



THE PROGRAMME

WELCOME AND OPENING ADDRESS

The Rev'd Canon Kathryn Fleming, Precentor

CHOIR

What a Wonderful World, originally sung by Louis Armstrong Performed by the Great Western Hospitals NHS Choir

OPENING REFLECTION

Irma Donaldson, Chair, RCSLT

INSPIRATIONAL READING

Extract from The Diving Bell and the Butterfly by Jean-Dominique Bauby Read by *Umaymah Dakri, SLT, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust*

CHOIR

Make Your Own Kind of Music, originally sung by Cass Elliot Performed by the Great Western Hospitals NHS Choir

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

Nick Hewer, President, RCSLT in conversation with Professor Pam Enderby, Professor Emeritus, School of Medicine and Population Health, University of Sheffield



THE PROGRAMME

SERVICE USER REFLECTION

Jon Organ, laryngectomy patient and founder of 'Life after Lary'

CHORUS SONG

Lovely Day, originally sung by Bill Withers Sung by all, accompanied by the Great Western Hospitals NHS Choir

READING BY RCSLT CEO

The shape of sound Read by Steve Jamieson, CEO, RCSLT

POEMS FROM THE RCSLT STUDENT LEADERSHIP COHORT OF 2024

Readings by Fraser Wakeling, Capucine Holloway and Garbhán Cannon

CHOIR

Daydream Believer, originally sung by The Monkees Performed by the Great Western Hospitals NHS Choir

FINAL CLOSING REMARKS

The Rev'd Canon Kathryn Fleming, Precentor

WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD

I see trees of green Red roses too I see them bloom For me and you And I think to myself What a wonderful world

I see skies of blue And clouds of white The bright blessed day The dark sacred night And I think to myself What a wonderful world

The colours of the rainbow So pretty in the sky Are also on the faces Of people going by

I see friends shaking hands Saying, "How do you do?" They're really saying "I love you"

I hear babies cry I watch them grow They'll learn much more Than I'll never know And I think to myself What a wonderful world

Yes, I think to myself What a wonderful world

Oh yeah

OPENING REFLECTION

Irma Donaldson, Chair, RCSLT

Good morning everyone and thank you all so much for being here today. It's an incredible honour to stand before you, in such a beautiful and historic setting, to celebrate 80 years of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

Southwark Cathedral has witnessed centuries of change, and it feels so fitting that we gather here to reflect on our own history—80 years of a profession that has quietly but profoundly transformed lives across the UK and beyond.

We often say that speech and language therapy is a profession that supports people from cradle to grave. And that's not just a slogan. It's the truth. From helping a premature baby to feed safely, to enabling a stroke survivor to speak again, to supporting someone with dementia to hold on to their sense of self through communication—our impact spans a lifetime.

And remarkably, we've been doing this since before the NHS even existed. Our College was founded in 1945, in the wake of a world war, with the vision that communication is a human right—and that everyone should have the support they need to connect, to belong, and to thrive.

Now, 80 years later, that vision is stronger than ever.

Whether it's the newly qualified therapist navigating their first caseload, the researcher driving innovation, or the support worker making a difference on the ground—this profession is full of passion, of purpose, and of people who care deeply about equity and inclusion. That's what gives me such hope for our future

As we mark this milestone, I want us to carry forward not just the achievements of the past, but the energy and ambition we'll need for the years ahead. We know the demand for our services is rising. We know that health inequalities persist. But we also know that our voice—your voices—are being heard louder than ever.

My ambition as Chair is to keep lifting those voices. To continue building a profession that is inclusive, innovative, and empowered to lead.

And so, today, let's celebrate. Let's celebrate the 80 years behind us—and the future we're shaping together. Thank you to every SLT, every student, every support worker, researcher, educator, service user, carer and ally who has brought us to this moment.

And thank you again for being here today. It means the world.

THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY

by Jean-Dominique Bauby

Chapter: Guardian Angel read by *Umaymah Dakri, SLT, Leicestershire*Partnership NHS Trust

The identity badge pinned to Sandrine's white tunic says "Speech Therapist," but it should read "Guardian Angel."

She is the one who set up the communication code without which I would be cut off from the world. But alas! while most of my friends have adopted the system, here at the hospital only Sandrine and a female psychologist use it. So I usually have the skimpiest arsenal of facial expressions, winks, and nods to ask people to shut the door, loosen a faucet, lower the volume on the TV, or fluff up a pillow. I do not succeed every time.

As the weeks go by, this forced solitude has allowed me to acquire a certain stoicism and to realize that the hospital staff are of two kinds: the majority, who would not dream of leaving the room without first attempting to decipher my SOS messages; and the less conscientious minority, who make their getaway pretending not to notice my distress signals. Like that heartless oaf who switched off the Bordeaux-Munich soccer game at halftime, saying "Good night!" with a finality that left no hope of appeal.

Quite apart from the practical drawbacks, this inability to communicate is somewhat wearing. Which explains the gratification I feel twice daily when Sandrine knocks, pokes her small chipmunk face through the door, and at once sends all gloomy thoughts packing. The invisible and eternally imprisoning diving bell seems less oppressive.

Speech therapy is an art that deserves to be more widely known. You cannot imagine the acrobatics your tongue mechanically performs in order to produce all the sounds of a language.

On my birthday, Sandrine managed to get me to pronounce the whole alphabet more or less intelligibly. I could not have had a better present. It was as if those twenty-six letters had been wrenched from the void; my own hoarse voice seemed to emanate from a far-off country.

The exhausting exercise left me feeling like a caveman discovering language for the first time.

THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY

by Jean-Dominique Bauby

Chapter: Guardian Angel read by *Umaymah Dakri, SLT, Leicestershire*Partnership NHS Trust

Sometimes the phone interrupts our work, and I take advantage of Sandrine's presence to be in touch with loved ones, to intercept and catch passing fragments of life, the way you catch a butterfly.

My daughter, Céleste, tells me of her adventures with her pony. In five months she will be nine. My father tells me how hard it is to stay on his feet. He is fighting undaunted through his ninety-third year. These two are the outer links of the chain of love that surrounds and protects me.

I often wonder about the effect of these one-way conversations on those at the other end of the line. I am overwhelmed by them.

How dearly I would love to be able to respond with something other than silence to these tender calls. I know that some of them find it unbearable.

Sweet Florence refuses to speak to me unless I first breathe noisily into the receiver that Sandrine holds glued to my ear.

"Are you there, Jean-Do?" she asks anxiously over the air.

And I have to admit that at times I do not know anymore.

MAKE YOUR OWN KIND OF MUSIC

Nobody can tell you There's only one song worth singing They may try and sell you Cause it hangs them up To see someone like you

But you gotta make your own kind of music Sing your own special song Make your own kind of music Even if nobody else sings along

You're gonna be nowhere
The loneliest kind of lonely
It may be rough going
Just to do your thing is the hardest thing to do

But you gotta make your own kind of music Sing your own special song Make your own kind of music Even if nobody else sings along

So if you cannot take my hand And if you must be going, I will understand

MAKE YOUR OWN KIND OF MUSIC

You gotta make your own kind of music Sing your own special song Make your own kind of music Even if nobody else sings along

You gotta make your own kind of music Sing your own kind of song Make your own kind of music Even if nobody else sings along

You gotta make your own kind of music Sing your own kind of song Make your own kind of music Even if nobody else sings along

> No no no no Even if nobody else sings along If nobody else sings along

SERVICE USER REFLECTION

Jon Organ, laryngectomy patient and founder of 'Life after Lary'

Pre January 2023 I would never have thought for one second that I would be standing in front of you having been given this amazing invitation to attend the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists 80th anniversary celebration, let alone be asked to speak.

Not for one moment did I ever think I would have anything to do with RCSLT and to be honest had not even heard of them or know what they did.

Looking back, I often think about what life can throw at you and how situations can change for you in an instant and you have to deal with them the best you can, with no knowledge of how it will pan out or what the road in front of you looks like. It does not always happen to someone else. I am that someone else.

January 2023 after many months of pestering my GP with a hoarse voice, that they put down to inhalers prescribed because of breathing difficulties, they finally sent me to Ear, Nose and Throat for them to take a look. I thought I had a bad throat infection or something similar. Some antibiotics and back to work. That's what I thought. How wrong was I.

A quick scope to take a look and I was told I had cancer of the vocal chords growing 40% over my airway. I did not know at that moment, but after further scans I was given 6 months to live, and the cancer was stage 4 and also in my thyroid.

At that moment you become a professional patient and life changes in a flash. Many hours of surgery, plus radiotherapy and chemo would hopefully save you. You rely on strangers to keep you alive and guide you through this crazy maze that you had never thought of before. Consultants, doctors, oncologists, radiographers, cancer nurses and of course, speech and language therapists.

Surgery takes place and your voice box is removed. Removing the voice box does not only remove your voice but you. Who you are. Your personality. The jokes the laughter. Just you. Thankfully during this journey you have speech and language therapy. My team was the best, I know we all say that, but my team literally saved me. Jess, Katie, Rosie, we, as a family can never thank them enough. They taught me how to speak, to breathe, to swallow. To be me again. To laugh and smile again.

SERVICE USER REFLECTION

Jon Organ, laryngectomy patient and founder of 'Life after Lary'

They changed my valve whenever it leaked. Tried different valves to improve things. Worked with me and reassured me.

Not just that but they went above and beyond to get the old me back on track when I felt all was lost. They have even taught me to change my own valve for a more independent life. They held my hand when it needed holding, supported me and the family when we needed supporting and generally was an integral part of my recovery and after.

I dread to think how my life would look without them. From no voice box and no voice and no future, to getting back to work, teaching and presenting and even a new hobby. Singing in the laryngectomy Shout at Cancer choir. Recently we sang at the Royal Opera House London.

We, as a family now have a future. A future where I can speak again. Smile again, be dad and grandad again. I cannot thank them enough for the support they have given me and my family.

I have always said and always will "It is the surgeons that remove your cancer, but services like speech and language therapy that give you your life back".

LOVELY DAY

When I wake up in the morning, love And the sunlight hurts my eyes And something without warning, love Bears heavy on my mind

Then I look at you
And the world's alright with me
Just one look at you
And I know it's gonna be

A lovely day (lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)
(Lovely day, lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)
A lovely day (lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)
(Lovely day, lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)

When the day that lies ahead of me Seems impossible to face When someone else instead of me Always seems to know the way

Then I look at you And the world's alright with me Just one look at you And I know it's gonna be

A lovely day (lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)
(Lovely day, lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)
A lovely day (lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)
(Lovely day, lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)

When the day that lies ahead of me Seems impossible to face And when someone else instead of me Always seems to know the way

LOVELY DAY

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A lovely day (lovely day, lovely day, lovely day) (Lovely day, lovely day, lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)

A lovely day (lovely day, lovely day, lovely day) (Lovely day, lovely day, lovely day, lovely day) (Lovely day, lovely day, lovely day, lovely day) (Lovely day, lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)

A lovely day (lovely day, lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)
(Lovely day, lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)

A lovely day (lovely day, lovely day, lovely day) (Lovely day, lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)

A lovely day (lovely day, lovely day, lovely day) (Lovely day, lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)

A lovely day (lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)
(Lovely day, lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)
(Lovely day, lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)
(Lovely day, lovely day, lovely day)

THE SHAPE OF SOUND

Read by Steve Jamieson, CEO, RCSLT

We are born into silence soft breath, small heartbeat, the hush before the world begins to speak.

And then—a voice.

Not ours, not yet. But a voice that gathers us, shapes the air into meaning, wraps sound in warmth.

Language is not just what we say. It is how we become known. How thought takes flight and feeling finds form. It is the bridge between minds, a thread spun between souls.

A single word can part a sea.
A sentence can set a heart ablaze.
A whisper can carry through centuries.
A name can summon presence from absence

Speech is the architecture of memory. The mother tongue, the scholar's verse, the lullaby, the lecture, the roar, the prayer.

It lives in every dialect, every stammer, every sacred pause.

Language is not perfect. It stumbles. It fails.

But oh—how it tries. How it reaches for the ineffable, pulling stars into syllables, and sorrow into sound.

In speech, we echo ancestors. In silence, we still speak. Even hands can shape sentences, even eyes can recite poems.

Let us not take this for granted this gift of voice, this miracle of meaning.

To speak is to create.
To listen is to honor.
To understand is to be changed.

So today, we gather to celebrate not just what we say, but what it means to say it.

Let us praise the beauty of speech its rhythm, its resilience, its music, its might.

Let us honor the infinite languages of the heart, and the quiet, courageous act of making oneself known.

For in every voice, there is a story. And in every story, there is a world.

THE WORK OF WORDS

A tribute to speech and language therapists by Fraser Wakeling

Eighty years of voices heard, Of shaping sound and sculpting word, From lisping tots to elder folk, We've coached, we've coaxed, we've cracked a joke.

We tango with phonemes, juggle with tone, Guide hesitant stammers to stand on their own. "Say it again," we patiently cheer, Because progress is loud — and sometimes unclear.

Yet ours is not an easy quest — The path winds on with little rest. Progress can cease, stall, or slide, And patience feels like half the ride.

But still we show up, day by day, And find small victories along the way — A whispered "yes," a lifted chin, Proof that each effort plants hope within.

From "f" and "th" to tricky "r", We train the sounds that travel far. With mirrors, games, and endless rhyme, We turn confusion into climb. Our toolkit's grown through changing years — From tongue depressors to Al ears. With apps and tech to guide the way, We shape tomorrow's voice each day.

We've battled myths, we've shifted minds, Proved words aren't all that language defines.
Gestures, symbols, and signs we teach — Because all deserve the gift of speech.

We work with those whose swallow strains, Who fear the sip that once was plain. With care we guide each step, each bite, Restoring safety, taste, and right.

So here's to colleagues, past and new, And all that lies beyond this year, For all the people we've guided through. And voices we've yet to hear, For eighty years — and eighty more — We'll lift each voice and help it soar.

INFLUENCE

by Joseph Norris

Read by Capucine Holloway

Drop a pebble in the water, And its ripples reach out far; And the sunbeams dancing on them May reflect them to a star.

Give a smile to someone passing, Thereby making his morning glad; It may greet you in the evening When your own heart may be sad.

Do a deed of simple kindness; Though its end you may not see, It may reach, like widening ripples, Down a long eternity.

THESE ARE THE HANDS WRITTEN

by Michael Rosen

Read by Garbhán Cannon

These are the hands
That touch us first
Feel your head
Find the pulse
And make your bed.

These are the hands
That tap your back
Test the skin
Hold your arm
Wheel the bin
Change the bulb
Fix the drip
Pour the jug
Replace your hip.

These are the hands
That fill the bath
Mop the floor
Flick the switch
Soothe the sore
Burn the swabs
Give us a jab
Throw out sharps
Design the lab.

And these are the hands
That stop the leaks
Empty the pan
Wipe the pipes
Carry the can
Clamp the veins
Make the cast
Log the dose
And touch us last.

DAYDREAM BELIEVER

Oh, I could hide 'neath the wings Of the bluebird as she sings The six o'clock alarm would never ring But it rings and I rise Wipe the sleep out of my eyes My shavin' razor's cold and it stings

> Cheer up, Sleepy Jean Oh, what can it mean To a daydream believer And a homecoming queen

You once thought of me
As a white knight on his steed
Now you know how happy I can be
Oh, and our good times start and end
Without dollar one to spend
But how much, baby, do we really need

Cheer up, Sleepy Jean
Oh, what can it mean
To a daydream believer
And a homecoming queen
Cheer up, Sleepy Jean
Oh, what can it mean
To a daydream believer
And a homecoming queen

Cheer up, Sleepy Jean Oh, what can it mean To a daydream believer And a homecoming queen [Repeat]







making space for love

with heart, mind, and soul

It is good to welcome you to Southwark Cathedral. Set on the south bank of the River Thames, in one of the most vibrant and diverse communities in London, this building has been a constant witness in a place of change.

The first church was built on this site around the year 606. First a convent, then a monastery, it became in 1106 the Augustinian Priory of St Mary Overie ('over-theriver'). With Westminster Abbey and St Bartholomew the Great in Smithfield, it is one of the three remaining great monastic churches of London. At the Reformation, the Priory became a parish church, and it remains so for the people of Bankside. In 1905, as south London was rapidly expanding, the church was consecrated as the Cathedral for the new Diocese of Southwark.

The Cathedral has a momentous and significant history and has had links with many famous and influential characters including St Thomas Becket, Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens. It has also been a Cathedral for those who feel on the edges of faith or society, our welcome reaching out to all people in their beautiful God-given diversity.

Here, our Christian faith is captured in our vision to 'make space for love: with heart, mind, and soul'. Faith requires our hearts to stand up for social justice, upholding integrity and kindness, and supporting the vulnerable and oppressed. It challenges our thinking, inviting our minds to be enquiring, honest, and generous. Faith also seeks to deepen our inner lives, with the arts and creativity, by sharing in the life of our community, and by learning the arts of prayer and attention. In Jesus Christ we see the human face of God, and our faith in him is our joy and our life.

We really hope you enjoy being here with us today and that we will see you again very soon.

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