

Supporting Early Speech Sound Development

Some children are not yet ready for direct speech sessions. This may be due to their age, confidence or attention and listening skills.

There are lots of helpful activities and strategies that adults can use to support children to develop their speech sound awareness. This will lay the foundations for direct speech therapy in the future, if they need it.

REMEMBER

- Do not try to correct mispronunciation as the child may lose interest and confidence and be less likely to try again
- Reinforce correct production of the child's speech by repeating the word back clearly and in a positive way
e.g. Child: "it's a bish", Adult: "oh yes, an orange **f**ish"
- Listening to and talking about sounds through fun games and activities will support the child's speech sound development. They do not have to say the sounds, just hearing them is enough.

Listening to non-speech sounds:

- Go on listening walks. Talk about the sounds that you can hear e.g. the noisy cars or quiet leaves blowing in the wind. Encourage the child to listen to the different sounds you can hear.
- Make animal noises when playing at home/nursery. Talk about the noisy cow "moo" and the quiet mouse "eek".
- Play with instruments and talk about the different sounds – long/short, noisy/quiet, high/low. You can make toy drums with old boxes and shakers with bottles filled with rice/pasta. If you have two sets of the same instruments hide one set behind a screen and give a matching set to the child. Play one of the instruments behind the screen and see if the child can show you which one you played.
- Hunt the music box. Hide a music box or musical toy somewhere in the room while the child closes their eyes. Ask them to find the toy by locating the sound.



Speech sound awareness:



- When talking and playing with the child, clap out the syllables in longer words (cat-er-pill-ar), (but-ter-fly). Encourage the child to clap with you. You could also bang a drum to indicate the number of syllables.
- Sound bags: Find a range of toys beginning with the same sound e.g. **b**ook, **b**all, **b**ubbles, **b**us. Put them in a bag and take turns to choose one. Talk about the toys and say the first sound lots of times e.g. "b b b book". The child does not have to say the sounds, hearing them is enough.
- Play treasure hunts to find items which begin with different sounds. Say the first sound in the word lots of times.
- Sorting sounds: find a range of toys which begin with two different sounds e.g. 'f' and 'g'. Emphasise the first sound when naming the toys and see if your child can sort them into two groups.

Rhyme:

- Sing rhyming songs e.g. 'Postman Pat' and read rhyming books e.g. 'Cat in the Hat'.



- Miss out the rhyming word in songs and encourage the child to fill in the gap, e.g. "Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great ...?"
- Guessing game – ask your child to find something that rhymes with.. e.g. mish (fish), or tall (ball), or nook (book). The more objects your child has to choose from, the harder the game.

If you have any questions please contact a member of the Early Years Speech and Language Therapy team on 0203 316 1897 or by emailing whh-tr.IslingtonEarlyYearsSLT@nhs.net