



Leicestershire  
County Council

Early Years Autism Outreach Service

## 10 top tips to support communication

1. Moving objects on a high shelf may encourage the child to ask or point for them.
2. Don't pre-empt what the child may want. Make it a little more difficult for them but be careful not to cause anxiety.
3. Create opportunities. Use the child's "work" session to motivate and encourage communication. Offer choices, hold up puzzle pieces, coloured pens etc for child to point/ask for. Snack, play and meal times can create motivation to communicate.
4. Try to respond to any attempts to gain attention – at least when the child's communication is just emerging. Try to set aside your agenda for a while and think that for this child nothing can be more important.
5. Don't have on offer what you can't deliver e.g. don't display a picture of the park or horse riding if it can't happen.
6. Motivators can be unusual; and exclusive to the child. You may have to "dig deep" to find motivators for some children but there is usually something. Common motivators – food, bubbles, music, computer. Unusual ones such as sellotape, plastic tubs, stickers etc.
7. Develop communicative intent. By acting as if a child has used a look, movement, gesture or vocalisation genuine intent can be developed.
8. Create pauses. Giving the child an obvious space in which to gesture, vocalize, look may encourage the child's communication. Emphasising the pause with a gasp or hand movement may help.
9. Teach the child to gain attention. Whatever means the child has for communication – verbal, signing, photo etc may need to be prompted to get someone's attention to receive the message.  
Sometimes we interpret as "challenging" behaviour what may be an early attempt at gaining attention e.g. screaming, hitting. Better alternatives need to be taught.

**10. Make it fun! We are all more motivated if we're enjoying ourselves.**

