

The Experiences of Newly Qualified Speech and Language Therapists in the Republic of Ireland as Independent Healthcare Professionals

I invite you to participate in a research study. Before making a decision, it's important to understand the purpose of the study and what your involvement would entail. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. If anything is unclear or you need more details, feel free to ask questions. Take as much time as you need to decide whether or not you'd like to take part.

WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT

My name is Lucy Rocke and I am a final-year student at the University of Galway, conducting this research as part of my undergraduate degree in Speech and Language Therapy. This study aims to explore the lived experiences of newly qualified Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) in Ireland within their first two years of independent practice. It will focus on the challenges, available supports, and coping strategies that early-career SLTs use. Findings from this study will contribute to recommendations for improving professional supports and training for new graduates.

WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to take part in a one-to-one semi-structured interview that will last approximately 45–60 minutes. Interviews will take place online via Zoom. The interview will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes, but all identifying information will be removed before analysis. You may pause, skip questions, or withdraw at any time. Topics covered in the interview will include:

- Your experiences transitioning into independent SLT practice
- Challenges faced and strategies used to manage them
- The role of supervision, mentorship, and continuing professional development (CPD)
- Perceived supports and areas for improvement in early-career SLT training

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?

You have been invited to participate because you are a newly qualified SLT (within two years of graduation) and currently working independently in a clinical setting. Participants are being recruited through the Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists (IASLT), the recognised professional body representing SLTs in Ireland. The Chief Operations Officer of IASLT has agreed to act as a gatekeeper for this study.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Participation is entirely voluntary. You can choose to take part or decline without any consequences. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time before or during the interview without providing a reason. Withdrawing will not affect your professional standing, employment, or relationship with the University of Galway or IASLT.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

There are minimal risks involved in this study. Some participants may experience mild emotional distress when discussing challenges in their transition to practice. If this occurs, you may pause or stop the interview at any time. A list of support resources (e.g., IASLT peer networks) will also be provided after participation. While there are no direct benefits to participating, this study aims to provide valuable insights that may inform improvements in early-career supports for SLTs.

WILL TAKING PART BE CONFIDENTIAL?

Yes. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study:

- You will be assigned a unique participant code, and all identifying details will be removed from transcripts.
- Data will be stored securely on a password-protected University of Galway OneDrive, accessible only to the researcher and supervisor.

- If a serious ethical or patient safety concern arises during the interview, the researcher is obliged to report it to the relevant professional body.
- Any direct quotes used in publications will be anonymised.

HOW WILL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?

Signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be stored on a password-protected University of Galway OneDrive, accessible only to the researcher and supervisor, until the research project is completed and my degree has been conferred. A de-identified transcript of the interviews, with all identifying information removed, will be retained for seven years in accordance with University of Galway retention policies before being securely deleted. The list of participants and their de-identified data will be stored in separate folders to ensure confidentiality. Under Freedom of Information legislation, you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

Findings from this study may be published in academic journals, presented at conferences, or used for teaching purposes to inform training and support strategies for newly qualified SLTs. Direct quotes may be used, but all identifying information will be removed to ensure anonymity. If you wish to receive a summary of the findings, you can request this from the researcher.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

If you have any questions, please contact:

Lucy Rocke (Researcher): l.rocke2@universityofgalway.ie

Dr. Mary-Pat O'Malley (Supervisor): marypat.omalley@universityofgalway.ie

Thank you for considering participation in this study. Your insights are highly valuable!