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## **The Railway Children Company**

### **Sharing of professional practices and support in place from Local Authorities**

Our focus for this professional practice will be supporting children's speech and language. You may find below activities, information, standard practice and resources to support parents provided to us by Havering Local Authority.

#### **Process of supporting speech and language within the setting:**

All staff focus on supporting children's speech and language development daily. Key workers will also focus on this area much more in the earlier years of a child's journey with us as they will focus on the 3 prime areas : Personal, social and emotional development, Physical development and Communication and Language- as a child gets older or when it is appropriate to they will then begin to include the other 4 areas of development: maths, literacy, understanding the world and expressive art and design.

Should you be concerned with your child's speech or language development (or any area of their development) please speak to your child's key worker so that they can work with the setting SENCO to provide support to your child.

#### **Things which may get put in place in the setting:**

If staff feel your child may benefit from some specific in house speech and language activities, we can discuss this with you. In house SALT (Speech and language therapy) is activities provided by staff which are more specific to your child's need but done so without a referral being submitted to Havering Acorn Centre for SALT support.

Through working with families we may discuss the next steps in supporting your child's development through the possibility of a referral to the SALT department at the Acorn Centre. It is a requirement that if a child does not have a recent hearing test, a referral to audiology would also be required to do to ensure that there are no issues with hearing which can impact a child's speech. Ear issues such as glue ear are very common in young children and may result in a speech delay and once addressed by a medical team can improve SAL quickly and effectively.

### **How to support SAL for babies :**

The best speech and language support for babies is done day to day and as a part of their routines. Small things such as face-to-face talking, singing nursery rhymes, reading lovely colourful books, playing peek-a-boo, and narrating daily routines will help expose your child to positive interactions. To further develop this, you can have a babble conversation with your baby- imitating their sounds and using gestures like pointing to build conversation skills and vocabulary from birth. These activities teach turn-taking, sound recognition, and connect words with actions, fostering language development through interaction.

To get the most out of these interactions we find that being face to face, using an excitable voice and repetition are the best ways to keep a baby's attention and involvement.

### **How to support SAL for toddlers:**

Supporting SAL for toddlers is very similar to supporting for babies, its best supported through face to face, in an engaging manner and repeating words and phrases. Toddlers often learn lots of vocabulary and may mispronounce some words and phrases its very important to not knock their confidence by saying "no its not.... Its..." instead acknowledgement of what is meant and the correct modelling is the most appropriate way to correct language mistakes. For example if a child say "look... ain" meaning train the best response is "oh wow yes a TRAIN" with emphasis on the correct modelling of the word mispronounced.

Activities at home for toddlers can be similar to baby activities, through singing songs, reading books and narrating daily routines however they are enhanced so that songs are more repetitive to encourage confidence in singing the words they are comfortable with, stories can be more interactive leaving gaps for the child to repeat sounds or single words they know well and narrating daily activities can be more question based for example "what am I doing today... today we are going to the park"

At the toddler age you can start to have more play based activities such as using toys to create stories, ask questions (Where's the car going?), and introduce words like "big," "little," "up," "down," . You can start to use building blocks to introduce a variety of language such as name colours, numbers, and use spatial words like "higher up," "fall down," and "left/right" while building. We find this next activity to be a favourite with toddlers as it is fun and interactive, by using a variety of animals to repeat their sounds or noises they may make it doesn't just encourage words but also exploring deliberate sound making and who doesn't love to make a big noise.

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### **How to support SAL for young children:**

For children at a preschool age / ability it is a wonderful time to get creative with how you interact with your child. Everything done with your child is a chance for them to learn and explore and to develop new vocabulary, extend their sentences and explore their abilities to the fullest. You can still do all the lovely activities which you would do with babies and toddlers but just extend and challenge them slightly more. We find that the best speech and language activities focus on interactive play such as storytelling, using more challenging games like "I Spy," which encourages attention and listening, charades, role-playing and dressing up which really allows the child to express their own individual preferences and interests, singing, and favourite books to build vocabulary.

It's important to remember that when asking questions of children to know their understanding and ability to use words, that we as adults also give them time to answer, this may feel like an uncomfortable silence for an adult however it could be the correct amount of time for a child's brain to process the question asked of them, think of the answer they wish to give and to then give that answer verbally.

I hope that you have found some of this information helpful and whilst it does not go into full depths and outlined ideas for more specific activities, you are more than welcome to speak to key workers if you would like some specifics for at home to complete with your child.

It is so very important to remember that every child is different, every child learns in a different way and at a different speed and it is this unique way of being that makes them so incredibly special. What may work for some may not work for others so we will continually aim to meet every child's needs and support every family in whichever way we can.

Alongside this there are some documents linked which parents may find useful, all information has been taken directly from Havering Education Services.