

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



The Stammer Specialist Ltd. is in Central London, a short walk from Oxford Circus, Tottenham Court Road, and Goodge Street tube stations.

The therapy rooms are situated on the first and second floors, a peaceful space shared with two female colleagues. There is also a waiting room in case you arrive a few minutes early for your appointment.

If you live outside of London, or further afield, or if it is difficult to find time to travel, 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 may be psychological factors, communication factors, environmental factors, and speech and language factors. While a child's outward stammering shows in their speech, their thoughts and emotions related to stammering also need to be considered – in fact this can often be the most important area to address. Understanding the factors which are relevant for your child's stammering is the first step in knowing how to help.

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

- A child assessment: this consists of playing, looking at pictures, and asking your child about their speech to see if stammering is affecting them. Some children are not aware of their stammering; for others there can be a number of emotional reactions and thoughts associated with their stammering and their experiences of it. 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, designed to help them to understand it and think about what might help.
- A parent consultation: in this session you will 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, friendships, and sibling and peer relationships. Where both parents live at home both parents are required to attend. The parent session ends with a 'formulation', where we discuss the causes of stammering, the factors relevant for your child's stammering, and therefore what might be helpful. 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 feel able to speak to their child and to know how to address and manage their child's stammering. 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 concrete plan is in place. Parents also feel more confident in knowing how to help their child.

### What happens after the assessment?

I will write a clinical report which summarises the outcomes of your assessment sessions and the recommendations that we have discussed. Should you wish to attend therapy, sessions usually take 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 of their stammering. Techniques may also give children the unspoken message that only fluent speech is acceptable, which may contribute to feelings of discomfort or shame. 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 confidence and the things parents can do to help. For older children, it is essential to help them to develop the skills, knowledge, independence, and confidence necessary to manage the moments of stammering that occur at home and at school.

The cost for the assessment and clinical report is £475.

### 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 general questions, please drop me a line and I will 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.

