

Handy Tips for Using Individual Visual Timetables

This strategy may be useful in supporting the following children -

- Children with social communication difficulties
- Children with high levels of anxiety
- Children with English as an additional language
- Children who are overwhelmed with the choices available in a classroom or setting
- Children who find transitions between activities difficult
- Children with a narrow range of interests

Do persevere. It might take some time for the child to become familiar with and understand this method of communication.

Do make these timetables yourself! The one in the video clip is a very robust one and may be worth investing in but a strip of cardboard and a tissue box also work well!

Do make sure that the timetable is always set up before the child comes into the room.

Do come down to the child's level when using this resource and make sure it is set up in a suitable location that is easily accessible to the child.

Do begin with a small number of symbols (perhaps 4 or 5) then gradually build this up as the child becomes more confident at using their timetable.

Do laminate and velcro the resources so that they last. This will save you lots of time in the long run!

Do reduce your language. Try to keep any prompts as non-verbal ones that can gradually be withdrawn. For example, with hand over hand you could gradually move your hand to the child's wrist and then their elbow before withdrawing.

Do use 'home' as your last symbol if you know this is where the child is going at the end of the day. The child will be able to see they are getting closer to 'going home' as the day progresses.

Do support the child you are working with to access the 'next' activity on the timetable and to return to the timetable once this is complete.

Do use the opportunity when teaching this strategy to use the Makaton sign for finished as in the video clip.

Don't force a reluctant child to come to their timetable by pulling them etc. You may have to model the strategy yourself several times before they feel confident to attempt it themselves. You could try the following strategies for children who are reluctant to engage with this:

- Supporting them to attach a name card they are given/collect on arrival to a photograph of them on the timetable
- Putting a favourite sticker on the timetable
- Ensuring the first activity is one you know they will enjoy

Some children may choose to remove/throw the symbols or replace them with those matching their own agenda. If this happens do not engage in conversation with the child but replace the symbols as they had been initially arranged.