RCSLT Cluttering position statement (downloadable document)

## DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

April 2025

Information contained within this document is for consultation only and should not be shared outside of this.

**The information in this document is currently in development and has been shared as part of a consultation. If you are seeking guidance or information on this topic, please ensure you refer to final published content which can be found on rcslt.org.**

We appreciate any comments provided to us during the consultation, all of which will be reviewed by the working group within the context and scope of the project. We ask that, where possible and relevant, you accompany any counter arguments to statements made in the document with supporting evidence e.g. a research reference.

Members of the working group should not be contacted directly, and all feedback should be made through the assigned route e.g. via survey or project manager. Feedback made through unassigned routes or after the closing date will not be accepted or responded to.

Thank you for your support with this project.

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# Introduction

This document is for managers and commissioners of speech and language therapy services across the four nations of the UK.It outlines the nature of cluttering, the benefits of speech and language therapy, and the risks of a lack of service provision.

# What is cluttering?

Cluttering is a different way of talking that is caused by a complex range of factors including neurophysiology.

Cluttering consists of a fast and irregular rate of speech and is sometimes associated with language planning and word finding difficulties, all of which reduce intelligibility. It commonly occurs alongside stammering, dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and autism (Sommer et al., 2021). People who clutter may experience psychosomatic symptoms and depression (Zukerman et al., 2024).

Cluttering is developmental, starting in childhood and typically noticed at primary or secondary school age.

# Benefits of providing a speech and language therapy service

There are multiple benefits of speech and language therapy for people who clutter.

* Speech and language therapists are qualified professionals who must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council. The quality and safety of their practice are ensured through a professional code of ethics and standards of practice.
* SLTs supporting people who clutter can facilitate their awareness and ability to self-monitor their speech (van Zaalen & Reichel, 2014).
* The communication skills and mental health benefits gained from speech and language therapy enhance both educational and employment outcomes.
* Speech and language therapists offer training to other professionals to increase early identification and referral. They advocate for people who clutter to ensure a supportive communication environment such as in schools.

# Risks of not providing a speech and language therapy service

The risks of not providing an adequate speech and language therapy service are considerable in terms of the cost to the individual and to society. The impact of cluttering extends far beyond speech. The absence of speech and language therapy support is likely to mean that people who clutter might feel misunderstood (Scaler-Scott & St. Louis, 2011) and are more likely to experience mental health conditions including anxiety (Zukerman, 2024).

# Workforce

Speech and language therapists working with people who clutter typically also work with people who stammer. To provide adequate care for people who clutter, each speech and language therapy service should ensure an appropriate level of clinical knowledge and skill mix across the workforce. This includes a combination of speech and language therapists who:

* Work with a general caseload
* Allocate specific time to cluttering and stammering
* Possess highly specialist expertise in cluttering and stammering

It is advisable for services to consider their current workforce skills mix for cluttering in terms of access to specialist practitioners e.g. for shadowing, mentoring and supervision opportunities.

# References

TO BE ADDED