



Belfast Health and
Social Care Trust

caring supporting improving together



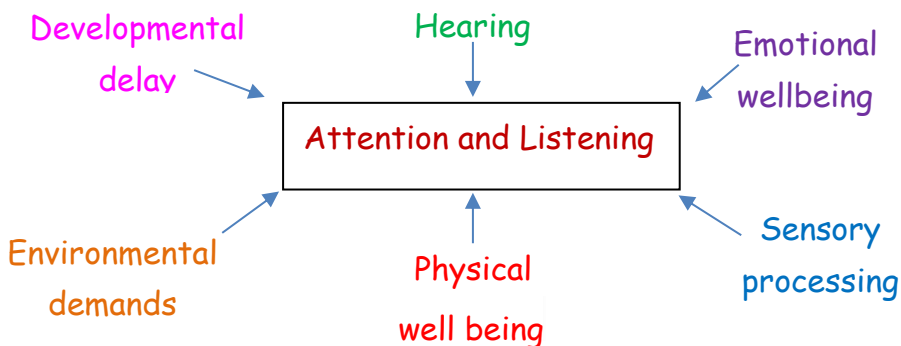
ATTENTION AND LISTENING DIFFICULTIES



PRACTICAL STRATEGIES TO HELP AT HOME

Attention and listening skills describe the ability to focus and maintain attention on what is heard or on a chosen task or activity. In developing attention and listening skills children typically move through several stages. Initially attention will be fleeting. By approximately 6 years children should have integrated attention and be able to attend to more than one thing at a time.

Several factors may affect this development:



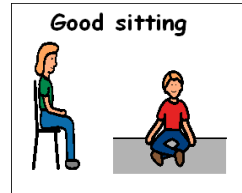
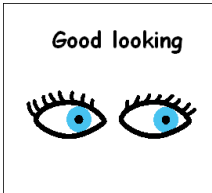
Children with difficulties with attention and listening may:

- be very fidgety, or find it difficult to stay still
- be easily distracted by things going on elsewhere in the room
- be quiet and withdrawn and be 'in their own world'
- have difficulty following instructions and answering questions

Strategies to help at home

You can help children with attention and listening difficulties by:

- talking about the rules of "Good Listening"



- being specific when praising your child, e.g. 'that's lovely sitting, well done!'. 
- using your child's name to gain their attention before giving them an instruction.
- reducing background noise and distractions or providing a quiet area to work e.g. for home works 
- keeping instructions short and repeating if needed
- checking your child has listened and has understood your instructions by asking 'what do you have to do now?'.
- encouraging your child throughout tasks to help refocus their attention.
- creating a structured environment with lots of routine

Activities to develop attention and listening

- Ready, steady, go games: Give your child a car to place at the top of a track. Your child has to wait until you say 'Go!' before they let go of the car.
- Simon Says: Give simple instructions, e.g. 'Simon says touch your nose' or give more complex instructions, e.g. 'Simon says clap three times then touch the leg of the chair'
- Kim's game: Gather a tray of items, e.g. keys, hairbrush etc. Show your child the objects and explain you're going to take one away. They have to work out which item is missing.
- Musical statues
- 'Which instrument?': Collect 2 sets of matching instruments and divide them by a barrier, e.g. folder. Take it in turns to go behind the barrier and make a noise with one of the instruments. The other person has to then copy that sound using their instruments. This game can be made more difficult by making it a sequence of sounds.

