

Leanne Nicholson

Speech and Language Therapist

MA (Hons),
HCPC Registered



Professional Profile

Leanne Nicholson is a Speech and Language Therapist with interests in acquired brain injury, tracheostomy and swallowing problems. Leanne has experience in both NHS and private settings and trained at University College London, completing the course in 2008. Leanne secured a first post working with people with traumatic brain injuries and mental health problems and from there Leanne moved to a large, independent hospital in London and worked with people with acquired brain injuries in both acute and rehabilitation phases. Leanne worked with people ranging from very low awareness states to those with high-level difficulties aiming to return to employment.

Leanne moved from London to Manchester in 2011 and initially worked with people with brain tumours and head and neck cancers before becoming lead SLT at a large regional hospital. Currently, alongside work for United Rehab Solutions, Leanne works in a large university teaching hospital, managing a caseload consisting of critically ill inpatients and people living in the community with swallowing problems or tracheostomy.

Leanne works with patients with swallowing and communication disorders resulting from stroke, traumatic brain injury, head and neck cancer or acute illness from the hyper-acute stages to community rehabilitation. Her experience includes working with people with aphasia, oral or verbal dyspraxia, dysarthria or cognitive communication impairments. Leanne has provided both individual and group therapy, ensuring clear, patient-centred goals with functional outcomes at all times. Leanne incorporates use of both low and high-tech communication aids, including iPads and eye-gaze technology.

For those patients in low-arousal states, in addition to holistic assessment and treatment, Leanne's role has included carrying out and setting up facial oral tract therapy, desensitisation routines and regular mouth care as well as giving advice and support to family and other members of staff.

Leanne has worked with many patients displaying challenging or aggressive behaviours allowing her to become skilled at negotiation and de-escalation. This has also encouraged a good understanding of the importance of capacity, consent and practice in best interests.

Providing a quality service to people with complex dysphagia requires timely use of both instrumental and bedside assessments to guide management. As such, Leanne often uses fiberoptic endoscopic evaluations of swallowing (FEES) or videofluoroscopy. Leanne regularly recommends compensation strategies, therapy and modified diets for people with dysphagia.

Close liaison and information sharing with other members of the interdisciplinary team, family and other relevant parties is an essential component of Leanne's work. Effective and holistic service provision is dependent on the team working together in all aspects of a patient's care, from patient-led goal setting to ongoing reviews and reports. Leanne has participated in joint sessions with other professionals as well as in regular ward meetings and case conferences. Leanne has contributed to detailed inter-disciplinary reports to provide families, funders and other

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parties with progress updates, outcomes and recommendations. Case managing for patients further promotes communication among the team and liaison with outside agencies.

As patients have a range of backgrounds and personalities, Leanne ensures her interaction with them and their families is always respectful and appropriate. This is also true for people with cultural and linguistic differences, for whom assistance from skilled interpreters may be needed.

Professional and personal development is something about which Leanne is particularly enthusiastic. Leanne aims to be familiar with relevant research and ensure her practice is evidence based where possible. Leanne always adheres to best practice guidelines as well as local / national policies and procedures.

Professional Qualification and Membership

- MA (hons) Linguistics, University of Edinburgh, 2001
- MSc Speech and Language Sciences, University College London, 2008
- Member of RCLST.
- HCPC registered.

Experience and Employment History

- SLT at United Rehab Solutions – 2016 – present: acquired brain injury, low awareness states, tracheostomy, swallowing and communication impairments.
- Highly Specialist SLT, NHS – 2014 – present: acute inpatient wards, specialising in critical care; community dysphagia; FEES and videofluoroscopy.
- Acute Lead SLT, NHS – 2012-2014: Lead SLT for inpatients with speech, language and swallowing problems; progressive conditions, stroke lead, instrumental assessments.
- Highly Specialist SLT, NHS – 2011-2012: swallowing and communication disorders with people with cancer.
- Highly Specialist SLT, independent hospital – 2010-2011: part of specialist inter-disciplinary team providing rehabilitation to UK and overseas patients with a range of neurological conditions.
- Specialist SLT, independent hospital – 2009-2010: as above.
- SLT, brain injury unit – 2008-2009: provision of individual and group therapy to people with communication, swallowing or cognitive impairments as well as those with mental health conditions.

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