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Supporting your child

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Giving your child the best start in life is essential for their development and sets the foundations of their future. There's lots of support available for your child across our family hub sites and across the town.

Blackpool family hubs have a timetable of free activities available for children of all ages with the aims of supporting a happy, healthy childhood.

Speech, language and communication

There's lots of ways you can help make a positive impact on your little one's speech, language and communication.

Here are our super six tips for you to try as part of your family's everyday routine to help your little one to talk more.

Watch, wait, listen and respond

Observe your child closely to see what they are interested in.

Watch to see how and why they communicate and what they respond to.

Waiting will give your child enough time to send messages in their own way.

When you listen to your child's sounds, words or sentences you learn about what they can already do and what you can build upon.

Be responsive

When your child starts an interaction with you, respond straightaway.

If they send you a message of any kind – a look, a sound, a smile, a body movement, a gesture or word – do or say something to let them know you received their message.

Responding immediately with enthusiasm helps your child connect your response with the message they sent.

When you respond make sure you respond to what your child is interested in, *not* what *you* think is important.

Model and highlight words at your child's stage

Talk to your child at their level of understanding.

Use short clear labels or sentences that give your child essential information.

Slow down your speech where necessary to give them time to understand what you're saying and show them by pointing at what you're talking about.

Repetition is important for children to learn new words, try and use the same word for the same thing for example when looking at a cat use the word "cat" each time, don't change to "kitty" or "kitty cat".

Follow your child's lead

Rather than leading or directing the play, allow your child to take the lead.

When you follow your child's lead with your actions and word, you respond to what they say or do, letting them know you are listening.

When you follow their lead and show genuine interest in what they're sharing, they'll be more encouraged to communicate with you.

Each time they initiate an interaction and you respond, you're reinforcing their interests, which helps strengthen communication skills.

Comment more than question

Say less and stress the words.

Too many questions can be overwhelming. Commenting develops understanding of what your child is interested in.

Earliest learning takes place through experiences. What they see, hear, touch, taste and smell. During these everyday experiences they hear you say the same words over and over in context to what you are seeing, hearing and doing together helping to build understanding.

Planned book sharing

Think about what your child does with the book, their understanding, interests and the kind of pictures that are meaningful to them.

Interactive books provide things for your child to do, even if they aren't yet talking or pointing to pictures.

Children tend to enjoy books with flaps, buttons and fuzzy fabrics.

Predictable books have repetitive words and phrases which are useful for developing children's understanding.

Sometimes children may only be interested in specific parts of a book, follow their lead and notice what pictures are capturing their attention, comment on this part of the book you don't have to read the whole story.

Childcare funding

Did you know you could be eligible for free childcare? [Find out more.](#)

Child and adolescent support and help enhanced response team (CASHER)

The CASHER team offer out-of-hours service for mental health support for young people up to the age of 25.

You can call them Monday to Friday from 5.00pm to 10.00pm and Saturday and Sunday from 10.00am to 8.00pm on 07810 696565 where they may invite you to visit a local group which takes place at our Central Family Hub.

Oral care for children

Looking after your children's teeth from as early as being a baby is so important. You can pop into your local Family Hub to pick up a free toothbrush for your children, and the [NHS website has lots of tips and support around their oral care.](#)

Some top tips for children's teeth care are:

- Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste for children aged 3 to 6 years
- Avoid sugar-sweetened drinks. The best drinks for young children are plain milk and water

- Brush teeth twice daily for about 2 minutes with fluoride toothpaste
- Make sure they spit out after brushing and don't rinse. Rinsing stops the fluoride from working as well
- Make sure your child visits a dentist regularly as advised by your dentist. NHS dental treatment is free for children and young adults under 18

All children should be registered with a dentist. If your child is 0 to 4 and not registered yet, text **'TEETH'** to **07717 535180** and Blackpool Better Start's community connectors will help you find a free dentist in Blackpool for your child.

Nutrition and weight

- The [NHS Change4Life website](#) aims to help you and your family eat better and move more with online recipes, information about eating 5 a day, plus healthier food swaps
- Active Blackpool is an exercise referral programme from Blackpool Council that offers a variety of activities including swimming, netball, walking and more. [Find out more about what's on offer for juniors and kids](#)
- Blackpool Football Club Community Trust is the official charity of Blackpool FC, based at Bloomfield Road Stadium. Working with residents as young as two years old up to adults in the later stages of life, Blackpool FC Community Trust provide a diverse range of programmes to increase social inclusion opportunities, improve physical fitness, health, and education, and lessen involvement in anti-social behaviour





HENRY Blackpool

HENRY are a charity who offer support and advice to new parents to ensure children have the best start in life. They run a range of free workshops in our family hubs including [starting solids](#), [preparing to feed my baby](#) and more.

They also run fun stay and play drop-ins for children. All of these sessions can found on our online timetable. You can call the HENRY on **01253 746788** or email blackpool@henry.org.uk.

Additional information

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