

## Social Communication

### What is appropriate for children aged 22-36 months

Uses language as a powerful means of widening contacts, sharing feelings, experiences and thoughts.

Holds a conversation, jumping from topic to topic.

Enjoys being with and talking to adults and other children.

Interested in others' play and will join in.

Responds to the feelings of others.

### What is appropriate for children aged 30-50 months

Beginning to accept the needs of others, with support.

Can initiate conversations.

Shows confidence in linking up with others for support and guidance.

Talks freely about their home and community.

Forms friendships with other children.

### What is appropriate for children aged 40-60+ months

Has confidence to speak to others about their own wants, interests and opinions.

Initiates conversation, attends to and takes account of what others say.

Explains own knowledge and understanding, and asks appropriate questions of others.

Shows awareness of the listener when speaking.

Expresses needs / feelings in appropriate ways.

Forms good relationships with adults and peers.

Works as part of a group or class, taking turns

### Common Signs of Difficulties:

- Children find the social rules confusing and don't understand why it is important to listen and take turns
- May engage in more solitary play
- Find it difficult to listen and attend
- Children with social communication difficulties often lack confidence and stick to what they know where they know what the response will be.
- Children often learn language by copying what they hear, thus you will hear them echo what others have said. This language may also be repetitive.
- Difficulty following group instructions.
- Can find it difficult to understand others point of view and feelings.
- Difficulty making friends and joining in with group activities.
- Turn taking may be difficult.

### Some Children May Demonstrate the Following Difficulties:

- Children may find it difficult to understand the tone used in someone's voice. They may find it difficult to put meaning into their own voices too.
- May find it difficult to understand body language, facial expression and gesture. They may find it hard to give their own body messages too.
- Children with social communication difficulties sometimes have a very good memory for facts or words which reflect their interests. This can be misleading as people often think children understand more than they actually do.
- Sometimes may find it difficult to make eye contact or may offer unusual eye contact
- May demonstrate obsessional interests.

### Factors Affecting Social Communication:

- A lack of stimulation and support
- Limited interactions
- May be a developmental delay

- May be linked to emotional factors
- A child may have a recognised syndrome or disorder that causes communication difficulties
- Sometimes a child may have social communication difficulties which are commonly associated with a particular condition

### **Strategies to Support Social Communication**

- Reduce your language. Use simple language, only include important points, slow your speech, use shorter sentences, build on what the children have already said, add language, do not correct, but provide the correct model of spoken language, model the language you would like to hear.
- Give the child longer to do something you have asked before you repeat what you say or give the answer.
- Use the child's name first to get attention. Approach from the front, gentle tap to engage, visual prompt, repeat whole class instructions to an individual
- Encourage eye contact
- Point out items of interest to the child. Share your enjoyment and pleasure with them. Reward any attempt to engage with you.
- Say things in the order in which they will happen. Use 'then' to help the child understand a sequence of events
- Avoid sudden changes or requests. When they do happen, prepare the child for them
- Tell the child what to do rather than what not to do e.g instead of saying "don't run", say "walk"
- Draw attention to other children who are behaving appropriately.
- Use visual ways to help the child understand. Visual timetables, visual pictures, objects, behaviour prompt cards. This can also help to prepare a child for change
- Ensure you use non-verbal cues – gesture, sign a long, visual prompts
- Consider the environment – reduce noise, Communication Friendly Space, displays, reduced visual distractions.
- Ensure praise is specific. Say what you are praising the child for, e.g. "good listening"
- Turn taking – simple and motivating activities to begin with. Give plenty of time for a response. Say 'my turn, your turn'. Can use an object or a symbol to show who's turn it is. (dropping balls down a tube; blowing bubbles; rolling cars down a ramp; knocking the tower over; dropping shapes into a posting box; roll or throw a ball etc) games for including another child to join in - take turns to turn pages, turns going down a slide, lotto, puzzles)
- Building relationships – solitary play – child plays alone, practitioner to sit next to child and watch him play, when he acknowledges you, then comment on what he is doing. Initially copy what the child is doing, then when the child accepts you start to take the lead sometimes.
- Then move onto Interactive play – include other children in play.
- Ensure that children have access to a good role model when taking part in communication groups

### **Further Information:**

#### Websites:

[www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)
[www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk)  
[www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk](http://www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk)  
[www.hello.org.uk](http://www.hello.org.uk)  
[www.elizabethjarmanltd.co.uk](http://www.elizabethjarmanltd.co.uk)  
<http://www.stokespeaksout>  
[www.elklan.co.uk](http://www.elklan.co.uk)

#### Books:

- Early Language Builders, Liz Elks and Henrietta McLachlan (published by ELKLAN)

#### Resources:

- Refer to Pre School Basic Communication Group Activities
- Inclusion Development Programme (Supporting children with speech, language and communication needs)