

When to be concerned about your child's speech and language development: children under five

Refer by 1 year if the child:

- Is having difficulties with eating and/or drinking.
- Is not responding to environmental noises and familiar voices (refer to audiology as well).
- Is not enjoying interacting with a parent/carer.
- Is not 'babbling' (playing with sounds).

Refer by 2 years if the child:

- Is not showing understanding of familiar routines e.g. bath time, bedtime etc.
- Needs a lot of extra cues (e.g. gesture, facial expression, pointing etc.) to help him understand simple naming words e.g. cup, car.
- Is not interacting with familiar adults.
- Is not attempting to use any words.

Refer by 3 years if the child:

- Has difficulty understanding action words such as 'jump' or 'wash'.
- Is using only single words and two words phrases (often consisting of naming words i.e. nouns rather than action words i.e. verbs).
- Uses learned phrases or sentences in many situations even when not appropriate.
- Speech is unclear, even to familiar adults.

Refer by 4 years if the child:

- Has difficulty understanding instructions that include words such as big/little and in/on/under.
- Only understands and uses a small vocabulary.
- Is not able to understand and take part in conversations about past and future events.
- Is not asking and answering questions.
- Has difficulties in mixing with other children (poor social skills).
- Has difficulties with pronunciation (except "th" or "r").
- Sentences are not well formed e.g. word order is confused, e.g. "me ball throw", word-endings are missed off e.g. "two brick".

Refer **at any stage** if the child is dysfluent ('stammering' or 'stuttering').

What to do if you are concerned

Come along to one of our [Drop-in sessions or Chattertime](#) and look at our [health promotion leaflets](#) for ideas of activities to support communication development.

See our [website](#), your Health Visitor or child's nursery for information on these sessions and resources.