

## Supporting Quiet Children

Some children are naturally quieter, they can talk well but may prefer to be alone or talk one-to-one. There is nothing wrong with having a quiet nature and below are some ideas to help children feel more comfortable about joining in.

Please note: some children are quiet because they are feeling anxious about talking. In more extreme cases children may have a phobia of hearing their voice in public and avoid talking and can be described as having 'Selective Mutism' – see Selective Mutism handout for further information on this.

**Encouraging play:** Allow the child to choose a friend to play with, encourage games that involve taking turns but have little focus on talking e.g. fishing game or building a tower.

**Give reassurance:** Quiet children often needs lots of reassurance and will look for adult approval. Try to build up the child's positive self-image with plenty of encouragement.

**Avoid applying pressure:** This means that adults should not make statements / ask questions that demand speech, for example:

"Tell Aunty Val what you got for your birthday"  
"What did you do at school today?"

Instead, try using the 'I wonder' phrase, for example:

"I'm wondering if you can remember any presents that you got for your birthday"  
"I have been to the shops today; I wonder what you have done"

Looking away from the child, rather than staring expectantly, after you have said an 'I wonder' phrase can also reduce the pressure to talk.

Try to discuss this with all adults, to all agree to support them in the same way.

**Encourage other forms of communication:** Praise and encourage other forms of communication such as facial expression, gesture and drawing.

**Create a positive and supportive atmosphere:** Talk positively **about** the child and talk positively **to** the child. For example, praise the child for the good things they can do, and use positive praise around them.

Based on Supporting Quiet Children: Maggie Johnson & Michael Jones