



SIMPLE, CONSISTENT AND EVIDENCE-BASED MESSAGING

# 'Super Six' Strategies Supporting Speech, Language and Communication

Better Start brought together a working group of professionals to develop the "Super Six"- a set of practical strategies to support children's speech, language and communication.

The group created a simple, unified set of strategies that professionals and parents could use. This was to ensure everyone was delivering the same clear messages to support children's development and to ensure that these met the needs of families.

## Understanding the challenge

Blackpool has a well-established Early Years Speech, Language and Communication **targeted** pathway in place. This is for children with identified speech and language needs. This includes: identification of need, a multi-agency triage panel and a combination of setting, home and community-based interventions.

However, provision of **universal** support, for all families, was inconsistent. Some families said they were receiving different information from different professionals alongside differing online resources. They felt bombarded and unsure which messages to follow. This made it harder for them to confidently support their child's development.

Practitioners also found that some children were at risk of speech, language and communication delay due to complex and multi-layered factors. It was felt these children could benefit most from strong support at home—but their parents needed clear, manageable guidance to help them do that.

At the same time, the Early Years workforce i.e. Early Years Practitioners, Health Visiting teams, Library workers, Community Connectors and Family Hub teams were also looking for help. They wanted a way to cut through the noise and share advice that was simple, consistent, and backed by evidence.



## What we did

The Better Start Partnership assembled a working group of professionals and prioritised development time with the aim of creating a concise set of strategies that could be used across Blackpool. The group consisted of colleagues from education, health, libraries and Family Hubs and was chaired by the former Government Communication Advisor, Jean Gross.

Initially, a wide range of national and international resources were reviewed and the group were encouraged to bring materials they typically shared with families. Local data from WellComm assessments was also used to understand the specific needs of Blackpool's children.

The selection process for the strategies was collaborative and thoughtful. First, each person chose strategies based on their experience and evidence. They, then worked in smaller groups to negotiate and refine down the strategies in stages until the final six were agreed by the full working group.

After reviewing all the discussions, six key strategies were agreed on. Fewer than six didn't cover the diversity of children's needs, and more than six felt overwhelming.

### *The Super Six Strategies:*

**Watch, wait, listen and respond**

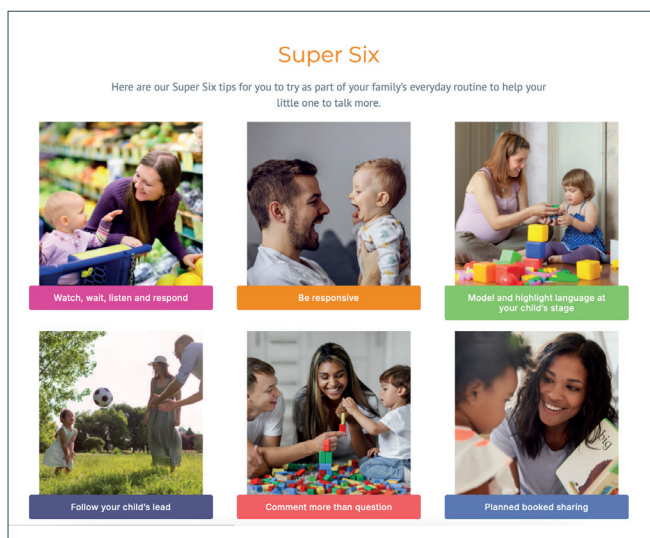
**Be responsive**

**Model and highlight language at your child's stage**

**Follow your child's lead**

**Comment more than question**

**Planned booked sharing**



## Listening to families

Next, the strategies were checked to ensure that they worked for parents.. In June 2024, the Home Visiting team and Community Connectors spoke with families - some who use Speech and Language services, and some who don't - to get their views on the six messages and how best to share them. 48 responses were received from families across Blackpool.

Their feedback was clear and powerful. Parents wanted to be recognised for what they were already doing well. They saw themselves as experts in their own children's development. They preferred to see imagery of children and families to help describe the strategies, and many said they found printed materials more useful than digital ones.

Using this feedback, both physical and digital resources were designed to share the strategies. Families were consulted again to check: *Did these materials feel right? Were they useful?* Their input helped us fine-tune further.

The strategies are now being shared online (via the website and social media) and in Early Years Settings, Health Visiting teams, Family Hubs, and libraries. They are helping practitioners support parents - empowering them to support their children's speech, language and communication.

## Outcomes

**Health Visiting Teams give out the Super Six cards to families at their Child Development Checks**

**Strategies are embedded into everyday practice in Early Years settings.**

**Libraries are sharing strategies in 'Baby Bounce & Rhyme' sessions.**

**The Family Hub's 'Stay & Play' sessions are built around strategies.**