

COMMUNICATE

GUIDANCE

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1. Introduction:

1.1 Within Youth Justice there has been growing awareness and research into the Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) of young people in the Youth Justice System and the impact of this on their ability to engage in and benefit from interventions.

1.2 The YJB have issued Guidance on SLCN; ***Practice advice: speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in the youth justice system*** (YJB 22 October 2015)

1.3 Within this guidance it is identified that “at the moment there is not a common definition for SLCN. SLCN can be a ‘hidden disability’, because it is often not visible or obvious and young people can become adept at hiding the true nature of their difficulties. Young people with SLCN can often come across as “intelligent and articulate”, which can make it harder to identify them”.

1.4 The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists briefing, ***Speaking Out: young offenders with communication difficulties*** (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 2007) indicates that young people with communication difficulties have problems with the following key competencies:

1. Articulation: the ability for an individual to express him or herself effectively through speaking, writing or non-verbal communication.
2. Perception: being able to recognise and understand the spoken or written word, body language and facial expressions.
3. Listening skills: the ability to listen carefully to what is being said.
4. Recall: being capable of remembering information that has previously been given.
5. Expression: being competent at expressing feelings and emotions in an acceptable manner.
6. Interaction: the capacity to relate to others in a socially acceptable manner plays a pivotal role in promoting social integration.

1.5 Young people with SLCN have difficulty communicating with others. This may be because they cannot say what they want to, have difficulty in understanding what is being said to them or do not understand the social rules of communication.

1.6 By the time young people enter the youth justice system, many of those with SLCN will have developed coping strategies to mask the impact of their SLCN. This might include:

- having a good level of surface conversation which they cannot maintain when conversations develop
- being very quiet and seemingly compliant
- using aggression to deflect hard conversations/to avoid having to admit that they don't understand
- being disruptive and having difficulty engaging
- indicating they understand, when they do not
- saying they understand when they do not

1.7 The Communication Trust report, *Doing justice to speech language and communication* (Communication Trust, 2015) states young people with SLCN may not understand their sentence and its requirements. The youth justice system uses technical language and many young people do not understand commonly used words such as “breach”, “condition” and “remorse”. Many young people struggle with the concept of time, which has an implication if they fail to attend appointments and breach their sentence.

1.8 The *Bercow report* described difficulties in responding to interventions as being “sufficient to affect their ability to communicate with staff on a day-to-day basis, to prevent them from benefiting from verbally mediated interventions such as education and offender behaviour work and, if not addressed, to contribute to reoffending” (Bercow, 2008:41).

1.9 The report ‘*Children and Young People in Breach*’ (Hart, 2010) suggests there is evidence that children and young people who have been subject to enforcement procedures may have struggled to comply because of a lack of comprehension about expectations.

1.10 The YJB has worked with the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists to develop a specialist screening tool to work within Asset Plus, and AssetPlus incorporates elements of the Royal College Speech and Language Therapists SLCN screening tool with additional neuro-disability questions.

1.11 The SLCN tool is only a screening tool which identifies those young people who may have a SLCN need. The YJB recommend that following the screening, these young people may need to be referred onto speech and language therapy for a full assessment to determine the extent of their problem. However, within Nottinghamshire there are **limited** Speech and Language Therapy resources available for young people in the Youth Justice Service due to their age.

1.12 Therefore, Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Service has adopted **Communicate** as the preferred assessment and intervention tool to address speech, language and communication needs and to improve literacy skills for young people subject to statutory court orders.

2. Communicate Overview

2.1 Communicate **is not** a replacement for education or training and does not provide an academic qualification.

2.2 It should also not be assumed that if a young person is engaged in an education or training provision that they would not benefit from Communicate, given that research indicates that a large proportion (60-80%) of young people within the Youth Justice System have some form of SLCN need.

2.3 Communicate is designed to help young people improve their confidence and skills which can help them in a number of contexts and includes, but is not limited to, the following;

- Understanding written and verbal communication and instructions (i.e. with an education setting or Youth Offending supervision session)
- Answering questions
- Speaking to new people
- Preparing for interviews
- Public Speaking (i.e. in a Court setting)
- Recognising and reading more words and more complex words
- Handwriting
- Spelling
- Completing forms
- Creating a CV

2.4 Case Managers should promote the Communicate programme to young people as an intervention tool which will help them with the above, and a Communicate leaflet will be available in Induction packs to help explain this to young people.

3. Communicate Implementation

3.1 A Communicate assessment is a **mandatory requirement** for all young people subject to a court order, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and if so these must be discussed with a Team Manager and a contact made by them on Capita as to why the Communicate assessment and any required intervention will not go ahead.

3.2 All young people will be assessed by an allocated, Communicate trained, Intervention worker, with the Initial assessment period wherever possible (within 10 days of allocation to the Intervention worker), to ensure assessment findings can be incorporated into the AssetPlus assessment and Intervention planning.

3.3 The Basic Skills Worker will continue to deliver Communicate to young people who are made subject to ISS and, subject to capacity, will also pick up other cases in localities. The Basic Skills Worker will also be able to offer alternative interventions where it is felt that Communicate is not the most appropriate tool to address identified needs.

3.4 Upon completion of the Communicate assessment the Intervention Worker will discuss with the Case Manager and record on Capita the outcome of the assessment and the intervention work that needs to be completed with an approximation of how many sessions this will take. Communicate assessment results will also be attached to Capita.

3.5 Case Managers should consider the sequencing of interventions, and it is recommended that post assessment, Communicate should be delivered as soon as possible, and on a regular basis, to improve SLCN and literacy skills which will then enable young people to benefit more greatly from further interventions, unless there are higher priority issues which would prevent the young person's engagement i.e. homelessness, chronic substance misuse etc.

3.6 The Interventions worker should summarise the findings of the assessment and record on Capita, and if necessary discuss with the Case Manager. Wherever any communication needs are identified, regardless of whether there are to be further Communicate interventions, the Case Manager and others working with the young person should consider these needs when delivering their interventions. This could be tailored resources, modifying language used etc. The ETE Coordinator and Basic Skills Tutor can give advice on tailoring intervention appropriately.

3.6 Upon completion of the Communicate intervention the Intervention Worker will re-assess the young person and if no further intervention is required, inform the Case Manager, and record on Capita the outcome of the intervention and close their secondary allocation on Capita. If further intervention is required this will be discussed and agreed with the Case Manager.

3.7 Where the young person is pre-16 and still of statutory school age, and the Communicate assessment identifies areas of need/intervention, the locality ETE Advisor in the team should share the Communicate assessment with the education provider and a decision made as to whether it is appropriate for the YJS to deliver Communicate interventions or whether the education provider should be addressing the identified needs. The ETE Coordinator will provide advice and guidance on such cases.

3.8 Please see the Communicate Flowchart in Appendix A

4. Communicate Coordination and Support

4.1 The YJ ETE Coordinator and Basic Skills Tutor will lead on the coordination of Communicate, and will:

- Update a central spreadsheet with all new orders on a weekly basis (this is completed by business support)
- Hold regular Communicate meetings for Intervention workers to offer support and discuss any issues/updates.
- Remain the link with the programme providers, Fluence, to access training/updates around the programme.

- Offer individual coaching/support time to Intervention workers to improve the quality of the delivery of Communicate.
- Audit the quality of the delivery of Communicate and liaise with worker to improve standards.
- Evaluate the impact of the programme by gaining feedback from young people who have participated.

Appendix A

Communicate Process

Young Person Receives an Order

Manager/ AP/Business Support inform Intervention Manager and ETE Coordinator at the point of case allocation.

Intervention Manager /ETE Coordinator allocate case to an Intervention Worker who will make contact with young person and Case Manager

At Induction - Case Manager to explain to YP that Communicate assessment will be carried out as part of the wider assessment process and appointments will be statutory. (Communicate leaflet will be in Induction packs)

OR

Case Managers to discuss with Team managers /AP's any reasons why YP should not have assessment and Team Managers to record on CW if agreed and inform Intervention worker

Intervention worker to complete assessment (within the AssetPlus start assessment timeframe).

Intervention Worker to update Capita by attaching assessment results to paperclip and put contact entry. Case Manager to be informed of the outcome of the assessment and the interventions needed.

Intervention worker to arrange interventions from the results and deliver to young person, these are statutory contacts.

On completion of planned interventions Intervention Worker to re assess young person and add results to paperclip, put a closure contact detailing progress made and close secondary allocation, or discuss with the Case Manager if further intervention required

Basic Skills Tutor and ETE Coordinator to contact sample of young people for evaluation