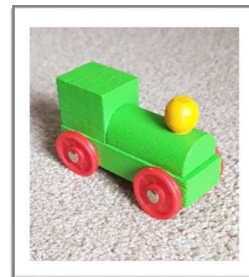## Information Sheet

Visual Supports

1. Using Real Objects of Reference

Visuals Supports include:

Real object of reference:

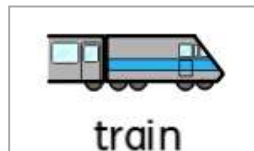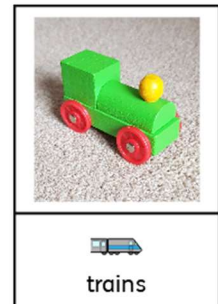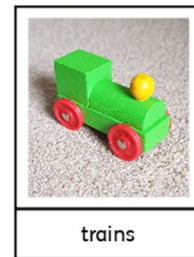A photo of a real object of reference:

Signing:

Symbols:

Photo Card examples:

Remember: Visual supports and PECS™ are <u>not</u> the same.

It is Important to Remember:

- Using visuals is a **whole team approach** - all adults use visual supports for all parts of the day and routine.

- **Everyone** in contact with the child must have an understanding of the child's preferred form of communication.

- When getting your setting ready for the day/session - this should include checking that visuals supports are accessible.

- Visual supports can be <u>personalised</u> to support individual children.

- Visual supports enable the child to have a visual image alongside the verbal word(s).

- Use of visual supports will help reduce some of the child's frustration and anxiety.

- Visual Supports encourage some independence, as well as develop the child's confidence.

- When using verbal communication, remember the child's **current stage of development** (not their actual age) and their current level of understanding.

- It is important to choose the words you will use with the real objects of reference - then all adults will use these <u>same</u> **word**(s) with the <u>same</u> **real object**(s).

- An adult will get down to the child's level and use the child's name to get their attention - then pause, briefly. The adult will use the chosen words while showing the child the Real Object of Reference.

- Take it slowly - start off with 1 or 2 real objects and only introduce more once the child is using these purposefully.

- Remember, that using visual supports doesn't automatically mean the child will co-operate.

- ❖ The following examples are based on a child who is <u>not</u> receiving support from a Speech and Language Therapist. If the child is receiving support from a Speech and Language Therapist, please contact them for advice.

For this example - nappy changing:

Think about the language you will be using with the object of reference.
For someone who has a good understanding of language, the following phrases all mean the same thing:

- Nappy
- Nappy time
- Let's change you

- We need to change your nappy
- Time to get changed
- Ooooh, you need that nappy changed!

However, to a child who has language difficulties, each of these phrases could mean something different. It is therefore, important to choose which words you will use and then all adults must use the same word(s) with the same real object(s) of reference.

For this example:

An adult will get one of the child's real nappies.

The adult will get down to the child's level and use the child's name to get their attention - then pause, briefly.

As the adult shows the child the real nappy, they will say, for this example, "nappy time".

nappy time

Advanced Notice:

Some children will need advanced notice for a change that is not of their choosing - this advanced notice will need to be supported with something visual.

The type of advanced notice will depend on the child's current stage of development and their level of understanding.

Advanced Notice within an Activity:

For this example: The child is currently rolling trains down a ramp, and the adult needs to give the child advanced notice about changing their nappy:

Depending on the child's level of understanding, you may need to count down the trains as they go down the ramp.

Advanced Notice with Time:

If you cannot be so specific, then use an amount of time, for example, '5 minutes'. The actual amount time could be more or less than 5 minutes, but always use the same words, so the child starts to recognise the phrase "5 minutes" and start to understand that something will be happening soon.

Depending on the child's level of understanding, you may find it helpful to repeat the amount of time at the end, to show that it is advanced notice.

Advanced notice using a sand timer:

For children who have more understanding of time, you may choose to use a sand timer:

When using a sand timer - you may need to let the child know when the sand timer is coming to an end.

Then, be clear when it has finished.

Remember: Every adult must use the same **word**(s) with the same **real object**(s).

Remember: Using visual supports - doesn't automatically mean the child will co-operate.