

Speech Sound Difficulties

If you have noticed that your child has some speech sound errors when they talk it may be useful for them to see a Speech and Language Therapist.

When children learn how to talk it is normal for them not to use certain sounds until they are 5/6 years old. For example, if your 3/4 year old child says 'soe' for 'shoe' or 'ticken' for 'chicken' this is part of their normal development. Your child would not need speech therapy for errors like these.

But sometimes children's speech sound errors are not normal for a child of their age:

- A **speech sound delay** is when children learn to say sounds following the 'typical' pattern but they develop them at a slower rate than their peers. For example, they may say 'tat' for 'cat' at 4/5 years old or miss sounds off the ends of words.
- A **speech sound disorder** is when a child uses sounds that do not follow a 'typical' pattern of development. They may miss off sounds at the beginning and ends of words, add extra sounds e.g. 'bulue' for 'blue'. A child with a speech sound disorder may also produce sounds that are not used in the English language e.g. they may make a hissy noise in their nose instead of their mouth for the 's' sound.

If you think your child has a **speech sound delay** or **disorder** a Speech and Language Therapist might be able to help your child with their sound development. In the meantime, here are some things you can do to support your child:

- Repeat, repeat, repeat – children need to hear words lots of times before they learn them.
- Encourage your child to look at your mouth when you are modelling words or sounds.
- Praise all your child's attempts at speaking - listen to what they are saying and not how they are saying it.
- Don't pretend to understand what your child has said - explain that it was difficult to hear and ask your child to tell you again or show you.
- Don't ask children to correct themselves.
- Don't copy your child's errors - repeat the word the correct way for them to listen to.