

<b>Reference:</b>	FOI.14976.24
<b>Subject:</b>	Speech and Language Therapy (S&LT) services
<b>Date of Request:</b>	31 July 2024

**Requested:**

1. Do you offer speech and language therapy services for children and young people who stammer? If so, what is the age range for this service?
2. How are children and young people who stammer referred to the speech and language therapy service, and what are the referral criteria?
3. Do you have a Clinical Lead for stammering in your children and young people service? As of July 2024, how many speech and language therapists work directly with children and young people who stammer?
4. If you do not have access to a Clinical lead SLT (Speech and Language Therapist) for stammering, or other stammering specialist SLTs, how do you manage more complex stammering cases?
5. Who commissions speech and language therapy stammering services for children and young people? Do third sector organisations fund or contribute to funding speech and language therapy services for children and young people who stammer?
6. How many children and young people were awaiting an assessment by an SLT for stammering in July 2023 and in July 2024?
7. As of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024, could you provide the waiting times from referral to initial assessment for children and young people referred for stammering? Please categorise the data into the following timeframes: less than 12 weeks, 12 to 18 weeks, 19 to 26 weeks, 27 to 52 weeks, 1 to 2 years, and over 2 years.
8. As of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024, could you provide the waiting times from initial assessment to the start of therapy for children and young people referred for stammering? Please categorise the data into the following timeframes: less than 12 weeks, 12 to 18 weeks, 19 to 26 weeks, 27 to 52 weeks, 1 to 2 years, and over 2 years.
9. How many sessions do SLTs typically provide to children and young people who stammer (e.g. once a week for six weeks)
10. Are Independent Patient Funding Requests utilised for speech and language therapy services? If so, could these requests be made for children and young people who stammer to access specialist services outside of Wales?
11. Would you ever refer or signpost children and young people who stammer to a specialist service or centre outside of your board area? If so, how often has this occurred between 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023 and 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024?
  - Never
  - Sometimes
  - Frequently

- Very Frequently

12. Do you provide information about and/or do you signpost to other organisations who can offer support for childhood stammering? If so, who do you signpost to?

- Action for Stammering Children
- STAMMA
- Michael Palin Centre
- Other (please specify)

13. What therapy approaches (e.g. Palin PCI, Lidcombe, etc.) do your speech and language therapy service offer to children and young people who stammer? Do you offer individual or group therapy to children who stammer, or both?

14. Where do your SLTs access their specialist training from?

- Michael Palin Centre
- City Lit London
- Online
- CENs
- In service training
- Other (please specify)

15. What barriers exist to your SLTs accessing necessary training courses in stammering? (e.g. cost and funding, availability of specialised courses, time out of clinic, high staff turnover, institutional support, etc.)

16. What information is provided to education setting staff about stammering? Would this information typically be provided for individual children and young people on your caseload or as part of education setting staff training more generally?

**Response:**

Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) is unable to provide you with all of the information requested, as it is estimated that the cost of answering your request would exceed the “appropriate limit” as stated in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. The “appropriate limit” represents the estimated cost of one person spending 18 hours (or 2½ working days) in determining whether the UHB holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

The UHB does not centrally record information for Children and Young People (CYP) with a stammer. Therefore, in order to provide you with the requested data for questions 6, 7 and 8, the UHB would need to undertake a manual trawl of all CYP S&LT patient records, to identify any information that fulfils your request.

The UHB is therefore applying an exemption under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA), which provides an exemption from a public authority’s obligation to comply with a request for information where the cost of compliance is estimated to exceed the appropriate limit.

However, under Section 16 of the FoIA, we are required as a public authority, to provide advice and assistance so far as it is reasonable, to individuals who have made a request under the FoIA. Therefore, the UHB provides, the accessible information it holds below.

1. The UHB confirms that it does offer S&LT services for CYP who have a stammer. The age range is from zero (0) to eighteen (18) years, or twenty-five (25) years if in education.
2. As some of this information is already within the public domain, the UHB has applied an exemption under Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA).as the information is accessible by another means.

Details on the UHB's S&LT referral process is available on its website and can be accessed via the link provided below:

[Paediatric speech and language therapy - Hywel Dda University Health Board \(nhs.wales\)](https://www.nhs.uk/services/health-boards-and-trusts/hywel-dda-university-health-board)

Research shows that parents and carers are generally accurate when identifying whether a child is stammering or not. However, the UHB's referral criteria includes:

- A notable increase in stammering that lasts more than 2 months and causes difficulty communicating, for example, at school, home or with friends.
- A child expresses concern about his/her stammer/talking.
- A child is less confident about talking or avoids talking in different situations, for example, at home, with friends, at school or with strangers.

3. The UHB confirms that it does not currently have a Clinical Lead for CYP who stammer. Additionally, the UHB does not have specific S&L therapists for CYP; all of its paediatric therapists work directly with CYP who stammer.
4. The UHB confirms that it has a Patient Participation Group (PPG) for stammering where specialist S&L therapists offer second opinions, contribute to service design and share good practice.
5. The UHB does not directly commission S&LT stammering services for CYP. However, the UHB does have a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Local Authority and Flying Start who will cover CYP who stammer.
6. Section 12 exemption applied.
7. Section 12 exemption applied. However, under Section 16 of the FoIA, the UHB confirms that the waiting times from referral to initial assessment for CYP referred for stammering is under twelve (12) weeks.
8. Section 12 exemption applied. However, under Section 16, the UHB confirms that CYP referred for stammering are treated as priority referrals.
9. The UHB does not hold this information, as CYP are seen on an individual need's basis. e.g. a block of Psychologically Informed Consultation and Training (PCIT) sessions would typically be around six (6) sessions including assessment, whilst the Lidcombe programme typically requires ten (10) or more sessions. However, in other cases, only a few sessions are required to assess and provide advice.

10. The UHB confirms that IPFR (Independent Patient Funding Requests) can be made for a S&LT referral outside of Wales, and any out of area funding request must be in line with the All Wales IPFR or Prior Approval Policy.

An IPFR is where funding is required for NHS healthcare for individual patients who fall outside the range of services and treatment that a Health Board has arranged to routinely provide, and the IPFR policy route should be followed. Such a request would normally fall within one of the following categories:

- A patient requires a treatment which is new, novel, developing or unproven and is not within the Health Board's routine schedule of services and treatment
- A patient requires a treatment which is outside of existing clinical policy criteria
- A treatment is required for a patient with a rare or specialist condition and is not eligible for treatment in accordance with the clinical policy criteria.

Whereas a Prior Approval request is normally defined as a request for a patient to receive routine treatment outside of local services or established contractual arrangements, the prior approval route should only be used when all treatment options available within locally provided or contracted services have been exhausted and it is clinically appropriate to consider accessing healthcare services elsewhere. Such a request will normally fall within one of the following categories:

- Second opinion
- Lack of local/commissioned service provision/expertise
- Clinical continuity of care (considered on a case by case basis)
- Transfer back to the NHS following self-funding in the private sector
- Re-referral following a previous tertiary referral
- Students

However, all requests must have the support of the secondary care consultant.

11. The UHB confirms that it would never refer or signpost CYP who stammer to a specialist service or centre outside of its area.

12. The UHB confirms that it provides information on support for CYP who stammer and signpost to:

- Action for Stammering Children
- STAMMA
- Michael Palin Centre
- Penguin app

13. The UHB provides both individual and group therapy approaches, depending on age and area. Also provided are termly virtual parent information sessions, in accordance with the All Wales Stammering Pathway (Getting The Words Out). All therapists deliver PCIT and Swindon programme approaches, and one (1) is Lidcombe trained.

14. The UHB S&L therapist access specialist training from:

- Michael Palin Centre
- Online
- CENs
- In service training

- Airedale, Swindon

15. The UHB confirms that cost and resourcing priorities cause issues with accessing training opportunities for stammering, as stammering often represents a small proportion of the generalist or complex needs case load.

16. The UHB confirms that education setting staff training varies depending on the needs of the setting. Previously, whole school training or bespoke training has been offered to certain staff members. It can also be the sharing of information/resources with teachers e.g. the teachers' section of the STAMMA website. If a CYP has identified a particular area of need, or an exam access arrangement, the S&L service may work directly with that subject teacher to put in place the support the CYP needs. Stammering is also included in the Elklan training packages for ages three to five (3 to 5), five to eleven (5 to 11) and eleven to sixteen (11 to 16) years.