A randomised controlled trial and economic evaluation of direct versus indirect and individual versus group modes of speech and language therapy for children with primary language impairment

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Record Status
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Citation
Boyle J, McCartney E, Forbes J, O’Hare A. A randomised controlled trial and economic evaluation of direct versus indirect and individual versus group modes of speech and language therapy for children with primary language impairment. Health Technology Assessment 2007; 11(25): 1-158

Authors’ objectives
“This trial aimed to address the following research questions.

How do direct individual therapy [speech and language therapist (SLT) working individually with a child], indirect individual therapy [speech and language therapy assistant (SLTA) working individually with a child], direct group therapy (SLT working with a small group of children) and indirect group therapy (SLTA working with a small group of children) compare with regard to the language outcomes for primary school-age children with persistent primary receptive and/or expressive language impairment relative to a comparison group receiving current models and levels of SLT service?

What is the evidence for long-term benefits for such children from their therapy at 12 months’ follow-up?

How do the four intervention approaches compare in terms of cost? ”

(from executive summary)

Authors’ conclusions
Implications for healthcare Well-trained, well-supported and well-motivated SLTAs can act as effective surrogates for SLTs in the delivery of services within primary schools to children with PLI who do not to require the specialist skills of an SLT. Generalising the central estimates of the relative cost of different therapy modes to other educational/health systems is possible, but the precise differences reported in resource use need to be qualified by the level of programme intensity and other characteristic features of education and therapy services that may differ from those observed in this trial.

Project page URL
http://www.hta.ac.uk/1232

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Indexing Status
Subject indexing assigned by CRD