

ASSESSING COMMUNICATION TOGETHER (ACT)

BY HELEN BRADLEY

The assessment is divided into sections:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Background Information | Vision
Hearing
Physical Handicaps
Relationships
Touch |
| Methods of Communication | Gestures/Signs
Photos/Pictures
Vocalisations/Speech |
| Summary | |
| 2. Social Communication | Name
Possessions
Important People
Hello/Goodbye
Attention Sought/Withdrawn |
| Summary | |
| 3. Activities and Routines | Eating/Drinking/Toileting
Likes and Dislikes [food/drinks/activities]
Choices
Asking for MORE
Asking for LESS
Main Events in the Week
Core Signs |
| 4. Implementing the Programme | Make priority decisions
List Problems and possible solutions |

NOTE

As soon as you get to the end of the first section you are asked to summarise the effect of the information gathered so far on any communication programme to be developed.

The second section looks at basic interactions (saying hello and goodbye in a consistent way) with other people which are often neglected.

The third section focuses at needs/reasons to communicate.

All of the tables give one column for writing in *how the carers will communicate with the child* and one column on *how the child will communicate with the carers*.

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The advantages of using this assessment over other assessments for children at an early stage of communication development are:

1. It looks at needs and opportunities as well as means.
2. It focuses on very early communication skills including expressing 'like' and 'dislike', asking for 'more' and 'less' and greetings.
3. It focuses everyone concerned on the priorities.
4. It is open about possible problems and encourages you to think of solutions.
5. It provides opportunities for adults to think about how they communicate with the child so the emphasis is not just on what the child will do but also what we will do to help the child understand our attempts to communicate with them.

SECTION A

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This section is designed to highlight information from a number of areas that will have relevance to the nature of the communication programme required.

The two case studies provide illustrations of relevant information. It is useful to refer to completed example sheets after reading the guidance notes on each section.

VISION

Information should be sought on any useful vision, history of visual loss, prognosis of condition, optimal conditions for using vision, and any visual aids required. Only brief information needs to be recorded with the implications of the information for communication clearly stated.

HEARING

Information should be sought on hearing loss, history of loss, prognosis, optimal conditions for hearing, any aids required and their use and maintenance. Implications of this information for communication should be clearly stated.

PHYSICAL HANDICAPS

Information on the physical development of the multi-sensory impaired person should be sought, especially optimal positioning for movement, and the sort of movements it is possible for the person to make. Again implications for communication should be stated.

RELATIONSHIPS

Learning to communicate is a social skill and especially in the early stages optimal communication may be restricted to one or two special people. It is important to identify who the multi-sensory impaired person is motivated to communicate with so that these people can be closely involved in the programme. If the person has no close relationships this may need to be tackled as a priority.

TOUCH

Touch is the basis of relationships and communication. If the multi-sensory impaired person finds it difficult to accept touch, a communication programme based round this area will be needed. If they enjoy touch this may be an area that can be extended for leisure purposes.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION:

SIGNS/SIGNALS/GESTURES/OBJECTS AND PICTURES

These sections are designed to explore the methods which the person uses, or could potentially use to communicate.

At the end of Section 1, the Co-ordinator should summarize the main implications for intervention and check that everyone is in agreement.

SECTION B

SOCIAL NEEDS

This section explores the social needs of the multi-sensory impaired person. Sections include: personal identity, personal possessions, and social greetings. In each section it is likely that different people may use different methods. These should be noted, and then ideas to increase consistency should be discussed.

The section finishes with the opportunity to summarize possible interventions.

SECTION C

ACTIVITIES AND ROUTINES

The most useful communication assessments and interventions are firmly centred around the multi-sensory impaired person's lifestyle and interests. This section is designed to allow carers to take an objective look at their client's lifestyle and the things which are most important for them to understand and express. In particular, the choices that a person needs to make, and their ability to control important events are examined. Routines and methods of helping the multi-sensory impaired person to anticipate and participate are examined.

SECTION D

CORE SIGNALS AND SIGNS

There are certain areas of communication that are essential for day-to-day living. ACT suggests some areas where it is essential to have an agreed form of communication (eg wait, finished, look, listen, etc), others may be added.

SECTION E

IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME

Making Priorities

By this point in the assessment many good ideas and possibilities for intervention will have been highlighted. However, the extent to which interventions can be introduced will be governed by existing circumstances. As consistency is vital to the success of the intervention it will probably be necessary to decide upon priorities. It is preferable to start in a small way with interventions that everyone feels happy and confident about managing.

The Practicalities of Intervention

It is important to leave time to look at practicalities, and foresee any problems as far as possible. For example, the best ways of distributing information, organising staff training, and monitoring the programme need to be agreed.

NAME: DATE OF MEETING:
D.O.B: PRESENT AT MEETING:
ADDRESS:
.....
PROGRAMME TO BE REVIEWED ON:

ACT - ASSESSING COMMUNICATION TOGETHER.

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. VISION

Any additional information needed:

Effects on communication programme:

2. HEARING

Any additional information needed:

Effects on communication programme:

3. PHYSICAL HANDICAPS

Any additional information needed:

Effects on communication programme:

4. RELATIONSHIPS

List the most important people in ** life.

5. TOUCH

Does accept and enjoy touch?

6. METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

(a) Does respond to any signals, gestures or signs?
If Yes, give examples.

b) Does use any signals, gestures or signs to
communicate? If Yes, give examples.

(c) Does understand the use of everyday objects?
If Yes, name some examples.

(d) Does ever use objects to communicate?
If Yes, give examples.

** Please insert the name of the person being assessed.

(e) Does _____ respond to any pictures or photo's?
If Yes, give examples.

(f) Does _____ use pictures to communicate?
If Yes, give examples.

(g) Does _____ respond to any speech?
If so, give examples.

(h) Does _____ use any vocalisations or speech to
communicate? If so, give examples.

7. SUMMARISE THE EFFECT OF THIS INFORMATION ON ANY
COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME TO BE DEVELOPED

B. SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

1. Does _____ respond to his/her name? (spoken, signed or as a
"name object")

If Yes - note how this is done?

If No - could a naming programme be started? If necessary agree the method to be used.

2. Does _____ identify his/her personal possessions?

If Yes, note which and how.

If No, could this area be programmed? If necessary agree the method to be used.

3. See 1.4 important people.

For each person

- (a) Does _____ recognise them?
- (b) Does _____ respond to his/her name? (spoken, signed or as a "name object").
- (c) Does _____ ask for them?

If Yes, note the person and the methods used?

If No, could this area be programmed? If necessary, agree the method to be used.

4. How do people say hello to _____?

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

5. How does _____ say hello to people?

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

6. How do people say goodbye to _____?

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

7. How does _____ say goodbye?

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

8. How does _____ ask for attention or affection?

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

9. How does _____ ask people to leave him/her alone?

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

10. SUMMARY OF ACTION

C. ACTIVITIES AND ROUTINES

1. Personal Needs

(a) Eating

How does _____ ask for food/show hunger?

How do carers offer food?

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

(b) Drinking

How does _____ ask for a drink/show thirst?

How do carers offer a drink?

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

(c) Toilet

How does _____ ask for the toilet?

How do carers offer the toilet?

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

2. Likes and Dislikes

(a) What are _____ favourite foods?

(b) What are _____ least favourite foods?

(c) What are favourite drinks?

(d) What are least favourite drinks?

(e) What are favourite activities?

(f) What are least favourite activities?

Choose one or more of the above

a How do carers offer the item or activity?

b How does show s/he wants the item or activity?

If necessary, agree the methods to be used.

Item or activity	Method for carers to offer or signify this	Method for to request this

3. Choices

(a) What choices does _____ make at the moment?
(e.g. food, drink, clothes, activities, people to spend time with?)

(b) If necessary, agree choices to be introduced and the method to be used.

4. Asking for more.

(a) How does _____ ask for 'more'?

- (b) How do carers offer/signify 'more'?

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

5. Asking for less

- (a) How does _____ ask for an activity to finish?

- (b) How do carers signify the finish of an activity?

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

6. MAIN EVENTS

List the main events in _____ week (exclude any already covered). For each, agree a method of letting _____ know the event is about to happen and a method to help him/her to ask for the event.

Event	Method for carers to offer or signify the event	Method for to ask for the event

D. CORE SIGNS

For each of the following, plus any others that are appropriate, agree methods of communication.

	Method for carers to signify this	Method for to express this.
Yes/O.K.		
No		
Good/Well done		
Wait		
Look		
Listen		
Stand Up		
Sit Down		
Walk		
List any others		

IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME

1. Make priority decisions

Which parts of the communication programme could be implemented right away?

Who will write up and monitor the programme?

2. List any problems which may undermine the programme. Also list any ideas to problem solve.

Problems	Positive suggestions

NAME:Trisha Smith..... DATE OF MEETING:
D.O.B:09.09.60..... PRESENT AT MEETING:
ADDRESS: .4 Acacia Avenue.....
.....Cardiff.....
PROGRAMME TO BE REVIEWED ON:

ACT - ASSESSING COMMUNICATION TOGETHER.

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. VISION

Trisha was born with no useful vision, possibly she sees very bright lights.

Any additional information needed:

None.

Effects on communication programme:

Trisha is dependent on everyone giving her tactile information.

2. HEARING

Trisha was born with a profound hearing loss. She has had a series of audiological assessments. No aids have ever been prescribed.

Any additional information needed:

None.

Effects on communication programme:

Trisha still needs to be talked to by staff but she will need some form of augmentative communication.

3. PHYSICAL HANDICAPS

None.

Any additional information needed:

None.

Effects on communication programme:

Trisha's hands are very agile. Physically Trisha could make signs and fingerspell. Signs would need adapting to make them tactile. Any fingerspelling would need to be using the 'deaf-blind' method. We could use signs from the Link Dictionary.

4. RELATIONSHIPS

List the most important people in Trisha's life.

Trisha's mother, Julie, visits Trisha two or three times a year.

Helen - Trisha's key worker.

5. TOUCH

Does Trisha accept and enjoy touch?

Yes - very much.

6. METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

**(a) Does Trisha respond to any signals, gestures or signs?
If Yes, give examples.**

Trisha understands some body signals from her time in hospital. She understands that holding her stomach means food or drink, a tap on the nose means no.

b) Does Trisha use any signals, gestures or signs to communicate? If Yes, give examples.

Trisha touches her stomach if hungry or thirsty.

**(c) Does Trisha understand the use of everyday objects?
If Yes, name some examples.**

Yes - eating utensils, clothes.

**(d) Does Trisha ever use objects to communicate?
If Yes, give examples.**

Yes - Trisha bangs her cup and plate if she wants more.

- (e) Does Trisha respond to any pictures or photo's?
If Yes, give examples.

No.

- (f) Does Trisha use pictures to communicate?
If Yes, give examples.

No.

- (g) Does Trisha respond to any speech?
If so, give examples.

No.

- (h) Does Trisha use any vocalisations or speech to communicate? If so, give examples.

*Trisha laughs if she is happy.
She cries if she is in pain.*

7. SUMMARISE THE EFFECT OF THIS INFORMATION ON ANY COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME TO BE DEVELOPED

Trisha needs hand-over-hand signing and gesture, coupled with speech. She would be helped by objects being used systematically with signs.

B. SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

1. Does Trisha respond to his/her name? (spoken, signed or as a "name object")

If Yes - note how this is done?

No - we do not use any method for naming Trisha - apart from verbally and she cannot hear this.

If No - could a naming programme be started? If necessary agree the method to be used.

Trisha likes to feel objects. She could have a special object or texture to mean "Trisha". Later we could introduce a fingerspelt T.

2. Does Trisha identify his/her personal possessions?

If Yes, note which and how.

No, Trisha shows no recognition of her own possessions.

If No, could this area be programmed? If necessary agree the method to be used.

Attach name object to key possessions.

3. See 1.4 important people.

For each person

(a) Does Trisha recognise them?

(b) Does Trisha respond to his/her name? (spoken, signed or as a "name object").

(c) Does Trisha ask for them?

If Yes, note the person and the methods used?

Mother - Trisha enjoys her mother's cuddles, but has no way of knowing her name or asking for her.

Helen - Trisha smiles when Helen touches her - Trisha seems to recognise her - she tries to feel in Helen's pockets. Trisha has no way of asking for Helen.

If No, could this area be programmed? If necessary, agree the method to be used.

Helen could carry a name object - preferably something she could keep in her pocket.

4. How do people say hello to Trisha?

No special method.

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

Everyone should use a "hello" sign hand-over-hand.

5. How does Trisha say hello to people?

She touches people.

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

*Help Trisha make the "hello" sign hand-over-hand.
Later we can fade prompts.*

6. How do people say goodbye to Trisha?

People just say goodbye at the moment.

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

Everyone could shake Trisha's wrist to say goodbye.

7. How does Trisha say goodbye?

Trisha does not do anything.

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

We could prompt Trisha to shake her wrist to say goodbye.

8. How does Trisha ask for attention or affection?

Trisha wanders round until she finds someone and tries to sit on them.

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

Sign "hello" and encourage Trisha to sit next to you instead.

9. How does Trisha ask people to leave him/her alone?

Trisha pinches hard.

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

Get Trisha's hand and make an adapted "finish" sign when she is about to pinch, then leave her if it is possible to do so.

10. SUMMARY OF ACTION

Possible Actions

Name object for Trisha

Name object for Helen

Hand-over-hand Signs

For - Hello

Goodbye

Leave me alone

C. ACTIVITIES AND ROUTINES

1. Personal Needs

(a) Eating

How does Trisha ask for food/show hunger?

She touches her stomach.

How do carers offer food?

We get her to touch the food.

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

If Trisha touches her stomach check if she wants food. Sign "eat" hand-over-hand and offer food. If she rejects this she may be thirsty. Always prompt "eat" sign before giving food.

(b) **Drinking**

How does Trisha ask for a drink/show thirst?

She touches her stomach.

How do carers offer a drink?

We get her to touch the cup.

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

If Trisha touches her stomach check if she wants a drink. Sign "drink" hand-over-hand and offer a drink. If she rejects this she may be hungry.

(c) **Toilet**

How does Trisha ask for the toilet?

Trisha does not ask, she goes if taken or is wet.

How do carers offer the toilet?

We just take her.

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

Sign toilet hand-over-hand before taking Trisha to the toilet.

2. **Likes and Dislikes**

(a) **What are Trisha's favourite foods?**

All milk chocolates.

(b) **What are Trisha's least favourite foods?**

Sweetcorn, peas.

(c) What are Trisha's favourite drinks?

All hot sweet drinks, eg tea, coffee, chocolate. Also dry white wine.

(d) What are Trisha's least favourite drinks?

Cold drinks - except wine.

(e) What are Trisha's favourite activities?

Swimming, massage, foot spa.

(f) What are Trisha's least favourite activities?

Nothing - unless she is in a bad mood then she won't do anything!

Choose one or more of the above

a How do carers offer the item or activity?

Chocolates - *we just hand them to her.*

Swimming - *we give her her costume to hold.*

b How does Trisha show s/he wants the item or activity?

Chocolates - *she eats them and smiles.*

Swimming - *Trisha does not ask to go swimming.*

If necessary, agree the methods to be used.

Item or activity	Method for carers to offer or signify this	Method for Trisha to request this
Chocolates	Let Trisha touch the sweet. Sign "sweet" hand-over-hand before giving sweet.	Let Trisha touch the sweet. Just before she takes it, make the sign.
Swimming	Let Trisha hold her costume. Mime splashing.	Help Trisha to mime splashing.
Foot Spa	Signal this by taking Trisha's hands and rubbing her ankles.	Again help her touch the spa then, make the signal.
Massage	Let Trisha smell the oils then take her hands and mime rubbing.	Give Trisha the oil to smell. See if she smiles if so, make the mime.

3. Choices

- (a) What choices does Trisha make at the moment?
(e.g. food, drink, clothes, activities, people to spend time with?)

None - we try to give her things she likes.

- (b) If necessary, agree choices to be introduced and the method to be used.

A hot drink and a cold drink to taste, Help Trisha to tap the hot drink before she takes it to her mouth.

4. Asking for more.

- (a) How does Trisha ask for 'more'?

She reaches out, or gets upset.

(b) How do carers offer/signify 'more'?

We give her more, or prompt her to carry on with an activity.

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

Make the "more" sign hand-over-hand with Trisha. make a point of pausing during some activities (eg Trampolining), sign "more" then continue.

5. Asking for less

(a) How does Trisha ask for an activity to finish?

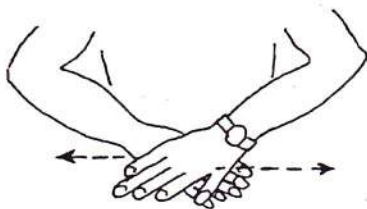
She gets upset and pinches, or pushes equipment.

(b) How do carers signify the finish of an activity?

We help Trisha feel the equipment has gone.

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

We need to use a hand-over-hand "finished" sign. The B.S.L. one is too difficult - use this adaption.



*Hands together - backs uppermost
- sweep hands outwards.*

6. MAIN EVENTS

List the main events in *Trisha's* week (exclude any already covered). For each, agree a method of letting *Trisha* know the event is about to happen and a method to help him/her to ask for the event.

Event	Method for carers to offer or signify the event	Method for <i>Trisha</i> to ask for the event
<i>Riding</i>	<i>Give Trisha her hat to hold.</i>	<i>Help Trisha to hold the hat.</i>
<i>Time to wash</i>	<i>Let Trisha smell the soap. Make sign.</i>	<i>Help Trisha make the sign and carry the soap.</i>
<i>Bedtime</i>	<i>Sign "sleep" hand-over-hand when Trisha puts her night- dress on and again when you kiss her goodnight in bed.</i>	<i>Help Trisha make the sign.</i>
<i>Trampolining</i>	<i>Adapted sign for jump.</i>	<i>Help Trisha make the sign.</i>

D. CORE SIGNS

For each of the following, plus any others that are appropriate, agree methods of communication.

All these seem relevant for Trisha - we could use them all.

	Method for carers to signify this	Method for Trisha to express this.
<i>Yes/O.K.</i>	<i>Use sign hand-over-hand.</i>	<i>For all the following help Trisha to make the sign in appropriate situations.</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>Use link sign hand-over-hand in combination with nose tap.</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Good/Well done</i>	<i>Use link sign.</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Wait</i>	<i>Use adapted sign. Press palms of hands together.</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Look</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Listen</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Stand Up</i>	<i>Use sign.</i>	
<i>Sit Down</i>	<i>Use sign.</i>	
<i>Walk</i>	<i>Walk your fingers on Trisha's hand (the usual sign is too difficult).</i>	<i>If Trisha stands by the door, she may want a walk. If you can, make the sign and have a short walk</i>

IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME

1. Make priority decisions

Which parts of the communication programme could be implemented right away?

Let's start with the signs for hello, goodbye, more, finished, food, drink, no, and walk, plus name objects for Helen and Trisha.

Who will write up and monitor the programme?

Helen.

2. List any problems which may undermine the programme. Also list any ideas to problem solve.

Problems	Positive suggestions
<i>Everyone needs to sign so some staff training and support needs to be organised.</i>	<i>Helen will make up a list of the signs with pictures and illustrations.</i> <i>We could use the next 2 Staff Meetings to practice them.</i> <i>We could spend some time practising the signs under blind-fold.</i>

REFERENCES

- **Assessing Communication Together, by Helen Bradley**
Available from Sally Evans at A.P.L.D. on 01423 331404
Approx £35
NOTE: once you own the manual you can photocopy the assessment pro-forma as often as you need to use it.
- **Communication Before Speech (Second Edition), by Judith Coupe-O'kane and Juliet Goldbart**
David Fulton Publishers, ISBN 1-85346-486-4
Approx £18