

Secondary School Children 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 the young person 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 stammering affects the smooth flow of speech and is characterised by a number of different features, for example: repeating sounds and/or words; stretching out sounds (prolonging) or getting stuck starting or moving through a word (blocking), showing tension in the face/neck and having disrupted breathing patterns e.g. taking an exaggerated intake of breath before speaking. Some young people present with extra body movement as they speak as they try and push the word out e.g. stamping their feet, tapping their hands etc.
- Being aware that some young people show little or no obvious signs of stammering (the above features); this is because they may be swapping words or avoiding speaking in certain situations to try and maintain fluent speech, although this may help themselves in the moment, it isn't always helpful in the long run.
- Knowing that stammering isn't all about speech characteristics and that it can have an effect on a child's confidence and this in turn can shape how the stammer develops.
- Understanding that Stammering can come and go for lots of different reasons. There may be a variation in the amount of stammering you hear depending on the situation or how your child is feeling.
- Being aware that Stammering is found in all parts of the world and can affect all different types of people e.g. it affects the rich, the poor, the highly intelligent and those who have learning difficulties.
- Knowing there are many famous people who stammer/stammered, for example King George VI (the Queen's father), Marilyn Monroe (model and actress), Kylie Minogue (singer) Bruce Willis (actor), Rowen Atkinson (actor), and Ed Sheeran (singer).
- Understanding that most stammering begins in early childhood when children are developing their speech and language skills.

- Up to 8% of children experience stammering when they are learning to talk. About 4/5 of those grow out of it either naturally or with help. Stammering can come and go throughout childhood but if it continues into adulthood, it's likely to be a lifelong condition. Up to 3% of adults in the UK say that they stammer.
- 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. However, here are things in an environment that might make it more difficult for a child to speak fluently if they do have a stammer.
- Understanding that Stammering is not caused by anxiety or nervousness although this can make stammering worse.
- 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 later on there are about 4-5 times as many boys who stammer than girls.
- Realising that the cause isn't really important, the thing to focus on is what can be done about it.
- Knowing that although there is no 'cure' for stammering, there is a lot that can be done to improve the situation and to help a young person manage their stammering more confidently, to have more control over their stammering and how they feel about it.
- Reading about stammering on the following reliable websites:
 - <https://stamma.org> (British Stammering Association)
 - <https://actionforstammeringchildren.org>
- Watching the following video clips (can be found on YouTube):
 - 'Wait! I'm not finished yet' by the Michael Palin Centre.
 - My Stammering Tap by My pockets Ltd.
 These video clips are short films which aims to raise knowledge and awareness about how to support an individual who stammers.

- Accessing information from relevant sources such as;



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

Boost your young person's fluency skills further by;

- Talking to the young person one-to-one to find out if there is anything you can do to help them (if it is clear that the young person is aware of their difficulties with stammering). Find out whether there are things that they want to do more of or whether there are particular tasks that really worry them e.g. reading aloud, answering questions, the register etc. and see if they have any suggestions of what they would like you to do to help etc.
- Being aware that young people who stammer benefit from having more time to respond, so during question and answer time it can be helpful for teachers to slow down their pace of talking so that everyone realises they don't need to hurry with their responses.
- Maintaining normal eye contact if they are stammering, to show that you are interested in what they are saying and that you are listening.
- Avoiding the temptation to finish their words for them, as this may make them feel rushed or frustrated. Instead wait patiently for them to get their words out.
- Dealing with bullying and teasing immediately, these make stammering much worse. If they have obviously been upset by teasing, talk with him/her one-to-one. Help them to understand why others tease, and brainstorm ideas for how to respond. If certain pupils are picking on him/her, talk to these pupils alone and explain that teasing is unacceptable.
- Not advising the young person to take a deep breath or to slow down. It probably won't help for more than a few moments and could make them more self-conscious about their speech. Instead set a slower speaking pace by pausing before responding to something they say and speaking slower when asking them something.
- Praising the young person for the things that they do well.
- Avoiding putting the young person who stammers on the spot. Allow them to volunteer to answer questions instead.

- Trying to be flexible with oral exams/tasks. For example, does there have to be a time limit? Does it have to be presented in front of the whole class? Allowing a variety of verbal or non-verbal responses at register time rather than having to say a set phrase.
- Being aware that keeping a young person waiting too long for their turn to speak (If everyone in the class is going to be asked to speak) can increase anxiety. Try to give them an earlier turn. It might also be helpful to ask them a question which requires a shorter response/give them shorter parts to read.
- Dedicating a key person/mentor to the young person who stammers- someone they can build rapport with and who they can talk to about their speech and about any problems arising if they need to.
- Making sure that at school, cover and supply teachers (and other school staff they will come into contact with-receptionist, mid-day supervisors etc.) are kept up to date with the young person's needs and the strategies that need to be in place to support them with their fluency. It may also be helpful to let the young person know that the cover/supply teachers have been informed of the strategies that they have mentioned are helpful for them, so that they don't need to worry that they will be put on the spot because the supply teacher doesn't know they stammer etc.

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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- Listening in order to improve
- Always doing what we can to be helpful

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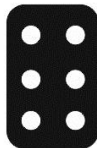
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Braille



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Electronic

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