

Executive Summary – people aged 18 and over surveys

The key findings of the main survey of people aged 18 and over are as follows.

Number of respondents

- The surveys for people aged 18 and over received a total of 100 responses.
- 77 responses were received to the main 18 and over survey; 7 for the accessible (Easy Read) 18 and over survey; and 16 for the aphasia-accessible survey.

Profile of respondents completing the main 18 and over survey

- More than half of survey respondents (51%) were adults who were having or had had SLT at the start of lockdown. 43% of respondents were family members/carers.
- The majority of respondents (81%) lived in England. 9% lived in Scotland, 5% in Wales and 5% in Northern Ireland. This matches the breakdown of populations across the United Kingdom.
- 50% of respondents were aged 50 and over. 17% were aged between 18 and 25. The remaining 33% were aged between 25 and 50.

Respondents' conditions

- A range of conditions were identified by respondents. Some identified more than one condition indicating complex comorbidities. Neurological conditions included Parkinson's Disease, stroke, brain injury, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis and dementia. Other conditions included learning disability, autism, hearing loss/deafness, stammer, mental health difficulties and persisting developmental language disorders.

Respondents' speech and language therapy

- More than two-thirds of the respondents (68%) were having or had received SLT before March 2020.
- Prior to the lockdown, the majority of these people were having or had received SLT for speech, language and communication; 10% for eating and drinking; and 14% for both.

- Before lockdown, 85% received SLT in person across a range of settings and 15% received SLT online or by telephone.

What happened during lockdown (March-June 2020)?

- After lockdown started in March 2020, there was more than a 50% reduction in access to SLT for survey respondents. Pre-lockdown, 68% were having SLT. After March 2020, only 33% did.
- During lockdown, only 16% of the respondents received the same amount of SLT as before lockdown. More than half of the respondents (52%) received less SLT, with 44% not receiving any SLT during this time.
- A range of reasons were given for the reduced SLT received during lockdown, including cancellations by SLT services and service users cancelling appointments. Nearly two-thirds of the cancellations reported (62%) were initiated by SLT services.
- People who received SLT during lockdown did so in a variety of ways, including in person, via telephone and online/telehealth. There was no clear consensus as to the perceived effectiveness of telephone and online/telehealth delivery. Respondents reported on the difficulties of telephone and online/telehealth delivery.

What was the impact of less speech and language therapy during lockdown?

- Overall, lockdown had a negative impact on adults' communication and eating/drinking. Nearly half of the respondents (43%) reported their communication and eating/drinking stayed the same and 28% reported it was worse.
- A decline in mental health was the area of impact highlighted most by the respondents (56%). This was followed by social life and friendships (54%), and home and domestic life (51%).

What happened after lockdown ended?

- From the end of lockdown (June 2020), 76% of the respondents were not receiving any in-person SLT provision.

What happened in the most and least deprived areas of England?

- Responses reveal a difference between the most deprived areas and the least deprived areas in terms of access to SLT in England for adults over the age of 18.
- A higher percentage of respondents from the most deprived areas received less SLT during lockdown than people from the least deprived areas – 50% and 42%

respectively.

- A lower percentage of respondents from most deprived areas received in person SLT during lockdown than people from the least deprived areas - 17% and 27% respectively.
- 58% of respondents from the most deprived areas reported receiving no in-person SLT during lockdown. The figure in the least deprived areas was 32%.
- 17% of respondents in the most deprived areas received face-to-face SLT after lockdown – in the least deprived areas the figure was 30%.
- 83% of people in the most deprived areas reported not having face-to-face SLT after lockdown. In the least deprived areas the figure was 70%.

What do people think about the future?

- Almost half of the respondents (49%) are concerned about being able to receive SLT in the future.
- They were concerned that a lack of access to SLT would make their lives worse.
- 65% highlighted the impact this would have on their social life and friendships. 61% highlighted their mental health. 37% highlighted their home and domestic life.

What do people think about speech and language therapy?

- SLT improves the lives of people with communication and eating and drinking difficulties. It also improves the lives of their family members and carers. Respondents were clear about this.
- 76% said SLT makes their life better.
- 29% said it makes their carer's life better.

What do people who filled out the accessible surveys say?

- While the small numbers of accessible survey responses make it difficult to identify trends as clear as those from the main survey, they do mirror the findings highlighted above.
- More detail is given in the descriptive data and analysis of the accessible 18 and over survey and aphasia-accessible survey below.
- Specifically on the aphasia-accessible survey, it highlighted interesting, if slight, differences to the other 18 and over surveys:
 - there is some indication that people with aphasia received more in-person SLT than in the other surveys.
 - people receiving SLT online or via video call were more positive about this than in the other surveys.

- there is some indication that more of these respondents reported that their communication got better during the lockdown.