

# Exploring accounts of joint working between Speech and Language Therapists and Stroke Association Communication Support Coordinators following stroke

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## Background

- Both **Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs)** and **Stroke Association Communication Support Coordinators (CSCs)** are employed across the UK to provide services for people with communication difficulties following stroke.
- There is **little existing literature** exploring current practices or joint working in this example of **cross sector working** between **health and voluntary sectors**. The 'CHANT' project (Mumby & Whitworth, 2012) was a **formal partnership project** which involved joint working and service provision between an SLT and a CSC.
- However, in contrast, this research explores **experiences of informal joint working** which may occur in regions where both roles are commissioned.

## Method

- In this research, a series of **in-depth interviews** were undertaken with **five CSCs** and **seven SLTs** across services within the East of England.
- A **semi structured interview schedule** was used, with open questions focussing on **exploring participants' experiences and feelings around joint working** between SLTs and CSCs.
- Data from the **12 interviews** were transcribed and analysed using **thematic analysis** (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King & Horrocks, 2010).
- Analysis led to the development of **six themes** which are displayed below in this **novel schematic model**.

## Findings.

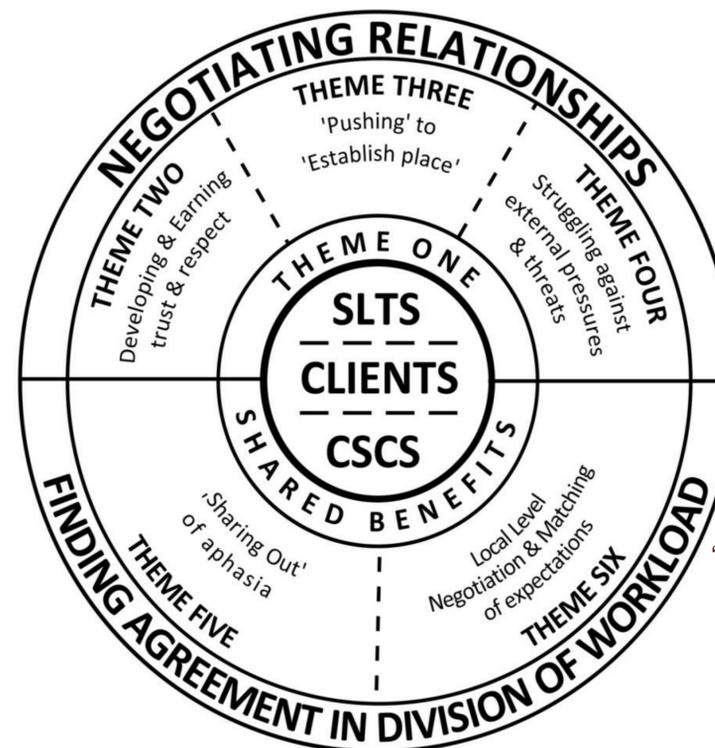
*"We are seen as 'that's the voluntary service, it's not the NHS. Very nice'...but I just don't think they take us 100% seriously" (CSC5)*

*"And that's the only way you're going to build up a relationship with them and their trust in what you are doing. 'Cos they have to be able to see you working and that what you are doing is correct..." (CSC4)*

*"It [joint working] should be standard everywhere across the country because it has such positive outcomes for patients" (SLT3)*

*"SLTs have a role to play [with people with aphasia] but we're not the only people...there's an awful lot of stuff that other people can do" (SLT5)*

*"I think even within my department we all have different focusses and different views [about role division]" (SLT7)*



*"...Speech Therapists, who are perhaps a bit more protective...in case what the outside agencies are doing is seen as Speech Therapy and therefore a cheaper equivalent or something..." (SLT4)*

*"I think a lot of our theoretical background and our [SLT] training is invisible really. It underlies what we do and our thought processes and our judgements, but it's not explicit necessarily to people" (SLT6)*

*"I had to take on board what they wanted [the commissioners]..and then I had the SLTs with what they wanted....and they were, I suppose, two different things" (CSC2)*

*"We put together a programme of how it would work ...so they [SLT] put down everything they would do, things that we would do, and stuff we would do together" (CSC4)*

## Discussion

- The research reveals joint working relationships between SLTs and CSCs can be **positive and beneficial**. However, the findings also highlight **challenges** inherent in this example of **cross sector working**, between two roles who undergo **different levels of training** and **professional regulation**. SLTs and CSCs engage in processes to **establish place in unstructured hierarchies** and to **negotiate role boundaries** to 'share out aphasia'.
- **Clinical applications** are suggested based on research findings – **please contact the lead researcher for more information** - [katherine.scantlebury@nhs.net](mailto:katherine.scantlebury@nhs.net)

## References

- Braun, V., Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2), 77-101.
- King, N., Horrocks, C.(2010). *Interviews in qualitative research*. London, UK: Sage Publications Inc.
- Mumby, K., Whitworth, A. (2012). Evaluating the effectiveness of intervention in long term aphasia post Stroke: the experience from CHANT. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 47 (4), 398-412