

### ▲●■ Look, listen and note

You will find it helpful for all the children if you take time to observe their progress, either when they are engaged in free play or when you have planned structured activities for them. These are some areas to watch out for especially when working with children who have ASD.

- In the early stages, observe the range of sounds, behaviours and gestures that the child uses. Are any of these used to communicate with others? If not, can others at least interpret how the child is feeling from them?
- Make a list of the single words that the child can use. Are these words made in association with given things or people (for example, saying 'ball' when a ball appears)? Are any of the words used to actually communicate with (for example, saying 'ball' when the child wants a ball)?
- Note down examples of *echolalia*. Note also how the child responds when you ask a direct question.
- Observe the child when playing individually with an adult. Is the adult able to move in close to play? Will the child allow the adult to interrupt the play? Are there any examples of the child imitating others or taking turns when playing or communicating?
- Tuning in to how sensitive children with ASD are to different stimuli allows you to interpret their behaviour better.
- Make a note of any two-word or short phrases. Are these used to communicate? Does the child show evidence of understanding them from others? Does the child combine words flexibly or are all the two-word phrases 'imported' as fixed chunks (for example, saying 'Oh dear!' or 'Fall down' in certain situations, but never using them in new combinations, such as 'Jamie down')?
- Observe the kind of directions that the child can follow. Do you always need to show the child what to do, as well as telling him or her?

### ▲●■ Effective practice

- If the child is not using sounds and gestures to communicate, but you can interpret the child's signals, respond as if the child were communicating in a certain way, thereby 'lending meaning' to the exchange.
- Teach reciprocal (my turn, your turn) play as a forerunner for simple conversational turn-taking.
- Focus your early conversations around items of high personal interest to the child. Stick to the 'here and now', using concrete examples.
- Use stock phrases for certain rituals: 'It's time to say goodbye' or 'Remember to say please'. In time, the child might repeat these and then follow them.
- Practise short phrases to use when the child meets certain social situations, such as how to ask for a turn, how to ask someone to play or to move out of the way.
- Make time to share a conversation with the child – it may take your whole attention to tune in and respond at the right level! In time, involve a small group of other listeners to make this a more sociable occasion.

### ▲●■ How to use the play plans

On pages 69–74 you will find six play plans for those skills marked with an asterisk on the assessment sheets on pages 66 and 67. Each play plan contains eight interventions that you could try. There are also two blank spaces to add your own personalised interventions onto each play plan.