

Speech and language therapy assistant

Speech and language therapy assistants are the frontline of helping patients with conditions that affect their communication, swallowing and feeding. It could also be your first step in becoming a speech and language therapist.

Working life

As a speech and language therapy assistant, you'll work closely with [speech and language therapists](#) ^[1] and support them in improving the lives of people with a variety of conditions.

speech and language therapy assistant and student

You will help people who have difficulties with:

- producing and using speech
- understanding language
- using language
- feeding, chewing or swallowing
- a stammer
- their voice

You will work with adults and children with a range of conditions including:

- [stroke](#) ^[2]
- neurological disorders, such as Parkinson's disease
- cancer of the mouth and throat
- head injury
- hearing loss and deafness
- cleft palate
- dementia

In many cases, you'll support the patient's carers too. Bilingual speech and language therapy assistants will use their language skills to help patients understand what is happening at their appointment.

Tasks could include:

- preparing rooms and equipment

- helping patients during appointments
- writing important reports on a patient's condition
- updating patient records.

Who will I work with?

As well as speech and language therapists ^[1], you'll work closely with teachers and other health professionals, such as doctors ^[3], nurses ^[4] and psychologists ^[5].

Where will I work?

You may work in hospitals, mainstream and special schools, community clinics or patients' own homes.

Entry requirements

There are no set entry requirements for speech and language therapy assistants. Employers expect good numeracy and literacy and some experience or qualifications in health or social care. Employers may ask for GCSEs in English and maths. They may ask for NVQ, BTEC or an equivalent qualification in health and social care.

Employers often ask for relevant work experience. Even where this is not specified, it would be an advantage if you have worked in health or social care, either in paid employment or voluntary work. If you're applying for a role in the NHS, you'll be asked to show how you think the NHS values apply in your everyday work.

Skills and personal characteristics needed

Speech and language therapists need to:

- be able to work with people of all ages
- enjoy using language and communication to help people
- be able to motivate people
- be able to reassure people
- enjoy working alone or as a member of a team

You'll also need

- excellent communication skills
- ability to motivate people
- organisation skills
- ability to explain treatment to patients

Training and development

You will receive appropriate training in order to do the job, including an introduction to the department and its procedures.

You may be offered the chance to study for qualifications such as:

- the NCFE CACHE level 2 Certificate in Healthcare Support Services
- the NCFE CACHE level 3 Diploma in Healthcare Support

You may also be able to do an apprenticeship.

Speech and language therapy assistants can become associate members of the Royal College of Speech and Language Specialists ^[6] (RCSLT) who run courses and events for speech and language therapy assistants to update their skills and network.

With experience, you could become a team leader supervising the work of other speech and language therapy assistants. You could apply to train as an assistant practitioner or with the necessary qualifications, as a speech and language therapist.

Pay and benefits

Your standard working week will be around 37.5 hours and may include a mix of shifts, such as nights, early starts, evenings and weekends. You'll be paid on the Agenda for Change (AFC ^[7]) pay system, typically starting on band 2 or 3.

You'll also have access to our generous pension scheme and health service discounts, as well as 27 days of annual leave, plus bank holidays, which increases the longer you're in service.

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Other roles that may interest you

- Occupational therapy support worker ^[8]
- Occupational therapist ^[9]
- Speech and language therapist ^[10]
- Knowledge and library services ^[11]

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Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/speech-and-language-therapist> [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Stroke> [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/anaesthesia> [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing> [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies> [6] <http://www.rcslt.org/> [7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#AfC> [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/healthcare-support-worker/roles-healthcare-support-worker/occupational-therapy-support-worker> [9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/occupational-therapist> [10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/speech-and-language-therapist> [11] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/health-informatics/roles-health-informatics/knowledge-and-library-services>