

Speech &  
Language  
Therapy in  
Primary Care

Support  
for adults  
in the  
community



# Introduction

**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION** is fundamental to health and wellbeing. It allows us to connect and belong; fulfil our day to day needs; participate and contribute within our community and exercise our rights to self determination.



Adults with communication difficulties and impairments not only have to deal with the day to day challenges of interacting with others, they also experience ignorance about their condition and feelings of stigma and exclusion.

Eating, drinking and safely swallowing are essential physical and social functions that we take for granted but have life threatening consequences and significant impact on wellbeing when disrupted.

It is essential that Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) are integrated within multi-disciplinary teams across health and social care as they are uniquely skilled to minimise the impact of communication and swallowing problems.

# Setting Context

Speech and Language Therapists enable people to communicate to the best of their ability. They also assess the safety of people's swallowing and work with them to develop eating and drinking skills and management plans.



In addition to individual planning with each person they work with multi-disciplinary teams, families, carers and the wider community to raise awareness and improve understanding of swallowing and communication impairments. This includes:

- promoting inclusive communication and
- ensuring safe, ethical swallowing management approaches are embedded within care establishments and care pathways

# Why it Matters

Why **COMMUNICATION** is so important...



Make sure I never lose dignity and respect, and my wishes are understood.

Check capacity and decision making.

Support me, even when my illness takes my voice away.

Why **SWALLOWING** matters...



Prevent aspiration, infection

Support food and liquid intake



# Community Connections

In PARTNERSHIP with the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector SLTs provide:

- Information and advice
- Carer support
- Prevention
- Reduce isolation
- Improve communication skills
- Promote safe swallowing



Speech and Language Therapy connects the patient with their family, carers, community and their health care team.



# People SLT Support

SLTs work across a range of conditions:

Dementia  
Multiple Sclerosis  
Parkinson's  
Huntington's  
Motor Neurone Disease  
Mental Health  
Stroke  
Learning Disability  
Autism  
Head and neck cancer  
Stammer  
Brain injury



Communication and swallowing impairments in adults occur due to acquired or developmental conditions and can be transient or become a long term condition.

More people are living with a complex condition that requires regular medical and social care support over prolonged periods.

Input from speech and language therapy can have a significant impact, reducing their difficulties in engaging with health and social care systems and improving health and wellbeing outcomes.

These conditions make up a significant proportion of the diverse groups of people referred to speech and language therapy services. It is therefore common for small speech and language therapy teams to be linked to many specialist multi-disciplinary teams rather than be solely dedicated to one team.

# Settings

SLT services are usually organised as a **SINGLE SERVICE** across **ACUTE** and **PRIMARY** care settings.



## PRIMARY CARE

- community rehabilitation and enablement services
- community stroke services
- care homes
- hospice
- out-patient services
- learning disability services
- forensic services
- specialist autism services
- mental health services

## SECONDARY CARE

- care of elderly
- Ear, Nose & Throat
- neurological and rehabilitation wards

- mental health in-patient services
- forensic in-patient services
- acute in-patient learning disability services

## PUBLIC HEALTH

- Promote access to health services for vulnerable groups
- Safeguarding and supporting vulnerable children and adults
- Targeted input for people who use Augmentative & Alternative Communication
- Optimising communication skills in the wider population impacting on health and wellbeing outcomes

# Inclusive Communication

## Areas of IMPACT:

- prevention
- reduced hospital admission / readmission
- health & wellbeing outcomes
- supporting carers
- reducing care costs
- promoting self-care and independence
- anticipatory care planning



SLTs are specialists in identifying and working with individuals with communication difficulties, enabling those individuals to communicate effectively and advising and supporting others to do the same.

With this expert knowledge, they are key players in promoting communication inclusion, both at an individual level and at wider organisational or population levels.

Speech and Language Therapists have a leadership role to play in supporting the implementation of inclusive communication through increasing the awareness, skills and knowledge of others in the public, private and third sectors. This can be done through training, and the involvement of Speech and Language Therapists in discussions of policy and organisational development.

To contact Speech & Language Therapy Adult Services get in touch with your local Health & Social Care Partnership, Health Board or primary care services. For more on Speech & Language Therapy visit [www.rcslt.org](http://www.rcslt.org)



Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists  
Room 506, 9-10 St Andrews Square, Edinburgh EH2 2AF

