



Speech and Language Therapy



What is an SLT?

- Speech and language therapists (SLTs) are allied health professionals.
- They work closely with parents, carers and other professionals, such as teachers, nurses, occupational therapists and doctors.
- There are around 11,500 practising SLTs in the UK.



Where do we work?

- community health centres
- hospital wards
- outpatient departments
- mainstream and special schools
- children's centres
- day centres
- clients' homes
- courtrooms
- prisons
- young offenders' institutions
- independently/in private practice



Who do we work with?

- **Babies with**
 - feeding and swallowing difficulties
- **Children with**
 - mild, moderate or severe learning difficulties
 - physical disabilities
 - language delay
 - specific language impairment
 - specific difficulties in producing sounds
 - hearing impairment
 - cleft palate
 - stammering
 - autism/social interaction difficulties
 - dyslexia
 - voice disorders
 - selective mutism



Who do we work with?

- **Adults with**

- communication or eating and swallowing problems following neurological impairments and degenerative conditions, including stroke, head injury, Parkinson's disease and dementia
- head, neck or throat cancer
- voice problems
- mental health issues
- learning difficulties
- physical disabilities
- stammering
- hearing impairment



What did I do?

- Graduated from Lancaster with a BA (Hons) Linguistics in June 2004
- Enrolled on Leeds Metropolitan BSc (Hons) Clinical Language Sciences (Speech and Language Therapy) in September 2004
- Graduated in BSc (Hons) Clinical Language Sciences in 2007



Whilst at Lancaster...

- Volunteered at the Stroke Association in Morecambe for 2 hours per week to gain experience of adult neuro client groups
- Spent 2 days with a Speech and Language Therapist in Halifax, West Yorkshire, to gain experience of paediatric client groups



Starting the Speech and Language Therapy course

Huge culture shock!! - From average of 6 hours per week to 8 hours per day



Course content

- Over the 2/3/4 years you will develop your knowledge of:
 - Linguistics ☺
 - Phonology and phonetics
 - Typical child holistic development
 - Psychology
 - Anatomy and Physiology (specialising on head and neck)
 - Councelling/supervising models
 - Specific syndromes and their prognosis



Clinical Placements

- Number of placements dependent on course however RCSLT set a minimum number of clinical hours to qualify as an SLT.
- 1st – spending time with typical developing children at school/nursery and also adults in nursing homes
- 2nd and 3rd – clinical placements with an SLT; being introduced to formal assessments and therapy techniques (either adult or paediatrics). Developing understanding of day to day duties of an SLT (e.g. admin including case notes)



Clinical Placements

- Block placements – Usually over summer term for 8-10 weeks. It is expected that the student will contribute to the SLT team by now e.g. by developing group resources etc



BSc (Hons) Vs MSc (Hons)

- BSc (Hons) average term of 4 years however some universities do 3 year courses (with longer terms)
- MSc (Hons) 2 years taught course – but you need to know your current degree class before you apply
- UCAS and www.RCSLT.org.uk have information on which universities offer the course
- In terms of employment the emphasis is on the applicants skills and experience not where they studied or which course

What universities are looking for



- Very competitive courses with limited number of places as they are NHS funded with means tested bursaries
- Applicants should have experience of working with children and adults
- Each applicant must have observed an SLT – some NHS SLT teams offer 1/2 days where you can learn more about what SLTs do



Shadowing an SLT prior to applying

- Can be very difficult as to work shadow in paediatrics some schools expect a recent CRB check to enter.
- Some trusts now run 1-2 information days.
- Volunteer/work for schools/nursing homes/charities (e.g. stroke association/NAS/DS).



Typical career progression

- Begin at Band 5 (NQT) spend 12-18 months building up your competencies folder. General post which can include:
 - Adults – Stroke ward/Rehab
 - Paeds – Community clinics/mainstream schools
 - + Supervision of observational students.
- Band 6 (Specialist SLT) – Begin to specialise in specific areas:
 - Adults – Could be Dysphagia/TBI/Voice
 - Paeds – Dysfluency/ASD/DS/DYsphagia
 - + Supervision of students.



Typical career development

- Band 7 (Highly Specialist SLT) – Specialist skills in specific areas – usually related to formal training:
 - Adults – Trachestomy/Cancer
 - Paeds – ASD diagnostics/ Trachestomy
 - + Supervising of lower banded SLTs + students.
- Band 8 (Clinical Specialist) –
 - Lead SLT co-ordinating specific area of service
 - Less clinical time; more strategic.



Payscales

- Pay structure are higher in private vs public sector.
 - Band 5 £20710 - £26839
 - Band 6 £24831 - £33436
 - Band 7 £29789 - £39273
 - Band 8 £37996 - £79031
 - Band 9 £75383 - £95333

- +
- Inner London weighting of 20% (max £6080)
 - Outer London weighting of 15% (max £4256)
 - Fringe of 5% (max £1581)

- Currently have final salary pension (due for review) + 27 days annual leave (+ bank holidays) + corporate discounts on a range of services.



Job prospects for NQTs

- Less NQT and other SLTs than in past 3 years
- No recent figures regarding NQTs who are still to find employment
- SLTs need to think about ways of further developing their skills whilst applying for jobs



Finishing at Leeds Met and looking for jobs

- Throughout my BSc (Hons) I worked as a Community Support Worker with adults with learning disabilities
- Employers are looking for a breadth of clinical experience that correlates with the NQT post
- To support applications further volunteering experiences can be sought
- I volunteered with the National Autistic Society with adolescents with Asperger's Syndrome in social skills groups



My current role

- Lead SLT at a secondary special school for children with Autism, Down's Syndrome and Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities. Dysphagia & Communication.
- Outreach role support other SLTs working with children with 'complex needs' in mainstream schools
- Lead SLT on diagnostic team with children over 5 with social communication difficulties (including Autism and Asperger's Syndrome)



What I love about my job...

- Every day is completely different to the last – I work across all socio-economic classes with very interesting children and families.
- I never have a boring day at work (except mandatory training) as the children can present differently every day
- I work with PMLD students and I celebrate what seem to be the smallest successes (e.g. when a child begins to track a light source in a darkened room)



What isn't so great...

- The higher banded you are the less 'clinical time' and the more time working at a strategic level and sitting in meetings.
- Caseloads can be high and so we need to prioritise – can't do everything I want to do for every family.
- Working over a wide geographical area means I lose a lot of time in travelling between appointments

Where to find out more information



- London Speech Therapy
www.LondonSpeechTherapy.co.uk
- Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
www.rcslt.org.uk
- University websites/prospectus
- Local SLT teams
- Association of Speech and Language Therapists in Independent Practise www.helpwithtalking.co.uk
- Also, a multidisciplinary project I am involved in
www.VideoProfiling.co.uk