

Checklist of communication strategies

Strategy		Comments
Are you aware of total communication?	Y/N	
Does each service user have a communication passport/ guide?	Y/N	
Have any staff had any training in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating with people with learning disabilities • Total communication • Intensive Interaction • Signing • Talking mats • Social stories 	Y/N Y/N Y/N Y/N Y/N Y/N	Give details– what, who from, number of staff etc.
Do the service users access choices through visual supports e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written word • Symbols • Photos • Objects of reference 	Y/N Y/N Y/N Y/N	
Does every service user have a personally adapted copy of their activity timetable?	Y/N	
Do you use visuals to display: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing rota • Timetables • Step-by-step instructions e.g. personal hygiene, making cup of tea • Personal shopping list 	Y/N Y/N Y/N Y/N	
Do you use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign of the week • Are they displaying the current sign? 	Y/N Y/N	
Have you produced/ use accessible information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent forms for the service user • Leaflets, policies, procedures etc around communication • Is it using simplified language and pictures? 	Y/N Y/N Y/N	
Do you currently use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication aids • Talking mats • Social stories • Intensive interaction approach? 	Y/N Y/N Y/N Y/N	
Any further comments, including any examples of creative use of communication strategies		

Checklist for communication strategies

How and why to use it

What is the checklist:

The checklist is a qualitative measure used to look at the service providers use of communication strategies. This is done through analysing the service providers awareness of communication strategies and ability to access and/or use communication strategies to support the individual.

Each service provider within Lancashire will be given a checklist in order to raise their awareness of a variety of communication strategies and to give them the opportunity to demonstrate the strategies that they are currently using.

Providers can use the checklist to:

- Demonstrate a person-centred approach
- Inform a Physical intervention quality check regarding the communication strategies used
- Promote their service to new service users
- Demonstrate to social workers the communication strategies in place

Why was the checklist developed:

The use of communication strategies are essential so that each individual is enabled to:

- make informed choices and have control over the options available to them
- express their opinion and have maximum participation in best interest decisions
- understand messages communicated to them and be able to communicate their desired message
- access activities and develop daily life skills

There has been a need identified as people can be placed within services who are unable to support an individuals level of communication need.

The checklist works through a variety of communication strategies that would give a staff team a gold standard of communication care to work towards. The checklist will raise awareness of the types of communication strategies that are available and will help services to know how they can support individuals appropriately.

The level of communication strategies required for the individual will differ. **The provider is not being judged for not using communication strategies that are not relevant to the individual.** The following table shows what communication systems are likely to be needed within the diagnosed severities of learning disabilities.

Level of learning disability	Anticipated communication strategies
Mild	Simplified language. Communication passport. Use of accessible information. Possible use of social stories.
Moderate	All above plus visual supports, talking mats, and possible use of signing or communication aid as support.
Severe	All above plus objects of reference, full use of visual supports, intensive interaction, signing communication guide.
Profound	Total communication, Communication guide, Intensive interaction, objects of reference.

How to use the checklist:

It is simple to use. Go through the checklist circling yes/no for each area providing comments where appropriate.

The more yes's that are recorded the closer the service provider is likely to come to a gold standard of communication care. Considering the individual's level of need the checklist will identify if the service is currently able to meet the needs of the individual.

For further information about the detailed communication strategies please see the attached glossary of terms, alternatively see the Communication task groups website www.clpb.org and follow links to task group and communication or the oxford total communication website www.oxtc.co.uk

Glossary of terms

Total Communication:

Total communication is an approach that encourages the use of all modalities of communication i.e. not just speech. For example total communication can utilise body language, facial expressions, photos, symbols, signs, touch and intensive interaction. Total communication aims to ensure that each individual is communicated with and is provided with the means to communicate in the most accessible way for them.

Communication passport/guide:

A communication passport gives a brief outline of how the individual communicates and the best way to communicate with them. It also looks at the individuals likes and dislikes. A communication guide also encompasses this information but it is produced to be highly visual and motivating, it also encompasses practical communication strategies e.g. a choice board, visual timetable or visual support for shopping. The guide should be kept on the individual at all times and be used to encourage communication and track communication breakthroughs. For more information see www.csrpcp.net follow the person centred planning tools and communication tools links.

Intensive Interaction:

Intensive Interaction is a form of communication where the communication partner interacts at a level that suits the individual. This is often used with individuals with severe learning disabilities and/or autism. It is used to teach the pre-speech fundamentals of communication e.g. turn taking, eye contact, facial expressions. It teaches individuals that they can have an effect on others and the world around them.

Signing:

Signing provides a visual support to enhance speech, it also helps to gain and focus attention on the communicated message. Within learning disabilities the signing systems most commonly used are Signalong or Makaton.

Talking Mats:

Talking mats use visual supports to aid conversations, to allow a person to make decisions and to look in depth into an individual's opinion. Talking mats allow an individual to state if they like, don't like or are unsure about a specific topic. Any topic can be explored and this can be done spontaneously using hand drawn pictures or written words if appropriate.

Social Stories:

Social stories are short stories that use simple language and generally use pictures to improve an individual's understanding of a situation. They aim to prepare an individual for new situations and help an individual to respond appropriately to situations. Social stories allow the individual time to process the information about a situation and can be revisited.

Objects of reference:

This can be a formalised system where the same object is used to represent an activity or message or where by a staff member uses an object impromptu e.g. giving the individual a coat to let them know they will be going out, or swimming shorts to tell them they are going swimming. Objects of reference are then learnt so that the individual can then use the object to choose to do an activity. This can be particularly useful for individuals with severe/ profound learning disabilities, visual impairment or individuals with dementia.

Visual aids:

Photographs, pictures and symbols (written in increasing order of difficulty to understand) can be used to reinforce a verbal message or as the main form of communication. Individuals could be shown visuals to let them know what activity they will be doing or what to expect later. Schedules can also be created to provide an individual with a simple to understand step-by-step instruction manual to complete an activity as independently as possible. Staff photos can be used to show who is on shift later. Visuals can be used to enable an individual to make choices.

Communication aid:

A communication aid is used to help the individual understand a message given to them or provides them with the means to communicate. This is a system which generally uses photographs or symbols but can use words. This can be either a high tech device or a low tech device. A high tech device might look like a small hand held computer and might have a voice output, it could also be an iPad. A low tech device might be a few pictures kept in a book or on a key ring.

An individual should have access to their communication aid at all times.