Children under 6 who have Dysfluent Speech (Stammering/Stuttering).

Information for parents, teachers and carers

For more information, please contact Speech & Language Therapy on:

For York and Selby Area: 01904 724366

For Scarborough Whitby, Ryedale Area: 01723 342472
UNIVERSAL LEVEL: ‘What you need to know’

Support, enable and include your child through;

- Attendance at our training courses in relevant areas of Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN);
  
  ➢ Supporting Children who Stammer

(Please contact the Speech and Language Therapy department to express interest in attending and to find out when this training course is running).

- Knowing that learning to talk, like other skills such as walking, doesn’t happen straight away. Young children will often stop and start again and stumble over words when they are learning to talk. It is normal for young children to repeat whole words and phrases and hesitate with ‘ums’ and ‘ers’ whilst they are trying to decide what to say and how to put their sentences together. Up to 8% of children experience stammering when they are learning to talk.

- Being aware that Stammering can appear usually between the ages of 2 and 5 when a child’s speech and language skills are developing. 4 out of 5 children who start to stammer will resolve either naturally or with help. However, as we don’t know with 100% certainty which children will resolve naturally, and which ones will need help, it is important the right support is in place to encourage a child to develop more fluent speech. Early intervention is the most effective and therefore timely referral to a Speech and Language Therapist is really important.

- Knowing that if a child is stammering you may notice that they are putting extra effort into saying their words, which can make the sounds come out in a more tense way. You may hear some or all of these features when the child talks:
  - Repeating the first sound or syllable of a word e.g. m-m-m-my or pa-pa-party
  - Stretching sounds out e.g. mmmmmum
  - Difficulty getting started or moving through a word, no sound may come out for a second or two because the sound is getting stuck e.g. m....um
• Being aware that it is normal for stammering to come and go, a child might not stammer for a few days or even months, but then the stammer might start again. A child’s stammer may vary depending on the situation (relaxed or rushed environment), the person they are speaking to (friends, family, strangers), how they feel (tired, anxious, excited etc.), or what they are trying to say (complicated or simple sentences, new or familiar vocabulary).

• Knowing that even if a child’s stammer isn’t there all the time it is still important to get the right support from a Speech and Language Therapist, to make it more likely their stammer will completely resolve or to reduce the impact of the stammering when it is present.

• Stammering is a neurological condition, subtle changes within the brain result in a physical difficulty in talking. However, stammering is complicated and there is not one single cause. There is usually a combination of factors that result in a child stammering. Things that happen in the environment at home or school do not cause stammering.

• Bilingualism does not cause stammering. Bilingualism in children is where the child has been spoken to in, or speaks, two or more languages. Millions of children across the world speak more than one language and young children are easily able to learn at least two languages at the same time. It is common for a child to stammer more in one language than another.

• There are many advantages of being bilingual. Exposing the child to more than one language when they are young gives them a great opportunity to become competent in both languages. It is important to continue to talk to your child in your home language.

• For some children who stammer, a change in their life can result in a temporary increase in stammering e.g. If your child starts nursery or school, moving house, if they are hearing a new language for the first time. Try to be as consistent as you can with other daily routines and your management of their general behaviour.

• Stammering often, but not always, runs in families. About 60% of people who stammer have another family member who stammers. Stammering initially affects boys and girls equally but by about age 10 there are about 4-5 times as many boys who stammer than girls.
• Reading about stammering on the following reliable websites:
  - https://stamma.org (British Stammering Association)
  - https://actionforstammeringchildren.org

• Accessing information from relevant sources such as;
TARGETED LEVEL: ‘What you do, in light of what you know’

- Although there are things you can do to make it easier for a child to speak, remember that the environment doesn’t cause stammering- don’t blame yourself!

- Give your child some one-to-one ‘special time’, this is helpful as they will have your undivided attention and there is no need to rush. Follow their lead by playing with what they want to play with and talking about the things they want to talk about. Make it relaxed rather than rushed. Try out some of the strategies below during these special times to help your child to speak more easily.

  - **Set a slow speaking pace.** A child can be more fluent when they take their time to think and plan what they want to say. You could try to set the pace for the child by waiting one or two seconds before speaking when they have just said something. Also use an unhurried rate when you are speaking by using lots of pauses.

  - **Try not to give advice,** such as “Slow down”, “Think about what you want to say first” or “Take a deep breath”. This will only make the child more anxious next time he/she speaks and make them think they are doing something wrong with their talking.

  - **Try to make more comments** rather than asking the child lots of questions e.g. ‘I bet you’ve had a good day today’ instead of ‘What have you done today?’ or ‘That’s a big tower’ instead of ‘What are you making?’ This allows the child to say something if they want to, without feeling the pressure of having to find the right words to fit the particular question. If you do ask a question, give the child plenty of time to answer, don’t ask another one before they have had time to think about and answer the first one.

  - Use the same kind of sentences as the child, keep them short and simple.

  - Keep easy, natural eye contact when the child is speaking so that he/she knows you are listening. If you are busy and cannot stop what you are doing, tell the child that although you are busy you are still listening.

  - Encourage everyone in the family/group to take turns to talk, to listen to each other and not to interrupt the speaker. It can be hard
for a child to be fluent when talking in a group particularly if they are rushing to interrupt someone else, or if they are rushing to finish what they want to say before someone else interrupts.

- Try to avoid a hectic and rushed lifestyle. Children who stammer often respond well to a routine and structured environment at home and at school. It can be helpful during holiday times to keep the days simple and well planned.

- Try to establish regular sleep patterns. Stammering can increase when a child is tired.

- Praise the child for things he/she does well. This will help to build confidence.

Share this information with anyone who spends a lot of time with your child.

If you are a bilingual family, use the language you are most comfortable with/the one you would usually use with your child when carrying out the above strategies.
Tell us what you think
We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact

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An answer phone is available out of hours.

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Caring with Pride:
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- Caring about we do
- Respecting and valuing each other
- Listening in order to improve
- Always doing what we can to be helpful
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