

## Using visuals to support children with communication

- Visuals help to provide structure and routine whilst helping to build understanding and reduce anxiety
- Using a simple visual routine allows a child to know what is happening and when which is particularly important for children with communication difficulties.

There are different kinds of visual supports and for you and your child and when introducing them it can feel a little trial and error to find which works best for you.

Visuals come in the form of:

- Objects of reference (real objects)
- Photographs
- Coloured pictures
- Black and white symbols



### Objects of reference

- One of the first stages of introducing visuals is to use objects of reference to support routine changes or transitions
- For example, you may use your child's coat to indicate it's time to go outside or show your child a banana when it's time for snack
- Always use verbal language alongside visuals, keeping it simple "snack time" and allow a little time for your child to process the instruction and repeat if needed.

### Now and next/visual timetable

'Now' and 'next' schedules are sometimes called 'first and then' boards.

These are broken down versions of using a schedule to develop a routine.

They indicate with pictures what is happening now and what will happen next.

For example: Tom is playing with the cars but soon it's time for dinner. On the 'now' section draw or use a visual for car and on the 'next' draw a dinner plate and knife and fork.

**Top tip** – If the dinner plate alone is not motivating enough, try drawing the part of the food you know your child likes, i.e. pasta.

You may also find it supporting to have a visual timetable for the day or a particular routine such as bedtime. This is a series of photographs/images or symbols so your child can visually see what is expected.

