

Early Years Service

We work with children under 5 living in Hackney who have difficulties with:

- Understanding language and following instructions
- Using words and sentences
- Communicating and playing with their friends and family
- Hearing, listening & attention
- Pronouncing words & sounds
- Stammering or stuttering
- Eating and drinking

Children who are in Hackney schools are seen by their school's link Speech and Language therapist and can be referred via the school's SENCO.

How we work

We work with children and their parents at home, in Children's Centres or in their nursery / playgroups – whichever is best for the child and family.

We work together with lots of other people, including teachers, Health Visitors and Early Support Workers.

Contact details

Speech and Language Therapy
Room 31 - D Block,
St Leonard's Hospital,
Nuttall Street,
London N1 5LZ
Tel: 020 7683 4262
huh-tr.sltinfo@nhs.net

Parent: "Thank you very much for your time. We have gone from having a not very communicative child to having a very communicative child"

Hackney parent, after receiving speech therapy with her child.

Speech development

Parent information leaflet



Speech sound production in children

Many children have difficulties with speech sounds. Speech sounds develop from birth and progress rapidly in the pre-school years. We expect most children to talk so people can understand them by the age of five.

Speech in young children

All young children make some predictable errors as they learn to talk like adults.

We expect most 2 year olds to be about 50% intelligible to someone who does not know them well, and most 3 year olds to be about 75% intelligible.

Some sounds are harder than others to learn. Typically, children learn sounds like 'm', 'd' and 'b' first. Harder sounds like 'r', 'j' or 'th' can take until the age of five or older to get right.

Common speech errors

- **Fronting** (a sound made at the back of the mouth like 'k' or 'g' is made at the front as 't' or 'd') – e.g. car → 'tar'
- **Stopping** (changing long breathy sounds like 's' or 'f' to short sounds like 't' or 'p') – e.g. sun → 'dun'

- **Gliding** (changing 'l' or 'r' sounds to 'y' or 'w') e.g. red → 'wed', leg → 'yeg'
- **Cluster reduction** (simplifying two or more consonant sounds together to one sound, e.g. spider → 'bider').

Most children grow out of fronting and stopping by 3 ½. Gliding and cluster reduction are usually gone by the age of 4 or even 5.

Speech sound difficulties

Sometimes things happen which slow down speech development – for example, hearing loss or physical difficulties.

Some children have difficulties with speech sounds when there isn't a clear reason.

Your speech therapist will assess your child to see which errors they are making and if they need extra help at this time.

How to help your child

Show your child you are interested in what they say, not how they say it.

Accept a good try even when it's not quite right.

Ask your child to tell you another way, or show you what they mean, if you don't understand what they want to say.

Repeat your child's words as naturally as possible.

This can help them to learn tricky sounds. For example, if they say 'Bish' you can say 'Yes, a big fish!'

Your child will know you have understood, and this can help build confidence about talking.

Speak clearly and simply with your child

This helps by showing a good model at the right level for them.

Children also try to speak like us, so if you want them to take more time, make sure you slow down your own speech.

Focus on sounds and listening

- Play listening games where everyone has to be quiet and listen to sounds around you – e.g. TV next door.
- Make sure your child can see your face when you are playing and talking with them. This makes it easier for them to see how you make the sounds.
- If your child has difficulties with a particular sound, you can show them how to make it, e.g. look, put your teeth on your lip like this – 'ffffff'.
- Play games with sounds. You can copy sounds around you, or make sounds part of a game – e.g. snakes say 'sss', 'Let's make a plane noise'.

