

### Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or [whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net)

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Twitter.com/WhitHealth  
Facebook.com/WhittingtonHealth

Whittington Health NHS Trust  
Magdala Avenue  
London  
N19 5NF  
Phone: 020 7272 3070  
[www.whittington.nhs.uk](http://www.whittington.nhs.uk)

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Speech and Language Therapy

## Developing Joint Attention

A guide for Parents/Carers



## Joint Attention is important because...

- ✓ It involves looking and listening to something with another person and being aware the other person is involved.
- ✓ It is essential to a child's developing communication skills.
- ✓ It helps your child match what they see or are doing to the words you say.

## You can encourage Joint Attention by...

- ★ Blowing bubbles - Wait for your child to look at you before blowing.
- ★ Blowing up balloons-Wait for your child to look at you before letting the balloon go!
- ★ Singing nursery rhymes with your child.
- ★ Playing people games such as peek-a-boo: Hide your face when your child is looking at you with a cloth or curtain, and then pull it off and say 'boo'!
- ★ Imitating what your child is doing, in order to join in with their focus.
- ★ Using feely bags filled with different toys/objects. Create excitement at 'what's in the bag?'.
- ★ Creating lots of surprises within everyday routines, e.g., pretend to put your child's shoe on your own foot. Your child is more likely to look if the unexpected happens.
- ★ Looking at books together- Using funny faces and making animal sounds together.
- ★ Constantly point out interesting things in your daily activities, e.g., a dog in the park.

## Our Top Tips

- ❖ Reduce distractions such as turning off the TV, so that your child can focus more easily when you are playing together.
- ❖ Use exaggerated facial expressions and noises in order to encourage your child to look in your direction as well as the toys you're playing with.
- ❖ Be at your child's level when you are playing together so that he/she can easily see your face.
- ❖ Hold things near to your face so your child can look at the objects and you more easily.
- ❖ Follow what your child is interested in. Pay attention to what he/she is focussed on. If you are interested in what they are doing, they will be more interested in you!
- ❖ Play with motivating toys and engage in sensory experiences with your child. This will foster their engagement in not only the activity but also with you.
- ❖ Observe your child's strengths and interests and tailor activities around these.
- ❖ Most importantly.... Have fun, be silly and enjoy the time you are spending with your child.