



Royal Society for Blind Children

How to interact with a vision impaired baby or child

Communication and interaction can take many forms, from visual cues such as a smile to the tone of voice. A baby or child with vision impairment may need some extra support to help them feel part of the conversation and to understand, interact and communicate with others and their environment.

When you first meet your vision impaired baby or child you will be keen to make sure they feel safe and secure with you and in their new environment. This can lead to questions about what to say, how to act and what to do.

We have compiled a few tips on interaction and communication, suitable for main carers, extended family, friends and anyone else who may be spending time with your baby.

Babies & Children

- Let your baby or child know you are talking to them. Using their name will help get their attention and let them know they are part of the conversation.
- If you are not the baby or child's main carers, introduce yourself until they are familiar with your voice.
- Tell your baby or child when you are leaving, even if it is only briefly, don't forget let them know when you are back again too!
- Give your baby or child forewarning before you touch them, let them know you are going to touch their arm, hands, legs etc.
- Use touch cues for changing dressing and bathing. Gently touch the back of the hand with a sponge, clothes or a nappy so they know what is happening.
- Keep changing, dressing and bath time routines the same so they learn what is going to happen and what to expect.
- Talk about what you are doing 'pulling your hat on', 'left foot in, right foot in'.
- Copy their sounds and noises to encourage shared communication.
- Let them know you are there and remember to introduce yourself.
- Get down to their level when you are talking.

- Use your tone of voice to give what you are saying meaning and help convey emotion.
- Give a little extra time to process information.
- Encourage them to explore (safely) and offer support and encouragement to help them complete tasks with independence.

Some general tips:

- Provide context about their surroundings - if there is a loud noise, especially a surprising one, tell them what it is and why it happened.
- Be patient and provide more breaks when you are taking part in activities as they will tire much quicker than a sighted baby or child.
- Be specific with your instructions. If you tell a child something is 'over there', or, you do it 'like this', how will they know what that means? Tell them it is to their left or right or show them how to do it.
- Conversational language has visual terms: we watched telly; we might see you later. If you are having a conversation with someone, these are fine to use.

Our families first team of family practitioners are here to support you through your child's early years and into the future.

RSBC can help you with:

- practical advice about your child's development
- support when you feel overwhelmed.
- understanding your child's vision impairment better
- living as a family and being supportive of each other

Call 020 3198 0225 or email connections@rsbc.org.uk

