# Makaton Awareness & Bookbug Sessions Webinar Transcript

**Thursday 30 September 2021**

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### Introduction – 0:00 minutes

Roz Coe:

Hello everybody, and a very warm welcome to our webinar tonight. This is Makaton Awareness & Bookbug Sessions, and we have today speech and language therapists Aileen Buchanan and Heather Sturgeon.

Roz Coe:

I'm delighted to welcome two speech and language therapists tonight. Aileen and Heather, who between them have got a wealth of clinical experience. Aileen is a specialist speech and language therapist, she's working with children, young people and their caregivers in clinics and home settings, as well as in nurseries and schools all over South Lanarkshire. She's a Makaton regional tutor, and is a trained Hanen practitioner as well. She's been a speech and language therapist for 20 years, and a Makaton tutor for four years, and she really enjoys being an advocate for Makaton, so I'm really glad she does because that's what she's doing here tonight for us.

Roz Coe:

And we also have Heather Sturgeon, who's an advanced practitioner in speech and language therapy. And she's working in additional support schools and nurseries across South Lanarkshire. Heather's a Makaton regional tutor too, and she also coordinates the Hanen More Than Words workshops for parents and carers of children with social and communication disorders, and that's across North Lanarkshire. Heather's also Bookbug trained, and she uses Bookbug in her nurseries, and she too enjoys championing Makaton, and has used it in several NHS Lanarkshire choir songs, I'm sure they're available somewhere online to see, Heather!

Roz Coe:

Heather's been a speech and language therapist for 30 years, and a Makaton tutor for 24 of these. Heather has asked me to ask you to excuse her shaky voice today, because she usually sings to 2-4 year olds. Now I have assured that we'll be a very welcoming and kind audience. But welcome to you both tonight, and thanks for coming. Aileen, shall I share your slides now?

### What is Makaton? – 2:22 minutes

Aileen Buchanan:

Yes, that would be great. Hi, everyone. As Roz said, my name's Aileen and I'm going to share some information about Makaton tonight. Really going to give you a brief overview about what Makaton is, its essential features, who uses it, and the aims of using it. Heather will then give some practical examples.

Aileen Buchanan:

Now this isn't a teaching, we're not going to be teaching you signs, but rather we'll be showing you signs and symbols being used in stories, rhymes and songs. So Heather, she'll be doing the practical session.

Aileen Buchanan:

To start with, Makaton is a language programme designed to support the development of communication, language and literacy skills. It's made up of speech signs and/or symbols and a combination of these can be used to give different options for both children and adults to communicate, depending on their need. But for the purpose of this session, I will be talking about children. But just to be aware that both children and adults use Makaton.

Aileen Buchanan:

Makaton signs have been taken from the British Sign Language, and adapted to make it easier for our users. The signs are used in conjunction with speech at all times, and in English grammatical word order, which differs from BSL. All Makaton signs have matching symbols, which are simple line drawings that show the meaning of words. They're pictographic, which means they often look like the object that they're representing. So you can draw them by hand, or you can photocopy them from the Makaton symbols book. You do not need to use Makaton symbols, there are other symbol systems out there. We use Boardmaker here in Lanarkshire, but you can also real objects, you can use photos, you can use other pictures, depending on the child's level of symbolic understanding.

Aileen Buchanan:

It will be easier for a child to understand the real apple, and the picture of a real photo is easier to understand than a line drawing or a picture. So that's just something to be aware of, okay? Makaton is a source of really useful vocabulary for those with communication needs as well as their interactors. It consists of vocabulary that most of us use on a daily basis, so your child can very quickly start to communicate what they want and need with significant others who will understand their communication. Next slide please, Roz.

Aileen Buchanan:

Okay, so the essential features of Makaton. It consists of a core vocabulary of 450 concepts, which is a small vocabulary of everyday words, and it's arranged in stages going from 1-8. It also contains some additional vocabulary, which reflects natural changes in our culture and society, and is updated by the Makaton charity. Stage 1 begins with commonly used words that meet basic needs. So for instance, drink, toilet, eat, and bed.

Aileen Buchanan:

Really useful words, if a child isn't able to communicate that basic need, if they can't indicate that they're feeling hungry, or they're feeling thirsty, or they need to go to the toilet. So these are really good words for them, signs for them to start to use. Using signs and symbols at these very early stages has been proven to develop their social communication skills, social interaction skills, such as eye contact, listening and attention, taking turns and using gesture. As the signs and symbols capture the child's attention, they add extra meaning to the objects and actions which in turn support their understanding, and make it easier for them to communicate.

Aileen Buchanan:

Makaton also has a much larger resource vocabulary, over 11,000 concepts, which support children and adults in different social situations, for example in community-based activities you'll find its topic base, so you'll find topics to do with leisure activities, food and drink, all sorts of activities will be included within these topics. So for instance, if your child is interested in animals, you will be able to access a topic book that contain a range of animal signs and symbols. And again, these are signs and symbols that not everyone needs or wants, so you can be specific and choose the topic that you need.

Aileen Buchanan:

The programme has flexible teaching methods, so you can either follow the sequence of the stages, choosing the signs that are meaningful for your child, or you can choose a few signs that your child will need in everyday situations, which may occur in later stages, or may not even be in the core vocabulary. For example if your child loves to play with dinosaurs, the sign for dinosaurs is not in the core vocabulary, so you would be accessing that because that's something your child is motivated by.

Aileen Buchanan:

And when you start to choose signs, that's what you really have to consider, your child's motivators. Because if you're using their motivators, you're going to have more opportunity for them to try and use their signing. So usually food and drink and toys are signs that would be really useful for your children. Okay, it's also important to introduce a selection of different types of words, as we want children to develop their language skills, not just name objects and activities. For example, you might want to include labels for people, like mummy and daddy, and you might want to include places, so school... sorry I'm just moving up a bit so you can see me! Or park, some objects, so your child might love playing with teddy, or reading stories. Action words are really useful because we need action words to make sentences. So words like eat and drink and wash are really useful, as well as some describing words.

Aileen Buchanan:

So if maybe food is hot or it's cold, or something's good, or something's great, it's useful to use these different words. And we also want children to use language for different purposes, so we want them to be able to ask for things, we want them to be able to respond, to comment, to make choices, to state their preferences. So again, using different types of words is really useful. Next slide please, Roz.

Aileen Buchanan:

So who uses Makaton? Children and adults with a broad range of communication needs. They use Makaton signs and symbols as either their main method of communication, or to support their speech. Those with communication needs may have difficulties with listening and attention, retaining information, understanding language, developing language, making themselves understood, telling people what we want. So using signs and symbols can really help to support the development of these skills. As well as children and adults with communication needs, the interactors of all kinds, we want them to be learning the signs too, the signs and symbols.

Aileen Buchanan:

So parents, carers, family members, professionals, friends. Those with frequent contact, as well as those who have less contact but are still in your child's life. So your child might enjoy going down to the local café and being able to ask for some milk, or ask for a cake, and it'd be useful to share these signs with people who work in these establishments, because then your child can interact with the other people. Okay?

Aileen Buchanan:

And education and service providers also use Makaton, and they use it in terms of translating information into a form that your child can access. Which is why really we're here tonight to promote Makaton. So by signing and symbolising stories, rhymes and songs, children can join in and have fun whilst learning the vocabulary they need in everyday situations. Next slide please, Roz.

Aileen Buchanan:

Okay, so what are the aims of using Makaton? Using Makaton can provide a means of basic communication. By using signs and or symbols with speech, those children who have little or no speech can make their needs and feelings known. And even if they only use a few signs from Stages 1 and 2, these can be used in a meaningful and useful way. For example, they could be saying, "I want a drink. Where's Daddy's car? I'm going home to bed." So they can start to develop their language skills by combining signs together, even as early as just using Stages 1 and 2.

Aileen Buchanan:

Using Makaton can also support understanding. So when understanding is hard work, it's natural to stop listening. But when signs and symbols are used with speech, they help to clarify the meaning of words. As many of the signs and symbols look like the object, for example, ball, drink, car. And as well as these visual clues, we make use of non-verbal communication such as facial expression, tone of voice, body movements, and natural gesture. Think about the early gestures that we use with babies. We'll point to draw attention to things, we'll put our arms out for them to be lifted, we'll clap our hands in excitement, we'll play peekaboo and hide our eyes. So we use natural gesture, and Makaton builds on this to reinforce meaning, which helps our children to understand, retain and recall key information.

Aileen Buchanan:

Signing also helps us to slow down our speech, as even though our speech is grammatically correct, we don't sign every word. Instead, we sign key words. Now key words are the words that carry the important information, so if I said, "Come and sit down." The words and and down are redundant, because I'm signing the key words, so I'm signing come and sit down. And I'm placing the sign where I want the child to sit, so I don't need to sign the word down because I'm placing that sign there.

Aileen Buchanan:

And we make use of pausing to help the child process what we're saying. When I'm saying that, "Come and sit down." But if I was just saying that, "Come and sit down." I would probably be joining all the words together, but I'm putting in a pause to support that two-part instruction. So I'm asking the child to do two things, I'm asking them to come, and I'm asking them to sit. Putting that pause helps them to process that information.

Aileen Buchanan:

We also use pausing to gain attention. So we might be saying to the child, "Look! A ball!" And did you see I was using an animated voice again, to hook them in? So just being aware that you use all of this non-verbal language is really useful to support a child's understanding. Using signs and symbols also help us to reduce the language we're using, as we're more mindful of the language we are using. We may want to say things in a different, more simple way, for instance instead of saying something like, "Oh it's far too hot in here, let's get your jacket off." You would be thinking, what signs do I need for my child to understand?

Aileen Buchanan:

So you might say, "Jacket off? It's too hot." Again, I was pausing and I was simplifying my language. And again, I'm using a visual, and I'm using speech that all of that will help the child to understand. Okay, so using Makaton signs and symbols will help your child tune into key vocabulary in stories, rhymes and songs, and Heather will show you how to do this during her practical session. You can also make up songs to help your children understand their daily routines. Thinking about the mulberry bush tune, you could be doing things, "This is the way we brush our teeth. This is the way we wash our hands."

Aileen Buchanan:

So you're actually helping them to understand their daily routine, plus you're teaching them signs at the same time. And using song, music stimulates both the left and the right side of the brain so it helps with language development too. Using Makaton can also help to develop expressive language skills. Signs and symbols can be used for naming objects and activities at its most basic level, but as a child matures, signs and symbols can be combined, just what I show you earlier, to form phrases and sentences supporting language development.

Aileen Buchanan:

And if a child's speech is unclear, you can also, using that child using signs and symbols can give the listener an additional visual clue to what he is saying, increasing the child's confidence when the communication is successful and motivating them to continue, to keep communication going. Using Makaton also facilitates social interaction. It gives the child the opportunity to send purposeful messages, and join in in the same way as their peers, so it's inclusive and it helps build relationships as there's that shared understanding. So that's why it's important for the people in your child's life to learn the signs too. If you don't understand what the child is signing, he will be less likely to interact with you.

Aileen Buchanan:

And you sometimes see that children won't interact in certain environments, because people aren't understanding their communication. So it's important for everyone to learn the signs.

Aileen Buchanan:

Okay, so using Makaton also increases equal opportunities, as information can be translated into an accessible form, just what I said earlier, so that the children can actively participate and they know what's going to happen. For instance, thinking about a visit to the hairdresser's, a child might be quite apprehensive about that. But the parent could be preparing the child for what's going to happen. They're going to have their hair washed, they're then going to have it combed, and then they're going to have it cut. And again, sharing that information with the hairdresser, the hairdresser can use the signs as they talk through the process, just to help the child be prepared and to alleviate any anxiety. So really useful for that purpose.

Aileen Buchanan:

So by incorporating key signs and symbols into stories, rhymes and songs, you will be supporting early literacy development, as you're increasing your child's awareness imprint with these added visual clues. The melody in a song, its simple, repetitive format, its fun element, in addition to these visual clues, all make it easier for children to learn and communicate. And you can provide lots of opportunities during everyday routines and play to reinforce key vocabulary. You did for everyday situations, so it's just being inventive and thinking how you're going to encourage the child to learn the signs. Next slide please, Roz.

Aileen Buchanan:

Okay, so if you want to learn more about Makaton, and you're interested in the training workshops, you will find information on the website. Now we have the information on the slides, and you will have access to this following the session. Makaton also works in partnership with Singing Hands UK and CBeebies and Something Special. So you can visit both their websites to see how Makaton is used to support children's communication in fun motivating ways which help to reinforce their learning.

Aileen Buchanan:

Singing Hands also, they have an Instagram page which is excellent. Yeah, I think that's all I'm wanting to say here, so I'm going to hand over to Heather for the practical session now, thank you.

### Makaton Practical Session – 19:50 minutes

Heather Sturgeon:

Hi, everyone. My name's Heather, I'm one of the speech therapists. This is going to give you a wee bit of mixture of some information about what to think about when you're using Makaton signs with a storybook, and also just to share with you some of the songs that I might do in my nursery or Bookbug Sessions as well.

Heather Sturgeon:

Just the very first thing we always say to people is when you're signing, it doesn't matter if you're right-handed or left-handed. I'm right-handed, so that's my dominant hand, that's my leading hand. So if you imagine if I was going to say something, this would be my pencil hand, my left hand would be the paper, it would be the supporting hand. So one hand will always lead. It doesn't really matter usually at the start, but if you're right you need to really stay with your dominant hand, because sometimes swapping between can confuse the children. And people will say to us, "I'm right-handed but John's left-handed, is that going to matter?"

Heather Sturgeon:

It doesn't really matter as long as the sign's consistent. You need to keep the sign consistent all the time. And the other thing we always say about, and again this is just sign-sharing so I won't be teaching you signs, I'll just be showing you them and we'll be referring you back to Makaton for them as well. But as the signer, your signs need to be accurate. Often the children won't give you things back the way you do it.

Heather Sturgeon:

For instance, the sign for toilet is like that, and a lot of children can't isolate a finger because they don't have the skills to be able to do it. So you might get a tap, you might get a wave, you might get something over that side. If it looks like what it's meant to look like, we accept that sign. Because what we're trying to do is reinforce to the children, "Well done, you used the sign and we understood that." And we're going to reinforce and say, "Yes, you can go to the toilet now." So you want to reinforce that positive communication.

Heather Sturgeon:

A lot of the children that use Makaton have not had positive experiences, so they've maybe used communication or they've used some sort of gestures that have not come across. So what we want to say is, "Well done, you did something and it got the message across." To try and promote that reciprocal communication and to keep it going.

Heather Sturgeon:

The other thing that I'm going to talk about as well is just when you are signing... And I know most people, because I've watched lots of the Bookbug videos, you do wear the t-shirt. So it's really important that you don't have lots of jewellery or anything that's going to click when you're on if you're using signing, because that can be quite distracting for children who’ve got any sensory difficulties as well.

Heather Sturgeon:

The only other thing to say, I'm moving back just so you can see me is, we used to tell people you have a signing space. So it's probably about that size. I used to say to people it was the size of a TV, but now people have giant TVs, so I can't say that anymore. It's roughly about a square, sort of it goes to shoulder height and goes to just at your hips. Anything that goes beyond that, up or about, is usually for exaggeration. So if I said to you I was driving a really big car. But I said to you, "Oh, I was driving a really big car."

Heather Sturgeon:

Again, what Aileen was saying, using my face. Or you know, "I saw a big, giant dog." So I would be using my voice, using facial expression, and using the signs as if you were exaggerating the same way. So if you keep all your signs kind of tight, the other thing is it's quite difficult for other people to watch you. If we have somebody that's signing and their hands are all over the place, it can be quite difficult to actually tune in, is that a sign or are they just waving their hands about as part of the story?

Heather Sturgeon:

So keeping your hands together. The other thing is usually that's, when we're signing, when our hands are together, that's an indicating and unspoken thing of, "That's me done, it's your turn." Because the children can't often pick up on that. So signers need a way of signifying it, so it's usually hands together, that's the end of my turn, and then you know that you can speak. Whereas you and I would know, "Oh that's her, she's stopped speaking, right it's my turn to say something else now."

### This Bonny Baby – 23:32 minutes

Heather Sturgeon:

The first thing to say is, the books that I'm going to talk about tonight are all Bookbug books. So I'm going to take a really basic one to start with, so this was in, I think the baby bag, and it's This Bonny Baby. The important thing, when we're thinking about Makaton as well is, Aileen said we're only signing key words. So we don't sign every single word in the story, you'll see this when I move onto the more advanced book.

Heather Sturgeon:

And sometimes when we look at books, the most important thing about signing a book is to get the message across. So it's not about signing every word, it's often about thinking, what does that actually mean? This is a great book to start off with, one of the reasons why I like this is because straight away we've got lots of verbs. People always forget about verbs and action words, because they're so busy saying, "You know what? I want them to ask for a biscuit. I want them to ask for the toilet. I want them to ask for a book."

Heather Sturgeon:

And it's great to have lots and lots and lots of nouns, but nobody walks about saying, "Table, chair, elephant." Or whatever it is. You know you'll have other... You'll say, "Where's the table? Or I need a chair. I want to go to the toilet." So it's really important right from the start that we're always encouraging people to think big and think about these words. Bookbug and the songs, they're a great opportunity for that because, and as you'll see when I start to do the singing, one of the biggest things when you start to sign is that you slow down. Because you're having to think about what the signs are, you will slow down reading the story.

Heather Sturgeon:

I know at the start you would be saying, "This book is called This Bonny Baby, and it's by..." I can't actually see who it's by now, but it's by a person! So you would do all that at the start, usually when I've got a book, I would have the book sort of, in a prop thing at my knee, but I can't do that on the video so I'm really sorry, please forgive me, I'm going to put the book at the side. So bonny's a tricky word. In the early stages of vocabulary, we don't have a word for beautiful, nice, or whatever.

Heather Sturgeon:

If we're thinking about the very basics, we would just be saying good. So that's the word that I'm going to be using for that. And so I'm just going to take you through it page by page, and also talk about how you can expand. So I would be saying, remember using the face, "This bonny baby loves playing." And then the next one says, "This bonny baby loves painting. This bonny baby loves eating. Mm!" You can put wee extra things in like that to add more meaning.

Heather Sturgeon:

"This bonny baby loves..." Now the word is actually bathtime, but a sign for that would be bath time, but what does that really mean? It really means the baby loves going in the bath and getting washed. So that's what the meaning is, the meaning is this baby likes to go in the bath and get washed. So that's what we sign. "This bonny baby loves bathtime." You'll be doing that as well, this is what I'm meaning about read the book first, think, what does that actually mean? Do I have a sign for it, can I get the message across?

Heather Sturgeon:

"This bonny baby loves..." And it's the same thing because the word is actually bedtime, but what does the baby love doing? He loves sleeping, so that's what we sign. "This bonny baby loves bedtime." It doesn't matter that the word doesn't match what the sign does, because the message will get across, what you're trying to say to the children is, this is what it means. It means the baby loves sleeping.

Heather Sturgeon:

And the very last page, this is great as well because it's lovely. It's got a question word on it. So people quite often use a lot of directive language with their children, "What's this, what's that, show me this, show me that." So it's lovely, and even in a baby book to have a question word. "What does this..." And you would be pointing to them, "This bonny baby love?" And then you could take it round and do lots of things like just again, some of them would be actions. So, "Do you love smiling? You love clapping. You love singing."

Heather Sturgeon:

Just to keep that together what I'm going to do is tie it in with a wee song so that it makes sense for you. Normally I would do things like, a story like that, have a chat round about it, but then I would have my song bag and I'm so sorry as well, it's been well-used so it's a bit dirty. So we sing a song just to share it with you, you can sing whatever you like, but I normally sing, "What's in the bag today? What's in the bag today?" If anybody has children who are in their twenties and used to watch Bear in the Big Blue House? That's where this song comes from, because I've had to watch it a million times.

Heather Sturgeon:

So I would usually do, have the child go round and then you would be doing all that, "Look, I wonder what it is?" Lovely question word again, "What is in this?" And then a nice song to tie it in with it would be, if you chose the love heart? I can't remember if you've seen this in your sight, but I would say, okay, so this would stand for a song. This is what Aileen was saying about thinking, using an object to match it. So if the child picks out this love heart, I would say, "Oh. We're going to sing, I love you. You love me. We're a happy family. With a great big hug and a kiss from me to you..." And then you sing their name, "John, John, I love you."

Heather Sturgeon:

That's a lovely song with the babies, parents can turn them round and have it, and it ties really in nicely with the vocabulary that you've used. And again, just anything'll do. If you don't have a real or a toy object, pictures are good in your bag as well. I'll tie that in later on to the second story that I'm going to do.

### Shark in the Park – 29:19 minutes

Heather Sturgeon:

So the second story, I've got a few things to say about this as well. This story's a bit more complex, Shark in the Park. More language in this one, but we always say to parents, especially the parents who come in social communication workshops is, remember, just because the book has lots of words in it, it doesn't mean to say you need to actually do the book like that. If you have somebody that you think, oh my gosh. There's so much going on in that picture. What will I do, what will I say? You don't have to read it word for word. You might be saying, "Oh look! Who can see ducks? Ducks." And then you maybe point to them, or you might be asking them, "Where is Daddy reading his paper?"

Heather Sturgeon:

Again, you don't have to read it word for word, you can pick and choose what you actually want to have in the book. This is one of my favourite books, it was until I started, I thought I was going to have to sign it to Bookbug and now I've gone off it a wee bit to be honest with you! But it was one of my favourite books. So again I'd be saying, "We're going to look at Shark in the Park, which is written..." So writing is just the way you would normally do it, "And illustrated by Nick Sharratt." And then I'm just going to go through it but I’ll show you, these books that are repeats, so the Gruffalo books, Julia Donaldson books, books that have repetitive language are really good.

Heather Sturgeon:

One, because you don't have to learn loads of signs, and two, because the children begin to predict and they can copy it. It's the same thing that happens when you start singing with children, they might not understand it but they'll begin to get some of the songs and the tune as the more that you sign and sing it with them. So this story again, just thinking about using your voice and using your face as well. So, "Down in the park, a little boy..." Now it says, "Is testing out." We don't have a sign for that, so what's he doing? He's playing. "Is playing with his brand new toy."

Heather Sturgeon:

And then again you could have a look and think, mm, do a bit of studying. When we're speaking about people's names, we usually just finger spell, so this wee boy's called Timothy Pope. You could just do Timothy or you could do “Timothy Pope Timothy Pope is looking through his telescope. He looks up to the sky, he looks down to the ground, he looks left and right, he looks all around, and this is what he sees. What a nasty surprise! In his loudest voice, Timothy cries, 'There's a shark in the park!'"

Heather Sturgeon:

So again, using your voice, using your face. "A shark? Fancy that!" We don't have a sign for that but we can wonder about that, because you would say, "Oh fancy that, imagine thinking that, or imagine knowing that." "Fancy that, it's only a cat!" Again, you could go through the book like that, because this is repetitive, we're back to the same thing again. "Timothy Pope, Timothy Pope, looks again through his telescope. He looks up to the sky, he looks down to the..." And you'd be leaving a gap there, maybe the kids would want to fill it in, "Ground. He looks left and right, he looks all around."

Heather Sturgeon:

So you're showing when you're doing that, he's just looking everywhere. "And this is what he sees. 'What a terrible sight!' Timothy yells with all his might. 'There's a shark in the park! A shark? Oh no!'" And again you don't know the words for it, so you would just use a natural gesture. "'Oh, it's just a crow.'" So there is different signs for different types of birds, but at the basic level we're just using that simple sign for bird, so the story goes on again, we're back to Timothy Pope. "Timothy Pope, Timothy Pope looks once more through his telescope. He looks up to the sky, he looks down to the ground. He looks left and right, he looks all around, and this is what he sees."

Heather Sturgeon:

Now the actual words say, "Tim's not in any doubt." We don't have a sign for that in Makaton, but so what does it means... It says Tim's not in any doubt, so Tim knows, so that's what we sign. "Tim is not in any doubt." But we're actually signing Tim knows. "Tim is not in any doubt. What do you think he's about to shout? 'There's a shark in the park!' A shark? No, it's not! Aren't you glad?" So again, not glad but it's happy but it means the same thing.

Heather Sturgeon:

"As a matter of fact it's Timothy's dad. 'It's time to go home Timothy.'" Sorry, I don't know why I did that, I always do the voices when I'm reading the stories, I've just realised that probably sounds a bit mad! "Timothy Pope says, 'It's safe to say there are no sharks in the park today.'" And then there's a little bit in the book if you if you'll know to say,, I would always say, "What do you think?" Which is tying that in again. Again, you could just cut bits of the story out as and when you need it. But the main thing is to really to show you that you don't have to have every single correct word to sign it to be able to sign a story.

Heather Sturgeon:

Read the story first, that's the key thing. Think, what does this actually mean? Bathtime, what does it mean? It means they actually like being in the bath, bedtime it means they actually like going to sleep. And you're choosing the sign that matches that, so you always start with the easiest vocabulary you can, there's no point in over-complicating things.

Heather Sturgeon:

With a story, it's quite easy, once you practise it your signing will begin to get quicker. So just be careful, always be mindful, pausing, taking your time, giving yourself time to just wait in the story. Lots of the children who need Makaton and even children who don't need Makaton, it helps children process the language, and they need a wee break in between to think, that's right. Also what might happen is some children, they'll be a wee delay. So some children might sign after you, lots of mainstream nurseries say that happens if I was signing a story, they'd be wanting to sign it after me and there's a wee delay, and that's absolutely fine.

Heather Sturgeon:

The other one I wanted to show you is, and this is in one of the links as well I think you've been sent. So Makaton do have stories that are aligned to... So they've got Dear Zoo, they've got The Gruffalo, they've got a few of Julia Donaldson's books. And the packs include all the signs you need to be able to do the story, and at the back just as Aileen was talking about, you can have symbols as well if you need to use them. So it's all in the pack, they're not hugely expensive, you can download them straight from Makaton. Even if somebody downloaded one, you'd be able to see the format of what it is.

Heather Sturgeon:

The other thing to do is the Makaton site, so www.makaton.org. They have a little Mak chat section, and sometimes people will go in there and ask, "Could someone tell me the sign for elephant?" Or whatever it is and the Makaton monitor that, so sometimes they'll put the sign on. Or what you might find is, another tutor will put the sign on, and you can read it. We always tell people if you're looking for a sign, you go to where the signs are developed, and that would be Makaton. So it's best if you're using it to always refer back to that. If you Google for a sign, quite a lot of the time it'll be American sign language things. So you really need to make sure that you're going to the right site for it.

### Makaton songs and rhymes – 37:25 minutes

Heather Sturgeon:

The other thing that we do use as well is my wee song bag, and I just wanted to show you this, because this isn't a big fancy thing either that you can make. In my bag I would have different... some of them are puppets that came with my original Bookbug, and we'd be singing that, "What's in the bag today?" And while I remember this, a song that is becoming very popular just now just because of the circumstances is the Wash your Hands song. I don't know if you have kids do that after things? I feel like in school we're constantly washing our hands every five seconds.

Heather Sturgeon:

So we sing a wee song and it's just, "Wash, wash, wash your hands, wash the germs..." We don't know, but they're bad. "Wash the germs away. If you don't, you might get sick, and that will spoil your day." So it's just a wee song we sing, I usually sing that in between hand sanitising so everybody knows so I just was adding that in there. So I would sing What's in the Bag? And then I would be doing all my looking, looking, looking. And then I would find... I usually let the children choose if I'm feeling generous, some days I don't.

Heather Sturgeon:

You pick something out, and this would be Miss Polly's dolly, so I know you do have Miss Polly's dolly that's already on it, someone's already signed that so I was just going to leave that. But I was going to do Hickory Dickory and another song. We've got the mouse, I would let whoever chose the mouse out the bag hold onto that, and then do Hickory Dickory.

Heather Sturgeon:

Again, thinking about slowing down, thinking about slowing your language you would do it slow, so you would do, "Tick, tock. Tick, tock. Hickory dickory dock, the mouse ran up the clock. The clock struck one, the mouse ran down, hickory, dickory, dock. Tick, tock. Tick, tock."

Heather Sturgeon:

"Hickory dickory dock, the mouse ran up the clock. The clock struck two, the mouse said 'Boo!' Hickory, dickory, dock. Tick, tock, tick tock. Hickory dickory dock. The mouse ran up the clock. The clock struck three, the mouse said, 'Wee!' Hickory, dickory, dock. Tick, tock, tick, tock."

Heather Sturgeon:

"Hickory dickory dock, the mouse ran up the clock. The clock struck four, the mouse said, 'No more!' Hickory, dickory, dock. Tick, tock. Tick, tock."

Heather Sturgeon:

Another one that we would do is, especially if you've got wee ones is a teddy bear song. This is actually a wee puppet that I let people play with again if I'm feeling generous. And you could use that for Round and Round the Garden but also Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear. So if I was doing that it would be, "Teddy bear, teddy bear, turn around. Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch the ground. Teddy bear, teddy bear, climb the stairs. Teddy bear, teddy bear, say your prayers. Teddy bear, teddy bear, switch out the light." Sometimes we have a wee noise there. "Teddy bear, teddy bear, say good night."

Heather Sturgeon:

So that as well. Just a wee quick one. Sometimes as well, we might pick things that, if I might have a real object. For instance, my duck. So I might let somebody hold onto the duck, I know it looks a bit like a goose but it is a duck. And then quite often I would make these for children, if you can see it? So you can make these out of anything. You could draw them, or you can download lots of pictures from the internet, it's just a pond. It's got five ducks on it and Mummy Duck. A really good way of songs like this, it makes you slow down but it also is really interactive for the children because they can rip them off one at a time.

Heather Sturgeon:

So you know again, this would be a wee prop, stand up and I'd be singing, "Five little ducks went swimming one day. Over the pond and far away." Somebody's got Mummy Duck, so they would be holding onto that. "Mummy Duck says, 'Quack quack quack quack.'" And then I give someone a turn, and then we would count them. "Only four little ducks came back."

Heather Sturgeon:

And when you're doing animals, so a duck wouldn't swim the way you and I would swim. A duck would swim with its feet, so you'd try to keep things properly, the way that the animals would do it as well. The other thing I wanted to say to you, I'm aware the time's gone on a bit I'm just trying to squeeze as much as I can in! Is sometimes I would maybe have participative things in the bag.

Heather Sturgeon:

So this is one that is really good. I'm so glad I can't see you all. It would be Little Bunny Foofoo, and it's been a bit well-worn I have to say, this one. Again, allowing someone to be Bunny Foofoo, not obviously bopping people on the head properly, but just the wee interaction. And then we've got a thing that goes with that as well, so that again someone can have the Bufnny Foofoo, they could maybe do the bopping on the mice and things like that. Really, really good, children love it.

Heather Sturgeon:

Again, other things that you'll have at home, or you could make with paper, another good one to get in the colours is just a rainbow scarf but with that you can... If someone picks that out then I would say, "Oh right, we're going to sing the rainbow song." I've lost my song list, hang on a minute.

Heather Sturgeon:

Good songs as well, just as a wee quickie just to share with you is Tidying Up. Lots of people ask us about tidy up time, there isn't a sign for tidy up in Makaton, but what we do say is, "Help clean." So again, I feel like I could sing this in my sleep, because we would be singing, "Tidy up time, it's tidy up time. It's time to tidy up the toys. It's tidy up time, it's tidy up time. So tidy up now girls and boys."

Heather Sturgeon:

Just really quickly, to get them to sing that. I think I've told you... You could use that song, we tell parents this all the time, it's a great wee song to do whatever you want... If no-one's going to do it just to get them to do it. So I would sing... Just tapping your wrist twice, "Now's the time to say goodbye, say goodbye, say goodbye. Now's the time to say goodbye, we'll see you back tomorrow." Or whatever it is you're going to do. "Now's the time to brush your teeth, or now's the time to go to bed." Whatever it is you want to do, you can do that, parents like that one.

Heather Sturgeon:

And the one I should have sung at the very start and I completely forgot, so I'm doing it back to front I'm so sorry, is when we start to get... Quite often the children are not aware of each other, so we'll sometimes do songs to get them to realise, "Oh, I'm in a group and other people are here." One of the songs I would do that is, "Who came to Bookbug today? Who came to Bookbug today? Who came to Bookbug today? If you are Aileen shout hey!" So they're all getting a chance to do that.

Heather Sturgeon:

And you can just tie it in with that as well, so I think that is me, squashed in as much as I can. There's lots of really good resources on the Makaton website which are, some of them for free, some of them are a small charge. But you'll usually see that when you go onto the site. The only other thing to say is, from a Makaton point of view, if you go onto the website you can Google training and there'll be local trainers in your area, there are some private tutors. There's also NHS, like us, trained people that do it, and it would just be a case of getting in touch with someone if you wanted to do the training.

Heather Sturgeon:

So it's usually, most of it's unfortunately online now, and the cost varies just where you are I think as well. There's Level 1 training which covers Stage 1 and 2 vocabulary. Level 2 covers 3 and 4, Level 3 covers 4 and 5, and Level 4 covers 7 and 8, and the additional as well. So you have to do each one before you can move onto the other, they're usually twilight, so usually over four two-hour sessions. Because we find that's about enough time, it's quite intense when you're signing, people get really tired and it's harder to do it when you're on a screen as well.

Heather Sturgeon:

If you're interested I would say have a look at Makaton, find your local tutor if you want to go, and thanks very much for your time tonight everyone, and giving us time to put this forward.

### Questions and answers – 46:16 minutes

Roz Coe:

Thank you so much Heather and Aileen. We've had lots of comments on the chat, we've got a lot of love for Makaton out there. In fact somebody said that they think you should have your own show Heather, they've really enjoyed all the songs and stories today! I've got a few questions for you as well, but I just wanted to mention some of the comments that people have been saying just so that you know because I know you've not been able to see them.

Roz Coe:

Somebody was saying that they realise the impact of signing when you're speaking even just in a webinar like this, because it's so much more engaging to be watching. Certainly even us watching you with your bag as well, all these visual cues that you have, just make it much more engaging. "Oh, what's she going to bring out next?" That kind of idea.

Roz Coe:

We've had a few questions. One is from Chloe who's asking a question about different sign systems and whether it's confusing. So she says that in her setting, she uses Signalong and just wondered how interchangeable the sign systems are? Even though they're both maybe based on British sign language, is it confusing... You should really stick to one rather than the other, I suppose is what she's asking?

Heather Sturgeon:

Yeah, you probably should, and some of that is... Makaton tends to be used in certain areas as well, it just depends where you live in the country. Sometimes people would use, on the East Coast might use Signalong, it's just been where the tutors have been. Whereas in the West Coast and up north, we tend to use Makaton. But really stick to the system you've got, so you'll see that some of the Makaton signs are a bit similar to Signalong, and the principles of signing are the same thing. But I would say to you, if you're using Signalong and it's working for you, keep using Signalong, don't go between them all because it will be confusing for you to look through all the vocabulary. But also if you're signing it in a different way that will confuse the children that are in your groups.

Roz Coe:

Thank you. And I guess it's the same with symbol systems too, isn't it? Sometimes it just depends on which local authority you happen to be in, what packages they've got and what they're using. So just to be consistent I suppose.

Roz Coe:

Thank you. Suzanne is wondering, "Can you just explain again when you're sharing a story what you do with your book?" We know that it's different tonight because you're on video, but what would you normally do with your book?

Heather Sturgeon:

So on Amazon, I think it's actually meant to be for your iPad, but you can get a stand and that's normally what I would put the book on. It's just a black stand that you can put it on. The other thing I put it on in school to stop people from stealing the books sometimes is a music stand. Anything that's going to prop it up with the wee ones, the babies usually I would just have it in front of my knees so it's kind of leaning against me. That's why again you need to know the story well enough to be able to make sure if you miss a bit you're going to be able to quickly look down and see it.

Heather Sturgeon:

But stand, just a wee... Anything that's going to work like that. Even a laptop stand, I've got a laptop stand as well that I sometimes put it on. Just so that... you need your hands free, so you need to have it somewhere that you can see it, but don't necessarily have to touch it. Sometimes I have an able-bodied assistant, if you're lucky enough to have two people, two adults in your group, sometimes the other adult will hold it for me as well.

Roz Coe:

Right great, thank you. That's really useful. I know it's very different when you're doing things online as well, isn't it? Somebody's just saying actually, this is really helpful. They're trying to get accreditation and 84% of their children are English as additional language learners, and they're saying, "I'm presuming this would help them as well?"

Aileen Buchanan:

Yes, I would totally agree. It would help those children as well, it's useful for all children, so yeah. Using any sort of alternative means is going to help that child understand, so yeah. Makaton would be really useful.

Roz Coe:

And something that often people say, if somebody hasn't got a communication difficulty, does that not mean it'll stop them talking?

Aileen Buchanan:

No. No, it doesn't. It certainly doesn't.

Heather Sturgeon:

We get asked this a lot when we do the training, and all the research and all the evidence is out there to say actually it'll enhance children's vocabulary, and people'll sometimes ask us as well, "My child's got autism or social communication difficulties." It doesn't mean these children just learn things in a different way, so it definitely won't do anybody any harm. And what you'll find is some children'll pick it up naturally anyway and go on, and other children won't. But certainly, that certain message is, all the evidence says absolutely not. It's really supportive to developing communication and language skills.

Aileen Buchanan:

And the gesture area in the brain is next to the speech area, so one stimulates the other, so it does help.

Roz Coe:

Right, okay. So great for all learners really.

Aileen Buchanan:

Yeah.

Roz Coe:

Now somebody's just... I think they're just wanting clarification on the tidy up signs. I think Leanne was maybe using them for putting things in a row, she's saying? Would you mind just clarifying what you use for your-

Heather Sturgeon:

I would use help clean. That's what that literally means, help clean. I don't want to go into the tidy sign, because I'm probably going to end up giving you the BSL sign for tidy. That's a Makaton sign that we use, help clean. But we can check that sign for you and get back to you, just in case. I usually simplify things, so it may well be I'm using a simplified version and someone's using tidied? But if you were meaning... Sorry, I did actually read that question and I thought she was meaning, doing that, like putting things, tidy up like that.

Heather Sturgeon:

And if you're like, that's fine as long as you're saying we're going to put things away. So you could still use that, we're going to put things away, we're going to tidy up. If you've got a system that works for you and the children understand it, then we would always say, be consistent. As long as everybody's doing the same thing and saying that we're tidying up - that's the most important thing. Because if you've got something that works, that's the best thing to do.

Aileen Buchanan:

I thought there was a sign, tidy up?

Heather Sturgeon:

I don't know, Aileen. I don't know, I'm so sorry, I can't remember.

Aileen Buchanan:

I thought there was, I don't know why I've come up with that, but I thought it was tidy up. We need to check that one out.

Heather Sturgeon:

Sorry.

Roz Coe:

I suppose that's the thing, isn't it? You don't need to know every single sign, and it's impossible to remember every sign. And like you say, you can use the signs that you've got to get across your message, which is the main thing isn't it? Rather than having to know thousands and thousands of signs, it's really more about getting your message across, and supporting your speech with the signs that you do know.

Aileen Buchanan:

Yes. And you're agreeing that you're being consistent and you're all using the same sign as Heather had said, yeah.

Roz Coe:

Yep. Okay, there is another question about the Rainbow Song and I'm not going to ask you to give us all the signs for it just now, but where would be the best place for somebody to find this?

Heather Sturgeon:

Singing Hands.

Roz Coe:

Actually, I'm just remembering I think we have that song on our website in the song and rhyme library, and I think it's Makaton signed, so Leslie it is. If you have a look, if you search Makaton in our Scottish Book Trust's website, I think you'll find the signs there as well.

Heather Sturgeon:

Yeah, and Singing Hands do it as well. Sorry, just to clarify Aileen's right. Tidy up is like that in a box. Quickly checked there, that's how speedy I am. And again if you've got a system that's working, just use the one that you've got. Singing Hands is a great, they're really good for extra signs as well. If you're looking for a sign, if you go to their YouTube, they've got lovely signed stories on there as well. They don't have loads, but they've got a few early stories that you could use and practise your signing as well.

Roz Coe:

Great, okay that's lovely. Thanking you for clarifying that on the chat there, that's great. Okay, and yeah, we've got some other comments on the chat. People saying that Makaton's really been beneficial for some of the children that have been signed with. Even if they haven't had communication difficulties, so that's good to hear.

Roz Coe:

I think that's all our questions. Is there anything else that either of you want to add before we wrap up? We've packed in an awful lot into a very short space of time, I know. But just wondered if there's anything else that-

Heather Sturgeon:

No, I think both of us would just say we really appreciate people using Makaton and including other children. Because a lot of our parents do make an effort to go to the signed Bookbug Sessions. And it's made a huge difference, because what they've realised is that everybody's using it, so it's really been supportive of us to make it inclusive and to make it something that is used everywhere, it's been very, very useful to us if we're trying to help families. And thanks to everybody who's come and thanks to people who are promoting it and using it.

Roz Coe:

Right, well hopefully tonight we'll have heightened that awareness, and maybe some folk out there will decide to start using it as well, to just make it a more inclusive society I suppose, for people who do use it. Your example about the hairdresser for example, was a really good thing for us to hear, that other people can use the signs too. It doesn't just have to be in a very small circle. So that was, yeah a really good thing to hear.

Roz Coe:

Thank you so much. You've given us all lots to think about and go away and look up and learn and watch. There's been a lot of tips you've given as well, about general communication and communicating with wee ones. Things like slowing down and keeping things simple, and just thinking about the meaning of what something has, rather than thinking about every word when you're signing especially. So thank you so much for joining us, it's been lovely to hear. Everyone who's here tonight will get an email with all the links that Heather and Aileen have mentioned tonight. And I'm sure if you have any other further questions for us you can get in touch with Bookbug at Scottish Book Trust. But thank you both so much for joining us, we do really appreciate it. We know you've had a long day at work as well today, so thank you so much.