

## Supporting children and young people

**C**ommunication difficulties put children at greater risk of poor literacy, mental health issues and poorer employment outcomes in adulthood. Speech and language therapy is a vital service that improves children's language and communication skills, and aids their personal development.

### Cayden's story

Cayden first attended speech and language therapy shortly after his two-year health visitor assessment. He had specific language impairment (severely disordered phonology) and was struggling greatly to be understood by anyone other than his mum and dad. He had a few one-off appointments for a year. When he was three years old, he began receiving intensive speech therapy for three years.

Cayden would find it upsetting when children couldn't understand him. When he started primary one he came home from school crying and said he didn't want to go back because no one would listen to him and the other children mocked the way he spoke.

According to his mum, attending speech and language therapy made a massive difference to Cayden's life. He no longer has to worry about being understood or rely on his parents to 'translate' what he says to others.

"He now has many friends at school and his school work has come on greatly," Cayden's mum says.

"Since attending speech therapy Cayden's confidence has just soared, we recently got married and he stood up in front of 130 guests to give an amazing speech! Cayden and our family's life have greatly improved as a result of attending speech therapy and I can't imagine where he would be without it."



### The size of the problem

- **7%** of children around five years of age have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).<sup>1</sup>
- One in every five pupils has a special educational need: approximately **1.6 million**.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2013, SLCN were the primary special educational needs in state-funded primary schools.<sup>3</sup>
- As many as **60%** of young offenders have SLCN.<sup>4</sup>
- **88%** of long-term unemployed young men have also been found to have SLCN.<sup>5</sup>
- Vocabulary difficulties at age five are significantly associated with poor literacy, mental health and employment outcomes at age 34.<sup>6</sup>
- Men who have speech difficulties in adolescence have a significantly higher risk of mental health problems.<sup>7</sup>
- Children with language difficulties have an impoverished quality of life in terms of moods and emotions, and are more at risk in terms of social acceptance and bullying.<sup>8</sup>



## How speech and language therapy services can help

- Speech and language therapy is an effective intervention in supporting children with SLCN.<sup>9</sup> Benefits extend beyond language gains and include improvements in social skills, peer relationships, self-confidence and literacy.<sup>10</sup>
- Speech and language therapy also creates financial savings, according to social return on investment research:
  - Each £1 invested in enhanced speech and language therapy for children with specific language impairment generates £6.43 through increased lifetime earnings.<sup>11</sup>
  - Every £1 invested in enhanced speech and language therapy for children with autism generates £1.46 through lifetime cost savings and productivity gains.<sup>12</sup>

# An essential service

Too few people understand the role speech and language therapists have in helping children and young people with communication difficulties, and the importance of early intervention.

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists is calling on GPs and commissioners to:

- Jointly commission services for children and young people with speech and language difficulties.
- Ensure commissioning is based on outcomes and includes education and training for the wider workforce to support early identification.

- For more information visit: [www.rcslt.org](http://www.rcslt.org)



## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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