

# **Bristol Autism Team**

## **Autism Toolkit for Early Years**

This toolkit has been produced by Carmen Bayandor and Jude Mountford Bristol Autism Team Early Year's, to support Early Years settings to further develop their understanding of strategies for children on the autism spectrum.

**For children with autism seeing is better than talking.**

**'If I can see it I can understand it'**

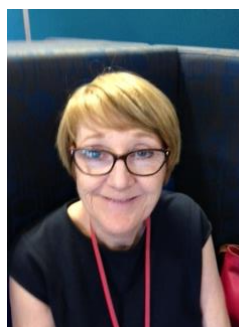
**Visual resources will support children with autism in the following ways:**

- ✓ To understand routines
- ✓ To support transitions
- ✓ To learn new skills
- ✓ To be independent
- ✓ To communicate

# To understand routines



Today Toby is working with:



Carmen

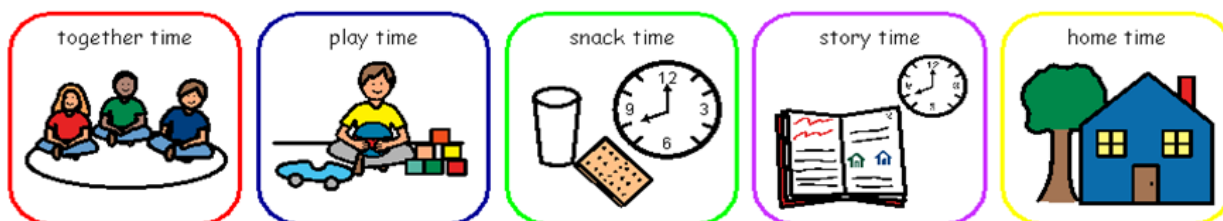
The child might like to know - 'Who will be working with me today?'

Children with autism often prefer to have a sense of structure and to know what to expect during the day, what activity they will be doing and when.

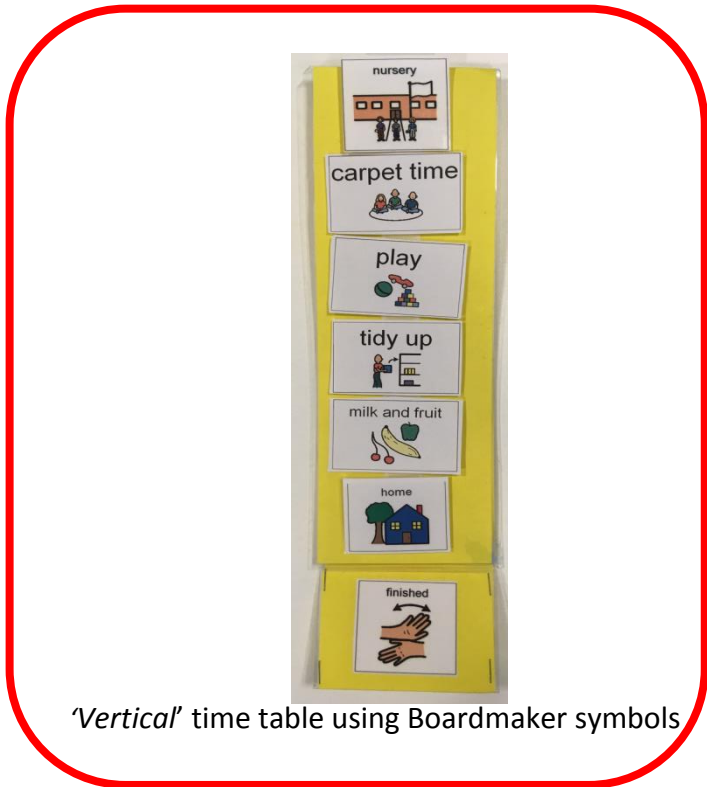
## Visual timetables

Introduce the visual timetable using only three or four visuals and gradually increase the amount of visuals over time. ***It is essential that the child interacts with the time table at every transition by peeling off the visual and putting in a finished box or pouch.***

### Our nursery day



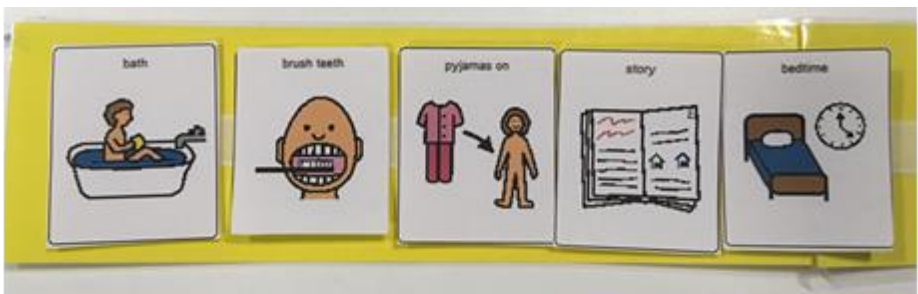
'Horizontal' time table using Boardmaker symbols



'Vertical' time table using Boardmaker symbols



'Horizontal' time table using real images



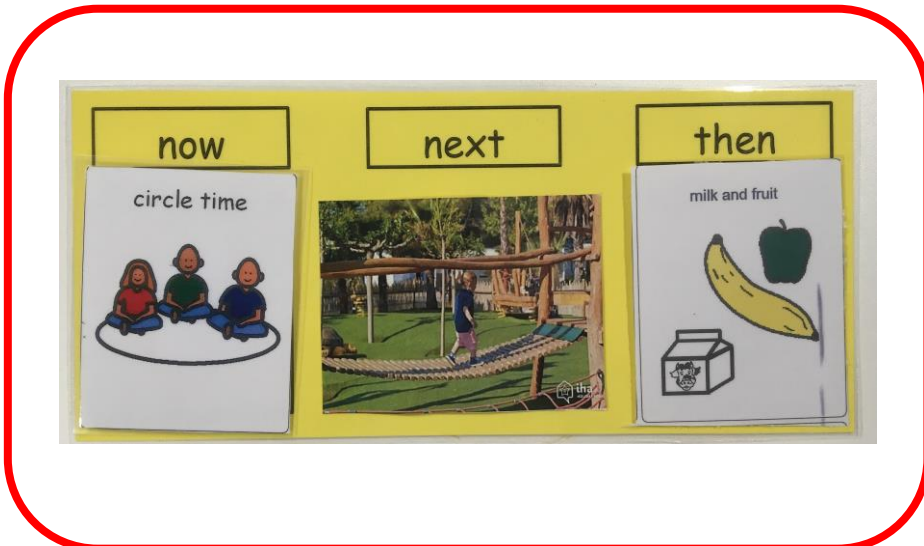
Home time tables to support routines



Some children may not yet understand photographs and pictures so will need activities represented using real objects



'Now and next boards' are arranged in a left to right format with two activities presented at a time. This helps the child to understand that events and activities happen in a sequential manner, not in isolation.



# To support transitions

Sometimes, young children with autism find it difficult to shift their attention from one activity to another. To prepare the child to change from one activity to another the following strategies may be useful:



- Sand timers can be used to indicate how long an activity will last for example: child's turn on the bike.
- They can also be used to give a warning



Present countdowns to transitions in a visual way

# To learn new skills

To support a child with autism to learn a new play skill, plan dedicated time in a low arousal area. Use a start and finish box on a cloth to visually identify 'Billy's Play Time.' Identify a visually clear, close ended play item of interest to the child e.g. inset puzzle, stacking cups, or posting activity. Share the activity with child. You may have to do a lot of hand over hand at first, don't give up and repeat every day!



Build a stacker





Build a rocket



Using special interest to learn to construct

# To be independent

Use visual sequences to support children with autism to learn routines and sequential skills with greater independence

hang up coat and bag



find name



lunch box on trolley




Step by step independent arrival routine

wash hands



Step by step washing hands routine



Step by step toilet routine



# To support communication

## Your language

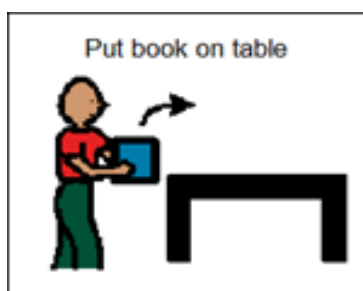
Children with autism may have a wide range of communicative ability. It is very important not to make assumptions about an individual child's skills solely on the basis of his/her diagnosis. Children with autism:-

- may not understand the need for communication
- may not initiate communication
- may fail to communicate clearly what they want or need
- may have difficulty with attention and listening skills, particularly in relation to verbal communication
- may have difficulty understanding language
- may have difficulties processing language, especially when combined with maintaining eye contact and nonverbal communication (gestures, body language)



### Use positive, directive language

- Always say exactly what you want to happen. For example: "James, feet on floor" rather than "James, stop kicking". The child may only process 'kicking' and continue with the behaviour.
- Another helpful strategy is to model the behaviour so that the child sees exactly what 'feet on floor' looks like.



### Use clear, non-ambiguous language

- Language should be as concrete as possible, i.e. relate to the 'here and now', particularly with younger children.
- Be aware that the child may not be able to understand personal pronouns such as 'he', 'she', 'they' or what words such as 'it' or 'there' refer to. Rather than saying "Put it over there" an adult needs to be specific, for example, "book, table."

### **Attention and Processing**

- Use the child's name first and wait until he/she is giving you their attention before speaking. This 'tunes in' the child to the fact that you are talking to him/her.
- The child may not recognise themselves as part of 'Puffin Group' or 'everyone' so may not respond to group instructions. Try saying "Liam, and everyone else, tidy up time."
- Wait for the child to respond before repeating yourself or giving further instruction. It can take up to 30 seconds for a child on the autism spectrum to process information.



### **USEFUL WEBSITES:-**

- [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk) (National Autistic Society)
- [www.bristolparentcarers.org.uk](http://www.bristolparentcarers.org.uk) (Bristol Parent Carers)
- [www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk](http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk) (Autism Education Trust)
- [www.findability.org.uk](http://www.findability.org.uk) (Findability – local information)
- [www.supportiveparents.org.uk](http://www.supportiveparents.org.uk) (Supportive Parents)
- [www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk](http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk) (Autism Education Trust)

**For more information about Bristol's Local Offer see  
<http://www.findabilitybristol.org.uk/>**