



Inclusive Communication
in Scotland

The 'Joe' Report - Making Scotland an Inclusive Communication Nation for him and for everyone else



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About this report



What is the purpose of this report?

1. To remind everyone **why inclusive communication is important**
2. To share **what was learned** from the work of the ICiS project
3. To show how this **links with Scotland's aim to be a nation that includes everyone**
4. To recommend **what actions are needed** and **who needs to take them**



The style of this report

This report aims to be an example of good practice in accessible written information (see '**Talk for Scotland**' toolkit). The report also uses symbols from **Bonnington**, one of a range of symbol sets available.

Key words and phrases are written in **bold**. This lets the reader know what the main points of the **message** are.

Who has helped to write this report?



This report and its recommendations draw on the experience and expertise of a wide range of people. The Inclusive Communication project worked with **people with communication support needs, disability organisations** and **professionals who are supporters and 'allies'**. (See the **back page** of this report)

The project partners, **Improvement Service (IS)** promoted the project's seminar programme through its links with local authorities and public bodies such as the Fire Service and the Police.

Further information



Further information on the project and recommendations is provided in an electronic version by email and on the website:

www.inclusivecommunication.org.uk

Contact: info@communicationforumscotland.org.uk

What does inclusive communication mean?



Inclusive communication means sharing information in a way that everybody can understand and enabling people to express themselves in the way they find easiest.



Inclusive communication includes –

- Written information
- Online information
- Telephone
- Face to face



The Project

Where did the Inclusive Communication in Scotland project come from?



The **Civic Participation Network project** run by **Communication Forum Scotland (CFS)** and funded by the Scottish Government, was the first **strategic work** on inclusive communication in Scotland.



People with communication support needs and speech and language therapists produced and promoted the '**Talk for Scotland Toolkit**' to encourage policy makers and service providers to make their services fully **communication accessible**.



The **Independent Living in Scotland (ILiS) project** chose **Inclusive Communication** as one of **four priorities for action**. It set up the **Inclusive Working Group** which included people with communication support needs, pan-disability organisations and practitioners.



The working group produced the '**Principles of Inclusive Communication – An information and self assessment tool for public authorities**'. This Scottish Government publication won a '**Plain English Award**' in 2011.



Improvement Service (IS) supported the Principles of Inclusive Communication through its **Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF)**. This framework has **ten indicators** for services to measure their progress in meeting the principles.

The **inclusive Communication in Scotland (ICiS) project** in partnership with Improvement Service took forward the work of making inclusive communication part of every day practice for Scotland's services.

Why is inclusive communication important?



Everyone needs to make sense of information and use services effectively. However, **communicating can sometimes be confusing**. We all experience **misunderstandings on occasion** which can feel **frustrating and distressing**.



People with communication support needs face **daily challenges** in understanding what is being said to them. People can struggle to make sense of written information. Many people find **communicating their needs** difficult and therefore may not get those **needs met**.

Laws exist, good practice exists but discrimination persists!

Why does it matter?



When communication is **not inclusive** -

- People do not get their **needs met**
- Some of us are **excluded from school, education, work, healthcare, police, fire, leisure and social services**
- People do not use **services** effectively
- People get **stressed** in their work and get sick. This costs money



People can **experience health problems** such as **a stroke** which can result in having communication support needs. In years to come there will be many more older people in Scotland. Many of us **will develop communication support needs** as we get older. Establishing good practice now will benefit this **'not yet disabled'** population.



Why are the Principles and Indicators needed?



1. To pull together and **simplify all the guidelines, tips and advice** into one set of **guiding principles and indicators of good practice**

2. To challenge **unhelpful attitudes** -

- It can be easier to **blame the person with communication support needs** when something is not understood
- Services may not see that **they have to change** and see **'other' people as the problem**



3. **The principles of inclusive communication** give services a way to –

- **Think differently** about their communication
- Understand how they can **change their behaviour**





- **Improve understanding** of communication support needs –
- 4. To help services meet **their goals and legal obligations** –
- **Systems and practices that exclude people** by not responding to their communication needs continue to **waste time and money**
- Using inclusive communication helps public bodies and Scottish Government to meet their **equality, legal and financial commitments**



Inclusive communication is **not** just for **‘them’**. Meeting the needs of people with communication support needs = meeting the needs of **everyone** now and in the future.

How does inclusive communication fit with Scotland’s goals as a nation?



National outcomes

The Scottish Government says that **progress for Scotland** can be seen in how we meet the **15 national outcomes**. The outcomes all promote an **ethos and culture** of Scotland being **welcoming and inclusive of all who live here**.

All of them are important but **four outcomes** in particular show **why becoming an inclusive communication nation matters** –

- Tackling the **significant inequalities** in Scottish society
- Ensuring our **public services** are **high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive** to local people’s needs
- Being proud to have a **strong, fair and inclusive national identity**
- Making our **communities strong, resilient and supportive** where people take **responsibility for their own actions** and how they **affect others**



The six principles of inclusive communication

The principles were developed by a **working group** that included **people with communication support needs, speech and language therapists and disability organisations**.



1. **Communication accessibility** and physical accessibility are **equally important**
2. **Every community or group** will **include** people with different communication support needs
3. Communication is a **two way process** of **understanding** others and **expressing** yourself

1. Be **flexible** in the way your **service** is provided
2. Effective **user involvement** will include the participation of people with different communication support needs
3. **Keep trying**

Principles of Inclusive Communication and the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF)



Improvement Service supports the use of the **Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF)** to measure change and improve service delivery. The PSIF is a self assessment framework used by **34 organisations** including **21 local authorities, seven fire and rescue services** and other partners across Scotland.

See: www.improvementservice.org.uk

There are ten indicators to support public authorities to apply the six principles of inclusive communication.

The project helped **local authorities** to **meet these indicators** by:

1. Describing what **working with the principles would look like in practice** e.g. annual audit of **inclusive communication staff training** including method of training (online, face to face etc) and numbers and type of staff trained
2. Leading a **session on inclusive communication** with the staff who are responsible for supporting their colleagues to meet these indicators

What were the project outcomes and how were these outcomes delivered?



Outcome 1:

Support the involvement of people with communication support needs and service providers to work together to make communication easier

How did the project deliver this outcome?

The Project Managers were privileged to meet and work with a number of people **who developed communication support needs** as a result of a stroke, laryngectomy, dementia or an accident.



In addition, the Project Managers drew on their experiences as **parents of children with communication support needs** and worked with **two groups of young disabled people**.

The people with communication support needs who worked with the project identified themselves as **experts** in inclusive communication.

The **experts** worked with us –

- to develop the **content of the seminars**
- **chairing** the seminars
- participating in and chairing the **Reference Group**
- **making the principles ‘live’** by describing what a principle meant to them presenting this in person and on DVD
- **co-facilitating** the table discussions at the seminars
- **sharing their experiences** of inclusive communication
- participating in the **Reception at the Scottish Parliament**

Although the project worked closely with the ‘experts’ the project managers did not have communication support needs. We recommend that **any future projects on inclusive communication should be led by an effectively supported expert** with personal experience of communication support needs.

Working with service providers -



The Project Managers worked towards **building the capacity of service providers** through delivery of **four regional seminars**.

Showing good practice in inclusive communication:



The seminar invitations, agenda and programme **used symbols and simple text** and **BSL interpreters** and an **induction loop** were available at each seminar. Experts and professionals **shared the role** of leading the table discussions.

The seminars gave providers the **opportunity to work with experts** and to look at how they delivered their services.



Attendance at the seminars was **by invitation** and were targeted at **chief executives and senior officers**. **60 service providers and 20 users of services** attended the four seminars in **Glasgow, Dumfries & Galloway, Edinburgh and Inverness**.

The objective of the seminars was to give people time to think about inclusive communication and to form **local partnerships**.

Feedback about the seminars included:



'When I first saw the **practicalities sheet and the agenda** for the seminar with the symbols and the simple text, I actually felt quite irritated. It seemed '**over the top**' but through the seminar I came to appreciate the **value of this approach**'

'It felt very powerful to be at such an **inclusive event**'

See: www.inclusivecommunication.org.uk for detail of the **seminar programme** and **PowerPoint presentation**.



Practitioners and voluntary organisations were **members of the Reference Group** supporting the work of the project.

The project supported the setting up of three **local communication partnerships** of experts, service providers, speech and language therapists and voluntary organisations to discuss taking inclusive communication forward and to share good practice.

Service providers brought information to display and share at the **Reception** at Parliament and attended as guests.

Outcome 2:

Work with Improvement Service to -

- Increase awareness of inclusive communication within the senior **management and development of organisations**
- **Link inclusive communication** to the **standards** organisations must meet

How did the project deliver this outcome?

- **Four regional seminars**
- Contributed to the indicators in PSIF by describing **what working with the principles would look like in practice**
- Presented to the **PSIF practitioners** – who support public bodies to improve their services and monitor progress
- **Reception at the Scottish Parliament**

Outcome 3:



Help service providers to:

- **Identify the barriers within organisations to inclusive communication**
- **Work out how to overcome those barriers and change their communication behaviour**

How did the project deliver this outcome?



The project managers **gathered information about the barriers to changing organisations' communication behaviour** from experts, service providers, disability organisations and practitioners at the seminars.

Experts, parents and carers told the project managers about **living with communication support needs**.

Barriers to an Inclusive Communication Nation

The experts told us that –



- Communication barriers have an impact for each of them at a **personal level** in just trying to do some **basic, everyday activities** that many people take for granted



- They are frustrated by how much harder everything is made when communication is **not inclusive**
- They felt they were often expected **to change their communication** somehow rather than **the system or process be changed**



- There was a general **lack of awareness** as to the **impact** of having communication support needs
- That they were **not** genuinely involved in **the planning and design of services**



- Young people said that in school they had **visual timetables** and **'signalong'** was used to support their communication. However, outside school the lack of signs and pictures made it harder for them to understand information and to express themselves

People **delivering services** told us that -



- There is very **little shared understanding** of what inclusive communication actually means
- There was a willingness to behave differently but a lack of understanding and **anxiety** about how to change
- These anxieties often meant they worried that they **‘would get it wrong’** and so did nothing
- That **specialist services** had to be involved **directly with the person** rather than **supporting the organisation to change** how it delivered its services
- They wanted to see their **leaders** set **an example** and prioritise inclusive communication at the **strategic level**
- There are a lot of people at a local level involved in trying to improve communication access but the **efforts are largely unco-ordinated and it feels it is hard to keep going**
- That they want to see **best practice rewarded** and **poor practice challenged**

Outcome 4:

To encourage:

- **Top leaders in organisations to promote an inclusive communication approach to delivering services**
- **Make recommendations to help Scotland become an Inclusive Communication Nation**

How did the project deliver these outcomes?

Chief Executives and strategic officers of public bodies and services were invited to the –

- **Regional seminars**
- **Scottish Parliamentary Reception**

However, only **4** attended in total. The invitation was delegated instead to Equalities Officers and operational staff, who deal with the **day-to-day management of services**.



We **observed and can evidence** from what the **project did not achieve** that public services are not yet communication inclusive.

A long way to go?

Everyone involved in the project worked hard to do what they set out to do. **The gap between what we want and what was possible at this time, was too big.** Some things did not happen in the project because national and local services are **not ready** to do them.

Public service providers are not as standard able to provide –



- accessible public information on the Principles and Indicators
- information about what they do to make communication accessible

Senior officers within public bodies have not yet **taken the lead** to –

- identify what their public bodies need to do practically to put the principles into practice and meet the indicators
- identify managers and front line staff to be the organisation's champions in changing communication behaviour

The **recommendations** pick up on these **gaps**.

These findings show that **change** means **commitment** to:



- Leadership
- Ethos and culture that supports inclusive behaviour and attitudes
- Developing knowledge and skills
- Systems that enable access to resources including training



Who needs to make the change happen?

Those of us who **govern and support government** – the Scottish Ministers, MSPs, Elected members and the civil service



Those of us who **plan, commission and fund services** – Community Planning Partnerships and Community Health Partnerships



Those of us who **promote and support improvement** – i.e. Improvement Service, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the inspectorates.

Those of us who **deliver services – management as well as front line staff** in public bodies and pan-disability organisations



All of us as **individuals**



Recommendations for an Inclusive Communication Nation



“For me now, it is not the cost of doing it that matters, it is the cost of not doing it”

(Local authority participant in the Glasgow seminar, November, 2011)

National leadership

We are aware that the Scottish Government sees inclusive communication as a **priority**.



It is therefore recommended that -

1. There is on-going national work **dedicated to delivering an Inclusive Communication Nation**.

Any future projects on inclusive communication should be **led by** an effectively supported **expert** with personal experience of communication support needs; **be ‘co-produced’** and based on **evidence** and **inclusive communication work** achieved in Scotland so far.



2. A **government minister** becomes the **champion of inclusive communication** – being an inclusive communication nation should be about how we see ourselves as Scots and how we want **Scotland** to be seen in the world.

3. A **national standard or regulation** is developed for inclusive communication like the one for physical access to buildings. There should be a **national symbol** developed for display by organisations that **achieve and maintain the standard**.





4. A **National Inclusive Communication Board** (like the Gaelic Board) is set up. Board members will include **experts** – people with communication support needs. The **experts will be in the majority** and will have the **lead roles** within the board i.e. **Chair**.



The board would lead on the **implementation of the national standard** and make **annual awards** to people and organisations whose work leads to Scotland becoming **an Inclusive Communication Nation**. This could be done in partnership with e.g. **The Plain English Campaign**.

5. A **'scoping' exercise** is carried out to identify and provide a set of standard key **communication access resources** (e.g. symbols, pictures, object signifiers) for use throughout **Scotland's public bodies** on letterheads, door signs, public information leaflets and in publications in line with UK and European guidance.

Scottish Government, with local government partners and lead communication support organisations will set up a viable **'Inclusive Communication service'** to develop –

- quality inclusive communication resources to be used and shared by public bodies and services across Scotland
 - quality accessible inclusive communication training programmes for management and staff within services to increase knowledge and skill
6. The **Scottish Government** adopts the principles and indicators of inclusive communication and **lead by example**
 7. Government should follow the lead of **Improvement Service's PSIF** and incorporate the principles into every aspect of **policy, procedure and practice**. Therefore **all improvement frameworks, policy and strategy** implemented by **public services across Scotland** will work to **the principles**. This includes the **single outcome agreements**.
 8. The government actively encourages the public sector to **follow its example** as both a **good inclusive communication public service provider and employer** creating real opportunities for graduates with communication support needs.

Public bodies can draw on the existing resources and expertise e.g. **University Student Support Services**

Local leadership



9. Local leadership need to reflect the national leadership approach and systems with identified **local inclusive communication champions** to establish **Inclusive Communication Partnerships** which draw on the local expertise and good practice and provide a **co-ordinating role**.

The draft proposals within ‘**A Right to Speak**’ recommend **local networks** are established for **augmentative and alternative communication**. The Inclusive Communication Partnerships would **link with such networks**.



10. Effective use is made of **existing local resources** – this should include the ‘lived’ experience of the experts as **role models, trainers and advocates** and those organisations and professions that **provide support** i.e. Speech & Language Therapists, voluntary and statutory organisations.

Access Panels give us a model of how this can be done. Many Access Panels already **include** communication access in their work. This needs to be strengthened and extended so that all panels include experts with a range of communication support needs.

11. As part of their **commitment** to inclusive communication **public service providers** will have to show that they have –
- produced a **local inclusive communication development plan** to **implement the national standard of Inclusive Communication**
 - **used** the set of standard key **communication access resources and training materials**
 - actively sought **evaluation of services** by people with communication support needs
 - used **evaluation processes that are inclusive** drawing on and developing existing good practice tools to take account of the **ten indicators** e.g. **Scottish Accessible Information Forum (SAIF)** user-led evaluation tool and the ‘**Talk for Scotland**’ toolkit



Conclusion



A commitment to the delivery of these recommendations will ensure Scotland’s future as an inclusive communication nation.

The report has been written by the **Inclusive Communication in Scotland (ICiS) project** on behalf of **Communication Forum Scotland (CFS)**. The contents do not necessarily reflect the views of the partner organisations.

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