

## JOINT ATTENTION

### What is joint attention?

- Joint attention is the sharing of a moment between two people when they both know that they are focused on the same thing.
- This means a child can focus their attention on the person they are communicating with, but also on the object or event they are communicating about.
- Usually it involves the child looking at the adult, then at an object they are interested in and back at the adult again. They are trying to socially share something.



### How to develop joint attention

- Before a child is able to socially share that moment with another person they need to be able to consistently communicate what they do and don't want by
- They need to do this by communicating intentional messages to request or refuse a range of things
- We can support child to do more of this by creating opportunities for communication

### What do we mean by “creating opportunities”?

As parents and carers, it is natural to give your child what you know they want because you are able to predict it, for example if they sit in a particular way or make a certain noise, it means they're hungry, thirsty or need help. Parents often say “I just knew they wanted me to open it” or “I just knew they were hungry, it's that time of day”. But someone who didn't know your child might not be able to understand these requests from their communication skills alone.






Opportunities for communication take place throughout the day. We want to think about how to help your child to deliberately and consistently communicate their messages to you. This means thinking about situations around your home and across your day when you can create reasons for your child to need to communicate with you.

By creating these opportunities, your child can practice communication skills like initiating interactions, requesting, and sharing attention.

\*\*\*For strategies and ideas on how to set up these opportunities see the 'Creating Opportunities' handout\*\*\*

### Why is joint attention so important for social communication development?

	1. It means a child can share their interests about the world verbally or non-verbally
	2. The child and adult will connect about the shared interest between them
	3. Adults will use a word or gesture to comment on that interest which the child will hear and learn from