

## Advisory Teaching Service

### BASES

Cheltenham

Advisory Teaching Service  
Battledown Centre, Harp Hill  
Cheltenham, Glos. GL52 6PZ

☎ 01452 324376

cheltenham.ats@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Forest of Dean

Advisory Teaching Service  
Dockham Road, Cinderford  
Glos. GL14 2DB

☎ 01594 823102

forest.ats@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Gloucester

Advisory Teaching Service  
4-6 Commercial Road,  
Gloucester. GL1 2EA

☎ 01452 426955

gloucester.ats@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Stroud

Advisory Teaching Service  
Redwood House, Room F01, First Floor,  
Beeches Green, Stroud, Glos. GL5 4AE

☎ 01452 583728

stroud.ats@gloucestershire.gov.uk

We can produce this document in Braille, large print, on audio tape and in other languages. If you would like a copy in one of these formats, please call 01452 426955.

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## Early Years - helping my child to communicate

Advice and information for parents & carers



**Advisory Teaching Service**

Communication and Interaction Team



**Gloucestershire**  
COUNTY COUNCIL

## Why it could make a difference

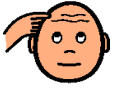







- Often parents and carers of children on the autism spectrum feel that they are unable to communicate and interact with their child, and may even be unsure of how to do so. This can often cause frustration and feelings of anxiety for you and your child. By helping your child to communicate you may be able to overcome these barriers.
- Not all children will use speech. If you watch what they do, you may notice that they are trying to communicate in other ways, like pulling you, which you can develop.
- Sometimes a child will only understand a little of what is said so simplifying your own language can make things clearer.
- Our words disappear after they have spoken, cueing children in and leaving a visual reminder is a way of holding what is said.
- Often children on the autism spectrum don't know that they can communicate, or understand why they should. We need to create opportunities and show them the advantages of communicating with others.



## Ideas and Strategies

- Some children find it difficult to give eye contact. You can encourage them asking them to look in your direction. You can practice this using things they really like such as bubbles and praising attempts by saying "good looking"
- There are some low tech recorders such as 'talking tins' that record short messages e.g. "drink please" which could encourage requests from non-verbal children or motivate others. Please refer to Early Years 'Where to go next for Practical Ideas and Strategies' leaflet.
- Joint attention – two people sharing the same activity or topic - is an important stage in development. Creating familiar and repetitive games such as peek-a-boo can help your child know what is expected. There are lots more ideas in the Early Years 'Helping my Child to Play' leaflet.

The example below has used Boardmaker (Widgit Software)

good thinking 	quiet 	stop 	good waiting 
good sitting 	good looking 	good listening 	good sitting 

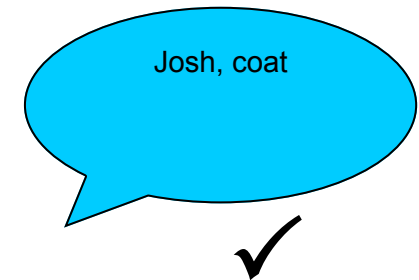
## Ideas and Strategies

- Encourage your child to communicate using their interests - food is often a very good motivator! Make Cue Cards with reminders for the words that your child can use for snack . These could just be pictures off packets. Keep these visual reminders on the table, on the wall next to the place where your child eats or even on the fridge door. If your child doesn't say anything on his own, point to the Cue Cards to remind him of the words he can say or point to. Remember to cross out what is not available today by crossing out the choice (banana) rather than removing, it encourages your child to understand that although the banana is not available today it still exists.



## Ideas & Strategies

- Respond to any communication attempts (gestures, repeated utterances, protests) made by the child.
- When speaking to your child, especially when giving instructions, first attract his/her attention by calling his/her name or by touch.
- Reduce the amount of language you use , if you say 'Josh coat' he knows what to listen to rather than "Josh its time to go out , go and get your coat now!"
- Give your child time to process what you have said and respond.
- Try to use the same words for things and let others know the words you are using.



## Ideas and Strategies

- Use the same language in different situations e.g. the phrase 'Wait, Mummy's working' could cover lots of activities, instead of saying 'Wait, Mummy's on the phone' or 'Wait, Mummy's getting dressed', making dinner, washing up etc.
- Use visual cues to facilitate understanding. They can reinforce what you have said, show a child what is coming next, help them make their needs known, learn the names for things and people, comment on or recall what they have done
- Showing your child an object can indicate what is happening next or what the choices are. You could build up a set of objects that indicate times of the day or choices of food, toys or song

first



then



## Ideas and Strategies

- Take photographs of favourite toys, food, people, places to go. You could build up little photo books or have individual ones available for a specific purpose
- Symbols (very simple pictures like the signs we all use on public toilets) are available or can be drawn simply by hand. Please refer to Early Years 'Where to go next for Practical Ideas and Strategies' leaflet.
- Gestures such as a 'wait' or 'stop' can reinforce an instruction
- Sand or kitchen timers can show children how long it is until something will happen

