How can adults help?
• Be interested and attentive.
• Maintain eye contact.
• Encourage talking. Children will share their ideas and feelings if they believe you are interested.
• Ask questions that encourage your child to describe and/or explain.
• Let them finish.
• It’s important to make time daily to have a conversation.
• Make responses that show you are listening.

Unhelpful adult behaviour
• Interrupting, not looking at the speaker.
• Finishing their sentences, rushing them.
• Not responding to questions, cutting them off.
• Assuming you know what they will say.
• Asking yes/no questions.
Children need a variety of listening experiences. This is how they learn sounds, vocabulary and more complex language.

Children with a history of hearing difficulties may have poor listening skills. These children need to practise and develop their listening. Make it fun.

**Listening and attention**
- Play games with simple instructions e.g. “Simple Simon says”.
- Have a selection of objects. Ask for 2 or 3 in the correct order.
- Say a silly sentence and work out why it’s silly e.g. “It was snowing so Millie went into the garden to make a sand castle”.
- Carry out simple tasks on command e.g. run to the door when I say ‘dog’, sit on the floor when I say “cat”.
- Listen for a key word in a story, e.g. Cinderella. Clap each time it is said.
- Read aloud together/listen to a story/passage and summarise it.
- Have a piece of paper each. Draw a simple picture, describe it for your child to copy without seeing it.

**Be a good speaker**
- Gain attention first.
- Look at the person whilst talking.
- Introduce the topic; cue in.
- Give information in a meaningful context; e.g. objects/pictures to illustrate.
- Speak clearly and not too quickly.
- Give time for information to be processed.
- Re-phrase rather than repeat.
- Keep messages short.
- Check frequently for understanding.
- Ask for repetition to check understanding.
- Encourage questions and requests for repetition and help.
- Check for fatigue, have frequent breaks.
- Alternate listening with doing an activity.
- Give instructions in small, logical steps.
- Offer praise.

**Control the listening environment**
- Reduce background noise; switch off TV and music, close doors/windows.
- Reduce reverberation (echo) carpets, curtains, soft furnishings.
- Sit in a position to see and hear clearly.
- Sit away from sources of noise e.g. other children, traffic, lawnmowers.
- Work in small groups in a quiet area.
- Reduce distractions, concentrate on one activity at a time.
- Be an active listener.
- Look at the person talking.
- Watch their gestures, tone of voice, body language; they all give important information.
- Pick out key words to remember.
- Ask questions if you are not sure.

**Practical suggestions**
- Listen to rhymes and music.
- Encourage playing musical instruments and sport.
- Pre-teach new vocabulary (liaise with teachers to identify new key vocabulary).
- Use pictures as a calendar of daily/weekly events.
- Have a “buddy” to help with taking notes/checking information.
- Keep notes in a home/school book.
- Highlight in colour/use different fonts for key information.
- Finish one task before starting another.
- Ask your child to repeat instructions back to you/older children to repeat silently to self.
- Your child can keep their own record of things to remember; by notes, key words, voice-recording, diagrams. This aids memory and encourages independence.
- Talk about events/give instructions in correct sequence. Don’t use unnecessary language.
- Encourage your child to ask.