



Speech and Language Therapy for Deaf Children in England and Wales

What is speech and language therapy?

- Speech and language therapy is one way of helping both children and adults to communicate to the best of their ability. It aims to develop communication skills that may include receptive language (what your child understands), expressive language (what your child says or signs), speech skills (how your child pronounces words), and interaction skills (how your child uses language in conversation, eg to ask questions).
- It can be used to help children who experience a delay in their language development as a result of their deafness. This could be permanent or temporary deafness (eg glue ear) and could be a mild, moderate, severe or profound level of deafness.
- Speech and language therapy should be part of a communication development programme. The programme is designed by a speech and language therapist, often together with educational staff. It is either carried out by the therapist or by someone under their supervision, such as a teacher, specialist teacher for deaf children, teaching assistant, speech and language therapy assistant or parent.
- It may take place in your local community clinic, health centre, at your child's school, local hospital or in the home.

Do all deaf* children get speech and language therapy?

No. It will depend on your child's individual needs. If you feel that your child is finding it hard to develop their language and communication skills, ask your family doctor (GP) or health visitor to refer your child to be assessed by a speech and language therapist. A referral can also be made by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) or specialist teacher for deaf children at your child's school, or by a social worker. You can also make a referral yourself by directly contacting your local service through the community clinic, health centre or hospital.

If your child has other special needs as well as deafness, these will be taken into account. These other needs may affect the type and level of speech and language therapy and whether therapy is suitable for your child.

* The NDCS uses the term 'deaf' to cover all types of hearing loss, including temporary hearing loss such as glue ear.

Who is responsible for providing and funding speech and language therapy?

This varies depending on the area in which you live and whether your child has a statement of special educational needs. Most speech and language therapy is provided and funded by the local National Health Service (NHS) Trust. However, if your child has a statement, and speech and language therapy is included in Part 3 (special educational provision), the Trust may still provide the therapy, but the local education authority (LEA) may fund it. Alternatively the LEA may be responsible for both funding and provision.

Most speech and language therapists are employed by a local NHS Trust. Others may either work independently, for a LEA, a special school, or occasionally for a charitable organisation.

■ Contact the NDCS Freephone helpline if you would like to know more about a statement.

If my child uses sign language, will they find speech and language therapy useful?

Speech and language therapy is about encouraging a child to develop their communication skills. This includes both spoken and signed language. Some deaf children may prefer to use sign language as their first language. Other children may use spoken English and/or another language (eg Urdu, Turkish). Others may like to use a combination of speech and sign language. Whatever method of communication your child uses, the speech and language therapist may be able to help your child to develop their communication skills.

My daughter has glue ear and has very little speech. Can I ask for speech and language therapy?

Yes. If you are worried about your child's speech and language development, ask your GP or health visitor to make a referral for your child to be assessed by a speech and language therapist. A referral can also be made by the SENCO at your child's school, or you can make a direct referral by contacting your local speech and language therapy service yourself.

My child is having a cochlear implant. Will they need speech and language therapy?

It is very important that your child continues to get the right support after they have been fitted with a cochlear implant. This should include speech and language therapy. The cochlear implant team's speech and language therapist should liaise with other professionals, such as your child's specialist teacher for deaf children and local speech and language therapist. Together they will discuss and set up a programme to develop your child's communication skills that may be carried out by your child's local therapist. It is unlikely that the cochlear implant team will work with your child directly; their role is to carry out an assessment, give advice and monitor your child's progress. Support from the cochlear implant team may be reduced over time.

■ If your child does not receive speech and language therapy locally, contact the cochlear implant team for help and support and the NDCS Freephone helpline if you should need further help.

What if I am told that there is no speech and language therapy available for deaf children in my local authority?

Some LEAs may decide that any support a child requires with communication can be provided by other professionals, such as a teacher or specialist teacher for deaf children, without the help of a speech and language therapist. If you are worried that your child is not getting the support they need, contact the NDCS Freephone helpline for advice and information.

Do all speech and language therapists have experience in working with deaf children?

No. However speech and language therapists should be trained to help all children with special needs. If you have concerns about the therapy your child is getting, first discuss these concerns with the therapist, specialist teacher for deaf children, SENCO, or the local speech and language therapy manager (depending on who is responsible for providing the speech and language therapy).

If you are not happy about the outcome of this, you can ask to see the specialist therapist in your area. Remember that not all specialist therapists have signing skills. Therefore, always check their experience and level of qualifications. The specialist therapist may give advice and support to your child's own speech and language therapist, rather than see your child directly. If there is no specialist, you do have the right to ask for a second opinion and can ask the therapist or your GP to arrange this for you. As an alternative you may wish to consider getting a private assessment.

My child has a statement of special educational needs. Does it matter where speech and language therapy is put on their statement?

The majority of deaf children who need speech and language therapy should have speech and language therapy specified in their statement. When a statement is drawn up, a speech and language therapist should assess your child as part of the overall assessment.

It is important that you make sure that speech and language therapy is in the right part of the statement. Generally, for deaf children, speech and language therapy is an educational need and should be in Part 3. *The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice* 8.49* states that “..since communication is so fundamental in learning and progression, addressing speech and language impairment should normally be recorded as educational provision unless there are exceptional reasons for not doing so.”

If speech and language therapy is specified in Parts 5 and 6 (non-educational provision), your LEA does not have a legal duty to make sure that it is provided. If you find that speech and language therapy is in Parts 5 and 6 of your child’s statement, contact the NDCS Freephone helpline to check whether this is right for your child.

You also need to make sure that speech and language therapy in Part 3 is ‘quantified’ (see *SEN Code of Practice 8.37*). This means that details are included about:

- who will provide the therapy (eg speech and language therapist or teacher)
- how it will be provided
- the amount of therapy to be given (eg number of hours per week/month)

*SEN Code of Practice (England and Wales), Department for Education and Skills (DfES) 2001. For a copy, ring 0845 60 222 60; Fax: 0845 60 333 60; E-mail: dfes@prolog.uk.com (quoting reference DfES 0581/2001).

If my child has a cochlear implant, where should speech and language therapy be put on their statement?

If your child has a cochlear implant, speech and language therapy should be on their statement under Part 3 to make sure that any support required by a local speech and language therapist or teacher will be provided. Very often speech and language therapy will be specified under Parts 5 and 6 because it is seen as a medical need (that is a non-educational need). You need to make sure it is on Part 3 as well as Parts 5 and 6 if this is the case (see page 8).

■ Contact the NDCS Freephone helpline to check where speech and language therapy should be on your child's statement.

What is meant by an ongoing assessment of speech and language therapy in the classroom?

It is becoming more common for speech and language therapists to act in an advisory role after assessing a child for speech and language therapy. They may set up a programme for another professional to follow to help your child develop their communication skills. The therapist should check your child's progress at regular intervals and change the programme as necessary. Therapy may be carried out by the therapist or by a speech and language therapy assistant, teacher or teaching assistant under the supervision of the therapist. It may happen within a group or on an individual basis.

Parents may also be given the opportunity to learn about how they can help their child at home, by either taking part in groups (with or without their child), or in individual sessions with their child. It is important that you as a parent play an active role in helping your child to develop their communication skills. You should be kept informed and up-to-date about the programme that the speech and language therapist, teacher etc are using with your child.

How do I know that the speech and language therapy my child is getting is enough?

When your child is assessed, the speech and language therapist should give you a report that explains if your child needs therapy and how the therapy will be given. If you have difficulty in

understanding some of the specialised language used in the report, ask the therapist to go through the report with you so that you fully understand what the therapy will involve. The report should say:

- why it is thought that your child could benefit from therapy
- what the targets will be in therapy
- who will give the therapy
- whether it will be given in a group or in an individual session (or both)

The report may also say (depending on local factors, such as the availability of speech and language therapy, waiting lists and times):

- the start date
- how often the sessions will be
- the length of each session
- how long the therapy will be for (as most therapists will carry out therapy for a set period of time and then review before carrying on)

How long your child will need therapy will depend on their individual needs. Make sure you are clear about what form of therapy will take place, as this will help you to monitor your child's progress. Your child's therapy will need to change as they progress and develop, to make sure that it is suitable for their needs.

■ Remember speech and language therapy is not just about time spent with the therapist. It is ongoing and should be included in your child's routine, eg at school with the teacher and in the home with you as the parent.

If I don't think my child is getting enough speech and language therapy, what can I do?

First, discuss your concerns with your child's speech and language therapist. The need to take further action will depend on whether your child has a statement of special educational needs. If your child does not have a statement, write to the speech and language therapy manager in your local NHS Trust and explain your concerns. If your child is at school, talk to the school and ask the SENCO or specialist teacher for deaf children whether your child is reaching the communication skills targeted in their Individual Education Plan (IEP). You may find that your child is receiving enough speech and language therapy, or that the amount required could be reduced because there has been an improvement in their communication skills. However, if you are still not satisfied with the reasons given for the amount of therapy your child is getting, contact the NDCS Freephone helpline for advice and support.

Depending on your child's individual needs, you might want to consider whether your child should be assessed for a statement. You can discuss this with your child's SENCO or specialist teacher for deaf children, or you can write to the LEA yourself requesting an assessment. Contact the NDCS Freephone helpline for further information.

If your child has a statement, approach your LEA at the next annual review and ask for a reassessment of the amount of speech and language therapy your child gets. If you would like to take some action before the next annual review, contact the NDCS Freephone helpline for further advice.

- Remember your child doesn't have to have a statement to get speech and language therapy.

Where can I get an independent report by a speech and language therapist who has experience of working with deaf children?

If you would like an independent assessment of your child, you may have to pay, which could be costly. You may like to contact the *Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)* for advice. A private speech and language therapist should be a registered member of the RCSLT and have relevant experience of working with deaf children. To obtain a private therapist you can:

- *contact the Association of Speech and Language Therapists in Independent Practice (ASLTIP)* who can provide you with a list of private speech and language therapists in your area (you can also do this through their website)
- ask your GP who may employ an independent speech and language therapist or would be able to recommend one to you
- check with the speech and language therapy manager in your local NHS Trust (perhaps at the hospital or community clinic) to see if they offer private speech and language therapy
- check your local telephone directory for listing of speech and language therapists. (Don't forget to check that they are registered members of the RCSLT).

Alternatively you could contact a centre which has a range of professionals, including speech and language therapists, who are able to provide an independent assessment of your child's needs. Referrals can be arranged through your local NHS Trust (via your GP), your LEA, or you can make a referral yourself. It is always worth checking first whether there are any costs involved and who is expected to pay. There is no legal duty on the LEA or NHS Trust to fund these independent assessments. For details of assessment centres (which presently only exist in England, but are open to families from all other parts of the UK), please contact the NDCS Freephone helpline.

Where can I get further information and help?

The National Deaf Children's Society is able to provide information, advice and support for parents, families and carers of deaf children and young people on all aspects of childhood deafness. We have a network of regional contacts that can also offer you support. For further information please contact the NDCS Freephone helpline or the NDCS Wales/Cymru office.

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)

15 Dufferin Street, London EC1Y 8UR

Freephone helpline: 0808 800 8880 (voice & text)

Open Monday to Friday 10am to 5pm

Switchboard: 020 7490 8656 (voice & text)

Fax: 020 7251 5020

Website: www.ndcs.org.uk

Email: helpline@ndcs.org.uk

The NDCS Freephone helpline can be accessed in over 100 different languages. If you prefer to use a spoken language other than English, tell us the language of your choice and your telephone number (in English). Within a few minutes you will be called back via an interpreter.

NDCS Wales/Cymru Office

Room 2, First Floor

43 Charles Street, Cardiff CF10 2GB

Tel: 029 2037 3474 (voice & fax)

Text: 029 2038 4277

Email: ndcswales@ndcs.org.uk

This booklet is available to individuals, on request, in large print, audio tape and in Braille.

Useful addresses

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)

Information Department, 2 White Hart Yard, London SE1 1NX

Tel: 020 7378 1200

Fax: 020 7403 7254

Website: www.rcslt.org

Email: postmaster@rcslt.org

Association of Speech and Language Therapists in Independent Practice (ASLTIP)

Woodside, Coleheath Bottom, Speen, Princes Risborough,
Buckinghamshire HP27 0SZ

Tel: 0870 241 3357 (answerphone)

Fax: 01494 488590

Website: www.helpwithtalking.com

Email: asltip@awdry.demon.co.uk

Afasic

2nd Floor, 50-52 Great Sutton Street, London EC1V 0DJ

Afasic Helpline: 0845 355 5577 (local rate) Monday - Friday 11am-2pm

Admin Tel: 020 7490 9410

Fax: 020 7251 2834

Website: www.afasic.org.uk

Email: info@afasic.org.uk

The National Deaf Children's Society is an organisation of parents, families and carers which exists to support parents in enabling their child to maximise their skills and abilities; and works to facilitate this process by every means possible. Its fundamental role is to advocate for parents and carers as and when appropriate, whilst at all times ensuring the child's welfare is paramount.



NDCS services include:

- Providing clear, balanced information and advice on many issues relating to childhood deafness
- Advice on audiology, including information on glue ear
- Advice on technology and equipment
- A children's equipment fund (subject to availability) and an opportunity to try equipment in the home and at school
- Support with benefit claims and Disability Appeal Tribunals
- Education advice and support at Special Educational Needs Tribunals/Appeals
- The Listening Bus™ which travels around the country with the latest technology
- Annual technology exhibition and conference
- Family weekends, special events and training for families of deaf children
- *TALK* magazine and a range of publications for both families and professionals, some leaflets in community languages
- A network of regional staff and local contacts
- Training and consultancy for professionals
- Personal development training for young deaf and hearing people
- Sports, art and outdoor for young deaf and hearing people

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