Using Visuals in your Setting

Visuals are:
- objects, photographs, pictures or symbols – the ‘ladder of visuals’ below is a helpful guide
- used with children at the same time of saying the associated word
- a visual reminder of the spoken message - visuals are constant and can be looked at many times whereas the spoken word quickly disappears

Visuals can be used for:
- all children
- children who are at risk of delay in communication development
- supporting listening & attention skills
- offering independence & choices
- supporting daily routines for all children or for individual children e.g. mealtimes, washing hands, story time

Visuals can also:
- reduce frustration for a child
- help a child to understand communication & learn new words
- help adults to use short, simple phrases
- help children understand expectations in a positive way

Remember:
- be consistent in the choice & use of visuals
- think about the size & position of visuals
- small steps can make a significant difference
- children need time to use visuals in everyday practice

The ‘ladder of visual support’ shows the sequential types of visuals that can be used to support children’s communication development.

- **Written label**
- **B/W pictorial symbol**
- **Coloured pictorial symbol**
- **Coloured picture of object**
- **Photograph of similar object**
- **Photograph of actual object**
- **Miniature object, such as a small toy**
- **An actual object similar to the real object**
- **Actual object well known to child**

An example of a ‘first and then’ type of visual that could be used to maintain a child’s attention.

A sample of a song board supporting children’s independence and choice.