



Learning and Development Opportunities for Speech and Language Therapy Support Workers

A variety of learning and development opportunities are available to SLT support workers. These include induction and in-service education, informal learning opportunities (e.g. shadowing, reading, portfolio keeping, literature review), short courses, accredited vocational education (e.g. N/SVQ, BTEC), foundation degrees, and access to the speech and language therapy qualifying courses.

This list has been compiled as an information resource for SLT support workers to illustrate some of the opportunities available. Please contact Jenny Pigram (Policy Lead) at the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) if you have any additions or amendments to the information listed [tel: 020 7378 3015/ jenny.pigram@rcslt.org].

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A. Short course providers

1. **AFASIC**
Education opportunities for teachers, SLTs, parents and support workers in the classroom. Training in the workplace is also available.
Contact: Afasic, tel: 020 7490 9410 / info@afasic.org.uk
Website: www.afasic.org.uk
2. **Downs Syndrome Educational Trust (DownsEd)
The Sarah Duffen Centre, Southsea, Hampshire**
Workshops for SLTs, conferences and courses for families, and health and education professionals.
Contact: DownsEd, tel: 023 92855330, email: training@downsed.org
Website: www.down-syndrome.net
3. **Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre, Surrey**
The centre offers a programme of modules and short courses for parents, classroom and learning support assistants, teachers and educational professionals at all levels.
Contact: Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre, tel. 01252 792400
4. **ICAN**
A national training programme which offers a range of courses, conferences and seminars to teachers, SLTs and other health and education staff working with children and young people with speech and language impairments. Courses are held in a range of locations across the UK. It is also possible for ICAN to arrange workplace training (subject to tutor availability) in a location of your choice.
Contact: ICAN Professional Development Team, tel. 0845 225 4073, email: training@ican.org.uk
Website: www.ican.org.uk/training

5. **The National Autistic Society (NAS)**
 Website carries a range of information on course providers, including short course programmes and postgraduate modules offered at a range of universities.
 A consultancy service is also available to deliver training in the workplace.
Contact: NAS Training Services, tel: 0115 911 3363, email: training@nas.org.uk
 Website: www.nas.org.uk

6. **National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)**
 Learning Support Assistant Training Course
 Aims to equip non-teaching staff supporting deaf children in the classroom with additional knowledge and skills. The 3-day residential course will cover roles and responsibilities, deaf awareness, parental rights and choices, tips and guidelines for the most difficult of subjects for deaf children including maths and English, and working with deaf children with additional needs or emotional and behavioural difficulties.
Contact: Conferences and Events, tel. 020 7490 8656; email: ndcs@ncds.org.uk
 Website: www.ndcs.org.uk

7. **The Bobath Centre for Children with Cerebral Palsy, London**
 Short courses held at various locations. Courses have included a meal-time assistants' course, and an introductory Bobath course for therapy assistants.
Contact: The Bobath Centre, tel. 020 8444 3355
 Website: www.bobath.org.uk

8. **Supporting Speech & Language Therapy in the Classroom**
Elkan
 A workshop based on the Elkan 'Language Builders' manual (providing detailed advice and activities to promote the communication skills of all school aged children, especially those with specific speech and language difficulties).
Contact: Elkan, Sunnyside, Wadebridge Road, St Mabyn, Bodmin, Cornwall PL30 3BQ, tel. 01208 841450/ email: Henrietta@tesco.net
 Website: www.elklan.co.uk

9. **Makaton**
 The Makaton Vocabulary Development Project holds details on a range of workshops and courses, including Makaton Tutor training.
Contact: Makaton Training Office, tel: 01276 61390, email: mvdp@makaton.org
 Website: www.makaton.org

10. **Independent Expressions In-service Training in AAC**
 In-service AAC training for staff in schools and colleges delivered by Anthony Robertson (AAC Consultant, Independent Expressions) and David Morris (AAC Consultant, SLT).
Contact: Independent Expressions, tel. 01483 813658

11. **Connect (The Communication Disability Network)**
 Working with People with Aphasia: A Course for Volunteers and Assistants
 A 4-day course, usually offered twice a year in London. A range of other Connect courses is available for SLT assistants and volunteers.
Contact: Hetty Lynn or Carol Pound, tel. 020 7477 8288, e-mail: hettywebber@ukconnect.org
 Website: www.ukconnect.org

B. Qualifications

1. **New National/Scottish Vocational Qualifications (N/SVQs) for Support Workers Allied Health Profession Support (Speech & Language Therapy)**

Skills for Health recently reviewed all of the N/SVQs in health and social care. They have now announced the launch of a new suite of Health N/SVQs in **June 2005**.

SLT assistants will be able to access a level 3 Health award in Allied Health Profession Support (Speech & Language Therapy). This will replace the N/SVQ in Diagnostic and Therapeutic Support previously available to support workers in the allied health professions.

The new awards aim to offer greater flexibility and choice, and will include the facility to make use of the expert witness as part of the assessment strategy. They are also mapped to the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) being used within the health service. Awarding bodies are currently preparing assessment documentation and supporting paperwork and it is anticipated that candidates will be able to register and begin the award by September 2005. However, all of the health competences (national occupational standards) and the qualification structures for the new health awards are now available on www.skillsforhealth.org.uk.

RCSLT is preparing an information and guidance paper on the award in Allied Health Profession Support that will be available to members in **September 2005**.

2. **BTEC Professional Development Qualification for Speech and Language Therapy Support**

Bournville College of Further Education.

Contact: Ruth Felstead, Bournville College of Further Education, Bristol Road South, Birmingham B31 2AJ, tel. 0121 483 1000.

3. **BTEC Professional Development Certificate for Speech and Language Therapy Support**

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust/Tynemouth College.

Contact: Gill Close, Health Offices, Albion Road, North Shields, tel. 0191 219 6711

4. **EDEXCEL (BTEC) Professional Development Certificate (SLT Assistants)**

North Warwickshire NHS Trust.

Contact: Kate Richards, SLT Services Manager, tel. 0121 329 4940/4941

5. **BTEC Speech and Language Therapy Advanced Certificate**

John Leggott College, Scunthorpe - in association with North Lincolnshire Primary Care Trust

Contact: Continuing Education & Training Department, tel. 01724 407099

6. **Foundation Degrees**

More opportunities are being developed for support workers in the allied health professions (AHP) to undertake foundation degrees. Foundation degrees do not result in professional qualification as a registered practitioner but may support entry into a qualifying programme. A list of available foundation degrees can be accessed via the UCAS website (www.ucas.ac.uk). Several AHP professional bodies, including RCSLT, have collaborated to produce a joint statement on foundation degrees. This sets out some agreed principles about these new awards from an AHP perspective. The joint statement on foundation degrees can be found on the RCSLT website (www.rcslt.org).

Foundation degrees relevant to a range of industries and sectors are being developed in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. To date, there are no plans to develop foundation degrees in Scotland. For further information on foundation degrees visit www.foundationdegree.org.uk.

The Open University offers a distance learning foundation degree in Health and Social Care aimed at AHP assistants (see www.open.ac.uk).

7. **HNC in Scotland**

The Scottish Executive Health Department in collaboration with the Scottish Curriculum Authority (SCA) is developing a new suite of Higher National Certificates (HNCs) for several of the allied health professions, including speech and language therapy. These new awards will be available to AHP assistants. Development work is still under way and RCSLT will keep members informed of progress with this initiative.

C. Qualification as a speech and language therapist

To train as an SLT you need to complete a recognised 3 or 4-year undergraduate degree course, or a 2-year postgraduate degree, which are offered at a number of education establishments across the UK. All these courses have been approved by the Health Professions Council and are recognised by RCSLT so that successful completion confers eligibility for registration as an SLT. At present, the University of Central England in Birmingham is the only university offering a part-time qualifying course.

Applications from mature applicants are welcomed (i.e. if you are over 21 years old) and considered on an individual basis. Evidence of recent academic study is normally required and the education establishments can advise on preparatory courses.

Eligible students are entitled to have their course fees paid in full by the NHS and to apply for a means-tested bursary. Financial support may also be available to help with childcare costs. This arrangement applies to both the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The Department of Health (England) produces a guide, Financial Help for Health Care Students, which explains the funding available. You can order this guide by calling their publications line on 08701 555 455 or view it online at www.nhspa.gov.uk/sgu. The booklet is about the support you can get if you attend a health professional course in England, regardless of where you live in the UK. If you attend a course in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland broadly comparable arrangements will apply, but you will need to consult the relevant national authorities below for details:

Wales – The NHS (Wales) Student Awards Unit [tel. 029 2026 1495];

Scotland – The Student Awards Agency for Scotland [tel. 0131 476 8212];

Northern Ireland – The Department of Learning, Training and Employment, Student Support Branch [tel. 028 902 577 77].

If a student is accepted to fill an NHS-funded place, then he/she will receive the NHS funding regardless of any LEA award previously made.

A small number of SLT assistants in England have been successful in securing sponsorship from their employing Trust and local strategic health authority so that (subject to certain conditions) they continue to be paid a proportion of their assistant salary whilst on the qualifying course.

Further information about qualifying as a speech and language therapist can be obtained by sending an SAE (with a request for a careers information pack) to Careers Information at RCSLT, 2 White Hart Yard, London SE1 1NX. Full details can also be found on the RCSLT website at www.rcslt.org.

D. Funding information

1. RCSLT Grants

RCSLT awards minor grants (up to a maximum of £500 per applicant) to support members' continuing professional development. Applications are welcomed from SLTs and assistants who have held associate membership of RCSLT for at least two years prior to the application.

The grants are awarded for:

- Presentations and/or attendance at conferences and professional gatherings;
- Certain specialised training, particularly short courses;
- Research into speech and language therapy.

The awards are advertised in Bulletin and information is also available on the RCSLT website. For application packs and further assistance, contact Glenn Palmer on 020 7378 3003 / email: glenn.palmer@rslt.org.

2. Individual Learning Accounts

England: NHS Individual Learning Accounts – www.dh.gov.uk

All learning and training funded through an NHS Learning Account must be agreed within the context of an individual's personal development plan (PDP) and future learning and development needs.

Wales: Individual Learning Accounts – www.ilawales.com

Scotland: Individual Learning Accounts – www.ilascotland.org.uk

3. Other

A wide range of information on grants, loans and other funds for post-16 students in further education, higher education, training, adult and community education can be found on this website: www.supportforlearning.org.uk.

E. Other RCSLT resources

The following RCSLT resources can be used to help support workers identify their learning needs and plan development opportunities. They are available to members on the RCSLT website at www.rcslt.org.

- 1. RCSLT Competencies Project Support Practitioner Framework (RCSLT, 2002)**
The framework outlines the competencies expected of support practitioners. It can be used to identify training and support development opportunities, reflecting a sense of progression and different levels of assistant working. The framework also explores dimensions (such as supervision and support) that influence and inform assessment of the level of support practitioner working.
- 2. Standards for Working with Support Practitioners (RCSLT, 2003)**
A set of auditable standards for working with SLT support workers. The standards are applicable to all areas of practice and are intended to support the development of local policies to ensure that assistants have access to appropriate support and supervision; a systematic approach is taken to induction and training; and role expectations are clear within services.
- 3. Reference Framework Underpinning Competence to Practise (RCSLT, 2003)**
The key purpose of the document is to support the newly qualified SLTs, returners to practice, and SLTs starting to specialise with a particular client group in identifying their development needs. However, students, assistants and bilingual co-workers may find the document helpful when reviewing their knowledge and skills base. The framework is not intended to be prescriptive, but as an aid to reflect on practice and development. It provides a guide to the range of knowledge and skills needed to work at a basic and competent level with a given client group.

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**Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
2 White Hart Yard, London SE1 1NX
Tel: 020 7378 1200 / postmaster@rcslt.org
www.rcslt.org**