



- **What is a Speech and Language Therapist?**

Speech and Language Therapists are fully qualified professionals who assess, diagnose and treat speech, language, communication and swallowing problems.

I qualified at City University, London 20 years ago. I am registered with the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) and a member of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT). I am trained to work with infants, children and young adults.

- **What is Speech and Language Therapy?**

Speech and language therapy helps infants, children and adults with speech, language, communication, and swallowing difficulties.

- **How do I know if my child needs Speech and Language Therapy?**

Children can show some of the following difficulties:

- Difficulty listening to and focusing on to what is said to them. Being easily distracted or having a notably very short attention span.
- Difficulty interacting with other people. Not seeming interested in other people or finding it hard to make or maintain friendships or play with other children.
- Limited understanding of the spoken language of others.
- Difficulty learning and using new words. They may have a more limited vocabulary than typically developing children and may use the wrong word to refer to an object, e.g. calling a fox a mouse. They may struggle to find the word they are looking for and maybe give up and end up not saying anything at all.
- Difficulty putting words together to form sentences. They may put the words in the wrong order or leave out key words.
- Their speech might not be clear. This can mean that people who don't know them and maybe even people who know them well find them hard to understand.
- Difficulty getting their words out or stammering on their words.

- Difficulty planning what they want to say. They may need more time to organise their thoughts into words and take longer than expected to start speaking.

- **What can I expect from Speech and Language Therapy?**

Treatment usually starts with an initial assessment. An initial assessment will help to identify if a client has a speech, language, communication or swallowing difficulty and the severity of their difficulty. The assessment will then determine the best method of treatment.

Therapy sessions typically last 45 minutes and can be held in a clinic, at a child's school, or via video call or phone. Therapy activities will depend on the child's speech and language therapy goals which are set after the initial assessment and in the first few weeks of therapy. The goals are reviewed every three months.

- **How long does speech and language therapy normally take?**

Treatment can last from a few weeks to several months, depending on the nature of the difficulty, a child's response to therapy and support outside of the sessions.

- **Why is Early Intervention important?**

Early Intervention supports a child who has speech, language, social communication and/ or eating and drinking difficulties. Carrying out therapy early improves outcomes for children or prevents escalating need or risk. Early intervention also provides training and advice for parents/ carers, educational staff and other key people that work with a child with speech and language difficulties. As well as helps a child develop the skills needed for meaningful conversations, understanding social cues and building relationships.

- **Can my child outgrow his/her speech and language difficulties?**

Speech and language continue to develop throughout childhood, but if a child has speech or language difficulties, he or she may not 'grow out of it' naturally. Without therapy, a child's speech or language could fall further behind making it harder for the child to catch up. Individualised Early Intervention is beneficial and can dramatically improve a child's

development and may prevent additional concerns such as behaviour issues.

- **What can I do to help my child's speech and language develop at home?**

I will provide you with regular specific advice, strategies or activities to help support your child's speech and language development. Continuing to support your child at home will maximise their learning potential. Your child's individualised speech and language therapy goals are discussed with you to ensure the goals are meaningful for your child.

- **What is the difference between Speech and Language?**

Speech – how clearly and easily a child uses speech sounds in their talking.

We often talk about children having 'unclear speech' or 'delayed speech sound development'. It is often hard for less familiar as well as familiar people to understand children with speech difficulties. This can become incredibly frustrating, upsetting and isolating for the child with speech difficulties, as they are unable to clearly convey their needs, wants and ideas. This can result in challenging behaviour, low self-esteem and difficulties making and keeping friends. There is evidence that young children with speech sound difficulties can often go on to struggle with learning to read and write if the speech difficulties are not resolved adequately.

Language – the words that a person is able to use and understand, as opposed to individual sounds.

Children can have trouble understanding and using language for many different reasons including language delay, developmental language disorder, specific and general learning difficulties, brain injury and children that identify as Neurodiverse (including Autism, ADHD, Sensory processing difficulties.)

Language difficulties can act as a huge barrier to lots of things such as communication with others, the quality of friendships and family relationships, the ability to make friendships and build relationships in

the first place, the ability to access learning and enjoyable activities like play, reading and watching films.

Both children with speech difficulties and children with language difficulties can experience frustration and feelings of isolation. The fact that they don't understand what is going on around them can lead them to feel anxious as they often do not know what's happening next either at school or at home. As with speech, early intervention for children with language difficulties is a key factor in achieving the best outcomes for a child.

- **Do you work with other professionals?**

I believe that collaboration is essential for a child to reach his or her full potential and work closely as a team with all the key people in the child's life, including other health and education professionals. With your permission, this can be done in many ways: liaising on the phone, sharing reports, attending sessions, and attending appropriate meetings.