Welcome to the webinar:

Towards a diverse profession

Thursday, 29 August 2019

#RCSLTwebinar
#SLTDiversity
Welcome

Derek Munn
Director of Policy and Public Affairs, RCSLT
Presenters:

Warda Farah
Independent SLT, Language Waves

James Smithson
MSc Speech and Language Therapy Student,
City, University of London

Berenice Napier
Policy Adviser, RCSLT
Housekeeping

• Send in chat messages at any time by using the Chat button

• Send in questions by using the Q&A button

• This event is being recorded. See here for recordings: https://www.rcslt.org/webinars

• Kaleigh Maietta is on hand to help!
Aims and objectives

After attending the webinar, delegates will:

• Know about the discussion and outcomes of the RCSLT workshop, ‘Towards a diverse profession’, held on 26th June

• Have an opportunity to reflect on some of the shared experiences about diversity we heard on the day

• Learn about the next stages of the project and how to get involved
Context and statistics

- **SLT students**: 5% male
- **Admissions steady, applications 30% down, more use of clearing to fill places**
- **Females 5X more likely to consider SLT career**
- **Limited awareness of the profession**
- **6% SLT students under 21 doing a first degree are from the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods compared to 11.3% in the general student population**
- **Images of the profession depict limited demographics and client groups.**
- **Minority ethnic groups less aware SLT is a profession – parental views important**
- **Stereotypes: about helping children not scientific**
- **Images of the profession depict limited demographics and client groups.**
- **Few senior role models – perception of low pay**
- **18% of UK SLT students have declared a disability**
- **SLT students 13% from ethnic minorities**

**Impact on student population**
Warda Farah
Independent SLT, Language Waves
SLT Diversity: Ethnicity

Warda Farah
Independent Speech & Language Therapist
Language Waves
Terminology

• “Ethnicity is the fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition.” Cambridge University Press (2008)

• “Race is a concept that is used to signify different types of human bodies. While there is no biological basis for racial classification, sociologists recognize a long history of attempts to organize groups of people based on similar skin colour and physical appearance.” Cambridge University Press. (2008)

• “Culture is the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society.” Cambridge University Press (2008)
What barriers do black speech and language therapists face when entering the profession?

1) Lack of awareness

2) Accessibility/ admissions

3) Issues around representation

4) Support at university
Lack of awareness

- Lack of awareness of what SLT is or routes into the profession
- Teachers and careers advisors have limited knowledge
- Deemed as less prestigious than other professions
- Difficulties in acquiring work experience
Lack of representation
University experience

• Very different to my secondary, Sixth-form classes

• Lack of ethnic diversity in SLT cohorts

• Difficult to relate or share personal experiences

• My cultural needs being ignored
Placement support

• Students don’t feel supported at university

• Lack of cultural competencies

• Unconscious bias is happening. BAME students do not wish to report in case of appearing to be “troublemakers”
Some solutions

• Schools/colleges/ career advisors should have a better understanding of SALT

• Videos/images of showing images of diversity in the profession

• Diversity training for all, to better understand the needs of the clients they serve

• Training practitioners to support students from diverse backgrounds to manage challenges when on placement.

• Develop diversity resources to support preparation for placement.
James Smithson
MSc Speech and Language Therapy
Student, City, University of London
SLT Diversity: Gender

James Smithson
MSc Speech and Language Therapy Student
City, University of London
What’s the problem?

• In industries involving science, technology, engineering and medicine, women make up less than a quarter of the UK workforce (BBC, 2018)

• However, in Speech and Language Therapy:
  • 5% of students in the UK are male (HESA, 2018)
  • The current MSc 2 year at City consists of 105 students, only 5 of which are male
  • 97% of qualified SLTs are female in the UK (RCSLT, 2018)

• The question: Why does the SLT profession attract significantly more women than men?
But first, a disclaimer

• A straight, white, middle(ish) class male discussing diversity and equality
  • Isn’t it ironic? (Morissette, 1995)

• However, our group’s aims were:
  • To establish why men:
    • Are unaware of the profession
    • Do not understand the depth of the role
    • Do not see SLT as a viable career option

• We did not aim to:
  • Create a 50/50 gender split
  • Even the playing field in the name of equality

• Our motivation was to improve awareness and understanding to attract the best people to the profession, regardless of gender

1995?! 😐
Possible reasons:

• There are two broad areas which could contribute to the low number of male S/SLTs:

  **Preconceptions of men:**
  • Not traditionally seen as caring or sensitive
    • Unemotional
  • Direct and solution-focussed
  • Prefer scientific, technological, engineering and manual professions
  • Less suited to working with children

  **Preconceptions of SLT:**
  • Solely one-to-one work with patients
  • Predominantly working with children
  • Caring for others is central to the role – a ‘caring profession’
    • Use of taught techniques/exercises - not scientifically based theory and EBP
Why is SLT so unappealing to men?

- We established 6 key areas which could contribute to the problem:

  - Feminised language
  - Lack of exposure/awareness
  - Misunderstanding what training & the role entails
  - Preconceptions about men
  - Job title
  - Comfort in an all-female environment
Purely a gender issue or a wider problem?

- These issues are likely to affect men suitable/eligible to be SLTs
- However, many could also act as a barrier for women:
  - Overly feminised language e.g. *part-time, caring, nurturing*
  - Misunderstanding of the job and/or training e.g. unaware of scientific base
  - An all-female workplace may feel as difficult to penetrate

- Our question:
  - What can be done to make the profession more accessible to a wider group?

- Our realisation:
  - We need to ‘re-brand’ SLT from the ground up
  - We need to ensure every touch point reflects the truth of the profession
Great, but how do we do it?

• Our aim was to challenge the current (mis)perceptions of SLT by:
  • Creating a library of photos reflecting:
    • Male SLTs (also applicable to other areas covered by the SLT Diversity Day)
    • The client base rather than the therapist
  • Ensuring adjectives reflect the role more accurately on sites, literature etc.
    • e.g. problem solving, dynamic, scientific, medical, pathology
  • Using male S/SLTs at open days and other events
  • Working with the education sector to ensure those interested in medicine, science and technology are aware of the profession
    • STEM subjects
  • Using men in the profession as use cases
    • E.g. Max Elswood – Health Careers
Themes, careers and wider diversity issues

Themes

- Role models profiling career trajectories and images of a more diverse group of SLTs.
- The profession should reflect how to deal better with incidents of discrimination/unconscious bias and how to proactively ask the question.
- How much is the monoculture of the profession contributing to careers and diversity issues?

Careers issues – lots of ideas!

- Multi-modal/ up-to-date use of social media/vlogging/podcasts/You Tube/Snapchat magazine/review #language re diversity eg “speechies”.
- New national SLT student network
- Improve schools careers advice on SLT.
- New research around target groups views of SLT and experiences of and characteristics of SLT students?
- National advertising campaign on You Tube.
- Make benefits of an SLT career clearer eg NHS benefits.

Wider diversity issues

- Some aspects of diversity better communicated via narrative (eg socio-economic/invisible disabilities) and some via images.
- How to support pressures of the training – mental health/financial.
- What do “reasonable adjustments” look like for SLT?
- Work experience focussed on those from a disadvantaged or more diverse background.
- Looking at student demographics and attainment.
What next?

- Work streams in these areas to take forward work:
  - Gender
  - Ethnicity
  - Influencing the profession culture
  - Wider aspects of diversity and admission
  - Careers promotion and images of the profession
- Join the RCSLT Basecamp group to get involved email hubs@rcslt.org
- Carry on using #SLTDiversity
- Look at local factors in your RCSLT Hubs
- New RCSLT webpages in development on careers and diversity – for members and non-members
Any Questions?
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www.rcslt.org/webinars