

Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service

Communication Boards

What is a Communication Board?

A communication board is a sheet of symbols, pictures or photos that a child will learn to point to, to communicate with those around them.

Why use a communication board?

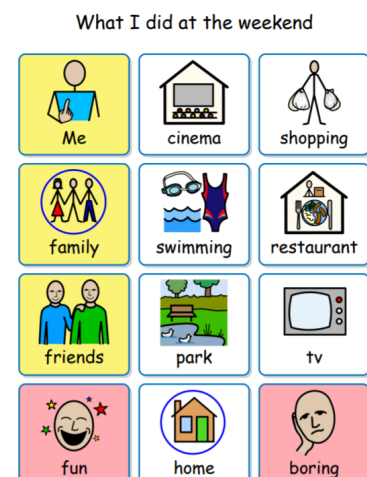
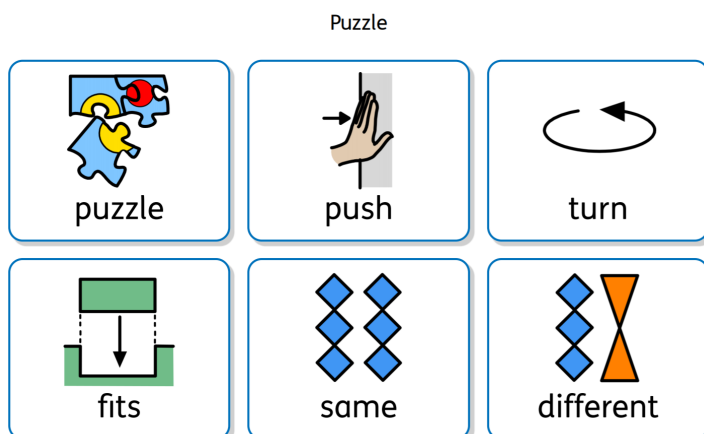
Speech is difficult for some children. They may find it difficult to make people understand what they are trying to say. They might say less than they want to because the words are hard to say. If the child is able to **show** their listener as well as **tell** them what they are trying to say they are more likely to get their message across. It can also be used to model to the child how to make choices and how to develop their language further.

Will using a communication board stop a child speaking?

No! A communication board is just another way of supporting communication. It is used **as well** as speech not **instead** of it. If speech is easier (or becomes easier) a child will naturally choose to speak rather than point to pictures.

What will the board include?

Your child's Speech and Language Therapist will request vocabulary from you and from school staff so that the boards are specific and relevant to the child. Boards can vary quite significantly both in complexity and the types of topics they cover. See below an example of a board with only a few key symbols based around a specific game, compared to the board (right) with a high level of symbols, based around conversation topics.



How to use a communication board

- It is important to remember that this is a **new way** for your child to communicate, therefore they will need lots of time and support to learn how to use it effectively
- Children usually learn language by having adults and those around them, use the language themselves, which the child then learns to copy. It is the same principle with using a communication board. The adult will need to use the board often to give the child the opportunity to copy this. The following steps will break this down further:

How to model the communication board for your child

- Choose an activity your child is interested in, for this example we will use puzzles.
- Place the board so both you and the child can see and reach it
- As you start to play, comment on what you and your child are doing, as you do this, **point** to the key words that you are saying, on the board.

For Example :

“more **puzzle**” “ it **fits!**” “ do you want a **different one?**” “ it’s the **same**”
“ **turn** it” “ **push** it down”

- Pause each time you model a word or phrase, allowing your child time to copy by also pointing, if they feel ready to.
- If your child points to any of the pictures, it is important to name the picture they pointed to, and then respond appropriately. For example, if your child points to “puzzle” you would say “ puzzle” and then maybe hand your child a piece of puzzle, or show them the puzzle
- As your child develops, you may start to point to more than one key word at a time. For example, you might say “ **turn** the **puzzle**” pointing to “turn” and then “puzzle” .
- On a more complex board, you may be able to build longer more complex phrases, for example on the “ Talking about my weekend board” you could create sentences such as
“ **I** stayed at **home**, and watched **tv**, it was **boring**”
“ **I** went to a **restaurant** with my **friends**, it was **fun**”

NOTE: this level of sentence would likely be achieved only after lots of practise with the board and the child may need prompting questions such as “ with who?” “where?”.

If you have any questions about communication boards, please seek further advice from your child’s Speech and Language Therapist