

**Health and Social Care Select Committee report on  
Community Mental Health Services  
RCSLT response - 8 December 2025**

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) welcomes the ambition of the Health and Social Care Committee's new report, [Community Mental Health Services](#), and its focus on transforming community mental health services.

However, we are disappointed that the report does not acknowledge the crucial role of all allied health professionals, particularly speech and language therapists, in delivering high-quality, person-centred mental health care, which we [set out in our written evidence](#).

**Communication and swallowing needs remain overlooked**

While the report highlights the need for holistic, community-based support for people with severe mental illness (SMI), it does not address the communication or swallowing difficulties that are common within this population. These needs are closely linked to poorer outcomes, reduced engagement, and increased risk of crisis, yet they are absent from the main body of the report. This omission risks undermining the ambition to improve access, reduce fragmentation, and ensure personalised, integrated care.

**Early identification and multidisciplinary working are essential**

Too often, people with communication and swallowing needs are identified late, resulting in avoidable deterioration, distress, and disengagement from services. Embedding speech and language therapists within community mental health teams is essential to ensuring timely assessment, effective engagement with services, and safe pathways of care.

We strongly support the report's call for integrated, multidisciplinary models, and we urge the Government to ensure that speech and language therapy is explicitly included in this vision. The report notes that timely, accessible care is essential for preventing harm and avoiding crisis. This reinforces the importance of early identification and intervention for communication and swallowing difficulties, which must be prioritised to prevent delays, crisis escalation, or further health decline.

**Supporting neurodivergent people**

The report rightly highlights the challenges neurodivergent people face when accessing mental health services. The lack of reasonable adjustments and the general inaccessibility of

services were noted as key issues. However, the report does not reference communication support, which is an essential component of high-quality, personalised care for many neurodivergent individuals. Speech and language therapists play a vital role in enabling people to express themselves, participate fully in treatment, engage with services, and avoid crisis or disengagement.

### **Workforce and funding must reflect real need**

We welcome the Committee's focus on workforce development and retention. The forthcoming 10-Year Workforce Plan must recognise speech and language therapists as a core part of the mental health workforce, with clear projections to meet population needs.

It is essential that improved mental health awareness for professionals includes training to help all mental health practitioners recognise and respond to communication needs.

Funding structures must also support effective multidisciplinary collaboration so that communication and swallowing needs can be identified early and addressed consistently across community mental health pathways.