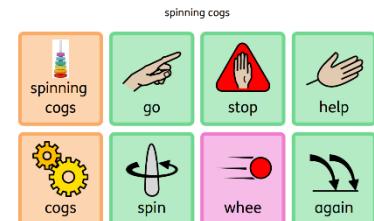




Help Sheet

0 – 25 Specialist Teaching And Support Service

How to use a Communication Board to aid language stimulation.



Why?

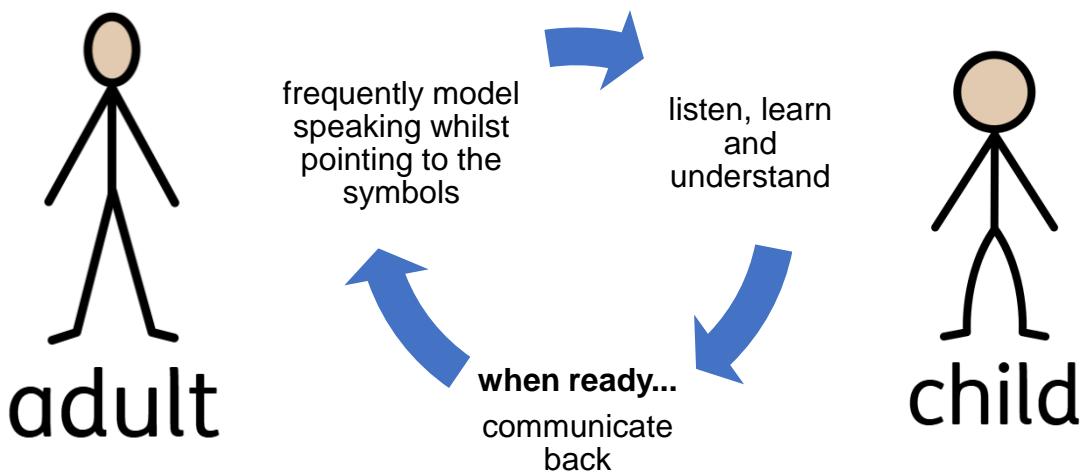
- This is to support children who are pre-verbal, non-speaking or minimally speaking.
- This is beneficial because pointing at symbols alongside modelling words or phrases can support the development of communication.
- Symbols last longer than spoken words, which aids children to 'hook in' to language.
- The strategy involves modelling without any expectations being placed on children, but when a child is ready, they may start to use Communication Boards to communicate back.

You will need:

- To identify activities that the child finds interesting and engaging.
- To observe the child doing the activities and identify words or phrases that relate to the equipment or actions.
- For each activity, create a Communication Board with a suitable number of symbols and the related words or phrases (see example templates). It is useful to have some key words or phrases and the related symbols repeated on different boards e.g. 'help'. Put the key word 'help' or phrase 'I need help' and the related symbol in the same position on the Communication Boards e.g. 'help' is always positioned in the top right.
- To make sure that words and phrases have a range of purposes:
 - commenting
 - requesting
 - transitions
 - protesting
 - sharing emotions
 - routines
 - sensory experiences
- To provide time in a low distraction environment to use the Communication Boards alongside child-led activities.

How?

- Watch how the child is engaging with the activity.
- As the child does the activity, point to the related symbol(s) whilst saying the word or phrase.
- Build pauses into the interaction.
- Repeat modelling the same words, phrases and symbols frequently.
- Use the Communication Board without an expectation that the child will use the board to communicate back.
- If the child gestures towards a symbol, say the related word or phrase and if appropriate carry out the related action.



Things to note:

Do not ask the child to point at the symbols. The interaction should have a natural 'to and fro' feel where the adult and child are communication partners. The child will start the interaction with their play and the adult will respond by modelling spoken language whilst pointing to the related symbol.

This help sheet is part of a toolkit:

Help sheet – How to use a Communication Board to aid language stimulation.

Resource – Examples of Communication Boards