

# POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS (PPA) TEAM IMPACT REPORT

2023 – 2024

# PRIORITY AREAS 2023-2024

1. Raising Awareness
2. Advancing Policy / Legislation
3. Building Relationships and the Voice of the Profession

## THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

**17%**

VACANCY RATE WAS REPORTED ACROSS THE PROFESSION FROM OUR THIRD VACANCY SURVEY

**24,000+**

VIEWS GATHERED FROM ROOT DATA ON APHASIA

**12,000+**

VIEWS GATHERED FROM ROOT DATA ON CYP REVIEWING SLT AND THEIR OUTCOMES

**10,000+**

SIGNATURES SECURED FOR **#INVESTINSLT** PETITION

**40**

ORGANISATIONS CO-SIGNED THE CALL FOR A PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON THE INVEST IN SLT PETITION

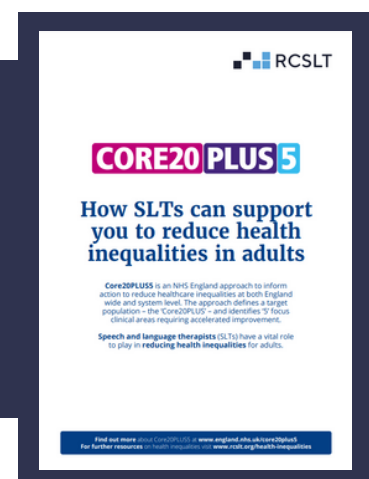
# RAISING AWARENESS

## UK / ENGLAND

- **Vacancies survey** - Our third vacancies survey continued to raise awareness of the depth of the workforce challenge for SLT. It continued to be a core part of our workforce lobbying, securing media interest and with members telling us how they have used the data in different ways to influence regarding workforce and in business planning. RCSLT gave the Press Association an exclusive story. Off the back of that we had a large news item in the Times Education Supplement as well as pieces in the Daily Mail, Independent and regional papers. The CEO did a pre-recorded interview with Radio News Hub that was broadcast on over 400 radio stations across the UK and internationally.

- Our revised **diversity fast facts** help to ensure there is awareness both for members and more widely about student numbers and diversity. We use this data regularly in responding to calls for evidence and consultations (especially to the NHS and governments who do not have this information in full) to provide accurate and clear information about the SLT student pipeline.

- **Health inequalities resources** – our promotion of these tools has this year included all AHPs, not only SLTs and we produced new infographics to highlight how SLTs can contribute to the NHSE CORE20PLUS5 initiative.



- **CYP ROOT data** – We put out data on Instagram and X from the ROOT about CYP receiving SLT and their outcomes (TOMS score improvements). It gathered over 12,000 views across both platforms. A similar post with Aphasia data from ROOT went out in June and gathered over 24,000 views.

- We worked in partnership with Speech & Language UK and Voice 21 to organise a roundtable for the Commission on **the Future of Oracy Education in England**. The roundtable featured Ambitious About Autism, Action for Stammering Children, the National Deaf Children's Society, Disabled Children's Partnership, NAPLIC and Commtap. A joint paper summarising the themes from the roundtable, **how oracy can be inclusive of children and young people with communication needs and differences**, was published by the Commission in their collection Speaking Volumes, and an edited version was **published in Schools Week**.

As a result of the stakeholder the final report featured a more inclusive definition of oracy and specific recommendations about children with SLCN.



- In February 2024, working with the specialist charity, Dyscover, the RCSLT launched the **#SLTForPPA campaign**. This called on the UK Government to ensure that people with Primary Progressive Aphasia can access the specialist speech and language therapy support they need. The campaign continues with a call on the UK Government to ensure that such services are nationally commissioned.
- In February 2024, the RCSLT worked with Lord Bradley on an Oral Question in the House of Lords regarding **extending independent prescribing responsibilities** to more allied health professionals, including speech and language therapists. Over the past year, the **#PrescribingNow** coalition has expanded to include the College of Operating Department Practitioners and the Institute of Osteopathy. The campaign continues with the new government, with the coalition handing in a letter to the Department of Health & Social Care. In December 2023, the House of Lords Committee on the Integration of Primary & Community Care referenced the Prescribing Now campaign in its final report. The Committee argued for the expansion of independent prescribing and referral rights to more AHPs.

### *#INVESTINSLT*

- In March 2024, we worked with service user advocate Mikey Akers on a petition on the UK Parliament website. The **#InvestInSLT petition secured over 10,000 signatures in just 16 days**. The House of Commons' Petitions Committee chose Mikey's petition for debate. The calling of the General Election prevented the debate happening. In response, the RCSLT brought together members, people having speech and language therapy, and **over 40 external organisations**, in issuing a joint statement on the need to invest in speech and language therapy. The Petitions Committee in the new Parliament is going ahead with the debate in January 2025.

### *#INCLUSIVEPARLIAMENT*

- In March 2024, working with STAMMA, the Michael Palin Centre, Disability Rights UK, and the Co-op, the RCSLT worked on the **#InclusiveParliament petition** on the UK Parliament website. It called on the UK Parliament to be inclusive of communication disability, difficulty, and disability. We are now taking this work forward through the House of Commons Modernisation Committee.
- Ahead of the UK General Election in July, working with members and people having speech and language therapy, we set up the facility for people to email their local candidates. After the General Election, we wrote to all MPs with a briefing about how speech and language therapists support their constituents, and to all relevant ministers. We have worked with members and people having speech and language therapy on setting up the facility for people to email their MPs. **We are asking MPs to be #CommunicationInclusive and to support the need to #InvestInSLT.**

### *WALES*

- We met with the Cabinet Secretary for Education in September 2024. We also meet quarterly with the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing who has asked RCSLT staff for **support with work on equalities**.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

- **Teachers' union conference** – RCSLT stand in March 2024 raised awareness of DLD and our early years report.
- **Visited the North West Cancer Centre** May 24 to draw attention to the need for instrumental assessment.
- **Increase in members requesting materials** for holding RCSLT stands at careers events and staff days.

- **Early years report: 'We are the Village'** – April 24. Secured a foreword from the Children's Commissioner. Excellent media coverage. Talks to Policy Forum NI, Childcare Partnership meeting and Stronger from the Start Alliance about the work.



## EVENTS: UK / ENGLAND

- In October 2023, the **RCSLT hosted a parliamentary reception**, sponsored by Saqib Bhatti MP. Over one hundred attendees, including MPs, peers, charity and other partners, heard speeches by RCSLT Chair Irma Donaldson, former footballer and pundit now service user advocate Chris Kamara, and activist Mikey Akers, on the **importance of having communication disability, difficulty, and difference identified and the impact of speech and language therapy.**

## DLD AWARENESS DAY: *NORTHERN IRELAND, WALES*

- DLD Awareness Day – Oct '24. **Held event held in Stormont to raise awareness of DLD** amongst teachers and launch resources coproduced with education authority. Media coverage was excellent – Belfast Live, Newsletter, Love Belfast and more.
- **Presentation on DLD at the WJEC** (Welsh examinations board) Conference for Subject Officers in October 2024. Hosted a Community of Practice session on DLD during awareness week of behalf of the National Neurodivergence team which attracted **150 people to the live recording**. Hosted a stand with RADLD at the Senedd on Tuesday 15th October 2024 to mark DLD day 2024 and raise awareness of DLD with Senedd Members and officials. 11 MSs called by and four posted graphics and a message of support on DLD day itself.

## SWALLOW AWARENESS DAY: *NORTHERN IRELAND, WALES*

- Swallow Aware - **PHA Swallow Aware Campaign** with Brain Injury Matters celebrated August 24 and launched in May 24.
- In March 2024, we held a **Dysphagia café event in the Senedd to mark Swallowing Awareness Day**. Four MSs (one from each main political party) released specific social media content on the day, following visits to speech and language therapy teams.
- *Almost a third of all Senedd Members attended the event.*
- *90 second statement on Swallowing Awareness Day on the floor of the Senedd.*





**MEDIA:** *SCOTLAND, WALES***WALES**

- Radio Cymru on the role of neonatal SLTs to mark awareness day – March 2024
- Radio Cymru to mark International Stammering Awareness Day 2024

**SCOTLAND**

- Live BBC television in January 24 on SLT waiting times and what can people do to support children spoken language skills
- BBC Radio interview in June 24 on stroke
- BBC Radio interview in September 24 on the impact of the pandemic on children's spoken language.

**WEBINARS:** *ENGLAND*

- **Prison webinar** - a webinar on prison SLT in partnership with North London Mental Health Partnership, called 'Behind the prison walls'. 475 students joined us and engaged with the subject.
- **LeDeR webinar** - RCSLT was invited by NHS England to head up and chair their webinar on Learning from the lives and deaths – people with a learning disability and autistic people (LeDeR) and the reasonable adjustment digital flag. 550 AHPs joined the webinar, showing how SLTs lead the way in better supporting people with a learning disability and autistic people.
- **Intermediate Care webinar** - RCSLT was invited to partner with NHSE England, CSP and RCOT for a webinar on the new intermediate care framework aimed at AHPs in March. Two hundred AHPs joined.

## CAMPAIGNS: SCOTLAND, NORTHERN IRELAND

### VOICEBOX 2024

**VoiceBox** successfully took place in Scotland for the first time. The VoiceBox joke-telling competition **raises awareness of the importance and joy of communication** and how we can **improve outcomes for children in Scotland**. The campaign increased the profile of RCSLT, SLTs and children with communication needs.

- We had **28 finalists** from 26 local authorities
- Children travelled from as far as Shetland and Orkney
- **46 MSPs** in the photo call
- 8 MSPs attended the entire event
- 3 MSP visits off the back of the event.
- We have developed new relationships and important advocates including the **Children's Commissioner and the Presiding Officer**.



### BUDDY CHAT

Buddy Chat launched 29th August 2024. **Co-produced with members, teachers, adults with lived experience and children with SLCN.**



**Over 120 people attended the launch** including teachers, parents, children involved. Dept of Education officials, the Minister for Health and CAHPO as well as Chair of Education Committee and RCSLT President Nick Hewer in attendance. Excellent media coverage – **UTV news** and **BBC news, Good Morning Ulster** and **online pieces**. Buddy chat has been shared with all mainstream primary schools in NI, **over 700 schools with over 50 downloads to date**. It is housed on three places on the Education Authority website and several places on the CCEA curriculum pages. It is also on the intranet for schools in NI.

# ADVANCING POLICY/LEGISLATION

## UK / ENGLAND

- We were one of a select group invited to **provide evidence to the National Audit Office study** into support for children and young people with special educational needs. The final NAO report reflects many of the key points made in our submission, **calling for more focus on workforce, early intervention and a whole system approach.**
- Following a period of sustained engagement with colleagues at NHS England, the **Early Language Support for Every Child (ELSEC) is now being implemented in nine pathfinder sites**, resulting in the establishment of new posts for speech and language therapists at Bands 7 and 8, and recruitment of more than 50 speech and language therapy assistants.
- **Submission to the Darzi review on NHS performance** – the CEO was the only AHP representative invited on to the steering group.
- **Submission to the DWP consultation on fit note reform.** This led to a meeting with NHSE strategy unit to discuss further.
- Worked with the chair of the end-of-life CEN to **submit a response to an APPG inquiry into hospices.** Submitted a response to the Oliver McGowan Code Of Practice, with questions on how the Tiers affect SLTs. A briefing note on the role of SLTs in urgent and emergency care settings was submitted to NHSE.
- As part of the Community Rehabilitation Alliance we **co-wrote an invited submission to the DHSC** as part of the Major Conditions Strategy on a costed rehab proposal.

## WALES

- Following our response to the Welsh Government consultation '**Belonging, Engaging and Participation**', the final document included a section on speech, language and communication needs.
- We played a key role in the planning and delivery of the Welsh **Government summit on the SLCN of young people within the youth justice system** in January 2024. Following the summit, we worked with the Senedd Equality and Youth Justice Committee to push for action.
- We led on development of the **AHP Equality, Diversity and Belonging plan** which is due to be finalised shortly.
- We **responded to four Senedd consultations** and gave **oral evidence to the Senedd Children, Young People and Education Committee** as part of its inquiry into access to education for disabled children. The final report includes a number of mentions of SLT and a key recommendation that:

“

*“The Welsh Government reviews the current numbers of key allied health professionals, identifies where there are current gaps, how these gaps will be addressed and the numbers needed to support future likely level of need, including the number of training places needed. This should then be supported by a clear delivery plan.”*

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- We responded to the Health Education and Improvement Wales Education and Training Plan. This led to a **draft proposal to increase speech and language therapy training places by 5%**.
- We responded to the Health Education and Improvement Wales consultation on **health apprenticeships**.
- We **responded to three consultations around neonatal services** from relevant stakeholders including the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee and NHS Executive.

*SCOTLAND*

- Submission to **National Care Service Stage 2 Bill consultation.**
- Submission to consultation on **amendments to the Adults with Incapacity Act**

*NORTHERN IRELAND*

- **Responses to the Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls** – October 2023
- **Statutory Guidance On The Reduction And Management Of Restrictive Practices In Educational Settings** – November 2023
- **Independent Review of Children’s Social Care Services** – December 2023
- **Introduction of Safe and Effective Staffing Legislation** – September 2024
- Providing **SLT proposal for Primary Care SLT posts** to Department of Health – June 24
- Proposal for **SLT apprenticeship pilot** to Department of Health - September 24.

# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND THE VOICE OF THE PROFESSION

## UK / ENGLAND

- We **influenced widely on apprenticeships in England** – including with the Department for Education and the Institute of Apprenticeships and Further Education. We supported their policy thinking around apprenticeships and student placements and highlighted the greatly increased burden from the new apprenticeship standard on HEIs, employers and apprentices, flagging the issue for future changes.
- Extensive engagement with NHS England, and a **joint campaign with RCPCH and RCOT (#ChildrenWontWait)**, led to a meeting with then Health Minister Helen Whately and ultimately, NHS England establishing a three-year programme to transform children’s community services, with a focus on speech and language therapy, and community paediatrics. **RCSLT is represented on the Clinical Advisory Group**, alongside a number of senior speech and language therapists.
- As a result of the **#SENDintheSpecialists campaign** we established excellent relationships with the specialist workforce team at the Department for Education. Officials now proactively seek RCSLT input to relevant developments. We successfully **supported the development of a specific piece of work looking at the SLT workforce for children and young people with SEND**, facilitating focus groups between DfE officials and SLTs, and provided advice on the DfE’s findings and early policy thinking.
- Attended a meeting with Director of NHS workforce plan and Deputy Chief Allied Health Professions Officer (England) to share our **vacancy, student and workforce statistics**.

- Attended a **Greater Manchester Workforce Strategy Stakeholder workshop** hosted by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Engaged with SLT leads and commissioners in Greater Manchester about their workforce strategy – contributing our **forecast for student numbers, retention rates in the profession and analysis of NHS waiting lists**. A roundtable hosted by Greater Manchester Metro Mayor Andy Burnham is forthcoming.
- Working with Professor Maria Arche from the University of Greenwich, in January 2024 the **RCSLT brought together a coalition of over 50 organisations in endorsing the ATLAS Think Language First manifesto**. This was launched at the House of Lords in an event sponsored by Lord Boateng and attended by an international audience including the Portuguese Education Minister, leading Croatian judge and a member of the United Nations Children’s Committee. There was extensive engagement on social media on the **#ThinkLanguageFirst** theme.
- Ahead of the UK General Election, working with Voice 21 and Speech and Language UK, in February 2024, the RCSLT brought together a coalition of over 50 organisations in **sending open letters to the leaders of the three main UK parties** calling on them to ensure that their parties’ manifestos reflect the importance of supporting children and young people’s spoken language and communication.

## GOVERNMENT

### *UK / ENGLAND*

- Presented to England's regional justice commissioners regarding **SLT in prisons**. New prison SLT roles being advertised as a direct result.
- Engaged with NHS England to discuss our concerns with the autism pathway guidance and the omission of SLT. Issued a formal statement. Following a second meeting we **successfully changed NHS England national autism guidance** to acknowledge the role of SLTs during assessments and safeguard SLT jobs which were at risk.

- Actively contributed to the debate around **Safe and Effective Staffing for AHPs**. Organised and ran a safe and effective staffing event with NHS England, CSP, RCOT and AHP leaders from across the country. RCSLT, with NHS England, is taking forward work to develop a new safe and effective staffing resource for all AHPs.

## SCOTLAND

- Met with Neil Gray, Cabinet Secretary for Health, as part of the Allied Health Professions Federation Scotland. Discussed **parity of AHPs** with the rest of the healthcare workforce, **supply issues and the impactful work AHPs do**.
- Engaged with the Scottish Government on the **relationships and behaviour action plan**, and successfully met with the Scottish Government to discuss the **SLT roundtable work on children's services**.
- Gave **written and oral evidence to the Health, Social Care and Sport committee's ASL enquiry**.

## WALES

- We took part in the **Senedd Stroke Cross Party Group meeting** on the experiences of Welsh speakers with aphasia in September.
- We attended **conferences of all the major parties** in Wales.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

- Met with new Minister for Health Mike Nesbitt in July 24 and Justice Minister Naomi Long in April 24. Both positive meetings with support offered for **SLT workforce challenges** and commitment from Health Minister to **support introduction of Apprenticeships** and from Education to consider possibility of joint commissioning for **SLT undergraduate training places**. Both Ministers keen for CAUK training within their departments and commitment to encourage uptake in prisons.



- Jan-March - Met with CYP representatives from UUP, SDLP, SF and Alliance to **lobby around early years research and workforce needs** as well as meeting with Education and Health committee staff.
- After a positive meeting with Department of Education official following our We are the Village report, we were approached by DE colleagues in August and asked to **submit proposal to address early years SLCN** - a short-term project with maximum, universal impact. We worked with SLT Heads of Service and submitted a proposal for Language Launchpad. We were successful and have been **granted just under £65k to work with community partnership Help Kids Talk until March '25**.
- Call from DE official working to deputy secretary asking for advice on the **SEN transformation delivery plan**.
- DUP, UUP, SDLP, Sinn Fein and Alliance party conferences attended – significant interest in CAUK. **Supporting Community Rehabilitation Alliance in their call for a Right to Rehab** in meetings with MLAs and fringe event at UUP party conference.

## STAKEHOLDERS

### *UK / ENGLAND*

- **Co-wrote and delivered a joint editorial in the BMJ**, jointly with the World Health Organisation (WHO), on **rehabilitation**.
- We successfully **influenced and lobbied SSNAP** (Sentinel Stroke National Audit Programme) to group SLT input for easier data entry. This will allow us to extract data nationally on SLT services across the country and benchmark improvements.
- Meetings with and **submissions to the Health Services Safety Investigations Body (HSSIB) to position SLT in mental health inpatient care**. HSSIB have been asked by the Secretary of State to investigate inpatient mental care and make recommendations for improvement. The final report highlights the importance of SLT and SLCN.

- Supported members with significant **uncertainties between the National Clinical Guidelines for Stroke and the NICE guideline on stroke rehabilitation**. Wrote a letter to seek urgent clarification on the differences between the guidelines. Published a news piece in the Neuro Rehab Times. **Published a clarification statement** for our members so they could advocate for the SLT role in national and regional forums/bodies.
- We **lobbied the UK Stroke Forum** to focus more on SLT and SLT needs. We secured three slots on the agenda for both aphasia and dysphagia.
- **CRA** - The RCSLT joined with 36 organisations from the Community Rehabilitation Alliance and led in writing to the three main UK party leaders, prior to the announcement of the general election, **calling for adult rehabilitation services to be prioritised and invested in**.

## SCOTLAND

- Organised a **visit for Foysoil Choudhury MSP to an adult community service**, where he met SLTs and service users. Spoke to him about the impact of speech and language therapy and the cost savings from services such as Home First. **He then laid a motion in the Scottish Parliament**.
- Created and chaired a **roundtable group to build consensus about children's SLT services in Scotland**. For the first time, we have a consensus about what good looks like and ideas about how education and health can fund SLT. This included:
  - The Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)
  - Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
  - Scottish Directors of Allied Health Professions (SDAHP)
  - Speech and Language Therapy CYP Leads.
- Built a **coalition to lobby for more work on inclusive communication**, including Enable and Communication Inclusion People.
- Ongoing relationship and **collaboration with Public Health Scotland**.

- **Met with EIS to discuss SLT in school.** Built a good relationship and they are supportive of our work. Have built close working relationships with the Association of Head Teachers and Depute Head Teachers (AHDS)
- Have **developed key relationships with ADES** despite the significant challenges we are facing with funding.

## WALES

- We have met with the **Youth Justice Board** and the Chair of the Youth Justice Managers.
- We meet regularly with the Office of the **Children's Commissioner for Wales** and the Commissioner will be meeting with the speech and language therapist working at Hillside Secure Home.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

- Met with **CCEA** (exam provider) to **discuss language modifications** and have commitment to review processes and work with RCSLT to ensure papers are modified going forward.
- Good relationship with **Belfast Stammer Support Group** – continuing to build relationships between them and NHS SLTs. Co-founder has introduced CAUK into the NI Fire & Rescue Service as mandatory and is providing bespoke training to 999 call handlers.
- **Early Years Communication Alliance** – EYCA set up following our roundtable event with over 20 key stakeholders as members.
- Building connections with **teachers' union** – new president is keen to collaborate to support the roll out of Buddy Chat by using sixth form students to deliver the courses to local primary schools.
- Met with Head of **PSNI training college** – August 24. Positive meeting with a commitment to adopt communication access training and consider need for accessible information across the PSNI.

# AND ALSO...

## SCOTLAND

### Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry

- Submitted written and **gave oral evidence to the Scottish COVID Inquiry**, highlighting the vital role of speech and language therapy during the pandemic and the impact the profession has had on supporting those affected, especially those with communication and swallowing needs. We **highlighted the pandemic's impact on children's communication, outcomes, and waiting times**, emphasising key learnings about PPE, maintaining children's services, and the critical role of communication in learning, mental health, and future life outcomes.

### Allied Health Professions Federation Scotland (AHPFS)

- We wrote to Chief Executive of NHS Scotland to **highlight disparity between nursing and AHPs at a local board and Scottish Government level** with a particular emphasis on the upcoming appointment of a CNO. AHPFS chair was subsequently asked to join the recruitment panel to influence the appointment of the CNO.
- We have significantly **closer links with NHS Education for Scotland (NES)**. Supporting NES with a range of priorities including supervision, advanced practice and practice placement models.
- We have built strong and **effective links with the Scottish Directors of AHPs** and have used this to sharpen our messaging when influencing politically.