

## **Assessment for children who stammer (stutter)**



The Stammer Specialist Ltd. sits in the heart of Bloomsbury, Central London, just around the corner from the British Museum and 5 minutes' walk from Tottenham Court Road tube station.

The therapy rooms are situated on the third floor, a peaceful space shared with two female colleagues who also work in healthcare. There is also a waiting room in case you arrive a few minutes early for your appointment.

If you live outside of London, if it is difficult to find time to travel, or if you live further afield, then it might be easier for your appointments to take place online. I have been working online for around 9 years with families from all over the world, and I have found it to be a very effective way of working. Some people prefer a combination of face to face and online sessions, for example you might want to travel for your initial assessment and then have your weekly therapy sessions online. It is entirely up to you.

One thing we know for certain is that parents do not cause stammering. Every child who stammers has a different and unique combination of factors that helps explain their stammering, both in terms of why it started and how it has developed. These can be psychological factors, communication factors, environmental factors, and speech and language factors. Some children are not aware of their stammering; for others there can be difficult emotions or negative thoughts associated with their stammering and their experiences of it. Therefore, your child's thoughts and emotions also need to be considered as part of the assessment – in fact this can often be the most important area to address. Understanding all of the factors which are relevant for your child's stammering is the first step in knowing how to help.

The assessment session consists of two separate appointments which usually take place about a week apart:

- A child assessment, where I spend time with your child talking about their speech, communication, and if/how stammering is affecting them. There may also be a questionnaire to complete, and a screen of your child's language skills. For older children, at the end of the assessment there is discussion around the causes of stammering. This conversation helps them to better understand their stammering, and to start thinking about what might help.
- A parent consultation, where you help me to understand the bigger picture in terms of your child's overall development, the onset of stammering and how it changes over time, their personality and character, school, and friendships and relationships. Where both parents live at home, both parents are required to attend. The parent session ends with a 'formulation', when we discuss the causes of stammering, the factors that are relevant for your child's stammering, and therefore what might be helpful. Specific recommendations are then given, and we will also discuss options for therapy.

### How does the assessment help?

While the session is an assessment by name, it is also therapeutic in nature. Discussing the causes of stammering, talking openly about the factors relevant for your child's stammering, and discussing what might help, are all important first steps. It is key for parents to be able to speak openly to their child and to know how to address and manage their child's stammering at home. Parents also find it helpful to recognise and discuss their own reactions to stammering, and any worries they might have. Following the assessment parents often tell me they feel less anxious about things, because a plan is in place and they feel more confident in knowing how to help and what to do.

### What happens after the assessment?

I will write a clinical report which summarises the outcomes of your assessment sessions, and which also details the recommendations that we have discussed. Should you wish to attend therapy, the appointments can be booked into the diary. Therapy takes place in blocks of six hours at a time i.e. one hour per week for six weeks in a row. It is usually possible to start therapy sessions two to three weeks after the assessment has been completed.

The specific contents of therapy are different for everyone and will also depend on age. Lots of therapists focus solely on speech techniques which can result in a lot of pressure for a child, especially younger children who are not aware they stammer. Techniques can also give children the unspoken message that no stammering is acceptable, which can sometimes be detrimental. For this reason, therapy at The Stammer Specialist Ltd. focuses on both the internal and external elements of stammering. For younger children, therapy centres around the family and the things parents can do to help. For older children, it is essential to help them to develop their skills, knowledge, independence, and confidence, all of which is necessary for them to manage moments of stammering at home and at school.

The cost for the assessment and clinical report is £460.

### How do I book an assessment?

The first thing to do is book your two assessment sessions into the diary, which can be done over the telephone or via email. Once the appointments are scheduled, I will then send you some forms to complete (Consent Form and Terms & Conditions Form) and an Invoice with information regarding payment.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you are not sure whether an assessment is for you, or if you have some questions, please drop me a line and I will be happy to discuss things further.

I look forward to hearing from you.

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Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist  
The Stammer Specialist Ltd.

