

## INFORMATION SHEET



### Children's Speech Sound Development

Children develop speech sounds gradually and at different rates. They may not produce all speech sounds until they are around 7 years old.

This table shows you **approximately** the order in which sounds develop and the ages to expect the sounds to emerge.

| Sounds Produced                     | Appropriate ages at which<br><b>50% of children</b><br>can normally<br>produce these<br>sounds | Appropriate ages<br>at which<br><b>90% of children</b><br>can normally<br>produce these<br>sounds |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| All common vowels                   | 1.5 → 2 yrs  | 3 yrs   |
| p b t d                             |  |   |
| m n w                               | 1.5 → 2 yrs  | 3 yrs   |
| k g f h                             |  |   |
| y as in 'yet'                       | 2.5 → 3 yrs  | 4 yrs   |
| s                                   |  |   |
| ng as in 'sing'                     | 2.5 → 3 yrs  | 5 yrs   |
| l                                   | 3 → 3.5 yrs  | 6 yrs   |
| sh as in 'shoe' ch as in 'chin'     | 3.5 → 4.5 yrs  | 6 yrs   |
| dg as in 'joke' z v                 |  |   |
| th as in 'thin' and th as in 'then' | 4.5 → 5 yrs  | 7 yrs   |
| sh with voice as in measure         |  |   |
| r                                   |  |   |

Where there are two or more consonant sounds in a word, these are known as **clusters** or **blends**. Children start to use these when single sounds are well established so it can take a further 2 or 3 years for these blends to be used accurately.



## Speech Sound Substitutions

During normal development, a child may use a number of sound substitutions in his/her speech. These substitutions mainly follow common patterns. When you can spot these patterns the child's speech can be easier to interpret.

Some of the common patterns are:

**Fronting** - The child replaces sounds made at the back of the mouth (e.g. k,g) with ones made at the front (e.g. t,d) e.g. **cat** → 'tat' or **dog** → 'dod'

**Stopping** - This is where the child has difficulty producing 'long' sounds such as s,f,'sh' and uses 'short' sounds instead e.g. **sip** → 'dip'

**Gliding** - The child confuses sounds like r/w/l/y e.g. **ring** → 'wing'

**Cluster Reduction** - The child reduces groups of two or more sounds to one e.g. **drum** → 'dum' or **string** → 'ting'

Two other common substitutions children use are:

Replacing 's' with 'th' ('lispings') e.g. **soap** → 'thoap'

Replacing 'th' with 'f' e.g. **thumb** → 'fum'

Children can have one or a combination of a few of these substitutions during their speech development.