

Health Bill – Second Reading briefing

May 2026

What is in the Health Bill relevant to speech and language therapy?

The Health Bill includes reforms that will directly affect the commissioning, delivery and coordination of speech and language therapy services in England.

Relevant measures include:

- the creation of a Single Patient Record, bringing together health and social care information to support joined-up care
- greater emphasis on prevention, early intervention and neighbourhood health services
- expanded commissioning responsibilities for Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), including community services
- reforms to ICB governance and local planning arrangements
- increased provider flexibility in how local services are designed and delivered
- reforms to patient voice and accountability structures within the NHS
- the wider shift from hospital-based care towards integrated community services

What does the RCSLT welcome?

- efforts to improve joined-up care through the proposed Single Patient Record
- the Bill's focus on prevention, early intervention and neighbourhood health services
- measures intended to strengthen integration between health and social care
- the ambition to reduce fragmentation and improve local decision-making within the NHS

These reforms could improve care coordination and earlier access to support for people with speech, language, communication and swallowing needs, provided speech and language therapy services are fully included in implementation and workforce planning.

What does the RCSLT seek clarity on?

The RCSLT is seeking clarity on how the Government proposes to use the Bill to:

- strengthen, rather than destabilise, access to speech and language therapy and wider rehabilitation services.

- ensure allied health professional (AHP) expertise is represented within ICB leadership and decision-making structures
- ensure neighbourhood health plans include appropriate involvement from AHPs, including speech and language therapists
- ensure future ICB mergers and larger commissioning footprints do not weaken accountability to local population need or lead to increased variation in access to rehabilitation and communication support services
- ensure the Single Patient Record includes datasets that capture rehabilitation and therapy outcomes across services and settings
- ensure professional bodies are consulted on significant service reconfiguration and redesign
- support provider flexibility and new models of care that enable AHPs to work at the top of their scope of practice

What more does the RCSLT think needs to be done?

- Legislation alone is not sufficient to modernise the NHS, however, or to resolve the issues affecting people's access to speech and language therapy. Nor is it sufficient to resolve the issues affecting the recruitment, retention, and continuing professional development of the profession.
- So, alongside the Bill, the Government must publish the Speech and Language Therapy Action plan it discussed with the Invest In SLT campaign in March 2024, and the forthcoming 10 Year Workforce Plan must meet the tests set out for it in the recent [joint statement from the RCSLT and ASLTIP](#).
- protect and expand allied health professional training places
- ensure speech and language therapy is fully embedded within neighbourhood health services and integrated community teams
- maintain national safeguards against unacceptable variation in access to rehabilitation and communication support services
- remove the legal bar to speech and language therapists training to be independent prescribers
- enable them to train to be Multi Professional Approved Clinicians
- ensure NHS restructuring and service reconfiguration are properly managed so that continuity of care, rehabilitation services and communication support are maintained throughout transition periods, particularly for smaller specialist professions, like the

speech and language therapists already operating under significant financial and workforce pressure

- ensure workforce planning delivers sufficient training places for allied health professionals, including speech and language therapists

For more information, contact: peter.just@rcslt.org