Resources



Improving the Communication Environment

Version control

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About Blaire Hannon

Hello, my name is Blaire. I have been involved with Sailability since the age of 15 where I myself learnt to sail, then became a volunteer and instructor/coach. I raced nationally and internationally in the 2.4mR for many years, and benefitted from the life skills and qualities being part of the Paralympic Transition Squad brings. A couple of years ago I graduated as a Speech and Language Therapist at Manchester University. This is when I worked with my local Sailability site to provide training and create the essential resources and aids to ensure everyone could communicate effectively and all voices were heard. The results were fantastic. Not only was everyone communicating better, but children found the venue an easier place to be themselves, non-verbal sailors were expressing their choice of sport for the first time, and some sailors overcame huge obstacles as they were able to understand the steps to take. This is why I wanted to share these resources and information with other Sailability sites.

Communication is a basic human right and a human need. It is important that we do our best to support of sailors to reach their full potential in a safe and supportive environment. I hope you find these resources and tips useful.

1) Overview

This set of resources has been collated to enable and support the many people who sail who may also face communication barriers in a world that relies on a large extent to being able to see, hear and use speech. Communication can be very individual to a person and can take a long time to tune into. With the right approach these resources can support communication partnerships.

Getting communication right means people can experience the world to the full, connect with others and fulfil their potential. Getting communication right is at the heart of the Sailability delivery principles – Safe, Fun, Open.







Figure 1 Sailability Delivery Principles

The resources consist of:

- An explanation of the various strategies that can be implemented and the tools available
- Printable photos, resources and templates for clubs, centres, instructors and volunteers to use these are embedded in the document as objects
- Links to videos and further information

The resources are a start point and are there to be adapted, built on and developed to make them specific to the individuals you work with and the location you use to get on the water. Remember to use the approach of asking, not assuming, listening well and learning as you go.

Genuine partnership with the person, with those who know them well will be at the heart of developing good communication and meaningful conversations.

- 1. Take the time to find out how a person communicates and be empathetic to how they make choices and express preferences, and the aids and technology they may use to help. Some people may have a communication passport that contains details of how they communicate, what they like and don't like. Asking if they have one may be a good start point to establishing meaningful conversations.
- 2. **Take an active interest** in the person learn about their communication and what motivates them
- Adapt the learning and communication environment the resources in this pack will help

2) Symbols

Symbols take the form of words, sounds, gestures, ideas and visual images to convey ideas, beliefs and meaning. Symbols may be anywhere on a scale form a concrete representation of an object to something abstract.

Scale of Symbolic Representation

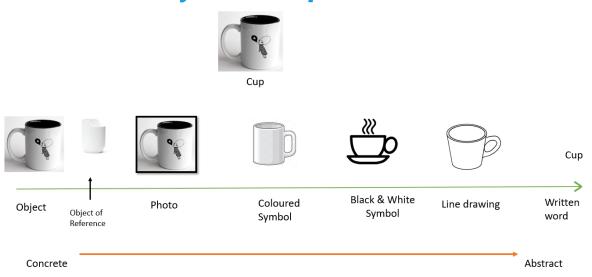


Figure 2: Scale of Symbolic Representation

Objects of reference

Objects of reference are a concrete representation of a word. They are any object which is used to represent an item, activity, place or person and can be used with individuals who find it difficult to understand spoken words, signs or other more abstract symbols. They can be touched, held, smelt.

Objects of reference can be a real object (cup for a drink), part of a real object (car keys for a car), a miniature object (toy boat for a boat) or something abstract (a scarf to represent a particular person).

Real objects are easiest to show and support meaning and thought is needed on the objects you choose. For example, car keys have more meaning for the person who drives, rather than the passenger.



Figure 3: Some objects of reference

Pictures and photos

Pictures and photos are easier to implement in a variety of visual communication aids. A picture of the actual object you are representing may be easier to process than a line drawing, which in turn may be easier to process than the written word.

Photos or pictures of the actual buoyancy aids in use may be better than a photo or picture of a generic lifejacket – some people may struggle with the difference between the two.



Figure 4: Photo of a buoyancy aid

Colour Symbols

Some words can be difficult to illustrate in photos – for example, weather, emotions and verbs. A picture of a man smiling could represent 'happy' or 'man'. Colour symbols enable you to emphasize the attribute you are trying to illustrate. Using the same colour symbols repetitively and in the same context help people share meaning.



Figure 5: Colour symbol for 'Happy'

Making your own symbol resources

Software is available to enable you to use a wide variety of symbols and pictures to make your own resources. <u>Boardmaker</u> and <u>Widget</u> are two examples.

Template and example resources using symbols

Clothes
Sports / Activities
Sailing terms – flip cards
Boat parts
Watersport widget symbols
Weather

Further reading / learning

https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/page/symbols

https://www.ukcoaching.org/resources/videos/how-to-communicate-with-children

https://www.widgit.com/parents/information/index.htm

https://www.sense.org.uk/get-support/information-and-

advice/communication/symbol-systems/

https://www.autism.org.uk/visualsupports

3) Visual Timetables

Visual timetables can be used to support communication of what is going to happen in particular timeframe or session, or to breakdown the stages on how to complete a task.

There are a variety of different visual timetables and you will need to have a conversation with the individuals concerned and those who work with them regularly to find out what works best.

Now / Then

A simple form of timetable used to show what activity or task is taking place now, and what is coming up next.

To do / Done

Used to break down the stages that need to be achieved to complete an activity. Once each stage is finished it can be moved to the done section. These timetables can provide a sense of achievement and help with focus.

Rewards

A breakdown of tasks to be completed in order to get a reward. Provides motivation and a means of ticking off each stage.

Daily / Session

Daily timetables break down the main activities for the day or session and can be useful when welcoming a group and briefing them about the activity they will be doing.

If you are splitting a group, you can have two versions of the timetable colour coded for each group or using a picture of the instructor / group leader they will be with. Use pictures of instructors or group leaders to indicate what activities they will be leading.

Some people may want to know the length of time each activity is going to last, when they will be on the water and when they will be back ashore, so introducing clocks can be useful. Find out whether the group you are working with find digital time easier than analogue, or combine both.

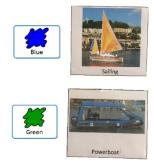


Figure 6: Colour coded session timetable



Figure 7: Daily timetable organised by group leader

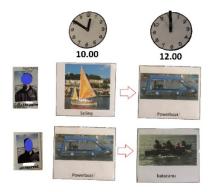


Figure 8: Session timetable with clocks and digital times

Micro activity

Micro activity timetables break down the stages of each activity – for example, how to get dressed for sailing, how to put on a buoyancy aid, how to rig a boat. A series of micro activity timetables could be built to support the Sailability and Powerability logbook and syllabus.

Micro activity timetable can provide structure to an activity and create a routine supporting the way a person processes information. They can reduce anxiety and clarify expectations.

Timetable resources and templates

<u>Micro timetable – Powerability - example</u> Clocks

Timetable templates

Now Next
To Do / Done
Reward

Further reading

http://northstarpaths.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/9-reasons-to-use-visuals-graphic.pdf

http://licensing.ican.org.uk/sites/licensing.ican.org.uk/files/pdfs/Visual-timelines-factsheet-parents.pdf

http://integratedtreatmentservices.co.uk/news/benefits-of-visual-timetables/

4) Choice Boards

Supporting people to make choices is vital – it is a crucial part of how we express ourselves and exercise autonomy. There is no option when it comes to giving people choices.

Some people benefit from support to make choices and develop their sense of independence and control. Choice can increase a person's interest and engagement in an activity and help them learn more. Choice helps develop communication by reinforcing cause and effect, establishing a good rapport, and developing a two way dialogue.

There is value in introducing regular opportunities to choose – for example, colour of buoyancy aid, activity, colour of boat, role in boat.

Pictures, symbols, text or objects can be used to represent the choice options.

A portable board can be useful so you can take it to the activity or where the choice needs to happen and enforce the choice as close as possible to when it was made.

The number of choices you make available will vary according to the individuals. Be careful not to overwhelm or create pressure to choose anything – perhaps start offering a small number of choices and introduce more as you get to know the person.

It can be important to check the choice a person has made – particularly if you are not sure you have clearly communicated the options. Ask them to show the choice again, perhaps swapping the choices around.

Some people may not have the skills to express their choice easily. A number of strategies may help:

- Reduce the demands on them (e.g. the number of choices),
- check the visual clues for the choices are within their field of vision.
- find out how the person indicates 'Yes' and 'No',
- learn their body language and gestures (smiles, eye flicker, whole body reaction.



Figure 9: Choice Board Examples

Further reading

https://www.pinterest.co.uk/specialthinkers/choice-board-ideas/

https://www.autismspectrumteacher.com/picturechoiceboard/ https://www.immagic.com/eLibrary/ARCHIVES/GENERAL/JOURNALS/E101100P.p df

5) Social Stories™

Social storiesTM are a great way to introduce a new situation, outline how and why people may react in different situations and explain why people may be feeling a certain way.

Social storiesTM are a short description of a particular situation, event or activity that include specific information about what to expect and why.

Developed by Carol Gray in 1991, primarily for people with autism, social storiesTM present information in a literal, concrete manner, making it easier to process. Social stories can outline the sequence of events, create a structure and routine and help a person prepare themselves on what to expect. The stories can explore the emotions and possible outcomes of a situation.

The terms 'social story' and 'social stories' are trademarks originated and owned by Carol Gray.

How to write a social story[™]

Carol Gray identifies the importance of

- **picturing the goal** what is the purpose of the story and what is it the person needs to understand to achieve the goal
- **gathering information** where does the situation occur, who is involved, how does it start and finish, how long does it last, what happens and why? Find ways of appealing to the interests and motivations of the person they are written for. Gather information about the person who will be reading the story their age, interest, attention span, level of understanding etc.
- tailoring the text social stories should have a title, an introduction, a body and a conclusion. The language should be patient and supportive. The text should cover where, when, who, what, how and why? Descriptive sentences accurately describe the context where, who etc, while coaching sentences guide behaviour.

Social Story[™] resources

<u>Sailing social story example</u> <u>Sailing social story easy read example</u>

Further Reading

http://carolgraysocialstories.com/
The National Autistic Society – Social Stories and Comic Strips
Educate Autism – Why Social Stories work?

The Effectiveness of Social Stories

6) Signs, badges and information boards Signs

Signs can help new participants find their way around whether they are new to a location or regularly attend but find orientation and recognising places difficult. Door signs can re-enforce location, provide reassurance, increase independence and reduce anxiety.

Photos of the room the door enters into can be more concrete than symbols. Written words underneath the photo or symbol should be in clear text with a good contrasting background. Avoid word only signs.

Photos should be clear and not include anything not usually found in the room.

Keep the signs free from un-necessary elements (e.g. logos) as these can be distracting.

Signs can be used for rooms, storage, information boards, menus etc.

Use Braille writing slates and the Braille translator to create Braille signs.









Figure 10: Examples of signs

Name Badges

Introducing yourself is important in any situation where people may be anxious around unfamiliar people and where a good rapport is needed quickly.

As an example:

"A young girl with Autism had come to a Sailability group for a few years and enjoyed it. A new volunteer went up to her and said "hello Rebecca, are you ready to sail". This made Rebecca extremely anxious, as a 'stranger' knew her name and she didn't know his name. She did not come back again".

A name badge can be an important part of introducing yourself. Saying 'hello, my names is' only takes a second but can make the world of difference.

The 'Hello, My Name is ...' campaign was adopted by the NHS in 2013 after a doctor receiving treatment was surprised with the number of staff who failed to introduce themselves before treating her.

Ensure any badges and signs are clear and easy to read. Bright yellow background and large black writing is a good place to start.

Photo boards

If you want to get across information about all those who may be involved in delivering an activity create a photo board and have staff / volunteer photos on your website.

Include names under photos, and perhaps roles, with clear, easy to read text.



Figure 11: Example of a staff photo board

Resources

https://www.hellomynameis.org.uk/downloads/

Further reading

My Asperger's Child - Place-blindness in children with Asperger's and High Functioning Autism

<u>Aspie writer – Place Blindness in People with Autism or Asperger's Syndrome</u> https://www.nlg.nhs.uk/news/new-yellow-name-badges/

7) Deaf-friendly communication - Tips

General / Briefing / Information sessions

- 1. Find out from the sailor:
 - a. What type of sounds may be easier to hear
 - b. How they like to communicate (sign language, lip reading, writing down)
 - c. What is the best way to get their attention?
 - d. What aids or equipment do you need to be aware of (and is it waterproof)?
- 2. Ask all participants to say their name before they contribute
- 3. Subtitle any videos you plan to use
- 4. Set a ground rule of participants contributing one at a time and not talking over each other
- 5. Repeat yourself, and other people's contributions if needed
- 6. Avoid covering your mouth, or chewing gum while talking
- 7. Keep your face clear (sunglasses, hats, whistles, buffs?)
- 8. Don't give up trying to explain, try different ways of getting across what you are trying to say use pictures, demos if needed
- 9. If you are using visual aids allow time for sailors to switch attention from what you are saying, to the visual aid
- 10. Avoid moving around when you are talking
- 11. Avoid speaking slowly or raising your voice as this can distort lip patterns
- 12. If you are using communication professionals (e.g. an interpreter)
 - a. Ensure the sailor can see the presenter and the interpreter
 - b. Give time for the communication professional to relay the message and for the sailor to reply
 - c. Have regular communication breaks (30mins)
 - d. Share information about the briefing / session / presentation with the communication professional before the session and go through any jargon / terminology

On the Water

- 1. Agree signals for key words / actions (help, head for home, come to me, emergency, stop)
- 2. Use visual signals as well as auditory ones whistles and flags
- 3. Communicate key information when the boat is alongside so you can give information face to face.
- 4. Have a portable whiteboard with you for key words, pictures etc
- 5. Have a watertight box or bag to put aids and equipment in (e.g. hearing aids)
- 6. Use BSL flip cards reminders of essential signs / concepts
- 7. Use picture cards for sailing words
- 8. Demonstrate skills and activities

Resources

On Water Signals / Cards BSL finger spelling

BSL Flip Cards

Further reading

http://www.british-sign.co.uk/british-sign-language/dictionary/

https://www.signbsl.com/

NDCS - BSL for deaf-friendly activity

NDCS: BSL signs for Watersports

8) Blind and Visually Impaired Sailors - Tips

General / Briefing / Information sessions

- 1. Identify yourself, your name and your role.
- 2. Find out from the sailor:
 - a. What support they might need getting to the venue and finding their way around
 - b. How you can support them?
 - c. What they can see?
 - d. How can the environment be optimised?
 - e. Is there anything to avoid?
 - f. How do they like to learn?
 - g. What experience and understanding do they have of the activity?
 - h. Do they need handouts / information in a braille format or electronically?
 - i. What to do with any mobility aids or guide dogs during the session / activity?
- 3. Assess the space you are using Is the floor and corridors free from trip hazards? What is the lighting like?
- 4. If you are using visual aids, ensure you explain with words as well
- 5. Take time to allow the sailor to familiarise themselves with the environment

On the water

- 1. Take time to fit flotation devices for the first time, ensuring the sailor knows how everything works
- 2. Take time to allow the sailor to familiarise themselves with the boat, all the controls (how they work, how they are fixed) and hazards
- 3. Add bells to marks / buoys to help locate them
- 4. Concentrate on how the boat feels and sounds during specific skills / tasks wind on their face, sails flapping, heel of the boat, tension on sheets with wind pressure
- 5. Check with the sailor if they are comfortable using hand over hand techniques to demonstrate specific skills e.g. tacking
- 6. Consider a buddy system
- 7. Consider adding tactile clues to support orientation around the boat

Guiding tips

- 1. Introduce yourself
- 2. Ask if they want assistance don't assume, and don't be offended if they don't
- 3. Ask which side they prefer to be guided on
- 4. Offer your elbow or shoulder
- 5. Ensure you are one step in front of the person
- 6. Don't walk too fast or too slowly check you are getting it right
- 7. Talk to the person particularly about what is coming up on the route and explain any noises
- 8. Keep your guiding arm still and relaxed

- 9. For seats place their hand on the back of the seat
- 10. Through doorways ensure the person steps behind you and make sure they don't get struck by the door as it closes behind them
- 11. Obstacles give the person you are guiding plenty of space

Further reading

British Blind Sport: A guide to visually impaired friendly sport

GBR Blind Sailing Website

9) Accessible and Inclusive Information

It is important to present information in a format that people can read, understand and that makes them feel included. Not having information in the right format can be the difference between participating or not.

There is a wealth of resource and advice available to help you get it right.

Subtitles on Videos

Closed caption subtitles on videos are essential for some people and really useful for many – think how many videos are watched from mobile devices with the sound switched off.

YouTube allows you to add subtitles to videos uploaded to the platform and there is a variety of software out there that allows you to add captions.

Easy Read Documents

Information that is presented well can make it easier to read. Easy Read is a style of information chosen by some people with learning disabilities. There is no one way to create easy read and there are variety of online resources and organisations who can help you produce information in easy read.

Generally Easy Read will make it clear who the information is for. Easy read will use easy words in short sentences, with images supporting the text. Large print and plain (san serif) fonts help.

- It is important where pictures and text are placed: pictures tend to go on the left, and text on the right.
- Keep text left aligned so that it is to the left in your text area
- Titles or headings can be centre aligned
- Having information close together can be confusing so find ways to separate different parts and sections. Boxes can be a good way of doing this.
- Careful use of colour can help separate different parts of the information. Remember black text on a white background can be hard for some to read.
- Bullet lists are good for grouping information, but don't overdo it.
- A space of about 8cm for pictures allows you to have larger pictures and helps keep lines of text shorter.
- Try not to use long or difficult words, and try to avoid shortened words. More than 15 words in a sentence can make it hard to read.
- Be consistent if you refer to a meeting, don't call it a review later in the document.
- Keep your font size to 14 or above. Fancy fonts are often hard to read. Arial,
 Verdana and Tahoma are good fonts.
- Too much punctuation can be complicated for some. Limit yourself to commas and full stops.
- One picture meaning more than one thing can be confusing (e.g. a picture of a cup meaning Cup, or a Cup of Tea)
- Keep a large gap between lines to help the person easily move from one line to the next.



Figure 12: Example of Easy Read

Dyslexia friendly

There a number of tips to help someone who may find it hard identifying letters, matching letters to sounds of words, or confusing the meanings of words.

- Use a rounded (san serif) font Arial, verdana, Tahoma,
- At least 12pt font size with 1.5 lines pacing
- Avoid capitals they can make identifying letter shape and whole words difficult
- Avoid italics letters can merge together
- Simplify complex or long sentences
- Break up points into paragraphs or bullet points
- Use headings and subheadings to help the reader navigate the text
- Use a light background colour
- Use pictures to support information flowcharts, pictograms, graphs etc

Visual impairment

People with a visual impairment will access information in a variety of ways, using printed words, or computer software and technologies. There is no one size fits all. As a start point:

- Consider large print versions of essential information, and versions that have different background colour / text
- Use a minimum of 12pt font size and san serif fonts
- Make essential information available electronically
- Avoid Capitals and italics
- Use styles and headings, and page numbers in word they will help a screen reader user navigate the document
- Add an 'alt tag' description to images and a short text explanation for graphs
- Avoid text over images

- Use good colour contrast
- Provide a variety of contact points (e.g. web, email, social, phone)

Further reading

http://www.easyonthei.nhs.uk/accessible-information-standard-what-is-easy-read https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/accessible-communication-formats

https://www.rnib.org.uk/rnib-business

http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/programmes/1817-inclusive-marketing-and-communications

Accessibility Training Videos: How to make Microsoft Word more accessible

Accessibility Training Videos: How to make Excel more accessible

Accessibility Training Videos: How to make PowerPoint more accessible

Accessibility Training Videos: How to make Outlook (Email) more accessible

Accessibility Training Videos: How to make Publisher more accessible

9 tips to making your website accessible

Al: What is accessible Information?

NHS: What is accessible information?

Mencap: Accessible Information Standard (Easy-to-read example)

Gov: Accessible Communication Formats

British Dyslexia Association: Creating Dyslexia Friendly Content

ThoughtCO: Creating a Dyslexia Friendly Classroom

AbilityNet: Producing accessible materials for print and online

https://www.rnib.org.uk/rnibconnect/image-descriptions-twitter-a-quick-guide

Resources



10) Communication Resources, Examples and Templates

Symbols and Picture Resources

Clothes – example and template
Sailing – picture flip cards
Sports – example and template
Watersports Widget Symbols
Weather – examples

Timetables and Information Boards

Micro activity – Powerability – example
Now and Then – template
Reward – example and template
To Do / Done – template
Clock
Weather and Clothes Information Board

Sign Languages

BSL Flip cards (Useful signs)
BSL – finger spelling card
On the Water Signs (Cards)
Makaton videos (list of links)

Social stories[™]

<u>Social StoriesTM – Sailability Session (example – Easy Read)</u> <u>Social StoriesTM – Sailability Session (example)</u>

Accessible Information

<u>Easy Read Joining Instructions – example</u> <u>Easy Read – Fire Alarm Rules</u>

Activities and Worksheets

Teaching boat parts using symbols/pictures

Domino's - Parts of the Boat

Word Search - Boat Part

Bingo - Parts of Boat



Object: 1 Clothes - example and template file



Picutre%20sailing-r elated%20flip%20ca

Object: 2 Sailing flip cards



Pictural%20represe nation%20of%20Spc

Object: 3 Sport - Examples and template



Watersport%20Wid get%20symbols.pdf

Object: 4 Sport related widgets



Weather.docx

Object: 5 Weather Symbols



Micro%20timetbale %20-%20Powerabilit

Object: 6 Micro Activity Powerability example



NowThen.docx

Object: 7 Now and Then Example and template



Reward.docx

Object: 8 Reward Timetable Example



Object: 9 To do / done timetable example



Clock.docx

Object: 10 Clock template



WeatherClothesInf oBoard.docx

Object: 11 Weather Clothes Information Board



BSL%20flip%20card s.pdf

Object: 12 BSL Flip Cards



bsl-finger-spelling. pdf

Object: 13 BSL Finger Spelling Card



On-Water%20Signs %20for%20hearing%

Object: 14 On the Water Signs



Makaton.docx

Object: 15 Makoton - List of Videos



Social%20Story%20 Sailing%20Session.c

Object: 16 Social Story (TM) for Sailing Example



Object: 17 Social Story (TM) for Sailing (Easy Read)



Sailability%20Acces sible%20Information

Object: 18 Easy Read Joining Instructions example



Fire%20Alarm%20R ules.docx

Object: 19 Easy Read Fire Alarm Rules example



Teaching%20Boat% 20parts.docx

Object: 20 Parts of the Boat - Symbols



Domino's%20-%20p arts%20of%20boat.

Object: 21 Parts of the Boat - Dominos Game



Word%20Search%2 0-%20boat%20parts

Object: 22 Parts of the Boat - Word Search



Bingo - Parts of Boat.pdf

Object: 23 Parts of the Boat Bingo