



Supporting speech and language in your child with hearing loss

Every child is different and of course every family is too. From your child's diagnosis of hearing loss their journey through speech, language and communication will depend on many things including the level of their loss and their age. Many children with hearing loss develop speech and language entirely in line with their hearing peers. Some children may have some differences in the way they use speech sounds, and some may find understanding or using complex language a challenge. Here are a few tips that you may find useful to support your child's speech and language development no matter what their age:

- **Get your child's attention before you talk to them.** A child with hearing loss will find it difficult to ignore any noise around them, so making sure they're listening by getting down to their level and using their name first will help them better understand what you're saying.
- **Make sure your child can see your face when you talk.** We all find it helpful to look at a speaker's face when we're listening to them. For children with hearing loss lip reading can be especially helpful, and indeed some children rely heavily on lip reading. Give your child the best chance of hearing you by making sure they can see you!
- **Reduce background noise.** We often take it for granted that we can block out unwanted noise, but for children with hearing loss this can be hard. Turn off the TV and radio when you play and talk with your child, so they don't have to work so hard when listening.
- If you're talking about a new object, **make sure your child can see both your face and the object.** When learning new words children need to hear the word and see the object at the same time. For children who rely on seeing your face when you talk this can be challenging, unless the object is near your face. So, hold up that new fruit as you tell your child what it's called.
- **Repeat back what your child says.** If your child is at the babbling stage, then just repeat what you hear. When they're older repeating their words provides a model for language. If you're at the park and they say 'loo, du', you can reply, 'yes look, there's a duck!'. Repeating children's words lets them know you're listening and you value what they have to say. Giving them a clear model for speech supports their emerging sounds and language.
- **Embrace signing.** We all communicate using a range of clues: spoken words, gesture, expressions, body language, and lip reading. Children with hearing loss really make the most of those visual clues when you're talking. Adding in a bit of sign language can help your child build their language skills. Many families opt to use a mixture of oral language and sign. Using signs with your child alongside your own mother tongue will not hold their oral language back at all.

When should you ask for help with your child's speech and language?

If you're worried, get in touch. Our Request for Help Line is **01904 726 599**. Anyone who is worried about a child's speech, language, communication or swallowing can call and a therapist will call you back within a week.