Department for Education

Supporting looked-after children with communication needs

Departmental advice for independent reviewing officers

March 2011 (revised January 2014)

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Summary

About this departmental advice

This is advice from the Department for Education. It is non-statutory, and has been produced to help recipients understand their obligations and duties towards looked after children with communication needs.

It relates to the following legislation:

- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Sections 17, 20 and 47 of the Children Act 1989 as amended by section 53 in the Children Act 2004
- The Children and Young Persons Act 2008

Expiry or review date

This advice will be kept under review and updated when necessary.

Who is this advice for?

This advice is for local authority independent reviewing officers (IROs).

Key points

- Children with communication needs have the same rights as all looked after children to have their wishes and feelings taken into account in the care planning and review process.
- This is a revised version of *Supporting looked after children with communication needs,* which was originally published in March 2011. Some minor updates have been made to the contact details for resources in this version.

1. Introduction

Children with communication needs have the same rights as all looked after children to have their wishes and feelings taken into account in the care planning and review process. They are also likely to require additional action by Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) to ensure that their individual means of communication is facilitated and understood.

This document provides practical guidance, information and resources to facilitate the involvement of children with communication needs in the care planning and review process.

- Section 2 gives a very brief summary of the legislative and policy context.
- Section 3 explains the terminology used in the document and provides an indication of the numbers of children who have communication needs.
- Section 4 summarises different communication methods and approaches.
- Section 5 outlines the barriers to communication experienced by children and young people.
- Section 6 suggests actions for IROs and IRO Services to enable and support communication.
- Section 7 provides a range of resources to support IROs working with children with communication needs:
    - 7.1 Websites
    - 7.2 Communication, involvement and participation resources
    - 7.3 Accessible information resources
    - 7.4 Training Resources and Courses

2. All looked after children have the right to communicate and to have their wishes and feelings understood and given due consideration

The right for all children to communicate is underpinned by The Human Rights Act 1998 and should be enshrined into the core values of all agencies working with children. Legislation requires that the wishes and feelings of children are ascertained and given due consideration when making decisions about providing services to meet a child's needs under sections 17, 20 and 47 of the Children Act 1989 as amended by section 53 in the Children Act 2004. The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 goes further and requires IROs to ensure that the Local Authority gives due consideration to any wishes and feelings expressed by the child. The statutory guidance known as The IRO Handbook [Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF), 2010] makes clear that the IRO should attempt, whenever appropriate to take into account fully the child's current wishes and feelings. This means that the IRO must seek the views of the child, including those with communication needs, at each review, and at any other time that the IRO considers appropriate, on the current arrangements for their care.

3. What do we mean by children with communication needs? Which children have communication needs and how many?

Children with communication needs includes those who use non-verbal means of communication as well as a wider group of children who have difficulties in communicating with others. It may be that they cannot express themselves effectively or they may have difficulties in understanding what is being said to them. Equally those who support them may not understand their way of communicating. Children and young people may use speech and language but in a very simplified and unclear way. Children and young people may have difficulties across one or many of the different elements of speech, language and communication. The Communication Trust[1] makes clear that

> "Many children communicate successfully using non-verbal means such as signing, gestures, communication books or electronic communication equipment." (p5)

A significant group of children in the general population, around 5 – 7%[2] have specific language impairment and no other general learning difficulty or physical or sensory impairment.

Communication needs are central to and common in association with a range of impairments including general learning difficulty; autistic spectrum disorder, syndromes such as Down's syndrome, sensory impairment (hearing, visual or multi-sensory), cerebral palsy, dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and selective mutism.

Based on the broad Disability Discrimination Act definition of disability it is estimated that there are 770,000 disabled children in the UK. The *Aiming High for Disabled Children: Better Support for Families Report* (DfES and HM Treasury, 2007) suggested this equates to 570,000 disabled children in England. This equates to 7 % of the child population. For the purposes of the Aiming High for Disabled Children Programme the numbers of severely disabled children in England have been estimated at around 100,000, about 17% of the total disabled children population, which in turn equates to 1.2% of the local child population.[3]

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[1] The Communication Trust (2009) *Explaining speech, language and communication needs.* Available to download from The Communication Trust website.

[2] Law J. Boyle J. Harris F. Harkness A. and Nye C. (2000) *Prevalence and Natural History of Primary Speech and Language Delay: findings from a systematic review of the literature* IJLCD Vol 35 no.2 in Lindsay G and Dockrell J with Mackie C and Becky Letchford (2002) *Educational Provision for Children with Specific Speech and Language Difficulties in England and Wales* CEDAR.

[3] Together for Disabled Children (2009) *Transforming Short Break Services – an introduction.* This document is no longer available. The Together for Disabled Children (TDR) website has been archived and is available from The National Archives' website.

DCSF figures for 2007 identified 2,300 looked after children whose principal category of need was disability, which equates to 4% of the looked after population of 60,000 in 2007. However it is very likely that a significantly higher number of looked after children have communication needs, but their principle category of need would not necessarily be disability.

4. Summary of different communication methods and approaches

Children with communication needs may use a range of communication methods, some use more than one and these can change over time. These can be formal communication systems or methods that are unique to the individual child. They are all of equal value. An individual approach to understanding each child's communication method is therefore required. Some children communicate using body language, gestures, facial expressions and behaviour. Some children will communicate with only a sign or word or movement that indicates yes and another indicating no. This does not mean that the child cannot understand or is not able to communicate their wishes and feelings. Some children's involvement will need to focus on their likes and dislikes using a variety of approaches.

The following is a summary of the most commonly used communication options and draws heavily from the *Two Way Street*[4] handbook and the *Focus on* series of fact sheets from *Communication Matters*[5].

4.1 Symbols

There are a number of graphic symbol systems in use in the UK. Local areas, and in some cases individual schools, tend to have a preference for a particular symbol system.

All are similar in that they are a way of representing meaning in a graphic form. Some are more pictorial than others but all rely on the child being able to assign meaning to the symbol and remember it over time. The most frequently used are Makaton, Mayer Johnson Picture Communication Symbols (PCS), Widgit Rebus, and Blissymbolics. There are also graphic symbol systems associated with specific high tech communication aids, for example Minisymbols (multi meaning icons) and Dynasyms. Some symbol systems are pictorial others are abstract; some can be built up to represent complex ideas and a comprehensive vocabulary.

Makaton's symbol system is designed to be used in an integrated way with signing and speech. For example:



© The Makaton Charity

An example of Mayer Johnson feelings symbols is given in Appendix 1.

[4] Marchant R. and Gordon R (2001) *Two Way Street: Communicating with Disabled Children and Young People.* NSPCC, Triangle and Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

[5] Communication Matters 'Focus on' series of fact sheets available to download from the Communication Matters website.

Children using symbols may access them in a range of different ways including using a communication book and / or board, calendars, prompts, and / or in a range of high and low tech computer devices. Some children use a grid system on a computer and /or a voice output communication aid. You need to find out which symbol set the child is familiar with and what is their method of accessing the symbols. You also need to find out how the child conveys messages, this may be through pointing to symbols with their finger, eye pointing to one side for Yes and to the other side for No or by using computer switches or scanning. Some children have a loose-leaf file or book of symbols they are familiar with, and an index system to find them easily. The range of symbols used grows with the child. Topic boards can be useful for specific activities or issues such as those pertinent to a particular review meeting.

Software programs enable writing with symbols. For example *Communicate in Print 2* can be used for a wide variety of communications and incorporates a range of different symbol systems. For more information see section 7.3.

An example of an introductory letter from an IRO using *Communicate in Print 2* is given in Appendix 2.

For more information about specific symbol sets contact:

Blissymbolics
Blissymbol Communication (UK)
c/o The ACE Centre, 92 Windmill Road, Oxford OX3 7DR
Website: www.blissymbols.co.uk

Dynasyms
DynaVox Systems Ltd, Tel: 01384 446789 email: enquiries@dynavox.co.uk
Website: www.dynavox.co.uk

Makaton
The Makaton Charity, Tel: 01276 606760 email: info@makaton.org
Website: www.makaton.org

Minsymbols
Liberator Ltd, Tel: 0845 226 1144 email: info@liberator.co.uk
Website: www.liberator.co.uk

Widgit Literacy Symbols & Mayer Johnson PCS Symbols
Widgit Software Tel: 01223 815210 email: info@widgit.com
Website: www.widgit.com or tel: 01926 333680

4.2 Photographs

Photographs can be used in a variety of ways to support communication. Children can take photographs of things they like or dislike, what's important to them or things they would like to change. With consent obtained in a meaningful way photographs can be

taken of children to record what they are doing and what they enjoy. They can also be used to make information more accessible. Some children use photographs to make choices and have choice books with photos of different options or activities

4.3 Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

PECS is used to teach early communication skills using pictures rather than words or signing. Children are taught to exchange pictures for something they want. For example if the child wants a drink they will give a picture or a drink to an adult who immediately responds with the requested item. This exchange format encourages interacting with another person. The PECS programme is divided into a number of phases, which gradually combine pictures into increasingly complex sentences.

For more information contact Pyramid Educational Consultants:
Tel: 01273 609555 email: pyramid@pecs.org.uk
Website: www.pecs.org.uk

4.4 Objects of Reference

These are real objects, which are used to represent particular activities, concepts or people. For example a spoon can represent food, a towel can represent swimming and a cup can represent a drink. Some children use just part of an object such as the corner of a crisp packet for crisps or a texture associated with an object such as a piece of material to represent a coat. Some children have a small selection of objects of reference in a bag or box or clipped to a key ring that they carry around to communicate their basic needs. Some children have object calendars to help them predict their day and week or to know what is planned. Some children use objects to identify individual people such as a certain piece of clothing or jewellery or an associated object such as a small car.

For more information contact Sense:
Tel: 0207 272 7774 email: enquiries@sense.org.uk website: www.sense.org.uk

4.5 Braille and Moon

Braille is a method of reading by touch. It consists of a pattern of raise dots with a different pattern representing each letter. There are also patterns, which represent commonly used words. Braille is usually written on a machine called a brailler. Braille readers use their fingers to read from left to right across the page by feeling the raised dots.

Moon is a system of reading by touch using raised shapes. Some children and young people who lose their sight after learning to read may be introduced to Moon. The shapes are more like the written word.

For more information contact RNIB:
Tel: 0207 2388 1266 email: helpline@rnib.org.uk website: www.rnib.org.uk

4.6 Signing

There are a number of signing systems in use in the UK. Deaf children and young people use various communication methods including speech and lip-reading.

British Sign Language [BSL] is the most widely used method of signed communication. BSL is a visual language which uses a mixture of precise hand shapes, lip movements, facial expressions and body movements to convey meaning. BSL is structured in a different way to English. In BSL you start with the main subject or topic and then refer to something about the topic. For example, *"What is your name?"* in English would be signed in BSL as *"Your name what?"*.

Fingerspelling supports sign language and uses the hands to spell out English words. Both hands are used together to make different shapes to represent each of the letters of the alphabet. Fingerspelling is used to spell out names or words for which there is no sign or to clarify. Fingerspelling alone is not sign language.

When working with a BSL interpreter the process is two way – the child requires interpretation for both their receptive and expressive communication. It is important to:

- Address the child directly, not the interpreter
- Allow additional time and be prepared to pause for interpretation of yours or the child's communication
- Check back to ensure that you and the child understand each other

For more information about BSL and Fingerspelling contact:

The National Deaf Children's Society
Tel 0207 250 0123 email: helpline@ndcs.org.uk website: www.ndcs.org.uk

Action on Hearing Loss (formally known as RNID)
Tel: 0808 808 0123 email: informationline@hearingloss.org.uk
website: www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Lip-reading and cued speech is the ability to read the shapes made by the lips when a person speaks. Lip-reading requires you to read a person's expression and needs a great deal of concentration. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish a word where the same or very similar lip shape is used. Cued speech is a system for facilitating lip-reading. Cued speech uses eight hand shapes and four hand locations, combined with speech to highlight the differences between spoken words.

When working with a child who lip-reads:

- make sure you have the child's attention before you start
- place yourself in front of, fairly close to and on the same level as the child
- make sure you are facing the light
- keep background d noise to a minimum
- do not shout as the shape of the mouth becomes distorted
- speak clearly, a little slower than usual but maintain the rhythm of speech
- use sentences rather than words on their own
- pause between sentences and check that the child has understood
- be aware that beards and moustaches make it more difficult to lip-read
- be aware that facial expression and body language provide important clues for children when lip-reading

For more information about lip-reading contact:

The National Deaf Children's Society
Tel: 0207 250 0123 email: helpline@ndcs.org.uk website: www.ndcs.org.uk

Action on Hearing Loss (formally known as RNID)
Tel: 0808 808 0123 email: informationline@hearingloss.org.uk
website: www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Cued Speech Association UK
Tel: 01803 832784 email: info@cuedspeech.co.uk website: www.cuedspeech.org.uk

Signalong is a sign vocabulary based on BSL designed to help children with learning disabilities acquire language skills. The extensive vocabulary signs are always used with speech and are organized around topics. Manuals are available with detailed instruction for each sign.

For more information about Signalong contact: The Signalong Group
Tel: 01634 819915 website: www.signalong.org.uk

Sign Supported English is intended for use at the same time as spoken English. It includes some BSL signs and also uses Finger spelling to give an exact representation of spoken English. Signs are used in the same order as English words but not every word that is spoken is signed.

For more information about Sign Supported English contact The National Deaf Children's Society:
Tel: 0207 250 0123 email: helpline@ndcs.org.uk website: www.ndcs.org.uk

Children who have a sight and hearing impairment use a range of communication methods depending on how much sight and hearing they have. Some children can hear speech, lip-read or use sign language. Others may use visual frame signing where the signing space is reduced to fit their visual field.

The Deaf / Blind Manual Alphabet involves spelling out words on the child's hand using hand shapes similar to those in Fingerspelling.

For more information about the Deaf / Blind Manual Alphabet contact Sense:
Tel: 0207 272 7774 email: enquiries@sense.org.uk website: www.sense.org.uk

5. Barriers to communication experienced by children and young people

Children with communication needs experience the same barriers to communication as all children such as the failure of some adults to listen to them properly and take their views seriously and a fear that they won't be believed or of the consequences if they are.

Children with communication needs can also experience additional barriers including:

- Judgments being made about a child's ability to communicate which are not based on accurate information and specialist advice
- Low expectations
- The assumption that speech is the only or best way to communicate and non-verbal means of communication not being recognised as valid
- The child's preferred method of communication not being recognised
- Communication impairments may not always be immediately 'visible'
- No one available who is familiar with the child's method of communication to support them in expressing their wishes and feelings
- Not having access to their communication system at all times for example their communication board remaining at school
- Augmentative communication systems not containing the words necessary to express what the child wants to say or describe an experience of abuse or neglect
- Assessments, planning meetings and reviews not allowing enough time to enable the child's wishes and feelings to be obtained and expressed
- Lack of accessible information

6. Actions for IROs and IRO services to enable and support communication

The core principles and good practice in involving all children is just as important for disabled children. In addition the following actions are important to support the involvement of children with communication needs.

Before you start / actions for IRO services and IRO managers

- **Create the right culture** - an inclusive culture is important to enable children with communication needs to be involved. This requires a commitment at all levels and an understanding that it is everyone's responsibility. Creating an inclusive environment where everyone can participate needs to be based on the social model of disability. This means the focus must be on identifying the barriers that prevent children and young people with communication needs from being involved and finding solutions rather than expecting them to adapt or fit in.

> **" We need to foster a cultural expectation that children with communication needs will be included "**
>
> [Independent Reviewing Officers Communicating with Children with Complex Needs. An Investigation for DCSF. The Children's Society 2009]

- **Provide training and staff development opportunities for all staff in communication skills and methods and disability equality.** For examples of training courses and resources available see section 7.4.
- **Recognise that each child's method of communication will be individual and find out what it is prior to allocating the case.** Agree a local protocol that the child's preferred method of communication is recorded and identified in their care plan prior to or at the 72-hour planning/ placement meeting.
- **Allocate referrals of children with communication needs to a specialist IRO with knowledge and experience or an IRO with experience of the child's specific communication method**.
- **Where specialist expertise is not available within the IRO team, ensure that from the outset the child has access to specialist support such as independent advocacy, so that their wishes and feelings can be elicited effectively.** The IRO Handbook makes clear that every child has the right to be supported by an advocate. The Handbook states that the IRO is responsible when meeting with the child before every review for making sure that the child understands how an advocate could help them and their entitlement to one. A presumption should be made that children with communication needs will be

supported by an independent advocate. They should have the right to opt out or chose someone else to support him or her if they wish. For children with communication needs independent advocacy or other specialist support should be available throughout the care planning and review process including when any significant changes are proposed.

- **Make available to all IROs up to date information about independent advocacy services, other specialist advice, resources, experts, interpreters and facilitators and the funding to access these**.
- **Recognise involvement is a continuing process and not simply attendance at a meeting or review and build this into the accepted way of working in your team**.
- **Recognise that more time will be required** to effectively involve children with complex communication needs and building this into allocations of work. This includes consideration of meaningful ways of remaining in touch with the child and maintain an appropriate level of contact between meetings.

When you are with children and young people / Actions for IROs

- **Present information in an accessible way** based on the level of understanding of each young person. This could be an introductory letter, information about review meetings or other specific issues. To be inclusive, information needs to be available in a variety of accessible formats. Visual or multi- sensory information is useful as are easy read versions, photographs, pictures or audio. For details of accessible information resources see section 7.3.
- **Introduce yourself in an accessible way** explaining who you are and why you are there. A useful starting point is to think about how to explain your role to a young child. Translating your introduction into basic symbols and signs is a good way to simplify your own communication

‘About Me’ guide

The 'About Me' guide is a resource developed by The Children’s Society to help professionals introduce themselves and their role to disabled children and young people they are working with. It is a 'home-made' resource where you can insert photos, pictures and symbols relevant to you and your role. The template uses Boardmaker symbols and pictures to summarise the key information areas. The template is a PowerPoint presentation that can be printed, laminated and ring bound together to make it more accessible and durable for young people. Disabled young people said they particularly liked the way this resource could be used in a number of different ways - it can be printed out and left, it can be watched as a power point presentation, you can add sounds and video clips if required.

For more information and the template are available from The Children’s Society website.

- **Have a wide and open definition of communication and tune in on all channels,** take note of speech, sounds, play, drawing, behaviour, body language, and gesture, signs, symbols and facial expression.
- **Make eye contact** if this does not make the child feel uncomfortable, and sit reasonably close and on a similar level. Echoing the child’s communication (head nodding for instance) or mirroring their body language (e.g. by leaning forwards) can help to convey to the child that their wishes and feelings have been heard.
- **Make sure that information about the child’s method of communication is made available for all those attending a review meeting**.
- **Consider the environment to best support communication.** Some children will need an environment free of background noise. Others may be more relaxed and more able to communicate if they are engaged in other activities such as play or art. Others may need to give their total attention to communicating and you should do the same.
- **Consider the use of person-centred approaches in review meetings.** Person - centred approaches, used most frequently in transition planning for disabled young people, place the young person at the centre throughout the review process, the young person chooses who to involve and the setting and timing of meetings. Attention is given to a young person’s family, friends and community. The focus is on the young person’s capacities and the support they require, the aim is to reflect what is possible and not just what is available and to result in a series of actions to help a young person achieve what they want out of life. For more information see section 7.2.

- **Respond respectfully to a child's use of communication resources** and methods even if they are unfamiliar to you. It can be easy to get distracted by the method of communication and remember to focus on the content of the message.
- **Where necessary break down more complex questions or issues into small segments**.

> **"It might be impossible to ask whether a child would like to change their placement, but you can ask about day to day issues that might be very important to the child's everyday life such as meals, staff, or activities.**
>
> **"Although it may be difficult to obtain quick answers to specific questions for a decision meeting, taking a holistic approach and building a picture of a child's life helps to inform these 'big' decisions".**
>
> - 'Independent Reviewing Officers Communicating with Children with Complex Needs. An Investigation for DCSF' – The Children's Society, 2009. This report is available from The Children's Society website.

- **Acknowledge if things aren't going well and say if you don't understand, don't pretend you did**. Have lots of different ideas ready and be prepared to change them. It is useful to agree symbols or signs which convey, "Let's start again, I've got in a muddle" and for "I mean something else" for when the child doesn't agree with any of the options, communicated by the IRO.
- **Attend carefully to everything that is being communicated** even if there is a discrepancy between messages. Check back and be willing to go back to the beginning and start again.
- **Let it take time, go at the child's pace, be willing to wait sometimes for long periods and give breaks if needed**. It is important not to be tempted to interrupt or finish off a child's sentences. Consider offering the child a non- verbal means of indicating that they want to say something.

Case study: The 'Big Mac' button

Antony loved using the 'Big Mac' button to let everyone in the meeting know he wanted to say something. With the help of the IRO he recorded the words 'Me now' which played every time he pressed the button. After a few practice runs he it gave him confidence to speak up when he wanted to. There were a few false alarms when Antony was a bit bored in the meeting and just wanted to hear his voice but this too was useful in alerting the IRO that Antony might need a break or had had enough of the meeting. More information is available from The Children's Society website.

- **Recognise non-instructed advocacy** and observations in a range of settings as legitimate ways to ensure the wishes and feelings of children and young people with very complex and multiple needs and limited cognitive ability are taken account of.
- **Ensure the child's method of communication is recorded and updated over time**.

Case study: Communication passports

Veejay has profound and multiple learning disabilities and does not use formal communication like speech, symbols or signs. He communicates using facial expressions, gestures and vocal sounds.

Veejay's independent advocate encouraged his parents and his learning support assistant to put together a communication passport, which in this case includes a video clip showing how he communicates. His IRO has ensured that this is attached to his short breaks plan and checks if this needs updating updated at each review. It is crucial that all the people involved in providing short breaks for Sanjay take the time to understand his individual means of communication and his communication passport acts as an invaluable resource.

For more information about Communication passports see section 7.2.

- **Make sure that you give the child or young person the opportunity to endorse that you have interpreted their wishes and feelings correctly**. Take particular care if you are interpreting non-verbal cues. For example some children appear to smile or grimace but in some instances this is beyond their control and may be associated with a muscle pattern rather than an intentional smile. If a child indicates that they like a particular picture you need to be clear what that picture represents to them. For example if the child indicates that they like a yellow car, is

it the colour they like or the car or are they trying to say 'I want to go out in the car now' or 'that's my dad's car' or something else?

Case study: Consultation key ring

Robbie was just beginning to use a digital communication aid but easily got tired and sometimes lost concentration. His IRO adapted the 'consultation key ring' so that she had available in the review meeting some basic symbols that she knew Robbie could understand. The IRO was able to checkout with Robbie if he understood what was being said and to check with Robbie that she had understood correctly what he was communicating.

More information about the consultation key ring is available from The Children's Society website.

- **When writing up a review include details of what the child said, signed or communicated directly and what they did** (expressions, gestures, behaviour etc). Use the child's own words/ signs/ symbols or drawings wherever possible including things they may have prepared prior to the review. Wherever possible check what you have recorded with the child.

Case study: I'll Go First

Alison's advocate had supported her to produce some statements using 'I'll Go First' boards about what she wanted to say in her review about contact with her family. Alison is able to say a few single words and with the encouragement of her advocate she was able to use the boards in the meeting to remind her about what she wanted to say and at the same time show everyone what she wanted to say. Her IRO agreed to copy the boards, attach these to the minutes of the meeting as a record of Alison's views. The IRO also used this approach to summarise the decisions that had been made so that Alison had a record of the decisions in a format that she could understand.

For more information about I'll Go First see section 7.2.

- **Consider how the child can contact you in between meetings**, they may not be able to phone you or email you. You could leave them with a small laminated card with your photo and the words/ symbols “Please contact Heather my IRO on Tel 00000000” in order that the child can indicate to a care worker / foster carer that they want to speak to you.
- **Feed back decisions to the child in an accessible format**.

7. Resources

7.1 Websites containing information about resources to support communication with disabled children

www.disabilitytoolkit.org.uk is designed by practitioners at The Children's Society, the is a one-stop information hub, providing essential resources, information and support that are required by professionals to support disabled children in decision-making and participation activities. This website is fully interactive and encourages users to share their resources, practice and ideas using the upload facility. Currently the database contains information on 150 resources reviewed by practitioners , including many that are free to download and 44 examples of good practice

www.triangle.org.uk provides a wide range or resources, training and services to support and enable communication. The website offers information about communication assistance services including BSL interpreters and communication support workers.

www.signature.org.uk promotes excellence in communication with deaf and deaf/blind people. The website hosts the national register of communication professionals working with deaf and deaf/blind people and has a wide range of information about working with interpreters and the different services registered communication professionals can provide.

www.ace-centre.org.uk provides support and advice in relation to children and young people with complex physical and communication impairments. The website offers information about assessments, communication technology and other methods of communication and the training available for the people supporting children to communicate.

www.talkingpoint.org.uk: ICAN runs a website called Talking Point. This provides a wide range of information about speech, language and communication. The site is for parents and professionals who help children with speech, language and communication needs and includes speech and language information, a glossary, a directory of resources, news, case studies, discussion groups, ask-the-panels write ups and frequently asked questions.

www.callcentre.education.ed.ac.uk provides a wide range of information guidance and resources on how Information Technology can assist disabled children including many free resources about Augmentative and Alternative Communication.

http://hbr.nya.org.uk: The Hear by Right website provides ready access to a range of resources aimed at improving participation for all young people. Many of these resources can be used with no little or no adaptation for disabled children and young people depending on the nature of their impairment.

www.communicationhelppoint.org.uk The Speech Language and Communication Framework developed by The Communication Trust is a comprehensive framework of speech, language and communication skills and knowledge needed by anyone who works with children and young people. It is available to download and can be used as an interactive online tool. Practitioners and managers can complete an on line evaluation of current skills and knowledge and identify competencies. The website links to training and resources that will support these competencies.

www.communicationmatters.org.uk provides a range of information about the needs of people with communication impairments who may benefit from augmentative and alternative communication systems to maximize their opportunities and enhance their life. These systems known as AAC include eye pointing, gesture, signing, using symbol/word boards, and electronic speech devices.

7.2 Communication, involvement and participation resources

(Listed in alphabetical order)

A Lot to Say written by Jenny Morris and published by SCOPE is a guide for social workers, personal advisors and others working with disabled children and young people with communication impairments.

Available to download from www.scope.org.uk/downloads/action/publications/lotsay.pdf

Communicating with your deaf child produced by the National Deaf Children's Society has some excellent information about different communication approaches. It also has information about interpreting services and the people who provide human aids to communication. Available to download from the NDCS website.

First Steps - developing communication skills for individuals with multiple disabilities. This leaflet gives information about different methods of communication. It provides ideas about developing a way of communicating with someone who has multiple impairments. Available free to download from www.communicationmatters.org.uk

How It Is consists of an image vocabulary for children about feelings, rights and safety, personal care and sexuality. The vocabulary comprises 380 images that are designed to be used as a flexible resource to support children to communicate about their feelings, bodies, rights and basic needs. The pack includes a booklet and CD-ROM. More information is available from www.howitis.org.uk.

Available to download
from: http://www.howitis.org.uk/PDF/How_it_is_Booklet_and_cover.pdf

Available to purchase (booklet and CD-ROM)
from: http://www.triangle.org.uk/catalog/resources/consultation-reports-and-handbooks

How to involve children and young people with communication impairments in decision-making is one of the series of 'How to' guides from Participation Works. It covers what is meant by communication impairment, barriers to communication, creating the right culture, accessible information, getting to know children and young people, practical suggestions and additional resources.

Available to download from: www.participationworks.org.uk

I'll Go First newly updated planning and review toolkit designed by with and for disabled children to enable them to communicate their wishes and feelings. The pack includes a series of colourful, hardwearing boards for children to complete with illustrations and electrostatic stickers and topics including keeping safe, review meetings and healthy living. A CD-ROM version with a range of drag and drop objects, activities, people and feelings allows children to create their own online record of their views, wishes and feelings.

Available to purchase from: The Children's Society Training and Consultancy Unit 1st Floor, Town Centre House Merrion Centre, Leeds LS2 8LY
Tel 07886 375654 or email Training&Consultancy@childrenssociety.org.uk

In My Shoes is a computer package that helps children and adults with learning disabilities communicate their views, wishes and feelings as well as potentially distressing experiences. It has been used in a wide range of circumstances, including with children who may have been abused and has been used successfully in interviewing vulnerable adults.

Available to purchase from http://www.inmyshoes.org.uk

Listen Up produced by Mencap, is a toolkit of multi-media resources to help children and young people with a learning disability complain about the services they use.

Available free from Mencap publications, 123 Golden Lane London EC1Y or Tel: 020 7454 0454.

Making Ourselves Heard is a handbook exploring disabled children's participation. It is based on a series of eight seminars with local authorities and sets out the current policy context for disabled children and young people's participation, outlines the barriers and challenges to effective participation and highlights what is working well. It contains a wealth of good practice examples as well as signposting readers to further resources.

Available to purchase from: http://shop.ncb.org.uk/product_p/6300-050b10123p.htm

My Life, My Decisions, My Choice is a set of resources to aid and facilitate decision-making including a poster, set of laminated ring bound cards and a guide for professionals. The resources, produced by The Children's Society were designed with disabled young people and are aimed at young people, and the professionals that work with them.

Available free to download from: www.disabilitytoolkit.org.uk /or in hard copy from The Disability Advocacy Project - Telephone 020 7 613 2886.

Personal Communication Passports are a resource outlining the key principles of making and using communication passports as a way of documenting and presenting information about disabled children and young people who cannot easily speak for themselves.

Available from www.callcentre.education.ed.ac.uk (where the resources can be explored online before purchasing). Tel: 0131 6516236.

A website to specifically address questions about planning, creating and using passports can be accessed at www.communicationpassports.org.uk

Person-centred planning and reviewing can be used to help a child or young person be at the heart of making choices and participating in decision making about their lives. Person-centred plans and reviews involve working with the young person rather than for them. They build the young person's circle of support and involve all the people who are important in that young person's life. There are many tools and approaches used to carry out person-centred planning and reviews. These include Circles of Support, Essential Lifestyle Planning, Maps, Paths, Personal futures Planning and Personal Portfolios.

More information about using person-centred approaches in Transition reviews can be found in A Transition Guide for All services p20–23 which can be downloaded from: http://www.transitioninfonetwork.org.uk/resources/policy-guidance/a-transition-guide-for-all-services.aspx

Additional information about person centred approaches can be found at: www.circlesnetwork.org.uk www.inclusive-solutions.com/pcplanning.asp www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk/Reading_Room/Who/Families_And_Children.html

Talking Mats © is a low-tech communication framework which uses a mat with pictures and symbols attached as the basis for communication. It consists of three elements, topics, options and feelings and uses whichever symbol system is most appropriate. Talking Mats can help people arrive at a decision by providing a structure where information is presented in small chunks supported by symbols. It gives people time and space to think about information, work out what it means and say what they feel in a visual way that is easily recorded.

For more information: Talking Mats Research and Development Centre, University of Stirling. Telephone 01786 458105 email: info@talkingmats.com
website: www.talkingmats.com

Talking Mats and Young People is a resource to support consultation with young people using care services. The package contains 60 symbols selected to facilitate the involvement of young people in target setting and reviews. The symbols are divided into topic areas: care and learning, rights, progress and environment. These sets provide a framework for discussion leading to recordable information reflecting a young person's views.

Available to purchase from Talking Mats:
Tel: 01786 467645 email: info@talkingmats.com website: www.talkingmats.com

Talking Photo Albums have a built in voice recorder allowing a message to be recorded that relates to each photo in the album.

For example: A photo of a school bus accompanied by a voice recording of the young person saying ' I want to travel to school on the school bus not in a taxi on my own'. They have been used successfully in review meetings for children to express their views about options for a change of placement and about the contact they want to have with individuals in the photos.

Available to purchase Talking Photo Albums can be purchased from www.redsave.com and other companies including Amazon, Talking Products and Inclusive Technology Ltd. A quick Internet search of 'talking photo albums' brings up many supplier options.

Ten Top Tips for Participation What disabled young people want. This poster is written in words used by young people and gives advice about how to ensure disabled children and young people have a say in decisions, which affect their lives.

Available as free download
from: http://www.ncb.org.uk/cdc/networks/making_ourselves_heard.aspx

7.3 Accessible information resources

Boardmaker v.6 for MS Windows is software package using Picture Communication Symbols. It is designed to use with and by disabled children and young people to help create written materials in symbol format. You type words into the programme and it provides a number of symbols to choose from for each word. You can also insert your own photos and symbols. The computer package can be used to create accessible information for disabled children and young people. The symbols are easy to use, bright and colourful and make pieces of communication 'child-friendly'. The symbols are generally intuitive so many disabled children and young people can recognise them even if they are not familiar with Boardmaker as a communication system. Another benefit of Boardmaker is the words to accompany the symbols can be translated into a large range of different languages.

For more information about Boardmaker go to www.widgit.com

Change Picture Bank is a CD-ROM and Book containing black and white line drawings of a wide range of people, objects, activities and situations. The pictures are designed to be used alongside written information to make it more accessible to people with learning disabilities. The pictures were produced with the support and advice of adults with learning disabilities.

Pictures are available under the following sections (and subsections):

- People: Access, Emotions, Men, Women, Groups, Relationships, Violence and Abuse, Support, Leisure, Choices, Rights
- Places: Transport, Where We Live, Police and The Law, Work, Day Centres, Government, Meetings, Hospitals and Health, College and Training
- Things: Information, Letter and Lists, Money, Times and Dates, Food and Drink, Technology

Although the pictures were primarily created for adults, they are as useful for children and young people. Change can create specific drawings or sets of drawings for a particular organisation and they provide training on how to make information accessible

Available to purchase from: http://www.changepeople.org/buy-our-resources/shop-picture-banks/ or call: 0113 2430202

Communicate In Print 2 is a flexible symbol-supported desktop publishing package for creating letters, worksheets, newsletters and posters. Its features include:

- Access to the full Widgit Literacy symbol set is included in colour and black & white;
- Print in any size, as books ready to fold or as single sheets;
- Use the 1500 coloured pictures to build up your own illustrations;

- Fully flexible layout, with guides rulers and templates;
- Insert your own digital images and scanned pictures;

You can type in a word and Communicate in Print 2 will provide a range of symbols to represent the word. You can select the most appropriate symbol (for your audience). You can also insert your own pictures and photographs. It allows you to produce any documents in text and symbols.

This software package has been used by advocates and IROs to:

- To create letters for young people about forthcoming visits and activities;
- To create written information for children and young people including leaflets and information sheets;
- To create 'child friendly' forms.

The software has also been used to create a disabled children and young people's information website (www.askability.org.uk).

It is important to check that the child or young person is familiar with the Widgit Literacy programme . You can also download other symbol systems such as Makaton symbols and use these on Communicate in Print 2.

For more information about purchasing Communicate in Print contact:
Widgit Software Ltd: Tel: 01926 333680 email: info@widgit.com
Website: www.widgit.com

How to use easy words and pictures produced by the Disability Rights Commission is an Easy Read guide that describes what Easy Read is and why it is needed and used. There is useful advice about how using the right words and pictures make information easier to understand.

Available to download
from: http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/how_to_use_easy_words_and_pictures.pdf

See it right provides guidelines on producing accessible information and preparing written documents for people with vision problems including advice on typeface and colours to use.

For more information visit the RNIB online shop.

People First Easy Read Services will make reports, forms and publications accessible to disabled people with learning difficulties.

For more information contact: http://peoplefirstltd.com/what-we-do/

Am I making myself clear provides advice on creating written documents for children and young people with learning disabilities.

Available to download from: http://www.easy-read-online.co.uk/media/10609/making-myself-clear.pdf

7.4 Training Resources and Courses

Whilst this guidance cannot recommend individual trainers or consultants, the following are examples of a number of relevant national training resources and courses.

Communicating with disabled children and young people: A two-day course with half day follow up, accredited through the National Open College Network run by The Children's Society. Aims to promote meaningful communication and equip workers with base line skills to communicate with disabled children. Explores the communication process, how to make communication meaningful in decision making processes, offers familiarity with a range of communication materials and planning effective action plans to ascertain the views of a disabled child or young person.

Contact: The Children's Society Training and Consultancy Unit 1st Floor, Town Centre House Merrion Centre, Leeds LS2 8LY
Tel: 07886 375654 or email: Training&Consultancy@childrenssociety.org.uk

Two Way Street: Communicating with Disabled Children and Young People is a training video and handbook about communicating with disabled children and young people. The video is aimed at all professionals whose role includes communicating with children and was developed in consultation with disabled children and young people. The handbook (also available separately) gives further information and guidance plus details of the main communication systems in current use in the UK and annotated references to good practice publications.

Available to purchase from: www.triangle.org.uk

Three Way Street: Putting children at the centre of three-way communication is a training resource and DVD . It demonstrates practical, evidence-based strategies to establish direct communication with a child in the presence of another adult.

Available to purchase from: www.triangle.org.uk

Introduction to Communication and Consultation: Two-day open access course run by Triangle. Aims to increase competence and confidence in consulting with disabled children about their views, wishes and feelings. Introduces participants to different approaches to communication.

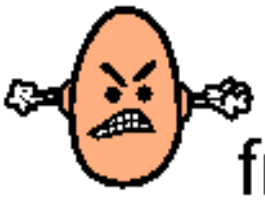
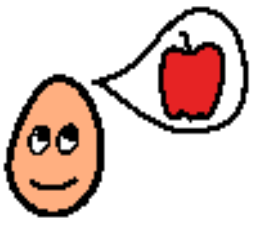
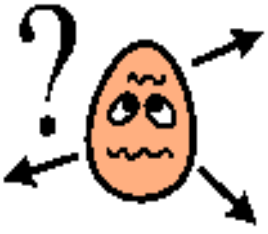
Contact: Triangle www.triangle.org.uk / Tel: 01273 305888
email: info@triangle.org.uk

Advanced Communication and Consultation: Two-day open access course run by Triangle. Aims to further develop skills in consulting with disabled children and apply these skills and approaches in different contexts.

Contact: Triangle www.triangle.org.uk / Tel: 01273 305888
email: info@triangle.org.uk

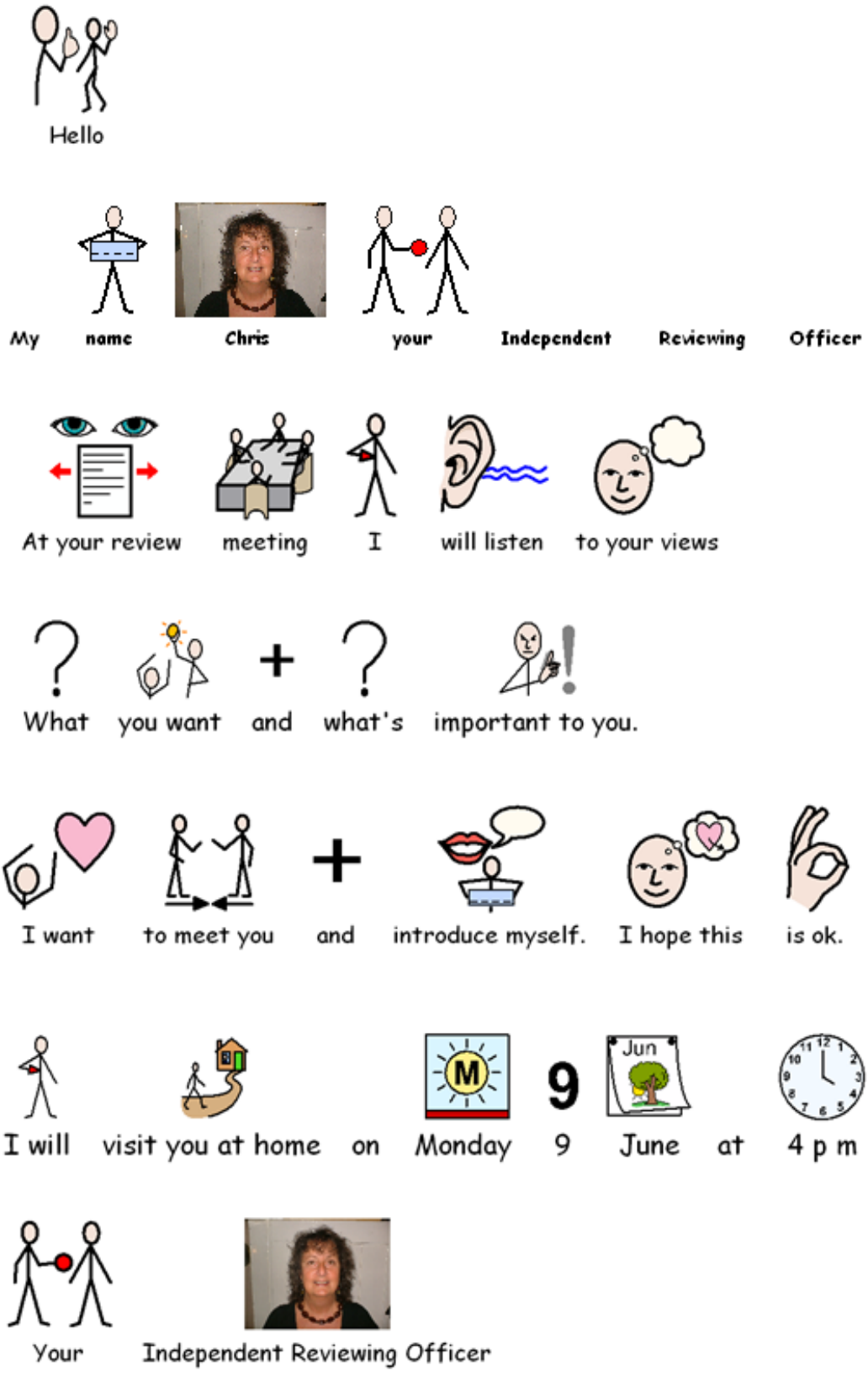
Appendix 1: Mayer Johnson feelings symbols

This is a small selection of the feelings symbols supplied by Mayer Johnson PCS symbols © Mayer Johnson LLC. For details of full set contact widget software www.widgit.com.

 angry	 frustrated
 annoyed	 happy
 sad	 cold
 wet	 tired
 hungry	 lost

Appendix 2: Example of introductory letter using Communicate In Print

A letter created using Widget's *Communicate: In Print 2* software. Symbols © Mayer Johnson LLC.



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