



Policy / Procedure Details	Title:	Communication Policy for Adults with Learning Disabilities
	Type:	Services
	Related Personal Outcome Measure:	People Chose Goals
	Code:	1.2
Original Version Details	Date Released:	31/10/2013
Current Version Details	Written By:	Marion Early – Speech and Language Therapy Manager Margaret McWilliams – Speech and Language Therapist
	Reviewed By:	Leadership Team
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	Date Due for Review:	31/10/2016

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to address the Total Communication needs of people supported by Western Care Association.

A Total Communication approach will be adopted and promoted by Western Care Association for all service users.

Total Communication is a communication philosophy. It is not a communication method and not a teaching method. Total Communication is an approach used to create a successful and equal communication between human beings with different language perception and / or production. To use Total Communication amounts to a willingness to use all means of communication available to an individual (for example non verbal communication, verbal communication / speech, signing, photographs, symbols, objects, written words, assistive technologies) in order to understand and be understood. All forms of communication are equally valued and promoted.

Western Care Association supports people in ways that are person centred. In order to do this, all staff endeavour to better understand the preferred communication methods of the people they support. Successful communication involves a two way flow of information and requires messages both non-verbal and verbal to be both understood and expressed.

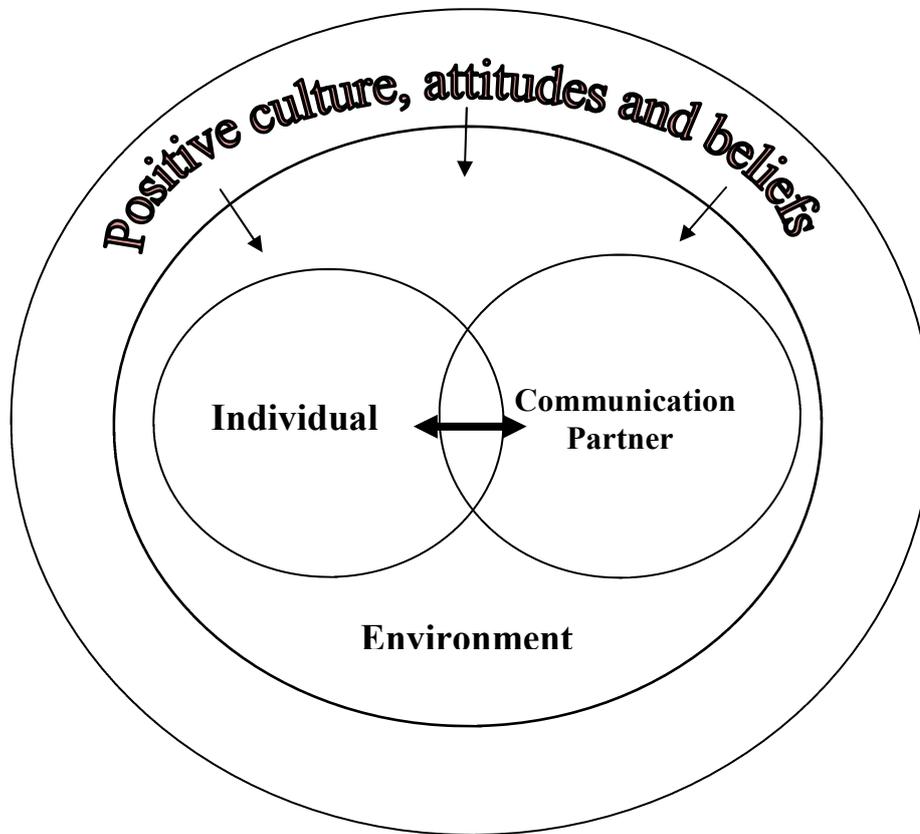
This includes the provision of evidence based approaches that anticipate and respond to the needs of individuals who experience speech, language, communication difficulties. It also involves working in partnership with the individual, their families and significant others to reduce the impact of these difficulties and increase independence, choice, participation and relationships (*Communicating Quality 3, 2006*).

Supporting Total Communication requires that we understand each person's unique way of getting their message across. This can vary from person to person, and can depend on the person's level of spoken language, their eye contact, and their body language. It is important in that each individual is recognised as having their own particular way of communicating.

A Total Communication approach is a person centred way of understanding people and facilitating their self expression so that they can:

- Make choices
- Give consent
- Self advocate and act independently
- Create and sustain relationships
- Understand and be understood
- Access and give information
- Engage in supported employment
- Experience positive communication

The Communication Event



“Communication is the transmission of meaning from one individual to another, whatever the means that is used” (Lámh 1991)

All attempts at communication by the service user should be acknowledged. It is the responsibility of the communication partner to identify opportunities in the service users everyday life that can maximise and reinforce their attempts at communication.

Every service user’s human right to communicate is promoted and facilitated

All people with an intellectual disability have specific communication rights which impact their quality of life.

Western Care Association is committed to supporting people to exercise these rights in their daily lives.

Each person has the right to:

- Request desired objects, actions, events and people
- Refuse undesired objects, actions, or events
- Express personal preferences and feelings
- Be offered choices and alternatives

- Reject offered choices
- Request and receive another person's attention and interaction
- Ask for and receive information about changes in their routine and environment
- Receive intervention to improve communication skills
- Receive a response to any communication, whether or not the communication partner can fulfil the request
- Have access to recommended AAC (augmentative and alternative communication) and other AT (assistive technology) services and devices at all times
- Have AAC and other AT devices that function properly at all times
- Be in environments that promote communication as a full partner with other people, including peers
- Be spoken to with respect and courtesy
- Be spoken to directly and not be spoken for or talked about in the third person while present
- Have clear, meaningful and culturally and linguistically appropriate communications (ASHA, 1992)

Western Care Association will support the Total Communication needs of people supported and their communication partners in the following ways:

- a) It is recognised that in order to communicate effectively with people who have an intellectual disability, staff needs specific skills. Western Care Association provides advice and guidance for staff supporting people with communication needs through the Speech and Language Therapy and Assistive Technology teams. Staff will be supported to be aware of each person's communication abilities and needs and how to respond accordingly.
- b) Every service user has a Communication Profile in their IP. This documents information about their ability to understand, preferred methods of expression, how they react when they do not understand, information about their hearing and vision, preferred topics of conversation and their communication partners. The Communication Profile (*Appendix B and C*) is the foundation for identifying and developing future communication systems and supports for individuals.
- c) A Foundation Module in Communication has been developed and delivered internally. It lays the foundations for understanding of various approaches to supporting communication such as signing, visual schedules, objects of reference etc. The training supports the development and use of communication profiles and introduces people to options involved in creating communication passports.
- d) Lámh is the recognised sign system for people who have communication difficulties in Western Care Association. Training for staff is given as appropriate.
- e) Picture, symbol and object communication systems are promoted and encouraged to support communication where appropriate. Where possible, commonly used photographs / pictures will be used consistently throughout the organisation and available to staff on the intranet in a standardised image bank.

- f) Our approach is to ensure that environments can be set up in such a way that all forms of communication are supported and respected.
- g) People need to be supported to communicate as best they can. The organisation facilitates the appropriate use of augmentative and alternative communication methods (e.g. Lámh signs, symbols, photos, gestures, object cues) for people who use little or no speech or need other methods to support their speech.
- h) People are given opportunity and assistance to make choices using their own preferred communication methods.
- i) Staff should provide clear information to people supported about what is happening throughout their day by using objects, pictures, symbols or words to illustrate activity and time, depending on the person's individual needs / preferences.
- j) Staff should display accessible staff rotas to inform service users who is working in their service each day.

Western Care Association will endeavour to make the spoken and written information we use with people supported, easier to understand and read.

- a) Written communication needs to be in an 'easy to read' format. All staff can refer to 'Make it Easy: A guide to preparing Easy to Read Information' (available on WCA website) when preparing information for service users to read.
- b) Where possible, people and in accordance with their wishes people using services should be involved in the production of 'easy read' information / documents.
- c) Requests for support and advice regarding the production of 'easy read' material / documents are accepted by the AT team c/o the Speech and Language Therapy Department, in draft form, from relevant parties. Time allocated and taken to do this work is highly influenced by resources available. The AT group has a protocol for the production of easy read information. (*Please see Appendix A*).

Staff are clear about their role in using Total Communication

All Direct Support Staff

- To be aware of their role as Total Communication partners with the people they support.
- To implement all recommended individual communication guidelines, plans and strategies.
- To integrate communication information, guidelines, plans and strategies into the individual's IP.
- To liaise with Speech and Language Therapy department regarding the review needs of people supported with regard to individual communication guidelines, plans and strategies.

Managers (Area, Day, Residential and Respite)

- To make appropriate referrals for Speech and Language Therapy input with regard to individual service user communication needs, by using Western Care Association referral procedures.
- To ascertain the support and training needs of staff / individual communication partners.
- To ensure the implementation of recommended communication guidelines, plans and strategies.
- To support the development and maintenance of a Total Communication environments.

Speech and Language Therapists working in adult services

- Assessment, diagnosis and intervention / advice / consultation with regard to individual's communication needs.
- Design and provision and review of individual communication plans / programmes.
- Appropriate onward referral, with individual's consent, to other team members or to other agencies.
- Apply current best practice which is evidence based and supports positive communication outcomes for the individual.

Assistive Technology Team

- To produce information in 'easy read' formats
- To develop a multi-disciplinary way of promoting and supporting Total Communication throughout all Western Care services and disciplines.
- To source assistive technology solutions for people with communication and learning needs.

Bibliography and References

Make it Easy: A guide to preparing easy to read information. Accessible Information Working Group, Ireland.

National Joint Committee for the Communicative Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities. (1992). Guidelines for meeting the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities. ASHA, 34 (Suppl. 7), 2-3.

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (2006) Communicating Quality 3, RCSLT Guidance on Best Practice in Service Organisation and Provision.

Policy and Procedure Feedback Form

A Policy and Procedure Feedback Form is available on the Western Care Association Intranet (under Procedures) which will provide an opportunity to comment on any policy/procedure.

Your comments will be forwarded to the person who has the lead for the on-going development of the policy/procedure.

All comments will be collated by the person responsible and will inform the three-yearly review cycle for updating procedures.

Protocol for the production of Easy Read Documentation

Individual author / group submits original documentation (policy, procedure, guidelines, etc.) to AT group. Where possible, individual authors / groups requesting the assistance of the AT group, should first attempt a draft version in accessible format, using input from local service users and also submit this draft to the group.



AT group will draft an easy read version using best practice guidelines or consult with individual author / group seeking assistance, to ascertain key points, vocabulary, suitable pictures



AT consults with service user groups for suitability, accessibility, improvements, etc.



Amendments made (if needed) by AT group following consultation with service user groups.

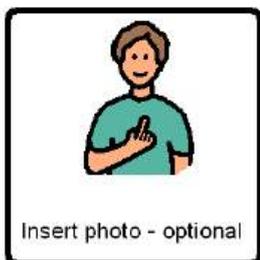


AT group returns easy read version of documentation to individual author / group seeking assistance.



Individual author / group organise circulation / implementation of the easy read version of the documentation.

COMMUNICATION PROFILE - ADULT



My Communication Profile

My Name: _____

I use these methods of communication to express myself -



- [] My speech (words)
- [] My vocalisations (non speech sounds)
- [] My eye contact with people
- [] My eye pointing to people/places/things
- [] My facial expressions
- [] My body language
- [] My movements towards people / places
- [] My natural gestures
- [] My miming of actions
- [] My behaviours
- [] My Lámh signs / own personal signs
- [] My objects / object cues
- [] My symbol pictures
- [] My photographs
- [] My drawings / sketches / cartoons
- [] My writing
- [] My communication book
- [] My electronic communication device / aid
- [] Other _____

I understand the following types of communication -



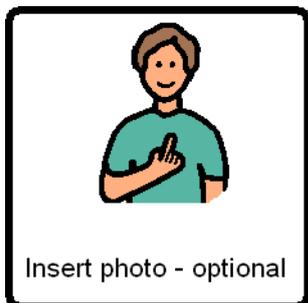
- Sounds in my environment (telephone, doorbell)
- Different tones of voice
- Your facial expressions
- Your body language
- Single words
- Short sentences
- Simple language
- Long sentences
- Complex language
- Language associated with my familiar routines
- Your gestures
- Object cues (soap and flannel = bath)
- Photographs
- Symbol pictures
- Written words / text
- Lámh signs
- Other _____

This is what happens if I have difficulty understanding you -

- I do not react
- I carry out part of a request
- I look confused
- I tell you I do not understand
- I become agitated / show signs of distress
- Other _____
- I move away
- I avoid eye contact
- I pretend that I understand
- I self injure

COMMUNICATION PROFILE - CHILDREN

My Communication Profile



My Name: _____

I use these methods of communication to express myself -



- [] My speech (words)
- [] My vocalisations (non speech sounds)
- [] My eye contact with people
- [] My eye pointing to people/places/things
- [] My facial expressions
- [] My body language
- [] My movements towards people / places



- [] My natural gestures
- [] My miming of actions
- [] My behaviours
- [] My Lámh signs / own personal signs
- [] My objects / object cues
- [] My symbol pictures
- [] My photographs
- [] My drawings / sketches / cartoons

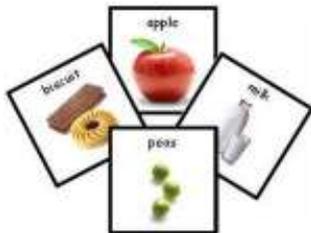


- [] My writing
- [] My communication book
- [] My electronic communication device / aid
- [] Other _____

I understand the following types of communication -



- Sounds in my environment (telephone, doorbell)
- Different tones of voice
- Your facial expressions
- Your body language
- Single words
- Short sentences
- Simple language
- Long sentences
- Complex language
- Language associated with my familiar routines
- Your gestures
- Object cues (soap and flannel = bath)
- Photographs
- Symbol pictures
- Written words / text
- Lámh signs
- Other _____



This is what happens if I have difficulty understanding you -

- I do not react
- I carry out part of a request
- I look confused
- I tell you I do not understand
- I become agitated / show signs of distress
- Other _____
- I move away
- I avoid eye contact
- I pretend that I understand
- I self-injure

About my hearing



- [] I have had my hearing tested
- [] I can hear well
- [] I have difficulty hearing
- [] I have difficulty hearing in noisy environments
- [] I have a hearing impairment
- [] I wear a hearing aid

About my vision



- [] I have had my vision tested
- [] I can see well
- [] I have difficulty seeing
- [] I wear glasses / corrective lenses
- [] I have a visual impairment

These are things I most like to communicate about -

The people who know my communication skills best are -

Person completing this profile _____ Date _____