**Transforming lives,   
improving outcomes**

**Speech and language therapy delivers**

**better lives for people with**

**communication and swallowing needs**

*A guide for budget holders and decision-makers*

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| **What is speech and language therapy?** |

Speech and language therapy transforms the lives of, and improves outcomes for, people with communication and swallowing needs. It plays a key role in:

* promoting public health through prevention and early intervention
* helping children with special educational needs and disabilities to engage with their education
* enabling self-management
* supporting rehabilitation
* helping people remain in or regain employment
* improving people’s quality of life
* promoting general health and wellbeing
* helping people to live independently
* enabling people to achieve their potential and the outcomes they want

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| **What do speech and language therapists do?** |

Speech and language therapists:

* assess and develop treatment programmes for people with communication and swallowing needs
* train and provide guidance to others to support people with communication and swallowing needs - these include the health, care, and education workforce (for example health visitors, early years’ settings, teachers, and care workers), employers and training organisations, and families, friends and the wider public

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| **Where do speech and language therapists work?** |

Speech and language therapists work across a range of settings and with a range of other health and care professionals to support integrated, personalised care. Places they work in include:

* health settings (acute and community)
* education settings (nursery, primary, and secondary schools, and further education)
* social care settings (care homes and nursing homes)
* justice settings (courts, prisons, and young offender institutions)
* children’s centres
* people’s own homes and workplaces

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| **What does speech and language therapy offer people with communication needs?** |

Speech and language therapy offers:

* social mobility, better literacy, and improved educational, employment, and social outcomes
* support for people to consent to their treatment and care, particularly important in relation to mental capacity and end of life care
* prevention of possible mental health problems, and potential involvement in the criminal justice system

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| **What does speech and language therapy offer people with swallowing needs?** |

Speech and language therapy offers:

* safe eating and drinking
* prevention of choking, chest infections, malnutrition, dehydration, pneumonia, and ultimately early death

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| **What does speech and language therapy offer budget holders and decision**  **makers?** |

Speech and language therapy offers:

* cost effective solutions for improved outcomes for people with communication and swallowing needs across a range of health, education, and care pathways
* reduced system pressures: prevention of hospital admissions, early and effective discharge, and reduced readmission
* financial savings and avoided costs for the NHS, local authorities, the criminal justice system, and the wider economy
* better public health through prevention and early intervention so communication and swallowing problems do not lead to further complications and poorer outcomes for people

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| **Speech and language therapy in action locally**  **Southfell’s Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy Team:**   * **identifies and addresses children’s communication needs** * **trains others to identify and address children’s communication needs** * **promotes public health**   In Southfell, there has traditionally been a high level of language delay in children starting nursery. In 2004, it stood at 64%. To tackle this we established a multi-agency programme to improve children’s communication skills in the crucial early years, 0-3, so they are school ready. Thanks to our approach the incidence of language delay has fallen to 46%.  Speech and language therapists:   * train and support parents, carers, practitioners, and anyone in contact with families to support children’s communication skills - since 2004, over 5,230 practitioners have been trained in key messages around early attachment, child development and speech and language development. * support 36 ‘communication ambassadors’ who are people living in local communities who have an interest in children’s development. * offer accreditation to schools and settings with a quality mark ‘communication friendly’ award.   To reduce language delay even further, we are working with a range of partners on a two- to three-year plan which will include extra speech and language therapists, a midwife, and reading and communication champions.  As communication is one of the determinants of health, speech and language therapists also play a crucial role in promoting local public health:   * if we see a child with glue ear, we talk to the parents about the connection between the condition and smoking. If they are smokers, we encourage them not to smoke around their child and highlight services to help them stop smoking. * if parents are worried about their child's weight or lifestyle we highlight relevant services to them. |

**For further information, please contact:**

Include your contact details here