

# A 'How to' guide to creating and using visual supports in the Early Years

Canterbury STLS

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# Why do we use visuals?

- It helps us emphasis key words
- It helps us slow down so children can process language
- It helps our message last longer than just words
- It gives a clear visual idea of what we are talking about
- It helps children pay attention to us
- It can be easier than forming words
- It helps a child understand what is going to happen next
- It helps a child understand routines and expectations

# Basic Rules

- Think of the child's developmental level – a whole session or day timeline may not appropriate
- What support does the child needs? - real objects, photos or symbols?
- Have them in a place the child can see them clearly (Lanyards or key rings can be useful)
- Introduce the pictures one at a time so the child understands what they are and make connections with their experiences
- Be consistent
- Visuals can be supported by signing to make the message even clearer

# Supporting visuals with signing (Makaton)

- Signing supports all children
- Follows the normal grammar and syntax of speech
- Gives a clear visual idea of what is being said
- Generally used at a functional or key word level in Early years
- Sign of the week -  
[https://makaton.org/TMC/The Makaton community/Sign of the Week.aspx](https://makaton.org/TMC/The_Makaton_community/Sign_of_the_Week.aspx)
- Free resources [https://makaton.org/TMC/Free resources](https://makaton.org/TMC/Free_resources)
- Makaton taster sessions – STLS / Early Years

# Real objects

- When a child is at an early developmental stage using ‘real objects’ will help them make connections in their brains and ‘label’ items
- Use a ‘Now’ and ‘Next’ approach – “Now nappy, then snack” (some children may need just ‘now’)
- Be at the child’s level so they can see the item clearly
- Keep language short and simple



# Moving from the 'real' to the 'pictorial'



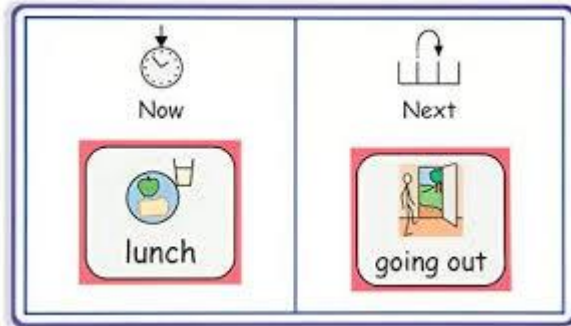
- Use photos once a child understands what the objects are
- Use clear pictures of the event or object (try not to make the photo too 'busy')
- Use photos where the child is complying with the expectations
- When talking about emotions use 'real' faces
- For snack time ,have photos of what is on offer ***that day***, rather than a general picture. This will help a child choose what they would like

# Moving to symbols

- Where possible use advice from Speech & Language Services
- Introduce the symbols one at a time so the child understands what it means
- You could add the symbol onto the photo to help make the link
- Ensure the symbols (and the photos) are available to everyone who works with the child to avoid frustration



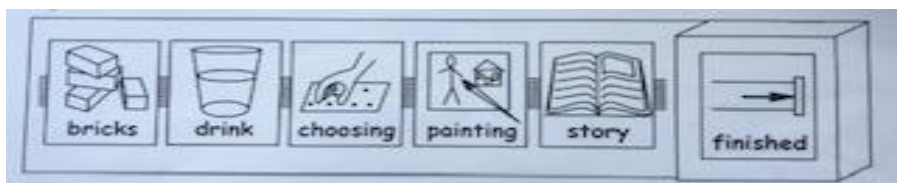
# Using a 'Now' and 'Next' board



- Find photos / symbols for the first task/ event and place it in the 'now' space
- Place photo/ symbol that will happen next in the 'next' space
- When the first activity has been completed remove from the board and place into a 'finished' box or bag – this could be supported by Makaton sign
- The symbol that is on the 'next' space can now be swapped over to the 'now space
- Repeat throughout the day at times of transitions



# Photo / symbol Timetable



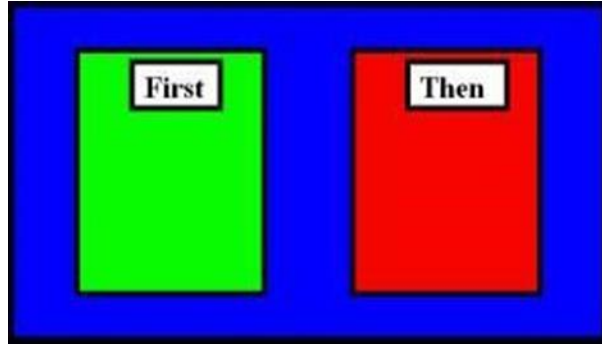
- Create a bank of photos/ symbols for activities / events throughout the day (have spares!)
- Make a blank timeline from left to right, using a Velcro strip
- For identified children break up the day into key sessions
- Remove each activity from the timeline as they are completed
- Make sure you have a finished box
- Support with Makaton sign

# Choice Boards



- Start with 2 visuals of activities, events or food the child likes
- Place them on the choice board and help the child indicate which one they would like
- Repeat back the choice “Daniel would like the cars”
- Give the child the choice they have made

# TEACCH Time



- Place 2 or 3 activities in the green basket away from the child
- Place the Velcro strip with the photos/symbols of what the child is expected to do.
- Sit opposite the child
- Show the child the strip, working left to right.
- Ask them to give you the first activity (if needed, adult takes it) from the green basket
- Demonstrate & use language firmly, to say what you want

# TEACCH Time cont...



- When the task is finished (using hand over hand if necessary), praise child with “finished” and place in the red basket with the corresponding picture from the strip.
- Repeat.....praising overtly after each activity is finished.
- When all activities are finished say “all the work is finished” “good work”.
- Offer reward e.g. bubbles for a few seconds and then say “go play” or whatever the next focus is.

# Remember!



- Only place in the basket what the child can do.
- Use the child's interests
- Do not allow the child to play with them at other times.
- The child **ALWAYS** finishes the activity.
- Praise all the time!

# Transition Books



- Collect photos of who is dropping the child off and collecting the child (Have the child in the photo smiling if possible)
- Have photos of key events within the day
- Create a zig zag book (number of spaces dependent on the child's development)
- Picture 1. Being dropped off, then key events, final picture being collected
- Have one for home and one for the setting so children can see what is going to happen and when they get to go home
- If the child is distressed, share the book – “We have done this, we need to do... and then you are collected”
- If multiple people drop off or collect, have an area where their pictures can slip in and out

# Thank you for listening



thank you

