



Seaside SaLT
Speech and language therapy

Expressive language Delay

Typical language development

Children learn to understand and use language gradually through everyday interactions, play, and listening to others.

What is expressive language delay?

An expressive language delay is when a child has difficulty using words and sentences to express themselves, compared to other children their age.

Children with an expressive language delay may:

- Putting words together to make sentences
- Using word endings correctly (like plurals and verb tenses)
- Building vocabulary
- Organising ideas to explain something or tell a story.

Key points

- The child may understand more than they can say
- Speech sounds may be clear, but words and sentences are limited
- Development is slower, but follows a typical pattern

When to seek advice

- Is not using many words by around 18–24 months
- Is not combining words by 2–3 years
- Struggles to express basic needs or ideas
- Shows frustration when communicating