

Tips for listening to young children with a hearing impairment (age birth to five years)



Why do we need to listen?

- By listening we can help children feel better about themselves
- By listening we can increase our understanding of children's needs, interests and concerns
- Listening builds respectful relationships.

1. All children are communicators.

Communication is the sending and receiving of messages between people. It can be physical or verbal. You may need to guess at and interpret the message and reinforce by responding in some way.

2. We need to learn to listen.

By listening carefully your response may be more appropriate.

3. Make time to give attention.

Children with hearing impairment need longer to process language and express themselves because of the things they have missed through not being able to hear.



4. Give time to observe, wait and respond.

Be alert to facial expressions, body movements, vocalisations and stilling. Patience will help. Wait for the child to express their feelings. Respond - repeat or feedback the response to the child.

5. Learn to recognize body language as well as verbal communication.



Children with hearing impairment may express their feelings through facial expression, action and body movements. Children may be visually very aware and need eye contact with you when they respond. Some children may become still when they are concentrating.

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6. Be aware of visual preferences.

Be aware that children will need to see your face in order to realise that their vocalisations result in a response.

Sensitively support children to explore new experiences of sound and give opportunities to revisit. Try peek-a-boo games. Build up a routine of responding to their vocalisations.



7. Acknowledge the child's interest or lead.

Reflect visually and verbally that you understand their intention.

8. Use language appropriate to the child.

Language development is often delayed with young children with hearing impairment. You may need to give experience of real objects. Always use language that reflects what the child is interested in.



9. Give clear visual indicators.

For example, gain the child's attention before you begin the interaction. Make sure they can see your face while the interaction takes place. Move so they can see you when you respond to their communication.

10. Use the child's responses to evaluate and to inform future practice.



Show the child that you are listening to them by acknowledging that they are communicating and acting upon it.