



Bonding & communication

Helping children thrive

The bond (attachment, connection) is the unique emotional relationship between you and your baby. If a parent or carer is responsive to a baby's signals or cues and communicates with them from birth onwards, babies develop a secure attachment. Communication is the foundation of relationships and bonding and is essential for learning, play and social interaction.

Language (including body language) is how we get to know and bond with one another and build relationships. In talking and listening, we help our child develop and learn as well as make close connections.

What can I do to help my baby's communication?

By consistently responding to your baby's sounds, gestures and facial expressions, they should be developing the skills which are needed to begin using language by the end of their first year. Be positive and use praise, try not to use too much 'baby babble'. Read stories, rhymes and sing together. Talk to your baby about everyday things. Look at pictures and repeat words. Give them some of your undivided attention with your mobile phone and TV switched off.

If your child seems to be having difficulties chat to your health visitor or nursery nurse in the first instance, they may recommend Parenting Programmes or help you get more support if you need it.

1.

I feel my toddler doesn't want to communicate with me, he seems to avoid any contact.

2.

Does he seem to want to engage with strangers, need to be alone and resists being hugged?

3.

Speak to your health visitor, who may refer you to a specialist service.

Look out for signs of emotional attachment delays, including:

- They do not like to be touched or hugged.
- They are indiscriminately affectionate with strangers.
- They resist social interaction.
- They seem to want to be alone.
- Display intense anger (rage).
- They can be destructive or aggressive.

If you suspect a child may have attachment difficulties they will require a specialist assessment. Talk to your health visitor, nursery nurse or GP.

A variety of factors may cause language and speech delays, including:

- Lack of communication from parents or carer.
- Lack of emotional bonding.
- A learning disability.

- Hearing loss, which may occur in children who have severe middle ear infections or occur as a result of certain medications, trauma, or genetic disorders.
- Autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) a group of neurological disorders that may involve impaired communication as well as impaired social interaction and cognitive skills.

It helps to talk to your child and encourage sounds and speech from an early age.