Advice:
Children who lack confidence in speaking
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
Speech anxiety in young children

UNIVERSAL LEVEL:
Support, enable and include children with speech anxiety through knowing that;

✦ Some children are more confident at speaking in some situations than others; but to a significant noticeable degree.

✦ Children with speech, language or communication difficulties are more likely to have this issue.

✦ Some children have no difficulties with speech, language and communication and may be chatty and communicative at other times, for instance at home.

✦ Inclusion in general social skills or verbal language interventions may not be appropriate; the child may be very sociable and have good communication skills once they are able to talk happily.

✦ The child is not being stubborn and is not exercising 'control'. They may just find talking out anxiety provoking and try to avoid the anxiety.

✦ Further information and support regarding your child's speech and language development from;
TARGETED LEVEL:
Boost a child’s confidence in speaking by;

- **Reducing** any attempts to get the child to speak. The less you try to get the child to speak, the more likely it will happen.

- 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. The child may not respond immediately, but may the more you do this.

- **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.

- **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, but negating other children’s comments e.g. “Sally doesn’t talk much”. You then could say, “Sally’s a great talker; she’s talks lots at home”

- **Giving no reaction** if the child does start to say more. Be completely natural and just respond to what they say, carrying on the conversation. No rewards or big congratulations!

- **Saying** e.g. “Yes, we knew Sally could talk” If other children comment about them speaking more.

- **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.

- **Talking in unison** e.g. all the children counting, saying rhymes or singing together and for older children e.g. paired reading.

- Referring to SLT if the issue goes on for more than 6 weeks and is not improving when the strategies above are put into place

- Referring to SLT if the issue is affecting the child academically or socially.
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)**

Patients, relatives and carers sometimes need to turn to someone for help, advice or support. Our PALS team is here for you.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or via email at pals@york.nhs.uk

An answer phone is available out of hours.

**About Us**

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