

## Have you tried? – Communication and Interaction

The following strategies will help to improve communication and interaction:

### Before speaking

- Reduce the amount of background noise (take some time to be quiet and listen – are there any noises you automatically tune out)
- Reduce distractions
- Get child/young person's attention (e.g. by calling their name)
- Make sure child/young person is looking at you (if they are able)
- Make sure child/young person is quiet

### While you are speaking

- Be aware of how many key words in a sentence your child/young person can cope with
- Use short sentences
- Break sentences up into “chunks” of information
- Leave time between each “chunk” for the child/young person to process what you said
- Use gesture or pointing to help the child/young person build up a visual picture
- Watch for signs that your child/young person didn't understand (facial expression) and repeat if necessary
- Give key information at the beginning to establish context. e.g. “your coat – go and get it” or “pens down – stand up – line up” (rather than, “ok everyone listen it's time to line up”)
- Ask one question at a time
- Use less “chat” and commenting so the child/young person can pick out the important information
- Use photos or other visual cues to give context when talking about things that have happened

### When you finish speaking

- Leave time for the child/young person to process what has been said
- Ask child/young person to repeat back what you have said

### While they are speaking

- Make sure you give the child/young person your attention – give good eye contact and use your non- verbal skills to show them that you are listening.
- Give the child/young person time to formulate their ideas and get them out.
- Try and keep children 'on topic'. Be specific; remind children e.g. 'We are talking about...'

### When they finish speaking

- If they have gone off topic explain this to the child and try to get them to refine their answer
- Repeat back what you think the child wanted to tell you to give a clear model and check information.
- Do not ask them to repeat any of the words.