

## ADVICE SHEET

### Objects of Reference

#### What are they?

Objects of reference are objects that are used to represent a person, object, activity or and place. They stand for something the same way that words do.



#### Why do we use them?

Some children need extra help to learn and understand spoken language. By using objects of reference at every opportunity the child learns to link the word, the activity and the object together. It will take time for the child to build up the link.

When they are fully understood objects of reference can help a child to:

- Anticipate (know what is about to happen)
- To sequence events (know what is happening now and what is happening next)
- To understand when an activity is finished
- To make choices

### **How to make Objects of Reference**

1. Select the person, object, activity or place you want the child to understand.
2. Choose an object, it should be easy to understand
  - It could be a nappy
  - The item you will use during the activity- for e.g. a spoon = dinner or a paintbrush= painting
  - A part of the object, for e.g. a rope =swing
  - Something like the object, for e.g. fabric of the same material as the object
  - Something that is not directly related but can symbolise the activity, for e.g. a twig for a walk in the woods
  - Something that links to a person for e.g. a toy poodle for a Nanny that has a poodle dog
3. It is best to start with 3 objects of reference for activities that happen frequently for e.g. bedtime/mealtime/bathtime and to add more later.

### **How to use Objects of Reference**

- Just before the child begins the activity give them the object of reference to explore. Accompany this with sign and speech, for e.g. we are going to the bed
- After giving the object of reference it is important to immediately begin the activity so the child begins to make the link between the object and the activity
- It is very important that the objects are used consistently every time you do the activity
- When the activity starts take the object of reference away from the child and put it away. It might be a good idea to store them in one place for e.g. a bag or a box

- Once the child has made the connection between these objects and activities you can use them to offer choices relating to these activities

### Some examples of objects of reference

Activity	Object
Brushing teeth	toothbrush
Brushing hair	Hairbrush or comb
Bath/wash	Sponge, towel, bubble bath
Drink	Cup or bottle
Meal time	Spoon or plate
Bed time	Blanket or teddy
Going outside	Shoes or coat
Going in the car	Keys
Going to nursery	Book bag
Going shopping	Bags
Going to see a family member or friend	Something specific to the person- e.g. something they have/see/play with at nanny's house



