**Gesture, facial expression and body language**

**Understanding and using gesture and pointing**

* Some children do not develop an awareness of non-verbal communication e.g. pointing and gesture.
* They may not respond to an adult pointing at a particular object or picture in a book as they do not realise that the adult is trying to direct their attention to something. They may not wave ‘goodbye’ or ‘hello’ or use pointing as a means to support their communication skills.
* These children benefit from support and from being shown how to use these non-verbal skills.

**Strategies and activities to support gesture and pointing:**

* Putting a motivating activity out of reach or in a clear plastic box and supporting the child to point to the object / box before offering them the motivating activity.
* Supporting the child to wave ‘goodbye’ or ‘hello’ in a familiar song.
* Sharing a motivating book and supporting the child to point at different pictures.

**Facial Expression and Body Language**

* Some children who have strong language skills may still present with difficulties with social interaction and may struggle to understand emotions and how to read them.
* We show emotion with our voices, our faces and with our whole body.
* These children will need to be taught how to interpret the way we show emotions, so that they can respond appropriately.

**Strategies and activities to support understanding facial expressions/ body language**

* Use family photos to support the child to develop an understanding of vocabulary associated with emotions
* Look closely at people's faces in everyday situations and discuss how they may be feeling. Discuss why they might feel that way
* Start with easier emotions such as happy, sad or angry
* Tell the child how you are feeling, so that your child hears emotion words regularly
* For children with stronger language skills, talk about situations using photos / words, e.g. ‘I just spilt my ice-cream’. Discuss how the situation would make them feel.