

Workshop B: Tactile Communication

Facilitators: Steve Rose; Gail Deuce

Summary of workshop:

The workshop was attended by X delegates with a range of roles, from 1:1 support, QTMSI, Advisory QTMSI, speech and language therapists and others. Within the workshop we discussed terminology, considerations and challenges to communication in the tactile mode. We broke into 5 smaller discussion groups and identified what is currently working and where we are getting stuck in our practice. We identified how tactile communication is promoted in our settings, what resources we draw on and generated ideas that would help us in our work.

The following notes are collated from flipchart and discussion groups:**What is working?**

- Working on foundation skills – intensive interaction / resonance board
- HUH exploration, body cues (limited)
- Keeping the hands free – opportunity to opt out
- Communication passport – supporting consistency of touch cues
- Being with – let him lead, tune into communication
- Recognising what are his own signs
- Identifiers / objects – transition objects that go between home and school
- Putting objects onto board so they become a symbol not a toy

What isn't working?

- Supporting consistency – at school, between home and school
- Over use of successful strategies – results in fatigue in successful strategy
- Confidence
- Consistency between 1:1 who work with him (transfer of knowledge)
- Difficult to impose TASSELS as a whole school system as it is input orientated.

How is the use of tactile signing currently being promoted and developed in your setting?

- Within your school – 'more' 'finish' use their own hands or with you. Objects of reference / or card with tactile elements
- Trust wide signalong course
- On-body signs used to ease anxiety in PMLD group
- Person centred
- Individual systems – establish consistency, knowing what to do and how to do it – training is needed

What resources can we draw on?

- In house training
- Passing on information to each other (e.g. signing 's' – give me your s finger to say hello)
- Switches e.g. a song for each activity, encouraged to press the switch or textures on switches.
- BSL signs – MSI – adapted MSI within the school

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- Canaan Barrie
- Networking with other professionals
- Use braille to promote the tactile modality (hand under hand exploration)

What do we need to develop to support you in your role, in your setting, with the children you work with?

- More training especially in signing
- Clarifying terminology
- Trust and relationships are important
- Consistency
- Communication by the staff to ensure promoting pupils signing/progression, observations made, especially when signs emerging.
- Acceptance of idiosyncratic signs
- Focus on total communication – multiple methods of communication
- Tactile signing needs to be made more aware of
- Framework of practice for mainstream
- Would benefit from some video footage
- More access to appropriate training
- Common language around terminology
- Knowledge on how to move children from the receptive to the expressive (training again!)
- More research needed.

Workshop leader's conclusion.

There are inconsistencies and confusion about language used to describe tactile communication systems, encompassing bodily-tactile communication, tactile sign language, and tactile symbols.

There is a role for an inclusive communication approach that includes the use of bodily-tactile communication, tactile symbols and tactile signs – although there needs to be awareness of the differences of what is what.

There is a need for training, developing supportive resources and documentation of individual systems. There is also a need for more research into the effectiveness and impact of tactile communication.

Prepared by: Steve Rose

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