

# Waltham Forest Early Years Guidance

## Support for Communication and Language Needs



### Joint Attention

**Joint attention is shared focus which happens when 2 people are interested in the same thing at the same time. Children will usually show this by looking at an adult, then back at the thing which interests them.**

Joint attention is crucial for language learning as children need to learn how to 'map' words onto the things they experience around them. For example, when a child points at a bus and the adult responds "bus!" they will start to associate the word with the object.

Some children can find it hard to learn to share attention with others. The following strategies can help them to do this more easily:

- Be face to face (you might need to be on the floor or even lie down!)
- Copy what the child is doing
- Use an animated voice and gestures
- Use singing and rhymes to focus their attention
- Find activities the child enjoys and show them- wind-up toys, bubbles, balloons

Try and use these strategies throughout everyday routines, and when engaging with children during play. You may find they can share only for a very short time at first and can gradually extend it for longer.