

# **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 726599

**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*
- 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. 5% 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. mmmum
  - 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.
- Understanding that Stammering is complicated, there is no one single cause. It is usually a combination of factors that result in a child stammering. Parents don't cause stammering. Stammering often, but not always, runs in families. Stammering initially affects boys and girls equally but later on there are about 4-5 times as many boys who stammer than girls.
- Reading about stammering on the following reliable websites:
  - [www.stammeringcentre.org](http://www.stammeringcentre.org) (Michael Palin Centre)
  - [www.stammering.org](http://www.stammering.org) (British Stammering Association)
- Accessing information from relevant sources such as;



## TARGETED LEVEL: 'What you do, in light of what you know'

### Boost your child/young person's fluency skills further by;

-Knowing that 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!

-Practicing the suggestions below; these can help a child to speak more easily. Share them with people who spend a lot of time with the child.

-Giving a 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 ideas below during these special times.

- **Setting 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.**
- **Trying 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.
- Trying 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?' 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.
- Using the same kind of sentences as the child, keep them **short and simple.**
- Keeping 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.

- Encouraging 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.
- Trying 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.
- Trying to establish **regular sleep patterns**. Stammering can increase when a child is tired.
- **Praising** the child for things he/she does well. This will help to build confidence.

## **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;

**For York and Selby Area:** 01904 726599

**For Scarborough Whitby, Ryedale Area:** 01723 342472

## **Teaching, Training and Research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of staff and improve health and healthcare in our community. Staff or students in training may attend consultations for this purpose. You can opt-out if you do not want trainees to attend. Staff may also ask you to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

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PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or via email at [pals@york.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@york.nhs.uk)

An answer phone is available out of hours.

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Providing care together in York, Scarborough, Bridlington, Whitby, Malton, Selby and Easingwold.

## **Caring with Pride:**

Our ultimate objective is to be trusted to deliver safe, effective and sustainable healthcare within our communities.

## **Our values:**

- 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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Braille



Audio e.g.  
CD



Large print



Electronic

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