

## GUIDELINES FOR REFERRAL TO SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY

### AT ANY AGE:

- Parental concern about child's speech and language.
- Child has difficulty with eating or drinking in terms of chewing and swallowing.
- Child has a hoarse voice or abnormal voice quality.
- Child whose play or social interaction seems inappropriate.

### REFER BY ONE YEAR IF A CHILD:

- Is having difficulties with eating drinking or swallowing.
- Is not responding to environmental noises e.g. door banging.
- Is not interested in interacting with familiar adults.
- Is not babbling.

### REFER BY TWO YEARS IF A CHILD:

- Never concentrates for more than a few seconds.
- Is not interested in playing with toys and/or plays in a repetitive way e.g. turning light switches on and off, spinning jar lids etc.
- Does not initiate communication/ interaction with familiar adults, e.g. doesn't point out or show objects to adults.
- Is not willing to participate in social games, e.g. peek-a-boo.
- Is not understanding single words e.g. "Show me the spoon", "Where's the cup?" without non-verbal cues such as pointing.
- Is not using more than ten words.
- Is not using any consonants e.g. p, b, m, n, t, d.

*Remember it is normal for a child of this age to have difficulties with some sounds. Refer to 'When Children Learn Sounds' handout.*

### REFER BY 30 MONTHS IF A CHILD:

- Never concentrates on anything for more than a few minutes.
- Shows no interest in pretend play e.g. feeding a teddy.
- Is unable to follow instructions with two key words e.g. "Give me the teddy and the brush", "Show me your nose and your ear", "Put the doll on the chair".
- Is not using more than approximately 30 words.
- Is not starting to join words together.
- Is not using 2 or more of the following sounds: p, b, m, w, t, d.

*Remember speech sounds will be immature and there may be a number of sounds that children of this age may not be able to produce (for example: s, sh, f, v, ch, j, r). Children may also still miss sounds off the ends of words.*

### REFER BY THREE YEARS IF A CHILD:

- Is not interested in a variety of activities e.g. likes a limited selection of toys/ objects.
- Never concentrates on anything for more than a few minutes.
- Cannot find two objects when asked, e.g., “get me a book and a teddy from your bedroom”.
- Is not using three word phrases, e.g. “me want juice”, “you go sleep”.
- Has speech which is difficult to understand.
- Misses sounds off the beginning/ends of words

*Remember some children at this age may not yet use more difficult sounds. Refer to ‘When Children Learn Sounds’ handout.*

### REFER BY FOUR YEARS IF A CHILD:

- Has limited play skills – only playing with a few favourite toys.
- Has difficulty mixing with peers and/or cannot play co-operatively with other children.
- Has difficulty following instructions with three key words e.g. “make teddy jump on the chair”.
- Is not using sentences of five or more words, e.g. “My teddy is under the table”.
- Is not understanding concepts of size (big/little) or position (in/on/under).
- Has speech which is difficult to understand.

### REFER BY FIVE YEARS IF A CHILD:

- Has difficulty following instructions with three or more key words.
- Has difficulty understanding question words (e.g. who, where, when).
- Is not using sentences with six or more words.
- Is unable to relate a short sequence of events.
- Has speech which is difficult to understand.
- Misses any sounds out of words (e.g. boa or oat for boat).