

Communication Friendly Environment Checklist for Early Years Settings – Guidance Notes

This document can be used alongside your checklist.

You will find examples of good practice along with suggestions for where to go for further information and ideas.

Developed by:



**Blackpool Teaching
Hospitals**
NHS Foundation Trust



In conjunction with:

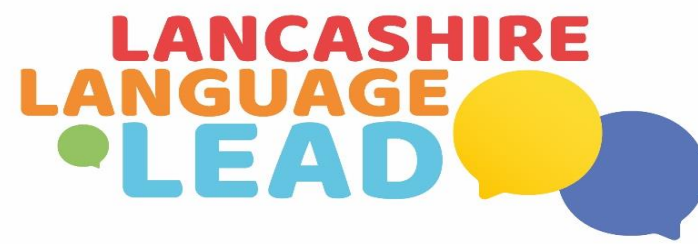


Physical Environment

Questions to consider	Some examples	Useful information
Do adults regularly observe how children are communicating in different spaces? Is this discussed/shared and used to plan any changes?		Every Child a Talker: Guidance for Early Language Lead Practitioners (leicestershire.gov.uk)
Does the physical space allow for different groupings, e.g., cosy/smaller spaces for small group interactions?	<i>There are areas within the room which allow for group interactions, for example, tent, cosy book corner or cosy baskets.</i>	Welcome to ELIZABETH JARMAN® - Elizabeth Jarman®
Does the layout/position of furniture allow children to be face to face with their peers and/or adults?	<i>The room is laid out with round tables, adults position themselves in front of the child and at their eye level. At square tables adults sit opposite or diagonally on a corner. Furniture is positioned so adults can see all areas.</i>	Learning environment resources – Birth To 5 Matters
Can children easily access quiet spaces where noise levels are reduced?	<i>Quiet corner, more enclosed to block out noise – away from door. Avoid unnecessary background noise such as music playing.</i>	https://youtu.be/r1ZbRpU9jak?feature=shared
Can children easily access spaces where visual distractions are minimised?	<i>Quiet area has minimal displays on walls and minimal resources, curtains can be used if needed, to create more enclosed space</i>	
Does the way into the setting allow for gradual transition, e.g., spaces to sit quietly as they arrive before starting their day?	<i>We have a comfy seat in a corner near the door, where children can watch for a while before they come and join in.</i>	

Activities and Routines

Questions to consider	Some examples	Useful information
Are children supported (visually as well as verbally) to understand routines and to transition from one activity or space to another?	<p><i>Traffic light system used to prepare children for transitions in advance alongside verbal cues.</i></p> <p><i>Objects of reference are used in the baby room.</i></p> <p><i>Now / next board used for specific children to help them understand what next.</i></p>	<p>Visual supports - Speech and Language UK</p>
Are opportunities for good quality interactions build into daily routines?	<p><i>Adults always sit with children at snack and mealtimes to encourage conversations.</i></p> <p><i>We introduce new words to go with routine activities, such as getting ready for outside (zips, buttons, pull, waterproof)</i></p>	<p>Create opportunities for children to communicate - Speech and Language UK: Changing young lives</p>
Do focussed/adult led activities include outcomes for communication appropriate to stage of development?	<p><i>Adults track children's progress and use this to inform planning.</i></p> <p><i>New vocabulary and ideas for conversations are included in planning.</i></p>	<p>Microsoft Word - ATTS (2022) - FINAL.docx (lancashire.gov.uk)</p>
Do activities and routines encourage communication for different purposes? E.g., greeting, asking questions, describing, problem solving, negotiating, requesting etc.	<p><i>At snack time, children are encouraged to request what they want, talk about our day, and encourage children to ask each other questions, talk about 'what would happen if...'</i></p> <p><i>Our babies are given time to make choices, show they want more or have finished.</i></p>	<p>Every Child a Talker: Guidance for Early Language Lead Practitioners (leicestershire.gov.uk)</p> <p>Means, Reasons & Opportunities Model (Money & Thurman, 1994).</p>
Is new vocabulary learning targeted routinely and appropriately to stage of development?	<p><i>Adults use mind maps to introduce new vocabulary.</i></p> <p><i>With older babies and toddlers, we encourage understanding of new words with repetition in routines.</i></p>	<p>Helping children learn new words: Early years - Speech and Language UK: Changing young lives</p>



<p>Are routines and planned activities carried out at the best times of day? (e.g., is story always before lunch when children are hungry and adults are busy setting up?)</p>	<p><i>Our routine varies dependent on the children. We have focused story/song/listening times when the children can focus best.</i></p>	
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Adult Interactions

Questions to consider	Some examples	Useful information
Do adults have a good level of skills and knowledge around speech, language and communication?	<i>Several practitioners have attended training from the SLT department including Makaton L1, EY: Help your child to communicate. Adults' knowledge about SLC is reviewed regularly</i>	Home - SLCF - The Communication Trust (slcframework.org.uk) How Can I Develop My Knowledge and Skills? :: Blackpool Teaching Hospitals
Do adults ensure they are face to face during interactions with children?	<i>Adults always sit facing children during interactions, if a child struggles to focus, adults try to ensure that child is sat in their eye line.</i>	
Do adults always get children's attention before giving information?	<i>We use children's names before speaking to them. If children struggle to follow group instructions, we repeat information on a 1:1 basis.</i>	How can I help my child at home? :: Blackpool Teaching Hospitals
Do adults give children sufficient time to engage in interactions?	<i>We observe each other and use peer observations to remind each other to wait.</i>	It's Worth the Wait! The Power of Waiting During Interactions with Your Child (hanen.org)
Do adults encourage <i>extended</i> interactions?	<i>Adults give time for children to take more turns, they comment on what preschoolers have said or done then wait to encourage them to add more information. Baby room staff copy what the children are doing or the sounds they make, then wait for the baby to continue.</i>	Holiday Handouts 2023 - snow (hanen.org)
Do adults use more comments than questions?	<i>Adults try to implement the 'hand rule', i.e. four comments for every one question.</i>	https://youtu.be/dNdHzFkKfBE?feature=shared
Do adults use effective strategies to teach new vocabulary?		Helping children learn new words: Early years - Speech and Language UK: Changing young lives



		How can I help my child at home? :: Blackpool Teaching Hospitals
Do children have opportunity for supported small group interactions (e.g, stories, talking time)?	<i>We make sure all children have time in a small group with an adult at some point in the day.</i>	The-Hanen-Centre-Calendar_September-2022.aspx Find times to talk throughout the day.
Do adults model speech, language and interaction skills at an appropriate level for individual children?	<i>Baby room adults model sounds and key words. In preschool, adults repeat back and extend children's sentences. We encourage interaction with peers as well as adults</i>	Help for early years providers : Exploring language (education.gov.uk) How can I help my child at home? :: Blackpool Teaching Hospitals https://youtu.be/55-SlwjXngI?feature=shared
Do adults use strategies to support children's understanding of language?	<i>Adults simplify their language and chunk information. We check back to make sure children understand what they have been asked to do.</i>	Early language and communication :: Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust (lscft.nhs.uk) How can I help my child at home? :: Blackpool Teaching Hospitals
Are children supported to understand their own and others' feelings?	<i>We use stories to talk about how the characters feel and relate this to the children's experiences.</i>	
Are children supported to understand the rules and boundaries for appropriate interactions?	<i>Adults model problem solving in play and encourage the children to listen to each other's views.</i>	