

What happens in a Cheeky Monkeys Speech Pathology long assessment session?

- All sessions start with a warm welcome.
- Parents/Carers assist their child to wash their hands in the clinic bathroom prior to the session starting to control infection and keep toys clean.
- The family is shown to the clinic room and the child is given age-appropriate toys to play with while Rachel speaks with the Parents/Carers. This allows the child to settle into the clinic room without any pressure to engage immediately. Rachel has a discussion with Parents/Carers about the story of their child: their birth history, their developmental history, their health, their hearing skills, their communication skills, their education, any concerns that exist and why their child was referred for an assessment.
- The language assessment then begins. The exact content and format of the assessment depends on the age of the child and their communication skills. For a child under 3 years of age, the assessment is based on Parent/Carer report and observation of the child playing and interacting. The focus is on the child's social skills, their play, their comprehension, the range of words they say, the way they say words and their behaviour. For a child over 3 years of age, assessments are formal and structured. The child usually sits at the table, looks at pictures and answer questions about them. If the child is shy and would prefer to sit on their Parent/Carer's lap this is allowed. Language assessments focused on comprehension include collecting information on a child's ability to understand questions, concepts, sentences and word associations. Language assessments focused on expression include collecting information on a child's vocabulary, sentence structure, use of grammar, ability to explain and describe, the flow of their conversation, and their narrative skills. Often standardized assessment tools are used (eg. CELF-P2, CELF-5) as these are tests that the Education system and Paediatricians are familiar with and use to diagnose and access funding.
- Other areas of communication may also be assessed if there are concerns (eg. speech sounds, pre-reading skills). Articulation assessments focus on identifying the range of sounds the child uses, sound errors and error patterns, oral-muscular ability, and readiness for therapy. As children approach school or are in school pre-reading skills can also be assessed. Observations about a child's behaviour, social skills, voice and fluency will also be made.
- Between assessment tasks, games are played with the child to build rapport, encourage compliance and bring an element of fun.
- At the completion of the assessment the child will be directed back to free play with toys while Rachel speaks with the Parents/Carers. Feedback on assessment results is provided. Some tests require more in-depth analysis so Rachel will provide some provisional feedback and call the Parents/Carers the next day to with specific and detailed feedback. Feedback generally describes the child's skills in the following

areas: social skills, behavior, expressive language, receptive language skills, speech, fluency, resonance and voice. Skills are quantified in terms of the categories: age-appropriate, mildly delayed/disordered, moderately delayed/disordered, severe delay/disorder.

- Rachel may make recommendations that the child be assessed by other health professionals if indicated (eg. Occupational Therapist, Audiology, Paediatrician).
- Based upon the child's assessment results, a recommendation is made as to whether therapy is required. It is difficult to know exactly how many intervention sessions are required for a particular child as each child has a unique profile including: the severity of their difficulties, family history of the communication difficulty, child's attention, child's motivation, the busy-ness of family life, homework completion, and the child's readiness for therapy. If therapy is indicated, Rachel will endeavor to estimate how many sessions are required and will provide guidance regarding the frequency of appointments. This advice will be based upon research evidence where possible.
- There is no pressure for Parents/Carers to make further appointments, but follow up appointments can be organized if the family wish.
- Sometimes a little homework is given at the end of the assessment.
- Parents then pay for the session using cash, card or direct deposit. Parents are given their invoice.
- The long assessment session usually takes between 60 and 90 minutes. It may be a little longer or shorter depending on the child's age and their difficulties or the complexity of the situation.
- Occasionally it is not possible to complete the assessment in one session (eg. if the child has concentration difficulties), when this occurs an additional appointment is arranged at no additional cost to complete the assessment.
- If the family have requested a report this is completed and emailed to the family within 2 weeks. Please see information under Reports for more details.
- If the family have not requested a report, a summary paragraph of results will be emailed to the parent so that they have a record of assessment results/recommendations and can forward this to preschool/school staff as they wish.