Communication difficulties and Talking Mats: the advantages and disadvantages of an online training course

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Talking Mats Centre
A LITTLE BIT ABOUT US…..
TALKING MATS CENTRE
A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

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PLAN

- Background
- Reasons
- Methods
- Design
- Examples
- Advantages
- Disadvantages
- Discussion

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BACKGROUND TO TALKING MATS

• Research evidence based low-tech communication framework
• Children and adults
• Supports people to understand, organise their thoughts and then express their views (1-4)
• Staff and family members
• Diverse specialist areas
• Used worldwide

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REASONS FOR ON-LINE TRAINING

- Range of high quality training courses
  - Rolling programme (individuals)
  - In-house for organisations
  - Specialist (dementia; capacity; vulnerability)
  - Accredited
- Travel (rural locations, carer responsibilities)
- Time (fitting into person schedule)
- To allow people to complete the training in their own environment and in their own time.

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METHODS

- Inspired by Finnish colleagues at ISAAC Barcelona
- Funding from NHS Education Scotland
  - Scottish AHPs can apply for funding
- Employed IT specialist
- Moodle www.moodle.org
DESIGN OF COURSE

• Twelve weeks - four modules which aim to provide participants with:
  • an increased understanding of communication and the impact of communication difficulties
  • knowledge of how to include people with communication difficulties in interactions
  • an understanding of the principles of the Talking Mats framework
  • the ability to use Talking Mats within their work setting using a symbol set developed from the World Health Organisation ICF (5,6)
MODULES

• Module 1a: The purpose of communication
• Module 1b: Different Methods of communication
• Module 1c: The impact of communication disorder
• Module 2a: The Advantages and Disadvantages of AAC
• Module 2b: The role of the communication partner
• Module 2c: Introduction to the Talking Mats framework
• Module 3a: Talking Mats Skills
• Module 3b: The people with whom you can use Talking Mats
• Module 3c: Using the Topics and Options from WHO ICF
• Module 4: Evaluation

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WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

First 3 modules (9 weeks):
• Introduction
• Teaching materials (DVDs, short articles..)
• Activities (quizzes, open forums…)
• Reflective task which participants complete and send to the trainers for evaluation
• Forum discussions
• Other resources (books, references, films etc..)
• Support from trainers

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Module 1b – methods of communication

Drag the words on the right to the pictures on the left.

Check

drawing
pointing
posture
gesture
Module 1c - Impact of communication difficulties

Who wants to be a millionaire? This is a quiz about the impact of communication disorder.

Please have a go at all of the questions. If you answer incorrectly, you will be given the chance to try again.

The percentage of women with learning disabilities who are sexually abused is...

A. __ ? __ 75%
B. __ ? __ 30%
C. __ ? __ 10%
D. __ ? __ 55%
Module 2b – communication strategies

**Talking Mats® Online Course**

This is the template for your submission for module 2b. Your template should be filled in and posted to your trainer.

Choose one of the strategies used by the communication partners listed below. Then reflect on the opportunities and challenges of using that strategy in your workplace.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Positioning and environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pacing of the interaction (time given for the person to think and respond)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Range of communication methods used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Use of questions they ask at a time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Why did you choose it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities for using this in my workplace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges for using this in my workplace</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please see following page for instructions
Module 3c – WHO-ICF

Quiz: Matching the option to the domain part 2

Matching exercise

Match the items on the right to the items on the left.
4TH MODULE - DVD ASSIGNMENT

• Using Talking Mats with client
• Symbols provided
• DVD
• Talking Mats report template
• Reflection sheet
• Feedback from trainers
ANNE AND LOGAN
Positive about:
Balloons, trips on the bus, play tent, lego, toy trains, story time, singing at gather time, playing with other children, apples for snack, craft table, bubbles, water table

Unsure about:
No activities
Although L did say sometimes he liked bubbles, he decided to place them in the like pile. It would be useful to further check his understanding of "not sure".

Negative about:
Play doh, hand dryer, home corner, oranges for snack, computer, play tunnel

Additional comments:
Areas to explore.
It was expected that L would not like the play tent, or singing at gather time. He has not been observed to play co-operatively with other children.
It was expected that L would like the computer and the play doh.
| Engagement | You managed to keep L engaged throughout and when he seemed like he was becoming distracted you brought him back gently. We can see that this little boy could easily lose concentration. |
| Use of Open/closed questions | You used open questions throughout and as you said in your reflection sheet, you were able to shorten it to ‘what about?’ This really helped L to understand the structure and flow of the conversation and allowed him to elaborate when he wanted to. |
| Pointing method | You gave control to L and we loved the way you let him place the symbols where he wanted, even on top of each other. We have never seen anyone remove symbols in order to put the most recent one right beside the top scale symbol. It was just great how you let him do this without losing the others. |
| Who has control | L definitely was in control of his views and responses. The way you had the symbols in your bag kept his attention but also allowed him control once they came out of the bag. |
| Language level | You matched your language to his beautifully and he understood you well. |
| Consistency of language | Again using the same question format really helped him. |
| Timing | Your pacing and timing of questions and bringing him back to the task were excellent. |
| Use of Blanks | You offered blanks appropriately even though he didn’t add anything. |
| Check and change | Agree with you that he had probably had had enough by this stage but you did manage to get him back and go over most of the options and found several that he wanted to change. We agree that starting with the negatives probably was not best for him and that starting at the positive side might have been better for L. We will use this as an example when we are training in the future! |
| Trainee - Reflection | Your reflections are spot on! What else can we add? |
| Trainee - Report | Excellent |
| Other | This is a beautiful example of how to use Talking Mats. We hope this will be helpful with L in the future and that you will go on to use Talking Mats with others. |
ADVANTAGES OF ON-LINE TRAINING

• Reach participants from a range of backgrounds and locations
• Different learning styles
• Work when convenient for them
• Breaks the training down into small chunks
• Participants can put the learning from the course straight into practice
• They can go back and look at course materials again
• Option for further reading and resources
• Quick and personalised feedback

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DISADVANTAGES

- Initial technical difficulties
- Consent to film patients
- Not meeting other course participants
- Holidays or illness delayed completion of assignments on time
- Trainers spent more time on assessing than planned
COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

• ‘Brilliant, can access anywhere, can do a section, leave it, and then go back when time allows’
  (Physio Technical Instructor)

• ‘I have learnt so much about communication in general. I feel this has to help me be a better communicator with everyone I deal with - not only those with communication difficulties’
  (Occupational Therapy Support Worker)
‘I will definitely use Talking Mats with my clients as my caseload is 90% complex needs and the clients would benefit enormously by using this as a thinking tool. I will also share my new found knowledge and skills with my colleagues and encourage them to use it with suitable clients on their caseloads’

(Speech and Language Therapy Assistant)
CONCLUSION

• Much more successful than expected
• High quality of assignments
• Positive feedback from participants
• Definitely continue and extend its use
REFERENCES


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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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