

Waltham Forest Early Years Guidance

Support for Communication and Language Needs



Encouraging Quiet Children

There are many reasons why some children may be more reluctant to communicate than others. Some children simply need more time to get used to the noise and activity in a setting they become confident to speak, while others may have had limited experiences of interacting with others outside their family. It is also common for children who are new to English to go through a 'silent phase' while they absorb new vocabulary and listen out for familiar words. With the benefit of supportive interactions with adults and time and space to practise, most children will emerge as confident speakers. However, there is much that early years practitioners can do to ensure that all children are given the best chance to become confident communicators...

Watch, wait and listen...

In order to build confidence and encourage children to try, it's important to accept how they already communicate without putting pressure on them to use words. For example, if a child makes a choice by looking at something they like, the next step may be for them to choose through pointing. If we put children on the spot with questions or try to make them repeat words, children may feel worried about making mistakes and be less likely to try next time

Find out about favourite things...

It may sound simple but we all like to chat about things we like and know. Pictures of favourite TV programmes, places, pets and family will help children feel valued and inspire them to chat. You could even make a chat book/chat box filled with things that children like to encourage conversation and make them feel safe.

Create cosy spaces...

some children may feel overwhelmed by noisy and busy early years settings. Ensure your space has cosy areas children can use to feel safe, comfortable and relaxed. Children are more likely to talk if they don't feel observed or on show

Encourage noisy games...

for some children, being confident to make a noise is an important step towards speaking. Have fun with noisy musical instruments, banging saucepans, make roaring sounds with animals/dinosaurs, practise vehicle sounds (nee naw), experiment with different sounds materials make e.g. splash, crunch. You could even go on a noise walk, seeing how many sounds the children can make without using words!