are really open to have that discussion.</p> <p><b>Deborah and Julie:</b> We do sometimes get called by SEND to support where a school might have had the opinion that they can't meet needs. And again it's about solution finding, isn't it? And it's about working out how those needs can be met.</p> <p>And so it's not just a blanket case of a school being able to say no, sorry, we can't meet need. They have to have justification as to why not.</p>
<p>When a child is going into school and part of the preparation that the school is an accepting, open, kind place and I know in the past there have been schools that have actually delivered training on introducing the child that may be different.</p> <p>Do you know if that's still exists? Do schools deliver anything like that?</p>	<p><b>Deborah &amp; Julie:</b> All SENCOs can and do attend a SENCO network meeting centrally, where aspects of that training are about inclusivity and obviously that's their role.</p> <p>The SENCO is the key person in this and in liaising with senior leadership and ensuring that the ethos is carried out within the school and that when there are transitions happening, there's the early intervention support to prepare the way.</p> <p>As a team working with PDA net, which is a physical disability work networking association, we do have some training that can be offered to staff around physical disability needs and that's free accessible online training.</p> <p>There's also a Level 2 training available at cost for SENCOs as well.</p> <p>I think a lot of schools have inclusion and awareness of different needs built in through their personal, social and health education programme.</p> <p>There are sessions a lot of schools will do that look at whole range of things, disability and</p>

differences, as well as how we're all similar will be woven into that.

There aren't many children with physical needs, and that makes it all the more important that when there is a child with physical needs, everybody's made aware of what the impact is, but how to be aspirational as well. Not to over care and over support because quite often, we're reigning teaching assistant support staff back and saying they can, with encouragement, with a bit of the right support, they can do it themselves. They will want to and it's about getting the communication right.

**Marcia & Laura:** I think sometimes it can come across at first that schools aren't welcoming. But actually when you start to say to them why are you struggling with this?

It's a fear from them because they want to do the best for the child and they're worried that they haven't got the skills and don't want to get it wrong. It comes from a good place.