

TRANSCRIPT: Developing intentional communication (1): expressing preferences

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Rob Ashdown: It's very important to be clear what a child's way of expressing like or dislike is because, sometimes, it can be the very slightest differences in responses, and one way of doing that is by repeatedly presenting particular stimuli in a structured sort of way and just looking for, 'Is there a consistent response here?'.

Leanne was trying to see whether Alice would demonstrate clear like or dislike responses in relation to a variety of experiences.

Leanne Higgins: Alice relies on adults for all her needs, really, so it's important that we look at her and just note if there's any patterns of a dislike, even if it's just a squint of an eye or the turn of the head.

Rob Ashdown: Obviously, we don't want to present Alice with things that she dislikes all the time. We want to find the things that she really likes.

If there is a consistent response, then the next step is to give more opportunities to experience that sort of stimulus.

If she's going to learn to intentionally communicate to people, she's got to realise that what she does has an impact on people. So when she is confronted by something which she doesn't like, people have got to react appropriately and withdraw it, or where if she's presented with something and she shows a clear like to, then people have got to make more of the same available to her, and as long as people are responding appropriately, according to her likes and dislikes, she should acquire more intentional communication.