

Giving Voice Campaign Briefing: England

1. **Nearly 20% of the population may experience communication difficulties at some point in their lives. Problems with speech and language imprison the individual, and severely limit their participation in family life, the community, education and the world of work.**
2. **Speech and language therapists are specialists who enable people to develop or regain vital communication and swallowing skills. Their work addresses individual needs and transforms lives.**
3. **Tackling communication and swallowing problems reduces avoidable costs and waste in the NHS, local authorities, the criminal justice system and the wider economy. New research shows that for three conditions alone, speech and language therapy delivers an estimated net benefit to the UK economy of £765m.**
4. **Despite evidence of cost effectiveness, over 80% of speech and language therapy services are being asked to reduce the scope of their services.**
5. **Urgent changes are needed to support timely access to speech and language therapy for those who need it.**

About the Giving Voice campaign

- The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists' Giving Voice campaign aims to increase understanding of the role of speech and language therapy and to show how it transforms lives, and releases value for government, society and the economy.
- Speech, language, communication and swallowing needs among children and adults are relatively common, but access to the right specialist support is not always possible - moreover budgetary pressures are putting existing services at risk.

What is speech and language therapy and who is it for?

Speech and language therapists are specialists who enable people to develop or regain vital communication and swallowing skills. They enable people to express themselves, to listen to and understand others. Everybody knows someone who has benefited from the help of a speech and language therapist. But did you know that:

- Communication disability is the most common disorder seen in childhood, affecting up to 10% of all children.
- Up to 55% of children in deprived areas start school without the communication skills needed to learn to read and write.
- Six out of 10 young offenders have a communication difficulty so severe that they can't benefit from prison education programmes.
- Stroke is the most common cause of disability among adults in England and one third of stroke survivors have communication problems.
- 700,000 people with dementia have speech, language and communication needs and the figure rises each year.

Why do we need to take action now?

- Unidentified speech and language problems become more entrenched and can lead to complex 'secondary' challenges, such as diminished social skills, poor educational outcomes, mental health problems perceived anti-social behaviour and worklessness. This not only ruins lives, but requires more intensive, high-cost forms of state intervention.
- Research published by Matrix Evidence shows how speech and language therapy delivers important cost savings for the NHS and Government through avoiding other clinical interventions and improving life prospects:
 - In the case of patients suffering swallowing problems following a stroke (dysphagia) the provision of speech and language therapy delivers £13.3 million in net savings to the NHS, or a return of £2.30 for every £1 invested.
 - For stroke survivors having difficulty with communication (aphasia), the net benefits are equivalent to are £15.4 million, with a return of £1.30 for every £1 invested.
 - For children with specific language impairment, which is encountered by 203,000 UK school children in a given year, the annual net benefit to the UK is £741.8 million, with every £1 invested generating a return of £6.43 in enhanced lifetime earnings.
 - For children with autism, the cost savings are £9.8 million and every £1 invested generates £1.46 in cost savings.
- Moreover, communication problems are an important factor in young offending – but specialist intervention is shown to reduce re-offending rates by 50%.
- Sustaining speech and language services will help to deliver 'more for less' in the NHS by reducing emergency admissions, supporting earlier discharge and care closer to home for stroke survivors, individuals with head injury and those living with dementia.

What are we asking Government and local budget holders to do?

- Put in place measures locally to ensure the early identification of speech, language and communication difficulties.
- Use available resources to ensure timely access to speech and language therapy for all those who need it.
- Ensure that public health budgets are appropriately used for speech and language therapy.

How can you support the Giving Voice campaign?

1. Contact the RCSLT to facilitate a joint meeting on the Giving Voice campaign between your local primary care trust, local authority, probation service and speech and language therapy service/s.
2. Contact the RCSLT to receive specific campaign recommendations, regular briefings and updates on the campaign.
3. Record your support for the Giving Voice campaign by visiting the RCSLT website (www.givingvoiceuk.org) and uploading a written or video message.
4. Write to the Government in support of the Giving Voice campaign, raise parliamentary questions, table a motion or call a debate on the issue.
5. Raise awareness of the Giving Voice campaign with local councillors in your constituency.

To find out more about how you can support the Giving Voice campaign, please contact RCSLT England Policy Officer Jane MacKenzie. Email: jane.mackenzie@rcslt.org or tel: 07973 702 772.