



Spotlight on Reading Borough Council's Children's Commissioning Team

Reading Borough Council's Children's Commissioning Team won the Commissioning Award for the second year in a row alongside The Kirkby Schools Collaborative and 5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Foundation Trust at the 2013/14 Shine a Light Awards.

In addition to this, the team were awarded the Pearson Outstanding Achievement Award in recognition of their work. The judges were impressed with their joint commissioning of speech and language provision for 0-5 year olds in response to growing numbers of children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in the Reading area.

Reading Borough Council's Children's Commissioning Team is a social care commissioning body. The team worked with Education & Extended Services to jointly commission speech and language provision with Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust playing a key role in creating, developing and refining the service.

The team performed a needs-analysis for 0-5 year olds in January 2011, and revealed a need for a universal speech and language therapy (SLT) provision. This provision provides preventative strategies and interventions, while facilitating wide-scale identification of children with SLCN (implemented by Education & Extended Services and Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust).

Since 2012 an internal restructure within Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust has created a new post to absorb the practitioners' management duties, generating more capacity amongst practitioners for working with families.

RBC's Young Commissioners have taken an active commissioning role. Their feedback on the service led to the team's delivering dedicated sessions to young parent groups, as well as effectively using the internet to increase parents' understanding of SLCN.

A 'Communication Pack' was commissioned and widely distributed amongst parents and practitioners. This informs people about interventions and strategies that can be implemented, increasing self-sufficiency and reducing the need for specialist input.

Speech and Language Therapist's (SLT) worked with Health Services (including Health Visitors), Children's Centres and early years childcare settings to improve detection of communication delay and their understanding of support options. Since April 2013, there had been no inappropriate referrals to the specialist SLT service, demonstrating that young people can more easily access appropriate support options.





Targets set by the Team have been met and often exceeded; in the academic year spanning September 2012 – July 2013, they have seen a 47% reduction in the number of children identified as being at risk of communication delay in participating settings, and over 80% of children receiving support have been in the 0 – 2 ½ age range.

