Changing lives forever

The Michael Palin Centre for Stammering Children
13-15 Pine Street
London EC1R 0JG
tel: 0203 316 8100

Summary of the Intensive Course
October 2011 to October 2012

Aim of the course
Stammering is a complex problem that requires a range of therapy strategies. The aim of the course was to help children to develop a 'toolkit' of skills for managing their stammer more effectively and to build their confidence in a variety of speaking situations. Parental involvement ensured that children were supported in this process in their everyday environment.

The therapy programme includes discussion and activities in the following areas:

❑ **Knowledge about stammering**
The children developed their knowledge and understanding of stammering, so that they could monitor their stammering and manage it more effectively. In parallel, the parents' group discussed the causes of stammering and the factors relevant for particular children.

❑ **Sensitivity and emotional reactions to stammering**
Several aspects of the course were designed to help children talk about their stammering more openly and to feel more comfortable and less sensitive about it. This helped them to tackle their fears about speaking and to reduce the struggle behaviour and avoidance. Learning how to be more open about stammering and remaining calm when stammering forms the basis of effective self-management.

Activities which were aimed at reducing sensitivity included:
- group discussions about the experience of stammering;
- watching videos of others and themselves while speaking;
- making a hierarchy of situations to work through related to confidence in speaking;
- experimenting with stammering deliberately; and
- deciding what their teachers needed to know about their stammer.

The children and their parents were introduced to the stammering iceberg (Sheehan 1958) and cognitive cycles (Beck 1976) to help them describe in detail their experience of stammering. The iceberg helps distinguish between the outward and visible features of stammering and the thoughts and feelings which are often hidden. The cognitive cycle provides a framework for understanding the links between thoughts about stammering and the emotional, physical and behavioural reactions to it.

❑ **Developing personal strategies for managing the stammer**
Initially, each child worked individually on their fluency and learned to copy a model of slow, smooth speech. They worked through a hierarchy of graded steps with a therapist to increase the length and complexity of what they could say whilst maintaining a level of fluency that sounded as natural as possible. The use of fluency strategies was increasingly encouraged during group discussions.

❑ **Social communication skills**
Stammering has the potential to affect a child's social communication skills e.g. eye contact, turn-taking and confidence. A key objective throughout therapy was to develop a child's social communication skills and build their confidence in their ability to communicate, whether or not they were stammering.

Social communication skills were discussed within the parents' group in order to identify interaction styles that support a child's progress through therapy in the home environment. Strategies to build children's confidence and to encourage independence were identified and discussed by the parents' group.

Measuring progress

A range of measures were taken before the course and then during the course and at each follow up for a period of one year.

Attitude tests

- The Communication Attitude Test (Brutten & Vanryckeghem, 1985)
- The Locus of Control Scale for Children (Nowicki, 1973)

Outward stammering behaviour

- The Stuttering Severity Instrument-3 (Riley, 1994).

The impact of stammering

- The Overall Assessment of the Speaker's Experience of Stammering – School age (OASES-S), (Yaruss, Coleman & Quesal, 2010)
- Palin Parent Rating Scales (Millard, Edwards & Cook, 2009)
- Child Rating Scales (Millard, 2009)

The graphs below show the progress made by the group of children who attended the October 2011 intensive course.

Communication Attitude Test

This test assesses the view that a child has about his/her communication skills by asking the child a range of questions about his/her speech e.g. I don't talk right (true or false); People worry about the way I talk (true or false). A decrease in scores is desirable as it demonstrates that the child's attitude towards their communication ability is becoming less negative.
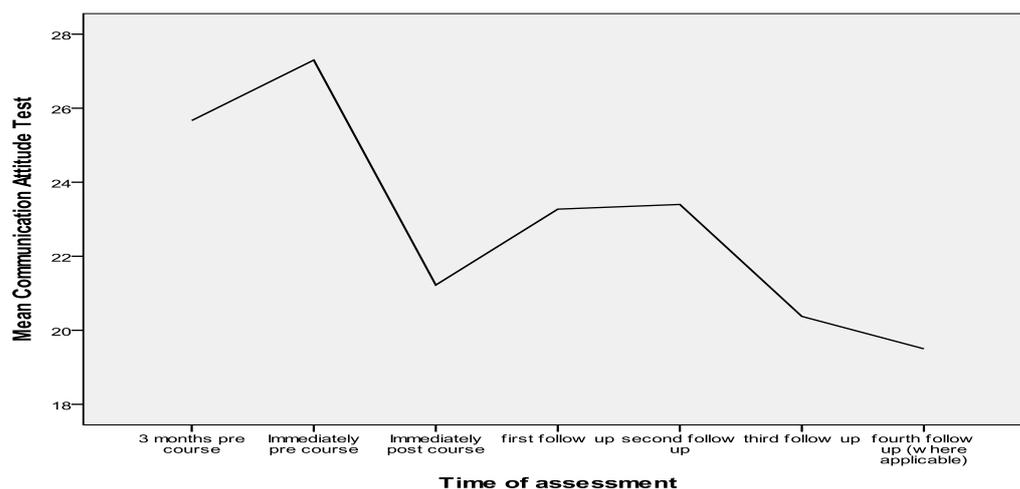
Locus of Control Scale for Children

This test assesses the degree of control that a child feels he/she has over his/her life. A higher score indicates that the child feels less able to control life and therefore a decrease in scores is desirable, reflecting that the child feels more in control of his/her life.
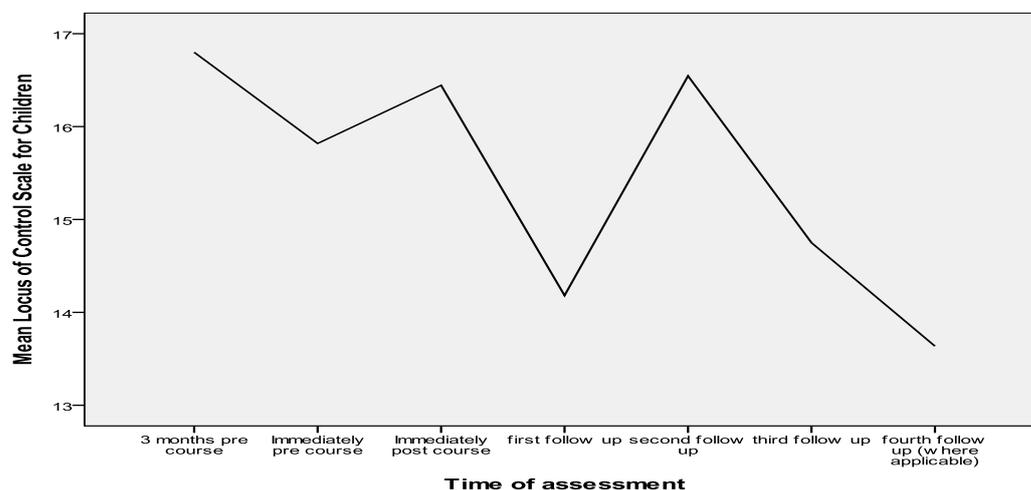
The Stuttering Severity Instrument-3
This test measures severity of stammering by taking into account:
- the frequency of stammering in a sample;
- the duration of stammers when they occur; and
- the amount of physical concomitants associated with stammering.

A decrease in scores is desirable, reflecting that the severity of the stammering is decreasing along with the duration of moments of stammering and the accompanying behaviours.
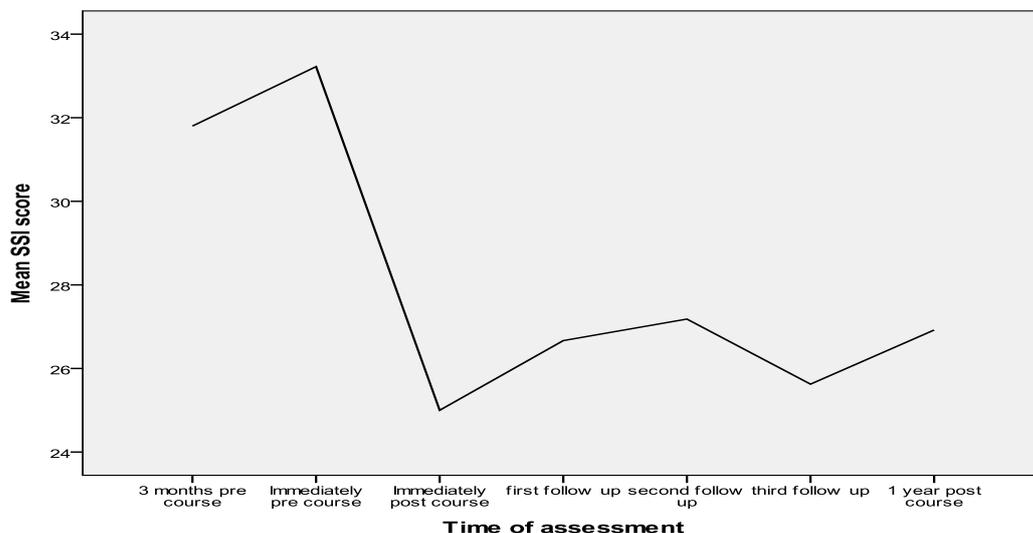

The Overall Assessment of the Speaker's Experience of Stammering – School age (OASES-S)
This questionnaire assesses the impact of stammering on an individual in terms of four areas:
- their knowledge and feelings about stammering;
- their own reactions to stammering;
- their ability to communicate in everyday situations; and
- their quality of life.

Scores range from 1 (Mild) – 5 (Severe). A downward direction in scores is desirable, reflecting that stammering has a less negative impact on the child overall.
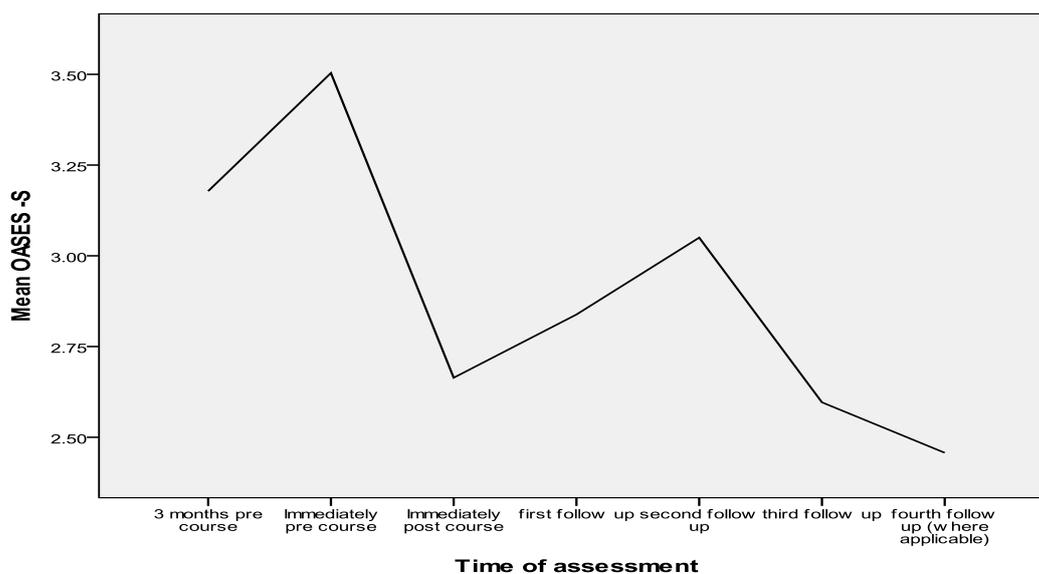
<u>Parent Rating Scales</u>
Parents were asked to complete rating scales about a number of aspects:
- the impact of stammering on their child;
- the severity of their child's stammering and the associated impact of stammering on parents; and
- parents' knowledge and confidence in managing the stammering.
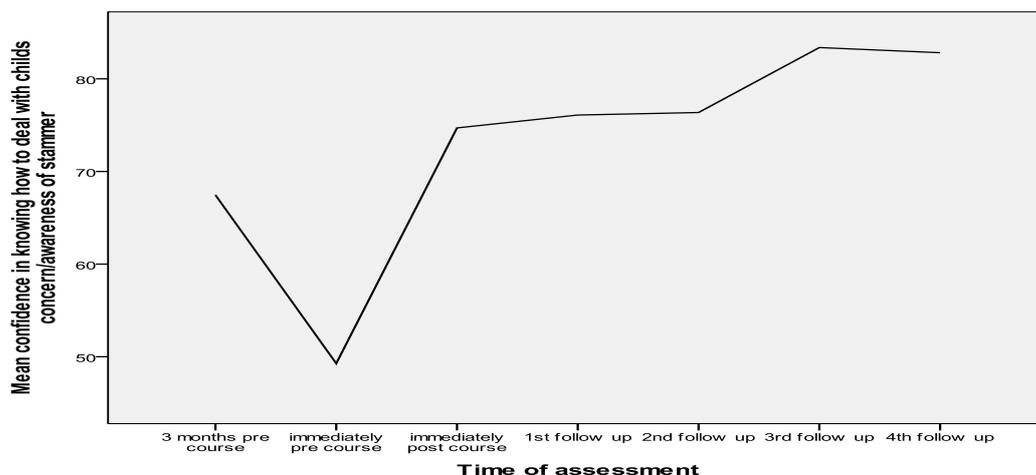
There are four graphs.

The graph below shows the ratings of mothers' confidence in their knowledge of how to respond to their child when he/she is stammering. An increase in scores is desirable, reflecting an increase in their confidence in responding to stammering.
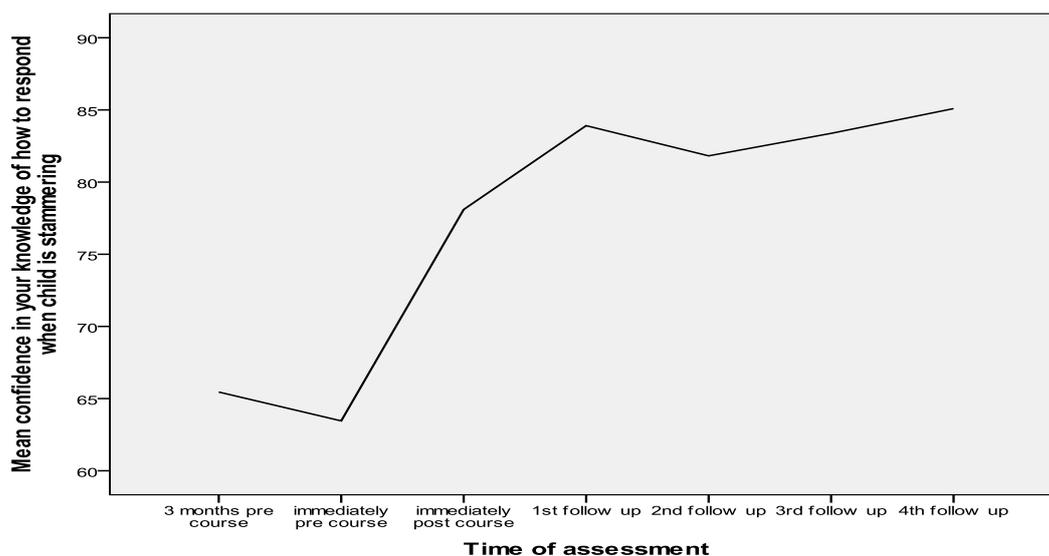

The graph below shows the ratings of mothers' confidence in their knowledge of how to encourage fluency in their child when he/she is stammering. An increase in scores is desirable, reflecting an increase in their confidence in encouraging fluency.
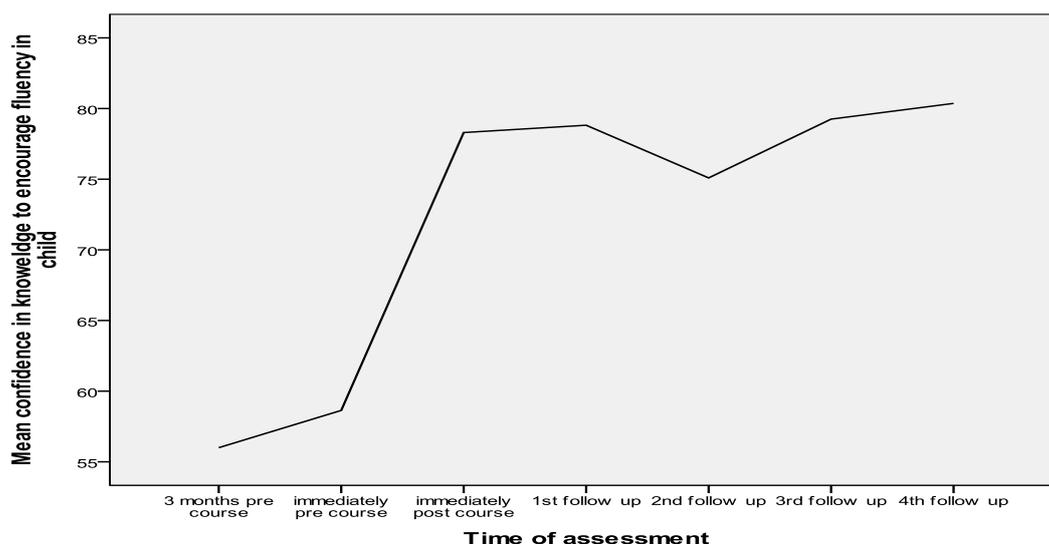
The graph below shows the ratings of mothers' confidence in knowing how to deal with their child's confidence and awareness of stammering. An increase in scores is desirable, reflecting an increase in their confidence in dealing with their child's confidence and awareness.

The graph below shows the ratings of mothers' confidence in knowing how to encourage confidence in their child. An increase in scores is desirable, reflecting an increase in their confidence in encouraging confidence in their child.
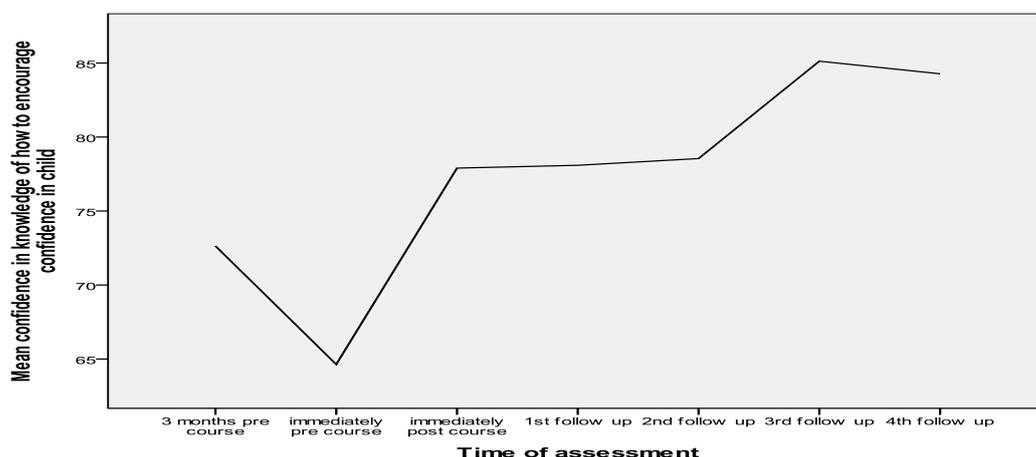
Child Rating Scales
A personalised 0-10 rating scale, where 10 is a child's "best hopes" and 0 is "the opposite of that" was used to help each client identify goals and reflect on signs of change during the year. An increase in scores is desirable, reflecting that the child is nearer to their preferred outcomes for him/herself.