WHAT IS SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY?

The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), the professional regulator in the UK, states that SLTs assess, treat and help to prevent speech, language and swallowing difficulties. The professional body, the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) defines the role in terms of providing life-improving treatment, support and care for children and adults who have difficulties with communication, eating, drinking or swallowing.

Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) are Allied Health Professionals who apply their expertise to prevention, health promotion, diagnosis, treatment and enablement. They work with a range of technical and support staff to deliver direct patient care and provide rehabilitation, self-management support, and enabling and health improvement interventions. (Ready to Act 2016)

SLTs work in partnership with children and their families, and with other professions and agencies to reduce the impact of speech, language and communication difficulties on children’s wellbeing and their ability to participate in daily life. Evidence based interventions are focused on the needs of the child and family in order to provide the right input at the right time, putting the best interests of the child at the heart of decision making.

HOW TO ACCESS SUPPORT

The ambition from Ready to Act 2016 is that all children and young people in Scotland will access AHP services as and when they need them at the appropriate level to meet their well-being needs, with services supporting self-resilience through consistent decision-making.

The ambition highlights the critical place of prevention and enablement and promotes least intrusive interventions through a tiered model of service design and delivery (universal, targeted and specialist levels of provision) directly linked to well-being outcomes.
UNIVERSAL LEVEL

This is for all children and young people. It recognises that a preventative approach and promoting good speaking and listening skills for children and young people, their parents, carers and families is an essential role. Speech and Language Therapists working at universal level will provide information and literature, directing children and young people, parents, carers, families and others to the best evidence-based information available, input to activities and programmes organised by others to improve skills and confidence, work with partners to increase participation, and support the development of nurturing communication friendly environments.

TARGETED LEVEL

Services and provision at this level are for children and young people (and their parents, families, carers and other stakeholders) who are more likely to be identified as having a Speech, Language or Communication Need [SLCN]. Services would include specific advice, programmes, workshops and learning, and support to improve Speech, Language and Communication Skills.

SPECIALIST LEVEL

This level is for those children and young people whose SLCN cannot be fully met through universal or targeted support. It would usually involve episodes of direct or indirect intervention involving parents, carers, families and others, with the ultimate outcome of promoting self-reliance and resilience through an asset-based approach.

HOW TO ACCESS SUPPORT: USEFUL LINKS

- NHS Lothian: Request for Assistance guidelines
- NHS Tayside: Request for Assistance guidelines
- NHS Lothian: Considerations prior to making a request for assistance
- NHS Lothian: What to try before making a request for assistance
- NHS Tayside: Speech and Language Therapy Pathway (PDF)
WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN NEXT WHEN A REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IS RECEIVED?

The information is gathered from the request in order to decide what assistance would suit the child / young person at that time, based on their needs and the impact of the presenting issues. Examples of assistance from the Speech and Language Therapy service (NHS Lothian) as a result of the request could be:

- Support and tailored advice for parents/carers and the family
- Consultation and advice with education staff
- Signposting staff to resources and approaches that would support the child/young person
- Modelling activities for staff and the family to use to support communication
- Ongoing assessment and direct support for the child/young person individually or within a group

FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more about universal, targeted and specialist Speech and Language Therapy services available in your area, contact your local SLT department to find out more:

- NHS Forth Valley
- NHS Lothian
- NHS Ayshire and Arran
- NHS Tayside
- NHS Lanarkshire
- NHS Highland
- NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde
- NHS Grampian
- NHS Fife
- NHS Dumfries and Galloway
- NHS Borders
- NHS Western Isles
- NHS Orkney
- NHS Shetland