

## Referral Criteria for Stammering

### What is stammering?

Stammering is where the person knows exactly what they want to say, but the word feels stuck. This can happen in different ways for different people. It can include:

- Repeating words (e.g. “and and and and then I left”).
- Repeating sounds (e.g. “c-c-c- c- come here”).
- Prolonging sounds (“ssssssometimes”).
- Blocking sounds (only some sound, or no sound at all, comes out).

You might also see some movements or additional noises such as twitching their lips or face, bobbing their head or shoulders forward, or blinking. These are called struggle or ‘escape’ behaviours.

Please note, the decision to refer isn’t about the frequency of stammering. It is all about whether the stammer is currently **having an impact on their wellbeing**.

### Please refer if any of the following apply:

- The child or young person, or their parent, is feeling worried about their stammering.
- The child/young person is experiencing stress, distress, tension, or struggle when talking.
- The child or young person is giving up on speaking, talking less, or avoiding words or speaking situations.
- The child/young person is feeling negative about themselves or their speech. Feelings might include frustration, anger, shame, embarrassment, anxiety, or sadness.
- The child/young person has experienced teasing or bullying regarding their stammer.
- The parent/carer or child’s teacher wants to find out more about stammering and how best to support a child/young person who stammers.
- The child/young person is exhibiting signs of covert, or ‘hidden’ stammering. Sometimes children who feel embarrassed about their stammer go to great lengths to hide it. This is called hidden, or ‘covert’ stammering. These children might not stammer openly very often but might instead present in the following ways:
  - Very frequent use of extra ‘starters’ or ‘fillers’ with in their speech such as ‘erm’ ‘so’ ‘well’, ‘like’, when they feel a word is going to get stuck.
  - Pretending they have forgotten what they wanted to say.
  - Changing the topic.
  - Avoiding speaking situations.
  - Switching the word they wanted to say for another word that feels easier to say (known as word switching).
  - Not putting their hand up to ask or answer questions in class.
  - Appearing to be very shy or quiet.
  - Becoming disruptive when they are asked to speak in class.