Assessing Communication Together (ACT)

Helen Bradley

The assessment is divided into sections:

1. Background information
     i. Vision
     ii. Hearing
     iii. Physical Handicaps
     iv. Relationships
     v. Touch
   b. Methods of Communication
     i. Gestures/signs
     ii. Photos/pictures
     iii. Vocalisations/speech
   c. Summary

2. Social Communication
     i. Name
     ii. Possessions
     iii. Important People
     iv. Hello/Goodbye
     v. Attention sought/withdrawn
   b. Summary

3. Activities and Routines
     i. Eating/drinking/toileting
     ii. Likes and dislikes (food/drinks/activities)
     iii. Choices
     iv. Asking for more
     v. Asking for Less
     vi. Main Events of the week
     vii. Core Signs

4. Implementing the Programme
     i. Make Priority Decisions
     ii. List Problems and Possible Solutions

As soon as you get to the end of the first section you are asked to summarise the effect of the information gathered so far on any communication programme to be developed.

The second section looks at basic interactions (saying hello and goodbye in a consistent way) with other people which are often neglected.

The third section focuses on needs/reasons to communicate

All of the tables give one column for writing 'how the carers will communicate with the child and on column on how the child will communicate with others.

Advantages of using this assessment for child at an early stage of communication development are:
1. It looks at needs and opportunities as well as means.
2. It focuses on early communication skills including expressing like and dislike, asking for more and less and greetings.
3. It focuses on everyone concerned on the priorities.
4. It is open about the possible problems and encourages you to think of solutions.
5. It provides opportunities for adults to think about how they communicate with the child so the emphasis is not just on what the child will do but also what we will do to help the child understand our attempts to communicate with them.

SECTION A

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This section is designed to highlight information from a number of areas that will have relevance to the nature of the communication programme required.

Vision:

Information should be sought on any useful vision, history of visual loss, prognosis of condition, optimal conditions for using vision and any visual aids required. Only brief information needs to be recorded with the implications of the information for communication should be clearly stated.

Hearing:

Information should be sought on any useful hearing, history of hearing loss, prognosis of condition, optimal conditions for using hearing and any aids required, and their use and maintenance. implications of this information for communication should be clearly stated.

Physical Handicaps:

Information on the physical development of the multi-sensory impaired person should be sought, especially optimal positioning for movement and the sort of movements it is possible for the person to make. Again implications for communication should be stated.

Relationships:

Learning to communicate is a social skill and especially in the early stages optimal communication may be restricted to one or two special people. It is important to identify who the multi-sensory impaired person is motivated to communicate with so that these people can be closely involved in the programme. If the person has no close relationships this may need to be tackled as a priority.

Touch:

Touch is the basis of relationships and communication. If the multi-sensory impaired person finds it difficult to accept touch, a communication programme based round this area will be needed. If they enjoy touch this may be an area that can be extended for leisure purposes.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION:

Signs/signals/gestures/objects/pictures

These sections are designed to explore the methods which the person uses or could potentially use to communicate

At the end of section 1, the co-ordinator should summarise the main implications for intervention and check that everyone is in agreement.

SECTION B

SOCIAL NEEDS

This section explores the social needs of the multi-sensory impaired person. Sections include: personal identity, personal possessions and social greetings. In each section it is likely that different people may use different methods. These should be noted and then ideas to increase consistency should be discussed.

This section finishes with the opportunity to summarise possible interventions.

SECTION C

ACTIVITIES AND ROUTINES

The most useful communication assessments and interventions are firmly centred around the multi-sensory impaired person's lifestyle and interests. This section is designed to allow carers to take an objective look at their clients lifestyle and the things which are most important for them to understand and express. In particular, the choices that a person needs to make and their ability to control important events are examined. Routines and methods of helping the multi-sensory impaired person to anticipate and participate are examined.

SECTION D

CORE SIGNALS AND SIGNS

There are certain areas of communication that are essential for the day-to-day living. ACT suggests some areas where it is essential to have an agreed form of communication (e.g. wait, finished, look, listen etc), others may be added.

SECTION E

IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME

Making Priorities:

By this point in the assessment many good ideas and possibilities for intervention will have been highlighted. However, the extent to which interventions can be introduced will be governed by existing circumstances. As consistency is vital to the success of the intervention it will probably be necessary to decide upon priorities. It is preferable to start in a small way with the interventions that everyone feels happy and confident about managing.

The Practicalities of Intervention:

It is important to leave time to look at practicalities and foresee any problems as far as possible. For example, the best ways of distributing information, organising staff training and monitoring the programme need to be agreed.

Name   Date of Meeting

D.O.B   Present at Meeting:

Address

Programme to be Reviewed On:
_____

Assessing Communication Together (ACT)

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION
1. Vision

Any additional information needed:

Effects on communication programme:

2. Hearing

Any additional information needed:

Effects on communication programme:

3. Physical Handicaps

Any additional information needed:

Effects on communication programme:

4. Relationships
   List the most important people in _____ life

5. Touch
   Does _____ accept and enjoy touch

6. Methods of Communication
   a. Does _____ respond to any signals, gestures or signs?

   If yes give examples

   b. Does _____ use any signals, gestures or signs to communicate?

   If yes give examples.

c. Does _____ understand the use of everyday objects?

If yes name some examples

d. Does _____ ever use objects to communicate?

If yes give examples.

e. Does _____ respond to any pictures or photos?

If yes give examples.

f. Does_____ use pictures to communicate?

If yes give examples.

g. Does _____ use any vocalisations or speech to communicate?

If yes, give examples.

7. Summarise the effect of this information on any communication programmed to be developed.

B SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

1. Does _____ respond to his/her name? (Spoken signed or as a 'name object')

If yes – note how this is done

If no – could a naming programme be started? If necessary agree method to be used.

2. Does _____ identify his/her personal possessions?

If Yes, note which and how

If no, could this area be programmed? If necessary agreed a method to be used.

3. See 1.4 Important people

   For each person
   - Does _____ recognise them?
   - Does_____ respond to his/her name? (spoken/signed/name object).
   - Does _____ ask for them?

If yes, note the person and the methods used?

If no, could this area be programmed? If necessary agree the method.

4. How do people say hello to _____?

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

5. How does _____ say hello to people?

If necessary agree the method to be used.

6. How do people say goodbye to _____?

If necessary agree the method to be used.

7. How does _____ say goodbye?

If necessary agreed the method to be used.

8. How does _____ ask for attention or affection?

If necessary agree the method to be used.

9. How does _____ ask people to leave him/her alone?

If necessary, agree the method to be used.

10. Summary of Action.

C ACTIVITIES AND ROUTINES

1. Personal Needs

    a. Eating

    How does _____ ask for food/show hunger?

    How do carers offer food?

    If necessary, agree the method to be used.

    b. Drinking

    How does _____ ask for a drink/show thirst?

    How do carers offer a drink?

If necessary, agree a method to be used.

c. Toilet

How does _____ ask for the toilet?

How do carers offer the toilet?

If necessary agree the method to be used.

2. Likes and Dislikes
   a. What are _____ favourite foods?

   b. What are _____ least favourite foods?

   c. What are _____ favourite drinks?

d. What are _____ least favourite drinks?

e. What are _____ favourite activities?

f. What are_____ least favourite activities

Choose one or more of the above

a. How do carers offer the item or activity?

b. How does_____ show s/he wants the item or activity?

If necessary, agree the methods to be used.

Item or activity	Method for carers to offer or signify this	Method for _____ to request this

3. Choices

    a. What choices does _____make at the moment?

    (e.g. food, drink, clothes, activities, people to spend time with?)

    b. If necessary, agreed choices to be introduced and the method to be used.

4. Asking for more

    a. How does _____ ask for 'more'?

    b. How do carers offer/signify more?

If necessary agree method used

5. Asking for less

    a. How does_____ ask for an activity to finish?

    b. How do carers signify the finish of an activity?

If necessary agree the method to be used.

6. Main events

List the main events in _____ week (exclude any already covered). For each, agree a method of letting _____ know the event is about to happen and a method to help him/her to ask for the event.

Event	Method for carers to offer or signify the event	Method for _____ to ask for the event.

D CORE SIGNS

For each of the following, plus any others that are appropriate, agree methods of communication.

	Method for carers to signify this.	Method for _____ to express.
Yes/ok		
No		
Good/well done		
Wait		
Look		
Listen		
Stand up		
Sit down		
Walk		
Others		

IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME

1. Make priority decisions

    a. Which parts of the communication programme could be implemented right away?

    b. Who will write up the programme?

2. List any problems which may undermine the programme. Also list ideas to problem solve.

Problems	Positive suggestions