



Summer 2023

Bedfordshire and Luton Speech and Language Therapy Service Update

In order to keep our families safe and minimise Covid-19 infection rates, the service continues to offer a blend of face to face, virtual and telephone appointments matched to the needs of each child and family.

How long is the wait for the first appointment?



- The target wait to first assessment is 18 weeks
- The average wait to assessment for school age referrals is currently 40 weeks.
- The average wait to assessment for pre-school referrals is currently 19 weeks.
- What about follow up appointments?
Follow up appointments are offered based on the needs of the child. Support may be offered in different ways including advice, training or individual therapy. For information relating to your child's follow up, please contact the service - details below.

What is the cause of the delay?



- Increased number of Children to be seen in person following COVID-19 restrictions.
- 30% increase in the number of requests for Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments which have to be seen within a six week time frame.
- Difficulties recruiting to some vacant posts.
- Long term sickness impacting appointment availability.

What is the Service doing to help?



- Increasing the number of virtual appointments available, in addition to the ones we provide face-to-face
- Creating online resources to help you, or your child's school, support your child's communication needs before (and after) you have seen a speech and language therapist. Please visit our website at <https://childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/resources/>
- We are offering an on-line early advice session for parents of pre-school children. To book a 15-minute appointment with a speech and language therapist, please visit: www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/how-to-refer/early-advice-sessions
- Extending our free training packages for schools so a referral is not needed to access training to support children with speech, language and communication needs in school - www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/training
- Regular meetings with parent/carer forums to listen to feedback and share updates.
- We've created a 'While You Are Waiting' leaflet with lots of information and advice
- Telephone advice line for school-age children - call our Health HUB number below



Where can I go for help in the meantime?



- www.childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/information-and-advice
This is the local speech and language therapy website which contains lots of information and support strategies including the pre-school and school age toolkit to help identify speech, language and communication needs.
- www.hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk
This is the government's campaign launched in 2019 to encourage parents and carers of pre-school children to engage in activities that support their child's early learning and help set them up for school and beyond. Lots of top tips for talking and helpful videos.
- www.afasic.org.uk/resources/free-downloads/schools-and-learning
Afacic are a parent-led organisation to help children and young people with speech and language impairments and their families. Lots of helpful information and advice for all ages.



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