



NHS Funding Bill Second Reading – 26 February 2020

On Wednesday, 26 February, the House of Lords is debating the Second Reading of the NHS Funding Bill. The Bill will enshrine in law a multi-year funding settlement for the NHS that would see a £33.9 billion increase in cash terms by 2023-24.

Along with the reforms proposed in the NHS Long Term Plan, the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists hopes that the NHS Funding Bill will help to ensure the provision of adequate services for people with communication difficulties and swallowing needs. There are many such people in the United Kingdom.

- 20% of the adult population experience communication difficulties at some point in their lives;¹
- Over 10% of children and young people have long-term communication needs;²
- In areas of social disadvantage around 50% of children start school with delayed language or other identified communication needs;^{3, 4}
- People with a range of conditions will also have swallowing needs. These include those who have had a stroke, living with various cancers or neurological conditions (such as dementia, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis and motor neurone disease), as well as those with learning disabilities and mental health problems.

Speech and language therapists play a crucial role in supporting those people, their families, friends and carers, and the other professionals who work with them. It is essential, therefore, that the appropriate level of speech and language therapy is commissioned so those people's needs are identified and met.

The Government has recognised the role of speech and language therapists in delivering the NHS Long Term Plan.⁵ The Plan itself highlighted that speech and language therapy is a profession in short supply⁶ and in its submission to the Migration Advisory Committee's *Full Review of the Shortage Occupation List*, the Department of Health and Social Care argued that speech and language therapists should be added to the Shortage Occupation List because the profession is facing a range of pressures including increasing demand, in mental health in particular.⁷

In ongoing discussions with NHS England and others about the NHS People Plan, the RCSLT is advocating the necessity of ensuring that these shortages are addressed. We look forward to those discussions continuing so that people with communication difficulties and swallowing needs receive the speech and language therapy support that they require.

20 February 2020.

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References

- 1 Law, J., van der Gaag, A., Hardcastle, W. J., Beckett, D. J, MacGregor, A., and Plunkett, C. (2007) Communication Support Needs: a Review of the Literature. Scottish Executive.
- 2 Norbury, C.F., Gooch, D., Wray, C., Baird, G., Charman, T., Simonoff, E., Vamvakas, A. and Pickles, A. (2016) The impact of nonverbal ability on prevalence and clinical presentation of language disorder: evidence from a population study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 57(11): 1247-1257.
- 3 Locke, A., Ginsborg, J. & Peers, I. (2002) Development and Disadvantage: implications for early years *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders* Vol 37:1.
- 4 Law, J., McBean, K and Rush, R. (2011) Communication skills in a population of primary school-aged children raised in an area of pronounced social disadvantage *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 46, (6) pp 657–664.
- 5 Caroline Dinenage MP in response to a written question from Steve McCabe MP on speech and language therapy in January 2020. <https://bit.ly/2TNqGyq>
- 6 The NHS Long Term Plan, January 2019, <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/>
- 7 Migration Advisory Committee, May 2019, <https://bit.ly/36cX5KB>

For more on the NHS Funding Bill, see the Bill's dedicated page on the Parliament website: <https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/nhsfunding.html>