

Language Delay

I. What is Language Delay?

Children may be regarded as having language delay if they fail to attain the following language abilities at specific ages:

Age	Ability
1 to 1.5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Say commonly used words
2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Combine words together
2.5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use more vocabulary and speak in complete sentences• Begin to ask questions
3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Say one's own name and age• Talk about daily happenings in simple sentences
4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand simple stories• Retell events with more detail• Frequent asking of questions, e.g. "Why?"
5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin to understand jokes and solve riddles• Ask more abstract questions

II. What causes Language Delay?

Language learning in children is mainly affected by the following factors:

- Inborn language ability
- Hearing ability
- Oral motor ability
- Attentiveness
- Intelligence

In addition, the lack of appropriate language learning environment is also a common cause of language delay in children. For example:

- Over-protection by caregivers reduces child's opportunities to learn to communicate
- Lack of role model in communication
- Multiple languages used in communicating with children

III. The effect of multilingual environment on language development of children:

During early stages of language learning, children exposed to multilingual environment may need more time to comprehend languages.

However, children without other impairments will gradually adapt when they are exposed to more listening and speaking experience.

To avoid confusion, adults should refrain from using multiple languages simultaneously in a sentence when talking to children.

Individual family members are encouraged to be consistent in using the same language when communicating with his/her children. For example, a parent may use Cantonese only. The maid English only.

IV. Does your child have the following symptoms?

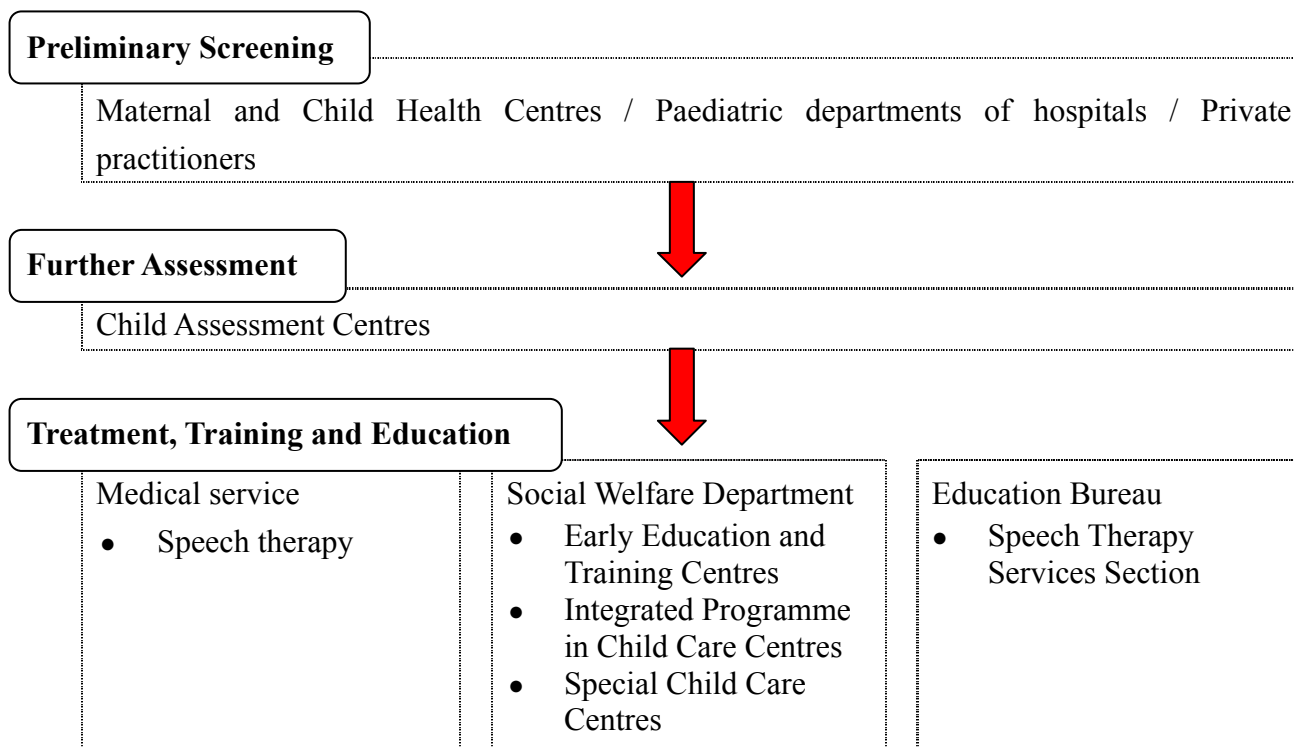
Age	Comprehension	Expression
1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unresponsive to speech or environmental sound 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot vocalize in string of syllables
2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No response when their names are called Unable to follow simple verbal instructions, e.g. "give to mummy" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot say single words
2.5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot understand simple questions, e.g. "do you want it?", "yes or no?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot combine words, e.g. "blow bubbles", "Daddy shoes"
3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot understand questions like "where?", "who?", etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot use complete sentences in daily conversation, e.g. "I want biscuit"
4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot understand complicated instructions Cannot comprehend simple stories or cartoons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot retell events in simple words Cannot give answers appropriately Make frequent mistakes in organizing sentences
5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot understand more complicated instructions Cannot comprehend complicated stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot retell simple stories in an organised way Still make mistakes in choosing words or organizing sentences.

V. What can parents do if their child has symptoms of Language Delay?

- Be alert to any deviations in the child's physical, intellectual and hearing development
- Be aware of the child's emotional/ behavioural features. Over dependence, withdrawal or impatience might hinder his/her learning to communicate
- If the child cannot understand what is being said, parents can repeat and explain with gestures
- Before the child can imitate words, parents can allow him/her to express himself/ herself by using gestures
- Enhance child's motivation to communicate through activities and games that would arouse his/her interest
- Make use of daily happenings as topics when talking to the child
- Encourage the child to express his/her needs and listen to him/her patiently
- Consider early admission to school to enrich the language learning environment

If necessary, parents should seek professional assistance as soon as possible

VI. Where can parents seek help if their child is suspected to have Language Delay?



Enquiry Numbers and Related Websites

Government Bureau / Departments

- Department of Health
 - Child Assessment Service 2246 6633
www.dhcas.gov.hk
 - Family Health Service 2961 8855
(Maternal and Child Health Centres) www.fhs.gov.hk
- Social Welfare Department 2343 2255
www.swd.gov.hk
- Education Bureau 2891 0088
(24-Hour Hotline) <http://serc.edb.gov.hk>
 - Special education and special school
 - Special Education Resource Centre

Other Organisations

- Hospital Authority 2300 6555
(General Enquiry) www.ha.org.hk
- The Hong Kong Association of Speech Therapists www.speechtherapy.org.hk
- Clinics of the Division of Speech and Hearing Sciences, the University of Hong Kong www.hku.hk/speech/clinic

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