



## Speech and Language Therapy Advice Sheet

# Supporting Young People with Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties in Secondary School

Support young people who have difficulties with verbal understanding and working memory by:

- Checking their understanding and at school. Develop a 'sign' to be used if they do not understand e.g. pencil on top corner of desk.
- Using short sentences when you give them spoken information.
- Allowing them time to process what you have said before give them more instructions.
- Support verbal understanding by using pictures, symbols and written word/ instructions; they can then refer back and use these prompts as they complete a task.
- Highlighting key information to help them bridge the gap between what is and is not stated e.g. '**Chloe** heard the **front door rattle**, her **brother** was **late home again**, what would **dad say** this time!'
- Checking their understanding of sayings and words with different meanings in texts and instructions e.g. 'It was getting dark, he had to go, so he quickly picked up the parcel; it felt very **light**' vs. 'The team needed more **light** to read the instructions and see the map'.
- Explaining idioms, metaphors and so on, as they crop up in everyday situations e.g. 'Get your skates on we need to leave in 5 minutes', 'the footballer was as cool as ice as he lined up the ball for the penalty'. Also language we use every day can be misunderstood by some young people e.g. 'do it in your head', 'just slip to the office' or 'go and wash your hands in the toilet'?
- Encourage them to make a list of items they need to remember in the school diary.
- Make time concepts as visual as possible e.g. using time lines in history.

## Support their spoken language by:

- Subtly re-phrasing any muddled sentences they produce, as though you are mulling over the information (so they know you understand, but also they hear the correct words)
- Using the (wrong) word they say and building from that e.g. “Yes it’s like an apple, but it’s more pointed there;...it’s a pear”. Then talk about the differences.

If you have tried using these strategies and you are still concerned about your child’s talking you can either:

- Look on our website for the ‘Quick Reference Guide’. This will guide you when the best time to refer your child to Speech and Language Therapy. The referral forms and further advice sheets are also available on the website:

<https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/childrens-centre/your-childs-hospital-journey/therapy-services/childrens-therapy-referral/>

- You can access further information from the following websites:

<http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk> Go to 'Resources - Resources for Practitioners' and look for 'Universally Speaking ages and stages of children’s communication development for children ages 8 – 18’.

[www.afasic.org.uk](http://www.afasic.org.uk) – what to look for in older children and teenagers – afasic  
[www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk) - Look for the resource called ‘Speech, Language and Communication in Secondary Aged Pupils’.