

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY:

YOUR CAREER
as a HEALTH
PROFESSIONAL



An essential guide to
becoming a speech
and language therapist



This booklet will give you some useful information about speech and language therapy, what speech and language therapists do and how you can become one.

For more information about this exciting and rewarding profession, visit the **Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists' (RCSLT) website:**

www.rcslt.org

What does a speech and language therapist do?



Speech and language therapists are professionals who help children and adults who have difficulties with communication or with eating, drinking or swallowing.

Speech and language therapists (SLTs) work closely with parents, carers and other professionals, such as teachers, nurses, occupational therapists and doctors.

There are around 15,000 SLTs in the UK based in a variety of different settings, including the National Health Service (NHS), schools, charities, prisons and private practice.

SLTs work in community health centres, in both acute hospital wards and outpatient departments, in research, in universities, at mainstream and special schools, in assessment units and day centres, in the care system and in their clients' own homes. Some work in courtrooms, prisons and young offenders' institutions. As you can see, the range of professional opportunities is very wide with many options to develop an area of expertise.

Starting salaries are in line with NHS pay scales. There are opportunities to progress in both the public and private sectors, and to continue your professional development in exciting ways.



Who do speech and language therapists help?



Babies with:

- Feeding and swallowing difficulties
- Hearing problems

Children with:

- Learning difficulties
- Physical disabilities
- Mental health problems
- Developmental language disorder
- Difficulties in producing sounds
- Hearing impairment
- Cleft lip and palate
- Stammering
- Autism
- Voice disorders
- Selective mutism

Adults with:

- Acquired conditions, such as stroke or brain injury
- Neurodegenerative disorders, such as Parkinson's, dementia, Huntington's or multiple sclerosis
- Head, neck or throat cancer
- Voice problems
- Swallowing problems
- Mental health conditions
- Learning difficulties
- Physical disabilities
- Stammering
- Hearing impairment



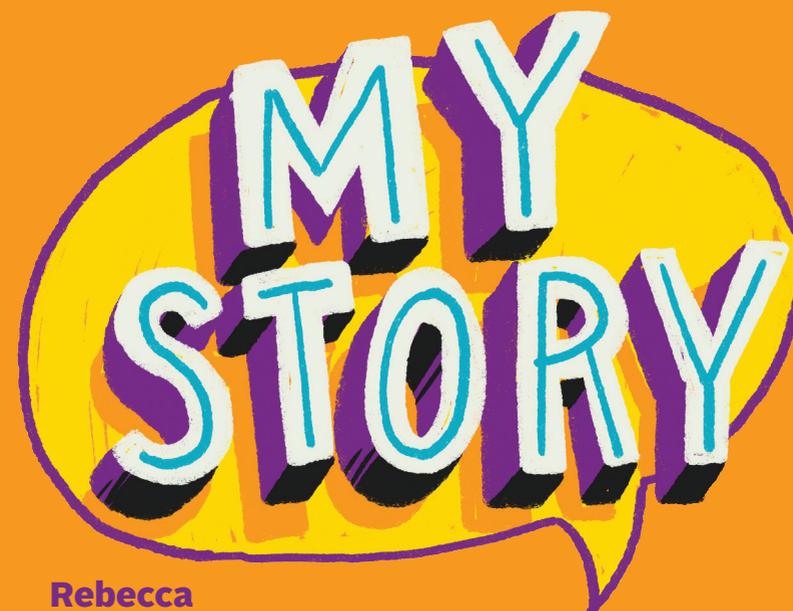
Should I become a speech and language therapist?

Wondering whether speech and language therapy is the profession for you?

Ask yourself if you enjoy:

- working with people of all ages and from all backgrounds;
- being part of a dynamic, rapidly developing profession which encompasses science, education, social sciences, languages, linguistics and medicine;
- working as part of a team;
- listening and communicating with people;
- solving problems;
- being responsible and accountable for your work;
- always learning new things and being creative; and
- leading a team.

To get a flavour for the type of work SLTs do, it is worth visiting your local speech and language therapy team. Your local NHS health trust or health board can put you in contact with your nearest speech and language therapy service, which may organise group visits, video presentations or open evenings. Your local careers service may also be able to provide more information.



Rebecca

Rebecca is a paediatric speech and language therapist

“I developed an interest in speech and language therapy while on placement at a local special school, where I found out what a varied and rewarding job speech and language therapy could be. I went to study speech and language therapy at university straight after completing my A-levels. After completing my degree, I was keen to continue working with children with complex communication needs. My job involves working to identify and establish alternative ways for the children to communicate. One of the most rewarding elements of my job is the close working relationships I have with other therapists; allowing me to constantly learn from their knowledge, ensuring that we work together to maximise the support for children and their families.”



MY STORY

Amit

Amit works in speech and language therapy research

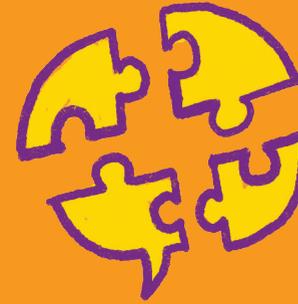
“Working as a speech and language therapist, I have always been interested in carefully considering whether my intervention was really making a difference. With this in mind, I began to carry out small-scale clinical research projects as part of my everyday practice. This led me to a full-time position in speech and language therapy research. In this role, I support evidence-based practice and research across the profession – this helps speech and language therapists across the UK to develop their practice and deliver the best possible service to people with communication and swallowing difficulties.”



Lauren

Lauren is a paediatric speech and language therapist

“I initially did a sports science degree with the goal of becoming a primary school teacher. While working in a school in a socially deprived area, many of the children I worked with had speech, language and communication needs. Recognising how fundamental communication skills were to academic achievement encouraged me to pursue a career in speech and language therapy via the postgraduate route. Speech and language therapy has offered me opportunities to work clinically with children, parents and other professionals, but has also enabled me to develop skills in research and leadership.”



Natalie

Natalie leads a hospital-based team dealing with stroke and other acute patients

“I studied French and Spanish at university and that was where I was first introduced to linguistics. After I graduated, I decided speech and language therapy gave me the opportunity to combine my love of languages with my interest in working with people and medicine, and I undertook the postgraduate diploma.

“What I really enjoy about the profession is the constant drive to learn and develop, and I really enjoy the mix of clinical, managerial and research opportunities that my job brings. Every day is different, and I enjoy working with patients and their families to improve their quality of life.”

Katie

Katie is a newly qualified therapist

“I found a passion for learning about acquired language disorders when I studied medical neuroscience. I decided I wanted to pursue this interest in a healthcare setting, so chose to do a postgraduate course in speech and language therapy. Since graduating I have worked in research with people who have difficulty with using or understanding language, introducing them to ways that they can use technology to help with reading and writing difficulties. I am continually warmed by the shared experiences with people who overcome communication barriers that have, until that moment, prevented them from accessing and expressing their identity in some way.”



How do I become a speech and language therapist?

All speech and language therapists must complete a recognised degree course and then register with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). For more information, including which universities offer recognised degrees:
info@rcslt.org
www.rcslt.org
www.hcpc-uk.org



Speech and language therapy courses combine academic study and clinical placements. Most require the equivalent of three A-level passes or five Scottish Highers as minimum entry qualifications. Some support the Access to Higher Education route, and some require specific GCSE and A-levels, such as English and Biology, so it's best to check the entry requirements with each university.

Many courses welcome applications from suitably qualified mature students. You may need evidence of recent study. If you have an honours or equivalent degree, you may be able to enter a two-year postgraduate qualifying course. Subjects in related fields (for example, psychology, social sciences and linguistics) are often preferred. Check with the universities for their most up-to-date requirements.

Overseas students whose first language is not English will need to meet individual university requirements relating to the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score.

The practical components of the courses are very important. These may take place in schools, NHS hospitals and community health clinics, and will help to develop your skills in the assessment and treatment of people with communication and swallowing disorders.

Work is under way on the development of a degree apprenticeship in speech and language therapy. Email info@rcslt.org for the latest information.



How do I apply?

You can apply for undergraduate courses through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. Visit: www.ucas.ac.uk for details.

For postgraduate courses, contact the university directly.

Speech and language therapy assistant practitioners

Opportunities also exist to work as speech and language therapy assistant practitioners or bilingual co-workers. You would be working with qualified therapists, for example, by supporting clients to develop communication skills or by developing and preparing therapy materials.

There are no formal educational or age requirements, although relevant skills, experience or qualifications from other areas can be beneficial. Training is often given on the job and you may have the chance to complete an NVQ or BTEC or SVQ (in Scotland) qualification or a healthcare apprenticeship (in England).



For more details, contact:

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

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