

POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS (PPA) TEAM IMPACT REPORT

2024 – 2025



PRIORITY AREAS 2024-2025

1. Well-crafted asks, effective influencing and member engagement ahead of the **Scottish and Welsh elections**.
2. Be a leading voice in **SEND reform in England**, and success in influencing the outcome of **mental health legislation at Westminster**.
3. **Proactive workforce influencing** with tangible outcomes across the UK including the **NHSE 10-year plan**.
4. Progressing the case for **prescribing rights** for SLTs and other relevant roles.
5. Progressing the member offer in respect of **support with local influencing** and opportunities for members who wish to engage in influencing, including ICSs.

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

24

SENEDD MEMBERS ATTENDED OUR 80TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION EVENT AT THE SENEZZ

100%

INCREASE IN COMMISSIONED UNDERGRADUATE SLT
TRAINING PLACES AT ULSTER UNIVERSITY

1.1K+

FOLLOWERS VIA THE NORTHERN IRELAND
INSTAGRAM PAGE TO DATE

30+

ORGANISATIONS THE RCSLT AND STAMMA BROUGHT
TOGETHER TO FORM THE **#INCLUSIVEPARLIAMENT**
COALITION

48

ORGANISATIONS SIGNED UP TO THE RCSLT'S BRIEFING
FOR THE DEBATE ON THE **#INVESTINSLT** PETITION

RAISING AWARENESS

EVENTS:

SCOTLAND

- **Scotland Day – 17th Sept 2025.** 150 members attended the day to celebrate RCSLT's 80th anniversary, and explore how we influence, advocate and communicate our impact. We had 28 contributors who covered a range of interesting topics such as AI, complex systems, human rights, partnership working, data and how teams are making real change locally.

WALES

- **24/60 Senedd Members attended the RCSLT Wales Senedd event to mark our 80th anniversary** including the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and party spokespeople for health and education from the Welsh Conservatives and Plaid Cymru. At the event, we published our **State of the Nation** report which led directly to an hour long opposition Senedd debate by the Welsh Conservatives. The debate included contributions from all political parties.



- We officially **launched AHPF Cymru at the Senedd in March 2025** with Caroline Walters as the first chair. Dawn Bowden, Minister for Social Care and Children and James Evans, Shadow spokesperson for Health and Social Care both spoke at the event which was well attended by politicians and stakeholders.
- **Wales Hub Event – 25 June 2025.** 75 delegates attended with contributions from students, NHS managers and leaders, ASLTIP, RCSLT colleagues and external companies. There was structured time for delegates to discuss and plan their use the State of the Nation report in influencing, also use of the evidence base, the power of storytelling, AI and reflections on the next 80 years of the profession.

NORTHERN IRELAND

- **DLD awareness Day** – NI long gallery event October 2024. Young adults with DLD gave their stories and experience of going through school and work with DLD.
- **RCSLT NI supported ISAD 2024** in St George's Market, Belfast by joining Belfast Stammer Support in raising awareness and speaking to people and families who stammer. Local MLA Peter McReynolds stopped by and then created a video on his Instagram on ISAD itself.
- **NI Connect Conference – November 2024.** Over 100 members joined the conference in person. We were joined by the CAHPO, the Minister of Justice and Minister for Education for a Q&A session where members were invited to pose their questions to the Education Minister.
- Met with President of NASUWT Sally Rees January 2025 – invited to take a stand at the Teachers Conference in March 2025 and as a result to **present to the wider teachers Equality Conference in June 2025** on SLCN and Buddy Chat.
- **AHPFNI Long Gallery event – February 2025.** Showcasing all AHPs with short presentations for MLAs and other stakeholders demonstrating the innovative and creative approach that AHPs have.
- **RCSLT NI Awards – 19th Sept 2025.** Almost 200 members came together to celebrate. Nine awards were presented. Excellent feedback from members.

- **Launch of Language Launchpad** – Dept of Education NI funded RCSLT NI project to boost universal supports for early language. Both Minister for Health and Education attended and spoke at the event in the Long Gallery on 6th May 2025 with over 100 stakeholders attending.

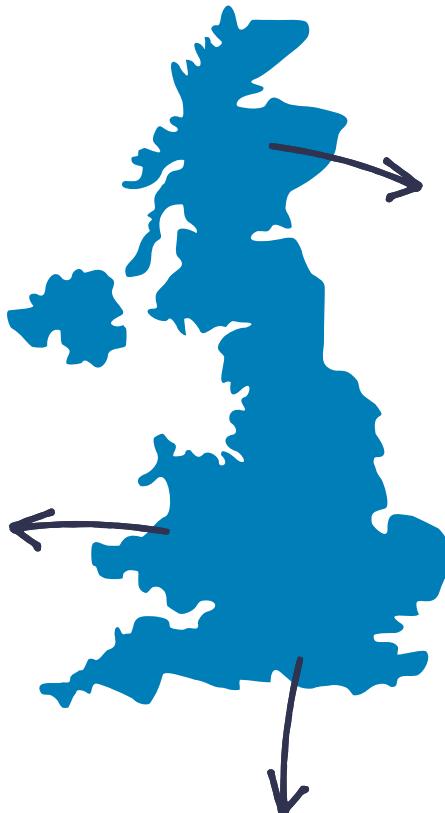


MEDIA:

NORTHERN IRELAND

- [Young NI people with DLD shine a light on life-long impact of hidden disability in bid to inspire others](#) | Belfast Live
- [Speech, Language and Communication needs joined up thinking at Stormont](#)
- [Allied Health Professionals showcase innovations improving healthcare and saving money](#)
- [Education Minister welcomes Language Launchpad](#) | Department of Education
- [New 'Language Launchpad' Initiative Aims to Strengthen Early Years Communication Development Across Northern Ireland](#) — Brown O'Connor Communications
- [Six out of six speech therapy awards!](#) | Southern Health & Social Care Trust
- [Double Win for Trust's Speech and Language Therapy Team at Prestigious Awards Ceremony](#) - South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust
- [Minister announces record investment in future workforce](#) | Department of Health
- NI team joined [Instagram](#) in December 2024 and have gained **over 1.1k followers** to date.

MEDIA:



WALES

- Coverage of our State of the Nation report on BBC One Wales Politics
- News item on our State of the Nation report on S4C (in Welsh)
- [Speech and language therapists needed as demand increases - BBC News](#)
- ['Galw uchel' am therapyddion iaith a lleferydd yng Nghymru - BBC Cymru Fyw](#)

SCOTLAND

- [Joke-telling competition to raise awareness for speech therapy | The Herald](#)
- ['My son may never talk without a speech therapist' | BBC News](#)
- [MSP Sharon Dowey attends Vibrant Voices session in Ayr | Ayr Advertiser](#)

ENGLAND / UK

- [Schools Week coverage of RCSLT appearance at the Education Select Committee](#)

WEBINARS: ENGLAND

- Webinar presentation to the Dementia Community on “**Support for people facing eating, swallowing and communication challenges**”, in March 2025.

CAMPAIGNS: SCOTLAND, ENGLAND / UK

ENGLAND / UK

- We ran a year-long campaign with the Aphasia charity Dyscover, **calling on the Government to include primary progressive aphasia in the list of conditions which are nationally commissioned through NHS England**. We wrote to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Wes Streeting, and the Chief Executive of NHS England. We published a statement expressing our concerns about the risk of poor care for people with primary progressive aphasia. We responded to the National Neurology Service Specification. We met with the two National Clinical Directors in NHS England. We held an event in the House of Commons to raise awareness. As a result of our activity, we successfully lobbied NHS England to confirm that primary progressive aphasia will be covered under national commissioning. Our next step is to lobby NICE to ensure PPA is included in its upcoming dementia refresh and to continue to raise awareness of PPA.
- **#PrescribingNow coalition** – RCSLT continues to work with seven other bodies as part of the #PrescribingNow coalition, campaigning for the removal of the legal bar to us being able to train as independent prescribers. We have met with Suzanne Rastrick, England's CAHPO, and will be undertaking further campaign activity in 2026.
- **#InclusiveParliament coalition** – working with STAMMA we brought together over 30 organisations, campaigning for the UK Parliament to be made accessible to and inclusive of signers and people with communication disability, difficulty, and difference. The coalition submitted written evidence to the House of Commons Modernisation Committee and speech and language therapist, Gillian Rudd, gave oral evidence to the Committee in June followed up with a further written submission.
- **#SENDInTheSpecialists coalition** – The RCSLT continues to provide the secretariat of the #SENDInTheSpecialists coalition, some 130+ organisations calling on the UK Government to invest in and properly plan for the specialist workforce supporting children and young people with SEND in England. The coalition submitted written evidence to the Education Select Committee's SEND inquiry, whose report echoed our evidence, and is engaging with the new junior ministers in education and health.

CAMPAIGNS: SCOTLAND, ENGLAND / UK

ENGLAND / UK

- **#InvestInSLT campaign** – working with Mikey Akers, others who have had speech and language therapy, parents, and speech and language therapists, the RCSLT has continued its #InvestInSLT campaign over the past year. We brought together almost 50 organisations in support of a briefing for the parliamentary debate on Mikey's petition in January 2025. MPs of all parties spoke powerfully of the need to improve access to speech and language therapy, many highlighting how family members have benefited from it. We supported Mikey at a meeting with Care Minister, Stephen Kinnock, in March 2025, a meeting also attended by Chris Kamara, during which the Minister pledged to work with Mikey on a SLT Action Plan. Over the autumn of 2025, we have worked with Mikey on a social media campaign as part of our attempt to influence the Budget.

SCOTLAND

VoiceBox 2025 Final – 5th June 2025.

The event took place at the Scottish Parliament, hosted by the Presiding Officer, with the BBC in attendance. Significant media and political engagement and follow up visits with MSPs.

- **All 32 local authorities represented**
- Children travelled from as far as Shetland and Orkney
- **24 MSPs** in the photo call
- **90+ media mentions** (TV, Radio and Online)
- Finalists told their jokes on Heart Radio



ADVANCING POLICY/LEGISLATION

UK / ENGLAND

- Following ongoing influencing work including in partnership with Voice 21, Speech and Language UK and others in the sector, the Curriculum and Assessment Review Final Report defined oracy as "speaking, listening, and communication, including verbal as well as other forms of non-written communication, such as sign language, non-verbal and Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC)." Its recommendation for an oracy framework for schools has been accepted by the government.
- Funding for the Early Language Support for Every Child programme has been extended until August 2026. We had called for this publicly and behind the scenes, for example in letters sent to Education and Health Ministers. The CEO was quoted in the [DfE's press release](#).
- Following discussions with the RCSLT, the Department for Health and Social Care is updating the [Best Start in Speech, Language and Communication](#) guidance for commissioners, supporting evidence and case studies. The RCSLT has been invited to sit on the expert advisory group, and secured places for four additional RCSLT members.
- We wrote to every ICB CEO and NHS England chief executive, Jim Mackey, [**calling for stronger strategic leadership for rehabilitation in ICBs**](#). NHS England responded to us. They confirmed that senior AHP leadership should be retained at all levels and are committed to working with us to strengthen guidance and share best practice.
- In January, several peers we had briefed spoke during the Mental Health Bill debate in the House of Lords calling on the Minister to provide assurances regarding speech, language and communication needs and the role of speech and language therapists.

- We were invited to present to NHS England's seven regional justice commissioners on the importance of incorporating speech and language therapy into prison settings to better support individuals with communication difficulties. As a result of this engagement, NHS East of England funded us to develop face-to-face communication training for their staff in prisons and to update RCSLT's The Box.
- Met with CMO Chris Whitty and his team to discuss the role of SLT in probation and prison settings. As a result, the CMO national report clearly highlights the importance of speech, language and communication needs and the role of speech and language therapists as part of the workforce delivering care in these settings.
- Analysis of the Model ICB Blueprint.

WE HAVE RESPONDED TO THE FOLLOWING CONSULTATIONS;

- Written and oral evidence to Education Committee inquiry on Solving the SEND crisis. Our evidence was quoted in the final report, which included a number of specific recommendations on speech and language therapy.
- Written and **oral evidence** to the Health and Social Care Committee inquiry on The First 1000 Days. Our evidence was quoted by committee members during **an oral evidence session** with the Health Minister and senior civil servants.
- Response to the Government's 10-year health plan. Our CEO sat on the DHSC Partners Council.
- NHS England's Standardising Community Health Services Phase 2 Core descriptions.
- Health select committee inquiry into adult community mental health.
- Major Trauma Service (Adult and Children) service specification.
- Verbal evidence to the Commission on Palliative and End of Life Care.

SCOTLAND

- Response to consultation on the proposed Restraint and Seclusion in Schools (Scotland) Bill.
- Response to Inquiry into ADHD and ASD pathways and support (Health, Social Care and Sport Committee). Also gave oral evidence on 7th October.
- Publication of new report on SLCN and children's rights: **Giving Voice to all of Scotland's children**.
- Launched new report on **embedding speech and language therapists in education**.



WALES

- External Affairs Officer Naila Noori played a key role in drafting the NHS Wales Women's Health Plan. Naila is explicitly thanked within the plan.
- A key partner in Project Pengwin – Welsh Government work developing bespoke, bilingual tools to monitor and support early SLC development in children.

We have responded to the following consultations;

- Health Education and Improvement Wales consultation on the **perinatal workforce plan**

- Welsh Affairs Select Committee **consultation** on prisons, probation and rehabilitation
- Senedd Children's Committee consultation on additional learning needs
- Senedd Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee inquiry on **apprenticeships**
- Senedd Health and Social Care Committee inquiry on **the future of general practice**
- Welsh Government consultation on the **draft disability rights framework**

NORTHERN IRELAND

- Workforce - Minister for Health NI announced **record breaking increase in undergraduate SLT training places for 25/26. 100% increase taking the numbers from 28 to 56.**
- 5-year SEN reform agenda and plan for NI announced Jan 2025 with a specific part of the plan dedicated to targeting SLCN. We have met with the DE officials twice to discuss how we can support them with the development of this plan.

We have responded to the following consultations;

- **Response to the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework Consultation (Word)** – September 2025
- **Response to the draft Northern Ireland fostering services minimum standards (PDF)** – September 2025
- **Response to Regional Review of Neurology Services (PDF)** – August 2025
- **Response to the Disability Action Plan consultation (PDF)** – May 2025
- **Response to the Justice Bill (PDF)** – March 2025

- [Response to the Children's Services Cooperation Act \(PDF\) – March 2025](#)
- [Response to the draft budget consultation \(PDF\) – March 2025](#)
- [Response to Hospital Reconfiguration consultation \(PDF\) – February 2025](#)
- [Response to Curriculum Review submission \(Word\) – January 2025](#)
- [Response to the MCA consultation in relation to acts of restraint \(PDF\)](#) – December 2024
- [Response to the draft Programme for Government \(PDF\)](#) – November 2024
- [Response on the Introduction of Safe and Effective Staffing Legislation \(PDF\)](#) – October 2024
- As a result of the consultation on the independent Review of the Curriculum we sat on a focus group with the reviewer. When the review was launched, we were mentioned in the keynote speech. We are the Village (2024) and Language Launchpad (2025) were within the report recognising the importance of SLCN and SLTs were the only AHPs mentioned within the review.
- Met with CCEA (NI Awarding Exam Body) on two occasions to discuss modified language papers and language modifiers. As a result, the newly mandated KS assessments are planned to be modified at source.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND THE VOICE OF THE PROFESSION

UK / ENGLAND

- We **published a briefing on mental health workforce roles** calling for Approved Clinicians and Responsible Clinician to be extended to SLTs.

GOVERNMENT

SCOTLAND

- Met with the Director for Children and Families – November 2024. SLT Discussion Paper on Children's Services Planning
- Met with MSPs – June 2025. Carol Mochan / Jackie Dunbar / Miles Briggs / Willie Rennie / Jackie Baillie - highlighting how SLTs and AHPs can help deliver on the reform that is required in health and social and why we need more SLTs in Scotland.
- As part of AHPFS met with Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing, Tom Arthur MSP – 10th July.
- Met with Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care – 24th July.
- Visit with Rachael Hamilton MSP – 22nd September.
- Met various politicians at SNP Conference, including a follow up meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care.
- Visit with Sharon Dowey MSP – 14th November. [MSP Sharon Dowey attends Vibrant Voices session in Ayr | Ayr Advertiser](#)

WALES

- Met with the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice in Wales to discuss our **Voice for Justice campaign** in July 2025 and have subsequently met with the new Head for the Devolution of Youth Justice in Welsh Government.
- Organised a visit for the Children's Commissioner to meet the SLT at Hillside Residential Children's Home.
- Met the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services in January 2025 as part of a delegation from AHPF Cymru.
- Met with Head of Workforce and Head of Apprenticeships in Welsh Government as part of a delegation from AHPF Cymru.
- Met with the Minister for Health and Well-Being visiting the NHS SLT Head and Neck Cancer service in their constituency.
- **Attended the Plaid Cymru, Welsh Labour and Welsh Conservative conferences** and met with the manifesto writers of all the main political parties ahead of the Senedd elections to discuss our asks.

- As part of AHPF, stands and roundtable events and fringes at the Plaid Cymru, Welsh Labour and Welsh Conservatives conferences. **Took part in the Marie Curie main stage debate at the Plaid Cymru conference.**



- Undertook a visit with Joel James MS, Welsh Conservative spokesperson for early years.
- As part of AHPF Cymru, we supported Plaid Cymru with a 50-minute debate on the AHP workforce which included multiple mentions of speech and language therapy. **This was the first debate in the Senedd on the AHP workforce for 15 years.**
- Regular meetings with the Speech, Language and Communication Co-ordinators in Welsh Government.

NORTHERN IRELAND

- Met with new NI MLA on Education Committee Michelle Guy to **discuss children with SLCN and our SLT workforce**. She invited us to train herself and her constituency office staff in communication accessibility.
- As part of the NI Community Rehabilitation Alliance, met with UUP, Sinn Fein and Alliance party to discuss the **importance of the upcoming Rehabilitation Framework** and the need for a Rehab Lead post across the trusts.
- As part of AHPFNI met with the new Permanent Secretary for Health Mike Farrar and achieved a commitment to look for AHP representation around all tables and meet with AHPFNI quarterly.
- Party Conferences – attended DUP, UUP, Alliance and SDLP party conferences over 2024/25 to **raise awareness of key issues including CAUK**.
- Early Years Communication Alliance continued to meet throughout 24/25. Networks and relationships have led to the group receiving free Solihull training and partnerships between the university SLT course and Altrum Irish Medium Immersion Education as part of the bilingualism and culture module. Further plans to train the group in CAUK and visual impairment.

STAKEHOLDERS

ENGLAND / UK

- We **worked closely with the GIRFT Head and Neck Cancer Audit Leads** to ensure that the final report contained specific and targeted recommendations to improve SLT.
- Met with and **influenced the Health Services Safety Investigation Body (HSSIB)** regarding speech and language therapy within mental health inpatient settings, resulting in the final report including recommendations to strengthen the SLT workforce across mental health services.

- **Successfully lobbied for speech and language therapy data to be grouped in the new SSNAP** (Sentinel Stroke National Audit Programme). By capturing speech and language therapy data, it will enable more accurate benchmarking and provide the evidence to support targeted business cases for securing additional resource.

NORTHERN IRELAND

- Met with PSNI staff alongside Hon Fellow Peter Bradley re CAUK Dec 2024 and they agreed to introduce the training as mandatory for their call handler staff.
- Met with the new commissioner for Older People in NI Siobhan Casey who is committed to her office becoming communication inclusive with a date planned for January 2026.
- Met with training and learning team within the NI Assembly and **delivered online CAUK training** to interparliamentary group during national inclusion week in September (staff from Scottish, Welsh and NI governments) and face to face training to members of the Assembly and their staff in Oct.
- Met with the new NI Autism Reviewer Ema Cubitt earlier this year and invited to support her with a briefing in Oct 25 to the Education Committee to address the unhelpful narrative around increasing SEN across NI.
- **Presented to the Language and Communication Service** within the Education Authority on RCSLT NI and recent work in early years (We are the Village)
- Met with TextHelp (now Everway) to **discuss SLCN and technology**. Attended our Long Gallery DLD Event in Oct 2024 and engaged with us regarding accessibility for people with SLCN, committed to include information on SLCN on their website.

AND ALSO...

BULLETIN

Bulletin edition on influencing



PERSPECTIVES

On the home team

Sparked by a national petition, a team of SLTs and allies came together to make the Government listen. **Elissa Cregan** tells the story

ELISSA CREGAN

Together, we developed the mission's strategy

In March 2024, Mikey Akers, long-time speech and language therapy advocate and founder of Mikey's Mission Foundation, launched the 'Invest in SLT' petition on the UK Parliament website, calling on the Government to increase investment in speech and language therapy. Previous petitions along with some newer colleagues, the home team members included campaigners Mikey and Louise Akers and Samara Berry (an adult user of speech and language therapy). A group of parents, Dave Harford, Sharon O'Hearn, Pam Slater and Georgina Tait, also joined the team alongside SLT, Francesca Beard, Karen Massey and Gillian Rudd.

With RCSLT Policy and Public Affairs team members Elissa Cregan and Peter Just playing a key role, the home team set out to ensure that speech and language therapy remained firmly on the Government's agenda.

Making a plan

Together, we developed the petition's strategy, messaging and outreach plan. Our key message was that speech and language therapy must be addressed to address the long-term issues affecting access to speech and language therapy, by increasing investment. Actions included writing to MPs, creating an e-action to help people contact their MPs and promoting the petition on social media. We gathered over 10,000 press corrections and brought together two separate coalitions of over 40 organisations to issue public statements in support of increased investment in speech and language therapy.

Getting results

Although the petition closed early due to the calling of the general election, it gathered over 13,000 signatures and secured a government response. The response included SLTs and people having speech and language therapy as well as other professionals and allies from around the UK. We were especially pleased when the House of Commons selected it for debate, despite it not reaching the usually required 100,000-signature threshold. In the debate on 27 January 2025, MPs from all parties spoke about the importance of speech and language therapy and the challenges and of the need for access to speech and language therapy to be improved.

Responding for the Government, Care Minister Stephen Kinnock paid tribute to Minister Kinnock did more than just pay tribute to Mikey and the team; he also pledged to meet us. In that meeting at an event in Westminster in March 2025, also attended by the BBC and a speech and language broadcaster affected by ageing of speech, the minister committed to an action plan to address the issues highlighted in the petition. We look forward to working with the UK Government to make that plan a reality. Until it is, we work together, and with you, will not stop.

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Find out more
rslt.info/invest-in-slt-debate

RCSLT.ORG 19