

Communication with home

Important note

The content of this advice sheet is not about the daily communication that your setting has with all parents/carers, rather it is about the enhanced communication that it is necessary for you to have with some parents/carers; those whose child has an Additional Support Need (ASN) which requires this type of extra support.

Why communicate with home?

Parents and carers love to hear what their child did during their Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) session and, whilst typically developing children don't always share, we can usually prompt them to give some detail of their day's activities. However, not all parents and carers have that luxury because their child, for one reason or another, is unable to share that information with them. We therefore need to be mindful of situations like this and address this need as part of an inclusive approach.



The type of communication support put in place between home and an ELC setting has many levels and serves various purposes. We need to consider:

- Does the child have limited language or communication skills?
- Does the child use a communication device?
- Does the child have medical, sleep or diet information which requires sharing daily?
- Does the child have sensory or behavioural information which requires sharing daily?
- How important is it that the communication arrangement be reciprocal?
- Is everyone clear about the important information to share for this child and their role within this support strategy?
- Does the child need to practise skills in communication which are being targeted e.g. using visual symbols, verbal prompts, switches, etc.?

What forms can the communication take?

When planning for a Home/ELC communication tool it is essential that the method chosen is fit for purpose. Does the chosen method share the relevant information and meet everyone's needs?

Purpose	Try...
Improving skills around visual supports	...to provide a copy of the daily timetable to use in conjunction with a visual symbol pack at home.
Sharing information on developing relationships	...to give feedback regarding positive support strategies being used and their effectiveness.
Providing prompts to support communication at home	...to take photos of activities the child did that day adding brief comments to support early conversations at home.
Supporting non-verbal children	...to provide more detail of the child's day with comments on any new skills observed or something the child really enjoyed - be anecdotal!
Sharing medical information	...to get advice on how best to record relevant information and adapt your template accordingly to cover the relevant/confidential information.
Sharing information around personal care needs, diet, etc.	...to provide the information a parent/carer needs most to support their child's personal care needs.
Supporting co/self-regulation	...to share the strategies you used and how the child responded. Ask what is working at home.

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Hints and tips!

Use this EASEYS to support a conversation with parents/carers and those working with a child to help decide on the format for home – ELC setting communication which best supports the child and family.



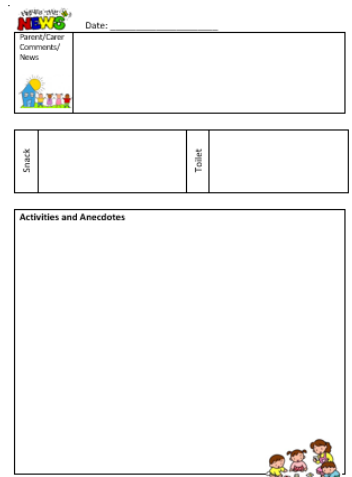
Adding photos can really help to enhance the communication.

Make sure any written comments provide anecdotal information as well as facts; parents love to hear these snippets about their child's day.

Parents and carers of children with ASN can have a lot of pressures on their time. They may not always have time or energy reserves to respond to comments or make their own contributions. That does not mean they don't read and value what has been written and appreciate the time taken to do this.

Points to consider before you implement this strategy in your setting:

- Are you clear about the purpose for this communication support being put in place?
- Have you discussed it with the parents/carers and agreed with them the information which requires to be shared.
- Does it meet the needs of the parents as well as your setting's needs?
- Have you asked the Speech and Language Therapist for advice or input (where appropriate)?
- When choosing a format remember that it needs to be easily accessible to read just after arrival in your setting. There may be something which could impact on the child during the session e.g. an unsettled night or not having eaten breakfast.
- Be careful you don't create something that is onerous to complete as it could then lose its value. You need to be able to easily add notes throughout the session.
- Different formats will have pros and cons. Think how each might show a child's progress over time or provide a means for spotting patterns in behaviour. Seesaw or ClassDojo are ideal for sharing photos and anecdotes. Paper diaries are more easily accessible and provide a long-term record.
- How will you manage time to allow for opportunities to add information throughout the session?
- Remember some information will need to be shared face to face or over the phone e.g. medical information, unusual changes in behaviour, etc.



Some things to try

- Use a recordable message device like a BIGmack switch (if already used as part of the child's communication) to be the child's voice telling something about their day.
- Use a paper daily diary with a personalised template to suit the agreed information sharing process.
- Use a communication app e.g. ClassDojo or Seesaw.
- Communicate by email with home only if parental permission given and agreed within setting protocols.
- Provide a pack containing outline and visual support prompts.
- Provide a daily timetable outline with prompting questions and relevant information.

Links

Seesaw pupil portfolio software which allows easy voice or video capture/storage/sharing opportunities.

ClassDojo provides easy messaging, photo, and video sharing tools.