BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Specialist Teaching Team, Vision

Talking Tips for communication with child or young person with a Vision Impairment (CYPVI)

Communication

Communication can be challenging for sighted people, but it is significantly more difficult for people with a VI. A person with a VI may not be able to access supportive nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions, gestures and body language, or may not be able to visually access the physical world around them.
Being aware of these potential barriers can facilitate effective communication.

Tips

- Always speak directly to the CYPVI
- Be specific – don't say 'Sit down over there', say 'Your chair is on your left.'
- Identify yourself when you come into the room or come up to the person.
- Introduce others around you, tell them who is around them, on their left/ right.
- Tell the person what you are doing and what is happening around them.
- Tell the person if you are leaving the group, 'I'm just going to get the washing in from the garden' etc.
- Use verbal cues to show your interest in the conversation to keep it going – 'Yes' or 'That's interesting' etc.
- Try to limit distractions and noise around the CYPVI so they are able to hear and 'tune in' to the language and joint communication.
- Encourage the CYPVI to face the adult when they are talking, to show that they are interested in the communication. 'Talk to the voice' – look in the direction of where the person speaking to them is standing or sitting.

Talking tips when communicating with Early Years children.

There are some Important points to remember when communicating and speaking with young children. Support children with VI to learn to communicate by using their hearing, taste, smell, touch or any functional vision they may have.

- Bend down to their level and ensure you have the child's attention.
- Say the child's name at the beginning of the sentence, wait and listen so they know you are speaking to them, and you have their attention.
- With young children play with words – babble, use silly voices and silly words. Make communication fun and engaging.
- Use simple and repetitive language.
- Say words clearly and repeat them slowly so that the child can process what you are saying, pick them up and learn them.
- For a child with a VI there is not always joint visual attention on an object or things in their environment/ surroundings. You therefore need to describe what is around them or happening, what something is or is used for.

- Comment on what they and others around them are doing, a bit like a running commentary to fill in the information they are unable to access independently.
- Ensure there are motivating things to explore with joint attention for you to talk about.
- Use all the sense to develop language in a fun, motivating way – residual vision, touch, taste, smell and hearing.
- Introduce new vocabulary for actions words and label objects they are exploring.
- Link language with real objects and physical movement in rhymes, action songs, role-play and practical experiences.
- Ensure the child has a good model of language to listen to, where people are talking to each other or about objects of joint attention. Give your full attention to the child without any distractions such as a tv, radio or phone.
- If your child says something incorrectly, don't just correct them, repeat the sentence back with the correct pronunciation/ word. Eg 'We **goed** to the park' repeat back 'Yes, we **went** to the park.'
- Do not ask too many questions. If you do ask questions, try to ask open ended questions that that cannot just be answered with a 'Yes' or 'No'. Ask 'What did you do there?' rather than 'Did you have fun at the park?'
- Nursery rhymes are a fantastic way to play with the rhyme and rhythm of language.
- Repeat rhymes so they become familiar and well known – when they know a rhyme well, say it and miss the last word of a line out, so the child fills it in. You can then miss out other words within the rhyme or say it wrong on purpose in the hope that the child will correct you.
- Repetitive rhythm and rhyme within simple books, with simple, clear, well-contrasted illustrations are another excellent way to play and develop language further.

Communicating with a child with a visual impairment – Information for parents and carers

Oxford University Hospitals – NHS Foundation Trust

43381Pvisualimpairment.pdf (ouh.nhs.uk)