

Communication is a key aspect of human life. There are many ways to communicate, yet we don't fully realise how much we depend on these skills until we start to think about it, or until we can no longer use them. Helping people regain or acquire the ability to communicate and understand communication is something I want to be a part of and this is why I want to study Speech and Language Therapy. From enabling people to speak with confidence and clarity, to having a sip of water after months of thickened fluids, the work Speech and Language Therapists do is invaluable.

I realised this was what I wanted to do after shadowing a Speech and Language Therapist in the acute Stroke Unit of my local hospital. Here I experienced how a stroke affects the swallowing and communication of the stroke victims. I was fascinated how the different areas of the brain affected the patients differently, for example how patients with dysphagia differed from those with aphasia, or how some patients could understand what you were saying, but were unable to respond to the questions. It also showed me how important Speech and Language Therapists are in the lives of the patients – they empower them with the ability to communicate with physiotherapists, doctors, friends and family – they are a fundamental part of a patient's recovery.

As part of my school's ambassador's scheme, I take part in a Reading Buddies Club that runs every week. In this I was paired with a year 7 student who struggled with reading. In each session, we read a book and help identify areas that he needs help with and we also worked on his fluency and confidence. I found it very rewarding that my work with him was making a difference. From this I learnt that I needed to be adaptable and creative, so I would think of activities that could help the student, for example by visually breaking a word up into smaller parts. This shows how I am committed to helping people improve their quality of life, as well as being able to effectively work and communicate with people on a one-to-one basis. This will help me on the course with placements, by being able to understand patients' needs and adjusting to them.

Being able to work with a variety of professions is something that really appeals to me about Speech and Language Therapy – it is just one of the things that makes the career so diverse. My teamwork skills are demonstrated in my Duke of Edinburgh expedition, where it was crucial that we all worked well together to try and solve problems. I have also completed NCS in which I worked with a variety of people that I had never met before to carry out a fundraising event. Not only did this require good communication skills and patience, but also it improved my confidence in acting as a team leader, where I was able to bring everyone's ideas together and make sure everything was on track and organised.

Another key part of a Speech and Language Therapist's role is working with people from different age ranges. For the past two summers I have volunteered in the Summer Reading Challenge where I worked with members of the library and children who were completing the challenge. In this I spoke with children of all ages, who told me about the books they had been reading. This required enthusiasm, patience and demonstrates how I am a good listener with the ability to work with children of differing ages.

The intensive nature of the course is an aspect that excites me, where time management and organisation are essential. By completing the EPQ, I learnt the importance of keeping to deadlines with effective time-management and it also enabled me to conduct research and develop skills such as referencing and presenting my findings. In my spare time, I enjoy playing the Classical Guitar at Grade 7 level, as well as running and swimming on a regular basis. This shows how I am capable of maintaining a balance between work and hobbies.