

4. Guidelines for helpers in singing sessions

It might be possible to spend some time in a staff meeting when you can maybe go through these and your own ideas with the adults who will be supporting both you & the learners in singing times. They will then know, before the event, how they can best help & what might be unhelpful.

Helpers should :

- **Be positive.** Know they are an essential part of the singing time.
- **Be totally focussed** on the activity.
- **Enjoy the time,** & communicate that enjoyment to the learners & the leader.

- **Be interactive.** Respond to the learners appropriately.
- **Be attentive** – to the leader & the learners.
- **Be a good example.** Model for the learners, & other staff, good behaviour & singing.

- **Take their turn** in the group, using singing, signing, choosing &c.
- **Be encouraging.** Show enthusiasm & interest with positive face & body posture.
- **Let the learners respond** in their own way, when that is safe & in keeping with the session.

- **Be responsive** – notice learners' intention to communicate.
- **Be willing to adapt** & change their own communication styles.
- **Be patient.**

- **Be willing to shed inhibitions.**
- **Know that they are an essential & valuable part** of the singing & learning time.
- **Use hand under hand** technique if requested by leader & tolerated by learner.

- **Be observant** & give relevant, helpful feedback to the leader after the session.
- **Ensure that any Augmentative Alternative Communication** equipment is available & working.
- **Be willing to lead** the sessions to allow the leader to observe.

Helpers should try to guard against :

- **Being 'too' helpful** i.e. intervening too soon & so denying the learner's opportunity.
- **Prompting too soon,** or provide physical help to learners before the leader requests it.
- **Forcing learners** to respond i.e. by using hand on hand to manipulate learners.

- **Distracting the learners** or the leader e.g. by talking or not being attentive.
- **Talking about the learners** as if they are not there. Always address what they say to the learner (saying his/her name first) or to the group.
- **Being so taken up** with their own participation that they forget others' needs.

Additional Suggestions

Put a copy of these (or your own) guidelines in the induction packs for new staff members. Make sure an experienced staff member goes through the points with new or temporary staff. Look at the guidelines annually with all staff -- make any amendments as necessary.