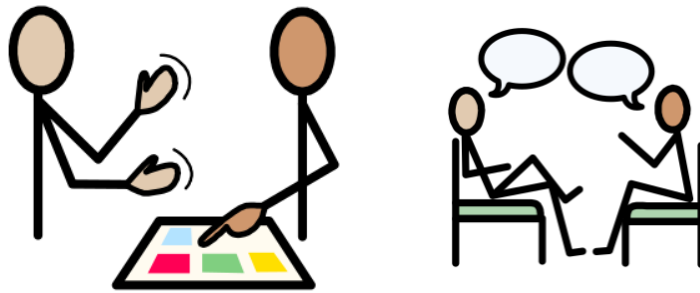


# Communication Advice Sheets



## **Communication Advice Bag Contents:**

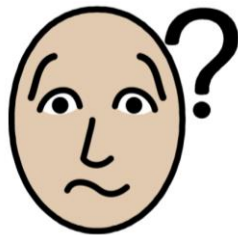
### **Information Sheets for Parents and Carers:**

- 1) Information Overload
- 2) Reframing Language
- 3) Visual Resources
- 4) Picture Exchange Communication System
- 5) Pictures, Photos or Symbols?
- 6) Objects of Reference
- 7) Makaton Sign Language

## 8) Makaton Starter signs

### Examples of Visual Resources:

- 1) Symbol Keyring
- 2) Emotions board
- 3) Choice board
- 4) Now and Next Board with symbol examples
- 5) Weekly visual schedule
- 6) Reward Chart
- 7) Portable daily timetable
- 8) Social Story



### Information Overload:

Children and young people can be very good at using the world around them and other people to understand what is happening and what they are expected to do. This often hides how much verbal, written or visual information a person can process at any one time.

Information Carrying Words are the parts of a sentence which we need to understand to be able follow an instruction.

### For example:

If you place an apple on the table and hold out your hand saying “give me the apple” then the person does not actually have to understand ANY of the words you used. This is because there is only an apple on the table, and you are holding out your hand to show them what to do.

If you placed an apple and a banana on the table and asked them to “eat” one of them instead, then the person would need to understand 2 Information Carrying Words (apple OR banana AND give OR eat).

### **Break Down Tasks:**

Some people will need to have instructions broken down into small steps with only key information being used and then the next step given once they have completed the first one. This is where visual prompts might be useful, especially if the individual finds it hard to remember what has been said for very long.



### **Reframing Language:**

The way that we say things can greatly affect how the other person responds or behaves. Try to think about HOW and WHAT you say before you say it. We all know that when we are busy or stressed, we do not always feel we have the time to do this, but it can improve the end result and achieve a more positive outcome.

### **For example:**

If you say something like “if you don’t eat your dinner, you won’t get time on the iPad” then all the other person may hear is the last thing you said which is a negative result and not what they want to happen – this may then cause a negative behaviour.

If you were to say “when you eat your dinner you can have iPad time” this implies that they ARE going to do what you have asked them to and the final part of the sentence is much more positive, therefore in turn the behaviour should be more positive.

### **Offering Choices:**

If you need someone to do something which is not of their choosing think about offering two choices but BOTH of them would be acceptable for you. For example, “do you want to wear the blue socks or the red ones?”. It does not matter which one the person chooses, as both are ok, but the person being asked feels that they are in control and have made the decision for themselves.



### **Visual Resources:**

We all use lots of verbal information every day and we can forget that not everyone processes this in the same way or as quickly as we might.

Using visual prompts to help someone understand, express themselves and make choices can be very helpful. We can use visual resources for lots of different reasons, such as:

- To say how we are feeling – emotions boards, fans or keyrings
- To make choices and requests – PECS, choice boards, symbol books
- To describe things – symbol books, topic boards
- To know our daily routine – now & next boards, visual timetables, keyrings
- To label things - choice boards, symbol books
- To help us learn to read – PECS, symbol books, communication aids
- To help us to complete a task – shopping lists, task boards, schedules
- To understand a new situation – social stories
- To track progress – reward charts
- To help manage your volume – volume tracker

There are some examples of visual resources in this bag but please ask For Us Too staff to help you to design and make your own resources specific to your needs.

Remember you will need to teach the person using them what each picture or symbol means before they will be able to use them effectively, never assume that because you know what it means that someone else will interpret it in the same way – often we are reading the word underneath rather than the image / symbol



### **Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS):**

PECS is a technique developed in the US for using images as a means of communication for individuals with Autism. It involves exchanging symbols or pictures for a desired item and follows a specific process for teaching the skills needed to do this. There are 6 stages of development and these are:

Phase I	Purpose: To initiate communication	The individual with autism sees a desired item. He is physically guided by a prompter to pick up a picture of that item from the table and place it into the communication partner's hand in exchange for the desired item. Physical guidance by the prompter is faded as soon as possible
Phase II	Purpose: To teach distance and persistence	A communication book is provided with one picture on the front of the book at a time. The individual with autism is taught to locate his/her communication book and travel to the communication partner to exchange a picture for the desired object
Phase III	Purpose: To discriminate between pictures or symbols	The individual is presented with a picture of a highly preferred item and a picture of a non-preferred item on his/her communication book. The individual exchanges a picture and receives the corresponding item. If the individual selects the preferred item then he/she is given the item with animated social reinforcement. If he/she exchanges the undesirable item then an error correction sequence is introduced. Once the individual begins to discriminate between the items, correspondence checks are completed to ensure that the individual's actions correspond to his or her requests. Discrimination training continues by added multiple desired items and increasing the number of pictures on the front of the book.
Phase IV	Purpose: To begin using sentence structure	Phase IV. The individual is introduced to a new icon "I want" to begin teaching the individual to use a sentence starter. A sentence strip is added to the front of the communication book and the individual learns to build and exchange the phrase by attaching the "I want" picture to the strip, attaching the picture of the desired item to the strip, removing the strip, and exchanging the strip. The communication partner then turns the strip toward the individual with autism and reads the phrase and provides the individual with the desired item
Phase V	Purpose: To answer a direct question	The individual is taught to answer the question "What do you want?"
Phase VI	Purpose: To begin to develop commenting	The individual learns to communicate more than just his or her wants and needs. He or she learns to comment about the environment. Icons such as "I see" and "I hear" are introduced one at a time on the communication board in a systematic fashion



### Pictures, Photos or Symbols?

When you first start to use visual supports, it can be difficult to know where to begin. Do you choose to use pictures from books or photographs of the actual objects or symbols which represent an object or place? The answer to this will depend on each individual and what they respond to the most - if you are not sure try some of each to see what reactions you get.

The size of the images can also be important – if you are working with someone who has visual difficulties you may need to use larger images and matt laminating pouches to avoid glare from lighting. You may also need tactile images (eg with raised lines or textures applied) to help a person understand what each one means.

Remember if you are using photographs, particularly of objects or people, then it is best to use a plain background so that the image is clearer and easier to understand. Colour photos are better than black and white ones unless this is what the person prefers.

If using symbols, then these will need to be taught and this can be done by using them at relevant times during the day (eg using food symbols during meal times or personal care symbols when getting ready to go to bed). Games and activities using symbols can also be a fun way of learning.



Whichever style of image you choose make sure that you include a variety of vocabulary to help the person start to make short phrases - it is very hard to hold a conversation if all you have access to are object words!



### **Objects of Reference:**

Objects of Reference are items used to help someone understand what they will be doing or where they should be going. This is particularly helpful for people who struggle to understand and retain verbal information.

### **Examples of Objects of Reference might be:**

Spoon = dinner time

Teddy = bedtime

Nappy = toilet time

Book bag = school

Sponge = bath time

Shoe = going out

Objects of Reference are used in the same way that we might present a sign or a symbol to show someone what is happening next. For example, you might show a spoon to a child when it is dinner time or a nappy when time to be changed. When showing each object you will name what it represents eg “dinnertime” and then put the object away again. You can also create a visual timetable using Objects of Reference once a young person understands what each object means.

If you are using lots of objects of reference you may need to think about how you might organise them – a shoe hanging organiser can be a good way of

doing this – see the examples below. You can label each pocket with the relevant picture or symbol as well.



### **Makaton Sign Language**

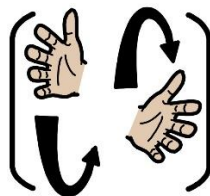
Makaton is a system of signs and symbols designed to help develop communication and interaction skills. It can be used with people with a range of difficulties including Speech and Language difficulties (such as Selective Mutism), ASD, Down Syndrome, sensory issues and those with sensory impairment such as hearing loss.

The Makaton Programme is organised in 8 different developmental stages, plus an Additional Vocabulary added in 1996, and each stage includes nouns, verbs, questions and describing words. This helps individuals form sentences and phrases right from the start of the programme. When using Makaton you only sign the key words and speak at the same time to help promote a range of communication skills.

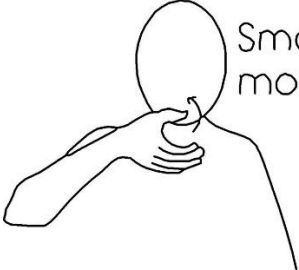


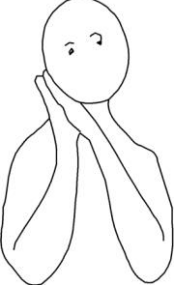

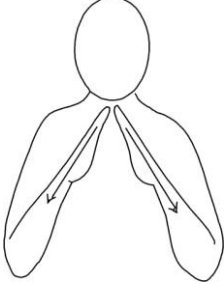
Some parents and carers worry that using sign language, particularly with non-verbal people, will discourage them from talking but scientific research has actually shown that the use of gestures and sign language can actually trigger verbal language to develop due to the proximity of the brain sensors for both verbal and visual learning being so close together.

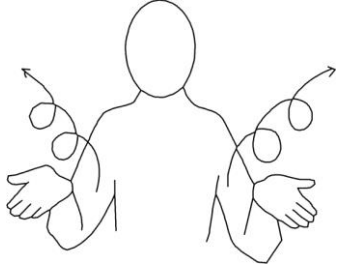
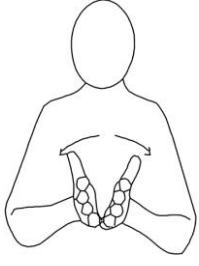
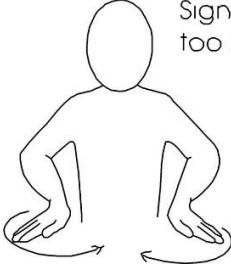
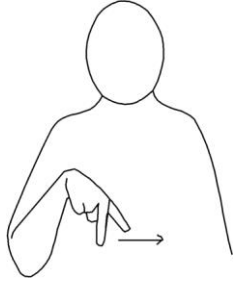

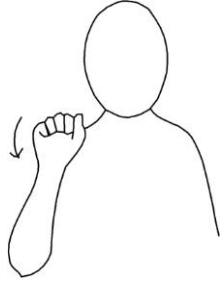

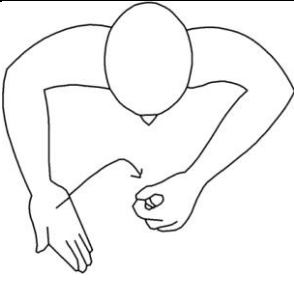
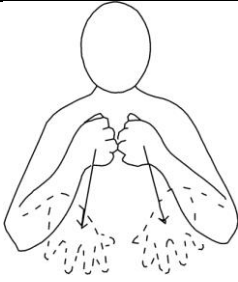
Makaton sign language can be used with children from as early as 6 months to help develop their understanding of vocabulary and encourage them to engage in eye contact and early interactions with another person. It is best to teach vocabulary in real life situations, such as food words at meal times, to help them make links between the signs and the words that they represent.

We have included some key signs on the next page to get you started.



### Getting Started with Makaton

 <p>Small movement</p> <p><b>Drink</b></p>	 <p>Tap once</p> <p><b>Food (eat if tap twice)</b></p>	 <p>Tip of middle finger makes contact with body and makes repeat movement</p> <p><b>Toilet</b></p>
 <p><b>Bed (sleep if close eyes)</b></p>	 <p><b>To have a bath</b></p>	 <p><b>House / home</b></p>

 <p><b>Play</b></p>	 <p><b>Book</b></p>	 <p>Sign FLOWERS too if necessary</p> <p><b>Park</b></p>
 <p><b>Walk</b></p>	 <p><b>Shop</b></p>	 <p><b>Yes</b></p>
 <p><b>No</b></p>	 <p><b>More</b></p>	 <p><b>Finished</b></p>