

# The NHS Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service(SALT) in Cornwall

## Spring Term 2022

I am writing to provide you with an update on our current position as we continue to find our way through the pandemic and try to provide support to the Children and Young people of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.



We now have a fully operational **Request for Help Team (RFHT)** who can deal with referrals and general enquiries within a few days. Thank you for using this process and the feedback we have had to date has been very positive. We are constantly looking at how we can improve this service which has become our new front door and welcome any feedback.

Email: [cft.saltrequestforhelp@nhs.net](mailto:cft.saltrequestforhelp@nhs.net)

Telephone: 01208 256262

For **eating and drinking referrals** only call 01208 834488 or download a referral form from our website <https://www.cornwallft.nhs.uk/childrensspeech-and-language-therapy/> and email it to [cpn-tr.enquirslt@nhs.net](mailto:cpn-tr.enquirslt@nhs.net)

I would encourage you contact the **RFHT** for advice and information on how to support any speech language and communication needs in the first instance. As a clinical team **they will not be able to update you on the staffing situation which I will endeavour to do in this update.**

If you are given some advice and suggestions by the RFHT to try and they are unsuccessful, please contact them so, they can explore with you any adjustments that might help. They can also liaise with the local SALT if appropriate if the case is known to the service or open a referral.



We are struggling to recruit to vacant posts as are many other services in Cornwall. This also reflects the national picture.

Currently we have:

- 2.5 vacancies and another part time post joining this soon in the Falmouth and Camborne Pool and Redruth areas. We hope to be able to relocate existing staff who have requested a west move which will have a knock-on impact on another area so this will need to be a carefully planned move.
- 1 full time vacancy in the East of the County
- 1 part time vacancy in the St Austell area
- 1 part time vacancy in our Request for Help Team which we hope to recruit to this month.
- We are also experiencing pressure on our Dysphagia service (eating and drinking)

This means that we have about 5 vacancies which out of a workforce of 27 full time posts is significant. It continues to be a challenge to get to all the children and young people we need to see when we also have a historical backlog of appointments and an ongoing high demand for support for children's Speech Language and communication needs. The number of children open to the SALT service currently stands at 2438.

We are transferring children and staff around where possible to provide some cover, but this has also been impacted by staff absence and the Covid restrictions. Some of the SALTs are working additional hours as we try to increase the number of appointments available. Where we can, we are providing online appointments as these can be run by any of the SALT team. We cannot secure agency staff and there are no bank SALTs available for us to approach. We have advertised some of these posts several times and will continue to do so

The next step will be to look at a recruitment campaign and more creative advertising in the hope that we can attract some new therapists. Christmas is not always a good time to attract new staff as they are often focused on other things.



Our priorities remain to provide support to the most vulnerable children with the most significant communication needs but also the children who have limited support for their speech and language needs **who may or may not** have an EHCP.

We continue to prioritise children who are being **assessed for** an Education Health and Care plan  
However we will do our best to provide as much ongoing support as we can and contribute to the annual review process.

We will continue to face these challenges into next term but hopefully we will be fully staffed by the start of the summer term. I will provide another update around the February half term

Thankyou for our patience

Sue Newman

Head of Service

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