

## Helpful contact details

### Resources

Johnston, M. & Wintgens, A. (2001) **The Selective Mutism Resource Manual**  
Bicester Speechmark Publishing

Longo, S. (1996) **My Friend Daniel Doesn't Talk**  
Bicester Speechmark Publishing Ltd

Social Anxiety: Selective Mutism in Children  
[www.anxietynetwork.com/spsm.html](http://www.anxietynetwork.com/spsm.html)

Selective Mutism Organisation [www.selectivemutism.org](http://www.selectivemutism.org)

Selective Mutism Information and Research Association (SMIRA) 0116 2127411  
[smiraleicester@hotmail.com](mailto:smiraleicester@hotmail.com)

[www3.hants.gov.uk/mutism.pdf](http://www3.hants.gov.uk/mutism.pdf)



## Supporting Reluctant Speakers - Children with Selective Mutism

### Information for schools/pre-schools



**Is there a child in your pre-school or school who is not speaking?**

**Do they speak at home or in other situations?**

If you have answered yes to both questions, the child may be selectively mute or a Reluctant Speaker.



## What does this mean?

Children with Selective Mutism speak freely to only a small number of people with whom they feel comfortable. This is usually their family and usually in the family home. Commonly they have most difficulty speaking in nursery or school.

Reluctant Speakers will speak a little in some situations and present less pervasive difficulties.

## Why does the child not speak freely?

Selective Mutism and Reluctant Speaking are caused by anxiety about talking in social situations. It is important to remember that the child wants to talk, but anxiety prevents them from doing so.

Many factors may be implicated in the development of Selective Mutism, and these will differ for each child. However, they may include family history of shyness or Selective Mutism, loss or trauma, teasing, separation or self-consciousness about a speech impairment.

## What can you do?

Strategies which will help the child be more confident about speaking:

- Remember it's anxiety that prevents the child speaking.
- Reward all attempts at communication: eg smiles, nods, eye contact.
- Let the child know that you understand that they find it difficult to talk.
- Encourage the child to build a relationship with a key staff member.



- Provide activities where children move, talk or sing as a group.
- Involve parents in planning interventions to ensure that the approaches are jointly developed and agreed.
- Encourage other children to include the child in play.
- Encourage the child to choose between verbal or non-verbal responses.
- Avoid increasing anxiety levels in children who have to wait their turn to speak, by instead asking who would like to tell or say something.
- Aberdeenshire Education, Learning and Leisure's approach to meeting children's additional support needs is the recommended planning framework to initiate interventions. '**Pathways to Policy**' sets this out.
- This document includes information about helpful approaches under the heading "**What can you do?**"
- Wider information is provided in Aberdeenshire Education, Learning and Leisure's pack on Selective Mutism.
- There are also NHS guidelines.

## Getting help

- Both Selective Mutism and Reluctant Speaking can be successfully overcome.
- If the child or young person is not speaking in pre-school or school after about eight weeks, you might want to plan interventions.

Professionals from Clinical Psychology and Speech and Language Therapy make up the Selective Mutism Team in Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital. This team might be involved following a planning meeting in pre-school or in school or when they are contacted by their Health colleagues.