

#### Introduction

In February 2022, Welsh Government, in partnership with SBW Advertising, commissioned the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) to identify ways to empower parents and early years practitioners to embed language and communication skills in everyday life.

BIT's online experiment aimed to inform which types of messaging best increased parents' intentions to talk, sing, and play with babies and young children.

The recommendations based on this research are now consistently applied to the 'Talk with me' campaign's content.

This document will help you to:

- Effectively communicate 'Talk with me' resources and share impactful messaging on SLC
- Apply BIT findings to your own content, to make this even more accessible and engaging

#### Introduction

BIT tested three sets of message options with a sample of 1,705 English and Welsh parents, between 17 - 26 January 2022.

These messages focused on supporting children's speech and language development through talking with, singing with, and seeking professional help for their child.



The three types of messages tested were:

- Basic
  (i.e. stating facts like "Sing nursery rhymes together")
- (i.e. giving specific advice on what we want parents and carers to do, like "Try singing Twinkle Twinkle, Little Star tonight")
- (i.e. explaining the impact that singing can have on a child's brain development. For example, "repetition and rhyme helps children to develop their awareness of different sounds")

#### BIT research recommendations

BIT then delivered the following three recommendations to inform 'Talk with me' messaging.

This document will help you better understand and put the first of these recommendations into practice.



Consider using both "Scientific" tips (e.g. how singing helps) and "Specific" tips (e.g. ideas on songs to sing).

Consider creating two versions of "Scientific" and "Specific" messages to primarily target under and over 3s separately.

Where possible, provide links to further resources (e.g. a list of songs/rhymes or extra ideas on things to talk about) and further evidence, as parents requested both.

Ensure logos (i.e. Welsh Government or Flying Start) are clearly visible on communications to lend credibility.



Focus more attention on the long-term benefits of making friends and doing well at school than on negative consequences or how to feel less frustrated.

Avoid (or be very careful about) negative consequence messages, given the high level of guilt provoked.

Be cautious about messages focused only on 'making friends', as this alienated one parent of a child with special educational needs.



Incorporate messages about milestones and when to seek professional help.

Add more context and reassurance to the messages tested (e.g. "children develop at different rates").

Add a link to other resources where possible to signpost further information.

## How 'Talk with me' applies these findings

'Talk with me' content is based on expert SLC materials, which are then translated into accessible and engaging formats. These include booklet resources and social media posts aimed at families with children aged 0-5.

Following BIT's first recommendation, both "specific" and "scientific" messaging features across this content, to further encourage families to talk and play with their children. "Specific" messages promote advice and activity ideas, while "scientific" messaging explains the impact of these activities on children's brain development.

The Parent and Carer Pack, for example, includes "specific" activity ideas alongside information on the "scientific" benefits of these activities.

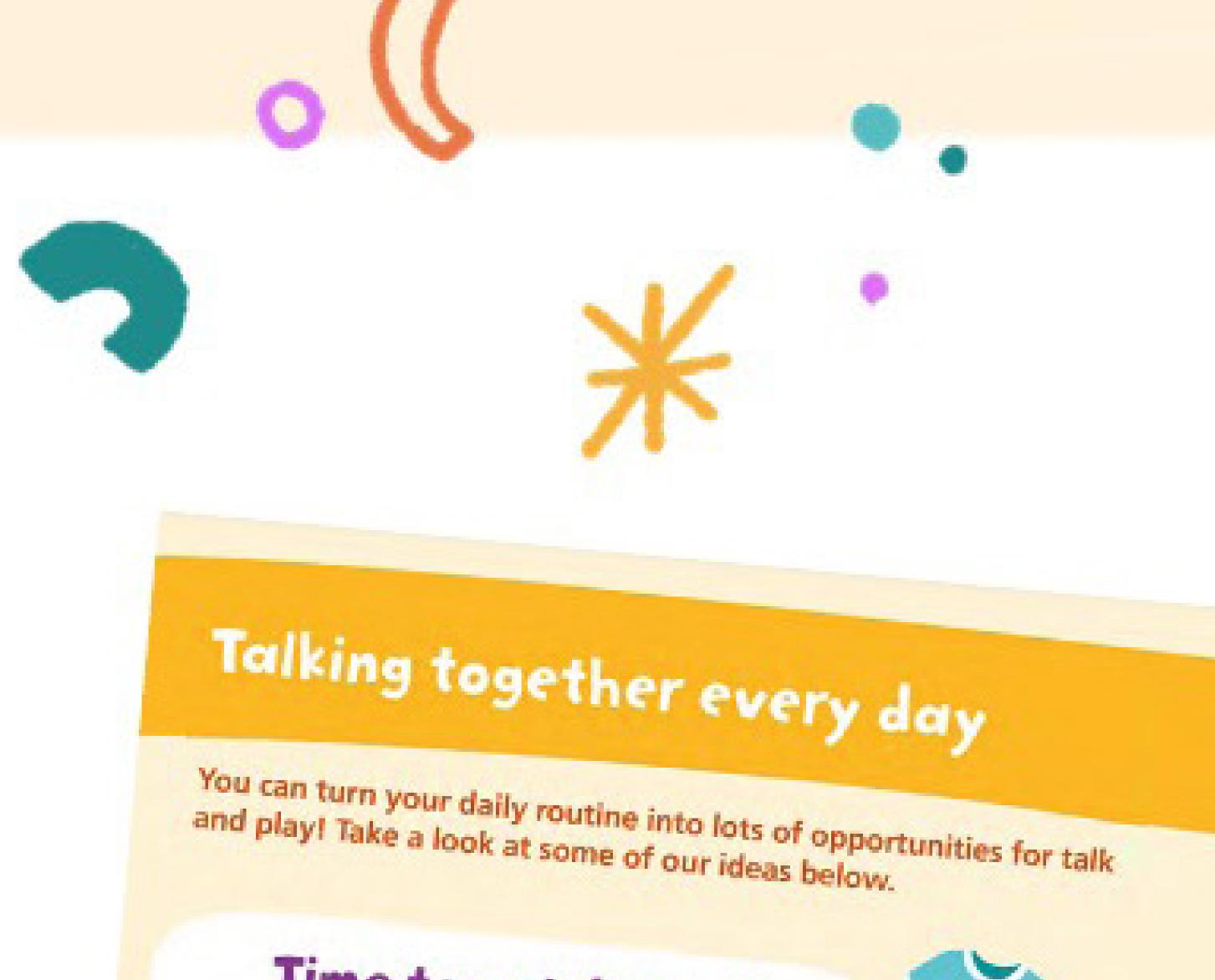
#### For example:

#### Specific activity:

Try asking simple questions at meal times. You could hold up cartons of juice and milk, and prompt your little one to point: "juice or milk"?

#### Scientific explanation:

Remember to give them plenty of time to answer. By using more comments than questions, you lower any pressure your little one may feel to speak.



#### Time to get dressed

As you help your little one get dressed, comment on what you're doing. For example, you could say:

Then try something silled very

Then try something silly! You could put your little one's socks on their hands instead of on their feet, and see what they say and do next.



#### Time to brush your teeth

Get face to face as you help your little one brush their teeth. Try breaking instructions into smaller chunks, one step at a time. For example: "let's run the tap", "now let's squeeze the toothpaste".

They love it when they can predict wha you're going to say next!

plenty of time to answer

By using more comments

than questions, you lower

may feel to speak.

any pressure your little one

#### Meal times

Get on your child's level and use gestures for eating and drinking. This helps them 'match up' words and actions.

Try asking simple questions too. You could hold up cartons of juice and milk, and prompt your little one to point: "juice or milk?"



#### Bed time

Do you enjoy sharing lullables or rhymes with your little one? This helps them understand rhythm and boosts their listening skills! You can make this extra fun by throwing in some actions too.











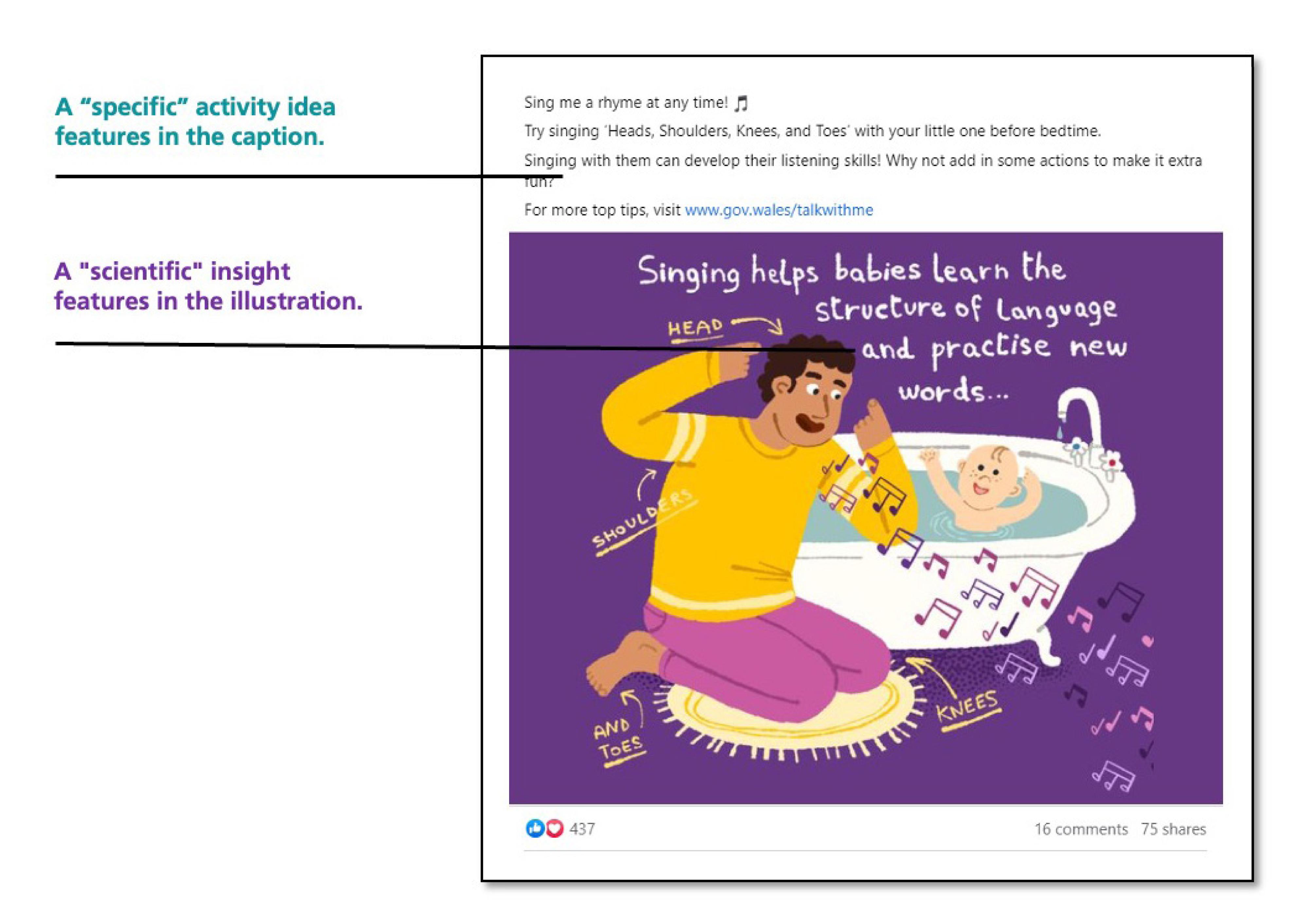
## How 'Talk with me' applies these findings

Following BIT recommendations, <u>'Talk with me' social</u> media content avoids overly complex information and messaging which may provoke feelings of guilt (e.g. information on negative SLC consequences or expensive activity ideas).

Instead, 'Talk with me' underlines that simple, free activities ("specific" advice) can have positive, long-term benefits for children's SLC ("scientific" impacts).

The channel also aims to reassure families that activities they are likely *already* doing with their children are beneficial for SLC development (e.g. "sharing a rhyme at any time"). This builds parents' confidence in their abilities and the resources already available to them.

When combined with engaging imagery, BIT-informed messaging is often well-received by the channel's audience (see example post on the right).



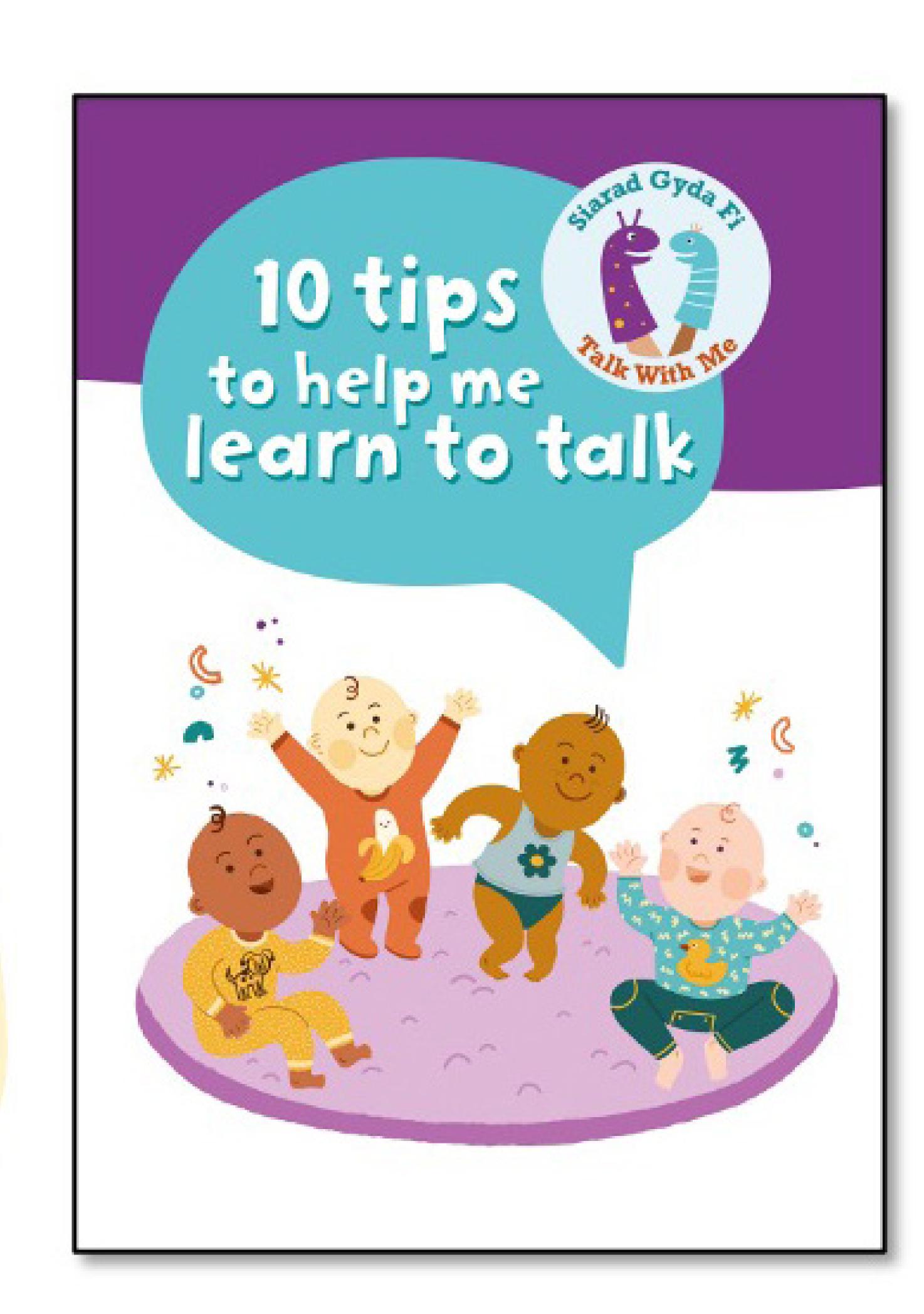


#### How to use 'Talk with me' resources

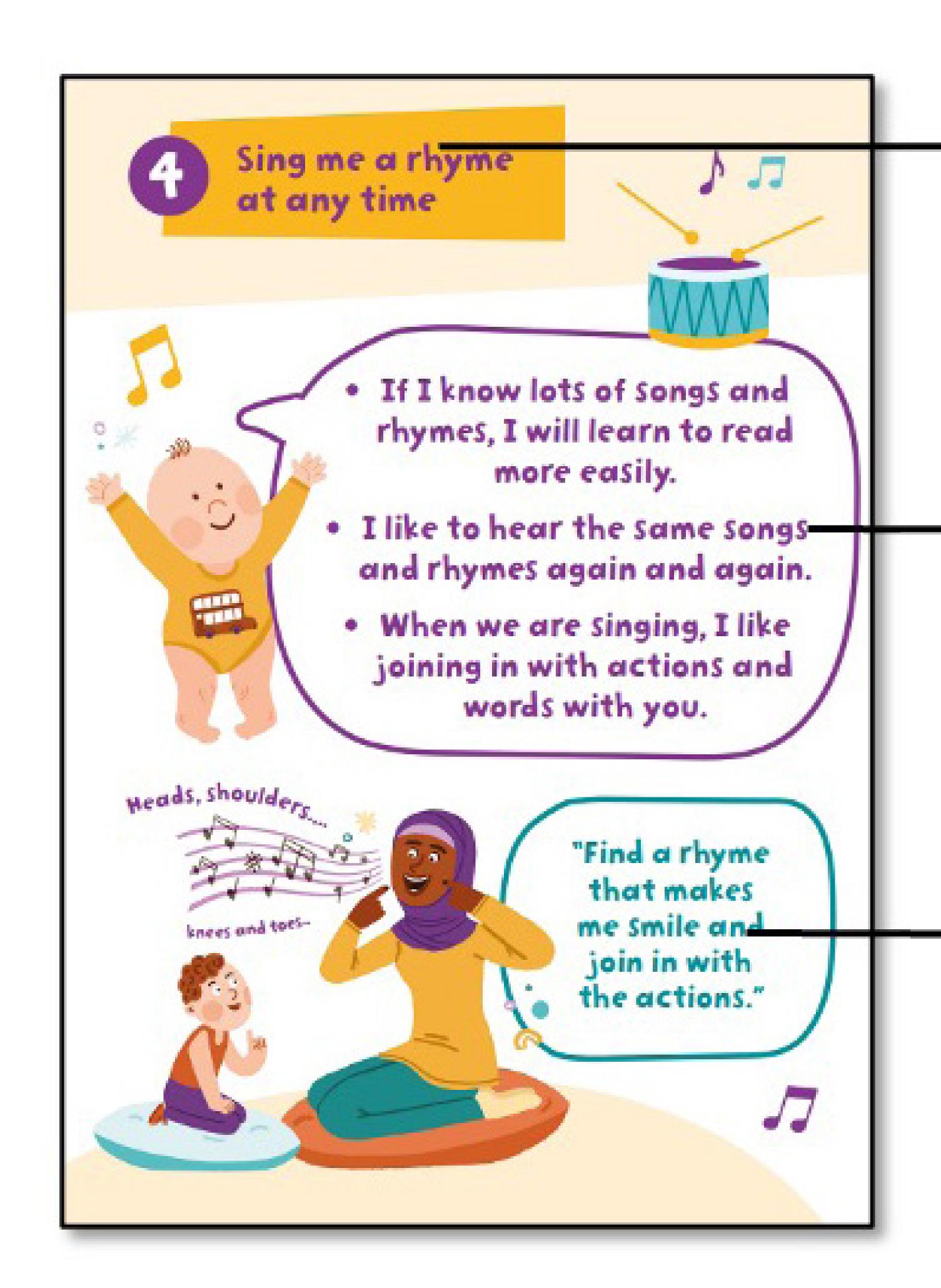
The 'Talk with me' webpage is full of tips and resources to help families understand the importance of their role in supporting their children's SLC.

You can find all 'Talk with me' resources at:

gov.wales/talk-meguidance-practitioners



Resources include our '10 top tips' booklet, which features both "scientific" and "specific" messaging.



You can find each of the ten key 'Talk with me' tips throughout this booklet.

"Scientific" messaging (explanations behind the tips) features in the purple text.

"Specific" messaging (example activities) features in the green text.

You can find further examples of combined "scientific" and "specific" messaging below, linked to each of the ten key 'Talk with me' tips. This messaging format can inform your own content on SLC.

## Tip 1: Start talking to me before I am born

Scientific message: Your baby can hear sounds from 24 weeks of pregnancy! Once they are born, they recognise sounds they heard in the womb and the rhythm of your voice.

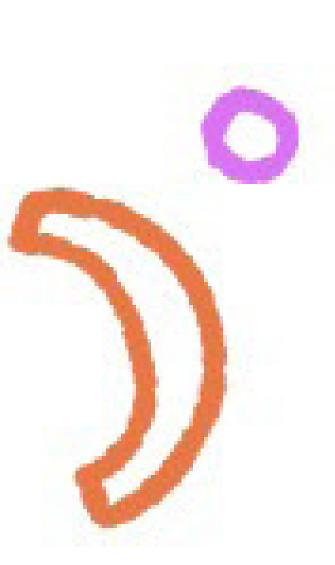
Specific message: Your little one loves it when you talk and sing to them before they are born. Try singing a nursery rhyme like *Heno Heno* to your bump whenever feels comfortable for you – you know best!

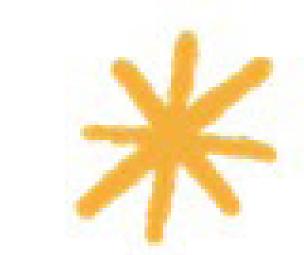
# Tip 2: I can learn our language and culture from you

Scientific message: Children's brains are amazing! They can learn multiple languages from birth, helping them understand the ways different sounds are formed.

Specific message: Speak with your child in the language that you know best! Try sharing a book from your own childhood to share your culture and heritage.









# Tip 3: Our best place is face to face

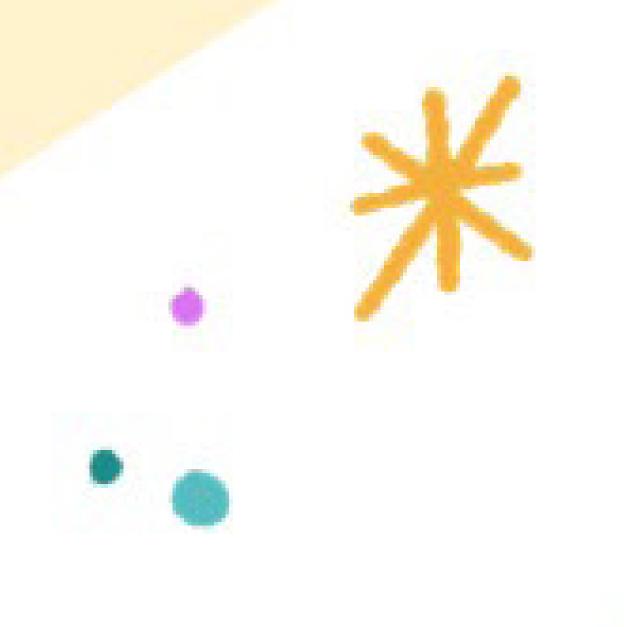
Scientific message: When you sit face to face, you can better understand your little one's expressions and gestures. This strengthens your connection and helps them to feel secure!

Specific message: Get face to face with your little one to help them learn about expressions and gestures. For example, you could get on your little one's level during meal times. Use gestures for eating and drinking to help them 'match up' words and actions too!

# Tip 4: Sing me a rhyme at any time

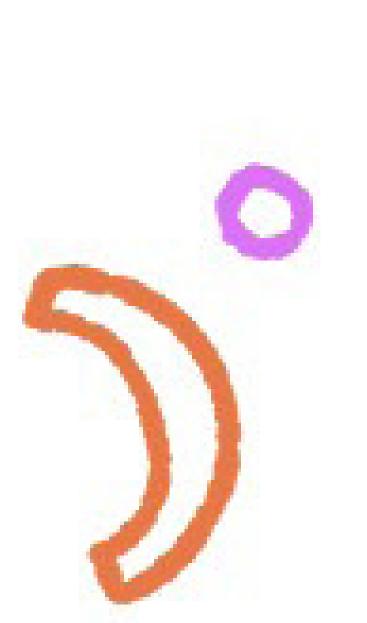
Scientific message: Did you know that singing helps babies learn the structure of language? Rhythm and pitch help children remember words too!

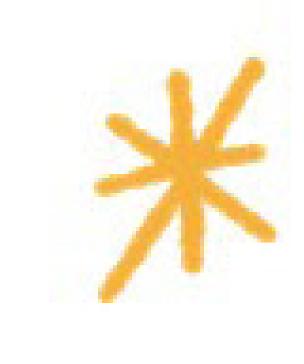
Specific message: Your little one loves sharing familiar songs and rhymes with you. Why not sing Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes in the bath tonight, and throw in some actions too?





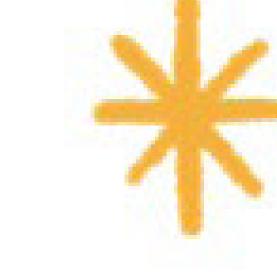


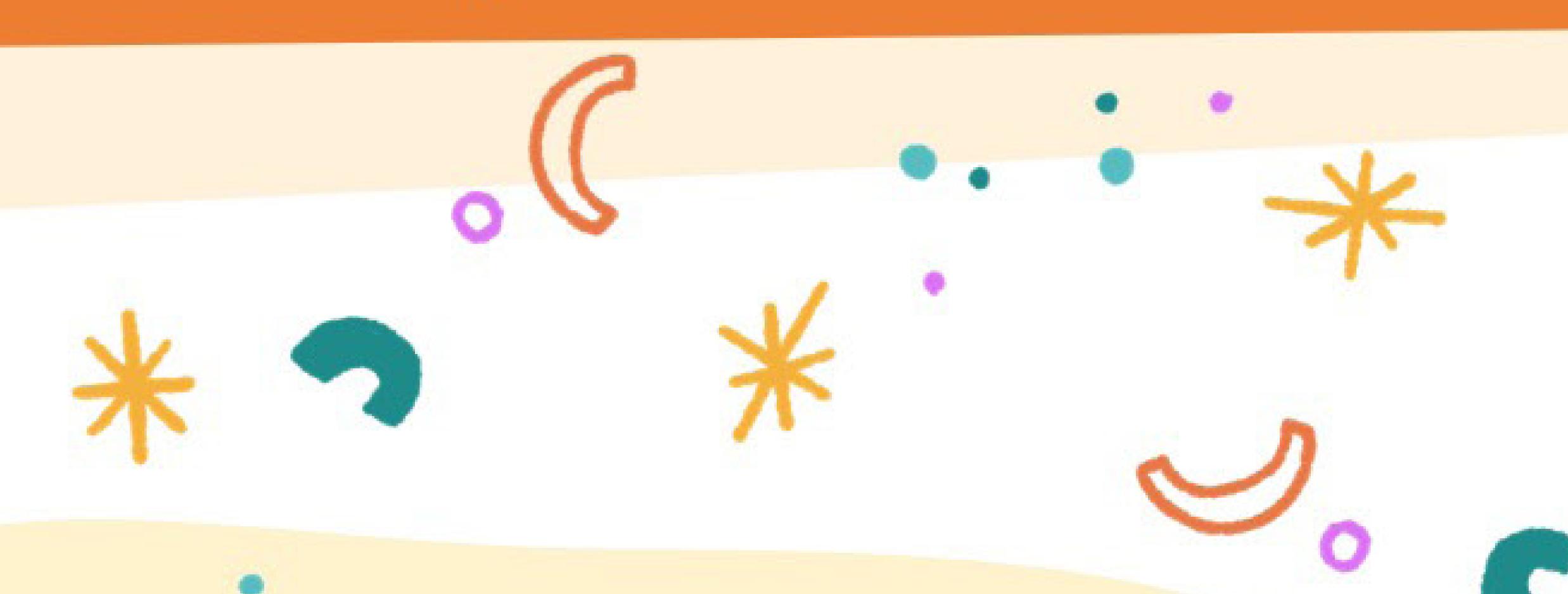












# Tip 5: Let's talk and play every day

Scientific message: Talking and playing with your little one helps them learn words and develops their listening and turn-taking skills too!

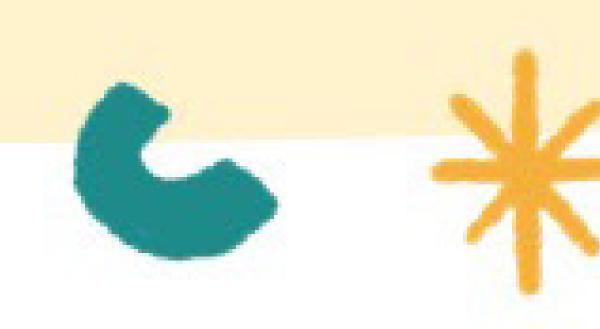
Specific message: Have a teddy bear's picnic with your little one! For every question you ask, try to say four comments. For example: Does teddy want milk or water first? 1. That looks tasty! 2. Teddy has had enough milk now. 3. I'm going to pour some water in the cup. 4. He's all done!

# Tip 6: Let's look at books together

Scientific message: Sharing books is a great way to develop your little one's talking skills. Try talking about what you see to help them learn different points of view and develop their imagination.

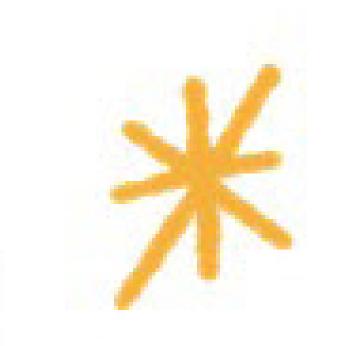
Specific message: Story time is a great opportunity to share books with your little one! Follow their lead and let them play with the book how they want to – this might look like them turning it upside down or even putting it on their head! This is all part of the language learning journey.



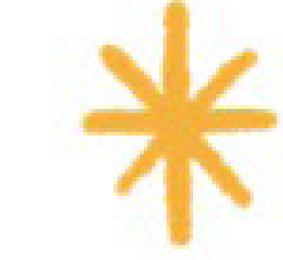














# Tip 7: Talk with me about what we can see

Scientific message: Repeating words and actions builds your little one's memory and helps them make new connections!

Specific message: Take time to name fruit or vegetables in the shops together. If your little one says a word incorrectly, like 'nana' when they mean 'banana', you can respond, "Yes, it's a banana!"



Scientific message: Shared focus builds your little one's concentration and helps to strengthen the bond between you.

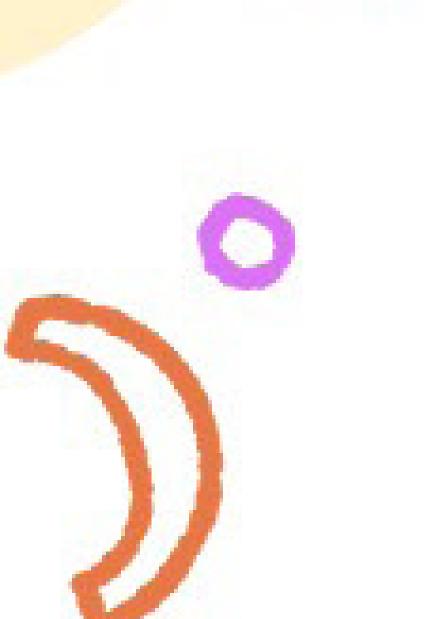
Specific message: If you're watching *Hey Duggee* with your little one, talk with them about what you can see! Describe what's on the screen and try to notice what your little one finds interesting. This will help to introduce more words into their vocabulary.



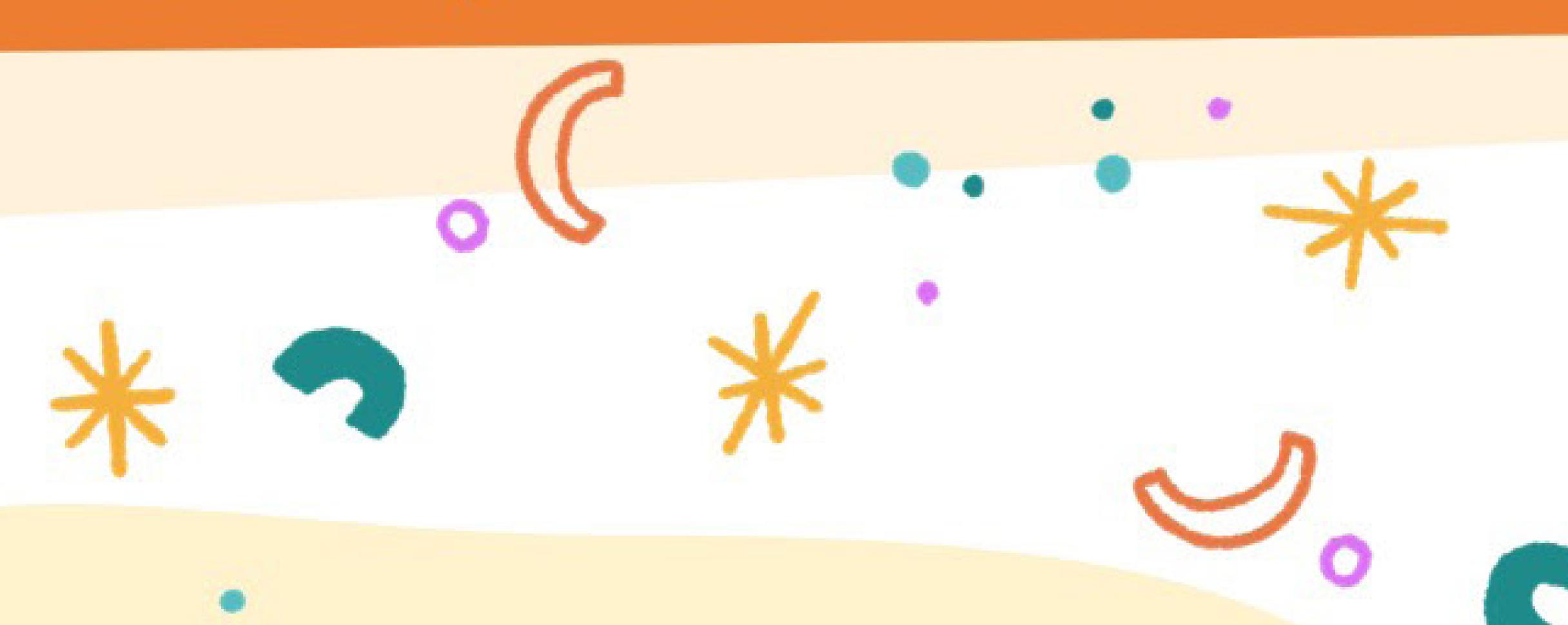












# Tip 9: Add a word to what you have heard me say

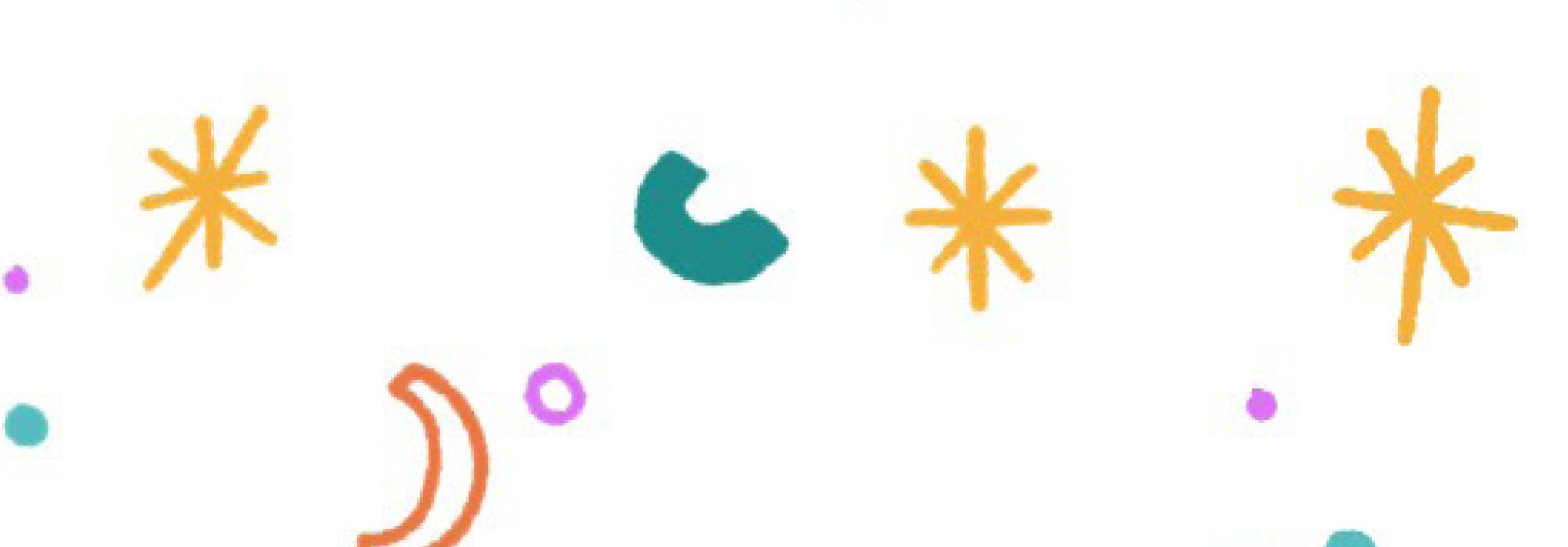
Scientific message: Adding words to what you have heard your little one say can help them build their vocabulary and make new connections.

Specific message: To help your little one learn new words, follow their lead and talk about what you can see and hear. Then try adding new words to what you hear them say. For example, if they say 'car', you could say 'fast car'!

# Tip 10: I love to talk with everyone

Scientific message: Talking with friends and family can help your little one develop their social skills and boost their confidence.

Specific message: If your little one enjoys picnics with your family and friends, why not talk about everyone's favourite foods? Your little one watches and listens to you all the time, so you'll help them learn new words.





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You can find all 'Talk with me' resources at <a href="https://www.gov.wales/talk-me-guidance-practitioners">www.gov.wales/talk-me-guidance-practitioners</a>. We would love you to share these tools with the families you work with.

For more tips and ideas to share with families, follow us on Facebook: Siarad gyda fi — Talk with me.



