



Communicating with children and young people during Covid-19

Wearing a mask and face shield makes communicating with children harder

- Children can't read your lips.
- Children may not be able to hear you clearly.
- Children can't see your facial expressions.
- Children may be scared or confused by your mask, face shield and PPE.
- Children may not understand who you are or what you are there to do.
- Even if they know you already, they may not recognise you.



Many of the children we work with may have difficulties with understanding, talking or social communication. This might make communicating and building a relationship with them whilst wearing protective equipment particularly challenging.

How you can help

Think about your visit from the child's point of view. They may be scared and worried during this time.

Prepare what you will say and how you will respond. How can you support your speech to help children understand?



Explain anything you are planning to do with the child. You could support this with pictures or props e.g. dolls, toy stethoscope.

www.makaton.com

www.widgit.com

Stay at a comfortable distance from the child, but keep at their eye level. Make sure your body language is positive and calm.



Be flexible – you may need another visit to carry out what you need to do so that the child gets to know you.



Communicate clearly

Ask families to turn the TV or music off to reduce background noise and distractions. Show children a photo of yourself when you say your name, so they can see who is behind the mask.



Use short simple sentences and support your speech with Makaton signs, gestures or pictures where possible.



Speak louder and repeat yourself if necessary. Pause often.

State the purpose of your visit clearly.

Ask the child if they want to speak directly to you, or if they prefer to give their answers to a family member instead.



Make use of interpreters such as British Sign Language interpreters (BSL) by contacting the Ujala service: T: 0116 295 4747 E: RequestsUjala@leicspart.nhs.uk