



Dear parent/carer,

Sensory Support Service for Children and Young People with a Sensory Impairment

You have been sent this letter because you are a carer or a parent of a child or young person who is supported in their education setting by the Sensory Support Service. The Sensory Support Service provides services such as teachers for children with a hearing or visual impairment. In March 2018 you will have received a public statement from the four authorities about the future of the service. In case you did not receive a copy of the statement, here are its main points:

In 2015-16 the local authorities commissioned NATSIP (National Sensory Impairment partnership), who are recognised experts in this field, to undertake a review of the service in light of new and significant legislation changes from the Children & Families Act 2014. The review has helped the commissioners to consider the immediate offer, long-term future and direction of the service.

In November 2017 the four authorities agreed to develop a new and revised service model based on the findings of this review.

The joint statement in March said that it was planned for the new service to be in place by 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019. The commissioners have been thinking again about the timetable for the service redesign, and it has been agreed \* that more time is needed to deliver the best possible service. The target date now for the new service to begin is 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020.

In thinking about the timetable the commissioners have also reconsidered the necessary processes in which to develop the new service. We will now work to produce a full and detailed plan for the new service and how it will work by December 2018. This plan will then be subject to a full formal consultation process for three months to gain the views of everyone with an interest in the service including parents, carers and children.

It is very important however that everyone involved has the opportunity to influence the development of the new service before we get to the formal consultation stage. We will be doing this through an engagement process which will run from 4<sup>th</sup> June to 31<sup>st</sup> July. We will be gathering the views of children and young people, carers and parents, and professionals and organisations through two ways.

There will be three electronic surveys – one for children and young people, one for carers and parents, and one for professionals and organisations. These will be open from 11<sup>th</sup> June and can be found at:

Children and young people - [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sss1](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sss1)

Carers and parents – [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sss2](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sss2)

Professionals and organisations - [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sss3](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sss3)

There will also be consultation meetings. There will be two in each of the four local authority areas – one in the day-time and one in the evening. These meetings are for carers and parents, professionals and organisations. If you want to come along please contact me on the contact details below. The dates times and venues are as follows

### **Bath and North-East Somerset:**

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> June – 10.30 am to 1.00 pm – Summerdale Pavilion, Cross Street, Keynsham BS31 2FW

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> June – 7.00 pm to 9.30 pm – Summerdale Pavilion, Cross Street, Keynsham BS31 6Fw

### **Bristol:**

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July – 10.30 am to 1.00 pm the Park Centre, Daventry Road, Knowle, Bristol [BS4 1DQ](#)

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> July – 7.00 pm to 9.30 pm – The Park Centre, Daventry Road, Knowle, Bristol [BS4 1DQ](#)

### **North Somerset:**

Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> June – 7.00 pm to 9.30 pm – Castlewood, Tickenham Road, Clevedon BS21 6AB ). Please note this postcode takes you to Clevedon Garage. Castlewood is the yellow building directly opposite the garage).

Friday 29<sup>th</sup> June – 10.30 am to 1.00 pm – Castlewood, Tickenham Road, Clevedon BS21 6Ab

### **South Gloucestershire:**

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 6.00 pm to 8.30 pm - Cleve RFC, the Hayfields, Cossham Street, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9EN

Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> July 10.00 am to 12.30 pm - Cleve RFC, the Hayfields, Cossham Street, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9EN

We will also want to gather the views and experiences of children and young people who currently use or who have previously used the service. We will be inviting children and young people to attend focus groups and participation events, the outcomes of which will also be fed in to the work on the service redesign.

The joint statement in March 2018 mentioned that a stakeholder reference group would be established. To do this we will be broadening and widening the membership of the Joint Operations Group (JOG). This existing group already works with the Sensory Support Service. We are revising its terms of membership so that it will have up to 15 parent carers and up to 15 professionals and representatives from relevant organisations. The role of this group will be that of an 'expert advisory group' to the four commissioners who will be leading the service redesign process. The JOG will meet between commissioners meetings on a monthly basis in Bristol and will have a direct impact on influencing the thinking and work of the commissioners on the new service. Reasonable travel expenses will be paid to the parent carer members of this group.

Any parent carer of a child or young person who is currently using the SSS, or has previously done so, can volunteer to be a member of the JOG. The commissioner's hope all carer and parents will understand that we need to make sure the representation has an equal balance on it from across the area of the four local authorities, across the three impairment groups and across the age range as the service covers 0-25. The commissioners will therefore choose the volunteers from all those who nominate themselves in order to get the balance right.

If you would like to volunteer for the group please email [alun.davies@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:alun.davies@n-somerset.gov.uk) or ring Alun Davies on 01275884033 by 18th June 2018. In your email or telephone call please say in which local authority area you live and the age and impairment of your child. The first meeting of the JOG will be on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> June from 10.00 am to 12.00 pm at a venue in Bristol. The second meeting will be on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> July from 11.00 am to 1.00 pm at a venue in Bristol.

I would like to stress on behalf of all four of the commissioning authorities that we very much welcome and want to receive contributions from everyone who uses or who has a view about this important specialist service. We believe this is an ideal opportunity to take the service to the next stage of development and we want everyone who wishes to have a chance to put their views forward.

Of course not everyone will agree about the changes that will be made and there will need to be compromise. The commissioners reaffirm the commitment made in the joint statement to fill any current staff vacancies within current structures and that there will be no reductions to funding for the service on top of the efficiency savings made in 2018-19 during the service redesign process. It is especially important in these circumstances that we make the most of this opportunity to develop the Sensory Support Service into a new service equipped to embrace the challenge of the coming years and continue to provide the best possible and most cost-effective service for the children and young people who use it.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any clarification or further information.

Many thanks,  
Alun

Alun Davies  
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## **General Data Protection Regulations**

### **As of 25/05/2018**

The Local Authority (LA) uses data to carry out specific functions for which it is responsible, such as the assessment of special educational needs and disabilities, home to school transport requirements, admissions, children/ young people's welfare, children looked after, exclusions and early years support. Anonymised information is used to derive statistics, to inform decisions on (for example) the funding of education settings, to assess educational performance and track Service provision. North Somerset Council is acting as data controller for the purposes of the consultation, and will be processing the responses provided on behalf of the four local authorities who commission the Sensory Support Service. More information, including contact details for the Council's Data Protection Officer can be found at <http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/privacy-cookies/how-we-use-your-personal-data/privacy-notice-and-data-protection/>.

If you wish to access the data held about you or a young person, please contact the Local Authority for your home area who can provide details of how to make a request.