

Helping Children/Young People with Unclear Speech



- React to **what** is said not **how** it is said. Children/young people don't always realise that they are mispronouncing words. On the flip side, some children are very aware/embarrassed that they are mispronouncing words so pointing it out may be frustrating and could reduce their willingness to communicate.
- Sneak a correct speech model into your response, for example, "Dan I dain dis?" you could say "Course you can change it", giving slight emphasis to the sounds you have corrected.
- Don't ask a child/young person to repeat the word. Drawing attention to it could affect self-esteem especially in front of others.
- Build self esteem. If you have understood part but not all of what has been said, repeat back what you *have* understood and leave a pause. This shows a child that they have been partially successful and may encourage them to rephrase, add one more word or two (which is easier than repeating the whole thing) or some children may start to sign the rest to you as they speak to help you understand.
- Don't pretend to understand. Instead, support the child to help you by asking them to sign it, show you, use gesture etc.

It is OK to sensitively talk about the frustrations of trying to get a message across, especially with older children. Be reassuring, recognise that changing articulation takes time but with practise, it is possible to improve.

Motivation to change brings about change.