



LEVEL 1

TRAINING MANUAL

DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES
IN SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND
COMMUNICATION

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT
CHILDREN WITH THEIR
SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND
COMMUNICATION

Act Early

Support Parents

Achieve More

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INTRODUCTION

Help Kids Talk is a project that supports speech, language, and communication development for children and young people 0-18 years old in Northern Ireland. It is a partnership approach with Early Intervention Lisburn and the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust as lead partners. The project was officially launched in March 2020 in Lisburn following a development period since 2013.

Our vision is that everyone in our community will work together to Help Kids Talk, whether that be a parent, carer, family member, childminder or organisation that provides services for children.

The project aims to:

- Help children and young people be the best they can be.
- Make children's development in speech, language, and communication everyone's responsibility.
- Make a difference to children's lives together.

Why is this project important?

In some of the most disadvantaged areas in Northern Ireland, research has shown that a high proportion of children are starting pre-school with language needs and difficulties. In 2016 the SEHSCT carried out some research on 172 children in socio-economically deprived areas of the SEHSCT and found that 26% of these children had difficulty in at least 1 area of language. Research carried out by Early Intervention Lisburn in 2013 in 9 Lisburn primary schools highlighted that 32% of children entering Primary 1 in September 2013 had a mild to severe speech and language difficulty. 76% of these children were male, from the more disadvantaged communities in Lisburn. Similar statistics in Northern Ireland have shown that in some of the most disadvantaged communities in Northern Ireland over 40% of children are starting pre-school with language delay or difficulty. We know that children with speech, language, and communication issues are at a high risk of experiencing difficulties with reading, writing, and spelling. We also know that the range of a child's vocabulary at age 5 is a very strong predictor of qualifications at school leaving age¹, and without support, over 1/3 of children with speech,

language, and communication issues go on to have support from mental health services later in life.² The Help Kids Talk project, has 2 approaches:

Universal Approach: available regionally for anyone with a responsibility for children 0-18 years of age including staff/parents/carers/extended family members. The approach includes:

- **Key Messages** are delivered every month through Facebook, Instagram & Twitter as guidance to parents, caregivers and those working with children to support children's communication development.
- **Basic Awareness online training (50 minutes)** gives an overview of infant mental health, brain development, and top tips for supporting speech, language and communication.
- **Level 1 Training (2 hours)** - *Developmental milestones in Speech, Language and Communication and Strategies to support children*. Available to those who have completed the Basic Awareness Training. This training aims to provide information about children's speech, language, and communication milestones, and promote strategies to support children's development in this area.
- **Bitesize pieces of specific topics** are in development.

Targeted approach:

- **The Early Talk Boost** programme is an ICAN evidence based intervention for children at foundation stage which improves their attention and listening, their understanding of words and sentences, and their speaking and communication.
- The **Talk Boost** programme is an ICAN evidence based intervention aimed at supporting children at Key Stage 1 and can boost children's ability in conversations, sentences, storytelling, and social interaction by an average of 9 - 18 months.
- **Talk for Work** is an ICAN evidence based programme for 14-18 year olds with poor communication skills and supports their development to be ready for the workplace.

Remember:

Parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, child-minders, teachers, class-room assistants are all examples of people who support children on a daily basis. You are best placed to make a difference in a child's life and are often the child's first educator.

1 Feinstein, L. And Duckworth, K. (2006). Development in the early years: Its importance for school performance and adult outcomes. London: Centre for research on the wider benefits of learning
2 Law, J., Rush, R., Schoon, I and Parsons, S. (2009) Modeling Developmental Language Difficulties From School Entry Into Adulthood: Literacy, Mental Health, and Employment Outcomes. Journal of Speech, language and hearing research, 52 (6)

DEFINITIONS

Attention and listening:

This is the child's ability to listen to and focus on sounds and activities. Appropriate attention and listening skills mean that child can also attend to adult-led activities.

Play:

Is the best way children learn. It is a child's work. Through play, children learn about their surroundings, how to become independent and how to communicate.

Understanding of language:

This is the child's ability to understand and follow what is being said to them. This may include being able to follow instructions of more than one key word, being able to understand concepts eg big and small, and being able to understand questions.

Expressive language:

This is about how many words a child has and how they put these words together to make sentences.

Speech sounds:

The range of sounds that a child is able to use.

Intelligibility:

Is how well a child is understood by others.

The Language Pyramid is a useful way to think about speech, language, and communication development

THE COMMUNICATION PYRAMID

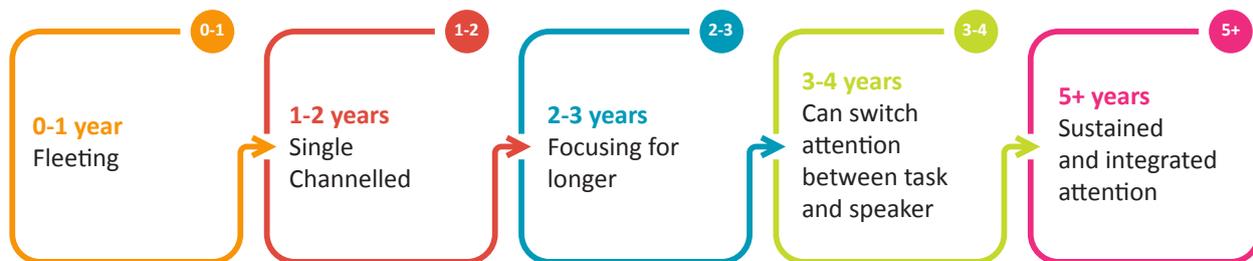


ATTENTION AND LISTENING

Attention and listening skills are needed to communicate effectively. We need to be able to listen to spoken information and filter out other distracting signals.



Ages & Stages of Attention Development



Adapted from Cooper, Moodley and Reynell's (1978) Stages of Attention Development.

If a child does not appear to be moving through the stages of attention as you would expect then you might find it helpful to try some strategies / activities. *See below for ideas:*

Early activities to develop attention

To harness a child's attention for a few seconds:

Use highly motivating toys like bubbles or noisy toys like egg shakers, people-games like Peekaboo are also good.



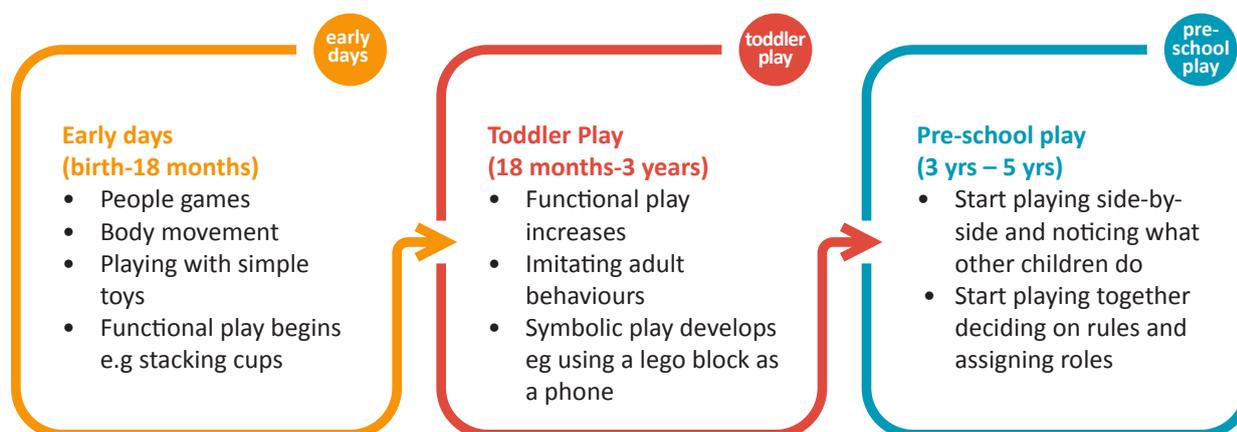
PLAY SKILLS

Play is a brain building activity. Through play children learn to engage and interact with the world around them.

Key milestone: **symbolic play**



Ages & Stages of Play Development



Activities to support Play Development

If a child does not appear to be moving through the stages of play as you would expect, you might find it helpful to try some strategies / activities. See below for ideas:

Early days play activities

People games

People games are physical games you play with a child, without any toys. These are great for developing play and communication as they are repetitive and predictable, as well as being motivating for the child.

- **Peekaboo;** get face to face with the child so they can clearly see your face. Cover your face with your hands, a blanket or soft toy. Dramatically uncover your face and say 'Peek a boo' in a loud happy voice.
- **Up and down games;** again get face to face with the child. Lift the child up and down or bounce them on your knee.
- **Songs or rhymes with actions;** row row row your boat is lovely for being face to face and rocking the child back and forth as if they are rowing a boat.



Activities to support later language development

WHO AM I GAME

Find some toy characters from around the room or toy box. The child might like to help find their favourites. You can then play the who I am game & ask the child to find who you are describing:

I am very small, I don't know how to talk yet but when i am hungry i might cry ... who am I?

I wear a special hat, I rescue people and i put out fires ... who am I?

I am a girl and I live in a castle. I wear a crown and my daddy is the king ... who am I?



WHAT AM I GAME

Find some objects from around the room. The child might like to help find a selection. You can then play the what am I game & ask the child to find what you are describing:

I have four wheels on the outside and a steering wheel on the inside. I drive you to places ... what am I?

I have wool and four legs. i like to eat grass ... what am I?

I can be red or green. I am a fruit and I am juicy ... what am I?



Strategies to support understanding of language

Show and say: by saying the word at the same time as showing a child the object you can help develop their understanding e.g. saying tractor while looking at a tractor on the farm.

Keep it simple: it can be helpful to break spoken information into 'chunks' and emphasise the key words in an instruction. E.g. instead of "Put your book in your tray, go get your coat and line up at the door" break this instruction up into smaller chunks with the emphasis on the key words: "Put your book in your tray" (pause) "get your coat" (pause) and "line up at the door".

Slow down & Pause: this allows the child to hear all the words and gives them time to process them.

Repetition: is beneficial for developing children's understanding. Allowing children to hear words over

and over helps them connect the word to the object or situation. Using a word in lots of different contexts will help the child to understand the meaning, eg wash; wash hair, wash cup, wash plate.

Key questions to ask if you think a child may have difficulties understanding...

- Does the child often look confused, anxious or withdrawn?
- Do they often echo back words/instructions given to them?
- Do they give answers that are completely irrelevant or unrelated?
- Do they need lots of visual support?
- Have you tried all the recommended strategies for supporting understanding? How has that helped?

Understanding (Receptive Language Skills)



Vision: Everyone in our community working together to help kids talk.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

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