

What is an Initial Assessment?

An initial assessment is an opportunity for the Speech and Language Therapist to get to know you and your child. The Speech and Language Therapist will find out about your child's strengths and difficulties in different ways. This may include:

- **Taking a case history** – the therapist will ask you questions about your child's development and may listen to examples of things that they manage well and things that may be difficult for them. It doesn't matter if you are unsure of some questions. The more information that you can provide will help us to understand your child better.
- **Informal Assessment** – the therapist will use games and play with your child whilst taking note of certain skills such as turn taking, their attention and whether they are able to follow directions.
- **Formal Assessment** – your child may be encouraged to look at some pictures with the therapist. The therapist may ask the child to name or describe pictures and point to certain objects. These assessments will provide a score so that the therapist can compare the child's performance with children of a similar age.
- **Play and Conversation** – the therapist will try to get to know your child by talking to them and joining in with their play. This will help the therapist to see how they communicate and whether they use any gestures or expressions to help them get their message across. The therapist may be interested in how the child plays and what types of toys and activities they enjoy.
- **Observation** – watching the child and how they communicate with their parents/carers or siblings may also be helpful for the therapist to see. If your child is quiet the therapist may want to observe them for a while, allowing them to feel comfortable first and then approach the therapist when they feel ready.

Initial assessments can take place in the community, your home or your child's nursery or school. The session usually lasts about one hour and you will have the opportunity to ask the Speech and Language Therapist questions too.

At the end of the session the therapist may make some suggestions about what the next steps could be for your child and how to support their speech and language development. The therapist may need more time to look at assessment findings in detail but they will be able to provide you with some advice in the meantime.