

## **Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties**

**Speech and language delay:** Often used when a child has problems with speech or language, but skills are developing in the normal developmental sequence. This means that the pattern of development is as you would expect, but developing at a slower rate.

**Development Language Disorder** (previously known as Specific Language Impairment or SLI) is a persistent type of speech, language and communication need that cannot be explained by an obvious cause.

**Comprehension** (or receptive language) difficulty: Children may have difficulty understanding words, sentences or instructions. This may be particularly true when they have no other clues from gestures or what is going on around them or in unfamiliar situations with no other people around to copy. Delayed or disordered comprehension (a problem understanding words and sentences) is often hard to identify as children can be very good at using the clues around them, and this hides their difficulties.

**Expressive language difficulty:** A child may have good understanding of words, but find it difficult to use language to express their own ideas, needs or feelings. They might be slow to build up the number and type of words they use. They may know certain words, but be unable to think of them when they're needed. They may have particular difficulty building up sentences and using correct grammar.

**Auditory Processing Difficulties:** An inability to process what's being heard. It describes a variety of problems with the brain that interfere with the processing of auditory information. Children will have difficulty in hearing the difference between similar sounding speech sounds or words and this may affect their use of these sounds or words in their own speech.

**Social interaction difficulties** (sometimes called pragmatic difficulties) : Some children find it hard to follow the rules of communication and interact socially with others. They struggle with things like turn-taking in conversations, eye contact, listening to others and changing the way they talk according to who they are talking to.

**Stammering:** Stammering is also sometimes called stuttering, dysfluency or non-fluency. The child may repeat words or parts of words, hesitate for long periods between words or totally get stuck on words.

**Dysarthria:** is a movement disorder caused by brain dysfunction or injury. It results in difficulties in moving the muscles needed for speech, eating and drinking. Dysarthria occurs in a number of neurological conditions (for example, cerebral palsy) and can affect precision, speed and/or range of speech movements, with difficulties controlling breathing needed for speech resulting in difficulties with controlling volume of speech, pitch, rhythm.

**Selective mutism:** Some children are able to talk comfortably in some situations (usually with close family members at home) but are persistently silent in others (usually outside their homes and with less familiar people). This is often referred to as selective mutism which is linked to an anxiety around talking. Children may be able to join in activities that do not require speech, and some may

be able to speak a little to their friends if they are not overheard. In other situations they can't talk at all.

**Verbal dyspraxia:** Verbal Dyspraxia is a condition where children have difficulty making and co-ordinating the precise movements their mouths need to make to produce clear speech. They find it hard to produce individual speech sounds and to put sounds together in the right order in words. As a result, their speech is often hard to understand even to family members.

For further information see: The Communications Trust – Communicating Phonics

<https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/projects/phonics/download-the-phonics-booklet/>