BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Specialist Teaching Team, Vision

Objects of reference to support early communication.

For young children with a Vision Impairment (VI) it is important to realise the importance of using touch to learn about the world around them and therefore a link to the development of communication and language.

You can use the hand under hand technique to help with exploration of objects, this is a way of making it more of an active experience for the child and enables them to be more in control than when you are holding and moving their hand to the object.

This is a link is to a short informative SenseCharity video showing the use of hand under hand technique.

Making play inclusive - Hand under hand communication - YouTube

Objects of reference

Objects of reference can be used to support communication.

- Making choices.
- Asking for something, to do something or to go somewhere.
- Gaining a greater depth of understanding.
- Understanding the routine of the day, what is planned and the order in which they happen.
- Identifying a person, object, place or activity.

This can be an object/ part of an object/ smell/ sound eg bell, rhyme, piece of music to represent a person, place, activity or object.

Routines

Many children like routines so that they can remember, anticipate and predict what is going to happen next in the usual structure/pattern of their day. Some children have little control of their lives and having a clear routine can help them feel more secure. They can then focus on what they are doing and exploring the world around them within a safe and trusted environment/ relationship.

You can choose objects that are relevant and meaningful to your child to represent parts of their daily routine. It is important to watch and sense how your child interacts with the world around them so you can identify objects of reference that have meaning to them. The object can help establish with confidence what a conversation is about.

Eg. Touch a clean nappy at nappy change time, a soft towel or bath toy to represent bath time, a bottle/ beaker/ cup to represent drink and a spoon to represent mealtimes or a perfume to

represent a person etc. Remember to use the spoken word to link it to the key action or part of the day.

When using objects of reference it is important to remember and ensure that

- They are relevant and personal to the child.
- They are used consistently by everyone, to mean the same thing and are presented in the same way before the activity or occurrence.
- To keep the objects of reference near to you so they are on hand to use each time the child is going to do something or go somewhere that is known or to meet a known person.