



## **Stephanie Crawford (Speech Pathologist)**

### ***What to expect during the assessment process***

Assessment is an important part of the process, and again we try to be really flexible with the assessment, based on where the child is at and also where the family is at. A lot of parents find it very difficult because they go through so much assessment and they feel like they are just answering the same questions over and over again, and they are not getting to the things that they are really wanting to be working on, which is helping their child improve their skills. So we tend to speak to the parent over the phone first, find out who they have seen and who they have spoken to, what assessment has happened so far and as much as possible we try and use information for those assessments to avoid too much repetition for the parent. Of course we need to ask our own questions, and we need to ask some really targeted questions, particularly around speech and communication development. But again we want parents to feel like they are actually moving forward.

So there are three main types of assessment that we would do; the first is informal assessment, this is probably the most important in a lot of ways, because depending on where the child with autism is at we might not find the answers through formal assessment. We do a number of second opinions where people have been to a previous speech pathologist, there has just been a formal assessment done and no further investigation and these children can often perform really well on a formal assessment, so we find that informal assessment is a vital part of the process, this often consists of just playing with the child, it can also be observing the child at their educational setting, if we want to do an observation, we often try and do it before we meet the child in the clinic because having an adult at kinder or childcare that they know can often change the situation for them so we may not see exactly what they do at kinder when there is an adult that they don't know there. We also do some play observations, we will often observe them playing with their siblings, all that kind of stuff gives us vital information about how they are using their communication in day to day settings. Secondly we may do some formal assessment, depending on how we feel it will inform the process, if we are looking at funding for school or kinder we definitely do formal assessment because this is often required for the funding applications, but if we are just wanting to set therapy goals then we really need to ask ourselves what we would get out of the formal assessment and if it is necessary for the process. Thirdly and very importantly we speak a lot to the parents, parents may not know the jargon of speech pathology but they are the ones who know what their concerns are and what the child's needs are. So we spend a lot of time discussing why the parents come here, what their concerns are and what their goals are. This can often be a bit confusing for parents initially because they don't understand why they have been referred to a speech pathologist. Particularly if the child has really good language skills and is able to answer questions or talk about their topic of special interest. So we spend a lot of time with the parents talking about the ways that we can help and working as a team together to put our goals together. That as well as the informal assessment are the two most vital parts of the assessment process.

*\*\* This is an approximate transcription only; minor modifications have been made to assist the reader.*