

Trafford Signs & Symbols Guidance ALTERNATIVE, AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION (AAC)



TRAFFORD
COUNCIL



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ALTERNATIVE, AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION (AAC)

Guidance Introduction

Aim

To increase the use of signs and symbols across schools and early years settings to promote inclusive practice and ideology.

Key Elements

- Promotes a consistent approach across mainstream and special schools/settings by staff and visiting professionals.
- Use and develop further collaborative working between SLT/Early Years/SEN Services and Special Schools.

Background and links to priorities:

This guidance was originally compiled in June 2008 following a project aimed at promoting a consistent approach across services schools and settings in relation to communication (AAC) in Trafford. The Inspiration for the project in 2008 was taken from the DfES 'Accessibility Planning Project' and information presented within the 'Implementing the DDA in Early Years settings and Schools' (DfES).

The original guidance was formed following the project and a number of work streams with Contributions from:

Sally Smith	Advisor for Inclusion Special Educational Needs Advisory Service
Gill Wilson	Special Educational Needs Advisory Service
Mandy Green	Special Educational Needs Advisory Service
Catriona Scott	Speech and Language Therapist
Suzanne Pickstone	Speech and Language Therapist
Catherine Colligan	Speech and Language Therapist
Lucy McGill	Speech and Language Therapist
Joanne Jones	Speech and Language Therapist
Nancy Samuels	Inclusion Officer for Childcare & Play
Claire Griffiths	Trafford Sensory Impairment Support Service
Linda Walker	Trafford Sensory Impairment Support Service
Jane Chesson	Area SENCO
Anne Davies	Trafford Sensory Impairment Service
Christine Deeran	Trafford Sensory Impairment Service
Sally Burston	Deputy Head Teacher, Delamere School
John Moss	Educational Psychology Service
Sarah Welton	Adult Social Services
Chris Dahlstrom	Children with Disabilities Social Care

This guidance has recently been reviewed to update it in line with current priorities and recent legislation) SEND agenda **2014** and Liberating the NHS (2013), formation of NHS England,

The review of this guidance fits in with Trafford SEN and Accessibility Strategies and aims to continue to support Trafford CYPS strategic approach to improving outcomes for children and young people. This review has been undertaken in 2017-2018 by members of the Trafford Communication Champions Group including:

Gemma Lester	Speech and Language Therapist
Julie Llewellyn	Speech and Language Therapist
Rebecca Myles	Speech and Language Therapist
Anne Davies	Trafford Sensory Impairment Service
Aimee Newsome	The Orchards School
Sally Burston	Head Teacher Delamere Special School
Alison Gurney	Educational Psychology Service
Katy Leckenby	Brentwood School
Gill Wilson	Special Educational Needs Advisory Service
Mandy Green	Special Educational Needs Advisory Service
Lauren Macleod	Delamere Special School

- **Education** – ‘ensuring appropriate educational and independent life skills are accessible to those with a learning difficulty or disability’.
- **Advocacy** – ‘develop Trafford Children and Young People Services as champions (CYPS) of the rights and interests of children and young people; and develop a more systematic multi-agency approach to engaging children and young people across the borough; ‘strengthen the advocacy role of Trafford CYPS embed meaningful engagement with all children and young people and their families, particularly the vulnerable, in the developmental and operational work of all services’.
- Trafford continue to subscribe to the roll out of the Signalong programme which started originally in March 2007.

ALTERNATIVE, AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION (AAC)

Visual Support (1)

Using Pictures and Symbols to Support Learning

Introduction

As adults we all use visual support to help us remember things and organise our days. Examples of visual support that we're all familiar with are symbols on toilet doors, road signs, traffic lights, shopping lists, calendars, diaries, to do lists, washing symbols on clothes, photos in recipe books and timers. Visual support can also help all children as it helps all adults.



The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to staff working with children and young people in various settings across Trafford. Settings may include mainstream or special schools, nurseries, day-care, play schemes and after-school/holiday clubs.

Why use pictures and symbols to support spoken words?

- They are easier to process than spoken words
- One small symbol can convey lots of meaning e.g. McDonalds
- Words disappear as soon as they are spoken
- Words can be difficult to remember
- Symbols do not stop speech, but act as a stepping stone to speech and aid communication

What are pictures and symbols?

Any pictures or symbols can be used to help children, for example:

- Photos
- Hand drawings – drawn by an adult or the child
- Clip art / copyright-free images
- Pictures can be black and white or colour
- Written words
- Pictures from catalogues and magazines



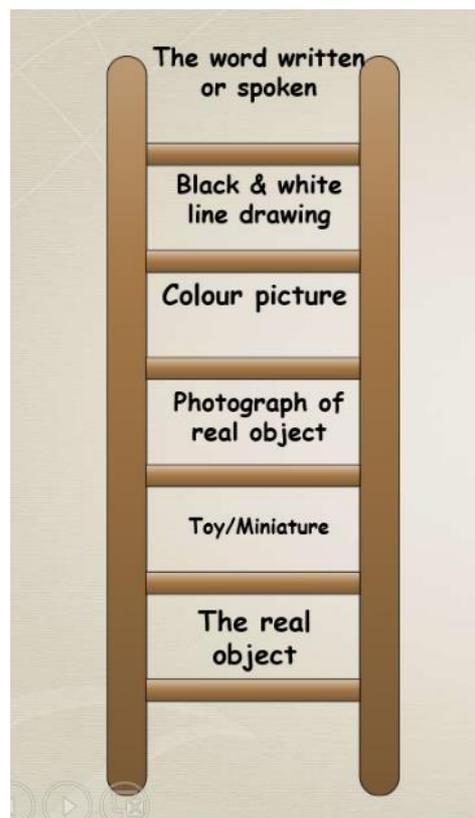
There are also specific symbol systems that can be used, these include:

- Picture Communication System (PCS). This system can be accessed through Boardmaker.
- Wigit (previously named Rebus) symbols – which can be accessed through 'Communication in Print.' These can also be used to support literacy, as each symbol represents a single idea/concept.

How can I decide to use photos or symbols?

There is a developmental progression of understanding visual materials.

- Photos of the real object are the easiest to comprehend so are suitable for very young children or children with significant learning difficulties.
- As a child progresses they generally become able to comprehend symbols and then the written word.
- Pictures and symbols should always be accompanied by the written word.
- Use of photos, or symbols, will depend on the child's developmental level. Discuss which would be more appropriate with professionals involved with the child. You can also take a look at the child's play skills to inform progression.



Elklan – Language Builders for Children with Complex Needs

Which pictures and symbols do we use in mainstream schools?

The important point is to remember to use visual support to help learning throughout the day, even a quick line drawing can make all the difference! If you wish to purchase some software to use in your school, Boardmaker, which accesses PCS symbols, is one that is particularly easy to use and is one of Trafford's recommended symbol systems. Boardmaker can be purchased through Winslow Press. Trafford have produced their own easy to follow starter guide for Boardmaker. SENCOs can also contact the Inclusion Officer who has access to PCS symbols through Boardmaker. Access to a digital camera is also useful. Always use the written word alongside the photo or symbol.

Widgit - Literacy. Pupils with significant cognitive needs may be more able to access PCS symbols, accessible through Boardmaker.

Which pictures and symbols do we use in specialised education provision (e.g. Special Schools)?

Within specialised education provision, when a child is at the level of understanding symbols, it is advisable for all staff to use the same symbol system throughout the school. Children with significant learning difficulty will take longer to learn and understand the meaning of symbols, and so will require that the same symbols are used from: class to class; school to home; school to childcare; and at transition from one Special School to another. This is particularly important when introducing symbols for more abstract ideas, which are harder for children to learn. The team of professionals working with a child should ensure that they are all using the same symbols.

Which pictures and symbols do we use in other settings?

As previously mentioned, consistency is important, so it would be useful to discuss this with the child's parents to find out what is used in any other settings the child attends.

How can pictures and symbols be used to support language in our setting?

- Labelling areas within a provision/setting.
- Visual Timetables (a symbol list of activities that will take place).
- Displays on the walls.
- Making choices, e.g. using photos to choose between the construction area and writing area.
- To support conversation and interaction skills to be more successful via communication/activity mats
- Helping children remember rules of the setting.
- To motivate and reward children, e.g., visual reward building towards a favourite treat.
- Help children remember sequences/routine, e.g., getting ready for an activity.
- Help explain changes in routines.
- Learning new vocabulary/difficult concepts.
- Story time.
- Describing the weather.
- Bringing visual material from home to share news, e.g., postcards, digital photos, tickets and leaflets.
- To encourage independence in children who have difficulty organising themselves.
- Including children in decision making, e.g. at time of review – school council.



Who should use pictures and symbols?

EVERYBODY!

As mentioned before, all children will benefit from the use of pictures and symbols, but some children may need pictures and symbols to access the curriculum at school. Pictures and symbols are particularly helpful for the following children:

“The least dangerous assumption is to presume competence” (1984, Anne Donnellan a respected researcher in special education)

- Children with difficulties understanding language
- English as an additional language
- General learning difficulties
- Children with behaviour difficulties
- Children with limited organisational skills
- Specific language Impairment
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Children who have difficulty coping with changes/routines/new situations.
- Children with memory difficulties.
- Children with attention and listening difficulties.
- Children with hearing impairment.
- Children who have unclear speech
- Children with literacy difficulties
- Children who are new to the school
- Children with Autism

Where should pictures and symbols be used in the setting?

EVERYWHERE!

- Labelling areas in the rooms the children use (e.g., construction area)
- Labelling drawers, boxes etc
- Labelling rooms (e.g. toilets)
- Displays
- Having choice boards easily accessible, e.g., to help a child choose an area/activity
- In curriculum materials, e.g. worksheets
- Sequencing strips
- Activity mats to facilitate language learning (communicating with the child/young person in the way in which we expect them to respond)
- In all places of the school, home, on the school bus. In all environments that the young person spends time in.

Make the symbols fit in with your routine, e.g., within schools, have the timetable near where you sit for whole class activities so you can easily point to what's happening next.

When do we use pictures and symbols?

ALL THE TIME!

As soon as children enter a provision, visual support can be useful and should be consistently used throughout school and childcare from preschool age right through to secondary age. Visual support can be particularly useful at transition or times of change. Older children who are increasingly independent could create their own written list of what will happen during the day.

How can symbols be used beyond school and into the wider community?

Children and young people who are using symbols in school may need support in communicating and accessing information outside of school in other settings and the wider community. Some examples of where symbol use could be beneficial:

- Brownies and Scouts or other youth or social groups
- Visiting the doctors or hospital to help with understanding medical procedures

- the local supermarket or shop to enable children to make choices

How symbols can be used to help children with hearing impairment?

The use of symbols may be different with children with hearing impairment. Professionals working with the child should seek advice from the Sensory Impairment Service (TSISS) telephone no: 973 0126/5694

Strategies/other systems Low-Tech/High-Tech definitions:

There is a range of communication systems that can be used to support children in different ways. The most suitable system will depend upon their skills and needs.

What is PECS?

PECS stands for Picture Exchange Communication System. It is a communication system that helps particularly non-verbal children with Autism communicate their needs.

How can pictures and symbols be linked to literacy and the National Curriculum?

The written word should always be used alongside pictures and symbols. This will aid literacy development and reinforce vocabulary development. Lower down the school, pictures and symbols can enhance story time and further up the school can enhance literacy time such as Big Writing.

When do we stop using pictures and symbols?

As previously mentioned, we use symbols into adulthood, but you may find that for many children whose literacy skills are sufficient, written words may replace pictures and symbols as they move through the school, e.g. a written timetable or homework diaries.

Young children learn language through modelling. Even though babies don't yet understand a lot of what we say we still talk to them. And during this time that we are bombarding them with language we don't expect them to say a single word. Similarly, we cannot expect a child to spontaneously start using an augmentative and alternative (AAC) system to communicate as soon as we give it to them.

Aided Language Stimulation

(ALS) is a communication strategy, where a communication partner teaches the meaning of symbols and models language by combining their own speech with the selection of vocabulary on the AAC system.

Visual aided language environments (environments where symbols are used regularly) should be introduced as early as possible.

Children and young people who are learning to use AAC will need to be immersed in a visually aided language environment.

ALTERNATIVE, AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION (AAC)
Visual Support (2)
Using Objects of Reference to Support Communication

Introduction

As adults we all use visual support to help us to remember things and organise our days. We may use a diary or calendar. We may leave objects we need to take with us to work near to the door. Seeing these objects helps us to remember not only what to take but it triggers ideas about the activity we will use them for. If we see the milk carton in the fridge we may remember to buy more milk.

We also use objects to communicate with one another. If someone is in the middle of a conversation we may not wish to interrupt him or her. If we want to ask them if they want a coffee, we may hold out a jar of coffee and raise our eyebrows or point to them. Our message is understood quite easily.



Why use objects to support spoken words?

- Some children recognise objects but they do not understand spoken words.
- Other visual systems such as photographs and symbols may be too difficult to see or they may not be meaningful because they are in two dimensions.
- One object can convey lots of meaning, e.g. a swimming costume can mean that the child is going to hydrotherapy. The costume can be dipped into the water and dried without rinsing. The addition of the smell of the chlorine will heighten the effectiveness. Sight and smell can trigger memories of experiences.
- An object can stay but words disappear as soon as they are spoken.
- An object can be touched, examined, looked at, smelt and even tasted.
- The child may understand your words but not be able to answer with speech. They can show you an object to send a message e.g. they may bring you their home/school book to mean, "Write to Mum." They are particularly likely to use objects to tell you that they are making a choice.

Who will benefit from Objects of Reference (OoR)?

- Children with profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- All babies and very young children.
- Children with visual and/or hearing impairments.
- Children who cannot understand other visual methods.

How do we decide who would benefit from Objects of Reference and how to help them?

- The child needs to be assessed by a speech and language therapist or a teacher of the deaf.
- They will guide the family and multi disciplinary team to make observations and trial ideas.

- Most children start using objects of reference at the first stage but the progress they make will depend on their learning ability, sensory skills and how consistently the team use this system.

What do Objects of Reference refer to?

- They refer to a **P**erson, an **O**bject, a **L**ocation or an **E**vent.
- Remember this as **POLE**.

What are the stages of Objects of Reference? (OoR)

There are several stages of objects of reference (OoR). You need to use the correct one for each child in the class.

Stage 1: Use of the actual object

- This is called an “index” and should be personal to the child. E.g. the child’s own coat is shown to them to mean we are going out.
- Some children understand very few objects. When babies are young they recognise people from their smell and voice not their appearance. This is also true for objects. A bottle is recognised by the touch of the teat onto the lips until the child is 6 months old and can then recognise it by sight. Some of the children we work with are at an early stage of development. Choose a few objects of reference at an index stage for them. Build them up gradually.

Stage 2: Use of an agreed object to refer to the event

- This is called an “icon”. An icon is a real sized object but it isn’t the object that is going to be used. It will be one of a collection of objects that you will keep in class (or at home) to use to send messages. You may show the class a wooden spoon each time you are doing cookery. When you are in the kitchen you may use other equipment. This is therefore a higher developmental stage than using the actual object to communicate.
- The meaning of the icon needs to be learned. In an establishment it is important to agree these shared icons so that the children can move from one class to another and not need to relearn the OoR that are used.
- You may choose an associated OoR as the icon such as a reusable Tesco bag to mean you are going to the supermarket.

Stage 3: Higher level icons

- A miniature of a real object can be used e.g. a small cup to indicate a drink.
- A partial object can be used e.g. the steering wheel of a car to mean a car.
- A physical property of an item may be meaningful e.g. a piece of rubber to indicate a trampoline.

Higher level icons are suitable for children with sufficient cognitive skills to understand the meaning. These may be children with severe spoken language problems who understand language. Very few children and young people will be able to use higher level icons but not photographs and/or symbols. Children with visual impairments would be among the children who might find them meaningful.

Should the object of reference be shown to an individual child or to the group?

- This depends on the child’s developmental level.

- At the personal object of reference stage (index), the child needs to feel and explore the object. He may need to smell and taste it, especially if it is food that is being offered. The child may not be able to recognise the object just by looking at it.
- Children with visual difficulties need to touch the object.
- Children with short-term memory difficulties may recognise the object when they touch it and then forget it when it is shown to another person.
- It is a good idea to show one object to the group and have individual objects for certain children.
- Remember that in a mixed ability class, other children may understand what you are saying or they recognise photographs and symbols. The use of OoR is a priority for certain children in the group. These are the ones who should handle the object.

How can object of reference be used to support communication in school?

- As a clue to what is being said.
- To show a child what will happen next.
- To involve a child who might otherwise be passive. He could be prompted to hold the OoR and show it to the other students while you explain.
- To allow the child to make a choice.

How can object of reference be used for choice?

- All choices need to be motivating, meaningful and frequent.
- Children's ability to understand and make a choice depends on the stage they have reached within objects of reference. It also depends on their sensory skills.
- The child should be shown one object at first. He may respond by accepting, rejecting; or there may be no response.
- If there is no response you do not know the reason e.g. lack of understanding, refusal or the child has not had enough time to respond. You will need to look at this more carefully and not jump to conclusions.
- When a child is shown two objects he/she may take both or look from one to another and not make a choice. If this happens go back to single objects and see which object he/she responded to most positively.
- Consider whether the child has explored the object enough to make a choice; e.g. if it is food he may not recognise it until he tastes a bit.
- Some children need to taste some of the drink to realise they like it or don't like it. It is a higher skill within OoR to recognise the bottle of juice or milk carton. This is the level of an icon.

Offering Choice:

Try these stages:

- One object offered in midline.
- One object held to one side (then the other).
- Desirable object is contrasted with a boring distracter. Desirable object is held nearer the child.
- As above with equal distance between child and each object (or on the tray).
- Desirable object is further away with distracter nearer the child.
- Two equally desirable objects but from different categories so they are very dissimilar e.g. a drink versus a food; a musical toy versus an exploratory toy.
- Objects that are similar e.g. two drinks.

Which objects should we use as objects of reference?

- At the index (indices) stage the object needs to be the child's own object.
- At the general icon stage you need to be consistent throughout the school and at home.
- Consider how practical the icon would be and how abstract it is.
- It is helpful if it can be something that the child can handle.
- It should be portable so it can be shown inside the classroom and can be taken to the venue.
- Icons are learned so it does not matter if you think he wouldn't understand the meaning straight away.
- If you select an object like a beanbag for PE it would be best to use the object as a warm up exercise at each PE lesson to make the OoR meaningful.
- You can select an object that is always used in the activity even if other objects vary. E.g. a beaker/glass for snack time; a swimming costume for hydrotherapy.

How can I measure progress?

- There will be progress within the personal index stage and later when general icons are used.
- Stage 1: the student shows little understanding of the OoR. They do not tolerate it and may ignore, drop or throw the object.
- Stage 2: the student may hold or carry the OoR but does not understand the meaning.
- Stage 3: student begins to show understanding of one or more OoR. They will eye point or go to the correct place or person. They will look excited when the object is given to them.
- Stage 4: student will correctly select from a range of OoR with prompts. This is not spontaneous communication. e.g. If everyone else is having a drink, you can hold up a cup and a distracter and the student will take the cup to indicate they understand within the context.
- Stages 1 to 4 are dependant stages. Staff need to assist the student and provide lots of opportunity to build up understanding.
- Stage 5: student selects and uses OoR independently to express needs and choices. They understand more OoR used towards them by staff than they can express.
- Stage 6: generalisation of knowledge in other situations e.g. understanding the cup in a café, not just at school.

A child will be at a higher level for one OoR than he/she is for another. This is because of the familiarity and frequency of use. It is also due to the level of abstractness of certain icons.

What are TOBIs?

- **TOBIs** are **T**ru**O**bject **B**ased **I**mages.
- They are an interim stage between objects and photographs.
- TOBIs use the natural shape of the object to convey an extra level of meaning that gets lost when you move from a 3D to 2D image.
- They can be produced either by scanning objects or by taking photographs; expanding to life size, cutting around the shape and laminating.
- As a further step the size can gradually be reduced but the outline of the object should be retained.
- E.g. a flat packet of crisps or an outline of a cup.

When do we stop using objects of reference?

- Some children will use OoR as their primary means of communication throughout their lives.
- Others will move on to symbols, signing or speech.

- We continue to use stages of communication such as OoR when we also use other methods. Therefore we should not stop using them.

Trafford Signs and Symbols Guidance

Top Tips section

1. Start with a detailed assessment of the child or young person's needs to ensure that a personalised communication plan is in place and to avoid inappropriate signs and symbols being used e.g. using photographs with a child that's at an objects of reference (OoR) stage.
2. Ensure that everyone supporting the child or young person is using a consistent approach e.g. the same symbols/visual support/signing system.
3. Ensure that resources can be easily shared between practitioners so that individuals do not have to 'reinvent the wheel' e.g. a central bank of resources/symbols on a shared ICT drive.
4. Meet with the child or young person's family regularly, particularly when introducing new signs/symbols/devices, so that they know how to use them effectively to support communication at home.
5. Ensure that resources are portable, durable, easy to find and personalised to the child or young person. You may need to use cases, straps, lanyards and stands to ensure they are easily accessible in a range of contexts. Protective/waterproof casing and lamination will be needed when using resources outdoors.
6. Provide opportunities for children and young people and their families to meet other AAC users to share experiences and practical strategies. Adult AAC users are also great role models.
7. Ensure that signs/symbols/devices are reviewed regularly and kept up to date as the child or young person grows older.
8. If using high tech AAC devices ensure that there is a plentiful supply of batteries and chargers available within school- do not rely on devices being charged at home.
9. Always have low tech AAC devices available as a backup for when high tech devices are not working (technology inevitably breaks or becomes faulty at some point!) e.g. printed screenshots of page sets.
10. Always ensure that the child or young person has a range of communication partners available, not just adults. You may need to run a peer communication session where the child or young person's peers have chance to try out AAC devices/communication aids so that they can experience using them and learn how best to communicate with those using them.

ALTERNATIVE, AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION (AAC)

Why Sign? - Frequently Asked Questions

What Is Signing?

Signing is a visual system that supports and encourages communication. It is often thought that signs are useful for people who can't speak, but the benefits go much further than that; even before a person is attempting speech. Using Sign or Signalong slows down speech and breaks the words into syllables.

Will signing stop my child from speaking?

Signs do not stop people from speaking; they can provide a stepping stone to speech. This is viewed as one step up from natural gesture.

How will it help?

- Signs give valuable extra information and draw attention to what is being said.
- Signs are visual and can be performed slowly and clearly, helping those who have difficulty understanding through listening alone.
- Signs can be prompted more easily than words.
- Signs are interesting to watch, so they focus the person's attention, helping with their **looking and listening**.
- Signs are easier than words, so people (babies and toddlers in particular) can say more with signs. This reduces **frustrations and tantrums** and helps them to tell you about their **ideas and feelings**.
- Signing supports children's communication such as saying hello to **turn taking** and joining in at song time.

Many people with communication problems find the trauma of being unable to make themselves understood so demoralizing that they avoid speaking whenever possible; especially to people unfamiliar with their problems.

Signing is designed to relieve the stress caused by people's inability to communicate, to be used in an environment where others are to use and understand sign.

Why should we bother?

The signs are fun and this encourages people to develop **enjoyment and confidence** in communicating.

The signs make words more memorable. This helps people remember words and sentences.

Some people have difficulty remembering words even though they know what they want to say. Signs can help them retrieve the words they are looking for.

The signs encourage the speaker to be more aware of their rate of speech and the words that are important, making language easier to understand.

Who would benefit?

All children would benefit from the use of sign supported speech.

It helps reluctant speakers, children with a speech and/or language delay, and children with low self esteem, express themselves and enables them to communicate without necessarily having the right words or pronunciation.

It may also help children with Autism and children who understand the spoken word but can not communicate effectively using spoken word alone.

The use of sign, particularly key word signing can help children understand concepts/ideas and enable them to participate more fully in activities. (particularly very young children and those with English as an additional language.)

Why did Trafford choose Signalong?

We chose Signalong because the descriptions given to describe the signing are very clear and specific because the hand shape and orientation are detailed for each individual sign.

Is Signalong easy to understand?

The signs are often obvious e.g. cupping your hand to your mouth for “drink”, often mirroring normal/natural gesture. Again this helps people understand the meaning of words and **sentences**.

How does British Sign Language (BSL) differ from Signalong?

British Sign Language is the language of the deaf community. It is not a communication system or support for spoken language but is a full and rich language in its own right. BSL has its own complex grammar.

Which should we use?

As the signs used in Signalong are based on BSL, Signalong can be used successfully to enable very young deaf children to be included in settings at the early stages of their language development – however specialist support from competent users of BSL/Sign Supported English will be essential for deaf children to fully develop their language skills and access the curriculum through sign.

Parents of deaf children may opt for BSL to be used in the education of their children or they may opt for BSL signs to be used alongside English in English word order – (Sign Supported English). Sign may be used flexibly to meet the individual needs of children and young people in different situations.

Professional advice from those working with your family i.e. teacher of the deaf or speech and language therapist should be sought.

What if I don't know a particular sign?

You will be given a Signalong manual at any training you attend, so that you can always refer to these. Various manuals are can be purchased to support different topics / interests, areas of curriculum and life styles/circumstances. Some may be available to borrow from a Trafford tutor.

You can contact Signalong direct via email admin@signalong.org.uk or by telephone 08707743752 and they will tell you the description of the sign.

Text a sign request is an automated service available 24 hours a day. Text **SIGN** and the word or phrase to look up to **07446462146**. Receive 4 free signs per month per user or subscribe to our unlimited service for a year for only £30.

Signs do not stop people from speaking; they can provide a stepping stone to speech and aid communication.

For further information on Signalong and to see the range of publications available please visit their website www.signalong.org.uk

Signalong in Trafford:

Trafford has a number of qualified Signalong Tutors within the Speech and Language Therapy Service, SEN Advisory Service (SENAS) and Special schools. Parents should check with the speech and language therapist or teacher of the deaf involved with their child. Practitioners can speak to SENAS members check the [Trafford Services for Education](#) website and Delamere School website for dates of upcoming training.

What types of courses are available?

Introduction to Signalong courses:-

- Explain that Signalong is based on British Sign Language.
- Uses one sign for several concepts/meanings i.e. Mummy, Mum, Ma, Mater, Mom etc
- Differentiates between others i.e. doll and baby, sleep and bed.
- Explains about signing windows
- Teaches the hand shapes that are used to make the signs
- Teaches how the signs are orientated i.e. in what direction your hands should face and point
- Talks about name signs (early years may only use second part of name sign whereas older children may use alphabet spelling then second part of name sign)
- Stresses that speech and sign must be used together and coordinated

Promotes discussion on:-

- Why we sign (means, reason and opportunity)
- Use of working hand and supporting hand
- Need for consistency with signing.
- How adults must model signs correctly but be able to interpret children's variants
- Introduced as developmentally appropriate to the child. (Please and thank you are niceties whereas toilet and milk are more essential)
- The use of natural gesture, facial expression etc.

The course lasts approximately 3 hours

Foundation Courses

Have a similar format to the introduction but cover:-

- More signs
- Symbolic Development
- Generalisation
- Objects of Reference

This course lasts approximately 15 hours – therefore a lot more practice and re-enforcement

Themed Workshops are also available to practitioners and parents who have attended an Introduction to Signalong Course. These courses vary in length between 3 and 5 hours and are based around themes such as Christmas and Stories and Rhymes.

ALTERNATIVE, AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION (AAC) Recommended Resources and Useful Links

- **ACE Centre**
Staffed by teams of teachers, therapists and technicians, Ace Centre offers many years' experience and expertise in Assistive Technology (AT), particularly Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). The charity also provides a range of general services to support children and adults with severe communication difficulties. www.acecentre.org.uk
- **CALL Scotland**
Call Scotland helps children and young people across Scotland to overcome disability and barriers to learning created by their environment, and to fulfil their potential. They provide information and support to individuals and their families, as well as health professionals. There are lots of useful resources available to download for free on their website. www.callscotland.org.uk
- **Communication Matters**
Communication Matters is a registered charity that aims to increase understanding, awareness and knowledge of the needs of people with complex communication needs. Again, there are lots of helpful resources on their website www.communicationmatters.org.uk
- **PrAACtical AAC**
PrAACtical AAC supports a community of professionals and families who are determined to improve the communication and literacy abilities of people with significant communication difficulties. It was founded in 2011 by two Speech Therapists, Carole Zangari and the late Robin Parker, around a shared passion for AAC. www.praacticalaac.org
- **Widgit Software: Software tools for inclusion and SEN**
Widgit is the UK version of the US Company Mayer-Johnson.
Information on the use of symbols for writing in Literacy and writing across Science, History and Geography:
They use mainly 'Widgit' symbols. The programme **'Writing with Symbols'** was one of the most popular packages, however they have moved away from black and white 'rebus' symbols and now use coloured Widgit Literacy symbols. **'Communicate in Print'** is the main package being currently promoted. Widgit is based on a structure that can be learnt and applied by those children with the cognitive ability to do so. e.g. an occupation is always represented as a stick-person plus an object. A shop is always the same building with an object under it. Widgit can be made accessible through switching, scanning and touch screen. <https://www.widgit.com/resources>
There is a document produced as part of symbols Inclusion Project Warwickshire County Council that illustrates how symbols have been used to support learning and communication in mainstream schools and settings. Follow the link below to view the document.
[Supporting Learning with Symbols Document](#)
- **Picture Communication Symbols (PCS)** from Mayer-Johnson, were developed to support Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC). They were created to support face to face communication. PCS are most frequently associated with Boardmaker Software (see below) but add-on packs are now available for the 'Communication' Series from Widgit Software/Mayer-Johnson.
PCS (see above guidance document and explanation below) may be better where levels of cognition are not at a level which can understand the structure of Widgit literacy symbols (WLS). The child's Speech Therapist and this Signs and Symbols guidance document will support you in choosing the best system.
- **'Let's Sign and Write'**
Graphics to support British Sign Language produced by Widgit Software. A starter guide to using this software has been produced by Trafford Sensory Impairment Service.

- **Boardmaker**
A flexible tool for creating print symbol-based materials such as communication displays for AAC users, worksheets and flash cards for English language learners, visual schedules and social skills stories for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, books and symbol-supported literacy activities for beginning and pre-readers, song and story boards for preschoolers, and general educational and functional living skills materials for special education students.
<https://www.boardmakeronline.com>
- **Sparklebox**
Picture based signs/cards and labels/resources useful to support children in Literacy, Numeracy and specific topics. Particularly useful for sequences such as changing for PE. These are more likely to be used for young children rather than those who will use symbol systems longer term. Downloads are free www.sparklebox.co.uk
- **Signalong**
The Signalong Group is a registered charity dedicated to enabling children and adults with impaired communication to overcome difficulties at to reach their full potential. It was founded in 1992 at a Kent special school and now provides resources and training throughout the United Kingdom and in some other countries. Trafford have provided training since March 2007. Contact Jane Chesson 911 8658 Area SENCO for further information. www.signalong.org.uk
- **British Sign Language**
See 'Why Sign?' within this resource and contact Trafford Sensory Impairment Service for further advice and guidance. 0161 912 5402. Service Manager: Anne Davies
http://www.ndcs.org.uk/family_support/communication/sign_language/index.html
- **I Want To Choose Too**
A resource for teachers and others for including primary school age children with little or no speech in decision-making
<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/sps/migrated/documents/iwanttochoosetoo.pdf>
- **Clicker 7**
The latest version of Clicker is more accessible, user-friendly and customisable than ever before. Clicker 7 helps every child to play an active role in their own learning and offers complete support throughout the writing process. Clicker 7 builds on the worldwide success of its award-winning predecessors. There's even more writing support for pupils, and it's easier than ever for teachers to provide personalised literacy support across the curriculum.
More details can be found at www.cricksoft.com