



Position Statement on National
Community Healthcare
Organisations Restructuring
February 2017

The Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists (IASLT) is the recognised professional body for Speech and Language Therapists in the Republic of Ireland. One of the key functions of the IASLT is to represent the views of its members to inform public policy in relation to the provision of speech and language therapy services in the best interest of service users.

In 2013 the IASLT participated in a joint submission with The Association of Occupational Therapists in Ireland (AOTI) and The Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists (ISCP), titled Submission to ISA Review Consultation Process. Disappointingly the recommendations were not evident in the National Community Healthcare Communication Report of 2014. In 2015 the IASLT published its Response to National Community Healthcare Organisations Report 2014 (referred to as the Healy report hereafter). No response to this document was received.

The IASLT now take the opportunity to reiterate its position on changes in structures within the Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs)

The IASLT oppose the proposed reconfiguration of Speech and Language Therapist Manager Roles into Heads of Discipline Roles.

Key reasons for objection are:

1. Separation of clinical governance from operational governance is not possible within clinical services. The IASLT view is that profession specific clinical knowledge is essential to effective operational management. Neither a Network Manager, nor non-operational Head of Department (HOD) roles as outlined can effectively manage all discipline specific clinical delivery. Maintaining standards of care and management of risk is dependent on discipline specific management. There is an absolute need for these roles to be preserved in any change in structures.
2. There is a lack of formal structure around reporting lines. There is no clear accountability in the relationship proposed between Network Managers and HOD positions. This relationship is outlined as one of support and advice from HOD to Network Manager, but no formal outline of HOD authority is provided.
3. The Speech and language therapy professional code of standards and ethics as defined by CORU states a therapist 'Should seek and engage in supervision in professional practice on an on-going and regular basis' (page 10, CORU 2014). It is untenable for a single HOD to provide supervision to the number of staff that would fall under their remit (up to 70 in some cases). Lack of effective supervision is detrimental to a service and service users.

4. Responsibility for supporting 10 Network Managers, working with 10 separate multidisciplinary teams, in addition to the above supervision, is not a viable remit for one HOD position. Increased complexity of services and geographical spread are factors that should be considered when assessing feasibility for these types of positions.
5. This change in structure represents deterioration in an already flattened career structure for speech and language therapy professionals. As this change reduces the number of profession specific management posts, speech and language therapists who wish to remain practicing in their area of expertise will be unable to move into management positions. Speech and Language therapists who move into non speech and language therapy management posts will be unable to meet CORU registration requirements for the profession.
6. As a profession SLT has a long history of client advocacy and at its core the profession has sought to improve services for those with communication and swallowing disorders. This is enshrined in our professional code of standards and ethics as defined by CORU. Speech and Language Therapists must 'advocate for service users with communication impairment' (page 10, CORU 2014). To achieve this appropriate discipline specific management is required.
7. There remains a severe concern regarding lack of national representation for the discipline. IASLT call for representation for a Therapy Professions Director at senior management level.