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QUESTION: I want to help my child but I really don't have enough time or energy. Can Speech Quest help me?

ANSWER: At Speech Quest, we know what a struggle it is to fit everything into busy family lives, especially for working parents. That's why Speech Quest's activities are designed to fit into times when you will be carrying out other necessary activities, such as meal times, bath time, and bed time. Using daily events like these provides a more natural setting for developing language skills in the early stages, and the great news is that it will take no more time than before! For slightly older children, we have also devised more table-top or play activities to make the most of any time that you do have to spare with your child. And remember, it doesn't have to be just you – others can help, including grandparents, childminders etc.

QUESTION: My child has a stammer. Can Speech Quest help me with this?

ANSWER: There is a phase in early language development around 2 to 3 ½ years old when many children go through a stage of hesitant speech or have difficulty getting their words out. This can be related to other issues relating to their language skills, so it is worth checking their progress using Speech Quest's Questionnaire and Assessment. From there, you will find out about his/her strengths and weaknesses and we show you how to help. Where the "stammer" or fluency difficulty lasts more than a few months, we recommend seeking advice from a Speech and Language Therapist in your local area.

QUESTION: My child's speech is really difficult to understand. What can Speech Quest do to help?

ANSWER: It is really important to look at possible underlying causes to this problem, and to tackle these first, before working on speech sounds. Completing the Speech Quest Questionnaire, and getting the Assessment feedback is the first step. This will show where the problems lie, and if there is anything else you might need to think about. We then show you how you can help and where to start in easy to follow steps.

QUESTION: I see that Speech Quest targets the age range from 3 months to 5 years. My child still has some language problems, so I wonder if Speech Quest could help with a child over 5 years old?

ANSWER: For most children, communication skills develop along similar lines, but some children are slower than others to gain these skills. Other children develop their communication skills in an unusual way. In either case, answering our Questionnaire about your child, and getting the Assessment feedback from us, will show you whether we can help. Our activities are targeted at the under fives age group, but children with slow to develop language skills can still benefit from our activities up to about age 7 years, because they may need things to be simplified so they are easier to understand. Often we find this can boost their confidence when things are easier for them, and they are happier to "have a go". To use Speech Quest in this way, just put in a lower age than your child's real age.

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QUESTION: It's difficult to think of things to do with my child. Can Speech Quest help me?

ANSWER: Yes, we have loads of fun ideas, and our Activities can be enjoyed by any child, not just those with speech or language problems. And, the added bonus is that enjoying these activities with your child will also boost their talking and conversation skills. Check out your child's skills first using our Questionnaire, and the Assessment feedback to reassure yourself about your child's skills. Then you can select any Speech Quest Activities from their age group that we give you. We value any feedback on the activities, and would really like to hear how you get along with them.

QUESTION: Now I have done the questionnaire and received the assessment, would it be best for me to wait to see a Speech and Language Therapist?

ANSWER: If the assessment recommends referral to SLT services, or if you feel you would like to arrange a referral anyway, it is important to do so. Most NHS SLT services try to meet the 18 week target time for waiting but very few can better this time. Private practitioners should have a fairly brief waiting time. Whether NHS or Private SLT is consulted, it is standard practice for parents to be given daily activities to do with their child by the SLT once the child has been assessed. Provision for weekly NHS SLT sessions is limited, and usually will consist of a "block" of 4 sessions over 4 weeks, then a break for a few months, when homework is often provided for parents to do with the child, then a further block of sessions. However, there is no time like the present. We firmly believe it would benefit your child to get started straight away on the activities we recommend for your child. Speech Quest's activities are similar to those recommended routinely by SLTs for parents to do at home. Once you have consulted with the SLT you will be able to continue using Speech Quest activities to back up the sessions provided by the SLT, and you will be able to retest your child's progress through our questionnaires.

QUESTION: What could I expect from NHS Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) for my child?

ANSWER: This varies across the country and if you are concerned, it is worth checking what's currently available in your area with your Health Visitor or Preschool Provider. SLT provision is likely to follow a similar path in most areas, depending upon available SLT resources: when a referral is received the child may undergo an initial "screening" or brief assessment to determine what sort of provision is needed, and then be more fully assessed soon after, or at a later date should the problem persist. Or the child may go straight into full assessment, a lengthier initial session with the therapist. Following this assessment phase, a decision is made about treatment needs: this can be any, or a combination of some of the following: individual or small group weekly sessions for a few weeks with the SLT or a SLT Assistant, usually with some activities for the parents to do between sessions; a "watch and wait" approach, to see if the child makes progress naturally; a parent training programme; home activities to be carried out by the parents over a period of weeks followed by a

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review of progress; a programme of activities for the pre-school staff to carry out with the child, and a review in conjunction with the pre-school staff. Where pre-school staff are involved, they are likely to have had some training from the SLT Service.

QUESTION: Would I have to do exercises or activities with my child if I go to a private or an NHS Speech and Language Therapist (SLT)?

ANSWER: Whether NHS or Private SLT is consulted, it is standard practice for parents to be given daily activities to do with their child by the SLT once the child has been assessed. At Speech Quest we also believe parents are in a strong position to help their child once they know how to help. There are a number of reasons for getting parents involved in the therapy process from the start, which include:

- Daily or frequent practise generally results in faster and more secure progress.
- The child learns to use new communication skills in his/her normal environment rather than just in the clinic or with one particular person.
- It can increase parents' awareness of the nature of the child's difficulties and how to help overcome them.
- It can often help parents to adjust their own way of communicating which is then likely to improve the flow of conversation with the child.
- There are many naturally occurring opportunities each day when potentially the child can practise his/her new communication skills.