

# Talking without words...

A guide  
for parents

Developed by Peterborough  
Speech and Language Therapy  
Children's Centres Team

**PETERBOROUGH**  
  
CITY COUNCIL





## Children can ‘say’ a lot without using words

They’re often really good at letting us know what they want by:

- Pointing
- Eye contact/eye pointing
- Gestures/signing
- Crying
- Facial expression
- Noises/vocalisations/intonation
- Reaching
- Taking your hand and leading you
- Giving objects

**....it’s all communication!**



## When should I get help

If you are concerned that your child is having difficulties with learning to communicate, speak to your: health visitor, doctor, local Children’s Centre or your child’s pre-school (if they go to one).



## Creating opportunities...

When we know children well, it's easy to fall into the trap of giving them what they want without them having to try to 'ask' for it. This takes away their need and reason to communicate. For example:

- if favourite toys are always within reach, they don't need to find a way of letting you know what they want.
- Why not try keeping the toy up high but in sight? That way, your child may point or take your hand to show you they want it.
- Take time to watch and notice how your child reacts to things they like and dislike and how they're letting you know!



## Imitation...

Although it sounds strange, research shows that copying baby's and young children's sounds, noises and actions, encourages them to do them again. Doing this is not only fun, but also teaches turn taking and communication skills:

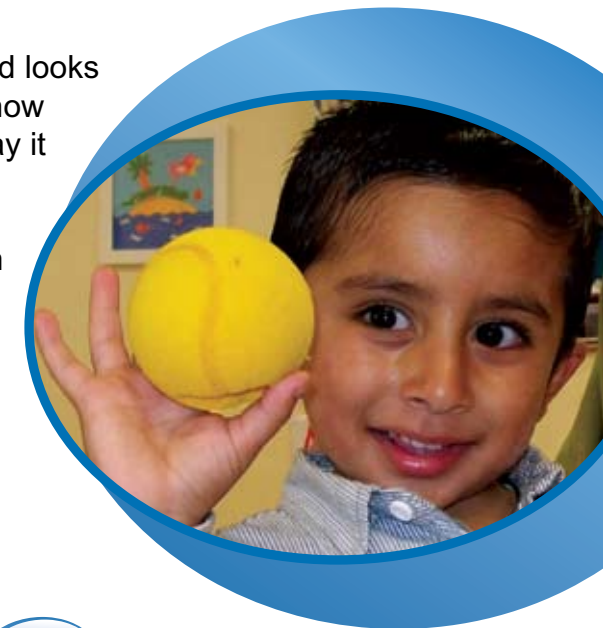
- if your child is lying on the changing mat making 'ma' 'ma' 'ma' sounds, smile and copy the same sounds back again.
- during the day, if your child is pretending to stir, join in by copying the stirring action.

## Modelling...

It is vital to talk to your child and name objects that they show you that they want:

- if when playing, your child looks at or points to his ball, show interest and say 'ball'. Say it several times.

Lots of repetition helps them to learn the words.





## Praise...

We all need praise to help us enjoy learning. So make sure your child knows you are pleased with them when they try to let you know what they want. A smile, a touch, a 'well done' helps children feel good about themselves which will encourage them to try again:

- if you are looking at a book together and your child looks at you and points to a picture of a dog, say 'dog, good girl/boy'.



## Helping your child with communication...



...watching, waiting and listening before you respond.

## Offering choices...

It's really important to offer your child choices throughout the day:

- so instead of giving your child a biscuit at snack time, offer a biscuit and an apple for your child to select from.
- when getting your child dressed, put two t-shirts out and encourage your child to choose one.

Always remember to let them have what they choose. Don't offer what you don't want them to have!

