# Supporting Language and Communication in the Classroom

**CYPIT Speech and Language Therapy**

# Aims of Today

By the end of the session you will:

- Understand more about **universal strategies** to support young people with communication needs

- Learn about how to create **a total communication environment**

- Learn about some targeted **alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) systems**

- Understand strategies that can be used to support **vocabulary development**
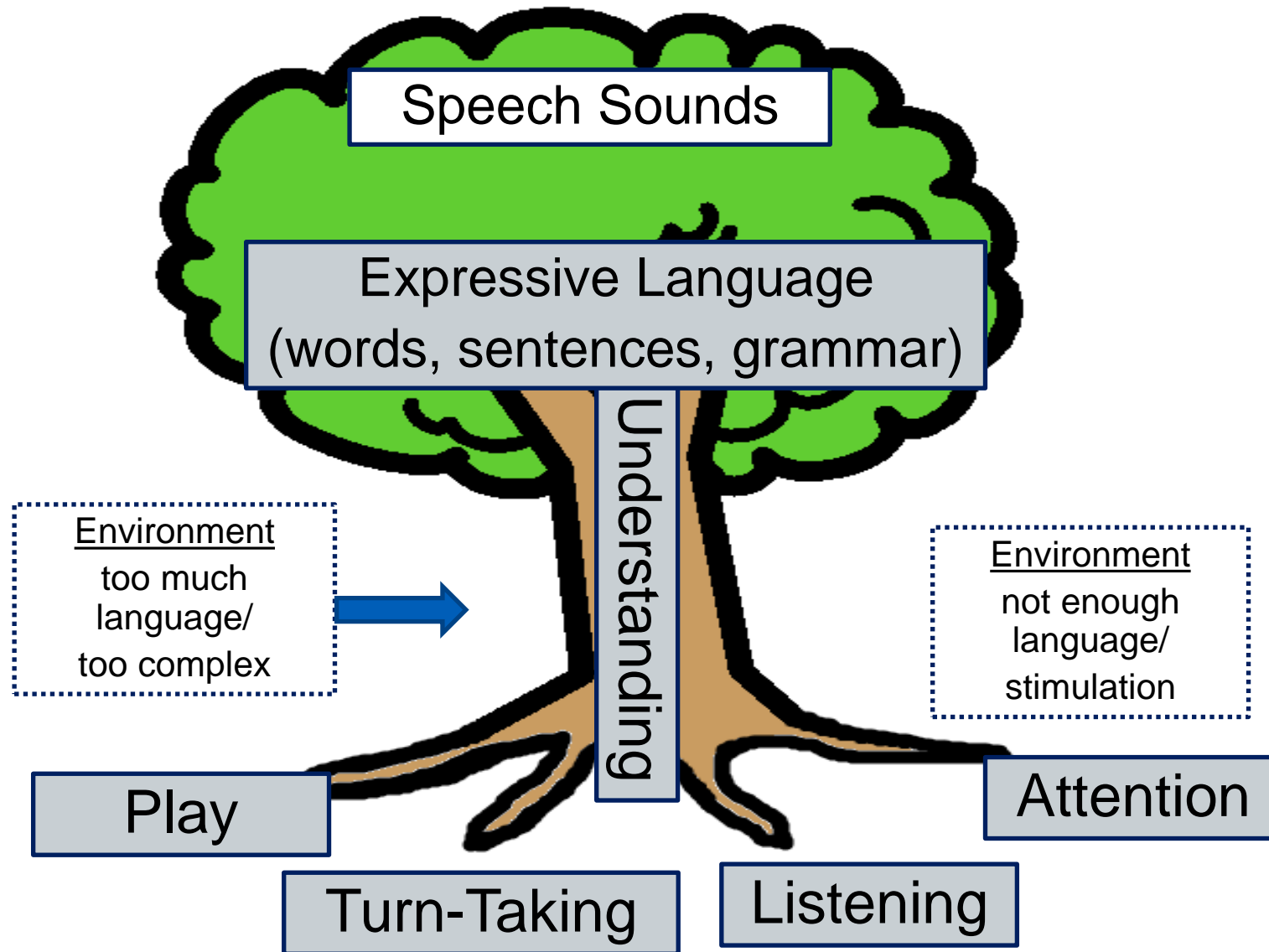
BASIC NEEDS OF THE CHILD! (Including Sensory Needs)

# Universal Strategies
Working with **children with limited communication**

# What is 'Total Communication'?

- Holistic
- Valuing all methods of communication equally
- Focuses on finding and using the right combination of communication methods for each person
- A combination of methods can be used, which reinforce each other and strengthen meaning for the individual

# Means, reasons and opportunities

For a child to communicate, they need the **three** following things:

- **Means** – Does the child have a reliable method of communication that they know how to use?

- **Reasons** – Does this child have an irresistible reason to communicate with you?

- **Opportunities** – Does the child have an opportunity to use their communication skills?
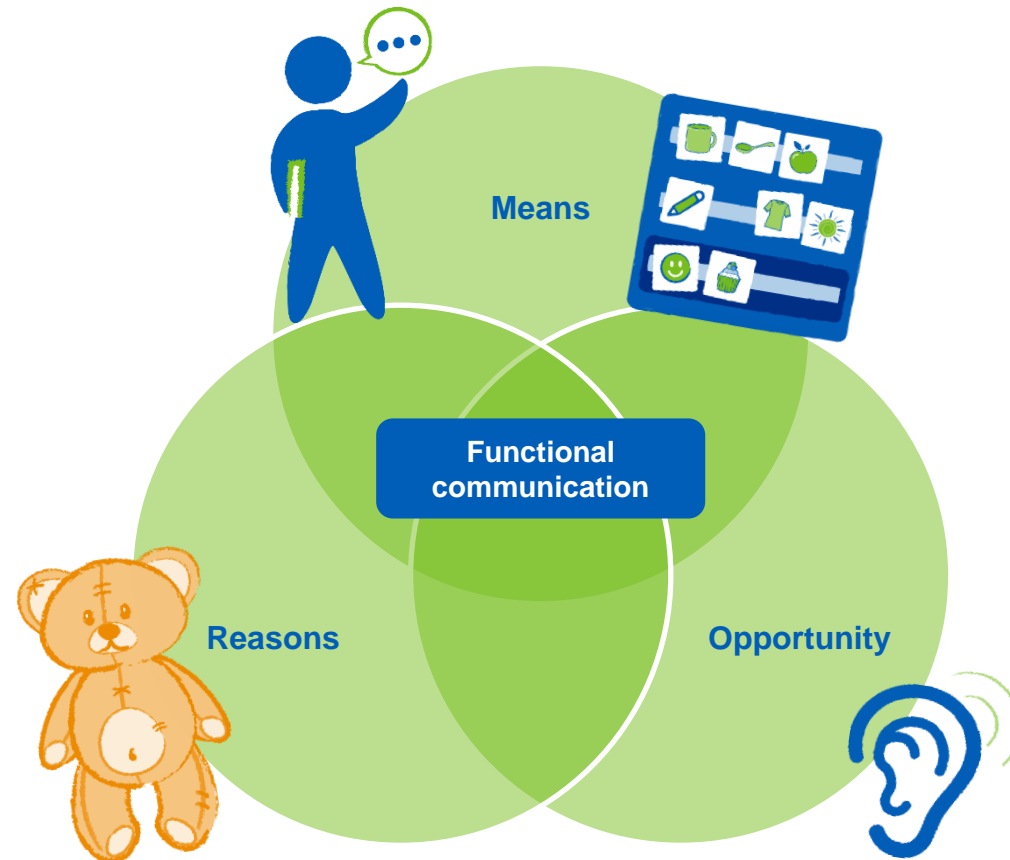
# What happens if children can't communicate effectively?

## Behaviour = Communication

- May become passive and stop trying to communicate

- May resort to other means of communicating, e.g., biting/hitting/scratching/kicking/pushing/pulling

- May become frustrated and have tantrums

- May avoid situations which require communication

- Only communicates with a few people

# The 3 Ms – Motivate, Mirror, Model

Sometimes if children are really focused on something that interests them, they can find it hard to engage completely in an interaction. This is a strategy you can use to make interaction easier for them!

- **Motivate** – Choose an activity/toy that your child really enjoys as this will make them feel more comfortable.

- **Mirror** – Sit at a safe distance away; don't crowd your child too much. Watch what they are doing and begin to copy their actions and sounds. Notice if they give you more eye contact/smile more when you do this.

- **Model** – Model appropriate language and extend their play e.g. if they're pushing a train, pretend to fall off the tracks and model 'oh no! Fell down'

- Great video to develop language through play: www.youtube.com/watch?v=V

# Things you can try……..

- Ready Steady Go games – e.g. bubbles, windup toys
- Turn taking games – count the turns
- Lotto games – e.g. use animal noises
- People Games – such as tickling/ chasing
- Nursery rhymes
- Peek-a-boo
- Inset puzzles, posting games, feely bag
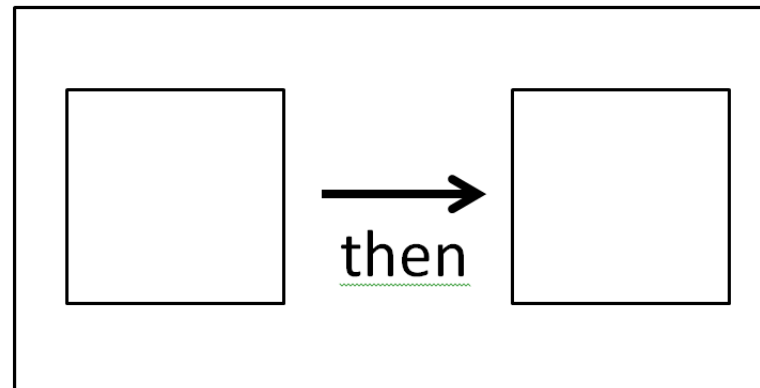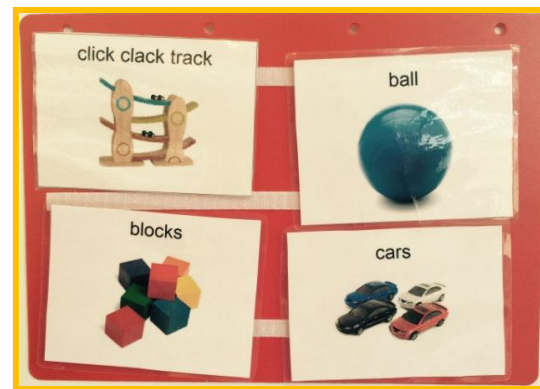- Simon Says

# Strategies that you can use

- Follow the child's lead

- Respond with interest

- Create opportunities

- Match +1 Strategy

- Visual supports

- Use simple language

- Use music/songs/rhymes

- Use repeated phrases

# Visuals

**Visual support** are helpful for everyone! But are particularly helpful for children with speech, language and communication needs.

finished

click clack track

ball

blocks

cars

**NHS**

**Berkshire Healthcare**
Children, Young People and
Families services

then

help

Get dressed

get dressed   pants   vest   trousers   T-shirt   jumper   socks   shoes

# Symbols versus Photos

**Fact Check**

- Hierarchy of visual representation is no longer thought to be strictly true

- Symbols are sometimes easier to understand than photos – clearer, no background, non-specific

- Children learn to understand symbols over time

- Photos may be better to represent people or very specific toys but make sure the background is plain.



TV

a sandwich

flowers



park
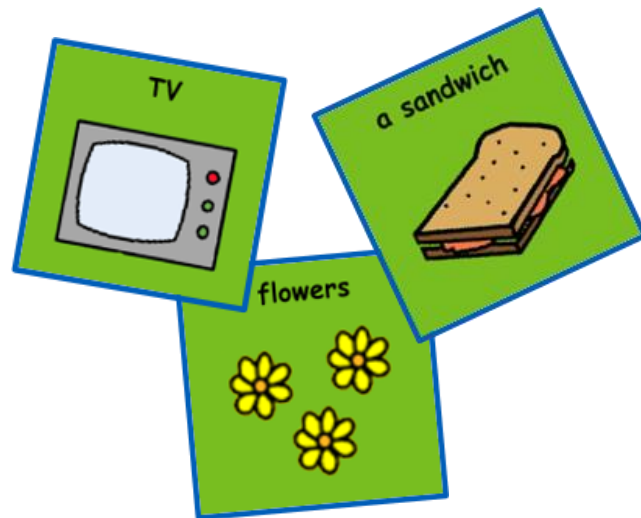
# 'AAC': Augmentative and Alternative Communication

# What is AAC?

- Augmentative and Alternative communication is using methods other than spoken language to support **both understanding and use of language**.

- Examples include communication boards, PECS, communication books, Makaton, high tech systems such as eye gaze or iPads.

- AAC is a **child's voice**! We need to set them up for success by providing them with access to it and by modelling its use.

- What is **modelling**? Modelling means we use the AAC system to talk to the AAC user.

  - Start small. It will feel difficult and you may feel clumsy but any modelling is better than none. It will get easier the more you do it.

  - All adults around the child should be modelling.

  - Model as often as possible.

  - Model without expectation i.e. don't make the child to copy you

# Types of AAC

**No Tech** – Gestures, Makaton Signs, Body Language, Facial Expressions, Pointing

**Low Tech** – Pictures, Visuals, Symbols, Communication Boards

**High Tech** – Switches (Mid Tech), iPads, Voice Output Communication Aids, Eye-Gaze Technology

# Objects of Reference

- Always present it to the child **immediately before** the change of activity (this avoids confusion or impatience).
- Try to gain the child's attention by calling their name.
- Use a simple and consistent phrase eg "Sophie, it's choice time now" "Look/feel, it's time for choice".
- Always emphasise and repeat the main word as the object is explored.
- Allow the child time to explore the object to experience and process the information through hearing touch and smell.
- Where possible the child should hold on to the object.
- Take the object to the next activity and then repeat the phrase above.

# What is **PECS?**

- Stands for **'Picture Exchange Communication System'**
- Goal = **spontaneous & functional communication**
- A form of low-tech AAC, where **a picture is exchanged for a desired item**
- Based on principles of applied behaviour analysis
- Student can **use PECS instead of or alongside spoken language**
- Teaches the student to start communication <u>without</u> having to copy or imitate
- It is made up of six phases

# Communication Boards & Books

The adult points to the board/book when they speak:

- This supports the child's understanding of what is being said
- It also encourages them to do the same when they speak

The child will learn the meaning of symbols through trial and error because the adult will respond to what they have pointed to, even if they are not sure that is what they meant.

This will help them to learn the meaning of the symbol for next time.

# High Tech Communication Aids
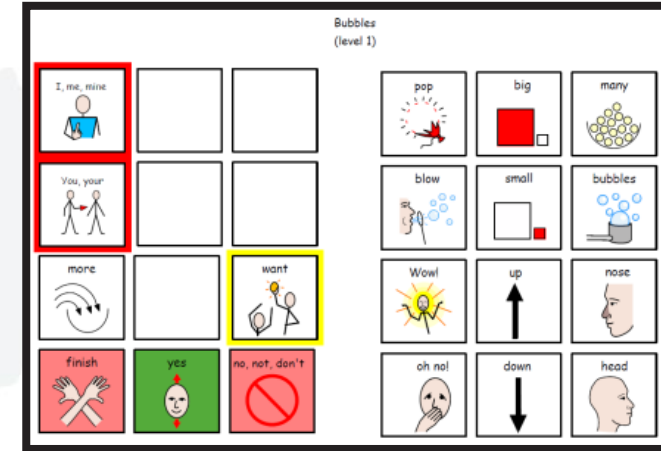
## What are Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs)?

These are devices that often have set symbol grids and allow access to a wide range of vocabulary.
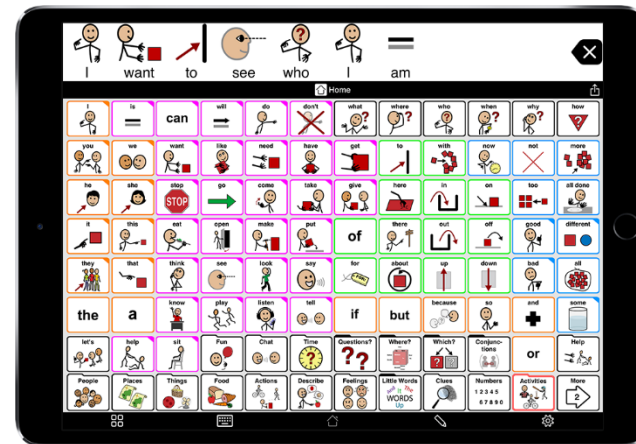
# **Best Practice**

1. Access
   - All day, at all times, and in all environments
2. Modelling
   - Exposure on/with their AAC system
3. Core Vocabulary
   - Comprises 80% of what we say
   - Core Vocab vs Fringe Vocab
4. Communication Opportunities
   - AAC users need at least 200 opportunities throughout the day
   - Provide enriching environments

# Intensive Interaction

- An approach to facilitate the development of social interaction and communication abilities in children with communication difficulties including autism, developmental delay and learning difficulties.

- A way of enabling children with communication needs to engage with their surroundings and build meaningful relationships.

- An approach that helps children to learn the basic communication skills and start to develop their social skills.

**The adult:**

- provides a safe environment
- allows the child to control/lead the interaction through the adult copying their behaviours
- uses exaggerated noises and facial expressions
- use simple and repetitive language to describe what the child can see or hear
- respond to every behaviour e.g. to a sound, sigh, smile, movement through 'imitating' or 'copying'

# Intensive Interaction

- **See our Mainstream Schools' Information Pack** for further details about Intensive Interaction.
- There is a checklist to complete (p. 72) that shows you where the child / young person is currently and how you can work on the next steps. The checklist completed at regular intervals is a good way to monitor progress.
- **www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk**

# Echolalia

- **Echolalia** is when your child **repeats back language** they have heard around them. They might have heard a **person** say it or hear it on **TV/iPad.**

- Echolalia can be **immediate** (repeated straight after they hear it) or

- Echolalia can be **delayed** (repeated after a few minutes/hours/days).

- **Echolalia communicates**! It is not random.

- What can you do?

  - Acknowledge echolalia by repeating it back to them, saying "yes" or "mhm"

  - Try to decipher what it could mean and model alternative language

  - Lots of immediate echolalia can mean the child is not regulated so try pulling back on your language

  - Diary to note down common phrases and what they could mean. Share and discuss with parents.

# Other targeted strategies

**Attention Autism** – *Gina Davies, "an irresistible invitation to learn"*

**Curiosity programme** - *strategy used to help teach individuals to develop the skill of curiosity, form positive relationships with others and to learn to engage with a wider range of stimuli.*

# One more **key thing……**

**Think about the child / young person's sensory needs** – all the things we have talked about today rely on pupil having some sense of sensory regulation.

Think about if the child / young person you are working with is **under-responsive:**
- Seeks constant movement
- Difficulty sitting still
- Doesn't get dizzy when spinning
- Craves fast, spinning and/or intense movement

# What you can do…

## Proprioceptive activities

Proprioceptive activities are generally **calming and organising** for both over- and under-responsive and **you can not do too much!**

- Rolling/ rocking on therapy ball
- Being squashed between 2 cushions
- Tug of war
- Climbing
- Ride on toys, scooter, pedal bike, go kart.
- Safe crashing
- Deep pressure
- Any leisure activity – running, swimming, ball games
- Jumping on a trampoline
- "Heavy work" such as putting away equipment and tidying up, digging in sand, watering plants, cooking/ baking, play dough and theraputty etc.

# What factors affect **understanding in the classroom?**

- Attention and listening

- Behaviour

- Memory

- Processing

- Ability to understand language

# Strategies to **support understanding**

- Get the child's **attention** before speaking

- Use **visual** support – pictures, objects, role play, demonstration.

- Teach how to ask for **clarification** or **repetition**

- Explain in different ways, **link** to familiar words and real life examples.

- **Demonstrate** if possible

- **Simplify** your language – use short 'chunks' and familiar words

# Supporting **processing**

- Provide extra thinking time

- Repeat instructions in the same way

- Reduce distractions

- Give specific things to listen out for and to remember

# Blank Language Scheme

Encourages the development of children's verbal reasoning and abstract language.
The model breaks down this complex area of language into smaller more achievable steps

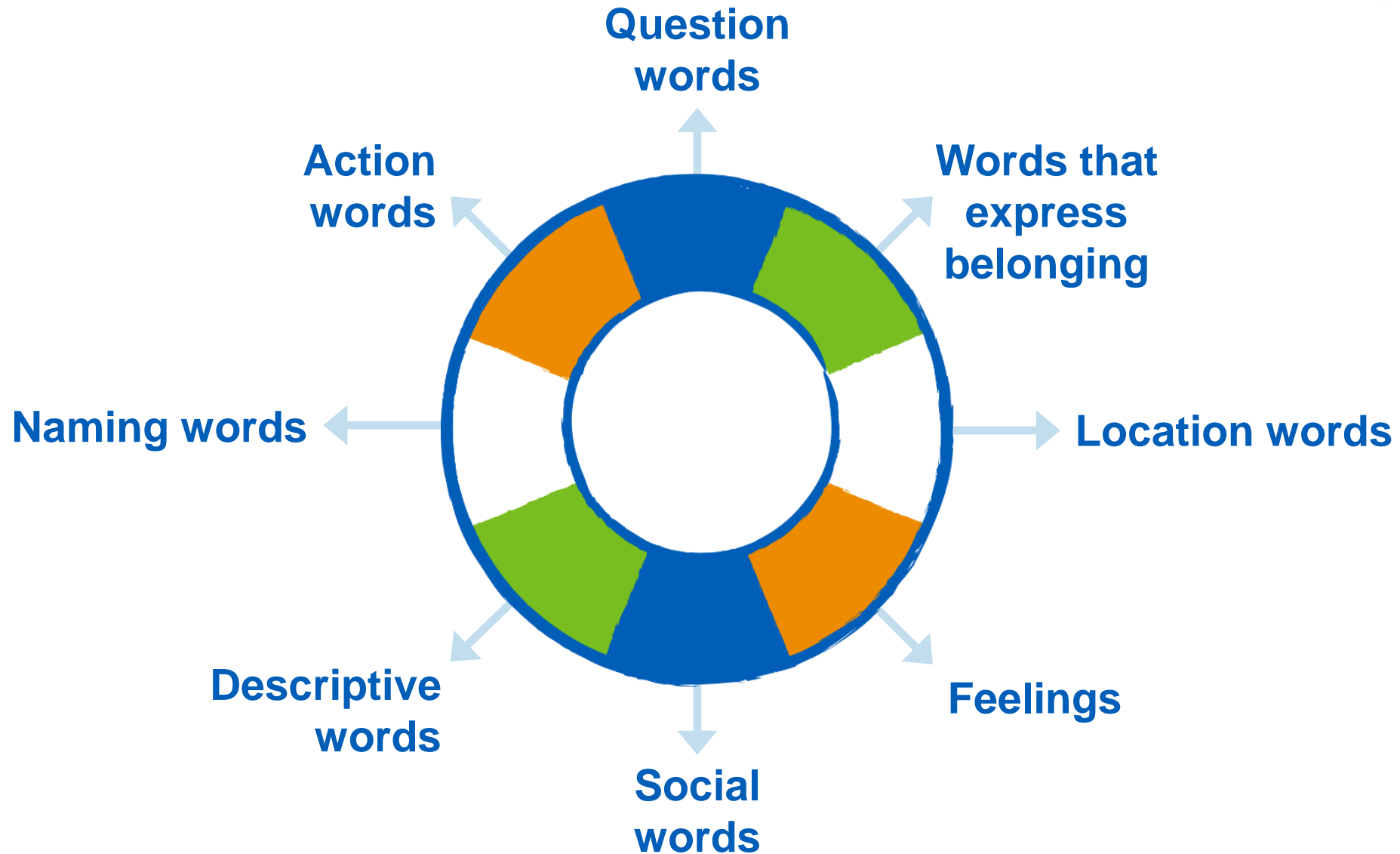| Level 1 | Naming Things | 60% of 3 year olds understand level 1 and level 2 questions. |
|---------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Level 2 | Describing things<br>Answering Who? What? Where? | |
| Level 3 | Talking about stories and events | 65% of 5 year olds understand level 3 and level 4 questions. |
| Level 4 | Solving problems and answering Why? Questions | |

# Blank Levels

## Supporting questions **in the classroom**

- Consider **which level of questions** you are asking which child

- **Try an earlier level of question** if a child is **struggling** to answer a question

- Provide **lots of opportunities** for children to hear questions (and their answers!) modelled.

# Five strategies **to support spoken vocabulary skills**

- Provide **opportunities for over-learning** (e.g. use same Chatterbox everyday in the week – keep some things the same and expand others)

- Think about **key words** and **comment** during play based activities

- Make it **practical**

- Talk about **action** as well as object words

- Play games that support **vocabulary skills** e.g.
  guess what I am thinking of
  category games
  Word Wise Whizz

# Vocabulary Wheel



Question words

Words that express belonging

Location words

Feelings

Social words

Descriptive words

Naming words

Action words

# Vocabulary Wheel



**NHS**
**Berkshire Healthcare**
**Children, Young People and Families services**

**Question words**
Where • Who • What
"Where's the car going?"

**Action words**
Go • Drive • Wash •
Turn Move • Pull •
Push • Gone

**Words that express belonging**
Mine • Yours • Hers • Sam's
Mummy's • Daddy's

**Naming words**
Car • Road • Wheels
• Lightening McQueen

**Location words**
On • Under • In
Behind • In front

**Car**

**Descriptive words**
Fast • Big • Broken
Small • Shiny
colours

**Social words**
Hello • Bye • Thank you
Brum-brum • Ta
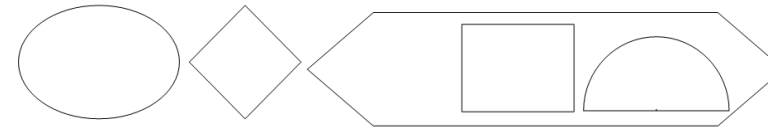
**Feelings**
Happy • Sad • Scary

# Approaches for Developing Expressive Language
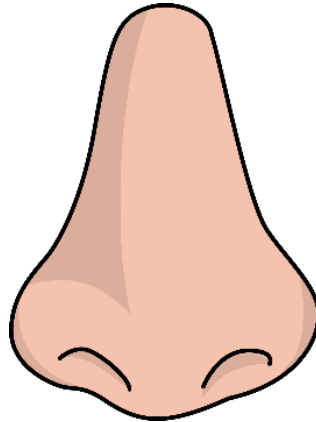## In the Classroom



- **Colourful Semantics**

- **Shape Coding™**

Look at the **Mainstreams Schools' Information Pack** for more info about Colourful Semantics – CYPIT also run online training on this approach.

# Multi sensory learning

# Useful **Resources**

**CYPF Online resource** – see link below for more ideas about sensory diet and sensory activities:

https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/support-and-advice/sensory-processing/

**Sensory Processing Videos:**
- What is sensory processing?
- The Tactile (touch) System
- Body awareness (proprioception)
- Movement and Balance
- Alertness Levels

https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/children-and-young-peoples-integrated-therapies/occupational-therapy/

# Thank you for listening

Further help can be found via our website:

**cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/communication**