

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In the period between November 2003 and October 2004, the Legal & Complaints Department of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) received eighteen complaints relating to lack of SLT services in Northern Ireland, of which sixteen were made formally. From the overall complaints, thirteen were made specifically in relation to the provision of SLT services, while in the remaining five, the lack of SLT provision was a significant factor in a range of other educational and health issues.

NICCY decided to carry out a **preliminary** survey of SLT provision and liaise with the Service Improvement Unit of the DHSSPS in relation to piloting alternative models of delivery.

## **FINDINGS/ISSUES RAISED**

**See Section 2 (pp.12-30)**

### **School Population and Statementing (Tables 2 & 3, p.13)**

- The total number of children and young people statemented for SLT as a primary need or an additional need remains unclear.
- The majority of children and young people receiving SLT do not have statements of special educational needs

### **Speech and Language Therapists (Table 4, p.16)**

- There are presently 333 practicing Speech & Language Therapists in Northern Ireland, of which 186.71 WTE work with children/young people within the 14 Health & Social Services Trusts providing SLT Services.
- 64% of Trusts identified a lack of resources/SLTs as a gap in service provision that needs to be addressed

### **Speech and Language Therapy Assistants (Table 5, p.17)**

- Speech & Language Therapy Assistants exist in 86% (12) of Trusts, however the total WTE is only 24.95 across Trusts.
- There is inequity between Trusts in relation to the employment of speech and language therapy assistants.
- 36% (5) of Trusts specifically highlighted that an increase in the numbers of SLTAs is required.

### **Informal Complaints (p. 19)**

- The number of informal complaints cannot be accurately estimated.

### **Formal Complaints (Table 6, p.19)**

- The total number of formal complaints received by Trusts (excluding Royal Group of Hospitals) between 2002 and December 2004 is 101.

**Number of children/young people waiting for SLT assessment (Table 7, p.21)**

- The number of children/young people currently awaiting assessment for SLT across Trusts is 2,488.
- There is clear inequity between Trusts in relation to the length of waiting times for speech and language assessment.

**Average length of waiting for Speech & Language Therapy (Table 8, p. 22)**

- There is clear inequity in relation to waiting times from date of referral to first therapy appointment. Where a child/young person lives in Northern Ireland determines the length of the wait for SLT.
- Only 21% (3) of Trusts have waiting times of three months and below.

**Gaps in assessment and provision**

- When asked about gaps in assessment and provision and any further comments they would like to add, **a range of concerns** were identified by the Trusts (**Table 9, p. 25**)