

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICE UPDATE

Relevant Board Member(s)	Julie Kelly – Corporate Director, Children’s Services
Organisation	London Borough of Hillingdon
Report author	Gary Binstead – Head of Commissioning
Papers with report	None

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Summary	This report is to brief the Board on the challenges of the delivery of Occupational Therapy (OT) statutory contacts for children with SEND, as outlined in their Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs).
Contribution to plans and strategies	The delivery of therapies outlined in a child’s EHCP is part of a statutory duty related to the SEND code of practice, and CNWL are jointly commissioned to deliver these therapeutic interventions on behalf of Hillingdon Council and the ICB.
Financial Cost	£2,739,345 overall contract value for therapies (LBH & ICB)
Ward(s) affected	All

RECOMMENDATION

That the Health and Wellbeing Board note the content of the report.

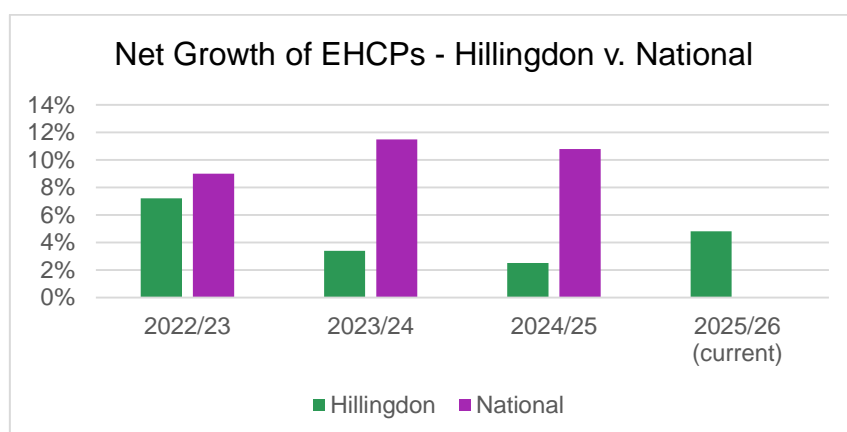
INFORMATION

1. This report relates to the number of children who did not receive their full number of statutory contact hours for OT during the last academic year (2024 / 25), setting out a recovery plan with approximate timescales. The information below sets out the number of children affected.
2. In the academic year 2024 / 25, approximately 400 children and young people did not receive their full allocation of OT contacts as set out in their EHCP, although more than half of all contacts were delivered as expected, and only a handful of children and young people did not receive any contacts.
3. This matter is being brought to the Board’s attention because of the potential risk if the service is unable to meet the current demand and sets out how the CNWL service will recover from the current backlog.

Context

4. The number of EHCPs in Hillingdon have been growing significantly over the years like many

Local Authorities are experiencing. More recently, the growth has slowed compared to previous trends due to robust annual reviews, more opportunities for young people to be supported into employment and a range of other factors.



5. Not all children will have therapy input in their EHCPs but many children do. A number of children have personal budgets in place for therapy or have a private provider due to specific needs. The rest of the children with OT in their EHCPs will have their therapy delivered by CNWL as part of the commissioning arrangements.

Background

6. This issue was highlighted to CNWL during the last academic year, and CNWL have been working closely with the Head of Commissioning in the Council to agree a plan to recover from the backlog.
7. There is a national shortage of OTs due to a range of factors which are impacting service delivery across many regions, and CNWL has not been immune to the recruitment and retention challenges in the country. This has impacted the current workforce, and in turn, the capacity to deliver all statutory contacts.
8. These pressures have been evident through a reduced workforce due to maternity leave, recruitment challenges and other factors, and has reduced the OT capacity for a prolonged period of time, despite CNWL efforts to recruit to the appropriate staffing levels.
9. As a result, there are a number of children and young people who have not received their statutory number of contacts during the last academic year as outlined above, and work is underway to correct this as set out below.

Recovery Plan

10. Where a child or young person has been identified for not receiving any contacts, plans have been put in place to recover these through separate commissioning arrangements in conjunction with families, and some of these have been delivered already.
11. The therapy needs of all the other affected children are being assessed, and plans are being developed to ensure their individual needs are met appropriately. This will include input from children, families, therapists, and schools. Once these assessments are complete, appropriate therapy will be provided as agreed.

12. CNWL are planning to commission additional capacity from the independent therapy market, in order to ensure that the appropriate level of therapy is provided to all children as outlined in their EHCP and also keep pace with the increased demand for assessments. These discussions are well developed, and CNWL are aiming to have additional capacity commissioned before the end of December.
13. It is expected that the appropriate OT provision will have been delivered by the end of the Spring term at the end of March for the children impacted during the 2024 / 25 academic year.
14. Reassuringly, all the scheduled OT statutory contacts are forecast to be delivered by the end of the Autumn term at the end of December as planned, showing a marked improvement due to additional capacity.
15. Discussions will continue between all organisations involved, and the recovery plan will remain under review. Plans will be updated as necessary to ensure the appropriate levels of therapeutic input are delivered to all children and young people as outlined in their EHCPs.