

4. If you don't understand what's being said, don't pretend that you do as this can be very annoying and make your child think you're not really listening to them. Try to 'get round' the problem by asking questions, saying "show me" or ask another child who is good at interpreting.
5. Sometimes you may just have to admit that you don't understand but then you try and take the 'blame' for this breakdown in communication. You could say that your ears aren't working properly or that you have your silly head on! Then give as much reassurance as you can in other ways and change the subject so that you can focus on something positive that your child can do.
6. Building self-esteem. Difficulties communicating effectively can result in low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence, so it is very important that lots of praise is given in those areas your child does well to balance any negative feelings they may have about their speech.

Speech and language therapy department
Vaughan Building, Ruckhall Lane
Belmont, Hereford HR2 9RP
Tel: 01432 363975
www.wyevalley.nhs.uk
(Services, community services)

If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please call 01432 363975

If my child's speech is not very clear or easy to understand, what should I do?



How to react to children with unclear speech

1. React to what your child says, not how clearly he or she says it. Children often don't realise they are mispronouncing words and so will not understand why you are correcting them if that's what you try to do!

e.g. adult: "car not tar"

child: "I said tar, not tar"

If your child is being seen by a speech and language therapist, they can advise which sounds they are working on and when it's advisable for you to encourage them to use that sound.

2. 'Model' back mature versions of their mispronunciations for them to hear:

e.g. child: "a bue tar"

adult: "yes, it's a lovely blue car"

You could slightly emphasize the sounds your child mispronounced.

3. Wanting children to repeat words can be unhelpful – unless they spontaneously want to do so. Until they can change the sound pattern, they are likely to find repetition unhelpful. They may feel under too much pressure and then communicating stops being fun and relaxed.

7. "He's just lazy" Most of the immaturities children have in their speech are just that, immaturities. They are stuck in an earlier pattern of how to say the sound – they are not being lazy. If you like, they get into the habit and we all know how hard it can be to break a habit. They have stored the pattern of sounds in their brain and they need the right kind of help to learn the more mature pattern. Remember - just because a child may repeat a word correctly after you, does not mean they have stored the new pattern for their independent use... they've just copied you!

8. Correcting speech errors – If your child is receiving speech therapy then they are being supported to learn the more mature sound pattern to replace their immature version. At some time during therapy, it would be helpful for you to encourage your child to use their 'practise' sound correctly.

The therapist will advise you when this is appropriate. Of course, practise makes perfect. In general, speech improves through practise.

If in doubt then you are safest just repeating the word for your child to listen to and praise any attempt they make.

For further help or advice, you are welcome to contact us or ask your child's Health Visitor.