Advice:

Selective Mutism
Key Stage 2

Information for parents and practitioners

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

For York and Selby Area:  01904 726599
For Scarborough Whitby, Ryedale Area:  01904 724366
Selective Mutism KS 2

UNIVERSAL LEVEL:

Support, enable and include children with selective mutism anxiety through knowing that;

- **Selective Mutism is an anxiety disorder**, whereby the child has phobia like behaviours around talking at certain times and this can extend to other forms of communication quite quickly.

- **The child’s speaking confidence is linked very specifically to variables of who is there, where they are and what the communication task is.** So s/he may talk happily to Mum on the approach to school and then stop at the school gate, or may talk to peers on the playground, but not once in school.

- The child is **not being stubborn** and is **not exercising ‘control’**.

- The child **will have a varied speaking profile**, talking happily and even noisily in some places, with some people, then is silent in others. This is what makes Selective Mutism, Selective (in medical terms, ‘specific) Mutism.

- **It is helpful to attend Selective Mutism Core and Advanced level courses.** See SMIRA’s website.

- Reading the **information for professionals and parents** on the SMIRA (Selective Mutism information and Research Association) website;  [www.smira.org.uk](http://www.smira.org.uk)

- Also any training available locally.

**Phonics Guide**, for information regarding access to the Phonics test for children with SLCN including Selective Mutism.
TARGETED LEVEL:
Boost a child’s confidence in giving a verbal response by;

- **Not trying** to get the child to speak!
- **Making sure parents understand too** how to respond to their child’s varied talking pattern (see advice sheet for parents)
- **Acknowledging the child’s concerns about talking**, but in a positive, ‘it’ll get easier’ way e.g. “I know it’s still a bit tricky to talk at the moment….it’ll get easier”
- **Acknowledging it must be frustrating** at times not being able to say what you want to say.
- **Acknowledging, but negating other children’s comments** e.g. if they say “Sally doesn’t talk”. You then say, “Sally’s a great talker; she’s just not used to doing it here yet”
- Advising other children not to talk about the child as someone who ‘doesn’t speak’ e.g. to ‘inform’ a supply teacher
- Letting the child talk through others; “Until you’re able to talk more in school”
- Talking with the child, but **reducing your use of questions** as much as possible. Just create a commentary regarding what you both are doing or what is happening e.g. “Ah I see what you’ve done here… you seem to have added the/written about ….”
- **Reducing your use of ‘tag’ questions** e.g. “…didn’t we?”, “……isn’t it?” and so on. They are still questions and it’s best to avoid them.
- **Reducing eye to eye gaze**, especially at the point when speech may occur, e.g. if you say “That’s a lovely drawing…” ; keep looking at that and don’t look for a response.
- **Sitting side by side**, where possible, as this reduces the direct pressure created (to respond) by eye contact.
• Being aware that the usual steps to enhancing communication are counter-productive e.g. don’t give forced alternatives/choices, don’t get down and face the child, don’t ‘be silly’ and get things wrong. These all put pressure on the child to give a verbal response.

• Finding out about the child’s favourite things and interests. S/he is most likely to feel confident talking about these; their ‘specialist subject’. Can s/he bring items from home?

• When necessary for communication, encouraging non-verbal communication, through pointing and gesturing, so the child still joins in. However be aware some children also find this tricky as they are very self-conscious

• Being aware it is usually counterproductive to give congratulations, if the child does speak.

• Saying, “Yes, we knew Sally could talk”, if other children comment.

• Not putting the child in the ‘usual’ SLCN targeted interventions e.g. Talk Boost, without consulting the SLT.
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

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An answer phone is available out of hours.

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01904 725566
email: access@york.nhs.uk

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