

speech therapy

Ann Kennelly
Regional Co-Coordinator for Disability Services
Laken
Dublin Road
Kilkenny

7 March 2006

RE: Ref AK/cm

Dear Ms Kennelly,

It is with great pleasure I submit to you the overall synopsis of the Release Speech Therapy September – December 2005 Session.

Although Ballyowen Meadows had been provided with a part-time Speech and Language Therapist, Release began the 2005-6 school year at Ballyowen Meadows for the 19 students still attending from the 2004-5 school year.

Our attendance at Ballyowen Meadows, was not due to HSE involvement, but because the parents, teachers and SNA's insisted to the Board Release continue its valuable service to their children.

Unfortunately, at the end of October, our contract was not renewed--and although the parents pleaded with the HSE to allow Release to remain in the school, *with the parents paying for all costs*, they were completely turned down.

Today, the majority of students at Ballyowen Meadows DO NOT RECEIVE WEEKLY, CONSISTENT SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY.

Therefore, the fight continues on...

This story was relayed on **"Today with Pat Kenny"** by a Ballyowen Meadows mother on 24 January 2006 (CD provided). Release and more importantly, our parents received huge support from the public at large. So much so, any attempts to dismiss the programme by comments texted into the programme from HSE employees, were negated by Pat Kenny reading a letter on air from one of our mother's on 25 January 2006, defending Release and highlighting the catastrophic need for speech and language therapy in this country.

Also enclosed is a copy of a Featured Article in *The Irish Independent* dated 20 February 2006, where a journalist interviewed a number of Release parents and children to get their point of view of existing HSE services versus Release Communication Intervention. It makes for enlightening reading.

The Irish Independent journalist Paul Melia asked me to provide him with names of people inside the HSE I had spoken to. I naturally directed him to our analysis documents available online on our website www.release.ie. Funny enough, or not, no one I had met with, wrote to, conversed with, had ever heard of Release and therefore, the HSE was not represented in the article. In case our file has been misplaced, I have included all previous analysis documents, and newspaper articles written about the programme.

In addition to our work at Ballyowen Meadows, Release held private sessions for an additional 28 children. 15 of these children were medical card holders, who received a full Release scholarship from The Vodafone Foundation. Every student attending the session, including medical card holders, who were able to fill out the End of Session Review gave the Release Programme and staff the highest marks possible.

I can not state strongly enough that Release is in a strong position to become a pool of resource for the Health Service Executive, through providing *continuous* Speech and Language Services within an integrated approach.

I would once again welcome an opportunity to discuss the Release Speech Therapy's Programme with the Health Service Executive's Director's of Disability Group with a view to entering into a formal Service Level Agreement.

As this programme has been running SUCCESSFULLY for the past 15 months, I strongly urge the Directors of Disability to meet with us at your earliest convenience.

I will be in contact within the week.

Warmest Regards,
Tara J Liston
Managing Director

speech therapy

**Release Speech Therapy
Ballyowen Meadows
Beechpark Services /
Private Session
Programme Analysis**

September - December 2005

Submitted To:

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CC:

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Submitted By:

Tara J Liston - Cunningham
Managing Director
Release Speech Therapy

7 March 2006

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Release's Accomplishments

Our experience proves Release can be an invaluable pool of resource for the Health Service Executive by providing an integrated approach ensuring continuity in the system.

Release Speech Therapy began its pilot programme in January 2005. At the end of the nine-week session, the classes were so successful, eight Release parents whose children attend Ballyowen Meadows School for children with Autism--with the support of their children's teachers--successfully convinced the school principal, team of school therapists, and the Health Authorities to have Release brought into their school.

The programme, which began in late April came to a close on 15 July, with 18 children receiving assessments and 27 children taught in the parent, teacher and child focused nine-week course.

This newly formed private / public partnership has successfully integrated into every child's IEP at Ballyowen Meadows and we are therefore able to provide the key missing component of Speech and Language Therapy for all 27 children--thereby affording each child a proper and continuous holistic therapy programme.

Through parental support, Release was placed back in Ballyowen Meadow's curriculum for September – October 2005. Although the parents strongly urged the programme continue, AND although they offered to pay for all services, the HSE denied their rights to Release.

Release Goals upon Start of Pilot Programme

- 1. To guarantee every child attending Ballyowen Meadows School receive at least one hour of speech and language therapy per week.**
- To ensure the Release Speech Therapy Programme group therapy approach worked for the children, parents, teachers and special needs assistants (SNAs).
- To work closely with the Principal, teachers and SNAs to develop a schedule this would not infringe upon the students structured activities.
- To have parents, teachers and SNAs attend each class in order to carry over the work taught to the individual children into their daily lives, both at home and at school.

Pilot Scheme Successes

Release has made significant strides in meeting these goals. The following are examples of accomplishments:

- The Release Programme ensured every student at Ballyowen Meadows who had been assessed received at least one hour of speech and language therapy per week.
- The Release Programme continued to bring about significant positive changes to every student attending the course.
- 96% of every parent, teacher and SNA surveyed stated they wanted to see the Release Speech Therapy Programme continued throughout the 2005-2006 school year.

Focus Points for Future Sessions

- Many teachers of our students found the children progressing; Release thereby used these opportunities to integrate the course work into each child's IEP (when available).
 - The major goal of Release is to be part of the HSE's IEP process for those being cared for, or currently awaiting placements on waiting lists.
- Time commitment is the largest issue for every parent involved in the Programme.
 - It proved difficult for the families in the Programme to find the time to do the 1/2 hour of homework per night—*however all families found the classes promoted their child's communication.*

Moving Forward with the Health Service Executive

- Speech and Language Therapy is not a stand alone programme, and should be part of an integrated approach, to afford continuity in the system.
- We at Release would be in favour of further integration with State-run Services in order to contribute to each child's IEP – in order to create a holistic programme written specifically for each child.
- With the successful private programme and now the successes with Ballyowen Meadows proving the therapy works in both arenas, we at Release are convinced the HSE no longer needs to be without Speech and Language Therapy.

With a Service Level Agreement in place with the HSE, Release can:

1. help fill the huge vacancy for Speech and Language Therapy in Ireland
 - a. through a proven level of recruitment of Speech and Language Therapists from abroad, to increase rather than reallocate the scarce resource.
 - b. through the successful group therapy approach, which enables the child, parent, and school—i.e. teachers and SNAs.
2. close the gap State-run Services are facing on a day-to-day basis with regards to Speech and Language Therapy.
 - a. both in the provision of services as well as recruitment
3. help the HSE provide a better service to its clients, through an integrated approach, ensuring continuity in the system.

End of Session Parent Review Quotes¹

1. "Best work for *** has been the game work. It's work which he will happily do at home!"
2. "Thanks again! This 10-week session was excellent. Lots of new and motivating exercises were presented in class with well explained, detailed homework sheets. Keep up the good work!"
3. "I found regular sessions for *** to be of HUGE benefit and look forward to continuing with Release in 2006."
4. "I found the therapist made the work fun which was needed to keep ***'s attention...the groups may work better for *** and it's the fun way. *** enjoyed coming each week. Thanks."
5. "The assessment was very comprehensive and seemed very accurate to me... I found the course excellent."
6. "Jenny is very professional and effective."

¹ End of Session original documents available upon request for viewing. Copies will not be furnished for data protection.

Jennifer Wetter, MS, CCC-SLP, Director of Speech and Language Therapy, also known as Jen or Jenny below.

*** indicates child's name withheld

Appendix A--Results of End of Session Review

September - December 2005

Question	lowest				highest
	1	2	3	4	5
Assessments					
I found the At-Home Assessment relevant and helpful for the Release Assessment			1	4	2
The Release therapist was well prepared for my child's assessment.					7
The Release therapist explained the tests being performed, and worked well with my child.					7
The Release Assessment Report was comprehensive and conclusions offered positive next steps helpful to parents and teachers (where applicable).			1	1	5
Totals	0	0	2	5	21
Classes					
Did Release Classes promote new skills acquisition?				5	4
Did the therapist use communication and supports systems appropriate to your child's cognitive abilities?				2	7
Did the therapist spend time with you and your child for individual instruction?		1	1	2	5
Did the therapist implement plans designed to accomplish goals discussed at the beginning of each class?		1	1	1	6
The homework was well-explained and backed by useful handouts.				2	7
I was able to find the time to work with my child for ½ hour per day.		2		4	3
I was able to take what I learned in Release and implement it into my child's daily life					4
I found the therapist receptive to my ideas and made changes to classes accordingly.			2	1	6
Totals	0	4	4	17	42
Overall Session					
I feel the course is well valued at €450 for 13 hours.		1 *VF Mom		1	7
I would be interested in the possibility of the sessions being 4 weeks on, 1 week off, 4 weeks (for a fee of €300)			1	1	5
I found this session to be extremely helpful to my child and to me.				2	7
Totals	0	0	1	4	19