



Suffering in Silence: Action for Stammering Children report on access to specialist services for children who stammer

RCSLT response

Action for Stammering Children has today published *Suffering in Silence*. The report investigates the extent to which children who stammer have access to specialist speech and language therapy services in the area they live. The findings are based on freedom of information requests submitted to healthcare providers and commissioners across the UK.

The report's findings include:

- Fewer than half of health providers in the UK offer a specialist stammering service.
- There is significant variation across the UK: in Northern Ireland three quarters of areas offer a specialist stammering service; while in Scotland only one Health Board of 14 reported providing access to a specialist stammering clinic.
- Even where areas have a specialist stammering service, it may not be sufficiently resourced to meet the demand for support.

The report recommends that:

- Structured specialist services for children who stammer should be available in all areas of the UK.
- No child referred for dysfluency should wait more than 12 months to begin intervention with a specialist speech and language therapist.
- There should be a national campaign targeting young families, schools, education staff and health professionals that raises awareness about stammering and the role speech and language therapists play in supporting these children.
- Teachers should be trained to identify stammering, to facilitate more timely referrals.
- There should be increased collaboration between health and education professionals and decision-makers to meet the holistic needs of the child.

Welcoming the report, chief executive of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, Kamini Gadhok MBE, said:

“It adds further weight to our concerns that many children with stammering and other communication difficulties can’t access the support they need. Our own survey found that there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of specialist speech and language therapy roles in the last 10 years. Investing in speech and language therapy services can support these children and young people to fulfil their potential, leading to improved mental health and employment.”

For more information please contact caroline.wright@rcslt.org

11 November 2019