



# Supported Decision Making



## Understanding the Person's Communication

Understanding the person's communication style

Developing a communication passport



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## Understanding the person's communication

Communication is really important in supporting people well and especially important when supporting people in decision making. Communication is a two way process. As with any message, one person expresses it and someone else has to understand and receive it.

We communicate: to share who we are, to share information, to form relationships, to share what we want and need for ourselves and from others, to learn about life, to be offered choices, to express feelings, to understand others, to request information, to have access to information, to be included socially, and most importantly to seek and reject assistance.

In exploring people's communication we need to consider one's ability to understand spoken or written language. Exploring communication requires a willingness to supplement or support the spoken word by using objects, photographs, line drawings, symbols or sign. In order to do this well, we need to know which method or combination of methods suit each person best.

Being able to express what is inside your head: your thoughts, feelings, desires, wants and wishes to another person is the essence of communication.

All people have their own way of expressing themselves; for some people, this may mean using other methods than speech alone. Objects, photographs, line drawings, symbols, signing and /or body language may be used to express information.

Our responsibility when supporting people, is a commitment to continually listen to, and learn with, the person. This includes striving to support the person's communication, ensuring they can direct their own life, interact with us and other people, and make their contribution.

To be a good communication partner we need the desire to really hear a person and learn how the person communicates with you and how you communicate with them.

Many people use informal communication styles that are unique to them and they are sometimes heavily reliant upon the people who know and understand them well. It is really important that a person's unique communication style is recorded to ensure that those around the person can learn their particular style.

One way to do this is to explore what we know and understand about the person's communication style now and build on this learning. This is a really important foundation for supporting people with decision making. **How can you possibly support a person in making a decision if you don't know how they communicate?**

By working through the following communication chart, (Communication charts adapted from Fulton, Woodley and Sanderson), this approach helps everyone understand how the person may be communicating.

**The following chart explores how others communicate with the person**

At this time	The person says or does this	We think it means	You should do this?
1. When does this happen? Are there particular times / places?	2. What do you see the person do?	3. What does everyone think it means? Sometimes we may be best guessing.	4. What are we all agreeing to do as a response?

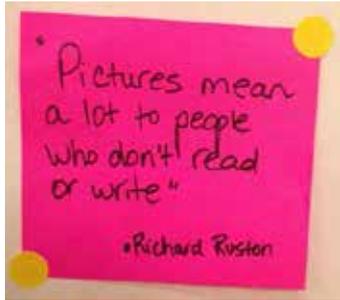
The following chart explores how others communicate with the person

At this time or in this situation	When we want the person to know or understand this or do this	You should do or say this

## Developing a communication passport or personal profile

Personal communication passports or personal profiles are a practical and person centred way of supporting people. It is a way of pulling complex information together and presenting it in an easy-to-follow format aiming to:

- Present the person positively as an individual, not as a set of 'problems' or disabilities
- Provide a place for the person's own views and preferences to be recorded and drawn to the attention of others
- Reflect the person's unique character, sense of humour etc
- Describe the person's most effective means of communication and how others can best communicate with, and support the person
- Draw together information from past and present, and from different contexts, to help staff and conversation partners understand the person and have successful interactions
- Place equal value on the views of all who know the person well, along with the views of the specialist professionals



Communication passports and personal profiles discover and describe who the person is, what is important to the person in everyday life and what other people need to know or do so the person is able to be listened to, heard and understood in relation to how they communicate. Not everyone would necessarily call one of these a 'Passport' as such. But whatever 'name' is used, the principle is the same, i.e. important information distilled into a simple and easily accessible format for the person. The areas that are generally covered include but are not limited to:

- My Journey
- Who I am
- Things you need to know about me
- Who is important to me – people in my life
- Things that others like and admire about me
- Things I like and dislike (e.g. food, places, people, hobbies, animals)
- Things I like to do and where I like to go (e.g. weekends, days, nights)
- Who I like to do things with
- What I like to talk about
- Things that are important to me
- Things that are important for me (eg. My health and wellbeing)
- How I communicate (e.g. when I do or do not need assistance, sadness, happiness, excitement, anxiety, fear, boredom, restlessness, cold, hot, sick)
- What you need to do to understand and support me and my communication





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## Resources

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# The following chart explores how others communicate with the person

At this time or in this situation	When we want the person to know or understand this or do this	You should do or say this



## Developing a Communication Passport

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- What you need to do to understand and support me and my communication







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