



IASLT

The Irish Association of
Speech + Language Therapists

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION
2026

Section 1.0: Introduction

Who are we?

The Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists (IASLT) is the recognised professional body for Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) in Ireland. IASLT envisions a world where:

"Everyone will have the right to live well, irrespective of communication or eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties."

This vision reflects IASLT's commitment to ensuring that people of all ages and abilities can participate fully in life, regardless of communication or swallowing difficulties. In this pre-budget submission IASLT presents strategic priorities for pre-budget consideration. These targeted investments and reforms will help strengthen workforce capacity, modernise career pathways, and enable SLTs to contribute at the top of their scope in evolving models of care. This submission calls for action to unlock the full potential of Ireland's SLT workforce—ensuring equitable access to quality services for all who need them. Aligned with the IASLT's vision, we also call on the Government to invest in creating national standards for inclusive communication—because everyone deserves to be understood and to be supported to understand.

SECTION 2: KEY ASKS

2.1 IASLT Advocates for Strategic Investment Priorities to Ensure Long-Term Sustainability of the Speech and Language Therapy Workforce

To ensure the sustainability, growth, and future proof of the Speech and Language Therapy profession in Ireland, IASLT proposes a set of strategic solutions that address systemic barriers, future workforce needs, and the integration of SLTs into modern models of healthcare.

Restoring Capacity: A Call for Urgent Investment in Services and Staffing: The current landscape of speech and language therapy service provision presents a stark and pressing reality: staffing across key areas has been significantly reduced, and as a direct consequence, vital services have been suspended, scaled back, or in some instances, closed entirely. The erosion of services has tangible consequences for service users and long-term outcomes. We must be honest in recognising what has been lost. It is unacceptable to present diluted service models as a substitute for adequately resourced speech and language therapy staffing. Doing so undermines the quality, safety, and equity of care that individuals and families deserve. This submission does not seek marginal improvements; it demands a substantive response.

We are calling for:

- Targeted allocation to restore staffing and rebuild workforce capacity.
- Reinstatement of suspended SLT services and safeguarding of those at risk of closure.
- The delivery of services that are firmly grounded in Evidence-Based Practice, structured around Outcome-Focused models of care, and underpinned by clearly defined specialist pathways that ensure individuals receive the right expertise at the right time.

- A comprehensive review of SLT workforce needs and recommendations including modelling for service need, regional equity, and future demand.

Families, communities, and professionals alike deserve a system that is properly resourced and future-facing. This budget provides the opportunity to make that commitment.

Proposed Measures:

- **Career Pathway Reform** Conduct an urgent evaluation of SLT career progression structures to ensure alignment with evolving service requirements and enable meaningful professional development.
- **Advancement of Clinical Practice:** Allocate a ring-fenced budget to support emerging areas of clinical practice and to advance the development of Advanced Practice (AP) roles within SLT. Co-design of AP roles with IASLT is essential to ensure these roles are clearly defined and appropriately integrated to modernise care pathways and facilitate safe, effective interdisciplinary working. Co-design is also a pre-requisite to ensure credibility, sustainability, and impact of any advanced practice roles for SLT.
- **Apprenticeship Pathways Engage key stakeholders** to explore the development and implementation of a Speech and Language Therapy apprenticeship programme in the Republic of Ireland. With increasing demand for SLTs, alternative and inclusive pathways into the profession are vital to expand the future workforce
- **Legislative changes:** amend SI 256/2018 to include SLTs as authorised 'referrers' and 'practitioners' for radiological procedures like videofluoroscopy, and to provide equivalent training and legislative support as granted to physiotherapists, ensuring fairness across HSCP professions. Exploration of legislative changes required to support the extension of supplementary prescribing rights to SLTs.

Retention and Recognition of SLTs

Invest in targeted retention strategies that acknowledge the expertise and value of the Speech and Language Therapy profession. This includes:

- **Annual CPD Stipend** – Provide a €500 annual individual professional development allowance per SLT.
- **Qualification Allowance** – Introduce a financial recognition for SLTs holding additional relevant qualifications.
- **Location-Based Supports** – Offset living costs in high-expense urban areas through a Location Allowance.
- **Work-Life Balance Measures** – Fund flexible and affordable childcare access to support workforce participation.
- **Ensure full pay parity for SLTs employed in Section 39 organisations**, in line with recent Workplace Relations Commission agreements and the 2024–2026 Public Sector Pay Deal

These measures are not just financial— without strategic retention investment, recruitment efforts will continue to struggle under systemic pressures.

2.2 IASLT calls on the Government to invest in the development of national inclusive communication standards— ensuring that every person is not only understood, but also supported in their understanding.

Why Does It Matter?

Inclusive communication ensures that public services, healthcare, education, and everyday interactions are accessible to people with communication support needs. Inclusive communication ensures that everyone—regardless of communication ability—can access, understand and participate in all services equitably. It’s a human rights issue, rooted in Article 21 of the UNCRPD, and essential for enabling equal participation in Irish society.

When services communicate in an inclusive way, individuals can access what they need, understand vital information, feel heard, and stay engaged with support that improves their lives. It leads to better outcomes, and a more respectful, empowering experience for everyone involved.

We are calling for the Government to:

Fund Phase 1 of a Government-backed national inclusive communication initiative, led by IASLT in collaboration with stakeholders and individuals with lived experience. The funding must support:

- Appointment of a specialist project manager to lead development
- Co-design with diverse service users, clinicians, and policymakers
- Planning for legislative change and national adoption
- A costed implementation strategy for Phase 2 rollout

These standards will improve public understanding, transform service delivery, and empower thousands of people to live more independently, access care more effectively, and participate fully in Irish society.

3.0 Conclusion:

Investing in the Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) profession is not just a commitment to workforce sustainability—it’s an investment in the health, education and quality of life of people across every community in Ireland. The strategic priorities outlined in this submission reflect the urgent need to restore capacity in the system, modernise career pathways, enhance service capacity, and fully integrate SLTs into evolving models of care. IASLT urges the Government to seize this opportunity to enable SLTs to work at the top of their scope and contribute meaningfully to national health objectives. With targeted investment, legislative reform, and collaborative action, we can build a future-ready SLT workforce equipped to deliver timely, equitable, and person-centred care .