

# Advice sheet

## Fluency

### Younger Children that Stammer

Many children between the ages of two and five go through a period of non-fluency. They are coping with lots of life changes and learning experiences and do not yet have all the language skills they need.



### Everyday Strategies:

- Show your child you are interested in what they are saying, not how they are saying it.
- Come down to the child's level and give them eye-contact.
- Give your child plenty of time to speak and let them finish what they are saying. Try not to show any non-verbal signs that you want them to hurry.
- The fast pace of life today is not always helpful for children who are stammering. Make sure you provide some routine and structure to their daily lives and time to stop and talk or play with your child.
- Play with your child and follow their lead. Avoid asking too many questions; instead comment on what you or they are doing.
- Slow your own speech down as this will alter your child's speed of talking. Asking your child to slow down may work for a few moments, but they will not be able to keep it up.
- Pause briefly before you respond to your child. This provides a good example of how to give yourself time to work out what to say next.
- Try not to use sentences and words that are too complicated for your child's age. If they attempt to use complicated sentences or words, they are more likely to get stuck.
- Avoid situations where the child has to 'perform' in speaking tasks e.g. 'Show Grandma how you can say ....'
- Do not ask your child to repeat a word that they stammered on. It will probably be more fluent if they do repeat it but not the next time they say it in a sentence.
- Make sure that everyone in your home takes turns to talk and does not interrupt others.
- Be encouraging to your child. Praise the things they do well using specific language (e.g. "I like the colours you've used in your picture") as this will build their confidence.
- Acknowledge the child's dysfluency in a supportive way e.g. 'I can tell you're finding some of those words tricky but that's ok, I'm listening'.



### Older Children that Stammer

Stammering or stuttering is an involuntary repetition, prolongation or block which interrupts the normal flow of speech. A stammer usually gets worse when the child perceives himself to be under pressure.

### Everyday Strategies

- Show that you are interested in what the child says; talk about things they are interested in.
- Try to maintain natural eye contact.
- Do not finish his/her sentences and try to reduce the number of times they are interrupted whilst talking; explain the importance of turn taking within a conversation.
- Slow down your own rate of speech (signing can help with this) and encourage them to slow their rate of speech; they may need support to plan their responses before speaking.
- Reduce the number of questions you ask.
- Always give plenty of time to answer one question at a time.
- Try to avoid a chaotic or stressful environments (ensure they get enough sleep).
- Try to arrange some time during the day when the child can have your full attention in a calm and relaxed atmosphere for perhaps five minutes.

- Praise your child for the things they do well.
- Treat the child who stammers in exactly the same way as a child who does not stammer– discipline should be appropriate and consistent.
- Celebration of success or competence in other areas can be encouraging, as well as directing the focus away from stammering.