Impact of COVID-19 on people with speech and language difficulties

3 December 2020

#APPGSLD
Thank you!
Thank you!

People
- Impact on children & young people

Practitioners
- PPE for speech & language therapists
- #AGPAlliance

People & Practitioners
- NHS Funding Act
- Coronavirus Act
- Domestic Abuse Bill
- Medicines and Medical Devices Bill
Impact on communication and swallowing

- People recovering from COVID-19 will have communication, voice, swallowing and respiratory needs & potentially cognitive issues.
- People who are hospitalised and who have life saving interventions such as mechanical ventilation, intubation or tracheotomy experience long-term challenges.
- Symptoms continue over weeks and months.
- A multidisciplinary team, with speech and language therapists, is crucial to support long-term rehabilitation.
Impact on adults

- SLTs were redeployed to support people with the virus in the first phase
- Community therapy only provided to people with “urgent” needs
- Thousands of adults received no speech and language therapy
Impact on adults – RCSLT member survey

- Access to speech and language therapy
  - Referrals down by 28% in April – May
  - 72% said there were adults on their caseload who had not received intervention since the start of the pandemic

- Impact on outcomes
  - 44% reported a deterioration in speech, language and communication skills* for many or some of the adults that they support
  - 43% reported a deterioration in swallowing function* for many or some of the adults that they support
  - 36% reported an increase in challenging behaviours* for many or some of the adults that they support

  (*since the start of the pandemic)
Impact on adults: what others have reported

Many therapy services were scaled back (inc. SLT, OT & physiotherapy)

- 72% of people with neurological conditions had appointments cancelled
- 70% of people with multiple sclerosis have not seen or spoken to a therapist
- 55% of stroke survivors had speech and language therapy cancelled
- 39% of stroke survivors received absolutely no speech and language therapy all year

Impact

- Increase in mental health problems and deterioration in physical health
- 75% of people with MS Society said that they were aware of a deterioration in the mental or physical health directly due to not accessing therapy during lockdown
The @RCSLT’s @KGadhok is pleased to be a signatory of this letter to @Jochurchill4. Everyone has the #RightToRehab - #rehab services need to restart fully & rehabilitation workers need to be protected from redeployment.

RCOT Campaigns, Policy & Public Affairs @PublicAffRCOT • 23 Nov

We have written to Health Minister @Jochurchill4 to ask for the protection of rehabilitation support.

Rehab services need to restart fully & rehabilitation workers need to be protected from redeployment.

Have a read of our joint letter 👇

#RightToRehab
Show this thread
The realities of working during the year

- Community therapist
- Head and neck cancer specialist
Impact on children and young people: RCSLT member survey

- **Early identification**
  - Referrals down by around 50% in April – May

- **Access to speech and language therapy**
  - 90% said there were children on their caseload who had not received intervention since the start of the pandemic

- **Impact on children and young people**
  - Around 1/3 (31%) reported a deterioration in children’s speech, language and communication skills
  - Nearly half (47%) reported an increase in challenging behaviours
The pandemic had **significantly impacted the learning and development of children.**

Many **children needed more support** to make friends and mix with others outside of their home.

Children were **now less likely to start a conversation or comment on things during play.**

**Widening inequalities** - 29% of leaders reported that communication and language had fallen behind, but 21% saying it had improved.

**Increasing delays** in accessing support for speech and language therapy.
My letter to the Royal College of Occupational Therapists.

Therapists provide vital support to children with SEND, they are allowed to be back in schools & should deliver medical services as usual & should not be redeployed.

@PublicAffRCOT  @RCSLT  @thecsp  @DCPcampaign
Impact on SLTs: member wellbeing survey

- Evidence that **anxiety** levels (having decreased slightly over the first few waves of the research) may be on the rise again.
- Workplace **stress** may be on the rise, with a steady increase in those complaining of **low morale** at work, from 18% at the start to 27% now.
- Difficulties arising from **staff shortages** have risen from 7% to 20%.
- ‘**Unfamiliar ways of working**’ has been the most challenging aspect of the pandemic.
- Most common way in which members have described their work environment is ‘**unpredictable**’.
- ‘**Intense**’ has increased in usage throughout the project with 45% now using it.
- Pressure is building on members to manage **heavy workloads**.
Impact on access to SLT: service user survey

- #SLTSurvey launched on 2\textsuperscript{nd} November after consultation with relevant charities. Closes on 5\textsuperscript{th} February.
  - Did the UK-wide lockdown (March-June) affect your speech and language therapy?
  - If so, what impact did it have on you?
  - What are your thoughts about the future?
Impact on access to SLT: service user survey

- All ages, all conditions, all nations of the UK.
- Accessible versions: Talking Mats, Easy Read, and aphasia-accessible.
- Analysis by @JudyClegg2 from @HCS_Sheffield in the New Year.
- Over 300 submissions to date.

We need your help! Please promote to your service users, local service user organisations & community groups.
#SLTTSurvey – what we’ve heard so far (from parents)

- Most children received less speech and language therapy during the UK-wide lockdown.
- Lack of access to therapy impacted on children’s mental and physical health, social and home life, and education.
- For those who received therapy remotely, there was mixed success – some said it worked well and others struggled.
- Most parents are worried about their children getting therapy in future.
Communication Access Symbol Project

- Launched on 12th November
- An e-learning package and accreditation scheme has been developed
- Since its launch, over 300 organisations have registered
Thank you!
Any questions?