

An Initial Overview

Surrey Speech and Language Therapy Service



SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

Speech Sounds

- Speech refers to the sounds in words that we use to get our message across. We need to say the correct sounds and use them in the right places in words for people to fully understand what we are saying.
- It is normal for children to make errors with sounds as they are learning to talk. Sometimes these errors carry on for longer than we expect. For example, a child might say 'wabbit' for 'rabbit'. This would be an acceptable error pattern but by four years old we would expect the child to be able to use the correct sounds. Children with a speech sound delay are more likely to make spontaneous progress with their use of speech sounds.
- Sometimes children make errors that are not part of typical speech development. Some examples include saying 'wabbit' for 'rabbit' or 'babbit' for 'rabbit'. This is referred to as a speech sound disorder. Children with a speech sound disorder are more likely to require input from a Speech and Language Therapist to make progress.

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- Hearing difficulties can affect speech. If a child is making speech errors it is important to consider whether there might be an underlying hearing difficulty. Your Speech and Language Therapist will ask whether a recent hearing assessment has been completed and may suggest that a referral to Audiology is made.

Articulation vs Phonology

For a child to be able to say a sound correctly in their everyday speech:

- First, they need to be able to say the single sound on its own (articulation).
- Then, they need to know where to use the sounds in words (phonology).

Children can have difficulties with one of these things or both. When a child is assessed, the Speech and Language Therapist will identify the type of difficulty to enable the appropriate therapy to be recommended.

Strategies to support your child

- Modelling:** Children do not always say words exactly as adults do, they might miss out a part of the word or say a sound incorrectly. If you tell them to say the word properly, they may not be able to change how they say it, instead you should **model** the correct production. Repeat what the child says and correct the error. For example, if a child says 'wabbit', you say 'rabbit'.
- Build confidence** and **encourage** your child to talk. Sometimes children are shy to talk. Encourage them to talk and value what they say. **Repeat back** any words that you do understand and encourage them to tell you more, be reassuring and find out what they are saying.
- Slow down your rate of speech** to provide an appropriate model. If you speak slowly, the child will too, which may help speech production.
- Be aware of the words that are tricky for the child to say**, particularly if they are complex. Maybe think of an alternative word, as well as practising the tricky words.
- Break up multisyllabic words** with the child (e.g. caterpillar . ca/ter/pi/ler) and practise a syllable at a time before putting the word together.
- If you are having difficulties understanding what the child is saying, provide the **topic of conversation** so that you know what the child is talking about.
- Encourage the child to use **visual clues** to support speech e.g. **natural gesture, facial expression and pictures / objects**.

- ◁ Practise **little and often** and have **fun! 5-10 minutes per day** is better than 30 minutes once a week.
- ◁ Learning to say a new sound(s) can take a long time, so keep trying, incorporating the sound(s) into lots of different activities throughout the day.

Ideas for how to incorporate speech practise throughout the day

- ◁ **Snack / Lunch time** Talk through what you are doing, emphasising targeted sounds (e.g. if the & @ã | à Á ~ ã } à •Ác%ç ã Á c Á ã [& \ Á É Á putting the peas on the p | { á c Or try É Á counting the number of syllables in words (e.g. ba-na-na / bis-cuit) whilst putting them on the table.
- ◁ **Reading** Be on the lookout for your speech sounds whilst reading books together. Set challenges (e.g. can you find 5 words that have your sound?). After reading the book, try to remember the words that were found/ older children might retell the story including the words found.