 **COMMUNICATION - MAKATON**

 **Importance of Communication**

Being able to communicate is one of the most important skills we need in life. Almost everything we do involves communication; everyday tasks such as learning at school, asking for food and drink, sorting out problems, making friends and having fun. These all rely on our ability to communicate with each other.

**How Makaton Works**

Most communication is through speaking to others.  However, some people have difficulty with using speech and they need to use different ways to communicate, like using Makaton symbols and signs.

When we speak, we often use extra tools to help the person we are communicating with understand what we are saying.  For example, if we are asked for directions, we might point (gesture) or draw a picture.  These are clues to help provide more information.

Makaton uses speech with signs (gestures) and symbols (pictures) to help people communicate.  We also use facial expression, eye contact and body language to give as much information as possible.

**When should it be used?**

Makaton is useful for supporting communication for children who have speech & language delay, general learning difficulties, Down’s syndrome, social communication difficulties and children who have English as an additional language.

It is important that Makaton is used consistently and that all staff working with the child are aware of and use the signs. Makaton works best when used consistently with all the children in the setting regardless of ability and as part of the general provision within the setting.

**How can we introduce it?**

It is useful to choose certain times of day where Makaton is used as part of a consistent routine. This can be snack time or story time. Certain signs would be chosen (not too many!) and used each time the routine is carried out.

It is important to choose signs that are motivating for the child i.e. ‘train’ for a child who loves trains. Do not be tempted to use signs that only benefit the staff! Start with a few signs (up to 5) until this is consistent and the child is responding to the signs and then gradually add more. Many children will not use the signs to initiate independently for a long time but this does not mean that it is not helpful.

**Top Tips**

* Signs must be clear and consistent- do not change your signs even if the child

signs it differently.

* Make sure the child can see you!
* Don’t forget to use facial expressions and to SPEAK!
* There must be consistency if the system is to work.
* It should be used by all staff involved with the child.

 [www.makaton.org](http://www.makaton.org)