

Speech Therapist

Speech and language therapists are specialists in communication disorders. They assess, diagnose and treat people with speech, language and communication problems. The aim of speech and language therapy is to help people communicate to the best of their ability.

They work closely with:

- people who have difficulty speaking or understanding language, due to illness or learning disabilities
- people with stammers, voice problems, or difficulty in swallowing
- the families and carers of clients
- fellow professionals in health, social care and education.

Speech and language therapists usually work 37 hours per week, Monday to Friday. They work in a variety of settings, including hospitals, clinics, schools or day centres; some also travel to clients' homes.

Salaries range from £16,828 for a newly-qualified therapist, to £66,396 for a highly experienced therapist with extensive responsibilities.

In addition to clinical expertise, speech and language therapists need good communication, listening and problem-solving skills. They must be able to relate to people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

The profession is likely to attract those with an interest in science, psychology, medicine and education.

Most speech and language therapists are employed by the NHS, education services or charities. There is a high demand for qualified therapists.

Therapists must take an approved three or four-year first degree course, available at 15 universities. Competition for places is keen. Most courses require three A Levels/four H grades. Two-year postgraduate qualifying courses are available for those with a relevant first degree.

Speech and language therapists start with a general caseload, but often become specialists in a particular field or group of clients. Promotion prospects are good.

