

Prioritising preschool children for speech & language therapy

Service resources for children with speech, language and communication needs are finite. Inevitably SLTs make prioritisation decisions on a daily basis. Decisions are not always easy and they often go on without explicit discussion. The study investigated how therapists prioritise pre-school children for speech and language therapy. Although other factors such as parental anxiety and family history are influential, this study specifically explored which speech and language behaviours displayed by young children raise a therapist's concern and leads to their decision to refer a child on a particular care pathway.

One hundred and seventy eight therapists from across the UK completed questionnaires for 604 preschool age children who had come to see them for an initial assessment. Questionnaires revealed that 69 (11.9%) of children were discharged on assessment, 187 (31.1%) were given advice and would be reviewed within 6 months, 242 (41.6%) were offered SLT support and a further 74 (12.7%) required further assessment. Of those 242 that received support, 60 (24.8%) were offered group support, 126 (52.1%) were offered one to one therapy and 60 (24.8 %) were offered parent group support. Findings were analysed to explore therapists' decision making and predictors of SLT support.

BSLTRU Researchers:

Helen Hambly

Sue Roulstone

Presentations:

Hambly, H. and Roulstone S. How do therapists prioritise pre-school children for speech and language therapy? A survey of therapists' treatment decisions. Presentation at the 30th Symposium on Research in Childhood Language Disorders, June 2010, Madison, US....