

# I CAN Factsheet A

## SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES: Speech and language difficulties: help in the early years



This factsheet details information about I CAN. It also outlines what speech and language difficulties are, the impact that having these difficulties can have on education and tells you how you can help your child if you have any concerns about your child's language development.

### What do we mean by speech and language difficulties ?

Imagine living in a world where all around you people spoke in a language you didn't understand, and no matter how hard you tried to learn, it still meant nothing to you. Or imagine the frustration of seeing a younger brother or sister talking and laughing with your parents when you couldn't even understand what they were saying. This is what it can be like to have a speech and language difficulty.

The term 'speech and language difficulty' covers a whole range of problems including:

- Difficulty listening and attending
- Difficulty relating to other people
- Limited understanding of what others say
- Difficulty learning and using new words
- Difficulty putting words together in sentences
- Unclear speech
- Difficulty getting words out or stammering
- A hoarse or croaky voice
- Difficulty taking part in conversations

### What impact can speech and language difficulties have on education?

As education is delivered almost entirely through the medium of language, a child with speech and language difficulties will need help to get the most out of school. If their needs are not met they might experience:

- Literacy difficulties
- Difficulties accessing the curriculum and therefore achieving in school
- Social isolation
- Disaffection/boredom
- Behaviour problems
- Bullying
- Low self-esteem

Of course, not all children will experience these additional difficulties. It is important to remember that every child is unique and depending on the nature of their difficulties some children will cope better than others.

### How can I help my child?

If you are at all concerned about your child's speech and language development share your concerns with your health visitor and staff at your child's playgroup or nursery. If they can't reassure you, contact your GP and ask to be referred to a speech and language therapist, they can see children as soon as a problem is suspected. It is important to note that it is possible to refer yourself to speech and language therapy.

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### I CAN:

I CAN is the children's communication charity. Communication is the essential 21st century life skill – the foundation on which children learn, achieve and make friends. I CAN works to develop speech, language and communication skills for all children. I CAN's particular focus is children who find communication hard.

### How I CAN can support you:

- **Talking Point**

The first stop for information on children's communication. Visit [www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk) to access essential information on supporting children at home and within the early years setting.

- **Resources for parents**

- **Ready Steady Talk**

- A fun-filled activity book to help 2 to 3 year olds get ready for pre-school.

- **Chatter Matters: Making life easier for you and better for your child DVD**

- Helps parents and families support their children's communication development.

- **The Communication Cookbook**

- 20 great activities to help develop speech, language and communication in children starting primary school, supported by a DVD and website.

Visit [www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk) for further information on I CAN's work and to register for I CAN's monthly newsletter.

### Further reading:

#### I CAN Factsheets:

You may also find these I CAN Factsheets helpful:

#### For professionals:

- **Factsheet 1**  
Language Difficulties in the Early Years
- **Factsheet 4**  
Pupils with Speech Dyspraxia
- **Factsheet 5**  
Pupils with Asperger Syndrome

#### For parents:

- **Factsheet B**  
Speech and Language Therapy: help in the early years

#### Further support:

- **Factsheet C**  
Useful Contacts
- **Factsheet D**  
Useful Reading

