Useful websites:

https://www.solihull.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-10/Situational-Mutism-Information-Pack.pdf

https://library.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/supporting-a-child-who-has-selective-mutism/

https://library.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/supporting-a-child-who-has-selective-mutism/

https://www.selectivemutism.org.uk/

Advocating for your child

Remember that you know your child best and are in the best position to advocate for your child, sharing their strengths and needs with others.

If your child is struggling to talk in school, make sure the teacher's know that your child's silence is anxiety based. Spend time talking about strategies that you think will be most successful with your child in school and meet regularly to review progress that has been made.

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SELECTIVE MUTISM

Understanding the anxiety behind the silence.

A guide for parents

What is Selective Mutism?

Selective Mutism, sometimes referred to as Situational Speaking or Selective Speaking is an anxiety-based disorder that results in an individual being able to speak freely in certain situations but remain silent or have limited speech in others.

A Little More Information

Selective Mutism is often a misunderstood condition , which rooted in anxiety means that individuals have an irrational fear or phobia of speaking out loud in certain situations. If not correctly supported in childhood, it can have a negative impact on a child's social and emotional development. The extent to which a child is able to speak varies widely and support for children begins with understanding where their current difficulties are and what are their strengths that you can build upon.

Ways to support at home

Sometimes children with Selective Mutism will communicate freely at home but then struggle to speak when visiting family or relatives. If this is the case, remember to take the pressure off children when visiting family and friends. Create a play based environment where there is never the expectation given that speech has to happen. Sometimes by having one person that the child feels comfortable communicating with and one person that a child feels less comfortable communicating with can be really supportive. Allowing your child to speak freely with the person they feel comfortable with in a play based environment will support progress towards talking to other person. It maybe that a "talking bridge" can be created where the child communicates with others in the room through their comfortable person. Progress can be slow but continue to provide a supportive environment without pressure.

A talking bridge can also be achieved through use of a puppet or cuddly toy or even walkie-talkies.

Accept non-verbal responses, e.g smiling, nodding, raising a hand.

Provide private spaces for children to talk out of sight of others can help children who find it easier to talk to another person if they cannot
physically see them. Use of screens, large pieces of material, tunnels, play equipment can be utilised to support this.

Ensuring your child always has access to other means of communication such as a pen and paper or IPAD will ensure that they continue to get their needs met and are able to self-advocate for themselves in situations that
they feel anxious in

Use of sensory play-based activities such as bubble blowing, puppets, music, encourage communication without pressure.