



# Social Communication

**Bolton  
Council**

## Educational Psychology Service & Speech and Language Therapy Service

*This leaflet has been designed for parents and educators to help recognise, understand and support children with social communication difficulties in school and at home.*

### What is social communication?

Social communication is the way in which we express or receive a message, idea, or thought, through spoken, written or non-verbal communication, such as body language, tone of voice and facial expressions, in order to produce socially expected behaviour when interacting with others.

### What are social communication difficulties?

**Some children find it difficult to begin a conversation appropriately and to talk to other people.**

Children with social communication difficulties often find it difficult to make and maintain friendships and demonstrate appropriate turn taking during activities and conversations with others. They can also experience difficulties in understanding the thoughts and feelings of others, such as their emotions.

The language that is associated with emotions can be difficult for some children to understand, as emotions are abstract concepts. This may mean that some children do not have the vocabulary to describe, recognise and express the emotions they are feeling and may find it difficult to identify and understand these feelings in others. This difficulty may be part of a disordered pattern of social communication or may be the results of immature skills that are following a typical developmental pattern but less developed than would be expected for the young person's age.



### What might a social communication difficulty look like?

**Signs of difficulties with social communication that a child may display may include:**

**Using inappropriate language and/or limited non-verbal language, eg. eye contact or facial expressions**

**Struggling or becoming anxious with changes in routine or unexpected changes**

**Limited understanding of social situations or social problem solving eg. struggle turn taking or making appropriate choices**

**Literal thinking eg. struggling to understand jokes, idioms, sarcasm**

**Struggling to understand different points of view or perspectives, interact with peers or maintain friendships**

**Experiencing difficulties in understanding verbal instructions and appearing unwilling to cooperate or maybe responding in an unexpected way.**

# Supporting social communication at home

There are many ways you can help support children with social communication difficulties at home.



## Break down instructions

Break down instructions into smaller/shorter chunks using minimal language that is easier to understand.



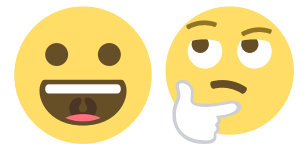
## Use visual aids

Use visual aids to support the child's understanding of verbal language, such as pictures and/or objects alongside words you are using.



## Give time

Allow the child additional time to process the given information and respond.



## Label emotions

When your child demonstrates an emotion, label it for them, such as "You are feeling happy/sad", so they can hear the name of the emotion and link it to how they are feeling. This will also help them to identify the emotions and feelings of others.



## Provide social opportunities

Provide your child opportunities to interact with others in social situations, in order to build their confidence in initiating/joining in conversations/play with others.



*It is important to remember that social communication differences may also be secondary to other difficulties such as social and emotional mental health needs, learning difficulties, sensory processing needs and genetic conditions.*

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### Our values are who we are...

Accountable, determined, making a difference, honest and respectful. We work together.



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