

Visual supports provide structure and predictability and can be used in a range of ways to help children and young people to:

- Process and understand spoken language
- Understand routines and help them to cope with and prepare for any changes
- Anticipate what's going to happen throughout their day
- Make choices
- Express their thoughts and feelings
- Manage their anxiety
- Understand positive behaviour messages
- Work through activities independently
- Organise themselves

What do visual supports look like?

- Meaningful gesture
- Demonstration
- Concrete objects/props
- Symbols
- Photos, pictures and drawings
- First-then boards
- Choosing boards
- Sequence instruction strips (e.g. following a recipe)
- Visual timetables
- Written supports (lists, story plans, step by step instructions, reminders...)

Visual supports need to be:

- Meaningful and appropriate for the developmental level of the child/young person
- Motivating for the child or young person - use their interests to create their visual supports (e.g. a reward chart could be in the shape of a dinosaur)

- Used repeatedly and consistently – it takes time for visual supports to become an effective part of the child/young person's day
- Kept in place – it can be tempting to think that visuals are no longer required when things are going well. However, children are often reliant on these supports to maintain the progress they have made.