Children and young people who are communicating at Stage 2 – ‘I’m meaning to tell you but I don’t have a system yet’

Stage 2 Communication

This describes the stage of communication when the child or young person realises that certain behaviours direct the attention and actions of others. They now intentionally use non-verbal means (such as gestures, sounds, pointing) for other’s attention and to request things they can see.

At this stage, the child or young person may also be interested in visual symbols, like photos and pictures and understand some simple spoken language.

Some examples of intentional, informal communication are:

- I point at my drink, look at you and say “uh... uh...uh”.
- I wave bye every day as I leave the classroom.
- I look at you and smile.
- I reach for the object I want to play with or explore.
- I like knocking things down so that you go and get them!
- I go and get my favourite book for you to look at with me.

Gaining the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people communicating at stage 2

To understand the meaning of the communication behaviours of children and young people at this stage of communication, it is important to know them well.

At this stage, children and young people may communicate in lots of different ways, including:

- pull you to what they want
- point
- push things away
- shake/nod their head, wave
- look at/reach out for things they want
- show that they recognise familiar people
- initiate games they both know/songs we sing
- use sounds that are recognisable as words in context, such as “b..b..” when playing with a ball.

Record what you see – you could fill out a simple table as a staff team and with parents to help enable a shared understanding of a child or young person, and show if everyone is interpreting behaviour in the same way.

You can print a template table to help you interpret the behaviour.
Making information accessible to children and young people communicating at stage 2

- Use what you think the child or young person understands, and check this out. How do you know that picture or symbol is understood? Can the child match it to the corresponding object or photo? Keep using pictures alongside the objects, so that the child can build up their understanding of what they represent.

- Keep your language simple (1-2 word sentences are often enough) and pause often.

- Use symbols in your activities to help the child to learn what they mean.

- Talk about the here and now. At this stage of development talking about the future is unlikely to be understood. Question words will also not be understood at this stage.

- Tell the child what to do, rather than what not to do, e.g. “put the cup down” rather than “don’t pick up the cup”.

- Use everyday objects in context throughout the day, for example:
  - if it is playtime show the child or young person a coat so that they know to go to their peg
  - show a cup or beaker when it is snack time
  - show them the book, then ask them to come for the story
  - show them the ball when it is time for PE.