



Some good ways to communicate with people with very complex needs

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Who are people with very complex needs?

They are people with a learning disability who need a lot of support every day.



They may be people who

- have more than one disability
- do not communicate by speaking. They may use other ways instead.



We looked at the different ways to communicate with people with very complex needs.

We wanted to find out what works best.



We did some work first. For example, we talked to families and other people who know a lot about communicating with people with very complex needs.

Some ways to communicate that we found can work well

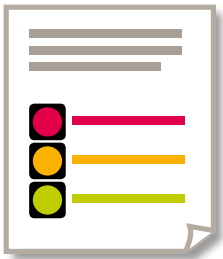


1. Getting together some information about the person

A person with very complex needs could have a book about themselves to carry with them.

The book may talk about things like

- how they communicate
- what they like
- what they do not like.



The book can help other people get to know them.

A book like this may be called

- a communication passport
- a health passport
- a communication dictionary.

2. Spending time with a person and learning how to communicate together



This is about spending lots of time with a person to learn about

- how they communicate
- what works for them.

You can watch what the person does and learn how they like to communicate.

Some ways to communicate that we found can work well

This will help the person get used to you and enjoy spending time with you.

Over time you can find good ways to communicate together.

This way of communicating is called **Intensive Interaction**

3. Using technology to help someone communicate



Technology is things like computers.

An example is something called a **BIGmack**. A BIGmack has a button on it. The person can press a button on the BIGmack to make something happen.



This can teach the person that they can make things happen by touching a button.

It can also help them learn how to make choices.

Some technology will be too hard for people with very complex needs to use by themselves.



4. Using objects to communicate

An object can be anything. For example, books, clothes, a football, a spoon or toothbrush.

Using objects can help people with complex needs communicate and make choices.

You can show someone an object when you want to tell them what's going to happen next or to find out what they want.



For example, you can show someone a cup when you want to find out if they want a drink.



The person can learn that when you show them a cup, it means they can have a drink.

Other ways to communicate

Pictures, symbols and photos



Some people with very complex needs can use pictures or symbols to make choices or say what they want.

One way is to stick some pictures onto a mat or board.



The pictures can be used to

- say what is happening that day
- help the person choose things they want
- help someone say how they feel.

Some people with very complex needs will not be able to use pictures or symbols

Using signs



This is when you use your hands to make words

Makaton and Signalong are 2 ways of using signs to communicate.

Some people with very complex needs will not be able to use Makaton and Signalong.

Some people with very complex needs will tell you what they want using their body instead

Music



Playing music can help people with complex needs learn to communicate.

For example, it can help people show how they feel.

It can also help them spend time with other people.

Telling a story about the person



This is when a group get together and talk about a person with complex needs' life and what is important to them.

You can use objects and sounds to help tell the story.

This will help the person with complex needs to join in if they are not able to use words.



The Standard and easy read versions of this guide can be downloaded at

www.mencap.org.uk/communication

For more information contact



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