

**COMMUNITY PAEDIATRIC SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY SERVICE  
COMMUNICATION SUPPORT FOR PRESCHOOL AGED CHILDREN  
REFERRAL CRITERIA**

**Referrals will not be considered without the following:**

- Evidence of a graduated response using universal communication strategies for a minimum of 3 months and an outline of progress made
- A fully completed referral form
- Signed consent from an individual who has parental or carer responsibility
- A Solihull GP or accepted link practice GP
- A school aged child with a Birmingham GP who attends a Solihull school – this does not apply to preschool settings

**Children between the ages of 18-24 months (about 2 years) – Children will only be accepted if they present with the following needs:**

- Cleft Palate (up to the age of 3 years)
- Moderate to severe bilateral sensorineural hearing loss
- A medical condition or syndrome with associated severe speech and language difficulties
- Born before 30-weeks gestation
- Looked After Child who has identified communication difficulties

**Children above the age of 24 months - Children will only be accepted if they present with the following needs:**

- Difficulties in understanding language and following instructions and below what is expected at their developmental age – please see developmental guidelines with the referral criteria
- Difficulties in developing spoken language including using words and below what is expected at their developmental age – please see developmental guidelines with the referral criteria
- Difficulties in developing speech sounds and below what is expected at their developmental age – please see developmental guidelines with the referral criteria
- Presents with a stammer - Children who have concerns relating to speech or a stammer will be accepted from the age of 30 months (2 1/2 years) to allow for natural development.
- Difficulties in communication and interaction – if children present with sensory and interaction needs only, please refer to the Specialist Assessment Service and include a graduated response

## WHEN TO REFER – PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Listed below are the typical ages to develop a range of Speech, Language and Communication skills. If you have concerns that the child is not developing these skills, advice has been provided and guidance on when to refer your child.

### What to expect at 12 months

Listening and Attention	Play	Understanding Language	Using Language (Talking)	Speech sounds and Pronunciation
<p>Child's attention will flit from one thing to another.</p> <p>A new object, movement, or noise will immediately distract them.</p>	<p>Child seeks to explore and shows curiosity</p> <p>Will use objects and will give them to an adult, either when requested or spontaneously</p>	<p>The child will respond using an appropriate gesture, e.g. wave bye.</p>	<p>The child will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Respond with a vocalization if they hear their name</li> <li>✓ Babble strings of sounds</li> <li>✓ Enjoy simple rhymes like "round and round" the garden</li> <li>✓ Use an occasional recognisable word</li> <li>✓ Begin to copy actions and single words</li> </ul>	<p>A child's early babbling will help them explore a range of speech sounds</p>

#### What to do if there are concerns:

- Access universal communication strategies (outline our Signposting Sheet – please see below). Keep a record of the child's progress
- Consider referring for a hearing test
- Access health visitor and local Hubs for support

### What to expect at 18 months

Listening and Attention	Play	Understanding Language	Using Language (Talking)	Speech sounds and Pronunciation
<p>A child will focus on one thing at a time (single channelled).</p> <p>They will ignore other noises etc. around them so they can concentrate on that one activity.</p>	<p>A child will be curious and explore objects they can find. These can be any objects – not just toys!</p> <p>They can start to show early pretend play, e.g. feeding themselves with a pretend spoon.</p>	<p>A child starts to follow simple commands like 'give me the cup'.</p> <p>They will start to point to familiar objects, people etc., when asked.</p>	<p>A child will start to use their first words.</p> <p>These will be familiar words, e.g. 'Mummy', 'Daddy', 'cup' and 'more'</p>	<p>Children's talking will not be clear at this age, as many sounds will not have developed yet.</p> <p>New words may not have all the sounds there, e.g., they can miss the end of words off.</p> <p>Sounds used at this age: m / n / p / b</p>

**What to do if there are concerns:**

- Access universal communication strategies (outline our Signposting Sheet – please see below). Keep a record of the child's progress as evidence of a graduated response.
- Consider referring for a hearing test
- Access health visitor and local Hubs for support

**When to refer:**

Children should only be referred if they present with:

- Cleft Palate (up to the age of 3 years)
- Moderate to severe bilateral sensori-neural hearing loss
- A medical condition or syndrome with associated severe speech and language difficulties
- Born before 30-weeks gestation
- Looked After Child who has identified communication difficulties

What to expect at 24 months (2 years)				
Listening and Attention	Play	Understanding Language	Using Language (Talking)	Speech sounds and Pronunciation
A child's attention remains single channelled, so they will remain focused on one activity and will not be aware of noises or objects/movement in the background	<p>The child will watch others playing and may want to copy or join in.</p> <p>They enjoy action songs, such as "Row, row the boat," or "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star"</p>	<p>The child will start to follow simple instructions or commands, e.g. 'Put the cup of the table'</p> <p>They can start to point to named parts of their body and understand simple conversation.</p> <p>They will find it difficult to understand things that have happened or are going to happen.</p>	<p>The child starts to link 2 words together, e.g. 'All gone,' 'uh-oh,' 'coat off.'</p> <p>They may have a gap between words to give themselves thinking time, e.g., "Mummy-cup"</p> <p>The child may start to use very familiar action words, e.g., jump, drink, etc.</p>	<p>A child's words start to become clearer and familiar listeners like parents will be able to understand them more.</p> <p>A child will start to use: m / n / p / t / d / w</p> <p>They will still produce many sounds incorrectly, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'c/k' is produced as 't,' e.g., car = "tar"</li> <li>• 'g' is produced as 'd,' e.g., dog = "dod"</li> <li>• 's' is produced as 't' or sometimes 'd,' e.g., sea = "tea"</li> <li>• 'f' is produced as 'p' or sometimes 'b', e.g., fan = "ban"</li> </ul>

**What to do if there are concerns:**

- Access universal communication strategies (outline our Signposting Sheet – please see below). Keep a record of the child's progress as evidence of a graduated response.
- Consider referring for a hearing test
- Access health visitor and local Hubs for support
- Consider referral to the Specialist Assessment Service if a child presents with communication, interaction, and sensory needs. Please include a graduated response

**When to refer:**

Refer if:

- The child shows no interest in communication
- They do not babble
- They show no interest in sharing with, or copying an adult
- The child doesn't show any situational understanding, e.g., if they are shown a cup and they don't realise it is time for a drink
- The child cannot understand simple instructions
- The child is not communicating using either words or a combination of vocalising and gestures.
- If the child is not starting to engage in simple pretend play

**What to expect at 30 months (2 ½ years)**

<b>Listening and Attention</b>	<b>Play</b>	<b>Understanding Language</b>	<b>Using Language (Talking)</b>	<b>Speech sounds and Pronunciation</b>
<p>The child cannot focus or listen to an adult if they are already playing.</p> <p>With help, they can move their attention to the speaker and then go back to the play.</p>	<p>The child will copy everyday household jobs like sweeping or washing up.</p> <p>They will show simple pretend play, e.g. feed a dolly or wash a teddy.</p> <p>The child can start to match pictures to objects and toys</p>	<p>The child can follow simple instructions, e.g. 'give the car to daddy'</p> <p>They can follow a simple story, e.g. 'That's not my rabbit'</p> <p>They can show an understanding of the use of an object, e.g. What do we sit on? What do we do eat with?</p> <p>The child can understand simple describing words, e.g., wet, dirty etc.</p>	<p>The child starts to link up to 3 words in phrases, "mummy cake gone"</p> <p>They start to use simple question words, e.g., 'where', 'what' and 'who', "Where daddy gone?"</p>	<p>A child's speech starts to become clearer, and more people can understand them in context.</p> <p>They begin to say the end of the words.</p> <p>A child will start to use: m / n / p / t / d / w</p> <p>They will still produce many sounds incorrectly, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'c/k' is produced as 't,' e.g., car = "tar"</li> <li>• 'g' is produced as 'd,' e.g., dog = "dod"</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 's' is produced as 't' or sometimes 'd,' e.g., sea = "tea"</li> <li>• 'f' is produced as 'p' or sometimes 'b,' e.g., fan = "ban"</li> </ul>
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#### What to do if there are concerns:

- Access universal communication strategies (see Signposting Sheet). Keep a record of the child's progress as evidence of a graduated response.
- Consider referring for a hearing test
- Access health visitor and local Hubs for support
- Consider referral to the Specialist Assessment Service if a child presents with communication, interaction, and sensory needs. Please include evidence of a graduated response
- Consider referrals to other agencies such as the Early Years Team. These referrals can need to go through a professional, e.g., the Health Visitor – discuss this with the health visitor for further information.

#### When to refer

Refer if:

- The child shows no interest in communication, including babbling.
- They show no interest in sharing with or copying an adult
- The child doesn't show any situational understanding, e.g., if they are shown a cup and they don't realise it is time for a drink.
- The child cannot understand simple instructions.
- The child is not communicating or only using a small number of words without gestures.
- If the child is not starting to engage in pretend play.
- Parents find it difficult to understand the child's speech.
- The child has developed a stammer.

#### What to expect at 36 months – 48 months (3 – 4 years)

Listening and Attention	Play	Understanding Language	Using Language (Talking)	Speech sounds and Pronunciation
<p>The child can listen to an adult's instructions while playing.</p> <p>They can independently move their attention from what they are doing, to</p>	<p>The child uses pretend or make-believe play, including pretend objects or people.</p> <p>They start to play with other children, e.g.,</p>	<p>The child can start to understand longer and more complex language and instructions.</p> <p>They develop an understanding of what has</p>	<p>The child can start to structure longer, full sentences</p> <p>They will continue to make some errors in their grammar, e.g. I wanted to</p>	<p>The child's speech continues to develop although they will continue to use lots of sound immaturities.</p>

listening to the adult, and then returning to play.	encourage other children to take part in structured play and give them roles to do.	happened in the past, and what will happen.	shop and bought a toy,” ‘he got ice cream” rather than ‘she.’  Small grammar words such as ‘the,’ ‘a’ and ‘in’ can be missed out.	They will start to develop the following sounds: k / g / f / s  Common speech sound errors that the child will often make: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘z’ is produced as ‘d,’ e.g., zip = “dip”</li> <li>• ‘sh’ is produced as ‘s,’ e.g., sheep = “seep”</li> <li>• ‘th’ is produced as ‘f,’ e.g., car = “fum”</li> <li>• ‘ch’ is produced as ‘t,’ e.g., chair = “tair”</li> <li>• ‘j’ is produced as ‘d,’ e.g., jam = “dam”</li> </ul> The child will have difficulty saying words that have 2 consonant sounds together, e.g., ‘st’, or ‘tr’, and they will often miss one of the sounds so it easier to say, e.g., slide = “side”, snake = “nake”
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**What to do if there are concerns:**

- Access universal communication strategies (see Signposting Sheet). Keep a record of the child’s progress as evidence of a graduated response.
- Consider referring for a hearing test
- Access health visitor and local Hubs for support
- Consider referral to the Specialist Assessment Service if a child presents communication, interaction, and sensory needs. Please include evidence of a graduated response
- Consider referrals to other agencies such as the Early Years Team (Specialist Inclusion Support Service). Some referrals can need to go through a professional, e.g., the Health Visitor – discuss this with the health visitor for further information.

**When to refer:**

Refer if:

- The child shows no interest in communication, including babbling.
- They show no interest in sharing with or copying an adult.
- The child doesn't show any situational understanding, e.g., if they are shown a cup and they don't realise it is time for a drink.
- The child cannot understand longer instructions.
- The child is not communicating using full phrases, or is only using a small number of words, and the child is becoming frustrated.
- The child is not taking part in pretend play.
- The child is often difficult to understand, even for familiar listeners and the child is becoming frustrated
- The child has developed a stammer.