
Different communication techniques

Participant communication guide



The
Right
Direction

Working together on positive
behaviour support (PBS)

Instructions for behaviour support practitioners

Behaviours of concern are often used by people with disability as a form of communication.

By considering what alternative communication strategies the person can use instead of the behaviour, you can shift to positive behaviour support strategies instead.

These alternatives should be based on the person's preferred communication style and skills. For example, if the person [uses Key Word Sign to communicate](#), include a strategy in the plan that teaches the person and their support network a new sign that can be used to let others know what it is they are seeking or trying to avoid. Consider the information in this guide when developing the behaviour support plan and support strategies to make sure they are meaningful.

This might include:

- developing tailored Easy Read documents or [discussion mats](#) to help conversations, and
- learning how to use the person's communication device and how it can be used to start conversations about behaviour support, etc.

Date: _____

Get to know your participant

This information is about how _____ (name)
and their support network communicates.

Person	Y <input type="checkbox"/> Are they verbal?
	Y <input type="checkbox"/> Are they nonverbal?
	Y <input type="checkbox"/> Do they have a speech therapist?
Environment	Note key information about their environment that may influence communication (eg: who they live with, where they live etc.)

Communication guide: key sections

This guide is designed to help behaviour support practitioners prepare to communicate effectively with a participant ahead of meeting a participant for the first time or in the early stages of getting to know the person.

You should ask the participant who they would like the information to be shared with, then share the information with those people/providers.

Here's a quick look at what the guide includes the following communication methods and space to record relevant details:

- Speech
 - English or other spoken language
- Reading and writing
- Other language
 - Auslan or other sign language
 - Body language and gestures
- Communication aids
- Electronic communication device(s)
- Understanding and responding
- Additional notes

1. Speech

Spoken language (English or other spoken language)

Person	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Does the participant use this method to communicate information?
Environment	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Do people in the participant's support network use this method to help the participant communicate/understand information?

Practitioner notes

Note key information about the person's spoken language(s) and/or their support network's language(s) and how they use them to communicate (eg: which language(s), level of proficiency).
Is the person's speech clear? Does their support network adapt to communicate (eg: short sentences)?
Approximately how many words does the participant use? Provide known examples.

2. Reading and writing

Person	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Does the participant use this method to communicate information?
Environment	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Do people in the participant's support network use this method to help the participant communicate/understand information?

**Practitioner
notes**

Note key information about how the person and/or people in their support network use reading and writing to communicate (eg: level of proficiency, key words, other information such as carries a pen and paper and writes down things for others to read, etc.):

3. Other language

Auslan or other sign language?

Person	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Does the participant use this method to communicate information?
Environment	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Do people in the participant's support network use this method to help the participant communicate/understand information?

**Practitioner
notes**

Note key information about the person's Auslan or other sign language(s) and/or their support network's sign language(s) and how they use it to communicate (eg: which language(s), level of proficiency).

Does their support network adapt language to communicate (eg: short sentences)?
Approximately how many words does the participant use? Provide known examples.

Body language and gestures

a) Facial expression, body language, body movements, and/or vocalisations

Person

Y ☐

N ☐

Does the participant use this method to communicate information?

Environment	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Do people in the participant's support network use this method to help the participant communicate/understand information?
Practitioner notes	Note key information about how the person and/or their support network use facial expressions, body language, body movements, and/or vocalisations to communicate (eg: the meaning of certain body movements or vocalisations):		

b) Natural gestures (eg: pointing, waving)

Person	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Does the participant use this method to communicate information?
Environment	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Do people in the participant's support network use this method to help the participant communicate/understand information?

**Practitioner
notes**

Note key information about how the person and/or their support network use natural gestures to communicate (e.g., the gestures used and their meaning):

c) Key Word Sign

Person

Y ☐

N ☐

Does the participant use this method to communicate information?

Environment	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Do people in the participant's support network use this method to help the participant communicate/understand information?
Practitioner notes	Note key information about how the person and/or their support network use Key Word Sign to communicate (e.g., the signs they commonly use):		

4. Communication aids

Person	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Does the participant use this method to communicate information?
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Environment	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Do people in the participant's support network use this method to help the participant communicate/understand information?
Practitioner notes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Communication book, board and/or cards	Note key information about how the person and/or people in their support network use communication aids to communicate (eg: specific aids and context in which they're used):
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Alphabet board	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Visual supports (eg: 'Who's here today' board, shopping list, meal plan)	

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Object symbols

5. Electronic communication device(s)

Person	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Does the participant use this method to communicate information?
Environment	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Do people in the participant's support network use this method to help the participant communicate/understand information?

Practitioner notes

Note down key information about how the person and/or people in their support network use an electronic communication device to communicate (eg name of specific device and in what context the device is being used)

6. Understanding and responding

Person

Y

☐

N

☐

Does the participant respond to their name?

	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Respond to yes/no questions?
	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Respond to one-step instructions (with or without gesture, eg: 'sit down')
	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Respond to two-step instructions?
	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	Demonstrate simple problem-solving?

Environment

Y

☐

N

☐

Is there anything in the person's environment that influences the person's capacity to communicate (positively or negatively)?

Practitioner notes

How does the person demonstrate that they understand what other people are saying to them (eg: says yes/no, nods head, completes the task requested without saying or gesturing anything, etc.)

Note any additional relevant information about the person's capacity to understand and respond:

7. Additional notes

Practitioner notes

Note any further observations around how the person's communication methods and skills may be potentially related to the **behaviours of concern** they are currently exhibiting, eg: are they potentially using a particular behaviour to communicate a need or want?



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