

## Finding a therapist

Most speech and language therapy services may be contacted directly by parents. Contact your local service when your child is stammering, or ask the school to do so, as soon as possible after you have noticed it happening regularly. The [BSA](#) can supply the contact details of your local service.

### Recovery from stammering for a primary school child

This is always difficult to judge, but we do know that Early Intervention gives the best chance of recovery and that the longer the child has been stammering complete recovery may be less likely. Parents may understandably find this upsetting and worry about their child's future. Anxiety about fluency can be transferred to a child from a parent and make it more difficult for him to manage his speech, so it is important to discuss these fears with the therapist and people who understand, such as the [BSA:Helpline](#).

Once parents come to terms with the fact their child may continue to stammer they will find it easier to use the simple strategies in this resource to support their child in managing his speech. It is important to deal with your own anxiety if your child continues to stammer because as long as he receives support from a therapist, at home and in school he can achieve his potential even if his stammering persists.

#### **Stammering need not hold you back**

**Parents can be reassured that stammering need not hold back a child's academic, personal and social development as long as he receives the support he needs from therapy, at home and in school. The BSA knows of people who stammer who have succeeded in every walk of life.**

## Finding a therapist

### The National Health Service (NHS)

Speech and language therapy for children who stammer is available under the NHS. In most parts of the UK, you can refer your child to the local speech and language therapy department yourself. The [BSA](#) can provide contact details. In some areas you may need your GP or Health Visitor to make the referral, or you can ask the school to do so.

Speech and language therapists are highly trained professionals who work with a variety of communication disorders. The majority are women, so for convenience therapists are referred to as she, although a number of men are now entering the profession.

If you are concerned about your child's dysfluency you should contact your local speech and language therapy service for advice as soon as possible, even if the stammer appears to be quite mild and does not trouble the child in any way. It used to be thought that it was best to wait and see how the child's speech developed before making this referral. We now know that a therapist should be consulted as soon as possible.

You may have to wait several weeks or longer in some areas before being seen, since most therapy departments have waiting lists. In the meantime use the [simple tips](#) in this resource.

### Private therapy

Parents may choose to contact a speech and language therapist who works in private practice. Rates for private therapy vary widely depending on the service offered. However, the average fee for an initial,

straightforward assessment is in the region of £85 to £120 per session. On-going therapy sessions are likely to be in the region of £50 to £70 per session. When family members have private medical insurance it is worth contacting the company to enquire whether speech and language therapy may be funded. Should the company require further information about stammering, the information on the [BSA](#) web site may be printed and supplied to them.

The Association of Speech and Language Therapists in Independent Practice (ASLTIP) provides information about independent speech and language therapists throughout the UK. All therapists are Registered Members of The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists and registered with the Health Professions Council. You can search online for a therapist via the [Association's website](#), [email them](#) or phone on 01494 488306. This is an answer phone service and is not staffed by therapists. When contacting ASLTIP, you will need to specify that you are looking for a therapist who deals with fluency problems or stammering, as many therapists do not work in this area of expertise.

Whether you see an NHS or a private therapist, it is entirely acceptable for you to ask if the therapist specialises in stammering and what you can expect from therapy. It is important, if possible, to see a specialist who works regularly with stammering and keeps up to date with the latest approaches to therapy.

If there is no specialist available in your local NHS speech and language therapy department, it may be worth asking if you can be referred to another department nearby - or contact [BSA](#) for details of NHS regional centres of expertise.

Whatever the age of your child if you are told to wait and see, as your child will probably grow out of it, the person is unlikely to be experienced in stammering. It is true that the majority of very young children do recover naturally from stammering, but you should still be given guidance on how to support your child, and the dysfluency should be actively monitored.

**When your child's stammer is first identified in the primary school the advice of a therapist is just as important. The older child who stammers needs that support so he has strategies to manage his speech and maintain his confidence and self-esteem. Support from a therapist will help him to avoid the hidden fears and anxieties that can come out in behaviour that may undermine his progress.**

### [The Michael Palin Centre for Stammering Children \(MPC\)](#)

Once you have made contact with a local NHS speech and language therapist, they may be able to refer your child to this specialist service in London. This may be appropriate either if there is no specialist service available in your area, or if a local therapist feels your child could benefit from extra help.

MPC is a 'tertiary' centre working within the NHS. They are unable to accept referrals direct from parents, a referral must be made by a therapist or a doctor and may be from any part of the UK where no specialist service exists. Parents living in the London Boroughs of Camden and Islington may refer direct. A free specialist assessment service for children is provided. Following the assessment, a programme of specialist therapy may be set up as appropriate, and may be carried out by the local speech and language therapist, with support from the Centre where necessary. Therapy may be offered at the Centre on an individual or group basis, where this is not available locally. Funding for this is usually obtained through the local Primary Care Trust.

If you choose a therapist working privately in your area MPC may be able to accept a referral from her. The therapist would need to discuss the procedures and any costs required for that referral with MPC in advance, and would need to ensure that on-going therapy support will be available for the child, after the completion of the course.

Contact:

The Michael Palin Centre for Stammering Children  
Finsbury Health Centre  
Pine Street  
London  
EC1R 0JH

Tel 020 7530 4238

## **Before your appointment with the speech and language therapist**

If you have the time it is useful to collect some information about your child's stammering and either send this to the therapist with a covering letter in advance of the appointment, or bring it along with you. This will give the therapist a good starting point for the discussion with you. It will also help you be clear about what you want to say.

You can use these forms below for convenient reference.

Click on the following links to open PDFs, use the back button on your browser to return to this resource. To save the handout to your computer, right click and choose 'Save as'.

[Fluency Record](#)

[What My Child Does](#)

### **Fluency record**

This is a simple record of your child's fluency that gives a score of 1 to 10 where 10 is the highest rate of stammering and 1 the lowest. Give a score as an average for that day based on the episodes of stammering that you have heard. Place a cross in the box of your score for each day. If you think that the average on one day is 7, then place a cross in the box for that day at the score of 7.

### **What my child does**

This simple form will help you to observe your child's speech and provide information about his stammer. This will help you to clarify your own thoughts and be helpful to the therapist.

### **When my child stammers**

You may have noticed that your child's fluency is affected by the situation and this form will make it easier for you to observe and note this down.

### **Things to remember about your child to tell the therapist**

Make a note about your child's medical history, family history with dates of major events such as the birth of a sibling, a house move or starting at primary school. Also, try to recall the details of anyone in the family who stammered.

**Speech and language therapists tell the BSA that it is very helpful if a parent has collected some information about the child's speech.** It provides a good basis for their discussion with the parents.

## **What happens when you meet the speech and language therapist**

All therapists will have their own way of working but generally common features occur in their approach. Your first appointment is often an initial screening session where the therapist will consider your child's needs to make sure that the referral is the correct one for him. If you have collected information, that could be offered to support a referral for stammering. You may be asked if you are able to keep

appointments regularly, should they be needed. The next step will then be an appointment for a full speech and language therapy assessment.

## The Assessment

If possible when both parents are involved with the child, they should go to this with their child. For part of the session, the therapist may need to speak to the parent(s) without the child. You should explain this in advance to your child so he does not get concerned.

It will help the therapist to understand your child's dysfluency if you have brought some information with you, either in your own personal record or, if convenient, on the forms provided above. Additionally, if you bring a small notebook with you in which you have written down any questions or concerns that you have, you are less likely to forget what you would like to ask or say.

Current research is clear that the cause of stammering has a physiological basis in the brain structure. The [BSA:Research](#) has the details of all the latest research and information. There is no single or definite cure and there is no single best strategy for supporting children as they all have individual needs. Parents cannot cause stammering but there is thought to be a family link in some cases, as where a close adult relative is stammering a child is more likely to stammer. While the underlying cause of stammering is now understood what is also certain is that stammering speech is affected by a complex combination of environmental, inherited, linguistic and physical factors that are unique to the individual in their form and effects. The therapist will take a holistic approach, examining all the factors that may be contributing to dysfluency.

## Your child's case history

The therapist will take a detailed case history about your child's life so far by talking with both parents, if they both attend the appointment. This will include the child's medical details, family background and history and information about his development and progress. This discussion will be quite lengthy and may involve questions about the family situation that some parents have told the BSA they could not see the necessity for. However, it is important to remember that therapists are bound by the same rules of patient confidentiality as any other medical professional, such as a doctor. Any information acquired during a therapy session may not be passed on to anyone, other than another medical professional, without the explicit consent of the parent(s). Questions that appear to be rather personal will be necessary to provide information that is relevant to the therapist's assessment of your child's speech.

Parents who still worry that in some way they have caused the child to stammer should be reassured after talking with the therapist that **parents do not cause stammering**. However they do have a vital role in helping their child manage the stammer more successfully.

The therapist will ask you for information so she can understand how your child communicates. Any details that parent(s) can provide about their child's fluency, and the situations that affect it are very helpful. If you have completed these details in your own record, or on the forms provided above, these are a basis for further discussion.

The therapist will then assess your child's speech and language skills. It is important to ascertain whether your child has any other speech and language problems that could affect the development and maintenance of the stammer. With young children the therapist will do this through playing and talking informally with your child, to ensure that they don't get unduly concerned or worried about their speech.

The therapist may wish to discuss with you how you respond to any episodes of stammering. Through informal discussion, the therapist will aim to identify factors which might make it more difficult for your child to talk, and explore with you some specific steps that you can take to help your child talk more easily (such as slowing down your own speaking rate by using more pauses).

After the assessment there will be time for you and your therapist to discuss your child's speech and any

concerns you have. She will suggest ways in which you can help your child at home. Further appointments may be needed and the therapist will make a decision as to whether therapy would help.

## Keeping your own record

It is perfectly acceptable to make brief notes as the therapist is providing you with information. Also, there may be more questions that you wish to ask at this stage, and you might want to make a quick note of these in your notebook with the answers given. **If there is anything at all that you are not clear about it is important to ask the therapist for a full explanation of any terms used that you are not familiar with.** Every profession has its own jargon words and parents are not expected to know these without explanation. It might be helpful to write down any details of the therapist's advice that you think are especially important to remember. If you do this it is best to check the details of this with her so you are sure that you have got it absolutely right.

The BSA knows from parents that sometimes they leave the assessment room feeling rather overwhelmed by the detail of information provided. This is understandable as there is much for a parent to take in. If you make a brief record of what was said you could look at again at your leisure and have information to hand that you could pass on to other key adults in the home, or the school.

## What happens next?

The therapist will compile a summary of all the information gained from the parental interview and child assessment that attempts to account for the child's current stammer. This will be shared with the parent(s) so that they are able to understand why their child is vulnerable to stammering and can work collaboratively with the therapist to support their child's speech.

After the assessment, a confidential report is prepared that summarises the assessment findings and the action that the therapist is initiating. A copy of this is sent to the parents and routinely to the child's GP and any other health professional involved in the child's care. If the referral was made by the primary school, then a copy would be sent to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator there and usually filed with the child's SEN records. However, when parents make the referral they may provide a copy of this report at their own discretion to their child's primary school, or ask the therapist to do so.

**The BSA would advise parents to ensure that the primary school receive a copy of the therapist's report so they are informed about the management of the child's stammer and able to collaborate with the therapist if required.**

## What therapy involves

Obviously individual speech and language therapists have different ways of working but these are features of their practice that are quite common.

The amount and type of therapy offered to young children will depend on the outcome of the assessment and the judgement of the therapist as to what level of support is required. Most therapists nowadays will endeavour to work closely with parents so they can become skilled supporters of their child's speech needs. The therapist would also try to use the lowest level of intervention in the first instance and this may involve one or more of the following levels of care:

### 1. Advice and information

This might be recommended when:

- the dysfluency has occurred only recently;
- the dysfluency is mild;
- parents are not anxious about the child's speech;
- there is no history of stammering in the family;

- there are no other speech and language problems;
- there are no other areas of concern.

## What is this advice and information offered to parents?

This will vary with the therapist but is likely to include some or all of these:

- Information about the development of stammering and its effects on a young child.
- The importance of creating a supportive environment for the child's speech in the home: for example by managing family rules for turn-taking, pausing in speaking and allowing the child to finish what he wants to say without interruption.
- Making time in the home for parents to spend time with the child and ideas on how to use this time.
- Developing consistency within the household in appropriate routines and boundaries for behaviour.
- The BSA knows from parents that they sometimes worry if their child is not immediately offered therapy. They may feel let down in some way when only advice and information is offered. If you do feel like this then it is important to express your worries to the therapist at the time when s/he explains to you what is going to happen. You do need to feel reassured about the support you and your child are receiving, because if you continue to be anxious then your management of your child's speaking might be affected, and your child could sense your concern. If you still feel worried then contact the [BSA:Helpline](#) and discuss it with someone who understands.

## 2. Indirect therapy

This is likely to be recommended to parents who are concerned about their young child's speech, and although the dysfluency may be variable there is evidence that the child's speech shows tension and frustration. There might be extra vulnerability because of a family history or associated speech and language factors.

With younger children, indirect therapy is the method more commonly used, and is carried out through you as parents. You may be asked to attend appointments without your child, to discuss ways in which you can best provide support at home. Sometimes arrangements are made for parents to work together in small groups. The therapy focuses on family communication styles and will show the parent(s) how to identify some small changes that are likely to promote fluency.

Indirect therapy tends to be based on the demands and capacities model of stammering. According to this model, most children trip up over words, get stuck and repeat words or sounds when they first begin to talk. Usually, they work through this phase, although some may need extra help. At the same time as speech and language skills are developing, there are increasing demands on the child to communicate - these can include both external demands and internal demands (for example, to answer questions, express themselves, compete with siblings, etc.). When a child's skills keep pace with the demands, any difficulties are overcome fairly soon. However, when the demands are greater than the skills a child has acquired, difficulties can persist. The aim of indirect therapy is to achieve a better balance between the demands on the child to communicate and his or her developing capacities. The therapist will explore ways in which you can help reduce some of the pressures your child may be experiencing, as well as ways in which you can help increase their skills. They may also advise on how to ensure that your child has a more relaxed life style so that he is not affected by too much rushing around. The BSA knows that nowadays it is often difficult to provide even young children with the time and space that they need to play as they wish at a pace that suits them. Parents can only do their best to deliver this, and even if only minor adjustments can be made they will help.

## Parent Child Interaction Therapy

This is more likely to be offered to the older child and consists of six one-hour weekly sessions followed by a six-week consolidation period with additional appointments as necessary to monitor and review progress. The main aim of this therapy is to identify the 'interaction styles' within the family that may help

the child towards more fluent speech. A key goal is to improve the family's confidence and skill in managing their child's problem.

Therapists know that children's fluency is highly variable and that periods of fluency can suddenly be disrupted by another phase of stammering. The task of the therapist and the parents is to identify the aspects that might be influencing the 'good' patches and the factors that may be less helpful at the moment.

The therapy sessions are set up in such a way as to make the child feel that it is a really fun playtime and he is videotaped playing with each parent in turn. Then the parents and the therapist (and the child if he wants to) watch a re-run of the play session. Next, the parents and the therapist consider aspects which might be useful to change a little, as these could influence fluency. Between the therapy sessions, 'changes' are practised during regular 5-minute 'special times' at home.

### **3. Direct therapy**

#### **Lidcombe programme**

For younger children (generally, those under 7 years of age), this specific form of direct therapy may be available in some areas. The therapist may wish to wait for some time before starting treatment, as there is evidence that children respond to this approach better, and go through the programme more quickly at around four years of age than when they are younger. This does not alter the fact that children should be seen by a speech therapist as soon as possible after stammering starts, so that they can be assessed and actively monitored.

Since the late 1990s, an increasing number of NHS and private speech and language therapists have trained in Lidcombe therapy, which was developed in Australia. It is a structured programme that takes a behavioural approach to the modification of a child's speech, the main 'therapist' being the parent. The therapist teaches you how to work directly with your child. You learn to recognize stammering and to measure its severity. For short periods each day, you will praise stammer-free speech, gently request that your child self-corrects stammered speech, and provide support. In the first instance, weekly sessions at the clinic are needed to guide you through the programme. Research indicates that this form of therapy is more effective than relying on natural recovery, but it will not be suitable for everyone. Parents should not attempt to use Lidcombe Programme techniques unless trained in them by a speech therapist and have the therapist's on-going support, as this could be harmful to their child's speech.

#### **Therapy and your child**

Therapists will always tailor their therapy approaches to the individual needs of the child and parents can be reassured that there is a not 'a one size fits all' approach to therapy. As children get older there may be more emphasis on the child's own understanding of his stammering and he may be taught techniques to help him speak more smoothly. Attention is likely to be paid to the psychological aspects of stammering, such as worrying thoughts. Problem solving and assertiveness sessions are often used to help the child manage situations that may be causing him stress, at school for instance.

#### **Therapists working in partnership with the school**

Most departments will provide support for the child in school as well and the extent of this will vary with the individual service. Parents of a child who stammers would be advised to explore what support is available in the school that they consider for their child, as practice does vary and a child's school needs to be aware of the importance of speech, language and communication needs to ensure that staff time and resources are made available for working with therapists.

Therapy departments are usually very pleased to support a child in school provided that the school does support this input and meets any costs in staff time or provision from the school budget. Most services offer training to teachers that the school can buy in and particular support in the school for a child, which

may be provided as part of the child's package of support, or may be provided at additional cost to the school. Common features of a school based therapy service are likely to be a visit to the classroom to assess the child's speech needs followed by a programme for the teacher to use to support them.

Therapists making visits are always sensitive to the fact that children do not want to appear different in front of their classmates and the teacher and the therapist would find strategies to involve other children in the classroom visit of the therapist so the child who stammers would not feel embarrassed. If a parent or child has concerns about how a school visit would be carried out then it is advisable for a parent to chat with the therapist about this in advance.

**The [BSA-Schoolchildren](#) leaflets are available to give information.**

## Summary

Contact your local service when your child is stammering as soon as possible after you have noticed it happening regularly. The [BSA](#) can supply the contact details of your local service.

### Recovery from stammering for a primary school child

This is always difficult to judge, but we do know that Early Intervention gives the best chance of recovery and that the longer the child has been stammering a complete recovery is less likely. Parents may understandably find this upsetting and worry about their child's future. Anxiety about fluency can be transferred to a child from a parent and make it more difficult for him to manage his speech, so it is important to discuss these fears with the therapist and people who understand, such as the [BSA:Helpline](#).

#### Stammering need not hold you back

Parents can be reassured that stammering need not hold back a child's academic, personal and social development as long as he receives the support he needs from therapy, parents and teachers. The BSA knows of people who stammer who have succeeded in every walk of life.

## Finding a therapist

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### Private therapy

Rates for private therapy vary widely depending on the service offered. However, the average fee for an initial, straightforward assessment is in the region of £85 to £120 per session. On-going therapy sessions are likely to be in the region of £50 to £70 per session. When family members have private medical insurance it is worth contacting the company to enquire whether speech and language therapy may be funded. The [Association of Speech and Language Therapists in Independent Practice \(ASLTIP\)](#) provides information about independent speech and language therapists throughout the UK.

Whether you see an NHS or a private therapist, it is entirely acceptable for you to ask if the therapist specialises in stammering and what you can expect from therapy. **It is important, if possible, to see a specialist who works regularly with stammering and keeps up to date with the latest approaches to therapy.**

## The Michael Palin Centre for Stammering Children (MPC)

Once you have made contact with a local NHS speech and language therapist, they may be able to refer your child to this specialist service in London. This may be appropriate either if there is no specialist service available in your area, or if a local therapist feels your child could benefit from extra help.

### **Before your appointment with the speech and language therapist**

If you have the time it is useful to collect some information about your child's stammering and either send this to the therapist with a covering letter in advance of the appointment, or bring it along with you. This will give the therapist a good starting point for the discussion with you. It will also help you be clear about what you want to say.

### **What happens when you meet the speech and language therapist**

All therapists will have their own way of working but generally common features occur in their approach. Your first appointment is often an initial screening session where the therapist will consider your child's needs to make sure that the referral is the correct one for him. If you have collected information, that could be offered to support a referral for stammering. You may be asked if you are able to keep appointments regularly, should they be needed. The next step will then be an appointment for a full speech and language therapy assessment. Additionally, if you bring a small notebook with you in which you have written down any questions or concerns that you have, you are less likely to forget what you would like to ask or say.

### The Assessment

If possible when both parents are involved with the child, they should go to this with their child. For part of the session, the therapist may need to speak to the parent(s) without the child. You should explain this in advance to your child so he does not get concerned.

### **Your child's case history**

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Parents who still worry that in some way they have caused the child to stammer should be reassured after talking with the therapist that **parents do not cause stammering**. However they do have a vital role in helping their child manage the stammer more successfully.

### What happens next?

The therapist will compile a summary of all the information gained from the parental interview and child assessment and share this with the parent(s) so that they are able to understand why their child is vulnerable to stammering and can work collaboratively with the therapist to support their child's speech.

After the assessment, a confidential report is prepared that summarises the assessment findings and the action that the therapist is initiating. A copy of this is sent to the parents and routinely to the child's GP and any other health professional involved in the child's care. If the referral was made by the primary school, then a copy would be sent there and usually filed with the child's SEN records. However, when parents make the referral they may provide a copy of this report at their own discretion to their child's Early Years setting, or ask the therapist to do so. **The BSA would advise parents to ensure that their child's primary school receive a copy of the therapist's report so they are informed about the**

**management of the child's stammer and able to collaborate with the therapist if required. Usually this report would be then sent to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) at the school.**

### What therapy involves

The amount and type of therapy offered to young children will depend on the outcome of the assessment and the judgement of the therapist as to what level of support is required. Most therapists nowadays will endeavour to work closely with parents so they can become skilled supporters of their child's speech needs. The therapist would also try to use the lowest level of intervention in the first instance and this may involve one or more of the following levels of care:

1. Advice and information
2. Indirect therapy
3. Direct therapy

For younger children, both indirect and direct therapy techniques can be equally successful, and different approaches suit different children.

**Support from a therapist in primary school provides the best opportunity for managing stammering.**

**The BSA-Schoolchildren leaflets are available to give information.**