

Meet Kate and her family

A Communication Hub resource

(electronic bubbles pop)

(note swooshes)

(gentle upbeat music)

(indistinct chatter)

- My name is Katie Mullins, I am 13.

- We got the two eggs. What else? We got the pan. And do we need the butter?

- Yeah.

- So I'm Michelle, and I'm Kate's mum.

- And I'm Pete, and I'm Kate's dad. Hello (indistinct).

- So Kate's an incredibly social little girl and a loving little girl as well.

- There does it. Can you do it? Oh dear, you've got no feet. (Kate laughing)

- Loves being out and got a lot of love to give. (Yay.)

- Being nonverbal, It doesn't stop her communicating with people. Just trialling different things and knowing what works best in each setting is how we've been able to develop effective communication. Sometimes it's easier for me to speak to Kate normally, how you would with any sort of child, and Kate would either gesture or sign back to us. You would use some words. So, that's most effective when we're sort of in a busy sort of time of the day or that.

- Crazy? (all laugh)

- Things like the PODD [Background - What would you like to play?], the Tobii, have opened up Kate's ability to express what she, how she was feeling.

- The PODD we've had for a fair few years now. And now we're trialling the Tobii Dynavox. So, the PODD is essentially the same on here only, this is, got the voice activation. So it's an instant input and output for Kate, so she's got feedback there immediately, which I think is important to Kate for her to be able to communicate with some of her friends that may be verbal. She can still be able to communicate effectively with them.

- When you're unsure of something, Is it hard to tell us exactly how you are feeling?

- Yeah.

- And does that make you feel a bit sad sometimes or?

- Yeah.

- Yeah.

- If you're wanting mummy and daddy, what do you say or do?

- Mummy.

- Big voice.

- Da.

- Da, and?

- Mummy.

- So what game do you want to play?

[Kate points to picture]

- The jigsaw puzzle.

So Kate will always be multimodal> She'll always be signing using words and using different sorts of devices, and that's something that Kate has displayed herself, that will give her own voice. And she can essentially then be in control of that. So, to give her more independence.

- You ask daddy, is he a boy or a girl?

- No, I'm not a boy. (Kate chuckles)

- Okay, quick, we've got to flip down all the boys.

- How does it make you feel when you can communicate?

- Calm.

- It makes you feel calm.

- It's about giving her time to respond rather than actively prompting her.

- 'Cause sometimes are people a bit unsure, 'cause your words are a bit different?

- Yeah.

- Yeah.

- Yeah.

- So do we sometimes tell people, just because your voice is a bit different, that you still love to communicate?

- Yes.

- That's right. Even though you're nonverbal, can you get your point across?

[Kate nods]

- Yeah, you can.

- Kate's pretty resilient, are you?

- Yeah.

- With other peers, if she was in like a bigger sort of setting, then maybe she feels a little bit left out, I think. Any form of communication for her to be able to be exposed to that and to get her point across is most important.

- Is that right?

- And you'll quite often sign to different people and if they're not sure, does mummy and daddy just help you with the words that you're trying to say?

[Kate points to the communication book]

- And you'll use the book, your book? That's right.

- Initially you don't get the responses that you're expecting, it's a very, very slow process. But when you see what you get, it is so rewarding.

- Society just gets hooked on that...you know, you need to have an auditory voice to be heard. And that's so not true, when it comes to, to people like Kate.

- It's like drinking water. Everyone should have the ability to be able to do that, and to be supported to do that as well. Without communicating, you're not an active member in society and you're left behind.

- It's very much investing the time and also being patient; give her opportunities and support her. Maximise her communication potential.

(gentle upbeat music plays)