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InfoBites for Parents-Carers: Supporting Speech, Language and Communication Needs

This guide was co-created for the Torbay SEND Locality Project with input from SEND Family Voice Torbay, Children & Family Health Devon, and Torbay Council – including the Educational Psychology Service, Early Years, and Children's Services Learning Academy.

Early Communication Strategies

Early Communication & Play

What is communication?

[Part 1: What is Communication? \(Children & Family Health Devon\)](#)

[Part 2: Developing Understanding \(Children & Family Health Devon\)](#)

[Part 3: What is 'Total Communication'? \(Children and Family Health Devon\)](#)

How can we create opportunities to develop communication?

[Creating Opportunities to Develop Communication \(Children & Family Health Devon\)](#)

[Tips and advice for children's speech and language \(Tiny Happy People\)](#)

Objects of Reference

A simple and effective tool to help children feel more settled and confident when moving between activities. How to use this strategy to help your child understand spoken language and make requests.

[How to use objects of reference \(SaLT by the Sea\)](#)

First-Then Approach (Now and next...)

The First-Then approach is a visual and verbal strategy that sets clear expectations by showing what needs to happen **first** (a task or activity) and what will happen **then** (a preferred activity or reward).

[Using visuals, photos and the First-Then approach \(Children & Family Health Devon\)](#)

Making Choices

Offering choices within everyday activities is a simple way to encourage your child to use more words and to build their language skills.

[How to use choices to get your child talking \(SaLT by the Sea\)](#)

Developing Strategies Further

Using Images to Communicate

What is a Core Vocabulary Board? How would we use one?

[How to use a Core Vocabulary Board \(NHS\)](#)

Visual Timetables

What is a visual timetable? How can we use it at home to help our child's communication and regulation?

[Supporting your child with Visual Timetables \(Children's Services, Torbay Council\)](#)

Introduction to Makaton

Makaton is a unique communication programme that uses symbols (pictures), signs (gestures) and speech to enable people to communicate. It supports the development of essential communication skills such as attention and listening, comprehension, memory, recall and organisation of language and expression.

[Makaton Signs for Everyday Routines – 7 short films \(Children's Services, Torbay Council\)](#)

These clips demonstrate how to sign for a range of useful topics: Getting up; Bathtime; Bedtime; Mealtimes; Requests; Meeting basic needs and comforters; Going to school and nursery.

[Makaton Signs for Everyday Routines – Visuals Support Guide \(Children's Services, Torbay Council\)](#)

Social Stories

Dr Ruth Amell, Educational Psychologist, explores how to use social stories to help young people understand situations, develop social awareness and regulate emotions more effectively.

[Using Social Stories to Support Understanding, Emotional Regulation and Participation \(Children's Services, Torbay Council\)](#)

Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)

Everyone uses AAC at some point, when we gesture or use written information to help us understand. For children and young people who have not developed spoken language, AAC may reduce frustration and help repair communication breakdown.

A group of professionals from organisations across Devon have worked with parents and carers from IACSS (Improving Access to Communication Services and Support) to put together an interactive introduction to AAC:

[E-Learning: Augmentative and Alternative Communication \(AAC\) – An introduction](#)

Other Reference Links

Torbay Family Hub:

- [Torbay SEND Support and Provision – Speech Language & Communication Needs](#)
(part of [Torbay SEND Support and Provision – Graduated Response](#))
- [Torbay Early Years Graduated Approach Toolkit](#)
- [Torbay SEND Resources - Early Years Communication & Interaction](#)
- [Age 16-18 - Speech, Language and Communication Needs \(SLCN\)](#)

Children and Family Health Devon:

- [Early Communication: How-to Videos](#)

Family Voice Torbay

- [Speech, Language and Communication Needs](#)

Other

- [Makaton](#)
- [Makaton: Sign of the Week](#)
- [Comic Relief Early Years Inclusion Programme - Dingley's Promise](#)