

Assessments for young people 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. There is a waiting room in case you arrive a few minutes early for your appointment, or you would like someone to accompany you on the day.

If you live further afield, or it is difficult to find time to travel, 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.

Everyone who stammers has a different combination of factors that help explain his or her stammering. These can be psychological or emotional factors, communication factors, environmental factors, and speech and language factors. Stammering is therefore complex, and the experience of stammering is different for everyone. A detailed assessment is the first step to understanding the factors which are relevant for you.

The assessment session usually takes around 3 to 4 hours and I offer both morning and afternoon slots. The session is probably longer than that offered by other SLTs who often only focus on the outward stammering that occurs in speech. It can take time to get all the information regarding the factors that are specific to your stammering. In my experience, for therapy to make a difference it needs to cover several areas i.e. not just speech techniques. Sessions are usually a combination of fluency strategies, psychological skills, and communication skills, and the specific content is different for everyone. The detailed assessment session means that any recommendations – and therapy – are both targeted and effective.

An assessment usually consists of:

- Discussion of your outward stammering, how it changes over time and what makes the difference.
- Completion of questionnaires regarding the impact of stammering on your communication.
- A case history, where we discuss your stammering in detail including the impact it has on you, the ways it affects your communication, and how it gets in the way for you on a day-to-day basis including socially. We will also explore your experience of stammering before, during, and after speaking and social situations.
- A 'formulation', where we discuss the factors relevant for your stammering and make detailed recommendations regarding what might be helpful.

How does the assessment help?

While the session is an assessment by name, it is also therapeutic in nature. During the second part of the session there is a 'formulation' during which we will spend time discussing the causes of stammering, talk openly about the factors relevant for your stammering, and discuss what might help. There are usually ideas that you can put into place or try out straight away. I will also share resources such as further reading or videos that might be helpful. Recommendations for therapy are also discussed.

Making sense of your stammering is important for change to happen. Following the assessment many people find that their feelings about stammering are already starting to shift.

What happens after the assessment?

Following the assessment, I will write a clinical report which summarises your assessment session and which details the recommendations that we have discussed.

Therapy will also be discussed at the end of your assessment. Therapy sessions are usually in blocks of five or six hours at a time, consisting of one-hour therapy sessions which take place once a week, for five or six weeks in a row. It is usually possible to start therapy sessions two to three weeks after your assessment.

People who stammer tell me that speech techniques are not always helpful, or they are only helpful in certain situations. Other ways of addressing stammering, and its impact, are therefore considered. The specific contents of therapy will depend on the outcomes of the assessment and the areas that you would like to work on, whether it is scenarios at school or college, social situations, or reducing the amount of discomfort you experience in the moment of stammering. So, while therapy is different for everyone, it usually consists of a combination of addressing negative thoughts and emotions about stammering, understanding stammering more, building communication confidence, and introduction of a speech or communication skill to use in speaking situations. We will think together about how to get your speech to where you would like it to be.

The cost for the assessment and clinical report is £340.

How do I book an assessment?

The first thing to do is to find a date and time for your assessment, which can be done over the telephone or via email. If you are under 18, it might also help for me to speak to a parent. Once we have the appointment in the diary, I will then send you some forms to complete and 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 general questions, please drop me a line and I would be happy to discuss things further.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kevin Fower
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Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist
The Stammer Specialist Ltd.

