

# Supporting reluctant talkers

Some children speak readily in some situations but stay quiet in others. Being reluctant to talk often starts when children are young and can come and go depending on the situation, such as on starting a new school, but occasionally it may last a lot longer.

## How to help at home

- Let your child know you understand and are not worried about their reluctance to talk. Do not put pressure on them to talk as this can increase anxiety.
- Explain the situation to others when you are away from your child rather than in front of them.
- Encourage lots of conversation at home, and in other places where your child is comfortable, in order to develop their talking and their confidence.
- Be positive about new social situations and try to do things that you know that your child will enjoy to help them build their confidence.
- Avoid direct questions, comment instead. If you do ask a direct question, either answer it yourself or respond with a comment eg. 'Let's decide later'
- Try making comments such as 'I wonder....', 'I expect...' which may provoke a response, but do not need one.



## How to help at nursery

- Do not put pressure on them to talk as this can increase anxiety.
- Identify someone who can form a special bond with the child, gradually building rapport and confidence. Introduce an activity that does not need talking. Follow the child's lead and then gradually encourage cooperative play as they gain confidence.
- As time goes by introduce other people into the time eg. have another adult popping briefly into the room to 'collect' an item or send in another child with a 'message'.
- Try some whole group activities such as singing, saying a nursery rhyme or counting. They might feel happier joining in if the focus isn't all on them. Create opportunities to make noise in other ways e.g. use louder instruments in music
- Make sure children have ways to join in both verbally and non-verbally. Accept any non-verbal communication that they offer and encourage participation through 'show' rather than 'tell'
- Praise the child's achievements without making them anxious about being singled out.
- Encourage home nursery communication eg. a book to write comments in about what the child has done, taking drawings home, bringing an item in from home. This can start a conversation without asking a direct question.