

# Developing a Communication Friendly Environment

Speech and Language Therapy Service

**Working in partnership**

The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust  
Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust



**Care Colleagues**  
**Collaboration Communities**

# Aims of this training

- An understanding of how communication usually develops
- Forms of communication
- Reasons we communicate
- Creating opportunities for communication
- An understanding of the impact of communication difficulties

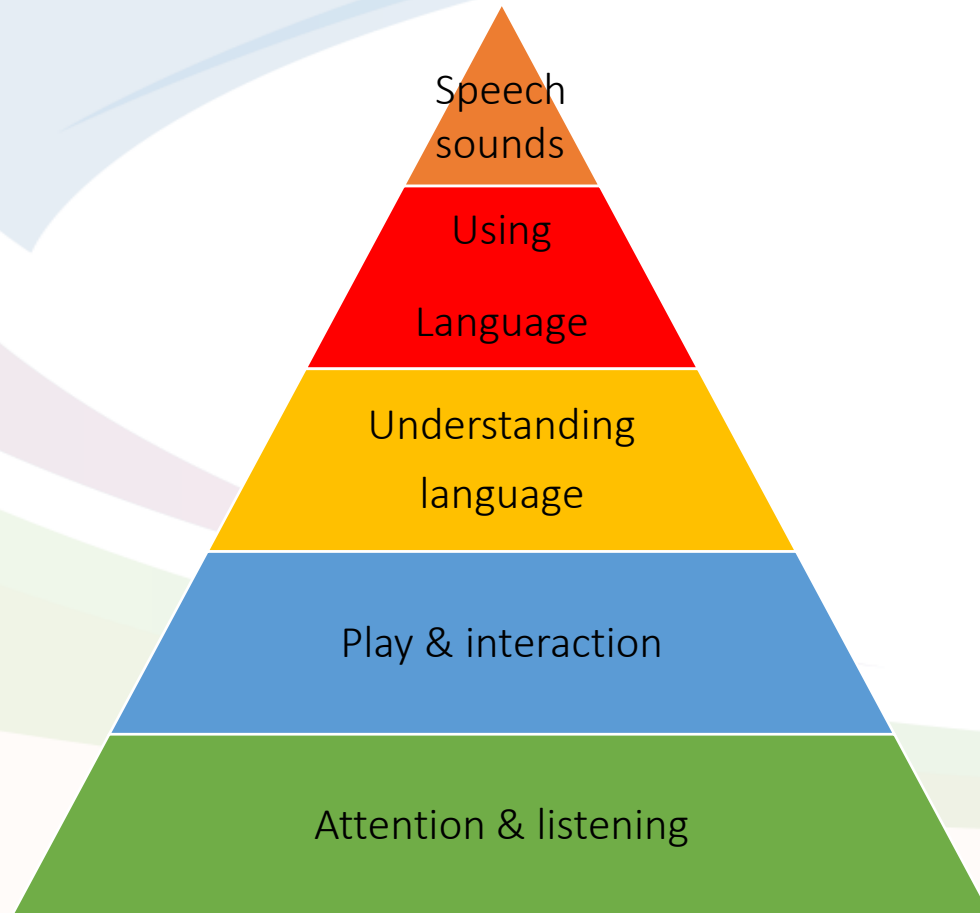
# Communication development

- Take a minute to think about what you already know about communication development
- How do you think communication typically develops?



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# Communication pyramid



We need a good foundation for language and speech to develop. Children/young people need:

- To listen to us/ look at what we are looking at (e.g. to learn words they need to pay attention).
- An interest interacting with us.
- An understanding of how they can interact with us (e.g. to let us know that they want something).
- An understanding of what words mean before they can use them.
- Lots of practise using words before improving how they pronounce them.



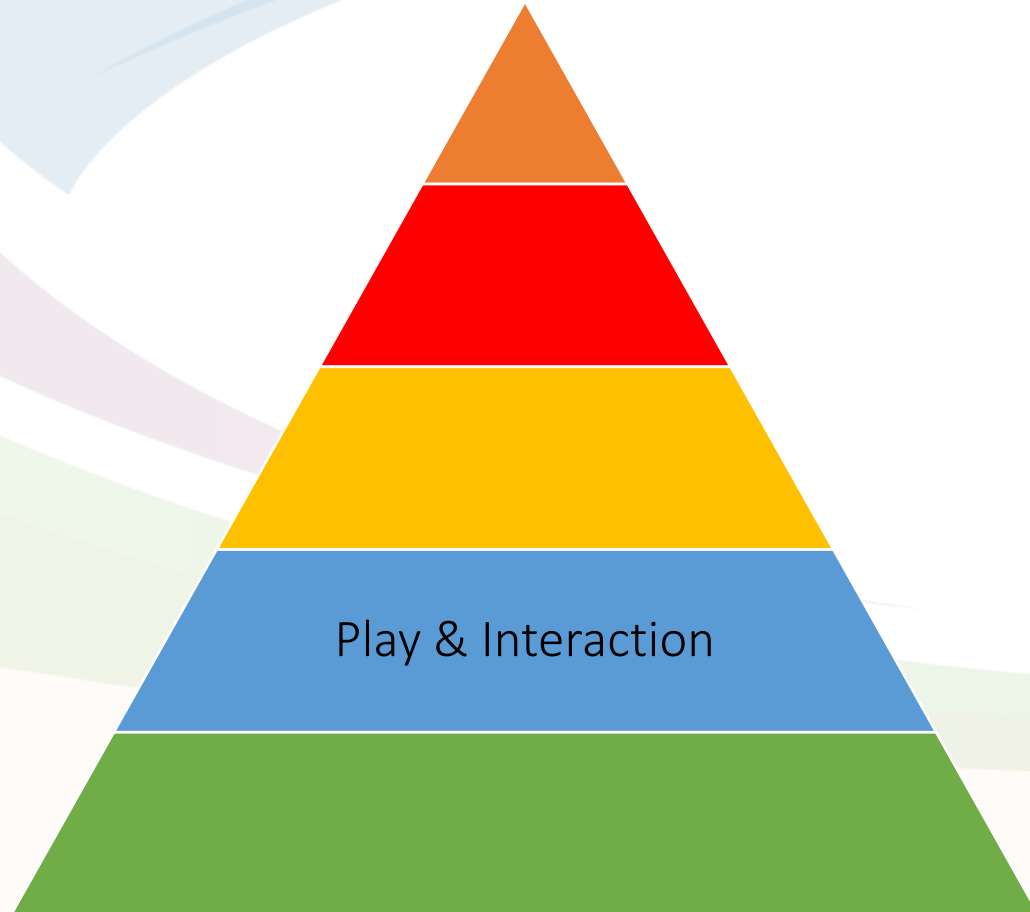
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# Children with attention and listening difficulties find it hard to:



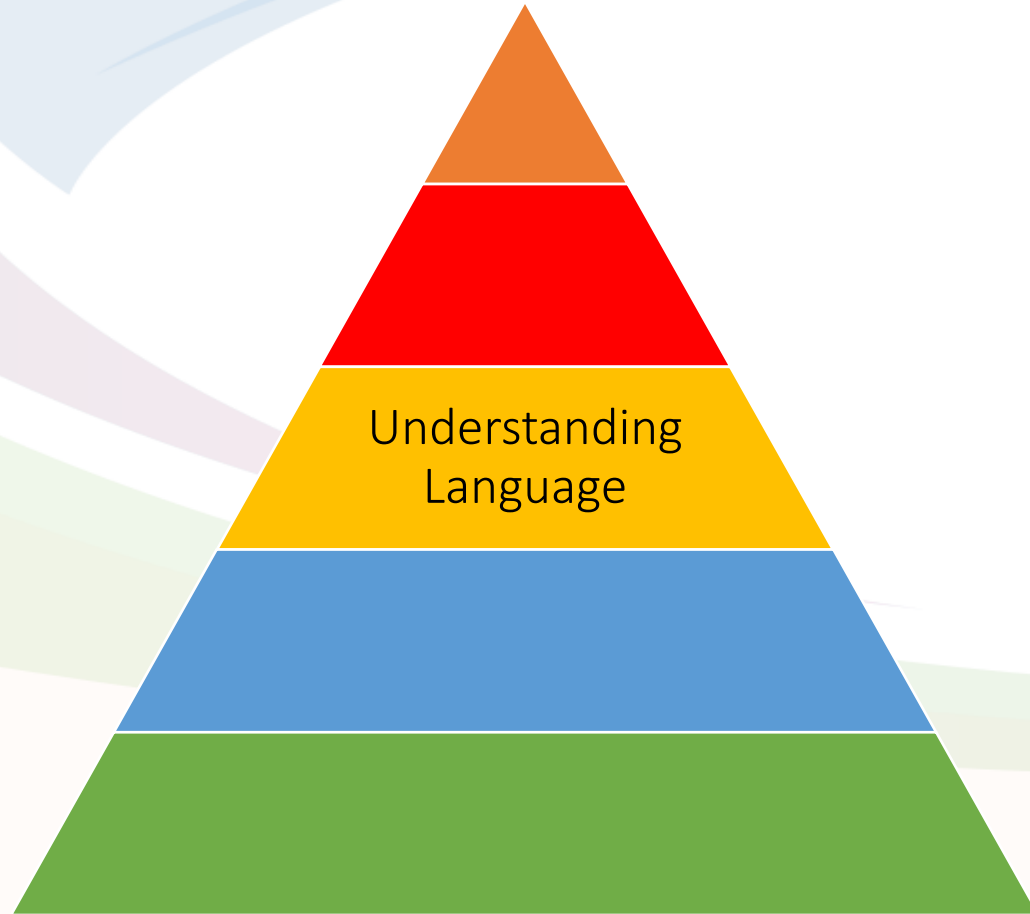
- Focus on activities
- Ignore distractions
- Focus on what people are saying
- Focus on whole group instructions
- Get back on track

# Children with play and/or interaction difficulties find it hard to:



- Problem solve
- Explore the world
- Learn new words and concepts
- Communicate and socialise with others

# Children who have difficulties understanding find it hard to:

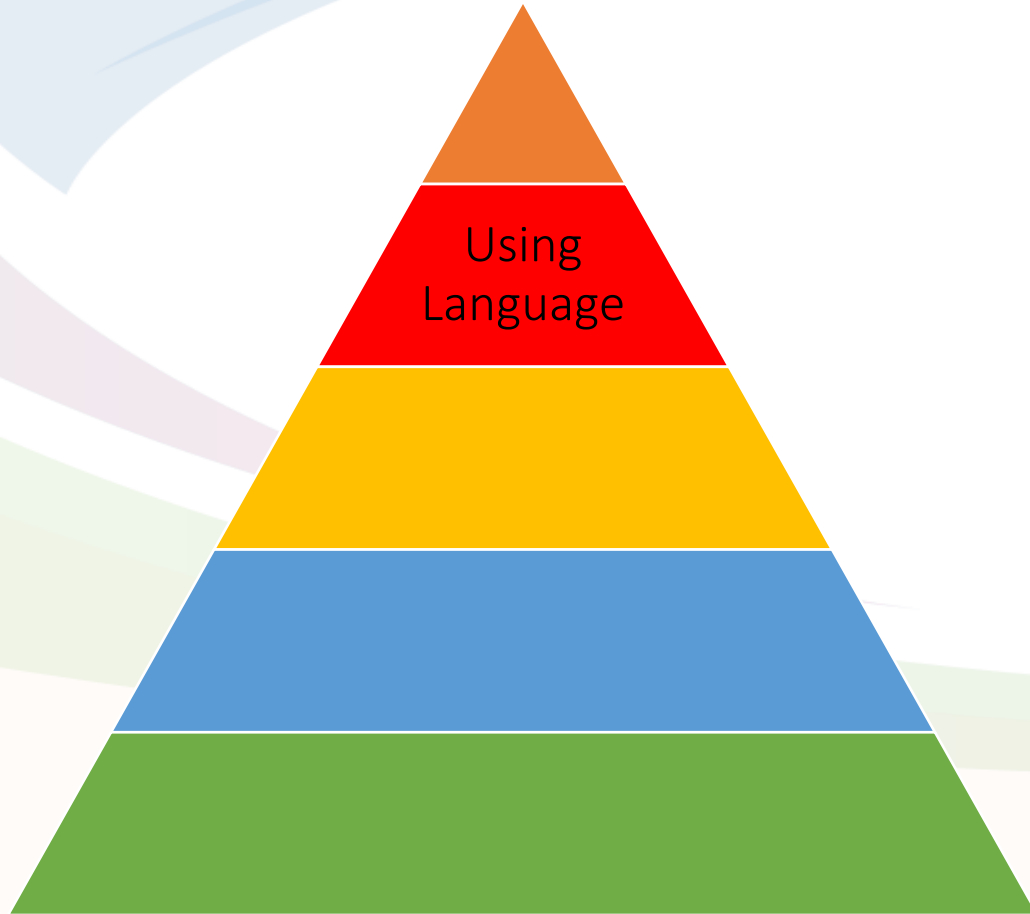


- Understand single words
- Understand new concepts, e.g. size, colours
- Understand single sentences
- Understand longer chunks of language, e.g. instructions and explanations
- Understand conversation and group discussion



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# Children who have difficulties talking find it hard to:

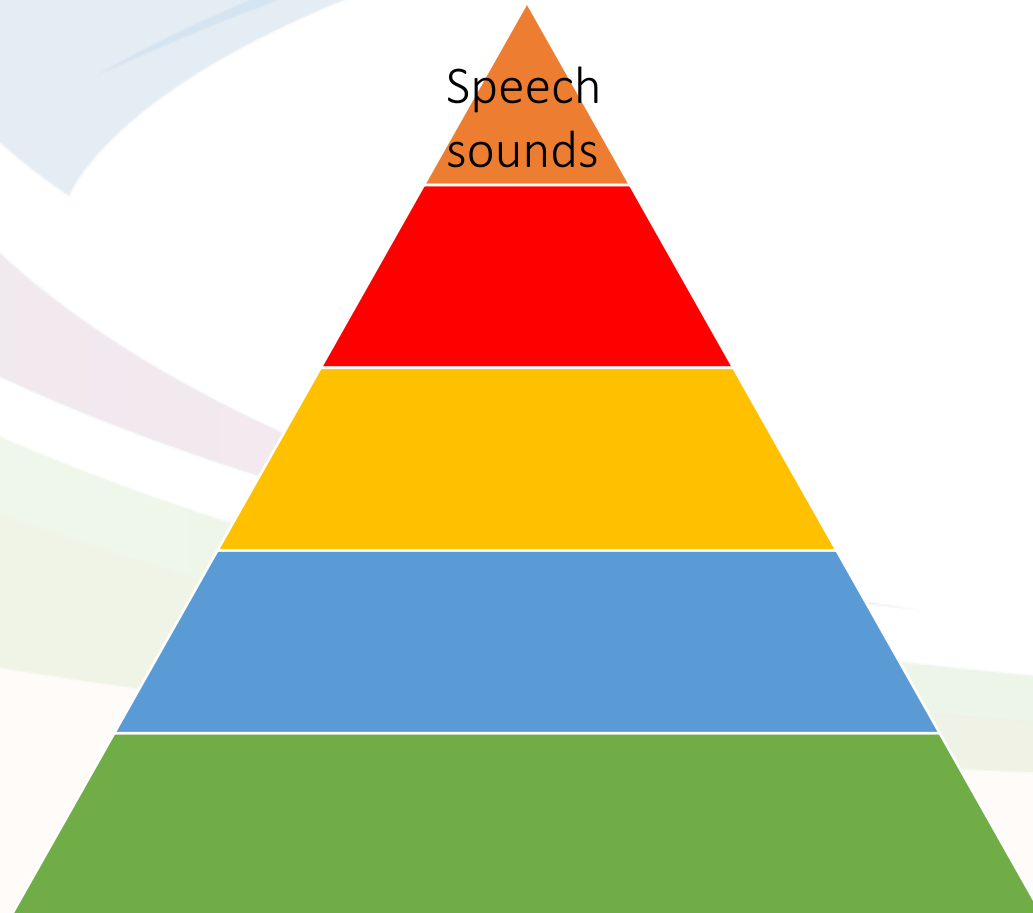


- Use appropriate vocabulary
- Structure a sentence
- Link sentences together, e.g. using 'and' or 'because'
- Sequencing longer chunks of language, e.g. to tell a story
- Joining in conversation and group discussion



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# Children who have speech sound difficulties find it hard to:



- Use clear speech. For example, they may substitute one sound for another or be unable to make certain sounds
- Develop good literacy skills



# What makes communication difficult?

- Anxiety
- Being asked lots of questions
- New words to learn and use
- Pressure to respond – quickly or with others watching
- Lots of long and/or complicated spoken instructions to remember
- Lots of things to look at
- A busy environment
- Different staff
- Lots of new information
- Background noise
- Not being understood

# How might this make the child feel or behave?

Angry

Worried

Frustrated

Anxious

Withdrawn

Lashing out at others

Upset

Embarrassed

Use non-verbal communication instead



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# How can we help?

1. Adapt the environment
2. Adapt our communication
3. Help children get their message across



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# 'What We Need to Communicate Effectively



# Means of communication

- Verbal / talking



- Nonverbal

- Reaching / pointing
- Guiding others to what they want (e.g. by their hand).
- Nodding/shaking of the head
- Facial expressions
- Gestures

- Signing:

- Makaton signs
- British Sign Language (BSL)



To Stand Up

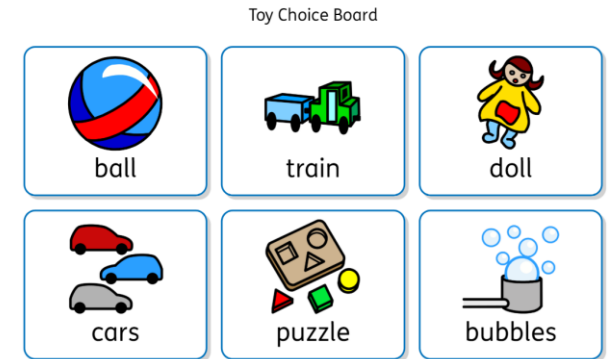
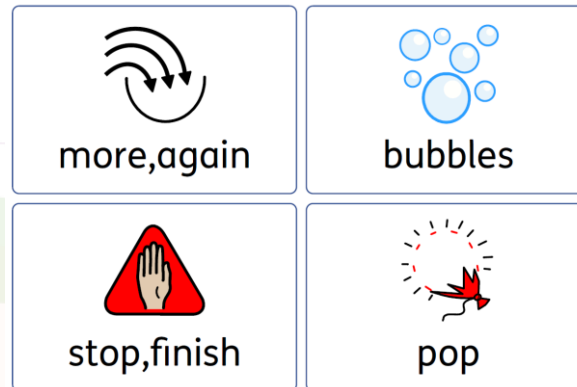
- Switches



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# Means of communication

- Symbols:
  - Choice board
  - Aided Language Displays (ALDs)
  - Picture Exchange Communication System
  - Communication books
  - Electronic device/ Voice Output Communication Aid (VOCA)



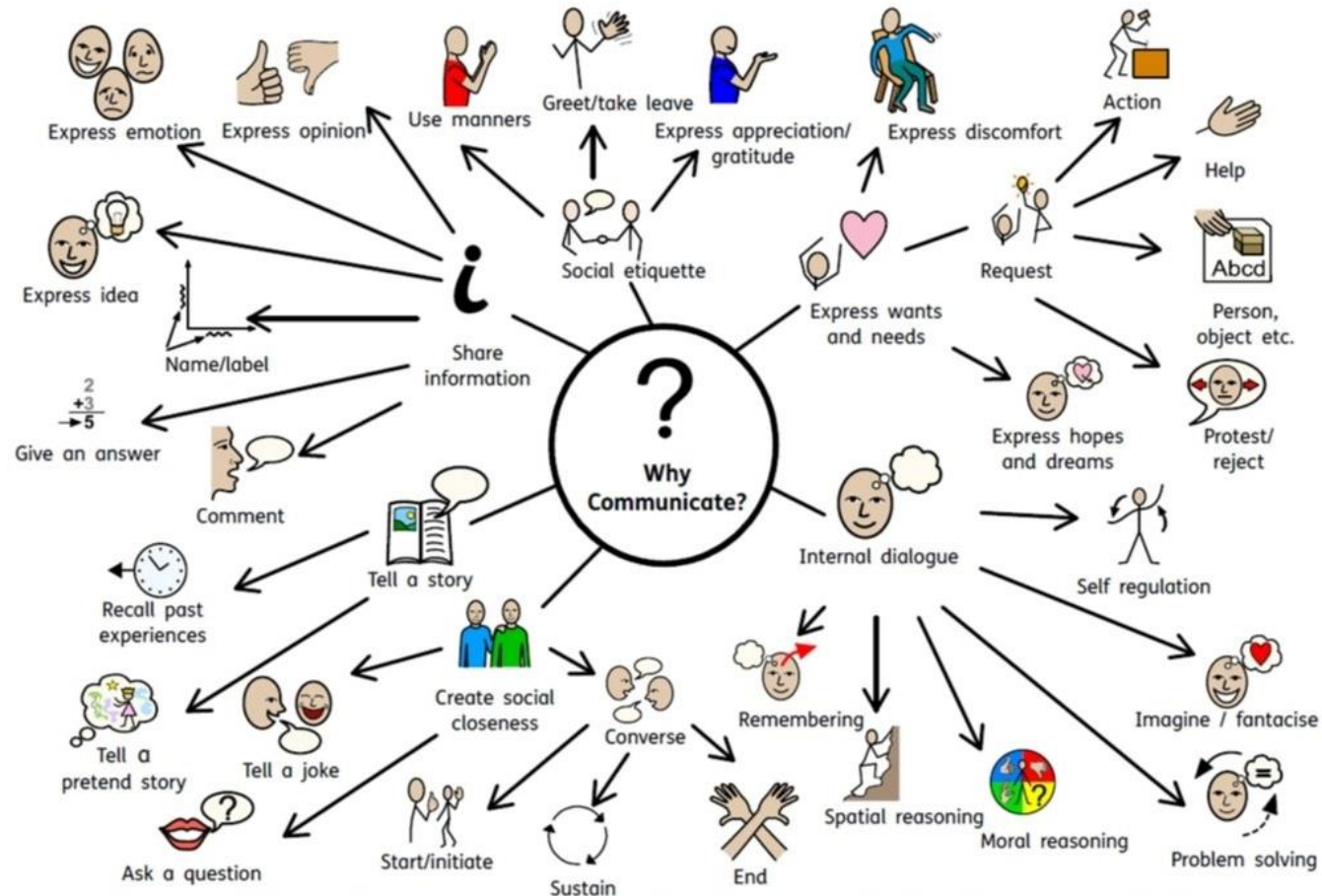
# Augmentative and Alternative Communication systems (AAC)

- Children/ young people with a communication aid always need access to this.
- Personalised – reflects their interests.
- Adults should model using these to support the child/ young person. This supports children to explore their own device and increase their ability and interest to use their AAC.



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# Reasons to communicate



Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Access to Communication and Technology, 2017. Reference; Kate Ahern- Motivate, Model, Move out of the Way Project



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# Reasons to communicate – Craft Scenario

Crafts activity: cutting and sticking pictures. Needs scissors, glue and paper.

Scenario 1: the child/ young person has some of the equipment, given a choice of different colour paper, and they need to cut out the pictures. The adult is nearby and waiting.

Scenario 2: the child/ young person has all the equipment needed, they have no choice of paper and the pictures are cut out ready for them.



# Craft scenario

## Reasons to communicate

### Scenario 1:

- Express a preference when offered a choice.
- Need to request an object they are missing.
- May need to ask for help.
- Comment/label



### Scenario 1 & 2:

- May reject/protest (e.g. if dislike the activity or the colour paper given).



# Reasons to communicate – Snack scenario

Scenario 1: a child/ young person is asked to give out plates and the snack to their friends.

Scenario 2: a child/ young person is asked to give out plates and offer their friends a choice of two snacks/drinks (e.g. apple or banana).

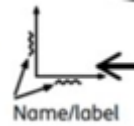


# Snack scenario

Reasons to communicate

Scenario 2:

- Name the choice of snacks
- Ask a question



Scenario 1 & 2:

- Greet a peer
- Give an answer



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# Increasing opportunities

- Model the language needed verbally and/or AAC (e.g. aided language displays).
- Give opportunities during activities that the child/young person enjoys.
- Follow the child/young person's interests (e.g. offer them choices)
- Sabotage techniques to create situations for children/young people to communicate to solve a problem.
  - Withhold something that the child/young person wants (but let them see more available out of their reach)
  - Miss a step in a routine.
  - Forgetting something essential.
- Expectant waiting by using pauses while looking at the child/young person to give them time to respond.



# Barriers to effective communication

- Not having AAC available or in reach.
- Adults not using/modelling the AAC
- Adults anticipating needs reducing the reasons needed for communication.
- Not following the child/young person's interests leading to reduced motivation to communicate.
- Not having a responsive communication partner (e.g. not using pauses or looking at the child/young person).
- Not being given time to process or respond.
- Not being given choices.
- Busy/distracting environments (e.g. TV on).



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