

# The Total Communication Approach

## SUPPORTING SPEECH, LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION NEEDS & BRAIN DEVELOPMENT



Incidental hearing - 80% of language in children under the age of 5 years is learned from over hearing speech. Aim to create an environment where speech can be overheard at a distance and when softly spoken, so turn off the radio.



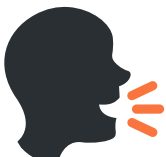
'Stop' is an instruction and must be used alongside a hand signal to 'stop' unwanted behaviour. For clarification, the appropriate use of the word 'no' is to refuse something e.g. Do you want an apple? No.



At any one time, 20% of the pupils in your classroom are suffering from glue ear and have a significant hearing impairment. Who these children are varies over time. They will not know that they are deaf and neither will you. Include Makaton alongside your day to day speech to support all children's understanding visually.



Even when using strategies consistently as a team, it can take a very long time for their effect to be observed. For this reason practitioners can give up after only a few tries and assume that they are not working. For example, it took two terms for LHJ to return eye contact using intensive interaction. Don't give up!



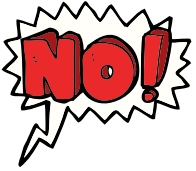
For a child to learn their own name, they have to hear it being used in context repeatedly. Every instruction they hear should be pretexted with their name.



Pause after speaking. Children with a SLCN will have a slower processing speed. For children like TH it can take up to FIVE minutes to understand an instruction. Repeating an instruction over and over again is not going to help a child understand what they have to do; time to think will.

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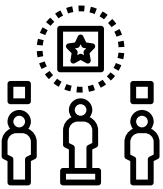
When given an instruction some children will give the reply 'no' automatically. They don't mean 'no', it is a learnt response to being asked a question. It also gives them time to process the request.



An individual delivering these strategies will not be as impactful as a whole team. Support each other, prompt when colleagues forget to use a strategy and celebrate each other's good practise when you see it.



Consistency is key. Using objects of reference as an example, a child being presented with a 'nappy' object of reference is not only learning what that particular object of reference means e.g. I'm going to have my nappy changed, but will be learning that something presented on a black card is telling them that a change is going to happen in their environment. They are learning the 'language' of objects of reference; making it easier to understand new ones.



Adapt your language to meet the needs of your children e.g. for a child who has limited understanding: 'Finlay, coat on'. Take advantage of opportunities to expand language as children become more able: Finlay, "I'm wet". Practitioner, "Yes, you are drenched aren't you".



When children with SEND are developing their language skills they do not need manners, infact they detract from the purpose of their language. For example, a child being asked to repeat the word 'please' to get their coat, will not learn that the functional word they actually need is 'coat'.

# Whole Team Every Day Practice

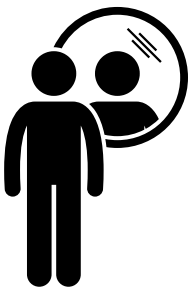
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Be receptive to a child's communication, it takes many forms and doesn't need to be verbal: A look, a gesture, taking you by the hand. Responding to these basic cues will motivate them to try more often and develop the ones they already have.



When communicating with a child crouch down to their eye level, try to make eye contact (but do not force as this can be scary for some children). They need to be able to see your lips, children with glue ear can naturally develop excellent lip reading skills.



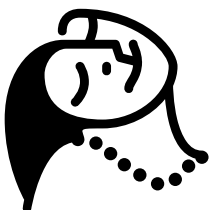
Intensive interactions teach children the building blocks of communication. The back and forth, the enjoyment of contact, the sharing of space. At its most basic, it is mirroring their actions and sounds. Enter their world, do not force them into yours. They are at their best when spontaneous or as part of a routine eg nappy changing.



Get to know the children, learn their interests so that you can use them as motivators to communicate. Potential provocations for play are your 'way in' to their world.



Talk as you do. This simple technique of either narrating what you are doing, or what the child is doing, can expose a child to 1000-2000 words in an hour!



When you sign and talk, always over exaggerate your facial expressions. Be enthusiastic and enjoy the moment. This makes you interesting and motivating to watch and respond to, and will trigger communicative responses. Enjoy the experience and have fun!