

Supporting Communication with Teenagers

The ability to communicate is really important at this age as it can have a significant impact on daily functioning and a young person's quality of life. For example, speech and language skills can affect engagement in social activities, developing relationships, and access to school work and the curriculum.

But it is important to remember that language skills continue to progress in teenage years and communication development can be promoted.



Having difficulties with communication can impact on:

- Educational achievements
- Behaviour difficulties and increased vulnerability
- Mental health difficulties
- Employability
- Increased risk of criminality
- Social isolation

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TOP TIPS

Teenagers should have well-developed speech, language and communication skills.

A teenager might have a language or communication difficulty if they find it hard to:

- understand spoken language, also called verbal comprehension,
- form spoken sentences (utterances),
- know how and when to use language in social situations, also known as pragmatics.

There are lots of things you can do to encourage teenagers with their communication at this stage:

- Encourage opportunities to talk without making them feel under pressure,
- Finding and creating situations for chatting, like mealtimes,
- Give everyone a chance to talk about their day, including you,
- Let them know that it is ok not to understand, or to get words mixed up sometimes,
- Help by explaining any words or phrases that they don't understand,
- Show that you are interested by making time to listen.

Support can help teenagers with communication difficulties to maximise their language potential. This will help to reduce some of the negative consequences.

Some key things to look out for that may indicate a Speech and Language need:

- Problems with sequencing their ideas in the right order.
- Being better at understanding individual instructions than group instructions.
- Finding it difficult to understand language where the meaning isn't clearly stated e.g. being able to infer that someone wants to close the window when they say 'It's a bit chilly in here!'; and taking things too literally, for example, "I'll be back in a minute".
- Finding long and complicated instructions hard to understand.
- Having trouble learning new words.
- Taking a long time to organise what they are going to say or write.
- Having difficulty taking turns in conversations.
- Talking to teachers and friends in the same way.
- Difficulties with speech clarity.

Useful websites/links

Afasic

www.afasic.org.uk

Communication Trust

www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/whatworks

ICAN

www.ican.org.uk

radld.org

It is possible for teenagers to have other difficulties in addition to their communication needs which might include: ADHD, ASC and / or literacy difficulties (this is not an exhaustive list).