



House of Lords Question on reducing the disability gap 12 February 2020

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) welcomes Lord Touhig's Oral Question on reducing the disability gap.

Communication disability is one of the most common disabilities. It can often be invisible. It impacts a significant proportion of the United Kingdom's population:

- **1 in 5 of people** experiencing a **communication difficulty** at some point in their lives;
- **over ten percent** of all **children and young people** having some form of long-term communication need.

Communication difficulties affect people in different ways. Some people may find it hard to ask a question, name an object or ask for help, while others may have speech difficulties that make them difficult to understand. Others may have problems processing information and difficulties with reading and writing. Some may use communication devices and require time to create their message.

These can create a **significant gap** between them and their peers, including in relation to educational attainment, the forming of relationships, the gaining and retaining of employment, their mental health and overall wellbeing. Unless they are appropriately supported, the **life chances of people with communication disabilities and difficulties** will continue to be **impacted disproportionality**.

The Government's **National Disability Strategy** represents an important opportunity to help improve support for the millions of people in the UK who have a communication disability. The RCSLT hopes that the Strategy will ensure:

- **Education:** greater awareness and understanding the communication disability across core infrastructure and services (job centres etc.) to ensure the needs of people with a genuine but many a times hidden disability aren't ignored
- **Accessibility:** Environments are accessible to people with communication disability. This could include, for example, the use of signage and/or symbols and communications being in easy read format
- **Communication Access UK:** participation in the Communication Access UK¹ scheme would support the creation of 'Communication Accessible' environments and organisations.
- **Speech and language therapy:** to help people with communication disability to achieve the outcomes that matter to them, they should have access to the appropriate level of speech and language therapy where required.

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For more information contact Peter Just on peter.just@rcslt.org or 020 7378 3630.
For more on Communication Access UK see <https://bit.ly/2SiXoOZ>