



Building back better: Speech and language therapy services after COVID-19 Evidence summary and policy recommendations

RCSLT did a survey about the impact of lockdown from March to June 2020. There were over 500 responses from people who have speech and language therapy support: 100 about adults, and 400 about children and young people.

Positive things we found out

People said SLT makes their lives and the lives of their carers better

- 76% of adults said it makes their lives better
- 78% of children and young people said the same

Some people continued to have SLT during lockdown

- 32% of adults received the same or more SLT
- 12% of children and young people did so

Some people liked SLT on the phone and online/video

- 20% and 57% of adults respectively
- 13% and 29% of children and young people respectively

Negative things we found out

People had less speech and language therapy during lockdown

- 52% of adults had less SLT
- 81% of children and young people had less SLT
- A higher percentage of people of all ages in the most deprived areas had less SLT

People had no SLT during lockdown

- 44% of adults had no SLT
- 62% of children and young people had no SLT
- A higher percentage of adults in the least deprived areas had no SLT
- A higher percentage of children and young people in the most deprived areas had no SLT

The impact

Impact on communication and swallowing

People said their communication and swallowing either stayed the same or got worse.

- 43% and 28% of adults respectively
- 47% and 24% of children and young people respectively

Impact on adults' lives

People aged 18 and over told us having less speech and language therapy was bad for their:

- Mental health – 56%
- Social life and friendships – 54%
- Home and domestic life – 51%

Impact on children and young people's lives

People aged 0-18 told us having less speech and language therapy was bad for their:

- Education – 67%
- Social life and friendships – 59%
- Mental health – 45%

The future

People are worried about getting SLT in the future.

- 49% of adults are worried
- 79% of children and young people are worried

What needs to happen

The survey report includes policy recommendations:

1. National and local recovery plans must identify and support people's communication and swallowing needs
2. Speech and language therapy must be recognised as integral to mental health services
3. Speech and language therapy services must be appropriately resourced so they can:
 - Meet increased demand including Long COVID
 - Address the backlog and higher level of need
 - Return to their substantive posts
 - Protect and promote people's general mental health and wellbeing

Support from other organisations

83 organisations wrote to the Prime Minister in March in support of these policy recommendations. They asked for better access to speech and language therapy and called for more support for people with communication and swallowing needs.

See the letter via: <http://bit.ly/PMLetterRCSLT>

How can you help?

1. You can write to the Prime Minister asking the Government to implement these recommendations.
2. You can pledge to work for better lives for people with communication and swallowing needs.
3. You can express public support using #BuildBackBetterSLT.

For more information:

- Visit bit.ly/BuildBackBetterSLT
- Email peter.just@rcslt.org and padraigin.oflynn@rcslt.org