

Thank you for your correspondence, received 21 November 2025, regarding Speech and Language Services.

Speech and Language Therapists (SaLTs) break down communication barriers—unlocking learning, inclusion, and opportunity for every child. They play a critical role in early intervention for children and young people. However, we know that too often, children and young people have a long wait to access speech and language therapy. That is why the Department for Education is working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care to improve access to community health services, including speech and language therapy. In partnership with NHS England, the Department has extended the Early Language and Support for Every Child (ELSEC) programme, trialling new ways of working to better identify and support children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) in early years settings and primary schools.

In addition, under the Best Start in Life strategy, the Department continues to invest in evidence-based initiatives such as the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI), which has demonstrated significant impact on oral language and early literacy, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Funding for NELI will continue for a further 4 academic years until AY28/29.

Furthermore, SaLTs can now also train via a degree apprenticeship, in addition to the undergraduate degree route. This route is now in its fourth year of delivery and offers an alternative pathway to the traditional degree route into a successful career as a speech and language therapist.

Thank you again for sharing your feedback. We hope this helps to alleviate your concerns.

Kind regards,

SEND and Alternative Provision Schools Team

