Do you have a communication friendly environment that supports children to become confident and skilled communicators?

This checklist is designed to help you and your colleagues think about the environment you provide for your children so that it is developmentally appropriate, supportive and stimulating and a place where children can enjoy experimenting with communication, language and literacy. Does your setting provide a learning environment which supports children’s speech, language and communication development that includes:

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| **Communication Friendly Environment checklist** | **RED****We don’t have this in place at all.**  | **AMBER****In place but not embedded; not everyone aware of it; evidence of effectiveness not known** | **GREEN****Robustly in place; clear evidence of impact** |
| 1. **Displays that are of interest/topical so that children want to talk about them**

*Use a plain background so the displays are the main focus of attention and are at child height. If the children have the opportunity to help with a display they are more likely to talk about it.* Displays are used throughout school or setting to support learning *Consider light, sound, layout and temperature. Visual distractions.*  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Routines**: *Are children aware of rules and expectations? Do they know daily routines; could these be supported visually? Are children given opportunities within lessons to say when they don’t understand? Are they explicitly taught how to listen, how to work together in groups? Are there opportunities for children to interact and use language in different situations, with different people at an appropriate level?*
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| 1. **Resources at child height so that children can reach them**

*Spaces should be viewed from the child’s perspective. Look around your space from the height of the children who use it. What do your children really see?* |  |  |  |
| 1. **Resources that are labeled with pictures or symbols. Other use of visual support.**

*Too much choice can be overwhelming. Do the children know what the symbols mean?* Visual timetables used for daily / weekly activities. Objects, pictures and symbols used to teach vocabulary, to make stories more active and support engagement in other lessons. Now next boards |  |  |  |
| 1. **A well-planned environment where it is clear to the child what happens there**

*Well-presented resources can encourage curiosity and experimentation, self help eg help desks. Children are more likely to comment and ask questions when resources are exciting to them.*  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Quiet, comfortable areas where practitioners can devote time to bonding with and being close to young children**.

*A place where adults and children know they can relax and enjoy a chat together away from the hustle and bustle of the busy areas of the setting* |  |  |  |
| 1. **Some areas that do not have much on display on the wall so that the children can concentrate on the adult talking to them, rather than having their attention taken with what they are looking at on the wall**

*Think about what is behind you when you are talking with children, or what is behind the book you are sharing* |   |  |  |
| 1. **Quiet areas for storytelling and reading, making opportunities to reread favourite books**

*Soft cushions and furnishings will help give the message that this is a comfortable area for sitting and sharing stories* |  |  |  |
| 1. **No continuous background noise such as a radio/music**

*Being in a noisy environment makes it really difficult for children to concentrate. This can have a negative impact on their speaking and listening skills.* Are noise levels conducive to learning – what can be done to minimize unnecessary noise? |  |  |  |
| 1. **Play equipment in the outside environment as well as the inside environment that encourages shared play**

*The outside space is a rich source of opportunities for language skills*  |  |  |  |
| 1. **An environment reflecting the culture and ethnicity of the children**

*Ensure that children have the opportunity to speak in their home language(s) if English is not their first language. Include play and learning resources that positively reflect the children’s cultural and linguistic identity and experiences* |  |  |  |
| 1. **Planning to both sing and say rhymes with the children either as a planned group activity or spontaneously when children choose to. Enhancing stories and songs with props such as objects or puppets and supporting them with actions/use of questioning**

*Include songs and rhymes you use all the time that are familiar to the children and also introduce new ones as part of everyday routines. Draw attention to the actions, rhyming sounds/words. This will help to focus children’s attention which is essential for the development of language* |  |  |  |
| 1. **Adults prioritise communication:** *this may include adults who: Have knowledge of language development. Understand the language levels of the children and the language demands in the environment. Can adapt their language so it is not a barrier to learning or communication. Give children strategies to say when they don’t understand.*
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| 1. **Showing children how spoken language and written language are linked**

*If writing is modelled in different situations children will attempt to do the same and may talk about their writing.* |  |  |  |
| **Developing your Communication Friendly Environment**Using the above information from the checklist, what are your priorities for the developing a communication friendly environment?Consider each of the rooms your children access separately  **Development Process**1. Complete the checklist in each room
2. Set targets
3. Set review dates for the targets – put these dates in your calendar
4. Have named staff allocated to complete the review(s)
5. At each review decide if the target has been achieved or not and comment why
6. Review the checklist and set new target(s)

**An example action plan format is attached** **Target examples****Long Term SMART target** e.g. All classrooms will score green across all areas using the communication environment checklist**Short Term SMART target** e.g. Staff in each class to evaluate resources in their room and identify whether they are stimulating and at the appropriate developmental age for children  |
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| **Communication Friendly Environment Action Plan**  |
| **Setting name:****Class** |
| **Targets** | Start date | **Start RAG****Red****Amber****Green** | **Review date** | **Review RAG****Red****Amber****Green** | **Review notes**Has the target has been achieved or not and how/whyRecord progress/next steps for the long term target |
| **Short Term SMART Target** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Long Term SMART Target**  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Revisit the checklist and make notes here to inform the next target(s)****Your Long Term Target may carry over with new short term targets until achieved**  |