BELS Barnet Education & Learning Service

NHS Whittington Health NHS Trust

How to develop:

Ability to maintain a conversation

Strategies

- **Build opportunities into everyday moments** – using what the child sees, does, hears everyday.
- **Use visual support** - gesture, objects, photographs, symbols to support the child to stay on topic, to ask a follow up question etc.
- When discussing a topic, remind the child to relate what they are going to say to what has already been said.
- Ask the child what they think about something, in relation to what someone else has said.
- Prompt the child when they have gone off topic i.e. "That's not what we are talking about right now, we are talking about…".

Activities

Topic cards:
You will need cards with pictures or words for different topics e.g. pets, music, houses, holidays, famous people etc. The first child picks up a card and has to say something about that topic. (You may find it helpful to model how to do this yourself e.g. "My favourite pets are guinea pigs".

They pass the card on and the next child who must think of something else to say. Keep passing the card until someone wants to change the topic. They can change by picking up the next card.

Role play:
You will need cards of different topics e.g. holidays, favourite foods etc. Ask the children to pretend to have a conversation with an adult in the group where the child speaks about the topic on one of the cards.

While one person talks about the topic, you drift off the topic. Does the child notice? Can he/she/they tell you what is wrong? Can he/she/they tell you what you should have been talking about?

Topic Maintenance – story line:
A child starts off a story and everyone else takes it in turn to add the next sentence, keeping to the same topic.

- Adult to pause the game if a child says a sentence that is “off topic” and discuss this with the group.

Comment/Question Board:
Write a topic in the middle of the board. Children discuss the topic freely. Children encouraged to ask each other questions related to the topic.

- Adult to provide example questions and to support children to think of their own questions.
- Adult to provide support by notifying children when they could ask their peer a follow up question, as needed.