



RCSLT STATEMENT ON CRITICAL WORKERS

23 June 2020

UK Government

According to UK Government guidance on critical workers, parents whose work is critical to the coronavirus (COVID-19) response include those who work in health and social care. The guidance states:

'This includes, but is not limited to, doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff'.

The guidance also highlights that education and childcare staff are critical workers, including support and teaching staff and specialist education professionals.

Speech and language therapists are healthcare professionals registered with the Health and Care Professions Council. They work in a range of settings, including supporting:

- people of all ages and stages of life in health and social care settings;
- children and young people in educational settings; and
- young people and adults in criminal justice settings.

On this basis, the RCSLT believes that speech and language therapists are critical workers, as defined in the UK Government's guidance and also in guidance on key workers and critical workers issued by the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

Scotland

The Scottish Government has issued guidance on key workers. It highlights three categories:

- **Category 1** – Health and Care workers directly supporting COVID response, and associated staff; Health and Care workers supporting life threatening emergency work, as well as critical primary and community care provision; Energy suppliers (small numbers identified as top priority already); staff providing childcare/learning for other category 1 staff.
- **Category 2** – All other Health and Care workers, and wider public sector workers providing emergency/critical welfare services (for example: fire, police, prisons, social workers), as well as those supporting our Critical National Infrastructure, without whom serious damage to the welfare of the people of Scotland could be caused.
- **Category 3** – All workers (private, public or third sector) without whom there could be a significant impact on Scotland (but where the response to COVID-19, or the ability to perform essential tasks to keep the country running, would not be severely compromised).

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-guide-schools-early-learning-closures/pages/key-workers/>

Wales

The Welsh Government has issued guidance on critical (key) workers. It states that health and social care workers include but are not limited to:

- doctors
- nurses
- midwives
- paramedics
- social workers
- care workers
- other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers
- support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector'

On education and childcare workers, it states that these include:

- nursery staff
- teaching staff
- social workers
- specialist education professionals who must remain active to deliver this approach

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-critical-key-workers-childcare-and-education-provision>

Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Executive has issued guidance on key workers. Its definition of key workers includes this:

Health and Social Care. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social care sector.

Education and childcare. This includes pre-school and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response.

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/news/ministers-announce-extension-definition-key-workers-access-childcare-0>