

How to Get Help for Selective Mutism (SM)

SMiRA
Challenging Selective Mutism

Myself or someone I know can speak freely in some situations, but not in others.

What can I do?

Learn about Selective Mutism. (see p.3)
A diagnosis is not needed to start making changes for the person with suspected SM.

Identify and change adult behaviours that are unwittingly maintaining mutism.

Find out how and where you can get help.

Meet school SENCo, take SMiRA leaflets with you.

Is the person under 18?

Ask GP to refer you to whichever service below works with SM or Social Anxiety in your local area. You may need to contact the services yourself to find out and tell your GP where you'd like to be referred. See Glossary.

- Children:
- Paediatric SLT service
 - Educational Psychology
 - Paediatrician
 - CAMHS
- Adults:
- NHS adult SLT service
 - NHS Adult Mental Health Service
 - IAPT service, or Mind Charity
- May not be successful, SM in adults is less recognised

Is school able to plan therapy with you?

Contact LA. Is there a formal local education SM pathway?

Parent and school led therapy. Following SMRM2, with or without SM trained SLT or Psychologist support, is often very successful.

Follow NHS therapy plan. It is most important that the therapist has SM knowledge.

Is SM therapy available?

Would I pay privately for specialist help?

Follow local SM Pathway. Could be through Education (Educational Psychologist, Special Needs Support Services, Early Years Support Services) or NHS (SLT or CAMHS)

Search for Private Therapist:
SLT: www.helpwithtalking.com
Psychology: www.achipp.org.uk or www.bps.org.uk
Check that the therapist has SM knowledge and is registered with www.hcpc-uk.co.uk

Parent and school, or Self-led intervention. Following SMRM2, with or without SM trained SLT or Psychologist support, is often very successful.

SM can be considered fully managed once the person can have conversations with anyone freely and without anxiety.

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SM Therapy

What does SM therapy involve?

SM therapy for adults involves a tailor-made programme devised by the adult and therapist together, or following advice from the SMRM2.

It tends to be based on what they want to achieve.

SM therapy for children (in the UK) generally involves:

1. Education for home and school.
2. Altering adult responses and behaviours towards the child at home, school and other familiar settings.
3. Talking to the child about SM and involving them as much as possible.
4. Intervention carried out in regular (ideally 3x weekly) sessions in school by parent (or someone the child can talk freely with) and school keyworker until child can talk confidently to keyworker, so that parent can withdraw from sessions. This should not take months provided the sessions are consistent and regular. Sessions following the SMRM2.
5. Parents working on small steps for speaking to people outside school.
6. Planned increased opportunities to become able to speak in more places to more people, (generalisation).

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The information in these pages is based on UK approaches to SM.
See this page on the website for International SM groups.

<http://www.selectivemutism.org.uk/info-smira-international-contacts-list/>

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Learning about SM

SMiRA
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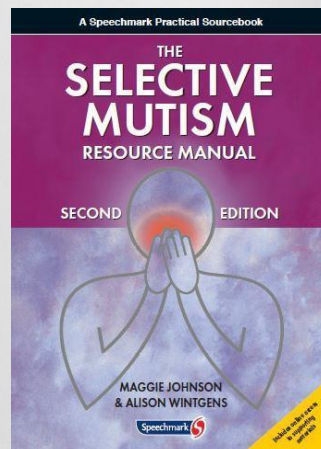
You can learn online, from the UK registered charity SMiRA
www.selectivemutism.org.uk

SMiRA also runs an excellent closed Facebook group.
Join us there.
www.facebook.com/groups/SMIRASelectiveMutism

“Selective mutism is a severe anxiety disorder where a person is unable to speak in certain social situations, such as with classmates at school or to relatives they don't see very often.”
NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/conditions/selective-mutism

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“The Selective Mutism Resource Manual 2nd Ed” (2016) by Maggie Johnson and Alison Wintgens. This excellent book has everything you ever wanted to know about SM and how to resolve it. It may seem expensive but it is worth the money and has an extra 200+ pages online. Available at online bookshops, (see link on SMIRA website).

Can I tell you about Selective Mutism?

A guide for friends, family and professionals



MAGGIE JOHNSON and ALISON WINTGENS
Illustrated by Bekah Eustice

“Can I Tell You About Selective Mutism?” (2012) by Maggie Johnson and Alison Wintgens.

This little book is a brilliant introduction to SM for parents, teachers and children. Available at online bookshops, (see link on SMIRA website).

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SM Information

You don't need to wait for formal diagnosis, Education or NHS help. There is a lot you can do yourselves at home with good information and online advice.

SM can be treated successfully.

If untreated SM can persist into adulthood. There is likely to be less NHS support for adults, than for children.

- Tips for Children:**
- Have a family bravery chart.
 - Talk about everyone's fears and scale them 1-10.
 - Have lots of supported Playdates

Someone with SM will not just grow out of it, but they can be helped to work through it.

- Tips for Adults who have SM:**
- Learn about how anxiety affects the body
 - Set yourself small challenges, reward yourself.
 - Acknowledge the changes you make.

GPs etc. may need to use the NICE Guidance for Social Anxiety Disorder as there is not yet any Guidance specifically for SM

Treating SM requires knowledge of SM that can be gained through training or following "The Selective Mutism Resource Manual"

SM affects around 1 in 140 children. (For comparison Autism affects around 1 in 80.)

SM should be identified by schools and colleges as a Communication and Interaction need within their SEN support system. An EHCP may be indicated, and may have funding attached up to age 25, if the person has unmet educational targets. At university support can be arranged through their Inclusion Officer and funding may be available from their Disabled Student Allowance.

As well as NHS and Education services, there are also private SM-trained therapists who can offer good support.

It is best to treat SM where it occurs.

Avoiding things that make you feel anxious, reinforces anxiety.

Not all NHS SLT or CAMHS services are funded to treat SM yet.

While school is a primary source of anxiety causing SM, school is not the only environment where someone can have difficulty speaking.

People with SM may qualify for DLA (under 16) or PIP (over 16)..

Glossary

- SM – Selective Mutism
- NHS – National Health Service (UK)
- LA – Local (Education) Authority
- SLT – Speech and Language Therapist
- CAMHS – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
- NICE – National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
- EP – Educational Psychologist
- IAPT – Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (self-referring)
- Mind – UK mental health charity
- SMIRA – Selective Mutism Information and Research Association
- SENCo - Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
- DLA – Disability Living Allowance
- EHCP – Education, Health & Care Plan
- PIP – Personal Independence Payment
- SMRM2 – Selective Mutism Resource Manual. 2nd Edition

No two people with SM show the same symptoms in the same situations.

The anxiety associated with speaking is as high whether the person is unable to speak at all in a situation, or can manage to answer if they "have to".