

Working together to develop early social communication skills

A Session for Early Years staff

Aims of session

To:

- Develop understanding of social communication difficulties in the early years
- Provide strategies to support social communication skills through play
- Provide visual strategy ideas

Social communication difficulties

- Social Interaction
 - reduced eye gaze, social/reciprocal smiling, social interest, showing objects to others, focusing more on objects than people
- Communication
 - Back and forth babbling, use of coordinated eye gaze, gesture and vocalisation, imitation of sounds
- Play
 - Repetitive actions, excessive interest / manipulation/exploration of objects, reduced imagination / flexibility (i.e. when things change)

Gesture
Body
movements

Reaching/pointing

Cry/scream

Lead by
the
hand/pull
you
towards
them

Words

Use of non-
verbal
communication

Eye
gaze

Echolalia

Sounds

Joint
attention

Pictures

Objects

Think about your child's communication difficulties...

Consider: **Social Interaction / Non-verbal or verbal
Communication / Play**

Why might this happen?

- Speech and Language delay / Disorders
- Specific conditions such as ASD, ADHD, Learning Difficulties
- Low self esteem
- Sensory difficulties
- Family life or early trauma
- May not understand how others think or feel
- May not understand social rules and conventions

Children's Styles of Communication

- All children have different styles of communicating. This affects how easily they find it to interact with other people.
- Sociable – often approach you to show things & get you to play. Keen to communicate even if they have difficulty using words
- Shy – may not often approach but happy to respond when other people start communicating with them. It can be easy to miss that they are communicating with you as attempts may be brief.

Children's Styles of Communication continued...

- Passive – less interested in communication. Rarely starts interacting with you or responding to others (being poorly may contribute to a child having a passive style)
- Self Directed / Own Agenda– tend to prefer to play on their own and don't often start an interaction unless they need something. It can be hard to get a response from them

All children will benefit from you using our suggested ways to help them develop language. Children with a passive or self directed style of communicating will need you to adapt your own communication and you will need to work harder to help them interact and learn

Now for the adults...

- Helpful – you want to make things quicker & easier... BUT your child may miss a chance to learn (and a chance to communicate) without opportunities to try
- Hurried – you are always in a hurry & have lots to do in a short time... BUT you may miss out on the chance to talk about what is interesting for your child
- Directing – You talk to your child a lot and help by planning & telling your child what to do... BUT your child misses out on the chance to explore and let you know what he wants to do

Now for the adults...

- Teaching – You want to help your child learn and ask lots of questions, but your child may feel ‘tested’ and you may miss seeing what they are interested in and want to tell you about
- Responsive – you will need to be different types of parent at different times through the day, but try to get a balance and respond / tune in to what your child is interested in. Letting your child start and lead interactions as much as possible will mean they have more chances to learn and communicate with you

How you can Help...

We can use strategies in everyday activities, in play and in everyday routines to support our children to develop these skills, the following slides will provide ideas...

Follow the Child's Lead

Watch, Wait and...!

- First you need to **Follow the Child's Lead** so . . .

Watch and Wait ...

- You need to **watch** what the child does to see what they are interested in and how they are communicating. The more interested they are in something, the more likely they are to communicate about it, and they will be interested in it for longer.
- **Waiting** is one of the most powerful things you can do during an interaction. It gives the child the chance to process what you have done/said and to have a go at communicating themselves.

The best way to **watch** and **wait** is to get
face to face

Also remember to '**listen**' to their communication (interpret body movements, gesture and sounds)

Watch, Wait and.... IMITATE

- Join in with the child's play – try copying their actions/sounds then wait to see what they want to do next
- Child scratches a chair with their nails
- Adult scratches the chair, whilst sitting next to the child
- Child scratches a chair with their nails
- Adult scratches the chair
- Child NOTICES that the adult has scratched the chair, and copies the adult scratching the chair
- Adult introduces a new action, e.g. scratching the carpet
- Child copies the new action, adult copies new action again and waits expectantly

Creating reasons to communicate...

- Offer a choice

Use objects to offer your child a choice between something they like and something they dislike, label these items as you show them to your child. When they make a choice (e.g. through reaching, pointing etc) then give it to them and label it. Over time, offer your child choices of items they like equally so they make the choice.

- Place items out of reach but in view

Place a favourite item out of reach. Wait until they look at you before you give them the item and label it for them.

You could also place a favourite item in a transparent box that they cannot open. Wait for them to 'tell' you they need help and then say 'open' as you open it for them.

Creating opportunities to communicate...

- Use 'people toys'

Give your child a toy that they need help to play with e.g. a jack-in-a-box, a spinning top, bubbles etc. Wait for them to 'ask' you for help. When you give them help, model using a word that is relevant to using that toy (e.g. 'spin' for a spinning top) or say 'help'.

- Offer items bit by bit

Offer your child a small amount of something they want. This could be at snack time (e.g. pieces of fruit) or a toy (e.g. one piece of jigsaw). Wait for your child to 'ask' for more. You can model 'more' or label the item for them to show them how to ask for this. Although modelling 'more' is useful, modelling the word for the item your child wants will help to develop their vocabulary.

- Give all but one

Leave out something needed for your game e.g. give the bubble wand but not the bubbles, give the cup but no drink.

Creating opportunities to communicate...

- Pause a familiar activity or routine

Wait at a specific point during a routine/familiar activity and watch for what your child does. E.g. pause when pushing them on a swing, sing a nursery rhyme and pause at a specific point.

- Try not to anticipate your child's needs and wants

Try to watch and wait to see if they will communicate with you that they need/want something before giving it to them straight away.

Create reasons to communicate in everyday routines at home or in nursery

Snack time	When they see you preparing snack. When they've eaten the bit of snack you have given them. When snack time has finished.
Nap time	Before you take an item of clothing off/put an item of clothing on. When you say 'Night night'.
Song times	Before you all sit down Before you start singing During the song
Getting dressed/nappy changing	Before you take an item of clothing off/put an item of clothing on. Introduce 'Peek-a-boo' when putting clothes over your child's head.

Bubbles!



1. Vehicles Activity

- *(Resources: Box of cars / transport toys)*
- Your child likes to sit on the floor and line all the cars up.
- How will you 'Watch, Wait and Imitate'?
- If they don't really respond to this, how can you provide opportunities for them to communicate during this activity?
- Would the child you have come here for do anything different with this toy?

2. Washing Machine and Clothes

- Your child likes to open and close the door, watching it carefully, and ignoring the clothes
- How will you ‘Watch, Wait and Imitate’?
- If they don’t really respond to this, how can you provide opportunities for them to communicate during this activity?
- Would the child you have come here for do anything different with this toy?

3. Building blocks

- Your child likes to stack the red bricks up into a tower, and then knock them down
- How will you ‘Watch, Wait and Imitate’?
- If they don’t really respond to this, how can you provide opportunities for them to communicate during this activity?
- Would the child you have come here for do anything different with this toy?

4. Running

- Your child likes to run from one side of the nursery to the other
- How will you 'Watch, Wait and Imitate'?
- If they don't really respond to this, how can you provide opportunities for them to communicate during this activity?
- Would the child you have come here for do any other movement activity?

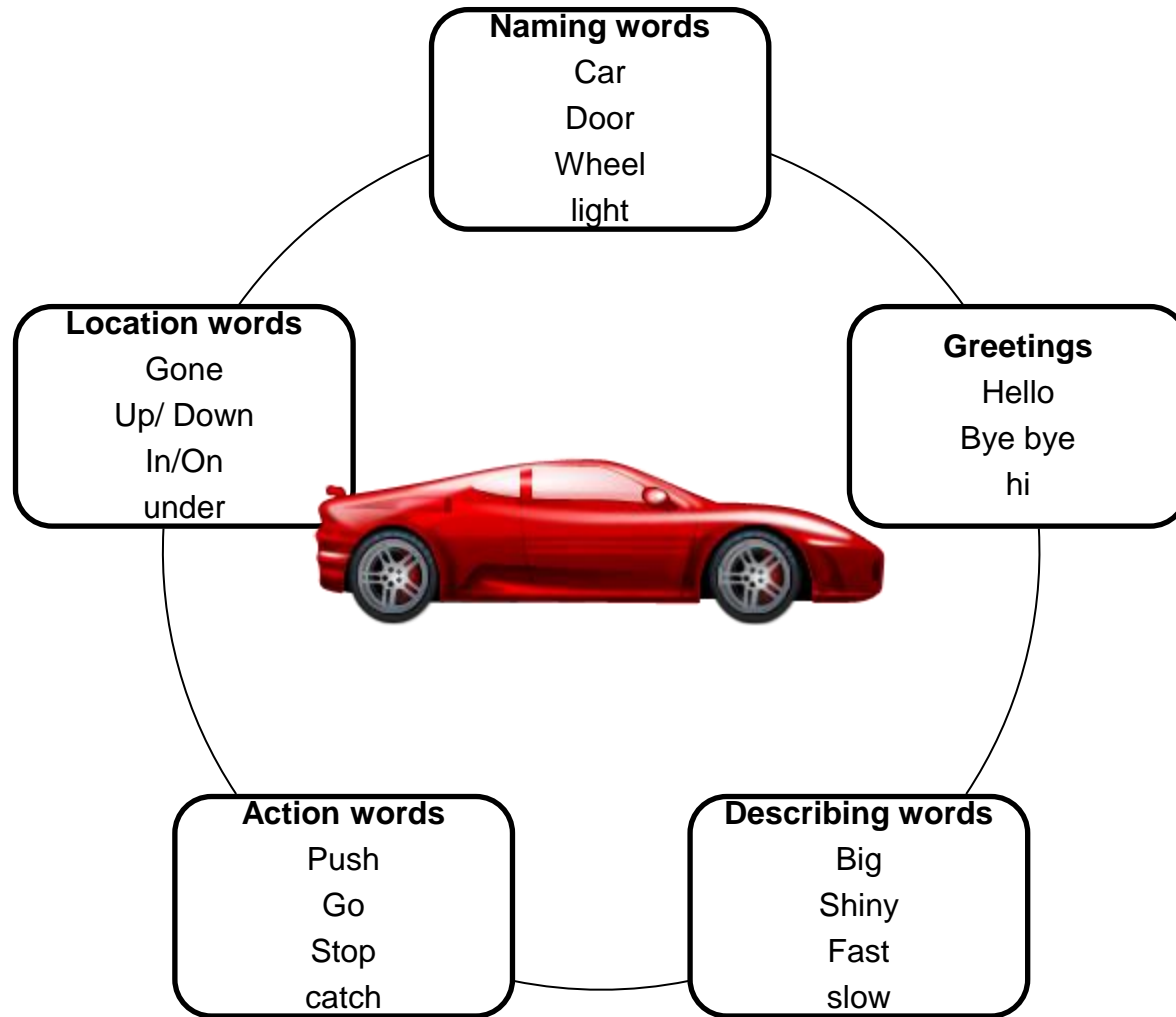
5. Transporting toys

- (Resources: Buckets/bowls, toy food, spoons)
- Your child likes to pick up objects and put them in a bucket. They walk over to the other side of the room with it, empty it out, and then go back to get something else.
- How will you ‘Watch, Wait and Imitate’?
- If they don’t really respond to this, how can you provide opportunities for them to communicate during this activity?
- Would the child do anything differently with these toys?

Commenting...

- As you play with the child or go about daily activities give comments about what is happening. E.g. It's dinner time! / We're walking!
- As you play give comments about the play
e.g. "car gone"
"All fall down"
- Add simple language all day long as part of your natural day.
Use lots of repetition with everyday words e.g. "Juice gone, more juice."
- When you are helping your child learn language it is important to use lots of different types of words. Your child may find it more fun to at first to use words such as up/down/stop/go tickle /jump/ run ..than name objects/food/clothes
- It may be too soon to talk about numbers or colours

Language Wheel



Add a word / Expand

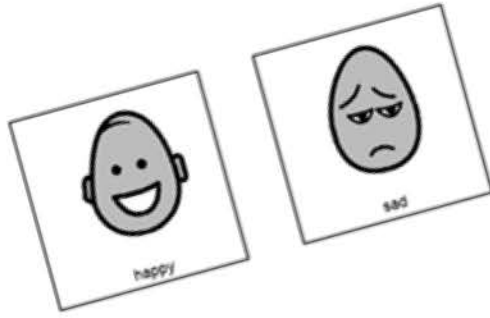
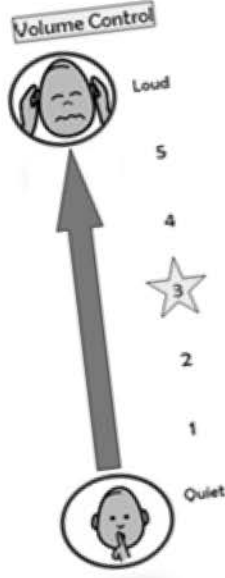
- Use approximately one word more than your child can use, e.g.
 - Child points: Adult says ‘Dog!’ (with gesture)
 - Child says ‘Dog’: Adults says ??
 - Child says ‘Big dog’: Adult says: ??


Gestures and Visual Supports





- We all use hand gestures and signing as part of everyday communication.
- Your child may find it easier to communicate with a sign rather than words at first. This is fine as long as you always acknowledge the sign with the word e.g. “Drink” ; “car”. Use gesture alongside the spoken language.
- Makaton – as Speech and Language Therapists we use Makaton signing to a greater or lesser extent within our sessions. We often use it to support our words or to help the child understand. e.g to clarify position words e.g. In/on.
- Your child may be able to copy a sign with his hands before he can copy a word or a sound. Using a sign may help ease your child’s frustration.

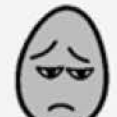
Visual Strategies



Good Listening 

1 

2 

3 



Bridgewater
Healthcare at the heart
of your community

Visual Supports

- Important for:
 - Reducing worry about what is happening during the day
 - Coping with change
 - Understanding routine
 - Supporting comprehension
 - Expressing ideas / communicating with others
 - Making choices
 - Attention control

Objects of Reference

- Use the same type of object for a certain item, activity, place or person. This can help a child to:
- Show they understand spoken language
- Show they understand daily routines
- Communicate with you.



Why use Objects of Reference?

- Understand spoken words
- Show the beginning of a new activity
- Make choices
- Ask for items and activities
- Understand the order of events so they know what is happening in their day.

What Objects of Reference can you use?

- Real objects, such as toilet roll for toilet.
- Part of the object, such as a piece of towel for bath.
- A small object, such as a doll's bed for bedtime.
- An object linked with a person or place, such as a scarf for a particular person.

TRAFFIC LIGHTS



NOW

work



NEXT

Lego



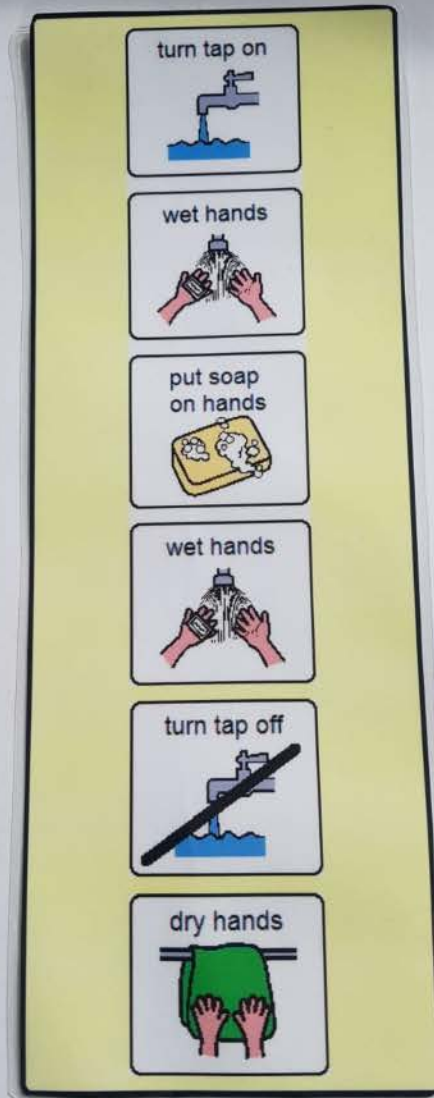
VISUAL TIMETABLES



VISUAL TIMETABLES

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
<p>school</p> 	<p>school</p> 	<p>school</p> 	<p>school</p> 	<p>school</p> 	<p>swimming</p> 	<p>day out</p> 
<p>surprise</p> 		<p>rainbows</p> 	<p>after school club</p> 	<p>surprise</p> 	<p>shopping</p> 	
<p>football</p> 	<p>tennis</p> 	<p>scouts</p> 	<p>gymnastics</p> 	<p>playground</p> 	<p>restaurant</p> 	<p>McDonald's</p> 
<p>surprise</p> 					<p>cinema</p> 	

PICTURE SEQUENCES



'I AM WORKING FOR.....' CHART

I am working for:



'I AM WORKING FOR.....' CHART

I am working for:



CHOOSE BOARD

choose



toy cars



bubbles



teddy bear



Play-Doh



puzzle



doll



blocks



musical instruments



animals



food



sing



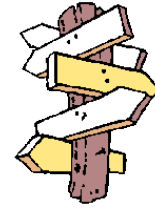
draw



Summary

- Children can experience different types of social communication difficulties
- Use the strategies we have discussed today to help support your child at nursery
- See what works best for you and the child
- Be aware that needs may change over time

Signposting – who else may be able to help



Occupational Therapy:

- Sensory needs (having a significant effect on young person's ability to function at home or in school)
- Organisational skills (planning, sequencing, dressing)
- Fine/Gross Motor skills (shoe laces, buttons, use of cutlery)

Family support/Local Authority

My Life Warrington / Early Help Service

(see Early Years 0-4 Graduated Approach Guidance Booklet and Graduated Approach Descriptors)

Behaviour courses:

- Speak to Health Visitor Team

Recommended reading : The Incredible Years by Caroline Webster-Stratton (for parents of children 2-8 years)

Resources

- Conklin, C., Weitzman, E., Pepper, J., McDade, A. (2013) 'It Takes Two To Talk', Hanen Centre Publication
- Sussman, F. (2012) 'More Than Words', Hanen Centre Publication
- The National Autistic Society (NAS)
- The Autism Education Trust (AET)
 - Early Years Autism Standards and Competency Framework
 - Understanding Autism Training
 - Early Years Training Hub



Questions Please

Thanks for listening



Bridgewater
Healthcare at the heart
of your community