

RCSLT MANIFESTO BRIEFING - YOUNG PEOPLE



YOUNG PEOPLE - Recognise that speech, language and communication are core life skills, fundamental for success in education, training, and job-readiness for all young people in Northern Ireland.

WE ARE CALLING ON OUR POLITICAL PARTIES TO:

- Ensure that young people with disabilities transitioning to adult services have access to timely speech and language therapy support so that they can express their choices, participate in society and live well.
- Identify and support young people within the justice system who have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) to give them the best chance of breaking the cycle of reoffending.

THE BACKGROUND

Communication is a core life skill, the means by which we express our choices, form relationships and access education, employment and the rest of society. Poor communication skills have a major impact on people's life chances. Vocabulary difficulties at age five are significantly associated with poor literacy, mental health and employment outcomes at age 34. Young people with poor communication skills are more likely to leave school with low qualifications and are twice as likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET). More than 60% of young offenders have speech, language and communication difficulties.



Ryan who has a life-long learning disability took part in a portraits and stories exhibition at Stormont to raise awareness of communication disability with the help of his speech and language therapist, also pictured here.

Speech and language therapists (SLTs), work with people who have disabilities to develop vital social communication skills. People with learning disability need speech and language therapy to prevent work placement breakdown.

However SLTs are currently not core members of transition teams despite the over representation of communication difficulties among young people with a learning or other disability. In addition there is currently a lack of mandatory training for careers advisors and employment support services on how to identify and support individuals with communication difficulties.

IN NORTHERN IRELAND

- Around 8,200 people aged 20+ have learning disabilities and up to 90% of these individuals have communication difficulties which present a significant barrier to employment, education and training.
- There is a high prevalence of SLCN among young offenders. In 2012 in the Lisburn area 54% of young offenders were assessed as having some SLCN. However, currently in Northern Ireland, speech and language therapy is not commissioned to provide services into post-primary or further education facilities and young offenders within juvenile justice centres, do not have access to speech and language therapy assessment or intervention.

THE ECONOMIC BENEFIT

- By dealing effectively with communication issues and keeping just 10 children out of secure children's home, the justice system in NI would save over £2million.

For further information and a full list of references please contact: