**Template press release for MPs**

[Insert Date]

**[INSERT NAME OF MP] PLEDGES TO BUILD BACK BETTER WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE COMMUNICATION AND SWALLOWING NEEDS**

[Insert name of MP] is today pledging to build back better with people who have communication and swallowing needs.

[Insert name of MP]’s pledge comes following the publication of a report by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) on people’s access to speech and language therapy during the first UK-wide lockdown (March-June 2020).

The report – ***Sp*eech and language therapy during and beyond COVID-19: building back better with people who have communication and swallowing needs** – reveals that lockdown had a negative impact on people’s communication and swallowing, as well as on their access to speech and language therapy, especially in the most deprived areas of England.

Additionally, it reveals people’s concerns about accessing speech and language therapy in the future and the potential effect of this on their education, social life and friendships, mental health, and home and domestic life:

* 62% of children and young people did not receive any speech and language therapy during lockdown. Of those who did receive therapy, 81% said it was less than they received before lockdown;
* 44% of adults did not receive any speech and language therapy during lockdown. Of those who did, 52% said it was less than before lockdown;
* 67% of respondents to the 0-18 survey said having less speech and language therapy made their education worse, 59% said it made their social life and friendships worse, and 45% said it made their mental health worse;
* 56% of people aged 18 and over said their mental health had got worse, 54% said their social life and friendships had got worse, 51% said their home and domestic life had got worse.

Following the publication of the report, a broad coalition of over 80 organisations representing and supporting people who have communication and swallowing needs wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister about people’s access to speech and language therapy during the first lockdown.

The report encourages the Government to build back better and level up speech and language therapy services in two key ways:

* national and local recovery policies must identify and provide appropriate response to an individual’s communication and swallowing needs;
* speech and language therapy services must be appropriately resourced so those people and their families and carers get the support they require.

[Insert name of MP]: “As has been revealed by people’s experiences during the first UK-wide lockdown, COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated the challenges faced by people with communication and swallowing needs and their families and carers. I will encourage the Government to address the backlog facing speech and language therapy services and ensure real, sustained improvement in accessing these services for everyone who needs them.”

Further information: [Add MP’s office contact details.]

**Notes to Editors**

For a copy of the Building back better report and more information, please visit: <https://www.rcslt.org/get-involved/building-back-better-speech-and-language-therapy-services-after-covid-19/#section-1>

**For a copy of the sector letter to the Prime Minister please visit:**

<https://www.rcslt.org/get-involved/building-back-better-speech-and-language-therapy-services-after-covid-19/#section-3>

**About the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists**

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) is the professional body for speech and language therapists in the UK, representing over 18,000 members. It facilitates and promotes research into the field of speech and language therapy – the care for individuals with communication, swallowing, eating and drinking difficulties. It promotes better education and training of speech and language therapists and is responsible for setting and maintaining high standards in education, clinical practice and ethical conduct. For more information on the RCSLT and its Giving Voice campaign visit [www.rcslt.org](http://www.rcslt.org/) and follow @RCSLT, @RCSLTpolicy and @GivingVoiceUK on Twitter.