HSE

ADULT SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE GUIDANCE

COMMUNICATION APPROACHES AND TOOLS TO AID SAFEGUARDING

MAKING SAFEGUARDING PERSONAL IRISH TOOLKIT

The aim of this document is to support you to communicate with people you are working with, in terms of safeguarding information, advice, and plans that they receive.

This guidance document will explore what is working and what is not working along with approaches and tools to facilitate communication.

BACKGROUND

Since 2010, Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) backed by the **UK Care Act of 2014** has marked a shift in culture and social work practice with professionals, enabling users to seek a better outcome to their circumstances and recovery **(Romeo, 2017)**. MSP is part of a growing practice of re-orientation from risk averse cultures towards a more collaborative, strengths-based and person-centred culture, enabling positive risk-taking.

> 66 *Making Safeguarding Personal means it should be person-led and outcomes focused. It engages the person in a conversation about how best to respond to their safeguarding situation in a way that enhances involvement, choice and control as well as improving quality of life, wellbeing and safety.* 99

(Liverpool John Moores University, Safeguarding Policy 2023).

To support the adoption/implementation of this model, the UK Local Government Association produced the **MSP Toolkit** containing 26 practice tools. The toolkit guides social workers on how to focus on the user and their perception of what is happening. The focus is on what is important to the user to enhance their engagement, choice and control, with an overall aim of resolution and recovery. The toolkit includes resources in risk enablement, solution focused communication and restorative justice, as some risks are managed or mediated rather than eliminated.

MAKING SAFEGUARDING PERSONAL (MSP) IN AN IRISH CONTEXT

The HSE National Safeguarding Office have reviewed the Making Safeguarding Toolkit to examine which tools can be adapted for use in an Irish context. In addition the National Safeguarding Office has collaborated with a large care provider to examine whether service users want, and can be enabled, to participate in the completion of the HSE safeguarding plans. The findings suggest that service users can and do want to be involved in these plans, particularly if communication tools can be utilised. This document outlines good practice for effective communication and lists what communication tools are currently available (this is not an exhaustive list).

This guidance document is provided by the National Safeguarding Office to help staff working with people who may have communication needs. Evidence from service users and carers indicates what works for them in terms of how information and advice is provided, and what doesn't (**Nosowska, 2013**).

We know in general what works for service users in terms of safeguarding, as depicted below (**taken from MSP toolkit number 2 "Working/Not working"**).

MSP TOOLKIT
NUMBER 2 WORKING/NOT WORKING

What's working	What's not
• Being told what is happening and what to expect	• Jargon
• Knowing who will support me	• Not being listened to
• Being reliable and honest	• Not getting back to me when you say you will
• Understanding what's happening	• No interpreter
• Knowing what will happen next	• Changes that I'm not told about

WHAT COMMUNICATION TOOLS ARE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE?

Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) support is varied across Irish services and not every service has regular access.
It is always advisable to refer to, or consult with SLT for people who have communication needs, but in the absence of this service many practitioners can and do use approaches and tools that aid communication.

The majority of Irish services promote and advocate for the use of Total and Inclusive Communication approaches to enable successful and meaningful communication between people.
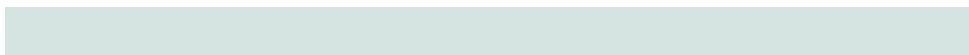Using this approach means acknowledging that supporting communication is everyone's responsibility, and to use all means of communication available to a person for e.g. verbal communication/ speech, use of sounds, use of body language and facial expression, sign systems and gesture, photographs, symbols, objects, written words and high tech augmentative and alternative communication devices. It is important to ensure that the environment around the person lends itself to good communication, e.g. removing as much background noise as possible.

APPROACHES AND TOOLS

Information on a person's current communication preferences	**All About Me books,** also known as Personal Communication passports **(CALL Scotland)** ·An All About Me Book or Passport gives a person a way to share key information about themselves, to help people to get to know them. A Passport is owned and shared by the person and other people in their life. It is especially important when going to new places and meeting new people.
	Personal Communication Dictionaries (Scope (Vic.) Ltd. 2004) ·This is a template that can be used to record an individual's gestures, body language, facial expression, vocalisations, and signs. It also records what these movements or sounds may mean and gives suggestions for how the listener/ communication partner should respond.*
Checklists	**DisDat (Northumberland Tyne & Wear NHS Trust and St. Oswald's Hospice, 2008)** This is a checklist which is intended to help identify distress cues in people who have different communication abilities. Designed to also document a person's usual content cues, which allows distress cues to be identified more clearly. A monitoring tool allows those who support the person to identify when distress is happening. The DisDat may be a supportive tool for Safeguarding screening/ investigations and to establish whether Safeguarding Plans are impacting on a person's level of distress/ content.

*Your service may have other personal communication profiles or documentation around a person's will and preference about their life decisions.

APPROACHES AND TOOLS

Sign Systems	• Lámh is a manual sign system used by children and adults with intellectual disability and communication needs in Ireland. With Lámh, speech is always used with signs and key words in a sentence are signed. Lámh currently has 588 signs. • Irish Sign Language (ISL)
General Visual and Picture supports and low Tech Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)	Photos/ symbols of vocabulary related to safeguarding and emotions. • Some people benefit from the use of images alongside the spoken word when discussing safeguarding issues. They can be also used when asking a person to rate their feelings of safety, happiness etc. • Depending on the person's preference and understanding, these can be photographs, coloured images, black and white images. • There are some packages available which contain relevant images for e.g. Photosymbols Ltd.
	Quick access Communication Displays with core words for safeguarding/ emotions for e.g. Communication card on a lanyard/ keyring. The purpose of the display is to provide a method of communication for people who may require support to communicate effectively. This can help both the person and their communication partner.
Visually Supported	**Talking Mats** (Cameron, L. and Murphy, J. 2008) A Talking Mat is a visual communication framework which supports people with communication diffculties to express their feelings and views. Talking Mats can be carried out physically or in a digital space, for example a tablet, laptop or computer. (https://www.talkingmats.com/) There is also a specific Resource. The Keeping Safe Talking Mats. It provides: A listening space for people to raise concerns, a structure for staff to find out what people are thinking about their lives, and raise issues that can be difficult to discuss.

APPROACHES AND TOOLS

High Tech Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Devices	**Voice Output Communication Devices** A person may have an electronic communication device which is typically recommended by their SLT. These can range in size and function for e.g. single messages to complex conversations. Training and support on how to ensure the device is used during conversations may be required.
Accessible Communication and Information	**Accessible Communication and Information** To accommodate all forms of communication and levels of understanding you will need to adjust the environment, your language and communication style and documentation to suit the person. Other Accessible Information supports can be used for e.g. • Easy Read information: these are made up of short, simple sentences that will communicate the most important messages you need to get across. They are usually accompanied by photos/ pictures that will aid understanding. **(Make it Easy, 2011)** • (Books) Beyond words. These are word-free picture stories that help people understand and communicate their feelings, learn about new experiences and tell their own stories. **https://booksbeyondwords.co.uk/** • Audio/ Internet and Websites • Large print, Braille, audio descriptions • Video/ Multi-media information with closed captioning for e.g. safeguarding videos developed by Brothers of Charity Services, Stewarts "Lionel the Lion" and the HSE Elder Abuse Videos **(contact the National Safeguarding Office for more information)**.