

## Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service

# Supporting Storytelling Skills

We use storytelling in our everyday lives to interact, explain, describe, and make sense of our lives. Children are exposed to stories daily through stories, TV, magazines, computer games, friends and family. Storytelling can also be called narrative.

Stories have a structure and are organised into a sequence. This is usually a beginning, middle and end. There is usually a plot, a setting including a location, characters, a main event or conflict and a resolution.

### A simple story has these features:

- The beginning i.e. the 'who', 'where', 'when' and 'what'. This is the initiating event or the problem to be solved .
- The middle i.e. the actions to achieve the goal.
- The end i.e the overall outcome.

Storytelling can be difficult for children and young people with language difficulties. It places huge demands on their listening and attention skills, their ability to remember and retell information, their understanding of language, their ability to put words into sentences and use the correct words and grammar. It requires the ability to order information in an appropriate structure and thinking about what happens, when, where and what happens next.

Difficulties telling a story and sequencing language in the correct order can result in difficulties describing social scenarios e.g. talking about something they have done. It's important a child is able to develop these skills so that they can share their experiences with others more easily.

In order for children and young people to develop their narrative/story telling ability it is essential to focus on the development of their -

- Attention & Listening skills
- Vocabulary
- Sequencing skills

### Strategies to help younger pupils with sequencing:

- Using everyday activities and talking about the sequence in which things happen e.g. getting dressed, making a sandcastle, cooking etc.
- Adults using simple instructions using clear language e.g. “First close your book, then line up at the door”
- Allowing the child to give a sequence of instructions to others in a real context supported by modelling use of words such as ‘first , then , next’ etc.
- Use a visual timetable, these are pictures to help you to talk through the sequence of the day’s events. Talk about what is happening at the start of the day, what happens in the middle of the day and what is going to happen at the end of the day. For support with using a visual timetable please refer to our website heading ‘visual support’ then ‘visual timetables’.

### General strategies to help develop a child’s narrative skills:

- Carry out active listening games. For instance tell a story and then re-tell it changing key characters and facts e.g. Red Riding Hood met a giraffe instead of a wolf. Encourage the children to say if they notice the differences and talk about the changes in the story.
- When sharing a book together talk about the characters, key events and the structure of the story wherever possible. It’s also important to keep talking about characters names and locations.
- Encourage the child to link sentences together appropriately using joining words such as “and” “because” “so” “then”
- Encourage the child to think about how characters feel, think and give explanations about what has happened in the story. This can include thinking about the impact of what has happened in the story on the characters.
- Encourage children to make up their own stories. These can be about anything! Encourage your child to have fun with storytelling!