

Title	Communication Policy
Issue Date	June 2014
Review Date	June 2016
Equality Analysis Date	June 2014
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Owner	Royal College Manchester (SALT)
Distribution	Trust Wide

Definition(s)

Communication – the exchange of information by speech, signs, actions or other medium from one person to another.

Student -This is any recipient of the service provided by Seashell Trust.

Multi-disciplinary Team: a group of people who perform tasks collaboratively by sharing roles. Mutually agreed upon priority goals are developed and information, knowledge, and skills are transferred across disciplinary boundaries. The primary purpose of this approach is to pool and integrate the expertise of team members so that more efficient and comprehensive assessment and intervention services may be provided.

Purpose

The purpose of the Communication Policy is to inform staff of agreed principles regarding communication. This will allow all staff to work in the same direction to ensure that all students access the best possible communication environment and make the best possible communication progress.

Policy

The Seashell Trust aims to provide its students with effective communication systems that enhance their well-being and will serve them into the future. All students at the Trust require some form of Augmentative or Alternative Communication. Since each student is unique in their strengths and abilities they require a well-matched individualized approach. Achieving this within a large organisation requires a shared set of values and beliefs, strong multi-disciplinary working and a commitment to evidence-based-practice.

Policy Statement

The Seashell Trust is committed to provide its students with optimum opportunities to develop communication skills. It is our policy to satisfy the following:

- Each student to experience pleasurable two-way interaction
- Each student to receive information in a way they can understand and retain as far as their capacity will allow
- Each student to be given strategies and opportunities to help them initiate communication.
- Each student to be given strategies and opportunities to help them communicate about things within and beyond their immediate environment
- Each student to be given strategies and opportunities to help them communicate across a range of environments
- Each student to be given strategies and opportunities to help them use communication for a range of functions including to refuse, request, make choices and express emotion
- Each student to be given strategies and opportunities to help them enjoy an increasingly broad vocabulary in whatever form that takes – signs, symbols, pictures etc.
- Each student to be given strategies and opportunities to help them increase their social understanding
- Each student to be given strategies and opportunities to help them develop skills of self-advocacy
- Each student to be given strategies and opportunities to help them acquire communication skills that are transferable to future educational/care/community settings

In order to achieve the above aims, the following principles have been agreed:

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- Focus on the skills of staff as much as on the skills of the students, as communication is recognised as a two-way process
- Recognition that communication is best mastered within natural contexts. Therefore when a communication opportunity arises permission is granted to abandon our prior agenda, reflecting the high priority which is placed on communication
- Recognition that students learn best when things are motivating, meaningful, and frequent
- Recognition that different means of communication often enhance and complement each other. Students are free to use a combination of means
- Recognition that by encouraging initiative and problem solving in students increases the likelihood of them initiating and sustaining communication
- Recognition that families are an essential part of the multi-disciplinary team
- Achieving maximum levels of communication between student and others is an entitlement. The Human Rights Act 1988, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Every Child Matters, ECM Change for Children, ECM The Next Steps, The Children Act 2003, The Mental Capacity Act 2005, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice and Valuing People / Valuing People Now, Children and Families Bill 2014 together enshrine the responsibility we all have to provide accessible information, to allow and enable people to make choices about matters that affect them, to provide the necessary support to enable people to communicate those choices, and to promote social inclusion.
- The development of communication skills in the students at the Trust is essential in fulfilling the organisations Statement of Purpose. Communication takes various forms and can be developed through a wide range of everyday activities. Consequently, this policy has links with every other policy that refers to the students at the Trust.

Risk Assessment

Failure to adhere to the policy may result in actions that are contrary to obligations arising from the Trust's mission statement, the Trust's policy on equality and diversity, the Trust's policy on Autism Spectrum Conditions, the national and international legislation described above and the Trust's obligations to funding authorities.

Responsibilities

The Speech and Language Therapists have a responsibility to work within the multi-disciplinary team to ensure that appropriate strategies are in place for individuals and across the organisation, such that the Intended Outcomes of this Policy are met for every student.

The Role of the Speech and Language Therapists within the Seashell Trust

- To work in partnership with all members of the team
- To contribute to assessment of students pre-admission
- To contribute to multi-disciplinary baseline assessment and long-term target setting on students arriving at School / College

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- To contribute to students' multidisciplinary medium-term targets each term and to review these in consultation with members of the team
- To give advice on IEPs, ILPs, strategies and activities
- To maintain professional CPD requirements
- To be a resource of information, ideas and materials for students, staff and families
- To contribute to integrated care plans and continuing health care assessments
- To work with students and staff in School, College and residence
- To work directly with students to explore suitable targets and strategies to work directly with students in order to demonstrate activities and strategies to other team members
- To work directly with students if they require work of a specialist nature that is not suitable for handing over to other members of the team
- To ensure all new staff reach an agreed level of competency in working with people with communication disabilities
- To be involved in the transition process as students leave School or College, facilitating the transition of skills and strategies
- To observe and comment on current practice
- To review the Communication Policy
- To help ensure good practice is maintained and developed
- To bring new research to the attention of the School / College
- To provide training as requested

It is the responsibility of all staff to:

- adhere to the communication policy and practice documents
- follow recommendations agreed and documented by the multi-disciplinary team
- complete the Communication Induction Training in order to complete their probationary period of employment

It is the responsibility of the Speech and Language Therapists to:

- adhere to the specified 'role of the Speech and Language Therapists' as documented above
- review the Communication policy on an annual basis

Related Document(s)

Equality and Diversity Policy – Single Equality Scheme
Autism Policy
Social Skills and Social Understanding Policy
MCA Policy