

## 8.0 HELPING CHILDREN WITH UNCLEAR SPEECH

### 1. React to what the child says; not how clearly he speaks

Children often do not realise that they are mispronouncing words so correcting them can be confusing. For example, the child says 'fis' '...the adult says 'Did you say fis?' The child looks puzzled and replies 'No, I said fis not FIS' !!

### 2. Repeat what the child says correctly so the child hears good examples

If the child says 'I like torys at cool', you say 'Yes, stories at school are fun.' This way you are saying 'Yes I know what you mean but this is how you say it.' You may want to give just the **slightest** emphasis to the sound(s) the child mispronounced.

### 3. Don't make the child repeat the words

Children need to feel relaxed and confident in order to experiment with sounds and **so change** their speech patterns. Drawing attention to mispronunciations and making children repeat words is not helpful.

### 4. Build self esteem

If part of the child's conversation is understood, repeat it back. This shows him that he has been partially successful and may encourage him to tell you more. Use strategies to help anticipate what the child might say. For example, a home-school book in which the parents can record events or the use of books, pictures, models etc. This can help if the speech is very unclear because you have some idea what the child might be trying to communicate. Give praise for other things the child does well.

### 5. Don't pretend to understand

Try asking questions or saying 'Show me.....' and encourage the use of gesture and mime as well as the child taking you to things. Sometimes you just have to admit that you can't understand. Be as reassuring as possible. Change the subject and focus on something positive.

### 6. Children may be able to articulate a sound but not use it in words

This is quite normal. A child may articulate 's' but say 'tock' for 'sock'. The child has to understand how to use the sound. This usually develops naturally. The best way to help is to repeat the words correctly so he hears good models. Sometimes speech and language therapy is needed.