



Securing political support for policy asks: students from UEA & UCL

During the 2015 UK General Election campaign, students from UEA and UCL helped secure political support for RCSLT's manifesto asks.

University of East Anglia

The University of East Anglia's Speech and Language Therapy Society worked hard in their local area before the UK General Election of 2015 petitioning local politicians using a manifesto adapted from the RCSLT's 'manifesto asks'.

The Giving Voice representative, Felicity Stephenson, created the Society's manifesto on www.change.org. It was shared across social media websites, such as Twitter and Facebook, and through different outlets, including the University's political societies, the heads of year for Speech and Language Therapy, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy at the University. Contact was made with other universities who offer speech and language therapy courses. The petition also grabbed the attention of speech and language therapists and students from across the country and was shared on accredited speech and language therapy Facebook groups and Twitter profiles. It gained over 200 supporters.

Additionally, the Society's Social Secretary, Sophie Carter, attended a 'UEA Hustings' event with the Norwich South candidates and questioned what their parties were intending to do to preserve current speech and language therapy services.

After this, the petition was emailed to all the local politicians and responses were received from Norwich North candidates, Jessica Asato (Labour), Adrian Holmes (The Green Party) and Chloe Smith (Conservative).

Chloe Smith promised, if re-elected, to contact the Director of Children's Services (Sheila Lock) and the local Clinical Commissioning Group about issues highlighted in the petition. After Chloe was re-elected, Felicity contacted her reminding her of her promises. Ms Smith responded and followed up with the Director of Children's Services who replied detailing the new speech and language therapy service that was being commissioned locally.

University College, London

During the 2015 UK General Election campaign, UCL's Giving Voice Society arranged *The Great Letter Writing Challenge*.

This involved forty society members writing to their Members of Parliament (MPs) to call on their political party to support and recognise the work of speech and language therapists (SLTs) and to ensure that all policies, speeches and documents referenced Allied Health Professionals (AHPs).

MPs from across England, Scotland and Wales were contacted. Supportive responses were received from a number of MPs, some of whom forwarded the letters to their parties' spokespeople, thus highlighting the work of SLTs to important stakeholders. The responses were combined into a collage, which was shared via social media to further raise awareness of SLT. Some members shared their letters on Twitter and, by including the MPs' handle in the tweet, the tweets were shared with all of the MPs' followers; thus raising awareness of SLT amongst the online community. The Society

maintained continuing contact with the MPs who responded to the letters by inviting them to subsequent Giving Voice events.

