

# AN INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL REVIEW OF THE SENSORY & COMMUNICATION SUPPORT SERVICE (SOUTH EAST WALES CONSORTIUM)



CLILC • WLGA

A review of the experiences and outcomes of children and young people, their families and schools supported by the Sensory & Communication Support Service



Gwasanaethau Cymorth  
Cyfathrebu a Synhwyrdd  
Sensory & Communication  
Support Service



TORFAEN  
COUNTY  
BOROUGH

BWRDEISTREF  
SIROL  
TORFAEN



monmouthshire  
sir fynwy



NEWPORT  
CITY COUNCIL  
CYNGOR DINAS  
CASNEWYDD

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DECEMBER 2019

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## 1. Foreword

In April 2019, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), took on the role of impartial commissioner to support an independent review of an innovative, regional ALN<sup>1</sup> service; SenCom (Sensory & Communication Support Service).

SenCom, is a joint service working across five local authorities in South East Wales;

### **Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Newport, Monmouthshire, Torfaen.**

SenCom has been delivering collaborative ALN services under its umbrella designation, since 2015. Their work includes the conveyancing of a wide range of specialist advisory, teaching services and interventions to families and schools.

During this corresponding period of SenCom's development, the Welsh Government's aspirations in respect of this educational area, have been clear-cut and unmistakably expressed; they wish to ensure high-quality support is available to children with additional learning needs in schools across the country. This objective is a central tenet of its new legislation and the ensuing ALN Code of Practice.

*“The Welsh Government is committed to creating a fully inclusive education system where all learners are inspired, motivated and supported to reach their potential.*

*Every learner should have access to an education that meets their needs and enables them to participate in, benefit from, and enjoy learning. Our vision is of a unified, equitable and non-adversarial system which supports and promotes the rights of all children and young people”.*

Kirsty Williams AM Cabinet Secretary for Education December 2018 Draft ALN Code for Wales

The WLGA, who represent the twenty-two local authorities across Wales, are supporting the five, partner authorities involved in this scheme. In particular, this important evaluation of SenCom's work, its impact on children, their families and schools, outcomes and preparation for adulthood.

The review will examine how; *effectively, efficiently, equitably, and economically* SenCom achieves and delivers a 'value for money' service to children, their families, and schools. This will include evaluating how well Secom delivers -

- specialist teaching, learning and communication provision to meet the needs of children and young people, it supports?
- critical support to families and schools to enable them to support meeting the children and young people's respective aspirations?
- a service that prepares young people with sensory and communication needs to become respected and appreciated adults in their local communities?

The independent review, announced in May 2019, will seek to gather a representative sample of stakeholders' views and judgements, by engaging with schools; other support service partners;

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<sup>1</sup> ALN = Additional Learning Needs

the voluntary and community sector (VCS) but most importantly the children, young people, and their families.

A copy of the terms of reference for the SenCom review are included with this report (see appendixes). Likewise, a number of the supplementary documents relating to, gathered, and studied during the review, can also be found in the appendixes.

The independent, external review has been led by Mark Geraghty. An experienced SEND professional with over 40 years' knowledge and understanding of working in the education/ALN /SEND<sup>2</sup> sectors.

He has a particular knowledge, expertise, and skills in the area of complex low incidence ALN/SEN. The review process will:

- enable all parents, carers, schools, complementary ALN/SEND services, and the voluntary & community sector, to submit their views, in person, in writing and/or electronically.
- Facilitate face-to-face meetings with representatives from the above stakeholder groups who wish to attend locally based consultation meetings. Details of these meetings can be found in the body of the report.
- Collect, collate, and evaluate the views and experiences; publish a report of the findings, as well as make a series of *unfettered* recommendations, based on the evidence gathered from SenCom's stakeholders.

The Welsh Government and the respective five partner local authorities passionately believe the mark of a caring society is indicated by how it treats children who are most in need of support.

Every child, whatever their background and no matter what challenges they face, should have access to a best-in-class education that prepares them for life in the modern world, as an adult.

Thanks to the hard work of teachers and support staff across schools in Wales, standards are rising, and Local Authorities will continue to encourage schools to focus on the achievements of **all** pupils. Children only get one chance at their education, so ...

***“Priority is placed within the ALN system on early intervention, ensuring needs are identified early, the right provision is put in place promptly, and multi-agency working to support learners and deliver effective and prudent interventions supports the healthier goal.***

***The emphasis on learners being encouraged to have high aspirations, supported to achieve educationally, and to go on to live fulfilling lives and make a full contribution to society, including through employment, links to the goals of prosperity and resilience”.***

Kirsty Williams AM Cabinet Secretary for Education December 2018 Draft ALN Code for Wales.

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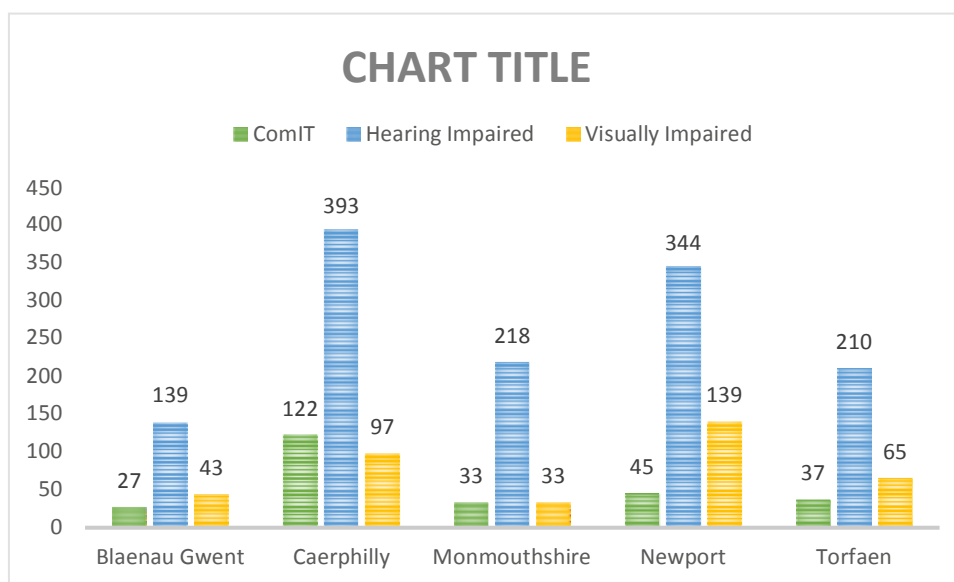
<sup>2</sup> SEND Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities

This independent scrutiny of SenCom is a timely opportunity to look again at the successes it has achieved, thus far and consider where there are occasions for improving the teaching and learning experiences for children and young people with sensory and communication needs, in Welsh schools.

It will also enable us to reflect on how Local Authorities can future-proof these highly specialist services. The independent review process commenced in May 2019 with a planned completion and publication of the findings and recommendations by December 2019.

## 2. Overview

There are over 1900 children and young people supported, at various levels, by the SenCom Service (Sensory & Communication Support Service). SenCom is a multiparty, collaboration and operational delivery arrangement of highly specialist teaching, intervention, therapy, and support services, for children and young people with low incidence Additional Learning Needs (ALN).



SenCom’s operational services include the provision of specialist help and advice together with a range of interventions from four, discrete expert ALN teams; which together form the SenCom service. These respective teams cover the following specialist areas of ALN:

- Speech, Language and Communication Needs (ComIT)
- Visual and multi-sensory Impairments (VIS)
- *MSI/deafblind (- managed under the VIS)*
- Hearing Impairments (HIS)

ComIT was the most recently established team, in 2008. The HIS and VIS were established by the preceding Gwent County Council. All three teams are co-funded by the five local authorities and *currently* provide a regional, highly specialist 0-19 training and intervention service to families, early years settings and schools.

The Head of Service took up post in September 2015; with a remit to further develop strategic and operational integration between the teams. It had been a long-held desire of the South East Wales Consortium to see isolated teams, amalgamate under the auspices of a single service.

The belief of an independent review of SenCom was proposed and agreed by all the partner Local Authorities (LA): Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, and Torfaen. The independent review was subsequently commissioned by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).

The review was propositioned following an occasion when one of the five partner Local Authorities, reasonably, considered the merits and benefits of developing a more local, intramural arrangement for its *identified* children, young people, their families and schools with sensory and/or communication impairments.

This view by the LA, was prompted by a confidence that it could achieve a similar level, type, and coverage of low incidence services to families, as provided by the existing SenCom services. The decision meant it would not continue as part of the existing, joint collaborative partnership. Moreover, it also felt it could achieve some supplementary efficiencies by providing a locally managed service.

This autonomous, strategic consideration was part of a cycle of annual review, which every Local Authority in Wales undertakes to appraise value for money of all the services provided to their respective, stakeholders<sup>3</sup> e.g. children young people, families, schools, etc.

After a period of further dialogue and reason, the single LA decided it would revoke its decision to deliver a discrete SenCom-like service and agreed to remain in the regional partnership, for the remaining period of the authority's administration.

Following negotiations at the very highest level, in April 2019, it was established that the WLGA, would commission, lead and support an independent review of the SenCom service. As had been recommended by the five local authorities.

The WLGA is;

*'... a politically led cross party organisation that seeks to give local government a strong voice at a national level. It is a membership organisation that represents all 22 local authorities in Wales, the 3 fire and rescue authorities and the 3 national park authorities as associate members. The WLGA's primary aims are to promote, protect, support, and develop democratic local government and the interests of local authorities in Wales'. - WLGA December 2019*

### **3. Methodologies for the Independent Review**

The central principles used throughout this review process to evaluate SenCom's merit are based on the National Audit Office's model of 'Value for Money'. This tool principally uses four criteria to assess the value for money of Local Authority spending i.e. the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes:

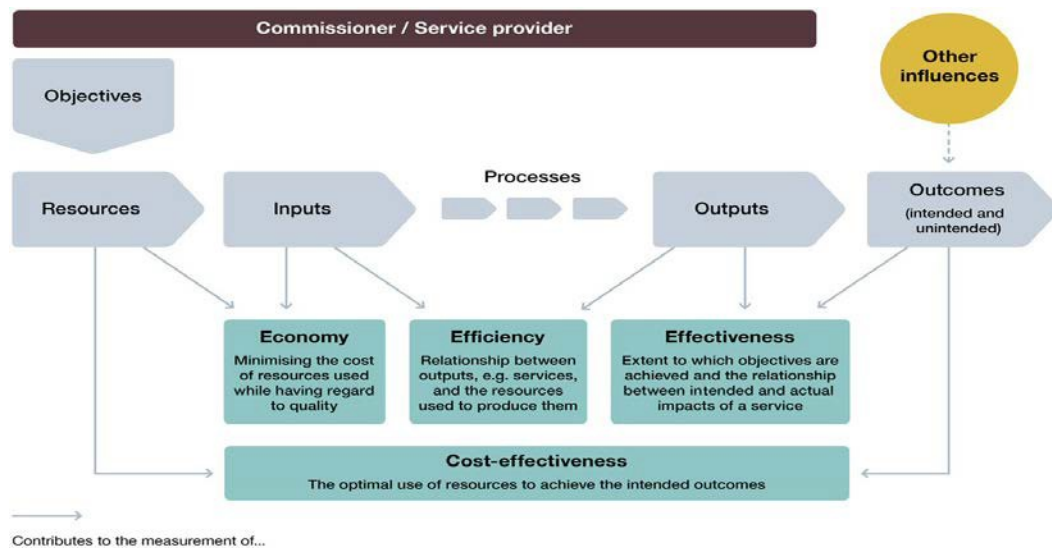
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<sup>3</sup> A person or persons with an interest or concern in something e.g. a business or a service which they use/access.

- **Economy:** minimising the cost of resources used or required i.e. inputs by SenCom,
- **Efficiency:** the relationship between the output from SenCom’s services and the resources to produce them,
- **Effectiveness:** the relationship between the intended and actual results of SenCom’s outcomes,
- **Equity:** the extent to which SenCom’s services are available to and reach all the stakeholders that they are intended to (*accepting that some children and/or young people may receive differing levels of service from SenCom for reasons other than differences in their levels of need*).

**Table 1. Established Instrument to Measure ‘Value for Money’<sup>1</sup> (<https://www.nao.org.uk/> )**

This diagram details the key components and processes used in the measurement of a value for money exercise.



A range of delivery methods were agreed by which the WLGA/Independent Consultant would collect and collate the views and opinions of the respective stakeholder groups involved with and offered support from the SenCom service.

These included;

1. The completion of an online and/or paper survey
2. A dedicated email address by which stakeholders could send free text to the WLGA
3. A number of facilitated public consultations with stakeholder groups, involving the independent consultant, Mark Geraghty
4. This essential anecdotal evidence, along with internally published information from SenCom, will be used to arrive at an overall Value for Money judgement.

<sup>1</sup> Table 1. extracted from the National Audit Office Successful Commissioning Toolkit - <https://www.nao.org.uk/successful-commissioning/general-principles/value-for-money/assessing-value-for-money/>

The evidence gathered, from across the various stakeholder consultations, will contribute and influence the findings and concluding recommendations, of the report.

However, it would be disingenuous of me not to acknowledge that the initial plans surrounding the collection of stakeholders' views, encountered a number of delivery and administrative challenges. This was most evident in the number of families able to attend the original face-to-face meetings in June/July 2019.

Given the importance of stakeholder's views, in particularly, families and the young people themselves, the WLGA after consultation with its partner local authorities, agreed to provide further and extended opportunities for face-to-face consultation with the independent consultant.

This pragmatic decision to extend the consultation process, affirms the unquestionable commitment of the WLGA and the five partner local authorities, to seek an open, transparent, and wide-ranging consultation with stakeholders.

The agreement, to extend the consultation period, was most welcomed by all and ensured that I met the children and young people themselves, gathered supportively the views of more families maintained by the SenCom service. As well as amassing the thoughts and related data, from other key professional stakeholders.

I want to commend and personally thank, all the Council Leaders/CEO/Senior Members/Chief Executives and Chief Officers (from the five partner authorities) for their passion and unambiguous interest in wanting to ensure families were consulted in a proper and timely manner.

#### **The Value for Money Paradigm**

Each area of the Value for Money model described in **Section 3**. was extensively shared, explained and examined throughout the various and distinct consultation meetings. Evidence has then been collated and scrutinised, together with the statistical information amassed via the online surveys of parents and professionals.

Consequently, information provided by the SenCom service has been studied and summarised, in the various tables and charts, within this report. Additionally, abstracts of this data and/or values have been used to support or refute the evidence findings, detailed in the respective sections of this commentary.

#### **4. Public Consultation Meetings**

**Table 1.** below sets out and details the; dates, venues, and consultees for a range of communal, unrestricted consultation meetings as well as the attendant planning meetings, to support the essential evidence collecting meetings of children, young people, their families, and other stakeholders.

The associated PowerPoint Templates (PPT) presentations and support materials can be found in the Appendixes, at the end of this report, for information.

**Table 1.** below provides *robust* and *unequivocal* testament of the comprehensive nature of the consultation processes. In particular, the independent consultant's endeavours to assemble unquestionable, unfettered substantiation of the views and experience of families and professionals involved with the SenCom.



**Table 1.**

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
4 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	David Hopkins	Interim Director, Education, Learning & Culture, WLGA – SenCom Planning Meeting
12 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	Leaders Group <sup>4</sup> Caerphilly	The Strategic and Operational Leadership of the Council's duties and responsibilities.
13 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	Leaders Group Torfaen	The Strategic and Operational Leadership of the Council's duties and responsibilities.
13 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	Leaders Group Monmouthshire	The Strategic and Operational Leadership of the Council's duties and responsibilities.
14 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	Regional ALN Leads Meeting	Heads of ALN for each of the respective Local Authorities.
18 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	SenCom Leadership Team	Head of Service; Lead Practitioners for Hearing, Visual and Speech Language and Communication Impairment Services
18 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	Leaders Group Newport	The Strategic and Operational Leadership of the Council's duties and responsibilities.
24 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	SenCom Staff	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom
27 <sup>th</sup> June <i>x2 am &amp; pm meetings</i>	Specialist Education Resource Base Heads NHS Professionals & Eye Clinics	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation <sup>5</sup> .
28 <sup>th</sup> June 2019 <i>x2 am &amp; pm meetings</i>	Third Sector Partners LA Representatives ComIT Leads & 0-3 Project	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation <sup>6</sup> .
28 <sup>th</sup> April 2019	Tracey Pead	Additional Learning Needs Transformation Lead
1 <sup>st</sup> June 2019	Parents Consultation Meeting - Trinity Fields Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
1 <sup>st</sup> June 2019	Parents Consultation Meetings - Maes Ebbw School, Newport	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2019	Parents Consultation Meeting - Penycwm Special School, Beaufort Hill, Beaufort, Ebbw Vale	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2019	Parents Consultation Meeting - Crownbridge School, Turnpike Road, Croesyceiliog, Cwmbran	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
4 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	Parents Consultation Meeting - Cwrt Bleddyn Hotel Llangybi, Usk,	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
11 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	Leaders Group Blaenau Gwent	The Strategic and Operational Leadership of the Council's duties and responsibilities.

<sup>4</sup> Leaders Groups always included; Leader of the respective Council, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Education Officer (or equivalent) plus additional Senior Officers for ALN, where requested.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendices PowerPoint Template - Professionals

<sup>6</sup> See Appendices PowerPoint Template - Parents

12 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	SWASSH Meeting	Deputy Heads of the Special Schools across Wales. Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
17 <sup>th</sup> July 2019	SenCom Staff	Presentation and update on the progress of the SenCom Review to all staff.
12 <sup>th</sup> August 2019	Local Authority Chief Officers	Presentation and update on the progress of the SenCom Review to the Five Chief Officers and the WLGA.
2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2019	David Hopkins WLGA	Phase Two Consultation Planning and Delivery Requirements Meeting
6 <sup>th</sup> September 2019	SenCom Leadership Team	Update and outline plans to the Head of Service; Lead Practitioners for Hearing, Visual and Speech Language and Communication Impairment Services
11 <sup>th</sup> September 2019	Headteachers Conference	Headteachers, Newport ( <i>cancelled due to serious traffic incident</i> ). Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
26 <sup>th</sup> September 2019	Headteachers Conference	Headteachers, Blaenau Gwent. Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
2 <sup>nd</sup> October 2019	Headteachers Conference	Headteachers, Monmouth. Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
8 <sup>th</sup> October 2019	Young People's Social group	Meeting with a group of young deaf adults to elicit their views on the support and help they receive from the SenCom service.
9 <sup>th</sup> October 2019	ALNCO Forum Blaenau Gwent	ALNCOs, Blaenau Gwent. Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
7 <sup>th</sup> November 2019 x2 am & pm meetings	ALNCO Regional Forum (Tracey Pead)	ALNCOs, regional Meeting (all five local authorities). Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
12 <sup>th</sup> November 2019 x2 am & pm meetings	Parents Consultation Meeting - 1 Kingsway, Newport, NP20 1UH	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
14 <sup>th</sup> November 2019 x2 am & pm meetings	Cwmbran Stadium Henllys Way, Cwmbran,	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
14 <sup>th</sup> November 2019	VI Preschool Group, parents and carers	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
15 <sup>th</sup> November 2019	Parents Consultation Meeting - Monmouthshire County Council County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk,	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation

15 <sup>th</sup> November 2019 <i>pm meeting</i>	Parents Consultation Meeting - Penallta House, Tredomen Business Park, Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
15 <sup>th</sup> November 2019	School Visit St Helens Catholic Primary School	Meeting with ALNCo and groups of children to elicit their views and feedback on the support they receive from the SenCom
19 <sup>th</sup> November 2019 <i>am meeting</i>	Parents Consultation Meeting – Caerphilly Penallta House, Tredomen Business Park, Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
19 <sup>th</sup> November 2019 <i>pm meeting</i>	Parents Consultation Meeting - Monmouthshire County Council County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk,	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
20 <sup>th</sup> November 2019	School Visit - Abersychan Comprehensive School	Meeting with ALNCo and groups of young people to elicit their views and feedback on the support they receive from the SenCom
21 <sup>st</sup> November 2019 <i>x2 am &amp; pm meetings</i>	Parents Consultation Meeting – Blaenau Gwent 20 James St, Ebbw Vale	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
22 <sup>nd</sup> November 2019	School Visit - Maes Ebbw School, Maesglas Road, Newport	Meeting with Headteacher, School staff and groups of young people to elicit their views and feedback on the support they receive from the SenCom
25 <sup>th</sup> November 2019	College Visit - Coleg y Cymoedd Nantgarw Heol y Coleg, Cardiff,	Meeting young person and support staff to elicit their views and feedback on the support they receive from the SenCom
26 <sup>th</sup> November 2019	HI Preschool Group, parents and carers	Presentation on the focus and remit of the independent review of SenCom. Collection of feedback and views based on a Value for Money presentation
26 <sup>th</sup> November 2019	School Visit – Brynmawr Foundation, Intermediate Road, Ebbw Vale, Wales	Meeting young person and support staff to elicit their views and feedback on the support they receive from the SenCom

## 5. Judgement Themes

### Theme 1 ~ Economy

*“Does SenCom minimise the cost of resources used or required, while continuing to deliver the highest quality of services possible to children, young people, their families and schools?”*

Scrutinising the feedback and comments from the various consultation meetings, survey evidence and examining the hard data included in this section, I can report that the SenCom service is considered, by its stakeholders, to be very successful in relation to this particular criterion.

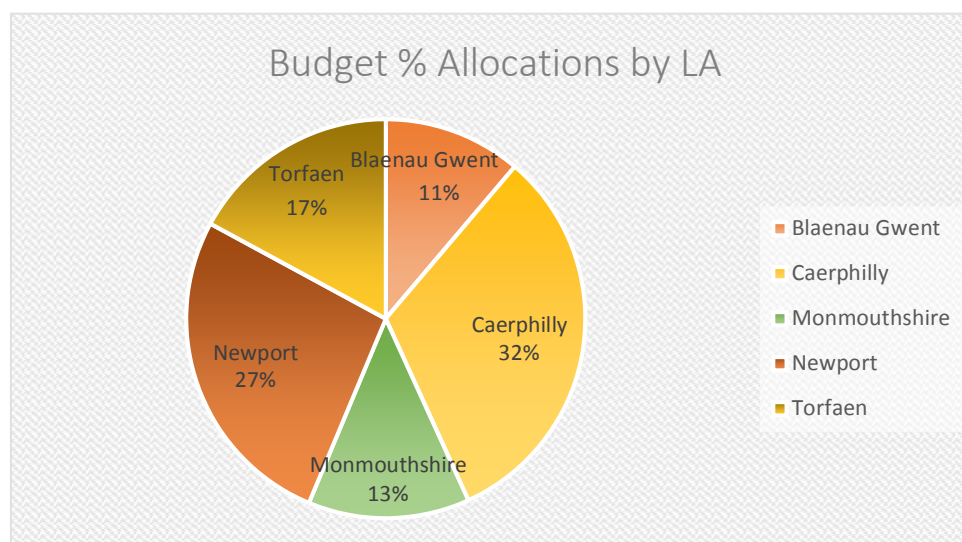
SenCom is funded from the five local authorities based on school population expressed as a percentage of the overall total for the South East Wales region.

- **Table 2.** gives the percentage contribution each authority provided to construct the total SenCom budget - £2,261,330.
- **Table 3.** indicates the contribution each authority provided to the total SenCom budget as a percentage of the overall budget.

**Table 2.** - Three Year Budget Summary

SENCOM Service	Budget 2018/19	% of Total Budget	Budget 2019/20	% of Total Budget	First Draft Budget 2020/21	% of Total Budget
	(£)		(£)		(£)	
Salaries	1,771,457	78%	1,856,656	82%	1,889,229	85%
Direct Spend	235,151	10%	228,033	10%	227,851	10%
Indirect Spend	254,722	11%	176,641	8%	104,426	5%
<b>Gross Expenditure</b>	<b>2,261,330</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,261,330</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,231,506</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3.** The current allocations by % are:



## Findings

I note from my review of the financial information, there has been no increase in the base budget for a number of years. Since 2015 SenCom has absorbed a number of costs of living increases including; employer superannuation contributions, apprentice levy and pay increases, across the whole team.

Throughout this period of operational service delivery, a balanced budget has been preserved.

Set these figures against an unanimity of view from stakeholders that SenCom's services to C&YP has been delivered unfailingly, consistently and to a very good standard in such an economic context.

The online survey asked schools if they knew what good support from SenCom should look like? Responses were well-defined and the professionals accurately described their expectations;

*SenCom should be proactive action to ensure that children can access all aspects of the curriculum before it is delivered.*

*When that pupil enters the school, what they need and where they will sit in each classroom is already identified and ALL staff are aware of how to communicate with and support them. Everything is in place.*

*Parents are kept up to date and reassured that everything is in place before school starts so that they do not have to keep on to the school to find out what's happening or rely upon the child having to relay the information.*

Extract from Professional's Online Survey

*Good quality support should have two branches of support.*

*One to support the pupils and their families/carers with communication, practical support regarding any equipment and visual aids and encouraging families/carers to work in partnership with schools to ensure the pupils participate in all aspects of school life.*

*The second branch is around supporting schools through professional learning with a key focus on how to include vulnerable pupils in all aspects of learning, how to identify pupils' barriers to learning and how to access appropriate support.*

*This will build capacity within all schools to meet the needs of vulnerable learners.*

Extract from Professional's Online Survey

When asked how well does SenCom match their descriptions and expectations, the results were very reassuring. **Table 4.** below detail the responses of professionals and affirms a positive view of SenCom's delivery. Over 80% (4 out of 5 schools) of respondents felt SenCom meet their expectations.

**Table 4.** How well does SenCom meet the expectations of professionals in Schools?



**Sample of Survey Feedback November 2019:**

- *“In all my time as a parent of a child with a sensory difficulty the SenCom service has delivered me excellent support to my family. This help over time has been crucial to my family, grandparents and friend’s confidence in helping my daughter. All their support and advice they have given me over the years, has been a lifeline to me and my daughter. It is vital that this service continues if my daughter is to grow up and have a real chance as an adult”. Parent - online survey*
- *“A brilliant service, nothing is too much trouble for the staff, they are patient and very kind to my son”. Parent - online survey*
- *My child has complex needs and has had many different people involved in his care. Of all the services involved the only reliable and consistent one has been SenCom. My son has an amazing relationship with the team, as do I, and they have helped us both over and above expectations.*

*We attended the parent’s group in Llantarnam for two years, but he now attends special school, so he accesses the service there. He still sees the same staff ensuring continuity for him - the only bit of familiarity in his new school, which must have been invaluable to him (he’s non-verbal). I cannot stress enough how valued this service is to me and my son. Parent - online survey*

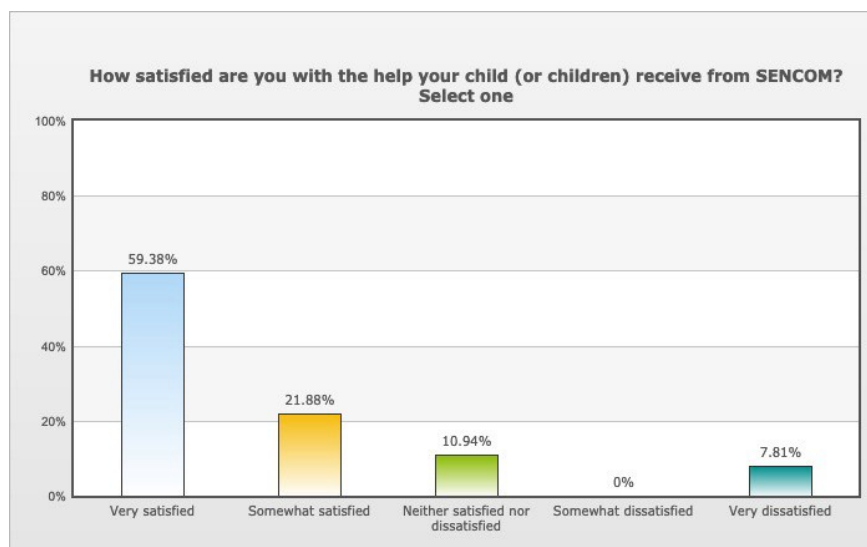
**Online Parents Satisfaction Survey**

Furthermore, these results for parental satisfaction with SenCom’s service delivered throughout this period, is confirmed by the data collected from the parent’s online survey: see chart below.

This chart indicates a parental satisfaction rate of over 80% (very satisfied/satisfied) classification. I would consider this as valid corroboration of a good economic performance during a period of austerity for the respective LAs i.e. SenCom maintained good quality support (satisfaction levels and pupil outcomes) while delivering support and intervention and minimising costs.

I would not exclude the opinion that further economies of scale could be made by reviewing and adjusting aspects of the Service's future operational delivery model. **See Recommendations.**

**Table 5. - Parental Satisfaction Survey Response October 2019**



### **Conclusion for Criterion 1 - Economy.**

The evidence collected, considered and compared with a range of local and national Special Educational Needs (SEN)/Additional Learning Needs (ALN) practices indicates, in my professional opinion, this aspect of Sen Com's Value for Money performance demonstrates robust and consistent delivery characteristics; although a number of operational and/or strategic leadership aspects will require improvement

### **Theme 2. ~ Efficiency: *the relationship between the output from SenCom's services and the resources to produce them***

The information detailed below include key features of the impact of SenCom's service on the progress of children and young people. More detailed information is contained in the appendixes of this report.

ComIT is a service whose fundamental approach to supporting children and young people is based around a **systemic training model of intervention**. It works primarily by upskilling, coaching, and disseminating high quality practice along with specialist strategies to the teachers and support assistances who work directly with children and young people, every day.

Consequently, it is highly effective in reaching the school's workforce across the five authorities, in turn is patently and effectively drives up the progress, achievement and confidence of the children and young people with speech language and communication needs.

**Table 6.** Details the number and percentage of schools in each authority that have completed; this data indicates the impact of ½ day working in schools.

Tier 1/systemic work with ComIT			
LA	Schools	%	
Blaenau Gwent	27/29	93	
Caerphilly	73/89	82	
Monmouthshire	29/36	81	
Newport	51/56	90	
Torfaen	28/34	82	
Number of CYP supported by ComIT; Tier 2 and Tier 3			
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Tier 2	783	719	199
Tier 3	40	60	58

From 2016-2018 many schools were supported by a ComIT Specialist Teaching Assistant (half a day a week for a term) to help set up effective processes for identifying and supporting CYP with SLCN<sup>7</sup>. In addition, ComIT helped schools to co-host Speech Language and Communication groups for identified pupils. Data was collected by ComIT on these pupils and is included in the tables above.

During 2018/19 many schools have been continuing with this process, self-sufficiently. The work at tier 2 and tier 3 for 2018/2019 has been more focused on CYP via a 1-1 approach, with higher levels of SLCN, while also continuing to engage school staff and parents.

ComIT training, policy and processes enable schools to recognise that they have many pupils with SLCN and support them effectively. Schools complete a SLCN audit and ComIT support schools to develop an action plan for SLC. ComIT support in school (to build capacity) and all teaching and support staff are offered SCLN training.

At least one ten-week ELKLAN Speech and Language Support in the classroom is delivered every term. ELKLAN Communication Friendly Schools training process is run every year. So far 14 schools have completed the process and a further 12 are due to finish shortly.

A series of half day workshops runs each term. The workshops are as follows:

- Introduction to Speech, Language and Communication
- ComIT Toolkit Whole Class Strategies Sounds So Simple Teaching Talking
- POPAT (Phonological Awareness Training)

<sup>7</sup> SLCN = Speech, Language and Communication Needs



**Table 7. Numbers of staff trained between 2014 and 2019**

2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
517	880	291	307	319

**Table 8. Number of Pupils and Progress Made Between ComIT Pre and Post Intervention Checklist Scores**

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	3 yr. Totals	3 yr %
<b>Minus Score</b>	10	15	9	34	<b>2.31%</b>
<b>1-10</b>	334	248	98	680	<b>46.26%</b>
<b>11-20</b>	319	97	60	476	<b>32.38%</b>
<b>21-30</b>	35	117	23	175	<b>11.90%</b>
<b>31-40</b>	12	39	11	62	<b>4.22%</b>
<b>41-50</b>	10	19	5	34	<b>2.32%</b>
<b>50+</b>	3	5	1	9	<b>0.61%</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>1470</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Although a non-standardised measure, checklist scoring is supported by consistent advice and training from ComIT staff. The percentage three-year totals indicate that nearly a third of pupils make 11 to 20-point differences from their original pre-checklist scores.

Only a very small minority make no progress at all following intervention from the team.

This information is used and analysed to check progress is being made. If no progress or regression is noted these individuals will be looked at carefully to see why this has been the case and follow up undertaken.

The total number of pre and post screens returned is dropping year on year. This is another indicator that ComIT are now working more with individuals at tier 2 and 3, as schools pick up the group work. Also, 2018/2019 is data for 1.5 terms only.

**Table 9. Tier 3 Pupils Who Received 1:1 Intervention Between 2016-19 And Speech & Language Therapy Department Outcomes**

No. of children who received 1:1 from ComIT	Discharge treatment complete	Discharge attendance non-	Current with SLT	Couldn't find
75	35 (46%)	5 (7%)	32 (43%)	3 (4%)

All of this data and attendant commentary are very encouraging and describe a team that is working very efficiently, achieving good outcomes for C&YP, upskilling schools, and impacting on lots of children.

The **Hearing and Visually Impaired Services** base their approach to support and intervention to children and young people on a *pupil focused* methodology.

This differs, fundamentally, from the ComIT team and reflects to an extent, the much lower incidence of children with hearing impairment/deafness and visually impairment/blindness.

These methodological support and intervention differences i.e. between ComIT and the HI and VI services, are why we have provided the outcome data as discrete cohorts of the respective parts of the SenCom service and not a single table of data.

**Table 10. Sensory Impairment Achievement/Outcomes**

<b>Hearing Impaired Children and Young People</b>	
Age - Hearing Impaired	Descriptor
Foundation Stage	Pupils make a strong start as illustrated by our Foundation Stage results with nearly a 20% positive gap against the national SEN population in Wales.
Key Stage 2	Continued progress throughout the primary years with above average result at the end of Key Stage 2
Key Stage 3	The core subject Indicator remains above average
Key Stage 4	The Level 2 threshold is also above average at end of Key Stage 4.
<b>Visually Impaired Children and Young People</b>	
Age - Visually Impaired	Descriptor
Foundation Stage	The cohorts of VI pupils is very small, even after several years, however, the performance of these children is just below the national average.
Key Stage 2	The core subject indicator at Key Stage 2 is above the national average for SEN pupils in Wales
Key Stage 3	As with the foundation stage the performance of these children is just below the national average
Key Stage 4	Level 1 and Level 2 Threshold performance is very strong with a 60%+ positive gap compared to national SEN population.

## Findings

There is much data for this section, but it's not cogently or formatively collected and used to drive up the Service's overall efficiency, at present.

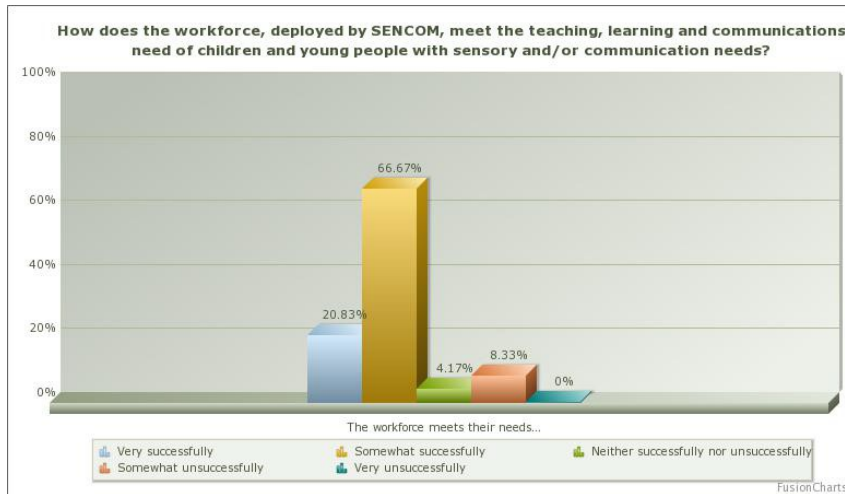
This is an area where I think with cooperative participation from a range of stakeholders and guidance, particularly the partner LAs, SenCom could make rapid gains and the resultant information used to inform year-on-year service priorities and thus improve overall efficiency.

An area I would like to see SenCom explore, further, which would impact on their efficiency would be the option of providing more online advice and information resources for schools and families.

This is an area which the service could exploit further as technology in homes is more prevalent and parents/carers welcome access to such materials.

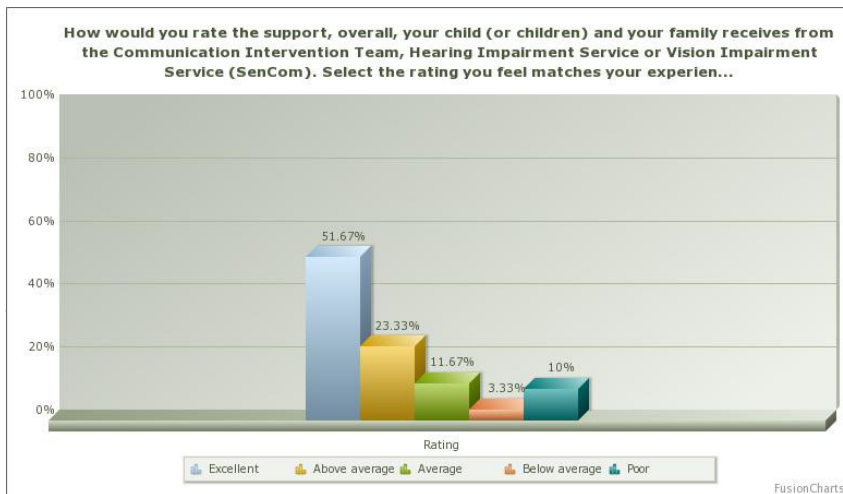
**Table 11.**

This table affirms a good level of satisfaction reported by professionals in meeting the needs of C&YP supported by SenCom, with 87+% of professionals feeling that SenCom successfully achieves this target.



**Table 12.**

Similarly, information from the online parent's online survey attests to my view that this aspect of service operation is good. Over 85% of families judge the service to be average to excellent!



Likewise, the feedback I received, directly, from the C&YP I met/interviewed in schools was overwhelmingly positive about their support and the difference they make to accessing teaching and learning in their schools.

Below, I have recorded some direct, personal statements from students, parents and staff proffered and provided during my school visits.

## Student Feedback

*They (SenCom) are just brilliant! Mrs. xxxx makes sure my equipment works well and gets it fixed if I have a problem. She helps me in lessons and teaches me new vocabulary as well. I would be lost without her help. She also helps my Mum, who worries about me in school. I am not worried about school as long as Mrs. xxxx can help me.*

*The support sessions we have are fun and interesting. I look forward to them each week. I hope they can support me when I go to College next year?* Student one-to-one interview

*I couldn't manage in class without their support. They talk to my teachers and help them understand why it's so difficult, at times, for me to follow their lessons. They help me with the vocabulary I need for my lessons and make sure all my equipment works properly.* Student one-to-one interview

*I would score Mrs xxx as 20/10 for her help. She's brilliant, I couldn't survive without her regular visits. I hope she continues to support me throughout my time at this school?* Student one-to-one interview

## Parent's Feedback

*"A brilliant service, nothing is too much trouble for the staff, they are patient and very kind to my son"* Parent - Online Survey

*"This service has been absolutely, overwhelmingly positive! Since the diagnosis of our daughter SenCom have been a support educationally and emotionally. Having met other parents of sensory impaired children in different authorities I have been hugely reassured that the service we receive has been invaluable! I cannot praise the service highly enough! If the service comes under any kind of threat due to cutbacks of any kind, I guarantee the parents will fight it all the way, our children NEED this!"* Parent - Online Survey

*My son was diagnosed at birth with having a sensory impairment. Without the help of SenCom, he would not be the same child he is today at 1 years old. He is able to sign some key words and say some words too. This is because of the SenCom Playgroup at which we attend weekly in Cwmbran.*

*Without this vital support, I would not be able to communicate with my son (or him with me) and I would have no help AT ALL until he begins statutory education aged 4/5. 4/5 years is a long time to wait and would mean he would be significantly behind his peers, starting off his journey to education on a back foot at a disadvantage to others with adequate hearing. This is discrimination.*

*SenCom and its amazing staff are vital to our babies and the mental health of us parents who have nowhere to turn and no one to ask for help. Who else would teach us to communicate with our children? Who else would provide information on open days*

*and training courses for ALN children and their parents? Who else would show us what toys are helpful to their sensory needs? Who else would give our children the same start in life as children without hearing impairment?*

*Our children have no voices. We are their voice and we should be listened to!*” Parent  
- Online Survey

## **Professionals Feedback**

*“SenCom is largely efficient and responsive to the needs of the C&YP, to my requests and the school. It has a strong component of being reactive in its approach to support. If I could suggest an improvement it would be - have a more proactive and dynamic input. It would be helpful to try and predict the challenges ahead for the C&YP and our school. That would make it 100% efficient, in my opinion.* Extract from a one-to-one interview with a mainstream school ALNCO

*SenCom is very efficient in its dealings with my school and myself. They provide lots of relevant support, information, and advice. I can contact them any time and they will respond promptly. I would like more input from them, but they just don't have the resources.* Feedback from a mainstream school/ALNCO

*They have made my work so much easier, as an ALNCO. I can praise their work enough. The best ALN service we deal with in this Local Authority.* Feedback from an interview with a mainstream school/ALNCO

*An excellent, highly efficient ALN service. I think they should amalgamate with other ALN Services, regionally. The working practice and impact are so palpable. I know parents and schools on my patch think very highly of them.* Ed Psych from a Local Authority Educational Psychology Service - public consultation meetings

## **Conclusion for Criterion 2 - Efficiency.**

The evidence collected, considered and compared with a range of local and national Special Educational Needs (SEN)/Additional Learning Needs (ALN) practices indicates, in my professional opinion, this aspect of Sen Com's Value for Money performance demonstrates robust and consistent delivery characteristics; although a number of operational and/or strategic leadership aspects will require improvement.

## **Theme 3. ~ Effectiveness**

**Effectiveness:** *the relationship between the intended and actual results of SenCom's outcomes*

This is the most challenging criteria to judge because of a paucity of determinative information available to me during the review i.e. intended outcomes to compare against summative consequences i.e. actual outcomes.

I have cited a number of related summaries of outcome data, in the section 'Efficiency' above. There is supplementary, exhaustive output data in the appendixes, also.

However, this is an area where the service needs to become much smarter, more accountable, and rigorous, in its reporting.

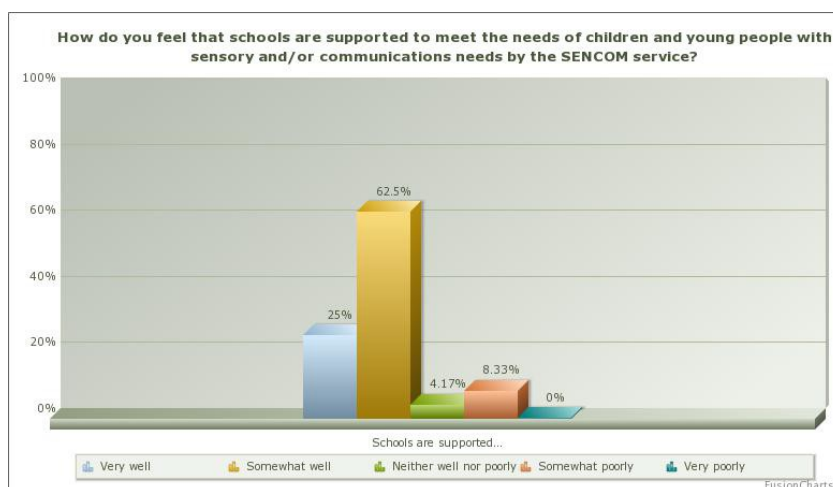
There is little evidence that a range of data and information, previously collected is used to inform and predict priorities and expectations for the coming year. Thus, it is very difficult to compare intended and actual results for the service’s overall performance.

As with the previous sections, the anecdotal evidence from my subjective interviews with children and young people in schools, parental meetings and various submissions and informative feedback from ALNCOs and other supporting professionals affirms a consistent and unswerving view of high-quality support.

Furthermore, the results of the professional’s online questionnaire evidences high levels of satisfaction apropos the impact and effectiveness of SenCom, as detailed in **Table 11** below. 80+% of professionals who work with SenCom in schools and who completed the survey, judge the service to be somewhat or very effective.

This equates to a high level of effectiveness, with less than 19% of schools judging the service neither effective nor ineffective or lower. Four out of five schools regard SenCom as a service which provides positive interventions; making a difference to their support and improves the teaching and learning experiences of sensory and communication impaired children.

**Tables 13. & 14.**



## Findings

This is unquestionably an area where the service needs to bring some focus and further develop its target setting for service delivery, support styles and performance. The general theme I heard, during my visits were, SenCom staff are generally reactive in their approaches to supporting C&YP and schools.

Schools would welcome a more proactive, preventive approach to support practices which they feel might reduce some of the difficulties C&YP can experience from time to time. The online survey data Table 14. confirms this elucidation.

Intriguingly, this was also a theme I came across at a couple of parent consultation meetings, where a more proactive approach to support would be welcomed by parents/carers. Notwithstanding this, the general feedback was overwhelming positive about how effective SenCom is for families and the young people themselves.

A statement one parent made to me, during a public consultation was:

*“We don’t know what we don’t know about how SenCom could support us more effectively? It would be good to understand the range of things they can offer when we first begin working with them?”* Parent

## Student Feedback

*“Without the support of the SenCom staff I would not have succeeded in school and achieved my goal of attending College. The support started when I was identified with my severe sensory impairment, as a child. I am now in College The transitional support I have received, this year, has been excellent. I am confident that I can now go to achieve my ambition to go to university and get a degree”.* Extract from a one-to-one interview with a Young Person aged 16

*“I have received support from SenCom for all my time in school. It has been excellent, both the in-class support and the help, out of class. I know how to manage my help because I have so much support. My Mum and Dad have received lots of help and advice over the years too. If I were to mark my help over the years, I would give SenCom 20 out 10!”* Extract from a one-to-one interview with a Young Person aged 15

## Professionals Feedback

*“We have received amazing support from SenCom over many years. We have received high quality training as well as direct support on curriculum planning and delivery. I have specialist teachers and TA staff who act as both confidants and advisors to me. We have over 10 C&YP supported by the SenCom services and without them we would have fundamentally struggled to help the C&YP.* Extract from a one-to-one interview with a mainstream school ALNCO

*The staff that have visited our school have been excellent. they have been knowledgeable and approachable, giving fantastic and useful advice!* Extract from the professional's online survey

*As a PRU we have benefitted hugely from this service and would be devastated if it were to be no longer available.* Extract from the professional's online survey

*I cannot speak highly enough of the support and help I and the school have received over many years. They have provided for every aspect of the C&YP's needs, the school staff's needs and enabled me to understand what is expected of me as ALNCO. They are by far the best support service we receive in this school and represent huge value for money.* Extract from a one-to-one interview with a mainstream school ALNCO

*It is essential to have the SenCom service available; they are able to offer advice, support, and reassurance to both the child, parents / carers and schools. Further, they teach and model good practice to schools who are then able to ensure interventions are carried out on a daily basis.*

*The quality of training and accreditation is excellent e.g. we have worked with ComIT for 3 years and this year we should achieve Communication Friendly School status. The work of ComIT initially raised awareness of the importance of language and communication in our setting, especially when related to challenging behaviours. We then started undertaking baseline assessments and found that the majority of our pupils were below low average i.e. their vocabulary was limited, and their understanding of questions was low. Interestingly, the lowest of these pupils were also involved within the Youth Justice system.*

*By receiving training from ComIT we have not only raised awareness of the importance of language and communication, but all lessons are now based around the principles of good practice which is also incorporated into our performance management. Whole school recognition and training has had the positive outcomes of better relations between staff and pupils, pupils and their peers and a reduction of challenging behaviours and anti-social behaviour both within school and in the community. We aim to continue this work and our next step is to engage parents/ carers and host awareness sessions with them.*

*ComIT has made a real difference to our school and the lives of colleagues and pupils.* Extract from the professional's online survey

## **Headteacher Feedback**

*"The support and advice we have received from SenCom has been first class! Not only have the children in my school benefitted from the support, intervention, and advice, directly.*



*The knowledge, understanding and skills acquired by teaching and support staff have been used with other, non-ALN children in classes throughout the school. They provide genuine whole-school support and help.*

*Can't speak highly enough about the Service. Fantastic value for money and worth every penny my LA pays toward the continued delivery of this Service to my school.* Extract from dialogue with a Headteacher at an LA Heads Conference.

The evidence in this section is predominantly, subjective. Not that such measurements are less valuable because they are personal accounts. Indeed, in hearing about and thus measuring the experiences of the C&YP, their families and schools, my overriding view from stakeholders is one real merit for SenCom.

The online results, parental feedback and anecdotal evidence collected in public meetings, parents' groups, and conferences, affirms this view i.e. that SenCom is very highly regarded as a Service. It unambiguously promotes and supports quality-first teaching, is person-centred and has very high satisfaction levels.

I believe once straightforward data gathering systems are put in place, the array of; inputs, outputs, achievement/attainment results, performance measures and preparation for adulthood/life-outcomes collated are published, they would confirm, objectively, the high levels of approval I found in the wide-ranging feedback, meetings, conferences and one-to-one interviews I attended.

It may well be that SenCom would benefit from the advice and involvement of an experienced professional leader, from within the field, to support this important area of improvement?

Paradoxically, in some areas of *effectiveness* there has been instances of exemplary work on outcome measures.

SenCom uses the nationally published NatSIP [Learner Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People with Sensory Impairment](#)

In addition, they have adapted the ComIT (SenCom Communication Intervention Team) pre and post intervention scoring, and created pre and post intervention tools for our Vision Impairment (VI) Service.

This is now used to inform a SenCom Learner Outcomes Framework (LOF) for all three sensory and communication support teams. Funding is currently being sought to evaluate the existing VI LOF in order to confirm its effectiveness. This in turn will offer further data that would inform and expedite the development of a whole service (SenCom) Learner Outcome Framework.

SenCom is leading the field with this project, with one of senior leadership team presenting evidence of their excellent practice i.e. VI LOF, as part of a strategy to develop a whole SenCom service delivery framework.

The [VIEW conference](#) was attended by practitioners of C&YP with Sensory Impairment from across the UK. In addition to delivering a Keynote presentation on this area, SenCom led workshops on the usefulness of the framework. There was interest from Sensory Impairment service staff across the UK. This interest suggests that there is the real potential for the materials to be used across Wales, as well as the rest of the UK

### Conclusion for Criterion 3 - Effectiveness.

The evidence collected, considered and compared with a range of local and national Special Educational Needs (SEN)/Additional Learning Needs (ALN) practices indicates, in my professional opinion, this aspect of Sen Com's Value for Money performance demonstrates robust and consistent delivery characteristics; although a number of operational and/or strategic leadership aspects will require improvement

### Theme 4. ~ Equity

The tables below provide a helpful overview of the numbers of children and young people receiving support from SenCom over the last five years.

**Table 15. Caseload Numbers Communication and Intervention Team**

ComIT	Blaenau Gwent	Caerphilly	Monmouthshire	Newport	Torfaen	Total
2014/15	34	32	10	79	31	<b>186</b>
2015/16	66	151	86	72	62	<b>437</b>
2016/17	16	54	19	27	19	<b>135</b>
2017/18	111	205	99	228	125	<b>768</b>
2018/19	27	122	33	45	37	<b>264</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>1790</b>

The percentage of support across the five authorities is consistently in line with the resource allocation provided by each local authority. The numbers of children and young people receiving support is determined by whether ComIT are requested to work with individuals or with groups.

It would be helpful to develop tracking data to compare the outcomes and progress achieved for students supported individually by comparison with those supported in groups?

**Table 16. Caseload Numbers Hearing Impairment Service**

HIS	Blaenau Gwent	Caerphilly	Monmouthshire	Newport	Torfaen	Total
2014/15	128	381	185	325	185	<b>1204</b>
2015/16	137	298	186	328	220	<b>1169</b>
2016/17	127	369	193	313	194	<b>1196</b>
2017/18	142	406	225	327	208	<b>1308</b>
2018/19	139	393	218	344	210	<b>1304</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>673</b>	<b>1847</b>	<b>1007</b>	<b>1637</b>	<b>1017</b>	<b>6181</b>

The number of pupils supported by the Hearing Impairment Service, across the partnership, has increased over time. The team now provides support for hundred more children and young people than they did five years ago.

This increase is significant, statistically. It reflects the cumulative national trend<sup>8</sup> of children and young people with complex ALN requiring highly specialist support and help.

**Table 17. Caseload Numbers Visual Impairment Service**

VIS	Blaenau Gwent	Caerphilly	Monmouthshire	Newport	Torfaen	Total
2014/15	-	-	-	-	-	<b>283</b>
2015/16	25	63	32	79	46	<b>245</b>
2016/17	33	92	44	135	62	<b>366</b>
2017/18	35	92	43	135	61	<b>366</b>
2018/19	43	97	33	139	65	<b>377</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>1637</b>

The numbers of pupils supported by VIS during 2014-15 per LA are not detailed. However, these were:

- 155 C&YP in mainstream schools with a visual impairment;
- 42 C&YP with a multi-sensory impairment (dual sensory impairments)
- 57 C&YP multi-disabled visual impaired i.e. C&YP with additional ALN e.g. moderate/severe learning difficulties, additional physical and medical needs, additional complex needs
- 29 pre-school children (under 5 years)

The caseload number trend remains very similar to C&YP with hearing impairment i.e. the VIS caseload numbers have increased by approx. one hundred within five years. There was no visiting data available i.e. which detailed the number of visits made by SenCom staff to the 1900 C&YP.

This is disappointing as it's difficult to begin to measure the precise equity of the resources without this information.

As previously detailed, the Service applies the NatSIP eligibility criteria to the allocation of staff for hearing and visual impairment (not ComIT).

In his submission to the review the Head of Service cited the following factors which inform how they ensure an even-handed system for staff deployment.

### **SenCom Pupil Support Allocation System**

*“After a period of research and consultation with staff and stakeholders in late 2015 and early 2016 examining how the three teams worked it was clear that ComIT had built an evidence based graduated intervention pathway which had been produced in partnership with key stakeholders.*

*The ComIT pathway was well know, understood, and implemented consistently and effectively between the team and schools. The evidence suggested that the team through a service delivery*

1. <sup>8</sup> Reference **Section 8 Future- Proofing SenCom’s Person-Centred ALN Offer**

*approach that aimed to build confidence, skill, and capacity in the mainstream school workforce to manage speech language and communication needs across the region were influencing universal teaching practice in significant numbers of schools.*

*The Welsh Governments focus on the uses of Person-Centered Practice (PCP) as a core element of Additional Learning Needs Transformation was also identified as an area of national policy that was also a good fit for us being a highly specialised, personalised service.*

*The HI and VI teams were working with an individual need led approach. Both teams use the [NatSIP Eligibility Framework](#) and professional judgement to facilitate allocation of support to individual pupils.*

*We felt it was important to shift from a provision to an outcome led service in line with national policy direction and include the key features of the ComIT pathway in our service delivery moving forwards.*

*We undertook the development of a new service delivery framework based on what our service regard as good outcomes:*

- Consistent curriculum access at a level equal to non-disabled peers.*
- Given a specific starting point the child/young person makes good or better academic progress throughout their school career.*
- The child/young person's disability doesn't adversely impact on their wellbeing.*

*The Key Principles on which support levels are based:*

- Decisions focus on the outcomes we want to achieve in partnership with children, families, and settings.*
- Our intervention is dynamic and able to provide support at relevant points in a child's development. The service is responsive to changing needs and having the flexibility to adopt an arm's length approach where we are confident our three key outcomes are on track. Equally, where required additional resource can be provided for agreed periods of time. For example; early intervention, to ensure an effective transition, at revision points, to avoid the need for a non-maintained specialist placement.*
- Episodes of intervention are based on clear, assessment-based evidence*
- Decisions should take full account of the provision the child already has within their setting. Our intervention must add specialist value and build on good inclusive practice.*
- Developing families, schools, and early year's settings capacity to manage outcome focused support is an increasing emphasis of our work. Providing intervention is seen in wider terms than only visits including; a range of training packages.*

*A service delivery framework was developed during 2016 (See Appendix 2) based on well used intervention terminology across the region; universal, targeted and specialist and acute. It was introduced and further developed with the support of ALNCo forums across all local authorities and has been our operating model since September 2017.*

*The model has bound our practice across the three teams, we now all work towards outcomes through a graduated response and look to episodes of intervention as a starting point. The model has also brought about further service developments including:*

- *New training packages for school, college, and early years staff*
- *A more consistent approach to developing regular planning and evaluation meetings with schools.*
- *The stimulus to develop our Learner Outcomes Framework*

*The model was designed looking towards the developing ALN Transformation of Education and has increasing resonance with developing education practice across Wales, with other Local Authority services taking it on and making it their own”.*

### **Head of SenCom November 2019.**

#### **Findings**

I can see and understand that this improved allocation system is in transition and endeavours to utilize, eclectically, the best practice regarding eligibility schemes, from across the UK. Together with a local interpretation and application of inherent service expertise.

It's particularly encouraging to read that it's been shared with ALNCOs, from across the region's schools.

However, it appears a little 'output heavy'. I'm not clear how the revised entitlement system is being evaluated, methodically and what quality assurance systems are in place to monitor staff's use of the staffing allocation system.

I did find evidence, during my schools' visits, that ALNCOs and schools were not clear how resources e.g. specifically staff were allocated. I was even presented with examples of where the system appeared inconsistent in its usage, notwithstanding the agreed protocols.

This was also true in my many meetings with parents, who were equally uncertain how staff allocations to their children and schools worked. This parent, who is also a professional in a school exemplifies some of the frustrations she has experienced.

Her commentary covers several aspects of this **Theme** and as well as other **Themes**. She helpfully, focusses on the need to provide, grass roots, in school local support.

*“No communication from SenCom other than flyers as how the service has change, I do not know if they visit the school to check xxxxx/carry out xxxxx assessments.*

*I am also a teacher and ALNCO of a school in xxxxx (my daughter is at a school in xxxxxxx). Over the past three years the service has become increasingly difficult to access especially for in school support - the focus on training in school staff has gone too much the other way.*

*I appreciate the need to "build capacity" but when there is no capacity left in schools this is little help. The help that the service can offer when they are in school is beneficial but at "grass roots", support on the ground there is not enough - money needs to be prioritised to fund TA's who can visit schools, not more managers,*

*consultants to carry out research - the service needs people in our schools for the children who need them most!* Parent Online Survey

Nonetheless, I commend the leadership of SenCom in trying to improve the equity of their scarce and valuable resource, at a time when numbers of C&YP are increasing. Moreover, they have been plagued with high levels of staff absences, due to illness, which has exacerbated the coherent application of support to C&YP and schools.

**Conclusion for Criterion 4 - Equity.**

The evidence collected, considered and compared with a range of local and national Special Educational Needs (SEN)/Additional Learning Needs (ALN) practices indicates, in my professional opinion, this aspect of Sen Com's Value for Money performance demonstrates its strengths outweigh its weaknesses; although a significant number of operational and/or strategic leadership aspects require improvement.

**6. Future- Proofing SenCom's Person-Centred ALN Offer**

Nationally, independent statistics which encompasses the incidence of children born and surviving with complex neurologically compromise (ALN/SEND) are increasing. Organisations like [Epicure](#); who have been tracking children born prematurely across Europe have found that survival rates for pre-27-week babies has increased since 1995. This increase has been highest in the UK.

This is also true of C&YP born with [rare and genetic disorders](#); survival rates are increasing and these young people are becoming successful and valued adults in our local communities.

Incorporate also, the growing numbers of children born with [Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder](#) (FASD) who are also neurologically compromised and you have a picture of increasing demand for specialist services like SenCom over the next five to ten years.

It is very important that 'the local ALN offer' ensures support to these children, young people, and their families, right. This independent review takes place in the context of the new 'Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018'.

The 2018 Act makes provision for a new statutory framework for supporting children and young people with additional learning needs ('ALN'). This will replace existing legislation surrounding special education needs ('SEN') and the assessment of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ('LDD') in post-16 education and training.

The 2018 Act requires the Welsh Ministers to issue a Code on ALN ('the ALN Code') and provides a number of regulation-making powers to Welsh Ministers. The 2018 Act has three overarching objectives, which the draft ALN Code and proposed regulations are also intended to support.

These are:

- A unified legislative framework that supports all children of compulsory school age or below with ALN, and young people with ALN in school or further education;
- An integrated, collaborative process of assessment, planning and monitoring which facilitates early, timely and effective interventions; and

- A fair and transparent system for providing information and advice, and for resolving concerns and appeals.

With transition to the new ALN Code of Practice, planned for December 2020, I consider now is the right time to focus on the quality and quantity of support, and provision, for children and young people with ALN/Sensory and Speech Language and Communication Needs.

I've been encouraged to hear about examples of how the SenCom leadership is preparing for the new ALN guidance. Nevertheless, it's not yet clear, from the concise evidence collected, how widespread are these examples being disseminated to the team?

Finally, I would also like to thank everyone that took the time to write to the WLGA and myself. In particular, thanks to those who have met with me to share their experiences and thoughts. I look forward to meeting, in the autumn term, some of the children, young people, more families/carers and hearing their accounts and experiences.

## **7. Local Authorities Statutory Duties and Responsibilities as Commissioning Bodies, Irrespective of the Recommendations detailed within this report.**

Notwithstanding the ensuing recommendations of this report, it is important to reaffirm, unambiguously and for all audiences of this report, the duties and responsibilities which endure, following publication of this review.

In particular, Local Authority's responsibilities include children and young people with Additional Learning Needs. These precise statutory duties and responsibilities apply in respect of the five partner Local Authorities, and set the context to the consequent recommendations.

These statements of commissioning and regional practice principles are extracted from the Welsh Government's Policy 'A National Model of Regional Working' November 2015<sup>9</sup>.

Whilst they do not explicitly name the SenCom Service; as a set of guiding principles I would expect them to apply to the regional engagement and participation of the five partner authorities and the SenCom Service.

The recommendations, detailed in this report, look to strength the existing successful regional cooperation and practice of the last five years; proffer an approach to ensure a sustainable future-proofed model of regional working for the benefit of ALL SenCom's stakeholders; whilst not diminishing the respective statutory duties of the five commission authorities to hold the service accountable for its performance.

As part of the future governance arrangements for the SenCom service proposed in this report, I expect the respective Local Authorities to set out clearly and unequivocally, their intended actions and the associated measures they will use to monitor SenCom's progress toward the delivery of all **agreed** outcomes.

These agreed measures should reflect local priorities; be proportionate and align with local strategic objectives and priorities; overarching aims, and outcomes agreed, together with SenCom's own service priorities.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://gov.wales/national-model-regional-working>

These measures will be used to evidence the impact and value for money of the SenCom service via its annual service improvement plan, alongside interrelated financial and operational business planning, which will also be used to monitor actions, impacts and progress.

### **The Responsibilities of Local Authorities**

- ***Local authorities will retain statutory accountability for school performance together with the responsibility for the exercise of statutory powers of intervention and organisation of schools.***
- ***Local authorities and diocesan authorities will designate a lead officer to act as the main point of contact with the regional consortium (*Partnership Board for SenCom*), in accordance with their arrangements described below.***
- ***Local authorities, diocesan authorities and regional consortia will have open discussions together about their plans which should be clear about the respective roles, functions and intended actions of each.***

These processes will remove any risk of regional consortia, diocesan authorities or authorities duplicating effort. In particular local authorities should share with regional consortia information on their proposals and decisions in relation to:

- the overall vision and social and economic development priorities for their area, having particular regard to issues that are likely to affect schools;
- school organisation, including plans for federations, amalgamations, closures and delivery of their 21st century school strategies;
- supporting the delivery of those having special educational and additional learning needs;
- the organisation of behaviour support and education welfare services;
- their youth engagement strategy;
- safeguarding arrangements for children and young people; and
- arrangements to promote effective procurement and the development of business support services within schools.

Local authorities will provide regional consortia (*SenCom*) with access to relevant data systems, including anonymised data sets on pupil performance where this is held at local authority level, and other information to facilitate their work.

Local authorities will not duplicate the work or activity of regional consortia. The development of secure local authority and consortia relationships will mean that both parties will consider urgently and jointly recommendations on statutory school interventions from any source.

### **8. Professional Conclusions**

I have read and heard a lot of evidence regarding the work of the sensory and communication support service. (SenCom) There is no question that the majority of the evidence confirms that the service delivers a **Good** standard of support to children families and schools.



The last 12 months, including the connected machinations, have had a significant and measurable impact on the capacity of the SenCom service. These include higher than normal absences for the staff, a number of which have been long-term.

The service has made progress since its inception in 2015, indisputably. I can see clear evidence of this progress across all three teams. Some areas of their work have progressed more expeditiously than others, but all areas have made progress.

The SenCom has many strengths and its operational delivery is well regarded across all of the stakeholder groups. The concept of working across five partner authorities is now well and truly tested and embedded.

This model of operational delivery provides the five local authorities with the flexibility and capacity to respond to the low incidence, very sporadic distribution of the children and families the service support. This is a key strength of the Service working across the five partner authorities.

Diminution of the number of LAs involved will have a significant and disproportionate effect on the service's fundamental characteristic; to be able to respond speedily and deploy specialist staff where the C&YP and their families are living.

It is vitally important to understand that the very low incidence of these children, relative to other areas of ALN together with the necessity to hold mandatory qualifications in hearing, visual and multi-sensory impairment makes their *raison d'etre*, unique!

This model of regional working is a template for the future. I am aware there have been a number of logistical challenges earlier on e.g. IT infrastructure, etc. However, the sensory communication support service has now created a platform from which they can drive forward and provide exemplary support and intervention to children, young people, and families.

This report highlights many of the strengths of the service but also identifies areas where it needs to improve. I believe, unequivocally, that this model of regional practice can future proof services for children and young people with additional learning needs across the region, indeed Wales, as a whole.

With the impending new legislation, it is vital that all such services for children and young people with an ALN, are appropriately prepared and able to meet the new and exciting challenges ahead. This will be particularly challenging for those ALN services, across Wales, which provide access to highly specialised teaching and support staff from the low incidence ALN impairment field. The requirement to provide a workforce holding the specialist, mandatory qualifications is becoming a serious challenge across the UK, as a whole.

Given the low incidence nature of sensory & communication impairments; regional co-ordination and joint commissioning arrangements will become more, rather than less, relevant for the future.

This review is timely in this respect as Local Authorities across Wales, digest the wide-ranging implications of the forthcoming ALN Code of Practice and revisit their strategic visions for the most vulnerable in their care.

Low incidence ALN services will be involved in all aspects of the statutory (and non-statutory) assessment and support, for the current statements of ALN (future IDPs) alongside providing

early intervention and support intended to ensure children and young people can flourish, without necessarily having to secure an IDP.

Numerous low incidence ALN services correspondingly provide critical contacts and signposting between education, health, and social care services. Any decrease in support in these areas would have an impact on the consistency and improvement of the provisions around low incidence support and their respective communities.

At its extreme, it would prejudice the ability of LAs across Wales to meet their statutory obligations to ensure specially trained professionals, holding mandatory qualifications, contribute to a rigorous and high-quality assessment processes.

The number of training providers offering qualifications in hearing impairment, visual impairment multisensory impairment is now very small; three providers for visual impairment (two in England and one in Scotland), one provider for multi-sensory Impairment (dual sensory loss – in England) and four providers for hearing impairment (all in England).

This paucity of specialist educational qualified trainers clearly limits the capacity of these providers to train sufficiently experienced mainstream teachers to acquire the necessary mandatory qualifications to become specialist teachers within this field of ALN.

There is no question that the numbers of teachers leaving the profession, who hold an existing mandatory qualification, is higher than those completing the two-year course and qualifying as new post-graduates.

This reduction in capacity coincidences with a significant growth in the population of children being born with complex neurological and medical needs including those with hearing, visual, dual sensory and language and communication impairments.

The corollary to these facts is that it will become increasingly more difficult for small, individual local authorities to appoint, retain, and deploy specialist teachers from within this field.

Incontrovertibly, in England this particular SEN watershed appears more imminent and the suggested solution is indisputable;

***“Addressing the shortage of good local provision for children with the most complex needs is often beyond the ability of a single authority because the numbers are too small and sporadically distributed”*** Department for Education, England, 2015

The five local authorities involved in this particular partnership, with SenCom, should be congratulated for their vision and insight into what will increasingly be a very challenging issue over the next five to ten years.

Without access to a pre-emptive, expertly qualified, and motivated workforce, like SenCom, it will not be possible to continue to deliver specialist ALN support and intervention to (more) children in mainstream schools.

Deprived of an agreed and funded plan to retain, recruit and reward such a workforce, I predict many parents will be forced to seek alternative placements, perhaps out-of-authority (*the majority of whom provide excellent education and care services*) because they cannot secure the essential

specialist input, knowledge, skills and expertise required (possibly detailed in their child's IDP?) to enable their children to access effective teaching and learning, within a 'local setting'.

The challenge to plan for these changes must happen now! A 'reactive stance' will result in serious pressure on local authorities to provide suitably qualified specialist, which parents will quite rightly demand.

A proactive, forward-looking position will help mitigate the imminent stresses and attendant anxieties which many families and schools will feel, as the numbers of C&YP with these needs grows.

You can let the external, growing pressures dictate to how you respond in such a predicament or get ahead of the challenges by anticipating their advent, find the solutions and ensure that C&YP with sensory & communication needs are fully prepared for adulthood.

## **9. Concluding Judgment**

In each of the four themes, described in the 'Value for Money' model, the evidence, and views of a wide-ranging group of stakeholders substantiates SenCom's performance as having either;

- *robust and consistent delivery characteristics; although a number of operational and/or strategic leadership aspects will require improvement.*
- *strengths outweigh its weaknesses; although a significant number of operational and/or strategic leadership aspects require improvement.*

These judgements were based on the information provided by SenCom, together with stakeholders personal and/or professional experiences, alongside data and material submitted by the SenCom's leadership team.

In my expert view, I judge SenCom to be a service that represents 'Value for Money' because it demonstrates, overall, respectable, and consistent operational delivery performances. However, a number of operational and/or strategic leadership aspects will require short/medium term improvement.

They could be addressed, efficaciously, by implementing the recommendations detailed in **Section 13; SenCom Recommendations – February 2020**

## **10. Personal Acknowledgements.**

I conclude this report by expressing my personal thanks to all the stakeholders I met, heard, or read feedback from, in particular;

### **SenCom**

Head of SenCom Services, Head of ComIT, Head of the Visual and Multi-sensory Impairment Service and Head of the Hearing- Impaired Service, for their critical support and professionalism, during the review process.

SenCom staff for your patience and professionalism in the two meetings we shared together, well done and thank you.

## **Voluntary Sector and other Regional Professionals**

Your observations and responses evidenced your passion and commitment to supporting the children, young people, and their families, at the centre of this review. You are an important part of the objective scrutiny of these services (and respective LAs) as well as dedicated advocates for families – well done.

## **Local Authority Officers/Advisors/Regional Advisors across the five partner LAs.**

Your openness and honest commentaries and feedback provided vital information. They afforded an essential context to my evaluations and assumptions.

## **Local Authority Political Leaders**

Your enthusiasm and interest in the review was unmistakable, heartfelt, and contributed a critical dimension to the final report.

## **Children, Young People and Families**

My final and irrefutable thanks go to the children, young people, and families with whom I met. I listened, attentively, debated and discussed passionately, and was inspired by their tenacity and energy to recognise what they needed and their unwavering hope, about what can be achieved.

- Parents; you may not leap tall buildings in a single bound or run faster than a speeding bullet, but you are superheroes, none the less, in my opinion. Every day, you manage situations that a regular parent would think are impossible.
- You stretch tight muscles, remember pills, and administer medicines and follow procedures, assiduously. You deal with tantrums and melt downs, often managing not to have a tantrum or melt down, yourself.
- You always encourage your child to do the things professional told you they would never do because you never gave up hope or hesitated in your belief for your child.
- You are a therapist, nurse, doctor, teacher, friend, confidante and a Mum or Dad. You inspire me and so many other professionals from with the SEN/ALN field – thank you for your trustworthiness, passion, and drive.
- It was a pleasure to meet with you and hear all about your experiences, good and bad or otherwise.
- To the children and young people, I met; you were simply amazing, exceptional, remarkable, tolerant, and unassumingly funny.
- You spoke honestly, freely and understood so much about your additional learning needs, what you wanted, what support you received and were undeniably grateful to those who supported you in school and at home.

- You were the 'jewel in the crown' of all that I saw, heard, and read about i.e. what you do and what you achieve. My personal thanks go out to you for sharing your precious time and private thoughts with me.

**A massive thank you to you all from me.**



Mark Geraghty, Independent SEND Consultant

## **11. SenCom Recommendations – February 2020**

I have summarized and précised the essential features of the concluding recommendations, in the form of bullet points initially in this section, for transparency.

The full recommendations, detailed below, proffer important and principal areas for improvement and development which emerge from my independent report and its attendant findings;

### *Precise of Recommendations*

- ✚ Publish information which sets out clearly what services you provide and how they will be scrutinized. Detail how this information will be shared and be unequivocally clear on what all the stakeholders especially the children, young people and their families can expect from the service, twelve-monthly.
- ✚ There is a need to put in place, quickly, a system of operational governance that will challenge and support the future work of SenCom and enable it to work to the respective ALN priorities of the five partner LAs, together with the Welsh Government's new ALN legislative requirements.
- ✚ Consult, with stakeholders and co-produce a plan, demonstrating how you might improve aspects of the service's operational efficiency to ensure you enhance time spent with stakeholders and reduce excessive travelling and avoidable non-contact time.
- ✚ The service needs to consider, immediately, how it intends to retain, reward and provide a stable high-quality specialised workforce, given the undeniable and growing national pressures on similar low incidence ALN/SEN services; to provide qualified educators and keep expert staff to support families and schools.
- ✚ Reinstate and redevelop an Annual Improvement Plan which sets out, clearly, your plans and expected outputs and achievements for the impending year. The plan should also include an annual appraisal of the preceding years performance and be shared widely with stakeholders, for comment and feedback.

✚ Develop a robust communication plan which sets out, clearly, how you will communicate key messages, successes, developments and reflect feedback for all parties, to stakeholders and SenCom's own staff. This plan should also address interests raised around the promotion and publicizing the range of SenCom's services, especially for new parents and the newest stakeholder groups, etc.

Consider and declare how the service will collect, collate, and publish honest and candid feedback from all its stakeholders. This is a business-critical requirement if the service is committed to year-on-year improvement in the view and experiences of its stakeholders.

The service needs to address how it intends to use parents/carers to support its ongoing development and improvement. *Co-production* should be at the heart of everything the service plans, going forward. The authentic engagement and participation of families will be essential to ensuring SenCom becomes a faithful, person-centered service.

Nearly five years ago, SenCom published its strategic objectives in an all-inclusive vision document. The cycle for this strategy is now drawing to a conclusion. It is timely, in the context of both local and national ALN drivers and this review report, to revisit its strategic vision and update its 5-year objectives. This would be an excellent early task for the new Partnership Board and its members.

### **Recommendation 1. ~ An Entitlement Framework**

One of the prevailing and frequent comments shared with me, at parental and professional public meetings, was the uncommonness of transparent information regarding what SenCom has to offer families.

While almost every parent (and indeed professionals) I spoke to had, a sound knowledge of the effect of SenCom. They were less clear about what was the **full** extent of the support, advice and intervention they could access.

Many parents spoke about a lack of accessible, promotional materials detailing the range of the services on offer. They felt such information would help them understand both what was on offer immediately, but also what might be available in the future, as their children/grandchildren matured.

This very much chimes with latest themes in the new ALN legislation and draft ALN Code of Practice. The notion that families and schools should be reflecting on and chronicling their aspirations during the child's journey through its education, as part of the young person's preparation for adulthood.

I also think such informative materials will help SenCom become more dynamic and open in its future planning of service delivery.

One essential area for improvement is for the SenCom leadership team to revisit how they collectively prioritize, increasingly scarce resources, in a climate where demand for support and help, will unquestionably grow?

The potential to offer new, innovative areas of support; post 16 – 25 will need to be carefully planned. This will include managing the expectations of children, young people, their families, and schools/colleges in the context of each of the respective Local Authorities' discrete ALN priorities.

In England the introduction of the Children & Families Act, 2014 resulted in a significant change in the SEND landscape; including an escalation in the number of SEND Tribunals, C&YP excluded from schools and an [exponential rise in the numbers of children placed out of authority](#).

It is vital that SenCom publish revised and updated guidance, which make clear what provision and services they offer in order that it can be; quantified and endorsed by the respective partner local authorities.

SenCom must be *watertight* in its support to LAs, schools, parents, and young people. To achieve this everyone needs to understand; who needs to do what, when, how often and when it should be reviewed.

Such arrangements are essential if schools (and colleges) in the future are to be able to determine the correct level of ALN support they should be receiving, in order to ensure high quality teaching and learning is supported and in place.

In order to improve this area of SenCom's responsibilities I would recommend the SenCom service co-produce - **An Entitlement Framework**.

An Entitlement Framework (EF) provides advice and guidance to support SenCom's leaders and practitioners in:

- early years settings,
- schools and
- other specialists' settings

The framework will build upon and enhance SenCom's ALN offer for the most vulnerable learners.

This should include: good support/teaching for children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). This guidance seeks to support service leaders in the promotion of high quality ALN practice, in every classroom/setting.

The EF details the important features of Quality Teaching and Support (QTS). In particular, how SenCom staff should support emerging and rising ALN support needs across the south east of Wales.

An EF builds upon previous LA(s) partnership guidance and should be used in conjunction with all locally published and related ALN guidance documents.

The EF guidance should be published in order to provide information for parents and carers about how ALN needs can be met in a variety of settings, schools (and colleges?).

I'm attaching a link to a prototypical [Entitlement Framework \(here\)](#) which although broader than the remit of SenCom's work is a helpful template against which a specific task and finish group could co-produce a draft document, for consideration.

## Recommendation 2. ~ Partnership Board

In discussion with many parents and colleagues I can track the successive development and progress of SenCom service since inception in 2015. However, it has reached a point where its leadership and its partnerships require a supplementary level of support and challenge.

Recent years has seen an exponential growth in the scrutiny of public services and its respective statutory duties. In particular, there is growing pressure from regulators and stakeholders to strengthen performance, predominantly via strong governance roles and responsibilities for the education sector.

While there is evidence that SenCom has been run meritoriously, at both its leadership level and LA officer level, the review has identified a mandate that intimates SenCom needs to strengthen its obligations in respect of its governance functions.

Given this important and growing requirement, I am recommending that a new **Partnership Board** be initiated and set up, as soon as is practicable.

The principal purpose of such a Partnership Board will be threefold;

- to provide additional strategic leadership to the SenCom service and its management team
- to ensure, through unambiguous and clear governance arrangements, that the service is held accountable for its educational and support operations to its stakeholders
- to provide mutual assistance and appraisal of its financial performance.

These are the fundamental and prevailing areas of a Partnership Board. Nevertheless, they are not exclusive to an emerging role in challenging and supporting SenCom service and its leadership to deliver, unflinchingly; *effective, efficient, equitable and value for money services, going forward.*

I expect such a Board will want to address how it can support and challenge the leadership team to:

- Improve, clarify, and refine SenCom's professional responsibilities and accountabilities to the range of stakeholders with whom it works?
- Ensure there is rigorous and systematic data reconciliation which will support a SenCom Annual Service Improvement Plan of SenCom's overall performance in respect of;
  - outcomes,
  - parental confidence,
  - meeting needs in a timely fashion,
  - building capacity to meet future needs,
- Appraise and comment on the quality and utility of the SenCom service's annual objectives and targets and its constituent teams and ensuing yearly priorities,



- Ensure all aspects of the SenCom service's operational organization remains fit for purpose, crucially enabling it to meet the critical requirements to provide; *effective, efficient, equitable and value for money services* to its stakeholders.
- Review and agree the successful collection, collation and publication of service data including but not exclusively;
  - ALN pupil data,
  - Operational visiting data,
  - Asset data,
  - CPD data (delivered and received),
  - Performance data (inputs/outputs/outcomes),
  - Satisfaction data – surveys (internal and external)
- The new Partnership Board should not be unwieldy, laborious and behave as a bottleneck for evaluations, decisions, and actions. In order to expedite the Boards requirement to provide concise and timely assistance. I would suggest a small number of sub-committees of the Board, which would undertake to complete regular tasks and finish activities, reporting back to the full board prior to each meeting.

These sub-committees might include;

- Risk Management/Impact assessments for service operations
- Annual Service Improvement Plan
- Financial performance
- Safeguarding practice

Challenge and support are intertwined. It's about pushing for improvement and setting aspirational targets, and then supporting SenCom's leaders to achieve them. A key part of the Partnership Board's role will be challenging the Head of Service and its leaders.

They should expect the Board to ask hard questions and hold them to account. The Partnership Board should be challenging what the Leadership team are doing in their respective roles, rather than them as individuals/personally.

The Partnership Board should ask what the problems are and what the leaders need to succeed, listen to their responses and ensure it supports however it can secure, where appropriate, support requested?

The goal of an effective governance model is not to dictate, but to define decisions and actions in ways that are meaningful and ensures SenCom operates within an agreed and defined code of practice.

Moreover, an effective governance operating model, defines the mechanisms and interactions through which the tacit authority of SenCom is operationalised. It plays an important role overseeing the work, plans and service performance of the SenCom service while simultaneously enabling management to implement new initiatives.

I would expect the Partnership board to involve representatives from **all** the stakeholder groups involved in the review. It will be for the Partnership Board to define its own Terms of reference and have them signed off by the regional LA partners.

Emphatically, in discussion with all the stakeholders during various public consultation meetings, the notion of formal accountability of the service, was a recurrent and welcomed theme.

This expectation was shared in a positive fashion, as it felt it would improve communication with the respective partnership local authorities, schools, voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners but most importantly, *families and their children*.

It may be appropriate to consider whether the Chair of the new Partnership Board is an independent individual with no professional ties to any of the statutory agencies or vested interests e.g. Education, Health or Social Care. *This notion is proffered by way of suggestion only.*

### **Recommendation 3. ~ Improving Efficient and Effective Working**

One of the themes to emerge during the public consultation was the notion that the geographic area covered by SenCom is relatively large, given its single point of approach, in Llantarnam. The population of C&YP, their families and consequent schools supported by SenCom is high; approximately 1900+ families.

Furthermore, there is inherent pressure on SenCom staff, due in part to capacity issues and the need to respond flexibly i.e. endeavouring to meet the needs of children young people and their families who are *low incidence, sporadic in their distribution and that require a diverse range of interventions, technical/teaching & learning support and exceptional assistance*.

Over the last 10 years, we have seen the emergence of locality working across the UK, as a mechanism to address the operational challenges facing multi-agency/professional teams. Especially a need to integrate responses and provide coherent, effective support to families.

I think SenCom is uniquely placed, regionally, to support this emerging practice to assist schools and their local communities. I believe there is an opportunity to build on existing local and national drivers, concerning multi-agency/professional working.

It already has some strong and established links with a number of statutory and voluntary & community services e.g. Health Care Services, Social Care teams, National Deaf Children's Society and Wales Council for the Blind.

There is a real opportunity to improve multi-agency/professional working in local communities and improve the efficient and successful deployment of ALN and other staff within those districts.

***“It takes a whole village to raise a child.” African proverb***

***Schools do not exist in isolation – they are a key part of a network of statutory, private sector and voluntary organisations that serve and support the local community.***

***By developing community partnerships, schools can potentially tap into a great source of support that can strengthen their school.***

***There are several types of networking with external agencies that schools will undertake.***

- ***Working with people, businesses, and other organisations in the locality in which the school is situated in order to enrich the curriculum, share resources, get sponsorship, run joint projects, and develop social capital. This is discussed in this resource.***

***Multi-agency working to support families facing multiple issues. This is discussed in the Multi-agency working resource (Theme 5: Resource 2) in this toolkit.*** Developing Community Partnerships and Multi-agency Working, Welsh Government

***Locality working is a way to work collaboratively and innovatively to make best use of the assets we have in our local area.*** Trafford Local Authority

***Locality Working is a journey, which needs to evolve from good practise across the Council.***

***This is not about implementing structural change which forces a shift in behaviours/working practises, but about enabling the multi-agency workforce to collaborate, share knowledge and work together focussing on the families within the communities that they serve.***

***This is about tactical and practical changes to be delivered in the short term which increase professional's ability to effectively support children and families at home and in school.*** Cheshire East Local Authority

I believe consideration of a locality model of operational service delivery will bring a number of important and measurable benefits to children, families, schools as well as SenCom's staff. Locality working will

- provide more equitable access to SenCom's services for all families regardless of location and accessibility
- increase the direct time spent with children and young people, schools and families
- reduce travelling times, attendant costs thus increasing SenCom's resources and subsequent capacities
- increase active community responsibility
- increase 'community tenure' of issues and challenges and enable them to contribute to developing innovative solutions
- increase the professional credibility of SenCom with schools and families
- reducing demand for some of SenCom's services
- improve transparency and accountability alongside local stakeholders
- provide local communities with the opportunity to influence change and decisions
- enable a dynamic service response and promote more proactive behaviours
- create a single front door for families and schools i.e. one single point of initial contact for referrals, queries, and feedback

- Professionals across a wide range of disciplines interact with families with ALN and/or disabled children every hour of every day: medical professionals support families to diagnose, treat and manage conditions; educators e.g. SenCom teams give children the best possible learning opportunities; commissioners bring through the essential services families require.
- Multi-agency working across localities is a subtle but effective methodology for engaging closely with the end-user from the beginning, on a basis of mutual respect. It can be used to overcome barriers, manage expectations and solve complex problems.
- Promote parent involvement regarding delivering improved support to families
- Contribute to strategic expansions
- Collecting local feedback to improving operational practice
- improved local relations and advance on the ground communications
- Improved overall effectiveness for SenCom and the respective LAs
- improved overall efficiency for SenCom and the respective LAs
- Improved overall economy for SenCom and the respective LAs
- Improved overall equity for SenCom and the respective LAs

#### **Recommendation 4 – Establishing a Workforce Development Plan**

It is indisputable that with a discernible trend of increasing numbers of C&YP with complex ALN over the next five to ten years; there will be extra pressure, nationally, on what can only be described as an ageing workforce, expressly on trained teachers holding a mandatory qualification in one of the three sensory impairments.

Likewise, there is a need to prepare for the implementation of the new Welsh ALN Code of practice. As a result of all the external drivers there is an urgent need for SenCom to examine workforce strategies and publish a fitting, workforce development plan.

In order for the five local authorities to continue with the partnership, it is vital that a workforce development plan is published which endeavours to set out how SenCom will retain and preserve its high-quality, very specialised teams.

This must, of course, be completed in consultation with the five partner LAs in the context of their own respective workforce development plans.

A workforce development plan is a strategy for an organisation, like SenCom, that identifies where the service or a team is, in terms of developing the skills of its staff, where it wants to go and how it intends to get there.

This will involve recognising the current skills of the workforce and identifying any skills gaps or skills shortages that need to be addressed. It must look to cover;

- Recruitment of a high-specialised, qualified, and experienced workforce
- Retention of experienced and valuable members of the team so the service can continue and improve its proactive and dynamic responses to stakeholders
- Performance Reviews that set out how it plans to deliver high quality performance evaluations which should:

➤ *Make your people feel valued*

- *Set new goals*
  - *Resolve complaints*
  - *Strengthen bond*
  - *Refocus the team*
  - *Oversight on new and current projects*
  - *Assess the training needs of the SenCom teams*
- Different people within the SenCom team have different strengths. Its leaders need to use the existing judgment process to assess the team's weaknesses, identifying areas which may require additional training and support those development processes.
  - Re-evaluate, update, and publish innovative service KPIs so that a range of data and service performances can be tracked more readily, and successes rewarded and areas for enhancement can be addressed.
  - A workforce development plan will also provide a vital opportunity for the organizational development of the service to be assessed and if appropriate, implement developments to ensure clarity of roles, consistency of remits and a structure that is future proof.

### **Recommendation 5. ~ Annual Service Improvement Plan (SenComASIP)**

I'm aware that the SenCom leadership drafted, but didn't publish, an Annual Service Improvement Plan (SenComASIP) in 2019; included in the Appendixes. Consequently, it has been some years since an updated improvement plan, was available to stakeholders.

I think it timely that a rationalised Annual Service Improvement Plan is now recrafted and published, through consultation with the respective LAs, reported to a new Partnership Board and communicated widely to stakeholders.

The SenComASIP should include

- Overall success criteria (which will usually relate to pupil outcomes). Success criteria, which should be quantitative not just qualitative; this is essential to the success of the plan. This will require taking time to really think about what will be different after the plan has been implemented, as this will lead to focused actions
- Objectives and targets for improvement. These must be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-framed) and crucially, the majority must be focused on outcomes for pupils
- Details of the actions which will be taken and the outcomes which will be achieved as a result of each action
- Details of the costed actions required to achieve the target
- Details of who is responsible for each of the action
- A timeline for implementation with key dates and/or milestones. The milestones should be measurable, clearly identifying what will be achieved; for example, at the end of particular period e.g. the first term, then the second and so on
- Details of what, who, when, where and how the impact of the plan will be evaluated
- A space under each key objective for the impact of actions every time the plan is reviewed.

A SenComASIP will also support a systematic process for:

- Service Performance Review
- Planning support and changes annually to reflect identified priorities for the coming year

- Reinforcing and sharing good practice across the service and supporting the Workforce Development Plan
- Identify and resolve ineffective and inefficient practice
- Affirmation of Local Authority support to SenCom leaders and its year plans and priorities.

An Annual Service Improvement Plan will enable the leadership to arrange specific, quality thinking time to look at service performance together.

To evaluate the service's previous year's performance and use the learning from this data and feedback to recraft and formulate the forthcoming years aims and objectives.

### **Recommendation 6. ~ SenCom Communication Plan**

Given the feedback and comments which have emerged from this review, from across all the stakeholder groups, I think it would be timely for SenCom to publish a succinct but clearly targeted Communications Plan. SenCom is embarked on a journey of change over the next five years.

Much of that change will be delivered externally e.g. new legislation, this change, in itself, will then result in culture change in schools, colleges other statutory agencies, etc. If this change is to be managed effectively and positively, it is vital everyone in SenCom understands what's happening, when it's happening, who will lead on the change and how the change will be communicated to other groups and stakeholders.

A communication plan is a policy-driven approach to providing stakeholders with clear and precise information. The plan formally defines who should be given specific information, when that information should be delivered and what communication channels will be utilised to deliver the communication.

An effective communications management plan anticipates what information will need to be communicated to specific audience groups. The plan should also address who has the authority to communicate confidential or sensitive information and how information should be disseminated (email, websites, printed reports, and/or presentations).

Finally, the plan should define what communication channels stakeholders will use to solicit feedback and how communication will be documented and archived.

Communication plans play an important role in changed management for services and teams. An effective communication strategy can help break down resistance to change by getting everyone on the same page and helping stakeholders become engaged and endorse the need for change and the steps being taken to bring it about.

In change management systems, the communications plan may include a glossary of common terms that will be used during the project. This glossary may also define and include samples of templates, reports, and forms that the project manager will use to communicate information.

A communication plan for emergency situations must address ways both electronic and non-electronic communication channels should be used to disseminate information. This includes announcements over a building paging system, automated text message, email alerts, pre-recorded robocalls and phone trees. Should electronic communication channels be available, social media and the organization's website can also be used to communicate emergency information.

I would see the development of a communication plan as a 'task and finish activity' co-produced with stakeholders, in fairly short-time scales and available for circulation, promptly! It will be well worth the effort once complete.

There are many CP templates available, free. Individual Local Authorities may be able to assist SenCom with this piece of work? A genuine opportunity to promote some collaborative working!

### **Recommendation 7. ~ SenCom Annual Stakeholders Survey**

I think it important that SenCom improves its function of self-evaluation and becomes much more data rich, than it currently is. It has been most pleasing to hear and read about how highly SenCom is regarded.

Notwithstanding this, the feedback has also provided an opportunity for many stakeholders to suggest areas for improvement. I believe the SenCom leadership will welcome this feedback and act expeditiously on many of the suggestions.

I have cited some examples below of positive and constructive feedback to exemplify why I think it's important that the momentum built up in this review apropos collecting stakeholders' views should continue.

#### Online Survey Feedback

*My child has complex needs and has had many different people involved in his care. Of all the services involved the only reliable and consistent one has been SENCOM. My son has an amazing relationship with the team, as do I, and they have helped us both over and above expectations.*

*We attended group in Llantarnam for two years, but he now attends special school, so he accesses the service there. He still sees the same staff ensuring continuity for him - the only bit of familiarity in his new school, which must have been invaluable to him (he's non-verbal). I cannot stress enough how valued this service is to me and my son.*  
Parent, online survey

*Communication between school-SenCom-Parents needs to be improved. I often do not know if visits are being undertaken or if they should be undertaken.* Parent online survey

*We, as parents, do not know when the SenCom service are due to visit our child in school, how frequently this should be happening, what happens in these sessions or the outcome of them. We occasionally receive a handwritten compliment slip to let*

*us know they have met with our son. Should school be keeping us updated?  
Improved communication would be welcomed.* Parent online survey

*Any, all, additional support must be applauded, however, as a parent of a child who over time has received support from all the areas of SenCom, I am told very little of what is going on.... xxxx suddenly appeared and I couldn't find an answer of whether this was through medical or educational angles ... nobody could tell me what was going on.... still not sure to tell you the truth... xxxx impairment and xxxx impairment support staff go into school... again, I don't know what goes on ...I don't know if this is because the child is presumed to tell parents... ? But as the parent of a child with various disabilities and additional needs I find communication with the various support services sadly lacking.... they may know what they have planned/planning, but no one else does....* Parent online survey

I would strongly recommend that SenCom's leadership consider re-crafting and publishing an annual stakeholders survey to collect feedback and views on the levels of satisfaction of users.

This valuable information could then be used in conjunction with the SenComASIP to corroborate the internal self-evaluation of the services performance, much like a 360-review process.

I would also urge the leadership to offer the SenCom staff (also stakeholders) an opportunity to feedback into the annual survey. This will bring a very different set of information and complete the 360-review methodology.

I appreciate this final suggestion may prove to be somewhat troubling, initially, but if the team are sincere about welcoming all feedback then they should consider very sincerely, providing the staff with an opportunity to feed into an annual stakeholder survey.

### **Recommendation 8. ~ Coproduction and Participation for SenCom**

Remarkably, I found very little evidence of any coproduction work within the SenCom service and its guidance, during my time spent on the review. Albeit it is clear the Head of Service understands the growing importance of coproduction, as a tool for change and improvement, going forward.

I do not question that SenCom's leadership understands the significance and value of coproduction. I believe they are explicitly committed to developing co-production with young people and their families who access their services.

Co-production is a culture in which staff work with all stakeholders who access SenCom's services as equal partners in; the design, development, commissioning, delivery, and review of its services.

Co-production is a central principle to achieving the Welsh Government's objectives of personalising its support services while concurrently increasing choice and control for children, and their parents/carers.

Incorporating coproduction into its behaviours will help SenCom ensure it meets the needs of the C&YP who use its services, as well as establish priorities for cultural change which will be key to its incipient quality and improvement agenda.



The jigsaw or whole systems approach to participation was developed to make the process of coproduction, transparent. Seeing services (or organisations) as a jigsaw consisting of four pieces: culture, structure, practice, and review. The principles of employing coproduction are organised using this model.

**Culture ~ the ethos of an organisation, shared by all staff, which demonstrates a commitment to co-production.**

SenCom will

- value and make meaningful use of the input of people who use SenCom's services in all key activities
- learn from our own and others' experiences of co-production.
- work to ensure that participation is a positive and mutually beneficial experience for everyone including people who use services, staff, and other stakeholders
- aim to be an organisation in co-production which is represented throughout
- encourage other services/teams we work with to develop co-production and champion participation for SenCom's families across the five local authorities
- be positive about employing disabled people,
- staff will champion and support co-production
- recognise and value the involvement of seldom heard groups and those protected by the Equality Act 2010, to ensure co-production solutions are fully informed by, and reflective of, these diverse experiences.

**Practice ~ The ways of working, methods for involvement, skills and knowledge which enable people who use services and carers to become involved.**

SenCom will:

- be clear about the scope of co-production and what can and cannot be achieved, involving people who use services and families in the decision-making in the spirit of co-production. Where there are limits because of factors such as finance/funding, staffing, timing and/or other resources, we will be clear about how this will impact on co-production
- take active steps to minimise the impact of any imbalances between Secom and people who use services and work to create as equal a partnership as possible
- work with C&YP who use Secom's services to plan the processes of co-production and identify the best approaches to involvement in different types of work
- provide feedback about the results of their input within agreed times to the people who take part in co-produced activities
- work with the widest possible range of C&YP/families who use SenCom's services to ensure that co-production in SenCom reflects different groups of C&YP who use services and the diversity within the service
- make particular efforts to ensure that people from seldom heard and underrepresented groups can participate in and access all services
- provide staff with the training, support and resources required to co-produce
- provide people who use SenCom's services to support and train so they can take part.
- use digital/computer-based approaches when appropriate to complement but not replace, face-to-face contact
- use different approaches to co-production that meet the access needs of specific groups, being flexible and responsive as possible to individual requests.

## **Structure ~ The planning, development, and resourcing of co-production evident in SenCom**

SenCom will:

- give people who use services participating in SenCom's work, clear roles that define what is expected of them and what will be involved in fulfilling that role
- for SenCom staff, use job descriptions, objective setting, and annual appraisals to promote co-production
- involve people who use services in staff recruitment processes when appropriate
- aim to have at least two people who use services on the new Partnership Board
- ensure that all future Partnership Board papers have a section that acknowledges co-production implications.

I would consider it a matter of urgency that SenCom staff and its leaders receive up-to-date coaching on the importance and critical role of coproduction. A SenCom coproduction policy is published and circulated to all stakeholders

### **Recommendation 9. ~ Review of Strategic Objectives**

I started the review by reading the original strategic objectives. When I meet representatives from the Local Authorities and schools, very few were aware that SenCom had a published document setting out its strategic objectives.

Given this review and the potential for its recommendations to prompt a number of changes and improvements across SenCom, preparation for the impending ALN Code of Practice/ALN legislation and the self-evaluation of the service after its first four years, it would seem timely to revisit and refresh the services strategic objectives.

In respect of timelines, many of the recommendations proposed in this section, should be built on the foundations of a new vision for SenCom and its impending plans over the next five year.

**Mark Geraghty**

**Independent SEND Consultant - February 2020**

## Appendixes

### Appendix 1. Terms of reference of the SenCom Review

# WLGA Briefing

## Independent Review of the Sensory and Communication Service for South East Wales (SenCom)

Dr Chris Llewelyn, Chief Executive  
20<sup>th</sup> May 2019  
029 20 468610 - [chris.llewelyn@wlga.gov.uk](mailto:chris.llewelyn@wlga.gov.uk)

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### Remit for the Proposed Review of the SenCom Service

SenCom and its predecessor services have been providing specialist sensory services since well before the last Local Government reorganisation. SenCom currently provides services for Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, and Torfaen councils.

Over this time there has been a significant change to the way these learners are being supported with a clear focus on learners attending their local schools with an appropriate package of support being put in place by the service. The numbers of learners requiring placements away from home is at its lowest level ever.

While the service has provided a wide range of services to children, their families and schools successfully over this period, it is now timely to look at how well the service is placed to meet the needs of all partners going forward.

The five Council Leaders have given a commitment to review the service through the WLGA and with the support of Welsh Government funding. This independent review will:

- Provide clarity on the range, volume, and impact of service provision in each local authority. While the service offers specialist support to children, families and school staff, the review will consider whether these are required in terms of WG guidance, proportionate, sufficiently focused on developing independence skills, and whether the service provides a professional learning offer for school-based staff that is sufficient in range.
- Consider joint committee that will provide governance for the service going forward. *(There has been no joint committee, there should be no implication there has been)*
- Review the management information that partners receive and suggest improvements, so partners are regularly fully aware of the range and impact of services being delivered.
- Consider the value for money of the individual and collective services provided and consider the costs in relation to similar services in Wales.

- Review the basis/formula upon which costs are allocated to Local Authorities to determine whether it is equitable and appropriate.

The review will also consider:

- Continuity of the service offer – given the specialist nature of the staff employed in the service and the low numbers of staff being trained across the UK, how can the service be best placed to ensure it can continue to meet the needs of learners over the next five years.
- A new joint agreement to underpin a future service outlining the service offer and the appropriate governance arrangements for the future.

## **Methodology**

An independent consultant will be commissioned to undertake this review; the consultant would be expected to have an expertise or experience both of sensory services and good governance.

It is anticipated that the appointed consultant will conduct preliminary discussions with each local authority leader or relevant lead cabinet member and their nominated senior officers, to hear their views of the service, its strengths, its weaknesses and potential areas for development. It is expected that these meetings will all happen within three weeks of commencement of the review.

Given the nature of the service offer there will be opportunities for all stakeholders to engage in the review. This will include engagement with:

- All schools – the consultant will particularly seek the views of staff in special schools and resource bases that the service works with, but all school staff will be invited to submit their views.
- Parents – this should include a number of structured focus groups of parents drawn from each LA area; an anonymised questionnaire survey of each family receiving the service.
- Parents will be invited to comment on what they value and what they think needs to be improved in the current service offer.
- Existing SenCom staff;
- Third sector partners / representative groups;
- NHS partners – including paediatricians, audiologists and speech therapists working with the service

## **Timescales**

Subject to Leaders' approval, the review will begin as soon as possible and will conclude by the end of June 2019.

It is anticipated that all data collection from stakeholders will be complete by the end of May. The final report will be available by the end of June 2019 and will be presented to Leaders for discussion at a date to be confirmed.

# Briff CLILC

## Adolygiad Annibynnol o Wasanaeth Synhwyrdd a Chyfathrebu De Ddwyrain Cymru (SenCom)



Dr Chris Llewelyn, Prif Weithredwr 20 Mai 2019 [chris.llewelyn@wlga.gov.uk](mailto:chris.llewelyn@wlga.gov.uk)

### Cylch Gwaith ar gyfer yr Adolygiad Arfaethedig o Wasanaeth SenCom

Mae SenCom a'i ragflaenwyr wedi bod yn darparu gwasanaethau synhwyrdd arbenigol ers ymhell cyn i'r Llywodraeth Leol gael ei had-drefnu ddiwethaf. Ar hyn o bryd, mae SenCom yn darparu gwasanaethau i gynghorau Blaenau Gwent, Caerffili, Sir Fynwy, Casnewydd a Thorfaen.

Dros y cyfnod hwn, mae newid sylweddol wedi bod i'r ffordd y mae'r dysgwyr hyn yn cael eu cefnogi gyda ffocws clir ar ddysgwyr yn mynychu eu hysgolion lleol gyda phecyn cymorth priodol yn cael ei roi ar waith gan y gwasanaeth. Mae nifer y dysgwyr sydd angen lleoliadau oddi cartref yn is nag erioed.

Er bod y gwasanaeth wedi darparu ystod eang o wasanaethau i blant, eu teuluoedd ac ysgolion yn llwyddiannus dros y cyfnod hwn, mae bellach yn amser i edrych ar ba mor dda yw sefyllfa'r gwasanaeth er mwyn diwallu anghenion yr holl bartneriaid yn y dyfodol.

Mae'r pump Arweinydd Cyngor wedi ymrwymo i adolygu'r gwasanaeth drwy CLILC a gyda chymorth cyllid Llywodraeth Cymru. Bydd yr adolygiad annibynnol hwn yn:

- Darparu eglurder ar ystod, maint ac effaith y gwasanaeth a ddarperir gan bob awdurdod lleol. Er bod y gwasanaeth yn cynnig cymorth arbenigol i blant, teuluoedd a staff ysgol, bydd yr adolygiad yn ystyried a yw'r rhain yn ofynnol o ran canllawiau Llywodraeth Cymru, yn gymesur, yn canolbwyntio'n ddigonol ar ddatblygu sgiliau annibyniaeth ac a yw'r gwasanaeth yn darparu cynnig dysgu proffesiynol i staff yn yr ysgol sydd yn ddigonol o ran ystod.
- Ystyried cydbwyllgor a fydd yn darparu trefniadau llywodraeth ar gyfer y gwasanaeth yn y dyfodol. (Nid oes cydbwyllgor erioed wedi'i sefydlu, ni ddylai bod unrhyw awgrym o hynny)
- Adolygu'r wybodaeth reoli y mae partneriaid yn ei derbyn ac awgrymu gwelliannau er mwyn sicrhau bod partneriaid yn llwyr ymwybodol yn rheolaidd o ystod ac effaith y gwasanaethau sy'n cael eu darparu.
- Ystyried gwerth am arian y gwasanaethau unigol a chyfunol a ddarperir ac ystyried y costau mewn perthynas â gwasanaethau tebyg yng Nghymru.
- Adolygu'r sail/ fformiwla a ddefnyddir i ddyrannu costau i Awdurdodau Lleol i benderfynu a yw'n deg a phriodol.

Bydd yr adolygiad hefyd yn ystyried:

- Parhad y cynnig gwasanaeth – o ystyried natur arbenigol y staff a gyflogir yn y gwasanaeth a'r nifer isel o staff sydd yn cael eu hyfforddi ar draws y DU, sut all y gwasanaeth fod yn y sefyllfa orau i sicrhau y gall barhau i ddiwallu anghenion dysgwyr dros y pum mlynedd nesaf.
- Cyd-gytundeb newydd i danategu gwasanaeth yn y dyfodol yn amlinellu'r cynnig gwasanaeth a'r trefniadau llywodraethu priodol ar gyfer y dyfodol.

## **Methodoleg**

Bydd ymgynghorydd annibynnol yn cael ei gomisiynu i gynnal yr adolygiad hwn; bydd disgwyl i'r ymgynghorydd feddu ar arbenigedd neu brofiad o wasanaethau synhwyrdd a threfniadau llywodraethu da.

Rhagwelir y bydd yr ymgynghorydd penodedig yn cynnal trafodaethau rhagarweiniol gyda phob arweinydd awdurdod lleol neu aelod cabinet arweiniol perthnasol ac uwch swyddogion penodedig, er mwyn clywed eu barn am y gwasanaeth, ei gryfderau, ei wendidau a'r meysydd posibl y gellir eu datblygu. Disgwylir y byd y cyfarfodydd hyn yn cael eu cynnal o fewn tair wythnos i ddechrau'r adolygiad.

O ystyried natur y cynnig gwasanaeth, bydd cyfleoedd i fudd-ddeiliaid ymgysylltu â'r adolygiad. Bydd hyn yn cynnwys ymgysylltiad â:

- Phob Ysgol – bydd yr ymgynghorydd yn ceisio barn staff mewn ysgolion arbennig a safleoedd adnoddau yn benodol sydd ymwneud â'r gwasanaeth, ond bydd croeso i bob aelod o staff ysgol leisio barn.
- Rhieni – dylai hyn gynnwys nifer o grwpiau ffocws strwythuredig o rieni o bob ardal Awdurdod Lleol; arolwg holiadur dienw o bob teulu sy'n derbyn y gwasanaeth.
- Bydd rhieni yn cael eu gwahodd i roi sylwadau ar yr hyn sy'n werthfawr iddynt a beth maent yn feddwl sydd angen ei wella o fewn y cynnig gwasanaeth presennol.
- Staff SenCom presennol;
- Partneriaid trydydd sector / grwpiau cynrychiadol;
- Partneriaid GIG - yn cynnwys paediatregwyr, clywedegwyr a therapyddion

lleferydd sy'n gweithio gyda'r gwasanaeth.

## **Terfynau Amser**

Yn amodol ar gymeradwyaeth yr Arweinwyr, bydd yr adolygiad yn dechrau cyn gynted â phosibl a bydd yn dod i ben erbyn diwedd mis Mehefin 2019.

Rhagwelir y bydd y casgliad data gan fudd-ddeiliaid wedi'i gwblhau erbyn diwedd mis Mai. Bydd yr adroddiad terfynol ar gael erbyn diwedd mis Mehefin 2019 a bydd yn cael ei gyflwyno i'r Arweinwyr i'w drafod ar ddyddiad i'w gadarnhau.

**Appendix 2. List of the political and professional local authority leaderships (June 2019) consulted as part of the independent, external review of SenCom.**

**PRIVACY NOTICE**

The information provided shall be used solely for purpose relating to the SENCOM Review and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Further information can be found at <https://www.wlga.wales/wlga-data-protection-policy>

<b>Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Blaenau Gwent   Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council</b> Municipal Offices, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale, Gwent, NP23 6XB		
<b>Leader:</b>	Councillor Nigel Daniels	nigel.daniels@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
<b>Chief Executive:</b>	Michelle Morris	Michelle.Morris@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Clive Meredith	Clive.Meredith@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
<b>Lead Director:</b>	Lynette Jones	lynette.jones@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
<b>Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili   Caerphilly County Borough Council</b> Penallta House, Tredomen Park, Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed, CF82 7PG		
<b>Leader:</b>	Councillor David Poole	davidpoole@caerphilly.gov.uk
<b>Chief Executive:</b>	Christina Harrhy	harrhc@caerphilly.gov.uk
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Philippa Marsden	philippamarsden@caerphilly.gov.uk
<b>Lead Director:</b>	Keri Cole	colek@caerphilly.gov.uk
<b>Cyngor Sir Fynwy   Monmouthshire County Council</b> County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA		
<b>Leader:</b>	Cllr Peter Fox OBE	peterfox@monmouthshire.gov.uk
<b>Chief Executive:</b>	Paul Matthews	paulmatthews@monmouthshire.gov.uk
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Richard John	richardjohn@monmouthshire.gov.uk
<b>Lead Director:</b>	Will McLean	WillMcLean@monmouthshire.gov.uk

**Cyngor Dinas Casnewydd | Newport City Council**  
Civic Centre, Newport, NP20 4UR

<b>Leader:</b>	Cllr Debbie Wilcox	Leaders.Office@newport.gov.uk
<b>Chief Executive:</b>	Will Godfrey	will.godfrey@newport.gov.uk
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Gail Giles	gail.giles@newport.gov.uk
<b>Strategic Director:</b>	James Harris	james.harris@newport.gov.uk
<b>Lead Director:</b>	Sarah Morgan Education Support Office, Room 418	sarah.morgan@newport.gov.uk

**Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Tor-faen | Torfaen County Borough Council**  
Civic Centre, Glantorfaen Road, Pontypool, NP4 6YB

<b>Leader:</b>	Cllr Anthony Hunt	Anthony.Hunt@torfaen.gov.uk
<b>Chief Executive:</b>	Alison Ward CBE	alison.ward@torfaen.gov.uk
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr David Yeowell	david.yeowell@torfaen.gov.uk
<b>Lead Director:</b>	Dermot McChrystal Education Service	dermot.mcchrystal@torfaen.gov.uk



### **Appendix 3. Qualifications and Relevant Experience - Mark Geraghty SEND Consultant**

- Qualified and experienced mainstream teacher, secondary phase
- Qualified Teacher of the Deaf, with mainstream and special settings (units, special school and specialist FE college) experience,
- Additional practitioner expertise in Autism, SLCN, Multi-sensory impairment and counselling.
- Recently retired, (August 2018) CEO & Principal the [Seashell Trust](#)
- Senior Leader of two large SEN Inclusion Services in England (Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire; teams of approx. 600+ staff) as a second tier LA Officer; managing direct reports for HI/VI/MSI/Autism/ SCLN /Physical Impairment, SLD/MLD and SEN ICT specialist services.
- Held leadership and management responsibilities for health and social care teams in cross authority trans-disciplinary services
- Lead LA officer for statutory casework teams, thus I am familiar with the fundamental and important statutory regulations for the related Education Acts (SEND) in England
- Commissioner for out of authority placements,
- Principal strategic lead on the development of outreach services from LA Special Schools,
- DfE regional coordinator for joint LA SEND strategies and operational deliveries and SEN Services,
- Member of the Council for Disabled Children's (CDC) strategic steering group - the DfE's independent and only strategic SEND partner, in England
- Member of the Special Educational Consortium (SEC)
- Member of the NatSIP Management group; a directly funded executive group overseeing the development and delivery of low incidence services across 153 English LAs
- Chair of the national Complex Needs Providers Group,
- CEO/Principal of an outstanding Special School (2-19) and Specialist College (19-25) [The Seashell Trust](#)
- SEND Consultant to non-maintained Special schools and Colleges
- Co-chair of a Ministerial review of all Residential Special Schools and Specialist Colleges - looking at how we can improve the inclusion rates within mainstream schools across England: [Good Intentions, Good Enough?](#)
- Co-Author of a National Report following our review to the Secretary of State for Education (at the time, Justine Greening): [Good Intentions, Good Enough?](#)

## SenCom Independent External Review

### Consultation Meetings with Parents November 2019

Mark Geraghty ~ SEND Consultant

## SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

Evaluate SENCOM's activities over the last 4 years.  
Stakeholder engagement includes:

-  Families, Schools, SENCOM Staff, VCS
-  Political Leaders, CEOs, Chief Education Officers
-  ALN leads, ALNCos, EPS, other stakeholders

## SENCOM Review Process

- Commissioned by the WLGA
- Selection Process for Consultants
- Commenced - May 2019
- To be completed by Nov. 2019

## SENCOM Review Process

National trends around C&YP with complex SEN  
and/or neurological compromise:

-  EPICURE Stats -
-  Genetic and Rare diseases -
-  New cohorts - FASD

## SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

The review will examine how SENCOM:

- 📄 How well does SenCom supports families and schools, to meet children and young people's (C&YP) hopes for the future?
- 📄 How well does SenCom meet the specialist teaching, learning and communication needs of the C&YP, it supports?

## SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

The review will examine how SENCOM:

- 🗣️ prepares young people with sensory and/or communication needs to become valued and valuable adults, in their local communities?
- 🗣️ offers 'Value for Money' Services to families, schools and local authorities?

## SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

The review will seek evidence that SENCOM is 'Value for Money' ... I will judge this by looking at the 4Es!

- 📄 Effectiveness of SENCOM
- 📄 Efficiency SENCOM
- 📄 Equity of SENCOM
- 📄 Economy of SENCOM

## VALUE FOR MONEY

Effectiveness of SENCOM

- 👍 Does SENCOM achieve its objectives?
- 👍 I will look at the achievements of SENCOM to confirm it delivers on its published objectives?
- 👍 Do you think SenCom's effectiveness can be improved in any way?

## VALUE FOR MONEY

### Efficiency SENCOM

- !👍 Is SenCom efficient in its delivery of the services it provides to C&YP and families, given the resources they have?
- !👍 Do you think SenCom's efficiency can be improved?

## VALUE FOR MONEY

### Equity of SENCOM

- !👍 Do SenCom's teams *reach* all identified C&YP by deploying its resources equitably?
- !👍 Do you think SenCom is fair in how it allocates its support to C&YP and families?

## VALUE FOR MONEY

### Economy of SENCOM

- !👍 Do SenCom minimise the costs of its resources while continuing to deliver good quality services to C&YP, families, schools?

## SOME QUESTIONS?

- !👍 What, in your experiences, are the strengths of SenCom?
- !👍 What does good practice across SenCom feel like for you as, parents/carers?

## QUESTIONS

- !👍 Are there areas of SenCom's work which you feel could be improved?
- !👍 What else would you like your Local Authority to know, regarding how you feel about the SenCom service?

## PLEASE SEND ME YOUR FEEDBACK

!✍ Please fill in the online questionnaire at:  
<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/RC635/>

!✍ Please submit comments and views via:  
[SENCOMConsultation@wlga.gov.uk](mailto:SENCOMConsultation@wlga.gov.uk)

!✍ Write to David Hopkins C/o:  
LLL&I Dept, WLGA, Local Government House,  
Drake Walk, Cardiff, CF10 4LG.

## Questions



## **Appendix 5. SenCom Annual Report 2016/2017**

This is the most contemporary annual report for the SenCom (approx. 3 years ago) and provided me with some baseline data against which I compared the most recently published figures, etc.



**Gwasanaethau Cymorth  
Cyfathrebu a Synhwyrdd**

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**Sensory & Communication  
Support Service**

# **Annual Report Activities and Impact**

## Introduction

The Sensory & Communication Support Service (SenCom) is commissioned by the South East Wales Consortium to support the five Local Authority Schools ALN improvement programme to raise the attainment and positive outcomes of pupils with additional learning needs and consist of three specialist intervention teams:

- Communication Intervention Team (ComIT)
- Gwent Visual Impairment Service (VIS)
- Hearing Impairment Service (HIS)

ComIT was established in 2008, while the HIS and VIS were established by Gwent County Council. All three are co-funded by the five local authorities and provide a regional, highly specialist 0-19 training and intervention service to families, early years settings and schools.

The Head of Service took up their post in September 2015 with a remit to develop greater strategic and operational integrated processes between the teams. This has been a long-held desire of the South East Wales Consortium and the five local authority Directors of Education have expressed a wish to see the teams amalgamate under the auspices of a single local authority, the achievement of which has been a large part of the services activity during the last academic year.

## The Vision and Aims of the Sensory & Communication Support Service

*To be an excellent, family focused 0-25 specialist Additional Learning Needs service which transforms the lives of children and their families by building capacity in Welsh Early Years, schools and colleges, empowering and inspiring young people to follow their passions and dreams.*

SenCom have developed a framework of six key strategic standards which will guide our service improvement activity up to 2021. The objectives we focus on in the service improvement plans over this time scale will always have regard to these standards. The six strategic standards are:

1. **Family & Person Centred;** A family led organisation which uses co-production and participation as a central tool to engage with families.
2. **Early Intervention:** A respected and highly regarded 0-25 one stop service for Children & Young Peoples with Additional Learning Needs & Disability that is Person Centred and Outcome Focussed.
3. **Removing Barriers to Learning;** Transforming Children & Young Peoples opportunities by becoming a national leader in innovative practice.
4. **Raising Expectations & Achievement;** Enable and empower, through meaningful participation, children, and young people to make choices about how they will be supported to access quality first teaching and learning experiences. We will achieve this by building capacity in schools and early year's settings, instilling a culture of inclusive learning and development.
5. **Delivering Improvements in Partnership;** Develop an integrated, cohesive trans-disciplinary SenCom which will work alongside existing specialist, targeted and universal services to ensure families receive support from all stakeholders in a coherent, accessible, and person-centred way.
6. **Futureproofing and Sustainability;** Develop a commissioned service for ALN & Disability. This service will provide high quality, specialist unique value for money services, which would be available to the wider maintained sector of Welsh local authorities. It will be fully costed, transparent in its service and performance.

The key strategic themes appear as the 'golden thread' across all aspects of the services planning, delivery, review and evaluation. This golden thread informs and enhances the planning of individual staff's performance reviews, discrete service targets and the overarching Service Improvement Plan (SIP).

## **Report Format**

For, this the first combined SenCom Annual report each of the teams have reported on their activity over the academic year. They have all illustrated their impact and development and this is supported by short case studies which we call 'interventions that make a difference'. The overarching SenCom developments are reported first.

## **Sensory & Communication Support Service**

### **Main priorities relative to the strategic standards**

#### **1. Family and person centred**

SenCom have taken the strategic decision that they will work towards becoming a regional advocate for person centred practice. This is a central theme across all Welsh Government draft guidance on how they wish schools to support pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). It's an approach that sits well across all three of the teams as at the heart of our work is the personalisation of learning for vulnerable children and young people. To support service personnel's understanding of the concepts behind person centred practice and how it operates within schools we have undertaken the following:

- Initial in-house familiarisation with one-page profiles and each member of staff producing their own. These have been shared within teams and as part of one to one meetings and updated on an annual basis.
- Whole service training by consultants from Helen Sanderson Associates, a sector leading company in this area on person centred thinking tools, gathering pupil voice and aspirations and how to support the development of an Individual Development Plan.
- The service has adopted the 4+1 thinking tool of; what we have tried, what have we learned, what are we pleased about, what are we concerned about, what do we need to do next, as a tool to support professional dialogue in one to one meetings between staff and managers.

#### **2. Removing barriers to learning**

Over the last twelve months the service has developed a new service delivery model. This looks to build confidence and capacity within the mainstream and special school workforce through greater training opportunities to manage low level of need across hearing, vision, multisensory and communication impairments. The model focuses the team's specialist support into episodes of intervention with strong communication between teams and ALNCo's to ensure pupils have good access to the curriculum, make appropriate progress given starting points and that their ALN doesn't impact on their wellbeing. The three teams have been piloting it in a number of schools around the region over the last academic year. Teams are refining and developing the model to support its operational role out across the consortium. To facilitate these managers from across the teams have also been asking for agenda items at local authority ALNCO Meetings, ALN Resource Panels and Educational Psychologist Team meetings, to explain the model and the roles of schools in its delivery.

#### **3. Raising expectation and achievement**

The Head of SenCom took on the role of chair for the ADEW All Wales Sensory Working Group in January 2017. This group consists of Heads of Service for Sensory Impairment services from across the twenty-two authorities. The Head has driven this group's agenda forward so that it now has a nationally agreed moderation framework for allocating provision for HI/VI and MSI pupils. This was a necessary first step in



the process of developing a set of key performance indicators the services can benchmark themselves against in the future

#### **4. Futureproofing and sustainability**

The Head of Service took up their post in September 2015 with a remit to develop greater strategic and operational integrated processes between the teams. The Service has now obtained political consent from both Torfaen and Caerphilly County Borough Councils for Torfaen to become the one host authority for the service. Activity is currently being undertaken to enable Caerphilly staff to TUPE across on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018 and this will also enable the formation of one combined service budget and structure.

### **Communication Intervention Team Annual Report Autumn 2016 – Summer 2017**

#### Background Information

ComIT (Communication Intervention Team) is part of The Sensory and Communication Support Service. It is an Education Service set up by five authorities of South East Wales, to work with children in schools who have Speech, Language and Communication Needs. (SLCN) Each Authority is allocated a number of sessions per week, based on the % of funding received by the service. Funding from Authorities is worked out per head of school age population. Individual schools to receive ComIT input are identified through a named ComIT Lead Professional in each Authority and ComIT time is allocated each term.

The ComIT philosophy that communication is the key skill underpinning all aspects of learning, drives all ComIT work. Communication is fundamental to children's development. Children need to be able to understand and be understood. It's the foundation of relationships and is essential for learning, play and social interaction. Children with SLCN are at high risk of difficulties with reading, writing and spelling. They are more likely to have behaviour difficulties. ComIT work to help schools identify and support children and young people with SLCN is essential as in the UK there are over 1 million children and young people (2-3 in every UK classroom) with some form of SLCN

#### Context

A SLCN Self-Analysis process has been devised by ComIT and ABUHB to help schools assess how they are developing and supporting communication skills for all children. By providing a communication friendly environment schools enable each child to reach his/her own potential in becoming an effective communicator. By ensuring essential communication skills (as referred to in strand one of National Literacy and Numeracy framework NLNF) are taught and embedded, children are given the greatest opportunity to access all areas of the curriculum.

ComIT have developed a school graduated response pathway for children and young people with SLCN:

At universal tier 1 level ComIT leads a skilled workforce in school to provide communication-rich environments, effective teaching and learning strategies and support to families/carers of all children. Work in schools to build capacity includes work with individuals; work with groups of children; whole class work; training; developing appropriate resources; liaising with outside agencies; linking with parents.

At targeted tier 2 level ComIT enables schools to support children and young people with recognised SLCN (which impacts on their ability to access the curriculum), receive appropriate interventions in schools.

At specialist tier 3 level, children, and young people with recognised SLCN which require specialist services (ABUHB Speech and Language Therapy Service) receive specialist assessment and intervention where appropriate in a timely manner.

During 2016/2017 ComIT introduced a new way of working. Prior to 2016 Specialist Teaching Assistants could have been visiting up to three or four schools a day including travel time, delivering a one-hour

session. After evaluating this method and with the development of the ComIT pathway it was decided that each Specialist Teaching Assistant would work ½ a day a week session in each selected school. This way of working has provided more scope to develop school's engagement with Tier 1 and Tier 2 of the ComIT pathway. The new process is as follows:

- Schools to receive input for ½ a day a week are identified by ComIT Authority Professional Lead
- An introductory meeting is organised with ComIT SMT member, school Head Teacher and SENCo/ALNCo
- ComIT school SLCN self-analysis is completed at the meeting
- ComIT work to be done in school is agreed
- Relevant paperwork is given (e.g. ComIT toolkit screen, Contract, Parental consent forms)
- An appropriate action plan for the half day working in school is drawn up and shared with school
- Following the terms work, an evaluation meeting is held to review progress. A short evaluation report is written and shared with school

ComIT members have evaluated this practice through service evaluation day and in team meetings. The main findings are:

- Good sound structures are in place
- The approach is collaborative
- There is more time and flexibility to liaise with school staff to develop tier 1 and tier 2 work
- The work carried out by the Specialist Teaching Assistants is of a higher quality as there is more time to deliver
- Improved outcomes for children in groups
- There is a decrease in travel time for ComIT staff
- There has been a reduction of individual requests for advice for ComIT

Overall, the new way of working has been a very positive change for ComIT and schools and ComIT will continue to work with schools in this way to deliver tier 1 and tier 2 work.

### Current Staffing

Currently ComIT is a team of 11. Head of service, Assistant Head of Service, Speech and Language Therapist, 3 full time, term time only Specialist Teaching Assistants, 1 Specialist Teaching Assistant 80%, 2 Specialist Teaching Assistants 60%, 1 Specialist Teaching Assistant 40%, Administrator. ComIT Service staffing levels are now back to full capacity following Head of Service extended sickness absence of eight months 2016/2017 and Administrator absent for six months during 2017.

### Training

Service Training delivery is a central element of ComIT work. Full Training delivery was affected by staff absence during 2016/2017. One ten-week ELKLAN Speech and Language Support in the classroom is usually delivered every term.

The following ELKLAN courses were delivered during 2016/2017.

- ELKLAN Speech and Language Support for 11-16. Seven learners attended.
- ELKLAN Early Years (In Welsh). Nine learners attended.
- ELKLAN Verbal ASD Four learners attended.
- ELKLAN Communication Friendly Schools programme. Ten schools achieved status.

A series of half day workshops were run each term during 2016/2017. The workshops and number of attendees throughout the year are as follows:

Introduction to Speech, Language and Communication	29 delegates	ComIT Toolkit
	72 delegates	Whole Class Strategies
	51 delegates	Sounds so Simple

A total of 308 people received training during 2016/2017. Post course evaluation data shows that all aspects of training received was rated by the attendees as good, very good or excellent. The majority of ratings were in the excellent category.

ComIT Data 2016-2017

Number of children supported by ComIT Autumn 2016 -2017			
Age Range	No of children	No of children in groups	No of children receiving 1-1 support
0-3	0		
Nursery	43	39	4
Foundation Phase	398	328	70
KS2	450	391	59
KS3	14	9	5
KS4	11	10	1
PRU's	0		
Post 16	0		
Special Schools	0		
Out of County	0		

916 children and young people received input from ComIT during 2016/2017. The majority of work was done in Primary schools. 441 children were from nursery and foundation phase settings. 450 children were from Key Stage 2 settings. 14 pupils were from Key Stage 3 and 11 from Key Stage 4.

Number of gains made on pre and post checklists	Number of pupils in groups Checklist 1	Number of individual pupils Checklist 1	Number of pupils in groups Checklist 2	Number of individual pupils Checklist 2
Minus score	7	5	7	1
0	0	3	0	0
1-5	71	15	57	8
6-10	77	11	80	10
11-15	84	21	71	10
16-20	49	14	34	6
21-25	34	19	17	3
26-30	18	7	6	4
31-35	3	1	2	0
36-40	4	1	0	0
41-45	1	2	1	2
46-50	1	2	0	1
51-55	0	1	0	0
56-60	0	0	0	0
60+	0	0	0	1

Data collected on pre and post ComIT screening tool shows that the gain made by the highest number of children was between 11 and 15 points. 105 children made a gain within this range. 63 children gained between 16 – 20 points. These are significant gains that make a difference to the child in the classroom. School staff report noticeable changes in the level of participation and focus. One aspect of the data to note is that on checklist 1, 12 children registered a negative score. Following discussions with the Specialist Teaching Assistants the main reason for this was a different person completed the pre and post scores so

some inconsistencies occurred. Another reason given was that the pre-scores were inaccurate and scored too highly, so the lower post scores were recorded as more accurate and realistic. This aspect of looking at pre and post scores will be considered carefully during 2017-2018 to see if there are a similar number of children with negative scores and to ascertain why.

Type of group	No of pupils in group type
Attention and Listening	341
Play and Interaction	0
Understanding language	118
Using language	17
Social skills	106
Speech sounds	0
Narrative	5
Teaching Talking	12
Talkabout	168

ComIT delivered seven different types of groups. 341 children received Attention and Listening intervention. Attention and Listening is a key core skill which needs to be consolidated before other skills can develop. 274 children received Social Skills intervention (including Talkabout). A growing number of children need support to develop social skills. Both these interventions delivered will now enable schools to provide these skills at tier 1.

No of boys receiving group support	506
No of girls receiving group support	271
No of boys receiving 1-1 support	106
No of girls receiving 1-1 support	34
No of tier 1 children and young people	769
No of tier 2 children and young people	80
No of tier 3 children and young people	55
No of children and young people not on code of practice	366
No of school action children and young people	195
No of school action plus children and young people	301
No of statemented children and young people	44

Data also shows 612 boys received ComIT support compared to 305 girls. This supports research findings that Speech Language and Communication needs are more prevalent among boys.

Data also supports the emphasis of ComIT support for tier 1 work this year, rolling out the new way of working. 769 children were supported at tier 1. Other tier work was also completed as 80 tier 2 and 55 tier 3 children were supported. This is more specialised work in conjunction with AUBHB SLT episodes of care.

### **Interventions that made a difference**

1.

<b>INTERVENTIONS THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE (SEPTEMBER 2016 - JULY 2017)</b>	
Specialist Teaching Assistant	
Local Authority: TCBC	Child (initials): X
NC Year: Yr. 9	Need: Receptive and Expressive Language
<b>A: Please briefly describe an intervention which has made a positive difference to a child or young person. (Action/Outcome)</b>	
Prior to this intervention the pupil had always struggled with his spelling and consequently writing and literacy skills. Through doing the programme he has made significant progress with his targets. There is sound evidence that the intervention was effective as the pupil became able to segment words and	

<p>'have a go' at spelling them. He became much more aware of the component sounds that make up words and became willing to sound out words himself.</p>
<p><b>B: How do you know the intervention was effective?</b> (Evidence)  During the sessions, the pupil gained in confidence and would ask if he didn't understand. It was reported by school staff that he was much more confident within the classroom setting and more willing to contribute in class. When he had his school projective report, he was expected to make progress and improve his grades in some subjects.</p>
<p><b>C: What factors do you think contributed to success?</b> (Positive Indicators)  This intervention was successful because the pupil himself wanted to learn to spell. The willingness and attitude of the pupil to want to use a new way of learning was a major contributory factor to the success.</p>
<p><b>D: If relevant, please describe how others helped you to achieve this success (including admin support).</b>  I have met up with the class general TA to give some help and advice in ways she could support TP in future classroom situations.</p>

2.

<b>INTERVENTIONS THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE</b>
<p>Local Authority: CCBC Child (initials): X  NC Year: 5 Need: Phonological/Exp Lang/Social Skills</p>
<p><b>A: Please briefly describe an intervention which has made a positive difference to a child or young person.</b> (Action/Outcome)  RG previously had ComIT 1:1 support in 2013 in his Infant school and then when he transitioned to Year 3 in another school. In total this amounted to 3 terms support. He was then re-referred to ComIT as he was unreceptive to Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) intervention in a clinic environment. During the sessions in school, once his confidence had been gained, RG slowly began to respond. RG's difficulties were phonological. This in turn was affecting his expressive and social use of language. ComIT support then ceased in May 2015. RG was then picked up for support again in summer term 2017 as part of a Year 5 Social Skills group to develop his expressive language and social skills further. RG remained under SALT to continue to target his phonological difficulties, but it became apparent that his confidence in voluntarily expressing himself in a small group was developing.</p>
<p><b>B: How do you know the intervention was effective?</b> (Evidence)  ComIT checklist 2 scores pre and post indicated ongoing progression in all areas of language development and is further evidence that the intervention was successful. Furthermore, commentaries from Class teacher, Teaching Assistant, SENCO and Head-teacher indicate RGs continued hard work in small group intervention initiated by ComIT had a positive impact on the pupil.</p>
<p><b>C: What factors do you think contributed to success?</b> (Positive Indicators)  Factors that contributed to the success of the intervention are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuity of ComIT support i.e. the same ComIT representative carried out the support, so RG was familiar with the person;</li> <li>• Opportunity was given to RG to develop his language skills in a small group environment;</li> <li>• School continuing this small group work;</li> </ul> <p>Support was given in school where RG was more comfortable and familiar as opposed to the clinic environment with SALT.</p>

<b>INTERVENTIONS THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE (SEPTEMBER 2016 - JULY 2017)</b>
School: Various Local Authority: Newport/Caerphilly/ NC Year: R - Yr. 6                      Need: SLCN (Speech and Language Communication Need)
<b>A: Please briefly describe an intervention which has made a positive difference to a child or young person. (Action/Outcome)</b> Schools achieving CFS (Communication Friendly School) accreditation have engaged staff and pupils to develop and enhance language rich environments.
<b>B: How do you know the intervention was effective? (Evidence)</b> The following aspects of the intervention is evidence that delivering CFS has been effective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre/Post Chat challenge illustrated positive change in Adult/Child interaction</li> <li>• Blank Levelling form of questioning has been incorporated into short term planning and enhances differentiation skills in the classroom</li> <li>• Each school has developed a Communication Policy to ensure a high profile of SLCN,</li> <li>• Visual Strategies are embedded across each school to support all children e.g. colourful stories.</li> </ul>
<b>C: What factors do you think contributed to success? (Positive Indicators)</b> The following factors contributed to the success of the CFS intervention: Training staff at Elklan Level 3 where specific strategies are learned to develop and enhance pupil's vocabulary skills (retaining and using) through mind-mapping and word-maps, memory skills, visual tools for learning, for example task plans and narrative frameworks and Adult/child Interaction. Training staff at Level 4 enabled whole school delivery implementation and embedding strategies in each class throughout both phases in Primary School. ComIT SMT – team worked collaboratively and gave support to each school in order to achieve status. This involved delivering sessions at Brecon House then visiting schools to provide support sessions and marking portfolios. Concurrently, SMT visited schools to support and carry out audits of work covered.
<b>D: If relevant, please describe how others helped you to achieve this success (including admin support).</b> ComIT SMT - team worked collaboratively and gave support to each school in order to achieve status. This involved delivering sessions at Brecon House then visiting schools to provide support sessions and marking portfolios.

Written by Head of Service, ComIT

**SenCom Visual Impairment Service Annual Report Sept 2016 - July 2017**

**Background**

SenCom Visual Impairment Service (GVIS) currently knows of 366 children and young people with vision impairment across the South East Wales Area. In the past 3 years the number of children aged 0-3 years known to the service has increased from 36 to 56. Supporting families with early intervention is key to placing the child and family's wellbeing at the heart of our work. For this reason, the expansion of pre-school playgroups has been a focus for GVIS.

Table 1: Total gross caseload numbers for VI Service 2016 - 2017

	Blaenau Gwent	Caerphilly	Monmouthshire	Newport	Torfaen	Total
0-3 years	5	15	6	22	8	56
Foundation Phase	9	12	5	25	6	57

KS2	7	26	13	20	16	82
KS3	4	12	6	17	6	45
KS4	0	7	5	13	6	31
Post 16	1	0	1	4	2	8
Special School	9	20	4	29	17	79
Out of County	0	0	3	5	0	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>366</b>

Table 2: Total gross caseload numbers for VI Service 2015 – 2016

	Blaenau Gwent	Caerphilly	Monmouthshire	Newport	Torfaen	Total
0-3 years	5	17	3	14	5	44
Foundation Phase	8	13	8	16	7	52
KS2	10	18	11	23	16	78
KS3	3	15	10	19	4	51
KS4	0	1	4	7	11	23
Post 16	0	3	0	0	3	6
Special School	8	24	5	37	12	86
Out of County	0	0	5	3	1	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>349</b>

	Blaenau Gwent	Caerphilly	Monmouthshire	Newport	Torfaen	Total
0-3 years	7	11	3	11	4	36
Total number of pupils across 5 CBCs						250

<b>FTE</b>	<b>Sep-15</b>	<b>Sep-16</b>	<b>Sep-17</b>
<b>QTVI</b>	<b>5</b> (4 Qual + 1 in training)	<b>4.1</b> (Qual)	<b>5.1</b> (Qual)
<b>Mobility Specialist *</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Habilitation specialist</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>ILS specialist *</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Specialist HLTA</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Specialist TA</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6.4</b>
<b>ICT Coordinator</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

\* In 2016 Habilitation VI UK qualification incorporated both Mobility and Independent Living Skills (ILS). Therefore, someone qualified as a Habilitation Specialist is qualified to teach both. GVIS's current Mobility Specialist has completed the top up qualification to now be considered a Habilitation Specialist.

Changes to staff in the past two years have reflected the current ongoing change to the way that SenCom VIS operates. With increased caseload numbers and a reduced staff relative to 5 years ago (since when a number of TAs and QTVIs left without being replaced) GVIS are moving towards building capacity within schools and developing outcomes focussed reporting and monitoring paperwork that will complement school records and planning paperwork.

The 5.1 FTE QTVI calculation for September 2017 above is broken down as follows:

Name	FTE time dedicated to QTVI caseload	Specialist Area/Phase
ANON	0.5	Secondary
ANON	1.0	Primary and Early Years
ANON	1.0	Multi-Sensory Impaired
ANON	1.0	Multiple Disability and VI
ANON	1.0	Secondary and Year 6-7 Transition
Vacant post	0.6	This post is yet to be filled since JP left in Aug 2017

As part of succession planning an MDVI teacher was appointed to support the children formerly supported by ANON. The overlap between ANON starting and ANON retiring was invaluable to the handing over of the caseload. An additional QTVI relative to 2016 was prioritised ahead of replacing 1.6FTE TAs.

## SenCom VIS main priorities relative to the SenCom strategic strands

Over the past year our priorities have centred on SenCom's strategic strands:

### 1. Family and person centred

There has been an improvement to the number of children attending the playgroups over the past year (from 13 to 16 in total across the 3 groups by July 2017). Links with NHS staff have led to visits from health professionals from Optometry, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, and an Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO).

Progress in the playgroups is measured using the Developmental Journal and activities are delivered to support every child's attainment targets developed from this (see ITMAD)

After school club has been regularly attended on Tuesdays by an average of 5 children each week. In the build-up to SenCom Champions Day Upbeat Drumming delivered a series of workshops during after school club that culminated in a performance by the children on Champions Day.

This has led to one home schooled pupil to consider returning to school. It was a great point of pride for the families of those children on the day. Capturing further evidence of family engagement would have been possible through the SenCom Facebook page.

However, this is yet to be set up and gathering data by other means (e.g. postal questionnaires) were likely to yield unreliable data.

### 2. Early intervention

The invitation of health professionals to attend the playgroups has led to greater understanding from families of the fact that we as education professionals work in a complementary manner to health and social



care professionals.

A strong professional link has been established with the Lead Clinician for Low Vision Service Wales, who we would now consider to be a critical friend to the service. Rebecca is also leading the SPECS pilot, providing sight tests to children and young people in special schools at their school. In working closely with ANON and understanding each other's part in supporting children, we have been able to deliver educational advice to schools following their diagnosis of vision impairment and regarding wearing their glasses.

In order to support Tier 1 children who do not score highly on the NatSIP eligibility criteria (resulting in an annual monitoring visit from the service, at best) and their schools, SenCom VIS are working with a Lead Orthoptist from Aneurin Bevan Health Board. We will be delivering training in partnership to school staff about the sort of vision impairments that affect Tier 1 children.

This should provide school staff with a greater understanding of barriers to access experienced by these children and in turn ensure that they are supported by all those involved in their education around them.

### **3. Removing barriers to learning**

The main focus in this area has been in developing an outcomes-focussed way of working with Tier 1 children. Traditionally they have been visited by the service and a monitoring report was written by a QTVI following classroom observations and conversations with the child and school staff. In the past year we have trialled various outcomes focussed ways of working.

The most effective method to have been trialled is the Easy Easier Activity.

Using this method pupils are given a number of statement cards and asked to say whether they find this 'easy' or if they would like to find it 'easier'. This truly captures pupil voice and as all of the statements relate to the Additional Core Curriculum NatSIP Learner Outcomes Framework, we can be certain that we are focussing on the VI specific aspects of their learning.

After school drop-ins were trialled but met with limited success. Therefore, rather than persevering with these we are trialling several other ways of supporting targeted schools and raising their awareness.

VI Awareness sessions have been delivered to University of South Wales Inclusive Practice in the Early Years and Inclusive Education students on two occasions in 2016-2017.

The USW students complete a placement in a variety of educational settings and have experience of working with children who have ALN/SEN. It is felt that VI awareness for these students will assist them in supporting children with VI with whom they may work with in the future. Similarly, their knowledge of SenCom VIS' work will assist with signposting to our service.

#### **Raising expectation and achievement**

In order to benchmark our service relative to other services in Wales we have chosen to adopt the NatSIP eligibility criteria in order to tier support to children and young people with VI across the 5 County Borough Councils. Two SenCom VIS QTVIs attended a national moderation event in the past year.

SenCom VIS QTVIs have also conducted a moderation exercise and will continue to moderate scoring together termly.

QTVIs are directing TAs' work with the approval of the Head of Service. Interventions with clear review dates and focussed outcomes, is becoming the usual way of working with most children supported by the service (see ITMAD 2). Schools are taking time to adjust to the fact that our recommendations and strategies are delivered in partnership with or solely by the school.

Whereas previously, pupils may have been withdrawn from lessons for sessions delivered by visiting SenCom VIS staff then returned to lessons after sessions. However, it is felt that schools had very little understanding of our work or why we do what we do.

The Easy Easier activity is helpful to schools keen to capture pupil voice. Some schools have welcomed its use as they feel it feeds nicely into their IDPs. Schools that are still using IEPs have not yet recognised the same value in the activity. Pupil VI Profiles are being created for every pupil as their case is revisited, as part of a rolling programme.

VI Profiles include the pupil name, school, and year, nature of sensory impairment and strategies and recommendations on one page.

These were developed following feedback from school ALNCOs stating that these were the only parts of our reports that they found useful and shared with staff.

#### **4. Delivering improvements in partnership**

Networking opportunities at the Wales Eye Care, VIEW and Vision 2020 conferences have led to improved links with other stakeholders. The Head of SenCom's VI Service is now a member of the Low Vision Service Wales Advisory Group meetings, held at the Wales Council for the Blind (WCB). This is the only representation from education in this group and the meeting is attended by a variety of people from health, social care and third sector VI organisations.

Over the past year the Head of SenCom's VI Service has been appointed Chairperson of the Welsh Association of Vision Impairment Educators (WAVIE), after having formerly held the position of Vice Chairperson. The advantage of holding this position is that SenCom's VI Service are seen to demonstrate good practice as a VI service and uphold the reputation of the service as providing excellent support.

A tactile graphics event was held at SenCom's VI Service in partnership with Cardiff VI Service. The event was delivered by staff from both services and the Managing Director of Pia (a local company who produce modified print and braille materials and exam papers). Subsequently our relationship with Pia has strengthened and discussions about further collaborative work opportunities have taken place.

SenCom's VI Service staff have been involved in the initial development of online national tests with Sian Richards from Alpha Consultancy. ANON will share their development to this point with WAVIE group practitioners in September. It is very positive to be so actively involved in promoting access and inclusion with a development at such an early stage.

The Head of SenCom's VI Service's involvement with WAVIE and WCB led to the opportunity for her to be invited to present at the Wales Eye Care Conference in September 2017. This was a joint presentation with the Service Delivery Manager, Children and Young People, Guide Dogs Cymru on the role of a QTVI and Habilitation Specialist in the education of children and young people with VI. The event was attended by approximately 200 delegates from education, health, social services and third sector organisations.

We have increased our partnership with UCAN Productions in the past year. During school holiday clubs we have made use of workshops delivered to children and young people with VI from our region. These workshops are run by young people who have vision impairment themselves and use drama and performing arts to develop performances with the children throughout the week.

School holiday clubs led by SenCom's VI Service's habilitation specialist have been delivered in partnership with Disability Sports Wales Torfaen. Activities have therefore included opportunities to consider sports in a national sense (e.g. Goalball team opportunities).

We have very strong links with the Eye Care Liaison Officers (ECLOs) from both Cardiff and Gwent. Our first name terms relationship means that we have often picked up the phone to each other and considered ways to jointly support families who have recently received a diagnosis of vision impairment.

#### **5. Futureproofing and sustainability**

In 2015 there were 6 braille users across the 5 CBCs. Within the next 3 years this is set to increase to 13. For this reason, there has been an investment in a QTVI to complete the Braille and Literacy RNIB course. Following completion of this course she has started to develop a programme of support to key GVIS staff

who will be delivering braille teaching in the coming months and may lack confidence or need their knowledge refreshed.

Another QTVI has developed the use of the Learning Media Assessment tool to use with under 5s, to help assess whether they are likely to be a print or tactile learner.

An investment in various pieces of assistive technology has been necessary over the past year. SuperNova screen mirroring and magnification software has been purchased for laptops used by pupils with low vision (see ITMAD 3). A BrailleNote Touch has been purchased for a blind pupil who is starting her GCSEs this year.

The advantage over a BrailleNote Apex is the fact that she will be able to read and write GCSE Maths on the touch screen. Also, the touch screen on the device allows improved access to her work by those around her without VI, promoting inclusion. 3 Prodigy Connect 12s (tablet with access for VI design features) have also been purchased for pupils with low vision. This device supports independent reading and writing for these pupils and distance viewing using the detachable camera. It is likely that more pupils would benefit from a Prodigy Connect 12 in future and if so, we would need to purchase more of these.

Some schools have felt that there are security issues for them with the connection of SuperNova from a SenCom VIS laptop to the teachers. Children in the schools affected by this barrier have not been able to access the whiteboard screen mirroring aspect of this software, limiting their use of the laptop in class.

The Prodigy Connect 12 does not rely on access to school networks and as it is the size of a tablet device it may be more socially appealing to pupils.

### Interventions That Made a Difference

SenCom VIS Little Stars Complex Needs Opportunities Group@ Brecon House NC Year: Various Need: Various
<b>A: Please briefly describe an intervention which has made a positive difference to a child or young person.</b> (Action/Outcome) Early Intervention – Developing: - listening skills, visual skills, the use of language, creativity, involvement in activities, exploration experiences
<b>B: How do you know the intervention was effective?</b> (Evidence) Progress made. Targets met. Parental feedback.
<b>C: What factors do you think contributed to success?</b> (Positive Indicators) Regular attendance. Parental support, involvement, and interaction throughout sessions.
<b>D: If relevant, please describe how others helped you to achieve this success (including admin support).</b> The dedication and reliability of the staff team working alongside me in the group.

Local Authority: Caerphilly Child (initials):X NC Year: 3 Need: Albinism
<b>A: Please briefly describe an intervention which has made a positive difference to a child or young person.</b> (Action/Outcome) An intervention programme was introduced at the end of March. The target was to improve the CYP's handwriting, which was a concern that had emanated from both the schoolteacher and parent. It soon became apparent that the equipment that had been provided to school was not being used effectively and that some of the difficulties being experienced by the CYP was as a result of poor organisational skills. Work on these issues has begun and will continue in September.
<b>B: How do you know the intervention was effective?</b> (Evidence) A review of the CYP's progress with the SENCO, teacher and parent revealed that his handwriting has improved dramatically in his class work and both school and parent have been delighted with the results.

<p><b>C: What factors do you think contributed to success?</b> (Positive Indicators) Joint working with the school was effective; The CYP was given adequate time at the beginning of each morning to complete exercises provided by GVIS to practise letter formation The CYP was provided with two sessions per week in order to practise other aspects of handwriting (spacing, grammar, punctuation) and was encouraged to check his finished work against a (modified) checklist provided. Regular feedback was given to the class teacher. A quiet place to work in the school was always available.</p>
<p><b>D: If relevant, please describe how others helped you to achieve this success (including admin support).</b> Alison Saunders (Teacher of VI) has supported the intervention by arranging meetings with school staff and parent, setting up equipment and training.</p>

## Head of SenCom VI Service

<p>Local Authority: Caerphilly      Child (initials): X</p> <p>NC Year: 3      Need: Accessing the curriculum (Nystagmus, Albinism, Photophobia)</p>
<p><b>A: Please describe briefly, an intervention which has made a positive difference to a child or young person.</b> (Action/Outcome) <i>With visually impaired students it is always a challenge to create a positive learning environment particularly when so much work is focussed on class whiteboards. Sitting at the front sometimes exposes our students and undermines their confidence. Training and experience with new updated Supernova software have enabled this particular student to connect to and magnify the teacher's interactive whiteboard on their own laptop. The student can now customize the view to meet their own magnification and colour scheme need. The split screen feature enables them to make notes at the same time as monitoring what's happening on the whiteboard.</i></p>
<p><b>B: How do you know the intervention was effective?</b> (Evidence) <i>When my student said during the first lesson with this new facility: "I can see the board on my laptop, look I can see everything!" With good keyboarding/computer skills this student can now take notes and photographs independently from the whiteboard during the lessons. This allows them to understand which information is included and how it is organised, which is not available with the assistance of a scribe/reader. During a recent review meeting the class teacher said that this student was excellent with technology and this new system had made a huge difference to their participation during lessons. They were now keen to engage with the lessons and showed reduced frustration and fatigue.</i></p>
<p><b>C: What factors do you think contributed to success?</b> (Positive Indicators) <i>Previous touch-typing and ICT lessons ensuring skills in place to make best use of the new software. Training and practice exercises both during the lesson and individually to ensure levels of confidence and independent learning were raised.</i></p>
<p><b>D: If relevant, please describe how others helped you to achieve this success (including admin support).</b> <i>Supportive parents who encouraged and participated with the initial homework exercises. Very understanding class teacher prepared to try new technology. Excellent ICT support from Caerphilly who added additional sharing software to their network.</i></p>

## Hearing Impaired Service Annual Report September 2016 - September 2017

### Background

The Hearing Impaired (HI) Service currently has 1196 children and young people on caseload. The vast majority of children are referred to the service by the local Health board. However, concerns can be raised by families, schools and settings and other professionals.

Caseload numbers have continued to increase rapidly over past years. The service welcomes referrals of

children and young people from birth to the age of nineteen if they are attending a state funded school setting within one of the five local authorities. As a result of Newborn Hearing Screening babies may be diagnosed with a hearing loss from birth.

These children often require a high level of intensive support in their early years to establish consistent hearing aid use and to support the family with developing early communication skills immediately following the diagnosis.

This is one of the reasons why the service has focused on establishing the provision of a specialist pre-school group which is now held on a weekly basis at Brecon House Cwmbran, during school term time.

## Staffing

Table 1: Total gross caseload numbers for HI Service 2016 – 2017

	Blaenau Gwent	Caerphilly	Monmouthshire	Newport	Torfaen	Total
0-3 years	4	28	5	16	19	72
Foundation Phase	30	101	62	82	54	329
KS2	42	119	69	112	58	400
KS3	16	62	23	45	27	173
KS4	13	26	8	19	22	88
Post 16	0	3	6	5	3	17
Special School	9	25	4	11	8	57
Out of County	13	5	16	23	3	60
TOTAL	127	369	193	313	194	1196

Table 2: Total gross caseload numbers for HI Service 2015 –2016

	Blaenau Gwent	Caerphilly	Monmouthshire	Newport	Torfaen	Total
0-3 years	5	25	4	16	23	73
Foundation Phase	26	93	70	69	50	308
KS2	53	152	61	131	59	456
KS3	17	46	18	32	41	154
KS4	12	30	10	18	31	101
Post 16	7	20	5	26	5	63
Special School	8	28	4	12	8	60
Out of County	9	4	13	26	31	55
TOTAL	137	398	185	330	220	1270

Table 3: Total gross caseload numbers for HI Service 2014 –2015

	Blaenau Gwent	Caerphilly	Monmouthshire	Newport	Torfaen	Total
0-3 years	5	31	10	22	11	79
Foundation Phase	25	119	67	98	46	355
KS2	41	125	60	102	61	389
KS3	19	47	17	35	37	155
KS4	12	25	8	22	13	80
Post 16	0	7	7	17	6	37
Special School	14	24	2	8	7	55

Out of County	12	5	14	21	4	56
TOTAL	128	383	185	325	185	1206

FTE	2015/2016	2016/2017
Administration officer	1	1
Specialist Higher Level Teaching Assistants	6	6
Qualified Teacher of the Deaf	4	4
Advisory Teacher of the Deaf	1.5 (1 vacant post. A challenge to recruit or to source supply cover due to specialist role)	2.5 (Successfully recruited starting in September 2017)

Staffing levels have remained static over the years despite the increasing caseload. This has presented challenges and the service is currently introducing a new way of working with a drive towards building capacity within schools and settings, supporting them to meet the needs of the children and young people on caseload. Developing and delivering a comprehensive training package has been a key feature in this.

2016-2017 was a particularly challenging year as the service were carrying a vacant Advisory Teacher (Key Stage 3, 4 & 5) post for the academic year. Despite a concerted effort to source supply cover, attempts were unsuccessful. A recruitment process has since been carried out with a new Advisory Teacher taking up post in September 2017.

Additionally, the service was affected by a significant level of long-term absence with four staff absent for over six months which significantly compromised service delivery. Due to the specialist nature of the role, sourcing appropriately trained supply staff was not possible despite approaching other specialist services across Wales and into England.

The provision of the specialist pre-school group has been significant in enabling the service to continue to address the needs of the early year's caseload in a very different way. Previously following the diagnosis of a hearing impairment at Newborn Hearing Screen a family would be allocated a Teacher of the Deaf or Specialist Higher Level Teaching Assistant.

Visits to the family home would be arranged; the frequency of these visits would vary depending on the individual need at the time. Families are now often seen just at the pre-school group by HIS staff, which is more efficient but many parents have commented on the benefits of the provision with opportunities for families to engage in a support network and for the children to be part of a deaf peer group on a weekly basis.

## HI Service main priorities relative to the SenCom strategic standards

### 1. Family and Person Centred

Following a Christmas themed Open Morning for families of pre-schoolers in the December of 2015 the provision has continued to thrive with the numbers of families steadily increasing. Children attend with grandparents, parents or guardians and other extended family members.

Initial contact with the family is made by the Head of Service (who has the responsibility for children in their early years) within 24 hours of the diagnosis of a hearing impairment. An updated flyer is given to families providing information about the pre-school provision.

To date, thirty-nine pre-school flyers have been issued to families. Twenty-six of those have attended over the past academic year. Initially a regular group of about three families attended. The average attendance per week is now between twelve to fourteen families.

An Audiologist has attended on a termly basis to carry out ear mould impressions for children. This has

helped families who can often find it difficult to ensure that the moulds are fitting well despite the child's rapid growth. The requirement for new moulds is essential to maintaining consistent hearing aid use. The pre-school group has also proved an invaluable setting for Educational Psychologists to observe the children when carrying out an assessment.

The service aims to ensure that the provision is responsive to the need of the families who attend. Oral feedback is currently the main source of feedback particularly during the multi- agency Early Years Hearing Meetings that families attend on a six-monthly basis.

A pre-school WhatsApp group has also been established and is used frequently by the families who maintain contact with service staff and other families between sessions. This has been of particular benefit during school holidays as the group is currently term time only and has allowed the network of support and contact to be maintained throughout the year, despite this. **(See ITMAD 1)**

## **2. Early Intervention**

Moving forward with the new way of working and organising pilot school meetings with ALNCOs or Head teachers was significantly impacted by the long-term staff absence and the vacant Advisory Teacher post. Despite this, thirty schools from across the five local authorities were allocated as pilot schools following meetings.

During these meetings expectations were discussed with the aim of ensuring a clear understanding of what was expected from schools when addressing the needs of the pupils allocated as Tier 1. Response from schools was varied, but with the majority receiving the new way of working positively. There has been some excellent communication established with some schools, with less contact from others unless the HI service initiated that.

With significant staff absence it was difficult to ensure that regular communication was maintained, particularly if there was a need to contact schools to request termly updates for pupils on caseload.

However, despite the challenges, links with ALNCOs in many schools have significantly improved through their attendance at the in- house Deaf Awareness training at Brecon House, Cwmbran.

This was particularly apparent with the vacant Advisory Teacher post as ALNCOs were initiating contact with the Head of Service following attendance at the training as they were seeking further advice in order to address recommendations and advice. Significant benefits were observed in settings as a direct result of their attendance.

## **3. Removing Barriers to Learning**

The main focus in this area has been in raising awareness of hearing impairment and the impact that it can have on a child or young person's ability to access the curriculum.

Historically, the Hearing-Impaired Service have provided training in schools across the five local authorities. The demands of this approach were becoming increasingly difficult with rising caseload. As a result, in-house Deaf Awareness training was launched in September 2016 and has been a huge success, both in the numbers that have attended but also the impact that has been observed in many schools as a result.

A total of 140 staff attended from Primary and Secondary settings **(See ITMAD 2)**.

The aim is that staff who attend will return to their settings and share what they have learnt with their colleagues. The challenge is that in order to ensure that this is achieved it is important that ALNCOs and other senior staff attend as they are more likely to have a responsibility for this within their settings.

As a result, this coming academic year there will be a focus on attending ALNCO forums across the five local authorities with the aim of sharing the new way of working with a larger audience of and to stress the importance of them attending the Deaf Awareness training themselves.

Some children and young people who would have been previously monitored on a twice-yearly basis (Tier

- 1) were allocated as Tier 2 as a direct consequence of the pilot school meetings with ALNCOs. This demonstrated that working in this way ensured that intervention provided was dynamic and responsive to need.
- 2) These meetings provided the opportunity for ALNCOs to discuss concerns regarding pupils with particular triggers in mind. These triggers included pupil's progress, wellbeing, and their ability to access the curriculum. ALNCOs are expected to consider these triggers and alert the service to any concerns following these meetings.

For this reason, some pupils were allocated termly blocks of intervention with specific outcomes in mind. Intervention provided was targeted and timely and may have been related to the individual pupil, equipment, the setting, or training for staff. Termly reviews inform whether outcomes are achieved. If outcomes were achieved, intervention may end but would be reviewed to ensure that the desired outcome was maintained. **(See ITMAD 3)**

In order to further assist in removing barriers to learning the respective Heads of Service for the Visually Impaired Service and the Hearing-Impaired Service delivered joint training to university students in their final year of training at the Newport campus of the University of South Wales. Training was provided on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2017 to students who intended to

work in education. Positive feedback received was provided via Survey Monkey and a further request for training has been made by the course leader and has been provisionally booked for the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018.

#### **4. Raising Expectation and Achievement**

The Hearing-Impaired Service use the NATSIP Eligibility Framework to facilitate benchmarking across local authority Sensory Services. It helps guide decision making when allocating support for individuals or tiering children and young people with a hearing impairment. The Head of Service attended a national moderation event which provided an opportunity to compare its use across Wales.

Another national moderation event is planned for early 2018 which another team member will attend. Information will be cascaded to the Teachers of the Deaf in the team. Training will be provided to enable them to also carry out the Eligibility Framework on an annual basis or in the event of a change in situation for a child or young person.

There will be ongoing formal opportunities to moderate internally within the service. Scores will be recorded on the service database alongside other pupil specific information and will be used to inform changes of tier and intervention.

#### **5. Delivering Improvements in Partnerships**

Links with the Hearing-Impaired Resource Bases have improved significantly in the past year. The Hearing-Impaired Resource Base Review completed by the Head of Sensory and Communication Support Service, helped to strengthen these links.

It has created further opportunities to share expertise, knowledge and to access joint training. Staff from the Hearing-Impaired Resource Bases were invited to an Audiology training day organised by the service. With rapid developments in audiological equipment and technology it is essential that all staff remain up to date and current.

Training was well attended with some staff from all three Resource Bases attending. Evaluations were completed following the training and feedback was positive with many interested in further training opportunities in the future.

It was also observed that less visits to the Resource Bases were required to troubleshoot issues with the pupil's equipment as staff had an increased confidence in resolving many issues themselves, without the requirement to contact the service as a matter of course.

The Head of Service supported Nant Celyn Resource Base staff in providing Deaf Awareness training to



the whole school. This training event was planned and delivered collaboratively and was well received by mainstream school staff with many individuals commenting on the impact that it would have on their lesson deliveries in the future.

Termly meetings have been key to improving links with staff in the Resource Bases. Agenda items have focused on discussing individual pupils, assessment procedures and managing the needs of Tier 1 pupils on caseload who are in mainstream.

In Cwmbran High we have trialled a system where responsibility of support for mainstream pupils with hearing impairment would be with the host school. This has been reviewed on a regular basis. Close liaison between the Heads of Service in both settings has been key to the early success of this.

More recently the Review of the Hearing-Impaired Resource Bases has been shared and future meetings will focus on how we can work together to support the implementation of the recommendations made. The aim is to establish a clear, defined relationship between the HI Resource Bases and the Sensory and Communication Support Service.

In addition, Nant Celyn have continued to host the Communication Meetings. The Head of Service frequently communicates with the Inclusion Manager at Nant Celyn to share ideas and experiences. Staff from the Bases now regularly attend the Gwent Children's Hearing Service Working groups on a termly basis held at Brecon House, Cwmbran. These are excellent opportunities to improve links with other professionals from Health including Audiology, Ear Nose and Throat Consultants and the Cochlear Implant Team, Social Services and the third sector voluntary agencies.

### Interventions That Made a Difference

<b>INTERVENTIONS THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE (SEPTEMBER 2016 – JULY 2017)</b>	
Date: 25.06.17	
Local Authority: <b>Torfaen</b>	Child <b>SG</b>
NC Year: <b>8</b>	Need: <b>Multiple Needs, including Visual and Hearing Impairment</b>
<b>A: Please describe briefly an intervention which has made a positive difference to a child or young person.</b> (Action/Outcome)	
When the HIS first started going in regularly to see SG, she was not wearing her hearing aids. She had not worn them for a long time. Through the course of the next few visits, SG began wearing her hearing aids again. When her moulds became too small, it was arranged for SG to come to our base, which was wheelchair friendly and close to the school. Mould impressions were made by the audiologist, who was on site that morning. It was arranged that SG would have more up to date hearing aids at this appointment, which the HIS then fitted, ensuring there was an FM setting, with SG's new moulds.	
<b>B: How do you know the intervention was effective?</b> (Evidence)	
The difference in SG's behaviour was startling, it was felt, by all who know her. She became really animated about having her hearing aids in, with the correctly fitted moulds. When the batteries ran out, or she did not have them in, SG would ask for them to be put in with body sign. SG loves to listen to music, which was now accessible through the audio leads we provided first, then later on an FM system which school staff also wore. SG is interactive, spontaneous with body signs and is happy in herself.	
<b>C: What factors do you think contributed to success?</b> (Positive Indicators)	
The beginning of the success was where SG's audiogram was explained to her Key Worker, showing that hearing aids would make a difference to SG. From then on, her Key Worker put them in every day at school. When problems arose, particularly with the moulds becoming too small, the Key Worker wanted us to help. Problems with transport was solved by having SG come to us at the base, which was really successful. Being able to liaise closely with school and with the audiologist, meant SG's needs were met. SG's key worker has been to our Deaf Awareness Training in house. The HIS have been open about SG's listening needs in the Multi Agency meetings and the V I team have also been actively involved, asking if an FM could be provided when the Key Worker asked about a problem with the audio leads.	

**D: If relevant, please describe how others helped you to achieve this success (including admin support).**

See above

**INTERVENTIONS THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE  
(SEPTEMBER 2016 – JULY 2017)**

Date: 11.07.17

School: Various      Local Authority: Across 5 authorities

Child (initials): Primary and Secondary Pupils

NC Year:              Need:

**A: Please describe briefly an intervention which has made a positive difference to a child or young person.** (Action/Outcome)

Historically, the Hearing-Impaired Service has delivered Deaf Awareness Training in schools across the five authorities. In Primary schools, this would normally be delivered during the staff meeting after school hours. Sometimes this would be attended by the whole school or, just class teachers, or TA's only. Our approach in Secondary schools was very different as it was challenging to meet relevant staff either on a 1-1 basis, year group, or whole school. Training was either delivered on INSET days or start/end of school day. Due to the ever-increasing demand from schools for staff training, it became increasingly challenging to meet that demand.

In September 2016, our in-house Deaf Awareness Training was launched, initially as a trial to invite key staff from Primary and Secondary schools to attend a 2-hour introductory training held at Brecon House. A short programme of Deaf Awareness Training was planned for the Autumn Term 2016. Specific PowerPoint presentations were designed separately for Primary and Comprehensive staff. The co-ordination and delivery of the training package involved the whole HI team to ensure that the sessions were well supported and facilitated.

Due to the huge success of the training programme in the Autumn Term 2016, we were able to extend this training into the Spring and Summer Terms 2017, and as we progressed we evaluated and modified the presentation regularly to meet the candidate's needs.

Since the launch of the in-house Deaf Awareness Training, we have delivered:

17 half day training sessions: (7 for Comprehensive, 10 for Primary)

Total No of candidates attending: 140 (48 Comprehensive staff, 92 Primary staff)

**C: What factors do you think contributed to success?** (Positive Indicators)

Comments from candidates recorded on the evaluation sheets collected at the end of the training session reflect the success of the training. A few selected examples below but just impossible to include all the amazing responses that we have received.

"The presentation covered everything I needed to know about hearing aids...."

"Very good resources used and detailed information. Practical information given was really useful".

"Very informative on all areas of education.... excellent presentation".

"Excellent, covered a good range including hearing aid use which I did not have prior knowledge of".

"Great range of resources to make you really think about life for a HI child".

"Fantastic presentation, very informative and reassuring to know there is a lot of support for schools and children".

**D: If relevant, please describe how others helped you to achieve this success (including admin support).**

As part of my Performance Management targets, I created an in-house Deaf Awareness Training package and designed the PowerPoint presentation. A working group was created to invite other members of the team to share ideas and contribute to the planning of the Deaf Awareness Training. Teachers of the Deaf volunteered to share the delivery of training and HLTA's volunteered to support the training, particularly with supporting the practical activities. Our Admin Officer provided on-going support with emailing schools with invitations, bookings, processing payments for Audiology Kits, emailing attendance certificates, meet & greet, registrations, refreshments, plus all the follow-up work entailed. The consistent support and dedication from the team has contributed to the success of the in-house training, whilst juggling the demands of their very hectic timetables. It is necessary for this support to continue so that the training can be extended into the next academic year.

3.

**INTERVENTIONS THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE  
(SEPTEMBER 2016 - JULY 2017)**

Date: 21/7/17

Local Authority: Newport

Child (initials): X NC Year: 4 Need: Independent hearing aid use,  
EAL communication support and transition to a new school.

**A: Please briefly describe an intervention which has made a positive difference to a child or young person. (Action/Outcome)**

In September I began supporting X in Newport Primary school. She was learning basic vocabulary and rarely vocalised. As a year 4 pupil she was joining the nursery class for most lessons as her vocabulary was that of a pre-schooler requiring sensory play experiences.

She was unable to re-fit her hearing aids independently and required adult support to maintain them. Earlier this year X moved to a different Newport primary and receives 1:1 support.

Our sessions have focussed on her independence, communication, and support through her transition.

**B: How do you know the intervention was effective? (Evidence)**

ZH has made significant progress this academic year. She is maintaining her hearing aids and FM system independently. She changes her own batteries, cleans her equipment, and refits her hearing aids independently. Most importantly she has settled in very well in her new school, made lots of friends and is happy. She works alongside her Year 4 peers and enjoys practical activities along with other interventions.

Her communication has improved greatly - ZH vocabulary has grown and she is speaking in short sentences using varied language. As her confidence grows, she is using her home language with friends in school as well as English. She is now expressing her feelings

**C: What factors do you think contributed to success? (Positive Indicators)**

H.I.S support through the school transition has provided continuity for ZH. Her 1:1 has joined all sessions and this communication and H.I training/strategies have been vital in ZH successful transition. I regularly liaise with Class Teacher and/or SENCO regarding ZH's needs and progress and reinforce new vocabulary or topics covered in class.

**D: If relevant, please describe how others helped you to achieve this success (including admin support).**

ZH has received excellent support from both schools to support her transition and staff at Maindee attended Deaf Awareness Training recently.

Her 1:1 joining every H.I session has had a positive impact.

**Written by Head of Hearing-Impaired Service**

**Key Areas of SenCom Activity for 2017/18**

A significant proportion of our time has been taken up with the planning, preparation and gaining approval

for the service to have one host authority over the last year. With the granting of political approval, the work with our HR and IT partners has stepped up a gear to ensure we will be ready to transfer Caerphilly staff on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018.

Over the last twelve months the service has developed a new delivery model. This looks to build confidence and capacity within the mainstream and special school workforce through greater training opportunities to manage low level of need across hearing, vision, multisensory and communication impairments.

The model focuses the team's specialist support into episodes of intervention.

The model has been piloted and indications are that it will help to build confidence in schools, but we will continue to work on its refinement over the coming year in partnership with schools.

The Service faces increasing pressures to maintain and develop the interventions it offers children, young people, and schools in the South East Wales Consortium (SEWC).

On average a doubling in demand through rising caseload across the teams

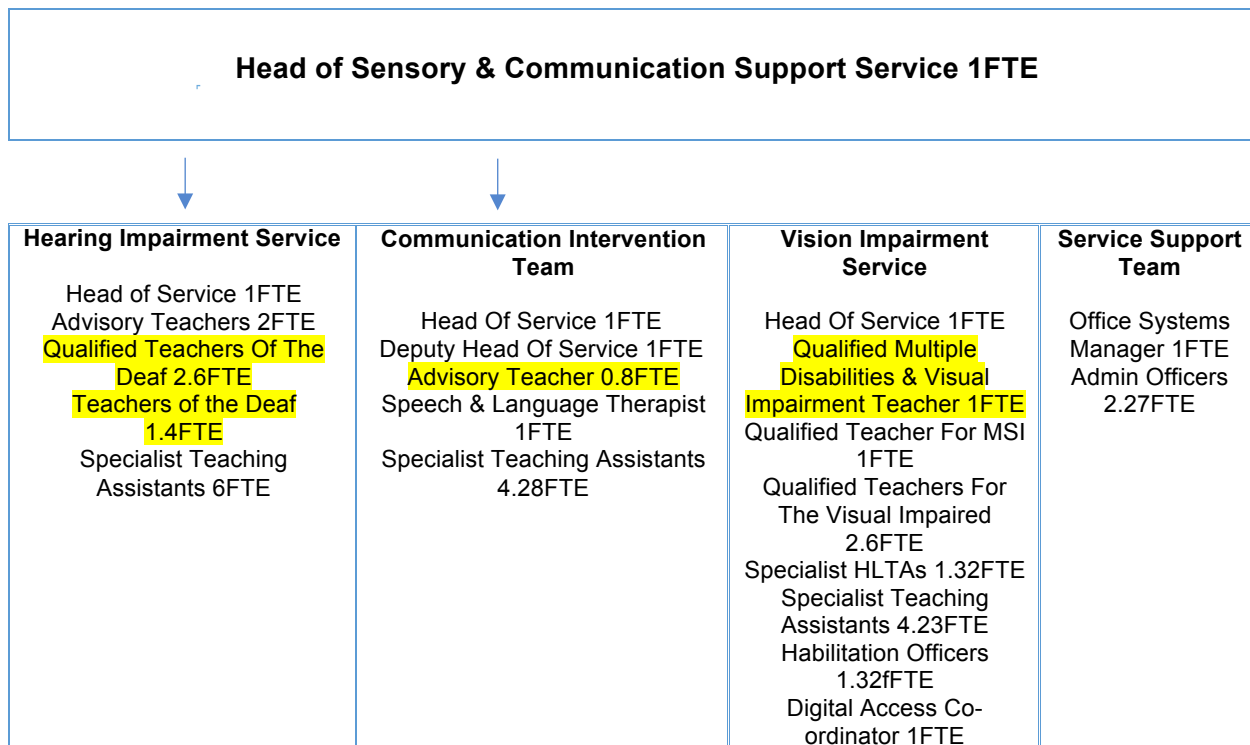
- The Vision Impairment Team has seen its overall caseload increase by 46.6% from 250 in 2014/15 to 366 in 2016/17.
- The Hearing Impairment Team have seen a jump of 56% from 767 in 2014 to 1196 in 2017.
- For the Communication Intervention Team (ComIT) demand for termly intervention from each local authority is increasing significantly and discussion with each authority lead professional with regard to prioritisation of need is now the norm.
- Together with caseload numbers increasing, the complexity of the children and young people the service provides for has increased overtime.
- The service currently offers 0-19 support if young people remain in maintained settings. Our existing Service Level Agreement has no provision for post 16 intervention within Coleg Gwent. This support is increasingly being requested and the impact the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Bill on specialist services is unclear and with ComIT looking to extend its remit in the 0-3 age group in-line with the national direction, these could add further pressure to the system.

The priority for us over the next year is to work with our SEWC partners to develop a resourcing plan that will enable the service to manage and further develop the quality services we offer.

## **Head of Sensory and Communication Support Service December 2017**

**Appendix 6.**

**Sensory & Communication Support Service  
Structure June 2019**



**Commentary - since September 2015:**

1. Two qualified teachers of the deaf (QTODS) left the service in December 2018 to either retire or take up a new promoted post in another Local Authority. These posts have been replaced by a) a job share between a QTOD (0.6FTE) and a TOD (0.4FTE) in training and b) a TOD (1FTE) in training. No QTODS applied for the posts.
2. An Advisory Teacher who had been seconded to the ComIT from Caerphilly CBC became a permanent member of the regional service in June 2018 and now operates across all five Local Authorities.
3. Within the VIS service there has been reconfiguration as post holders have retired. In 2016 with the retirement of two specialist teaching assistants, funding was recycled to appoint a Qualified Multiple Disabilities & Visual Impairment Teacher 1FTE. 1 QTVI applied for this post.
4. A senior QTVI (0.6FTE) was replaced in 2017 following their retirement by a 0.6FTE QTVI but not with TLR responsibility as previous post holder. 1 QTVI applied for this post.
5. Since September 2015, the establishment figure has seen a net decrease of 0.8FTE across the service.



## Service Improvement Plan Summary & Working Document (draft only/unpublished - 2018-19)

### The Vision and Aims of the Sensory & Communication Support Service

*To be an excellent, family focused 0-25 specialist Additional Learning Needs service which transforms the lives of children and their families by building capacity in Welsh Early Years, schools and colleges, empowering and inspiring young people to follow their passions and dreams.*

The sensory & communication support service (SenCom) is commissioned by the South East Wales Consortium to support the five Local Authority Schools ALN improvement programme to raise the attainment and positive outcomes of pupils with additional learning needs.

SenCom will be delivered between 2016-2021 within a coherent framework of **six key strategic standards:**

7. **Family & Person Centred;** A family led organisation which uses co-production and participation as a central tool to engage with families.
8. **Early Intervention:** A respected and highly regarded 0-25 one stop service for Children & Young Peoples with Additional Learning Needs & Disability that is Person Centred and Outcome Focussed.
9. **Removing Barriers to Learning;** Transforming Children & Young Peoples opportunities by becoming a national leader in innovative practice.
10. **Raising Expectations & Achievement;** Enable and empower, through meaningful participation, children and young people to make choices about how they will be supported to access quality first teaching and learning experiences. We will achieve this by building capacity in schools and early year's settings, instilling a culture of inclusive learning and development.
11. **Delivering Improvements in Partnership;** Develop an integrated, cohesive trans-disciplinary SenCom which will work alongside existing specialist, targeted and universal services to ensure families receive support from all stakeholders in a coherent, accessible, and person-centred way.
12. **Future Proofing and Sustainability;** Develop a commissioned service for ALN & Disability. This service will provide high quality, specialist unique value for money services, which would be available to the wider maintained sector of Welsh local authorities. It will be fully costed, transparent in its service and performance.

The key strategic themes; will appear as the 'golden thread' across all aspects of the services planning, delivery, review, and evaluation. This golden thread will inform and enhance the

planning of individual staff's performance reviews, discrete service targets and the overarching Service Improvement Plan (SIP).

Each of the strategic strands for the 2017/18 SIP take as their focus 'how do we know how good we are as a service?' The effectiveness of the activities in achieving these strands will be regularly evaluated throughout the year using the Estyn Common Inspection Framework Judgements:

**Excellent**

Very strong, sustained performance and practice.

**Good**

Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement.

**Adequate and needs improvement**

Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement.

**Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement**

Important weaknesses outweigh strengths.

SenCom Strategic Strand Focus for 2017/18	Planned Outcomes	Specific Actions	Evaluation Evidence & Effectiveness Judgement
<b>Family &amp; Person Centred</b>  What can we do to become a family led and person-centred organisation?	To establish a family co-production group that is at the heart of service development.	1. Run an open event for families that supports recruitment to co-production group.  2. Establish online Mechanism for families to have a voice in service strategy development.	
	For all aspect of the service to demonstrate Person Centred Principles in the written information they provide for families.	1. All SenCom Staff to undertake training on Person Centred Principles. 2. SLT to develop guidance on reporting formats. 3. SLT and TLR posts to carry out report scrutiny to evaluate quality of practice.	
<b>Early Intervention</b>  What is initial contact with our service like for stakeholders? How can we add to this?	Develop a referral and caseload management process across the service.	1. User specification requirements worked up across the three teams.  2. Service undertakes a tendering process.  3. Upload of software and training phase.	
<b>Removing Barriers to Learning</b>  How confident do our partners feel about supporting Tier 1 pupils? What can we do to improve that confidence?	The production of a SenCom Training Offer for the region including new ALNCO/PGCE and NQT cohorts.	1. SLT review and co-ordination of individual team training plans for 2017/18.  2. Partnership links with local HE and EAS training managers further developed.  3. Training Offer produced for January to July 2018	

	To Carry-out a Service wide consultation exercise with a wide range of stakeholders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To identify/develop perception measures service wants to trial.</li> <li>2. Sampling and perception measures trialled and developed during two-week windows in November and June.</li> </ol>	
<b>Raising Expectation &amp; Achievement</b>  How well do children on our caseload make progress and develop as individuals?	To have a fully developed system that captures end of year progress and attainment across all five authorities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To submit pupil records to EAS for population of data in agreed spreadsheet.</li> <li>2. SLT evaluation of progress and attainment data.</li> <li>3. Agree a three-year data set to support trend identification &amp; future service planning.</li> </ol>	
	To know that the judgements we make about progress and provision are consistent and robust.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For all three services to develop internal moderation systems to ensure consistent setting of provision and outcomes.</li> <li>2. Where available for teams to engage in national and regional moderation events.</li> </ol>	
<b>Delivering Improvements in Partnership</b>  What can we do to strengthen our relationships with <b>the partner organisations we currently work with and how do we know these relationships are effective?</b>	A Governance mechanism is established for SenCom by the formation of a Partnership Board.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Following consultation; production of a proposal paper which sets out role, remit, and composition of the Board.</li> <li>2. Presentation of Proposal to Joint Education Group for consideration.</li> <li>3. Inaugural board meeting held.</li> </ol>	
<b>Futureproofing and Sustainability</b>  What activities would be better provided on a service wide basis to make sure we are efficient and provide our Local Authorities with the best value for money?	To have an agreement from Torfaen and Caerphilly CBC to transfer GVIS staff to Torfaen and establish one host one host authority.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Permission to transfer to one host authority sought from both councils.</li> <li>2. Staff formal consultation events.</li> <li>3. Timeline for transfer and business transformation activities established.</li> </ol>	



	To implement Welsh Government Project to increase Mandatory Qualified VI/Hi workforce.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Secure Welsh Government Funding to support training of 1 HI and 1 VI MQ teacher.</li> <li>2. Develop a memorandum of understanding to implement with successful candidates and host schools setting out responsibilities and requirements.</li> <li>3. Run an expressions of interest process for teachers across SEWC and secure training places for September 2018 start.</li> </ol>	
<b>ComIT Strategic Strand Focus for 2017/18</b>	<b>Planned Outcomes</b>	<b>Specific Actions</b>	<b>Evaluation Evidence &amp; Effectiveness Judgement</b>
<b>Family &amp; Person Centred</b>  What can we do to become a family led and person-centred organisation?	To improve information and involvement for parents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Write more detailed introductory letter to parents of pupils who receive 1-1 from Commit.</li> <li>2. Ensure home/school link book is used for 1-1 pupils.</li> <li>3. Offer parents of 1-1 pupils a school visit to observe work being done</li> <li>4. Update parental perceptions form and obtain views when support is completed.</li> <li>5. Use established of online mechanism to obtain responses.</li> <li>6. Recruit interested parents to co-production group</li> </ol>	
<b>Early Intervention</b>  What is initial contact with our service like for stakeholders? How can we add to this?	0-3 Pathway To extend ComIT service delivery to include an 0-3 pathway for stakeholders.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish a working party of relevant stakeholders including ABuHB Lead Staff to scope task.</li> <li>2. Audit current available provision for 0-3 particularly in Flying Start areas. Prepare a gap analysis</li> <li>3. Evaluate ELKLAN 0-3 training. Consider relevance to roll out across 5 Authorities.</li> <li>4. Assess current capacity and audit implications for staff.</li> </ol>	

<b>Removing Barriers to Learning</b>  How confident do our partners feel about supporting Tier 1 pupils? What can we do to improve that confidence?	To continue to enable and support schools to identify vulnerable pupils using ComIT toolkit and put interventions in place.	1. To review and amend ComIT screening tool.  2. SLT to test tool for reliability and consistency.  3. To revise and develop Tier 1 workshop training to address suitability for KS2/3 staff.  4. To create a Toolkit pack of activities for use with KS2/KS3 pupils. Include transition pack and maths concepts.	
	To enable schools to support vulnerable children with poor social skills.	1. Schools to use Teaching Talking to identify and support pupils with SLCN in nursery classes.	
	To ensure that schools make adequate provision for identified vulnerable pupils at the end of KS1 to KS2 and KS2 to KS3.  Running transition support groups.	1. To collate all pupils currently due for Transition Groups in Summer 2018.  2. Ensure that identified pupils will be in transition groups.  3. Contact feeder School – ALNCo to ensure pupils will be placed in transition group.  4. ComIT and/or school to run transition groups in Summer 2018.  5. Re-establish contact with AGORED to offer accreditation to vulnerable pupils.	
	Continue to consolidate tier 1 work through the Self -analysis process.	1. Schools identified for support complete ComIT self-analysis tool and receive an action plan for the term.	
	To enable schools to support vulnerable children with poor social skills.	1. Provide Alex Kelly training on Talkabout Support schools to identify and deliver Talkabout groups for vulnerable pupils.	
<b>Raising Expectation &amp; Achievement</b>  How well do children on our caseload make progress and develop as individuals?	To consistently and confidently use Pupil Progress data to help inform interventions.	1. To develop the electronic toolkit use in schools.	
	Develop a service data base to record and measure pupil progress	1. MJS to liaise with SH to set up data base	

<b>Delivering Improvements in Partnership</b>  What can we do to strengthen our relationships with <b>the partner organisations we currently work with and how do we know these relationships are effective?</b>	Re-establish links with SLCN professional bodies. i.e. Afasic Cymru NAPLIC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meet Director of Afasic Cymru.</li> <li>2. Continue to network with Afasic Cymru Parent Officer via Parental Engagement workshop.</li> <li>3. Plan joint opportunities with Afasic Create plan for joint training event for schools and/or other events. Deliver training.</li> <li>4. 2 x SMT to attend NAPLIC conference.</li> </ol>	
	To continue close working partnership with ELKLAN	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deliver 1 core course termly; 1 cohort to complete CFS annually</li> <li>Deliver 1 Welsh course annually</li> <li>Deliver 1 specialist course annually</li> </ol>	
	To continue close working partnership with POPAT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deliver 2x2 day courses for 10 learners per course</li> <li>Deliver 1 2day course to a whole school</li> </ol>	
	To sign a new Service Level Agreement with ABuHB	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Secure a Speech Therapist to work with ComIT for 3 years</li> </ol>	
<b>GVIS Strategic Strand Focus for 2017/18</b>	<b>Planned Outcomes</b>	<b>Specific Actions</b>	<b>Evaluation Evidence &amp; Effectiveness Judgement</b>
<b>Family &amp; Person Centred</b>  What can we do to become a family led and person-centred organisation?	Development of a system using tools e.g. Easy Easier, to inform the school's development of an IDP and capture pupil voice.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Produce Easy Easier paperwork, process and guidance for all staff using it</li> <li>2. Work with schools to use Easy Easier paperwork and process to inform the IDP and target intervention</li> </ol>	
<b>Early Intervention</b>  What is initial contact with our service like for stakeholders? How can we add to this?	Improve understanding of the roles of HLTAs as distinct and developed from other roles.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SH and QTVI/MSIs to identify the roles of HLTAs that are distinct from the role of a TA and consider how their works complements the work of QTVI/MSIs and Habilitation.</li> <li>2. Review the set-up of Playgroups and HLTAs' involvement with Early Years Children.</li> </ol>	
<b>Removing Barriers to Learning</b>  How confident do our partners feel about supporting Tier 1 pupils? What can we do to improve that confidence?	Deliver VI Awareness training events for school staff.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Plan and deliver a number of VI Awareness workshops at SenCom for school staff.</li> </ol>	
	Liaise with EAS regarding possible training for those training to teach and/or NQTs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SH to liaise with EAS regarding the possibility of raising awareness of VI to NQTs and PGCE students</li> </ol>	

	Signpost to key resources using our new website.	1. Sharing knowledge of key services and resources available to professionals and families.	
<b>Raising Expectation &amp; Achievement</b> How well do children on our caseload make progress and develop as individuals?	Use the 8 Learner outcomes for learners with VI, to develop RAG profiling and Easy Easier for Tier 1 pupils.	1. Develop RAG profiling document and Easy Easier paperwork and guidance.	
<b>Delivering Improvements in Partnership</b> What can we do to strengthen our relationships with <b>the partner organisations we currently work with and how do we know these relationships are effective?</b>	Habilitation staff to work with other Habilitation specialists across the country to promote the use of the NatSIP Eligibility Criteria for Habilitation..	1. Habilitation staff to use their existing links to raise the profile of Habilitation and develop a more uniformed approach to Habilitation across Wales.	
	Deliver joint training with health professionals (as per the ALN Bill reforms).	1. Several of the GVIS events promoted by EAS are co-presented with health staff (e.g. orthoptists).	
	Deliver training to school staff on several common VI conditions and Literacy and Braille.	1. School staff will be invited to GVIS to receive 2-hour sessions on specific conditions that affect a number of pupils in their school e.g. Nystagmus.  2. QTVI/MSI will pilot Learning Media Assessments.  3. Following this they will deliver a Braille and Literacy workshop for staff from schools with braillists.	
<b>Futureproofing and Sustainability</b> What activities would be better provided on a service wide basis to make sure we are efficient and provide our Local Authorities with the best value for money?	Appointment of Temporary Tier 1 Project Lead (Feb - July 2018)  Plan permanent TLR post starting Sept 2018	1. Appoint Project Lead TLR3 post.  2. Appoint TLR 2a post from Sept 2018.	
	Appointment of 0.6FTE QTVI to replace JP.	1. Appoint 0.6FTE QTVI.  2. The caseload of this position will be established, and priorities will be set	
<b>HIS Strategic Strand Focus for 2017/18</b>	<b>Planned Outcomes</b>	<b>Specific Actions</b>	<b>Evaluation Evidence &amp; Effectiveness Judgement</b>
<b>Family &amp; Person Centred</b> What can we do to become a family led and person-centred organisation?	To improve engagement with families through the provision of the pre-school group	1. To develop the use of social media to promote the pre-school provision, providing a hyper-link to families of pre-school new referrals.  2. Families will be able to access a short film clip in order	

		<p>to gain an understanding of what to expect when attending the group.</p> <p>3. To update the current flyer to a booklet design and to distribute to other professionals who work with families.</p> <p>4. Booklet flyer to include some parent/ guardian feedback informing of their experiences of the pre-school group.</p> <p>5. To establish ways for parents to feedback to ensure that the provision is responsive to needs. This could include questionnaires, suggestion box, feedback groups and social media such as the pre-school What's App group.</p>	
<p><b>Early Intervention</b></p> <p>What is initial contact with our service like for stakeholders? How can we add to this?</p>	<p>A phased introduction of the new way of working in line with the Service Delivery Model.</p>	<p>1. Visit all five authorities to present the new way of working at relevant forums ALNCO forums ALN Resource Panels Parental forums.</p>	
	<p>The new way of working is dynamic, and pupils may change tiers according to triggers affecting curriculum access, academic progress and concerns regarding the child or young person's wellbeing.</p>	<p>1. To organise meetings with Headteacher/ ALNCOs to discuss the pupil caseload in each school.</p> <p>2. Pupils will be tiered according to their level of need at the time of the meeting. The tier that they are allocated is dynamic and may change when considering the triggers.</p> <p>3. Concerns should be reported to the Hearing-Impaired Service and assessments, observations and information from parents, school staff and other professionals will be considered.</p> <p>4. The NATSIP Eligibility Framework will be considered to inform decisions made</p> <p>5. Targeted Deaf Awareness Training to be provided to ALNCO groups in cluster areas.</p>	
<p><b>Removing Barriers to Learning</b></p> <p>How confident do our partners feel about supporting Tier 1 pupils? What can we do to improve that confidence?</p>	<p>To deliver training to University students, PGCE and Newly Qualified Teachers</p>	<p>1. To respond to requests and /or approach Universities to target PGCE and NQT to provide Deaf Awareness training.</p>	

<p><b>Raising Expectation &amp; Achievement</b></p> <p>How well do children on our caseload make progress and develop as individuals?</p>	<p>To improve the reliability of using the NATSIP Eligibility Framework.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Advisory Teachers to attend the National Moderation exercise.</li> <li>2. To determine the caseload of children and young people that staff will complete the NATSIP Eligibility Framework.</li> <li>3. To formalise the system of moderating internally when using the NATSIP Eligibility Framework.</li> <li>4. To organise training for Teachers of the Deaf from the service so they are also able to complete the NATSIP Eligibility Framework on children and young people, when necessary.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Delivering Improvements in Partnership</b></p> <p>What can we do to strengthen our relationships with <b>the partner organisations we currently work with</b> and how do we know these relationships are effective?</p>	<p>Supporting the implementation-ion of HI Base Review Recommendations.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regional half termly meetings with Hearing Impaired Resource Base staff.</li> <li>2. Attendance at Nant Celyn Communication Meetings and GCHSWG.</li> <li>3. Shared opportunities for training and professional development. Opportunities for senior Teaching Assistants to support less experienced staff through shadowing opportunities. Opportunities for TODs to shadow each other to share good practice and experience.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Futureproofing and Sustainability</b></p> <p>What activities would be better provided on a service wide basis to make sure we are efficient and provide our Local Authorities with the best value for money?</p>	<p>Appointment of a TOD to cover the reduced hours of the Advisory Teacher on a temporary basis.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expressions of interest from the Teachers of the Deaf within the team.</li> <li>2. Internal interview process.</li> <li>3. Opportunity for successfully appointed TOD to gain experience of the different aspects of the Advisory Teacher role.</li> </ol>	

## **Appendix 8.**

### **Mark Geraghty - Independent Consultant**

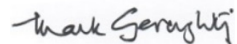
I have worked with similar children and families for much of my professional life and was delighted to be invited, by the WLGA, to review their experiences and conclusions. These are some of the most vulnerable children and young people in the Welsh education system, with needs greater than many of their peers.

I have been really pleased to have had the opportunity to meet with a small number of parents/ carers, representatives from SenCom, schools' representatives, members of local/national voluntary and community services, Officers, Chief Officers, Chief Executives and Leaders of Councils.

In all the meetings I've attended, across all levels, the passion and desire to ensure children and young people with a speech language and communication, hearing and/or visual impairments receive high quality support and appropriate resources, has been manifestly apparent.

I am particularly grateful to the families, who at short notice, travelled across the region to attend consultation meetings with me. They always spoke passionately, fairly, and honestly about their experiences of the SenCom services and the educational settings, in which their children were educated.

Similarly, survey returns received from families and professionals, both online and directly as letters, have again expressed their views and opinions candidly and very good-naturedly.



Mark Geraghty  
Independent SEND Consultant