



# **Information for Makaton Users and Carers**

We all hope that we will be able to talk to our friends but for some people this can be a problem.

We know that **Makaton** can help. Some people will use **Makaton** for a short time, others for longer.

Makaton was developed in the 1970s to help people with learning disability to communicate.

It is now widely used with a variety of people with communication difficulties.

## Things you should know about Makaton

Talking does not just involve speaking.

Watch someone talking. They will not just be saying words but they will also be using:

- hand movements or gestures
- facial expression
- eye contact
- body language (posture and movement)

**All this is communication.**

**Makaton uses Speech and:**

- gesture
- facial expression
- eye contact
- body language

telling the dog off



It is a Language Programme which is based on a selected list of everyday words, for example

- friend
- door
- drink
- in

**Makaton** uses **Speech** together with a **Sign** (gesture) and / or **Symbol** (picture)

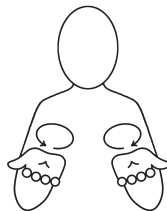
**Sign**

**Symbol**

eg sleep



eg where?



**Let's consider some questions people often ask.**

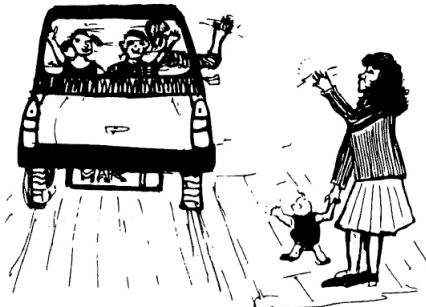
## **1. Why use Makaton?**

Signs and symbols give extra information which can be seen. Research has shown that signs or gestures are easier to learn than spoken words. This makes sense. People use gestures before they can speak, to tell us what they want, for example

pointing at the  
computer



or waving  
goodbye



Makaton can help if people have difficulties with understanding and speaking. Through **Makaton**, they are able to develop important communication skills.

If a person has to rely on speech development alone, these vital skills may not develop appropriately:

- eye contact
- turn-taking
- making choices
- understanding
- sharing information

People who have difficulty understanding and speaking can become frustrated or withdrawn. They may communicate this through behaviours such as shouting or hurting themselves. These are unpleasant for them and for us. By using **Makaton** we are helping the children to communicate in a more acceptable way.

## 2. Will Makaton stop someone from speaking?

Experience and research indicate that using gestures and signs promotes and stimulates speech development. It is very important that you use speech together with signs and symbols.

## 3. What is a symbol?

A symbol is a picture used to represent a word. The picture representation is simple and easy to remember. For example: a bus.



## 4. When do you use symbols?

Symbols can be used to develop language and reading skills. They are also used to help people in everyday life situations. Symbols can be used when a person has difficulty with hand movements making signing inaccurate or impossible.

## 5. Who needs to use Makaton

We will learn to speak by listening to other people speaking. Everyone needs to learn signs and symbols and use them as much as possible to help the person communicate. **Everyone** needs to be involved and will usually be happy to help.

## 6. What will other people think?

You may feel strange using MAKATON at first and you may think that people are looking at you, but with practice it soon becomes more natural and **you** know it is helping.

## 7. How many signs or symbols to start with?

It is important that only a few signs or symbols are used at the beginning. These will be the most important ones you will need. As the person learns, more words will need to be introduced.

## Important things to remember when using Makaton

- Using **Makaton** is **fun!**
- **Makaton** should be used **throughout** the day
- Always remember to speak as you sign or use symbols and encourage any attempt at speech.
- It may be necessary to help the person make the signs or point to the symbols.
- **Don't give up: Makaton** can be **fun!**

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