

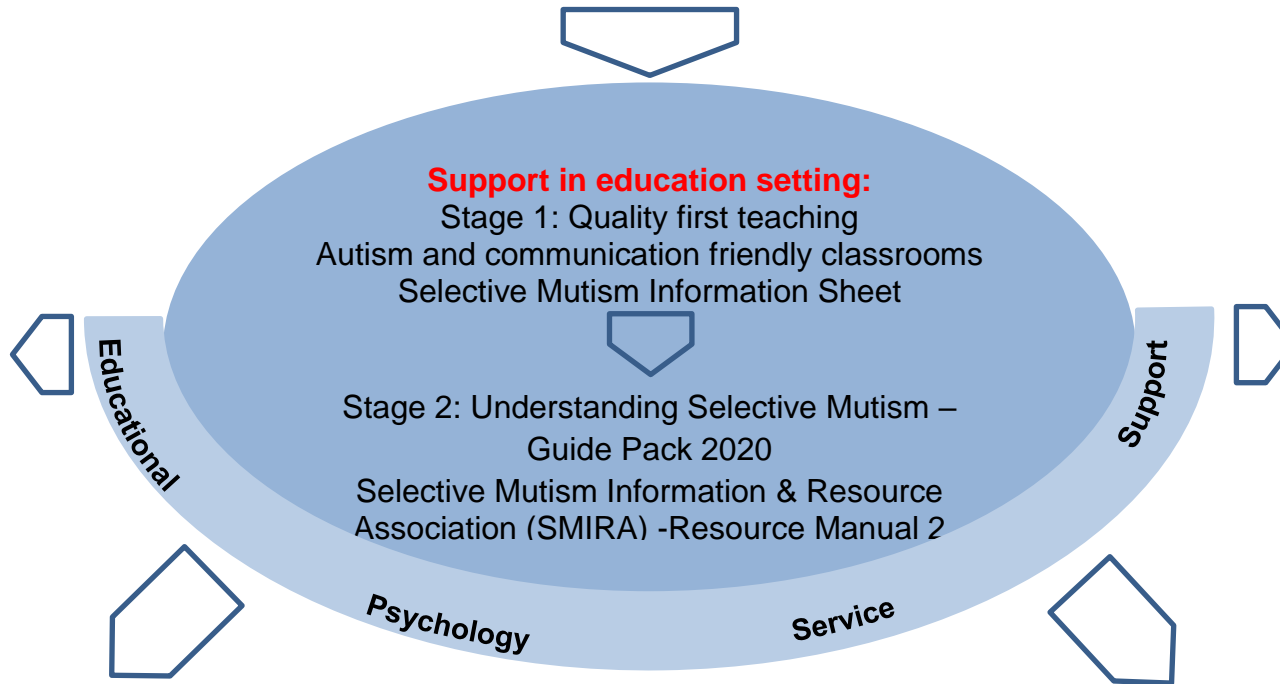
Selective Mutism pathway
Child is not speaking in certain situations.
Is there a safeguarding concern? If so, refer to Social Care.

Concerns about: speech or language development or a stammer?

Speech and language therapy:

South:
www.speech.derbys.nhs.uk

North: Chesterfield Royal Hospital 01246 514509



Concerns about: autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?

Multi-professional ASD Assessment

South: via SPoA 0300 7900264

North: The Den at Chesterfield Royal Hospital 01246 512096

Is the child learning English as an Additional Language?

Use EAL Strategies

Derby:
New Communities Achievement Team – NCAT 01332 641305

Derbyshire:
www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/attendance-behaviour-welfare/support/new-to-english/children-with-english-as-an-additional-language.aspx

Concerns about: general development / other medical needs?

Community paediatrician developmental assessment

South: via SPoA 0300 7900264

North: The Den at Chesterfield Royal Hospital 01246 512096

Concerns about: anxiety or other mental health needs?

- **Mental Health tel. support line** (all age) 24/7 Call 0800 028 0077
- **Derby & Derbyshire Emotional Health and Wellbeing website-** [https://derbyandderbyshireemotionalhealthandwellbeing.uk/provides-a-signposting 'one stop shop' for all services.](https://derbyandderbyshireemotionalhealthandwellbeing.uk/provides-a-signposting-one-stop-shop-for-all-services)
- **School Nurse / Health Visitor**
- **CAMHS / Specialist Community Advisor**
South: 0300 7900264.
North: www.camhsnorthderbyshire.nhs.uk/contact-us
- **Clinical Psychology:**
South: via SPoA 0300 7900264.



Selective Mutism: INFORMATION & ADVICE

What is Selective Mutism?

It is a social anxiety disorder, mainly affecting children. Children with selective mutism are unable to speak in certain situations, even though they want to speak, and can speak in other situations. It particularly affects speaking at school or in public. It is **not** shyness. It has been likened to having 'stage fright' and causes the child to 'freeze'.

The term selective mutism is used when the issue:

- has lasted at least a month,
- is interfering with the child's educational and social development,
- is not due to the child not knowing the language,
- is not due to another communication or other difficulty like stammering or autism.

What causes selective mutism?

There is no one clear cause. It may involve many factors, including psychological, emotional and social. It can be triggered by big changes like starting school or going into hospital. It is more common in girls.

It is normal for young children to have a period of not talking in the first few months of learning an additional language. This is not selective mutism.

Will it get better?

With early support, yes, it is very likely to get better. Occasionally, it can persist into older childhood and adulthood.

What's the best way to help?

In Derby and Derbyshire, a graduated response is used. By this we mean that a range of education and health services along with parents & carers, form part of a "virtual team", each with different roles and areas of expertise to contribute. This is delivered in a graduated or staged way to respond to each child or young person's unique circumstances including:

Stage1:What parents and teachers can do to help?

- Accept your child and show understanding and patience. If the adult shows anxiety, this can increase the child's anxiety.
- Do not refer to your child as 'non-speaking', or draw attention to the mutism in front of others. This can also increase anxiety.
- However, do privately explain the child's needs to others, so that they understand why the child may not speak to them.
- Encourage and praise participation in social activities, whether the child speaks or not.
- Accept all forms of communication, including non-verbal (gestures, facial expressions, use of pictures, drawing, mimes, signing etc).
- Encourage conversation at home, including talking about school, feelings, etc.

- Do not put any pressure on the child to talk. Do not reward them for speaking or sanction them for not speaking.
- Record your child when they are talking at home, and encourage them to watch/listen to themselves speaking – this can help desensitise them. If the child agrees, you could also play the recording at school, so the child can take part in ‘Show and Tell’ or other public speaking.
- Treat your child the same as their siblings/peers and give them the chance to communicate, whether by speaking or non-verbally. Do not let others speak for the child.
- Children with selective mutism may feel more comfortable speaking to pets, or when role-playing in imaginative games.

Stage 2: What can education settings do to help?

As well as using the above strategies in the first instance, use the Derby/Derbyshire ‘Understanding Selective Mutism – Guide Pack 2020’. This has been developed by a multi-agency team of professionals and is available to education

Stage 3: Who else can help?

Specialist services, including the ones below, may need to get involved later. Several different services may need to be involved, depending on your child’s needs. Ideally, the SENCo or GP will coordinate this.

- School **educational psychologist** can identify the child’s psychological and emotional needs and support school to manage these, including support using the Selective Mutism guidance pack for schools & settings.
- A **speech and language therapist** can identify and support any other communication difficulties the child may have (e.g. stammering, speech disorder, social communication disorder).
- A **paediatrician or clinical psychologist** can identify any other developmental or medical needs the child may have (e.g. autism spectrum disorder, learning disabilities).
- **Mental health services**; in Derby/Derbyshire this may include the school pastoral support or counselling services, school nursing, Specialist Community Advisors, “Build Sound Minds” and/or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), all are able to help support with anxiety and mental health need.

For more information about how to access support for selective mutism in Derbyshire, please see:

- The Derby/Derbyshire Selective Mutism flowchart.
- SMIRA (the Selective Mutism Information and Research Association) is a charity that can provide information and support for parents and professionals. Their website is: www.selectivemutism.org.uk