



General Election 2019

Speech and language therapists support people across the age range who have speech, language and communication needs and/or difficulties with eating and drinking.

RCSLT General Election asks of candidates and parties

- The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) is calling on all candidates to make their campaigns communication accessible.
- With our partners, the RCSLT is calling on political parties to commit to better lives for people with communication and swallowing needs.

Better lives for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs

With I CAN, the children's communication charity, RCSLT is calling on political parties to commit to improving the lives of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs. This would be achieved by:

Policy ask 1:

- A cross-government strategy for children and young people, including a joint statement about the importance of children's speech, language and communication.

Manifesto wording: We will improve the lives of all children and young people by developing and implementing a cross-government strategy which includes their speech, language and communication.

Policy ask 2:

- Every local area has a joint strategic plan for speech, language and communication, which assesses the level of need, and sets out a funded plan to meet that need.

Manifesto wording: To ensure that every child, wherever they live, can get speech and language support when they need it, there will be a joint plan for speech, language and communication in each Integrated Care System.

Policy ask 3:

- Training for new teachers to understand children's speech, language and communication development, and knowledge of how to identify and support children with speech, language and communication needs.

Manifesto wording: We will offer all new teachers training in supporting children's speech, language and communication and identifying need.

Policy ask 4:

- Better support for vulnerable young people at risk of communication needs.

Manifesto wording: We will train staff working in alternative provision, the care system, the justice system and mental health teams on how to recognise and support vulnerable young people with communication needs, with speech and language therapy for those who need it.

Better lives for people with communication and swallowing needs

The RCSLT is calling on political parties to commit to improving the lives of people of all ages with communication and swallowing needs by improving access to community health services and ensuring the appropriate speech and language therapy workforce to meet those needs. This would be achieved by:

Policy ask 1:

Improve access to all community health services, including speech and language therapists, so people can be discharged promptly and safely from hospital and then get the speech and language therapy support they need at home to enable them to get better quicker and return to a full life.

Manifesto wording: We will guarantee community health services to ensure prompt and safe discharge from hospital.

Policy ask 2:

Increase the speech and language therapy workforce with policies that attract and support new people into the profession via universities and apprenticeships and once qualified, by actively supporting their continued professional development and providing a motivational career structure, to ensure that there is a skilled workforce in hospitals and in the community so people can be confident that they receive the best care.

Manifesto wording: We will address the shortage identified by NHS England in professions such as speech and language therapy.

Policy ask 3:

Ensure that services are more closely integrated between acute NHS, community services, mental health and social care, including in the way that data can be accessed across boundaries.

Manifesto wording: We will integrate acute, community, mental health and care services including safely sharing data.

Policy ask 4:

Ensure that all Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships and Integrated Care Systems are evidence based and clinically led with allied health professionals at the centre, providing the best service for their local population.

Manifesto wording: The full range of health professionals will be used by Integrated Care Systems.

Improved equality of access and opportunity for people with communication needs

The RCSLT is calling on political parties to recognise communication as a basic human right and ensure people with communication needs have equality of access and opportunity. This could be achieved by:

Policy ask 1:

The recognition of the importance of inclusive communication.

Policy ask 2:

Support the adoption of inclusive communication initiatives across the public sector (including health and social care, education and wider government social security system/services).

Policy ask 3:

Ensure that all information that is made publicly available is presented in formats that are accessible to individuals who have sensory, physical or mental health conditions.

Manifesto wording: we will require the public sector and encourage others to create environments that are accessible to those with communication needs.

Allied Health Professions Federation

As part of the Allied Health Professions Federation, the RCSLT is calling on political parties to:

Policy ask 1:

Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) have a unique contribution in improving outcomes for children, young people and adults. There needs to be effective investment in public health, including mental health and wellbeing in order to capitalise on AHPs' skills through early intervention, prevention, recovery and rehabilitation. This will lead to better value outcomes.

Policy ask 2:

Clarity is needed on how effective strategic planning will take place following unprecedented structural changes brought about by student funding reforms, including the loss of bursaries, apprenticeship developments and uncertainty on student placements.

Policy ask 3:

AHP leaders are critical to the ICS (Integrated Care Systems) implementation process and ICS implementation plans must show how the role of AHPs has been considered, including AHP representation on clinical groups/boards.

Policy ask 4:

There needs to be a new funding settlement for health, education and social care so children's, young people's and adult's needs can be met.

Community rehabilitation collective

As part of the community rehabilitation collective, the RCSLT is calling on political parties to:

Policy ask 1:

Make a commitment to community rehabilitation in their manifestos.

Policy ask 2:

Mandate NHS England to improve the quality and accessibility of community rehabilitation services.

Policy ask 3:

Amend the NHS Constitution to make people's existing rights to community rehabilitation clearer and more explicit.

For more information, please contact peter.just@rcslt.org 020 7378 3630