



Supporting Selective Mutism

Selective Mutism is a phobia. It is an Anxiety Disorder that affects both children and adults. People with Selective Mutism have a fear of talking in social situations, but are able to talk easily at other times (e.g at home).

People with Selective Mutism really want to be able to talk but can't because of their anxiety and fear. They physically freeze and are not able to talk.

Selective Mutism might look like:

- Being able to talk in one place but not in all places
- Being able to talk to some people but not all people



If you think your child has Selective Mutism...



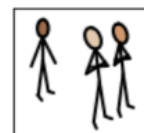
DO:

- Make sure the child knows that **they do not have to talk**.
- Accept **other ways of communicating** (e.g. nodding/shaking their head).
- **Comment** on things happening around them without placing pressure on them to respond.
- Allocate the child a **consistent key worker** within their education setting. This needs to be someone who can build a close relationship with the child throughout their time at nursery and/or school. This key worker will be key in supporting any interventions for Selective Mutism that are recommended.
- Ensure **everyone is consistent** in their approach.



DO NOT:

- **Pressure the child** to talk or communicate. Asking the child to point, give a thumbs up/down, or nod/shake their head may still cause significant anxiety.
- **Ask lots of questions.**



- **Ignore** the Selective Mutism and hope it will go away. Parents, education staff and any others involved in the child's care will need to work together to support the child's Selective Mutism.

Why does my child have Selective Mutism?

- Selective Mutism is complex and the cause is not clear.
- Selective Mutism is linked to anxiety.
- Around 1 in 140 children have Selective Mutism. It is more common in young girls and those who are learning a second language.
- With appropriate support, most children are able to overcome Selective Mutism.



For further information, please visit:

[Selective mutism - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

[Selective Mutism Information & Research Association \(SMIRA\)](#)

[iSpeak - a voice for people with Selective Mutism](#)