

Health Bill: NC117 - access to speech and language therapy
Briefing from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
September 2026

Anna Sabine MP has tabled an amendment (NC117) to the Health Bill on access to speech and language therapy.

The amendment would require the Government to publish a strategy for improving access to NHS speech and language therapy in England.

This would include assessing:

- waiting times for speech and language therapy across integrated care boards;
- geographical variation in access to services;
- the speech and language therapy workforce, including vacancies and future workforce need; and
- what action is needed to reduce waiting times and inequalities in access.

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists strongly supports this amendment.

Too many people who need speech and language therapy face long waits or difficulties accessing the support they need. This affects people of all ages, including babies and children and young people with speech, language and communication needs, adults who acquire communication or swallowing difficulties as a result of conditions such as stroke, cancer, dementia or other neurological diseases, and those who develop issues with their voice, or those with life-long conditions, such as learning disabilities.

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Timely access to speech and language therapy can make an enormous difference to people's lives. It can support children's learning and educational attainment, help people enter or remain in employment, enable people to recover from illness, or to live independently for longer. All of this can help to reduce avoidable pressures on

health and other public services. So can the role that speech and language therapists play in training the wider workforce, including, for example, those who work in schools or social care settings, to support people with communication and/or swallowing needs and their families.

These are issues that will affect people throughout England. A national strategy, backed by better information about waiting times, variation in provision and workforce need, would be an important step towards ensuring that someone's ability to access speech and language therapy does not depend on where they live.

The amendment builds on longstanding calls for action to improve access to speech and language therapy by the Invest in SLT campaign which, in partnership with advocate and campaigner, Mikey Akers MBE, we lead.

For further background, the recent letters the campaign sent to the current and previous Prime Minister are accessible here:

- Letter to Prime Minister Andy Burnham, July 2026, from the Invest in SLT campaign:
<https://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/Invest-in-SLT-letter-to-Andy-Burnham-July-2026.pdf>
- Letter to then Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, March 2026, from a coalition of over 50 organisations:
https://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Invest-in-SLT-Letter-to-PM_-22March26.pdf