

Meet Lucy Brookes, a Speech Language Therapist (SLT)

Based in Christchurch, Lucy Brookes joined the Ministry of Education in 2004.



Lucy's story

Lucy came to New Zealand from the United Kingdom to take up a role with Child Development Services (CDS) in Auckland working predominantly with 0–2-year-old children with dysphagia (feeding difficulties). At that time there was only one SLT training course running in NZ so there was a nationwide shortage of SLTs.

“After being a generalist SLT in the UK and gaining experience with adults and children with acquired and developmental communication difficulties I recognised that my passion was with children who require supports across a number of different areas”.

Lucy began working for the Ministry of Education in 2004. First in Palmerston North, then after having her own children she began working in Christchurch.

Lucy's day-to-day

“The beauty of working for the Ministry is that we support a huge variety of children. We see children with straight forward speech, language, or fluency difficulties but then we also see children whose needs are more complex and require the collaboration of a number of different professionals to support the child and the adults in the child's life.”

As well as her day-to-day work with the children and their whanau/teachers, Lucy is involved with supporting other children and families not directly on her caseload. She co-hosts workshops such as

More Than Words for families of children with a diagnosis or features of ASD. She is accredited to be able to issue equipment for children who need access to Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) devices.

Lucy also has the role of supporting others in her district when the children with communication difficulties also have feeding concerns.

Rewards and challenges of the role

The biggest sense of satisfaction for Lucy comes when there is good understanding between all the people who are supporting the child.

Everyone brings something to the relationship – the SLT brings evidence-based knowledge and experience about strategies that will help the child with the development of their communication; the family and educators bring different skills to the team – they come with their own kete – their cultural knowledge, their knowledge of the strengths of the child in the various environments where they are living and learning. When collaboration works well, they have a clear plan, and everyone is aware of the part they will play in the plan.

Speech Language Therapist – Role Information

Role responsibility

- work to understand the impact of the child's speech and language difficulties in the context of their home, school and community
- work closely with parents, whānau, caregivers, teachers and other specialists to help children and young people to develop their speech and language skills
- work as part of a multi-disciplinary team
- talk to the adults in a child's life to find out about a child or young person's overall development and behaviour so they can identify what their individual communication needs are.

Speech Language Therapist must have knowledge of or skills in:

- a Bachelor's (Hons) or Master's degree in speech-language therapy or an equivalent that meets the requirements of the New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association
- to be eligible to be a member of the New Zealand Speech-language Therapists Association.

Skills and knowledge required:

- managing speech and language needs in a variety of settings
- understanding how speech and language needs affect how children learn and participate in social contexts
- working effectively with adults and facilitating their learning
- maintaining meaningful relationships with whānau and teachers and providing support services

- working with diverse cultures
- acknowledging and respecting Te Ao Māori
- communicating, teaching and planning effectively.

Career development

Becoming a Speech Language Therapist with the Ministry of Education will give you the rewards and challenges of the job itself, as well as opportunities to develop your career.

You will:

- be supported and supervised by experienced professional colleagues
- be kept up to date with the latest evidence
- take part in ongoing training
- have opportunities to share and extend your knowledge and skills.

In time this can lead to leadership roles, eg, manager, practice adviser or practice leader. You might also have opportunities to take part in projects, working groups or consultations.

Further information about speech-language therapists

Learning support careers and professional development

For more information about the role of a special education adviser and working in learning support, visit our [learning support careers page](#)

Learning support scholarships and study awards

If you're interested in a career in learning support, you may be eligible for a scholarship or study award. Find out [more here](#)