

Halima's story February 2024

Service: Makaton sessions with Jodie, Locala's Play Intervention Lead.

What is Makaton? Makaton is a language that uses symbols, signs and speech to enable people to communicate.

Makaton helps by

- developing early communication skills such as eye contact and gestures like pointing
- developing understanding by giving a visual clue alongside speech
- reducing frustration and promoting inclusion, giving children with communication difficulties a way to express themselves independently
- stimulating sounds and first words
- encouraging language development and putting words together



Figure 1: Makaton sign 'more'

To find out more, take a look at the Makaton Charity website <https://makaton.org>

About the person: Halima is 3 years old and has a tracheostomy. This is when an opening is made at the front of the neck, so a tube can be inserted into the windpipe (trachea) to help breathing. She needs this due to 'Congenital Hypoventilation Syndrome' – when breathing controls that should happen automatically, don't. Jodie remembers meeting Halima when she was 9 months old. It was Jodie's first day in her new job with Locala's Children's Speech Therapy team! She explains, "**Halima was ventilated 24 hours a day when she was very little. She is now ventilated just at night and if she's poorly.**" Halima and her family have been under the care of Speech and Language Therapist Kate since she was a baby. Kate suggested that Halima would benefit from learning Makaton with Jodie and her family were keen to get started.

Makaton sessions: All Locala's therapists working with children know some Makaton signs. Jodie has had additional training with a Makaton tutor and uses her enhanced skills to support her colleagues and help raise awareness. She runs the Makaton sessions with patients and families who have been put forward by Locala's Speech and Language therapists.

What Halima's Mum Sophia says: "**Halima has done really well. We've had sessions with Jodie over 9 months. We use Makaton throughout the day and at nursery.**" Sophia gives some examples of when Makaton helps communication, "**Going outside, if she's hungry, wanting a drink, putting shoes on.**" Sophia says learning Makaton has made a difference. "**It's made things a lot easier. She's not frustrated. She can explain things in her own way, like pointing, but learning Makaton now means she is more confident with other people. It's pushed her to communicate, to portray what she wants, outside of home. She uses some words and Makaton. If we don't understand what she says, she now uses Makaton.**"



What Jodie says: "**Halima is now able to independently express and communicate what she wants or doesn't want. She's also able to make choices using Makaton signs. She's a very clever little girl!**" Jodie explains what Makaton signs Halima has learnt, "**We started with functional signs such as 'more', 'finished', 'help', and then food that Halima particularly likes, such as 'crisps' and 'grapes'. Halima is really good at using non-verbal communication such as gesturing or pointing to communicate what she wants, therefore her parents had to work hard with Halima, modelling the different Makaton signs and prompting Halima to use Makaton signs to tell people what she wanted. Halima is starting to try say some words but parents and Nursery continue to encourage Halima to use Makaton signs to make sure she can clearly make her wants and needs known.**"

Halima's Mum Sophia spoke with Joanne Vaughan Engagement Team on 27.11.23 and gives consent to share her story widely.