Speech & Language Therapy

Early Years: Guidelines for Referral
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1. HOW TO REFER TO SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY

If you are concerned about a pre-school child’s speech and language development, discuss your concerns with the child’s parents. The ‘guidelines for referral’ will help you to decide whether or not to refer. If you are only concerned with the child’s speech and language skills then you would support Parents to access a drop-in. If you have concerns with other areas of development then an Early Help Assessment should be completed.

Parents/Carers may find it helpful if you explain ‘What happens at the first Speech and Language Therapy appointment’ (see notes)
2. GUIDELINES FOR REFERRAL

The following pages will give you a guide as to how most children’s speech, language and communication skills develop. This information will help you to decide whether to advise parents to take their child to a drop-in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>18 MONTHS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We are looking for children at this age to be able to do the following:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE</th>
<th>Points to familiar people and objects when asked. Understands simple instructions, e.g. “give it to Mummy”, “fetch your coat”.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPOKEN LANGUAGE</td>
<td>Able to use 10-20 single words in their first language. Attempts to copy new words. Uses nonsense chatter and babble with a range of different sounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPEECH SOUNDS</td>
<td>Speech sounds in words may not be clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLAY AND SOCIAL</td>
<td>Acts out simple routines, e.g. puts teddy to bed. Briefly copies simple everyday activities, e.g. brushes Mummy’s hair. Enjoys putting objects in and out of containers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHEN TO TALK TO A SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPIST

- If the child does not appear to understand the words for familiar objects, such as ball, brush, spoon, cup, when asked.
- If not using a range of different sounds or noises.
- No babble or words.
- If the child is not making eye contact with carer AND there are concerns about language development.
- If stammering.
### 24 MONTHS (2 YEARS)

We are looking for children at this age to be able to do the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understands many single words.</td>
<td>Beginning to follow some instructions containing 2 key words, e.g. “put the doll on the chair”.</td>
<td>Understands action words e.g. walk/run/sleep.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPOKEN LANGUAGE</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses about 50 words.</td>
<td>Beginning to join 2 words together, e.g. “where Mummy”, “more juice”, “teddy jump”.</td>
<td>Repeats/echoes things said by an adult.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPEECH SOUNDS</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children of this age often use the following sounds in their words: p, b, t, d, m, n, w (e.g. “cat” may be said as “tat” and “dog” may be said as “dod”). Speech is understood by family, but often unclear.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAY AND SOCIAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recognises pictures of objects.</td>
<td>Engages in simple pretend play, e.g. pretending to cook dinner. Plays alongside other children but not yet joining in with others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### WHEN TO TALK TO A SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPIST

- If unable to understand simple questions, e.g. “where’s Mummy?”, “do you want a drink?”.
- If uses less than 30 words.
- Showing limited play skills AND difficulty communicating.
- If there are difficulties with parent/child interaction (e.g. parents talking lots and lots, or not enough) AND there are concerns about language development.
- If stammering.
### 2 YEARS 6 MONTHS

We are looking for children at this age to be able to do the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE</th>
<th>Can now follow instructions containing 2 key words, e.g. “put the spoon in the cup”. Understands simple, short stores with pictures. Understands simple, child-friendly conversation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPOKEN LANGUAGE</td>
<td>Can use short 2 to 3 word sentences. Is beginning to ask questions, e.g. “where ball gone?”. Is joining in with rhymes and songs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| SPEECH SOUNDS            | Still may only be understood by familiar people. Most children are unable to use all of the speech sounds. Common speech sound errors are:  
  \[k \sim t \ (\text{car} \sim \ “\text{tar}” ) \quad g \sim d \ (\text{got} \sim “\text{dot}”)
  \[s \sim t \ (\text{sea} \sim “\text{tea}”) \quad sp \sim p \ (\text{spoon} \sim “\text{poon}”)
| PLAY AND SOCIAL          | Will join play sequences together, e.g. undresses doll, prepares bath, washes and dresses doll. Can use objects imaginatively, e.g. pretends that a box is a car or a bed. |

#### WHEN TO TALK TO A SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPIST

- If not beginning to follow instructions containing 2 key words, e.g. “give brush to teddy”.
- If not beginning to joining words together, e.g. “more milk”, “Daddy gone”.
- Showing limited play skills AND difficulty communicating.
- If speech is so difficult to understand that his/her words are unrecognisable. Please refer child for a hearing test.
- If stammering.
### 3 YEARS
We are looking for children at this age to be able to do the following:

| UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE | Beginning to understand instructions with 3 key words, e.g. “make teddy kick the ball”.
|                          | Beginning to understand some concepts, e.g. big/little, on/under, colour names. |
| SPOKEN LANGUAGE          | Uses 3-4 words in a sentence, some grammatical immaturities present, e.g. “she felled down”.
|                          | Asking lots of questions. |
| SPEECH SOUNDS            | Speech becoming clearer-beginning to use k/g correctly in words.
|                          | Some speech sound errors still present, e.g. sk ~ k (sky ~ “ky”) s ~ th (sun ~ “thun”) r ~ w (red ~ “wed”) |
| PLAY AND SOCIAL          | Enjoys playing with others. |
|                          | Enjoys pretend play and creative play. |

### WHEN TO TALK TO A SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPIST

- If not able to understand instructions with 2 key words, e.g. “put the apple on the plate”.
- If not joining 2 words together, e.g. “Mummy gone”.
- If speech is only understandable by close family and friends.
- If the child is not showing pretend play skills AND there are concerns about language development.
- If stammering.
3 YEARS 6 MONTHS

We are looking for children at this age to be able to do the following:

| UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE | Able to understand instructions with 3 key words, e.g. “make teddy kick the ball”.
|                           | Beginning to understand longer instructions within daily routines, e.g. “can you take your apron off then go and wash your hands?”.
|                           | Understanding simple conversations about things that are happening.
|                           | Understands some describing words, e.g. long/short/hard/soft/fast/slow.
| SPOKEN LANGUAGE           | Uses 4 or more words together, putting the words in the right order to make a sentence.
| SPEECH SOUNDS             | May still not use all of the speech sounds but should be understood by most people. The sounds ‘s’ and ‘f’ may have developed. Words like “spot” and “star” may be used clearly now.
| PLAY AND SOCIAL           | Joining in play with other children. Enjoys imaginative play.

**WHEN TO TALK TO A SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPIST**

- If not beginning to follow instructions containing 3 key words, e.g. “give brush to big teddy”.
- Repeats what people say without understanding it e.g. adult says “What’s your name?” Child says: “What’s your name?”
- If not beginning to join 3 words together, e.g. “more milk Mummy”, “cat on table”.
- Sentences sound ‘jumbled’.
- If child’s speech is so unclear that you have to interpret what he/she is saying for others to understand.
- If stammering.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE</th>
<th>Beginning to understand “why?” and “how?” type questions. Can understand instructions given to a group of children.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPOKEN LANGUAGE</td>
<td>Sentences are becoming grammatically correct. Beginning to use joining words, e.g. “I’m going to wear my boots because it's raining”. Can hold a simple conversation about something that has happened or is going to happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPEECH SOUNDS</td>
<td>All sounds should be used appropriately except ‘th’ and ‘r’. Blends (e.g. ‘gr’, ‘bl’) may still be developing. Child may still lisp e.g. s ~ th (sun ~ “thun”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLAY AND SOCIAL</td>
<td>Complex imaginary play involving acting the role of another person e.g. a princess or super hero. Mixing well and making friends.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WHEN TO TALK TO A SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPIST**

- If not able to understand instructions with 3 key words, e.g. “put the apple under the plate”.
- If not joining 3 words together, e.g. “my red boot”.
- If not understanding simple conversations.
- If not understanding basic concepts, e.g. size — big/little and position — on/under.
- If missing small words and endings, e.g. “Daddy gone shop” instead of “Daddy has gone shopping”.
- Speech remains difficult to understand.
- If stammering.
3. REFERRAL VIA DROP-IN'S

What happens at a Drop-in?

What is a speech and language therapy drop-in?
Speech and language therapy drop-ins give you an opportunity to come to one of our clinics to discuss your child’s speech, language and communication and to see if a referral needs to be made to speech and language therapy.

Who can go to a drop-in?
Anyone who has concerns about their child’s speech, language and communication can come along. Sometimes parents and carers are advised by a professional to visit a drop-in, e.g. Health Visitor, G.P, Nursery/Playgroup staff. If there are other concerns with the child’s development then you should not attend a drop-in but an Early Help Assessment would need to be completed to ensure that the appropriate SALT team sees your child.

Do I wait to receive an appointment letter?
No, Just drop-in! When you arrive you will be advised about how many families are there and when you are likely to be seen. We may suggest that you come back a little later if there is a wait. Appointments are short and last approximately 5-10 minutes.

What do I need to bring?
Bring your child and any letters/reports from other professionals that you think may be relevant. You might want to bring your ‘red book’ as a reminder about dates.

What will happen when I get there?
A receptionist, speech and language therapy assistant or a speech and language therapist will greet you in the waiting area and ask you to fill in a form with your child’s details. They will be available to help you with any questions about the form. You will wait until it is your turn to see the therapist. Under exceptional circumstances, if there are too many children to be seen by the therapist in one session, parents will be given dates of future drop-ins and invited to return.
What will happen in the appointment?
The Speech and Language Therapist will ask you about your child’s health and development and what is concerning you. They may spend some time with your child to find out more about their speech and language skills. Do not worry...it will be done through play and will be fun. You can then make decisions together about what the appropriate next steps might be.

What will happen at the end of the appointment?
The therapist will talk through various options with you:
1. The therapist may reassure you that your child’s speech, language and communication skills are developing as expected for his or her age.
2. You may agree that therapy is not necessary at this stage, but you could come to another drop-in if you are still concerned in a few months time.
3. The therapist may want to carry out further assessments, and will offer you some dates for a full appointment. If none of these are convenient, you will be asked to phone in to arrange a date.
4. If it is felt that your child will benefit from our therapy groups or parent workshops, the therapist will give you information about how to access these.
4. REFERRAL VIA EARLY HELP ASSESSMENT

Children who you have other areas of concerns i.e. not just speech and language, are not appropriate for drop-in sessions, e.g.:

- Child is not responding to their name
- Child prefers to play alone and has limited social interactions
- Child has limited pretend or imaginative play

For these children an Early Help Assessment needs to be completed. The referral will be triaged by the Early Support Panel and if appropriate the families will be seen by the paediatrician for either a General Developmental Assessment or Multi-Disciplinary Team Assessment (or both). They will also access a Early Communication Support Training before further speech and language intervention is provided.
5. SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY SERVICE CONTACT DETAILS

Speech and Language Therapy Department - Peterborough
Children’s Development Centre
City Care Centre
Thorpe Road
Peterborough
PE3 6DB
Tel: 01733 847166
E-mail: cpm-tr.SLTmailforparents@nhs.net

Speech and Language Therapy Department - Cambridge
Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust
Oaktree Centre
1 Oak Drive
Huntingdon, Cambs
PE29 7HN
Tel: 01480 418673
If someone else has suggested that you take your child to a drop-in, for example, your health visitor or a member of staff from your child’s playgroup or nursery, it might be helpful for them to fill this information in before you attend.

**Name of Practitioner:**

**Work base:**

**Contact telephone number:**

**Date of drop-ins:**

**Comments:**