

## Speech and Language Therapy

### Helping Children With Unclear Speech

#### React to what your child says - not how clearly they speak

Children often don't realise that they are mispronouncing words so correcting them can be confusing.

#### Repeat what your child says correctly, so they hear good examples

For example, if your child says "boon" for spoon, say "Yes, here's your spoon!"

Slightly emphasise the sound that is mispronounced or omitted.

#### Don't make your child repeat the words

Drawing attention to a child's mispronunciations, and making them repeat words, can affect their confidence in talking. It's more useful to acknowledge what they have said rather than comment on the error they made.

#### Your child may be able to make a sound but not use it in words

This is quite normal. For example, they may be able to articulate 's' but still say 'dock' for 'sock'. The best way to help this sound develop in words is to repeat back the words correctly so that your child hears a good model.

#### Use every opportunity to reinforce the sounds in words

Commenting on everyday activities (e.g. getting dressed, bath time, meal times) is a good way for your child to hear the words pronounced correctly without it feeling like they are working or being corrected.

#### Build self-esteem

If you understand part of your child's conversation, repeat it back to them. This shows them that they have been partially successful and may encourage them to tell you more. Use strategies to help anticipate what your child might say. For example, a home-school book in which you

can record events or weekend activities, or use books, pictures, models etc. These can help if your child's speech is very unclear because you have some idea of what they might be trying to communicate.

**If you can't understand what your child has said**

Put the blame on yourself and say something like 'I'm sorry, my ears aren't working very well - can you say that again'. Ask them questions such as 'who are you talking about?', 'what were you doing?' This may provide you with extra clues to work out what they are saying. You could also ask them to show you what they mean or draw it if they can. If you still can't understand them, then acknowledge this rather than pretending you have understood