

## **Information for On Body/Touch Interaction and Communication**

This document provides a brief guide to various forms of on-body communication. It recognises that each individual will require their own bespoke form of interaction developed to meet their needs and stage of development. This may range from basic touch to more complex forms of communication such as haptics or signing.

**Tactile signing** is a method used by people who cannot access sign language through the use of vision, or who would benefit from the use of additional tactual information. It can be the tactile adaption of an existing sign language like BSL. It can also be used to communicate and interact with people who do not use a formal language, through touch, movement and idiosyncratic signs.

(NatSIP, 2019)

### **Bodily-Tactile Communication**

- Involves more than the simplistic notion of basic touch focused on the hands alone
- Eclectic, bodily approach to the whole child a physical being in a physical world
- It also includes the residual senses of hearing and vision
- Includes tactile signs based on elements of sign language as well as haptic communication

(Costain Schou et al., 2017)

### **Tactile Sign Language**

- Refers to the mode that signing is accessed via touch
- The listener's hands are placed directly onto those of the speaker's hands
- May include cultural manual signs, modified signs or idiosyncratic signs
- A full tactile language includes a range of linguistic elements

(Natsip, 2019; "Tactile Signing", 2020)

### **Hand over hand guidance**

- Where the adult controls the child's hand and the learner may become passive and has the experience of no control.

### **Hand under hand guidance**

- The adult places their hands underneath the child's as the adult manipulates and explores objects
- Is non-controlling
- The child can feel that you are sharing the same experience of touching the object and using the same kind of movements
- Does not obstruct the important parts of the child's own experience of any objects he may be touching.

(Miles, 2003)

### **Bodily Emotional Traces (BETs)**

“This trace is the bodily and emotional memory of the most salient sound, movement of gesture, and feelings involved in the shared event expressed by a gesture of localization on the body, or a sound or a movement. The emotional part of the trace will be reflected in the nuances of intonation, facial/bodily expressions and touch. BETs can be understood as mental images, and the gestures (or other expressions) refer to the mental images”

(Janssen & Rodbroe, 2007)

Gestures that originate as **BETs** have high-meaning potential and gestures become signs when they are taken over by the partner (frequently by way of imitation)

(Daelman et al., 2004)

**Personal Signifiers** – an object that can be worn by the adult for the learner touch to indicate to the learner who is working with them. This may be useful for a learner who operates a concrete symbolic level.

### **Tactile signing elements**

**Alphabet based** – Deaf Blind manual Block

**Visual adaption** – Visual Frame, Close signing, Hand tracking

**Tactile Sign Language** – Coactive signing, Hand under Hand signing/Hands on signing

**Contact points** – Haptic touch, On Body Signs referenced on the body

### **Social Haptic Communication**

“Haptic signals are a number of signals, which are ‘drawn’ on the body – typically on the upper part of the back or the upper part of the arm. They provide the possibility of a detailed visual interpretation during communication. “

“Using haptic signals deafblind persons and persons with visual and hearing impairments are able to receive information about e.g. their surroundings or the mood and facial gestures of other people while continuing their conversation uninterrupted. “

(Nielsen 2012)

**Touch Cue Systems** – examples of these are Canaan Barrie, and TaSSeLs. They have been designed to offer a specific sign that can be used across a school or organisation but are not likely to match the cognitive and sensory level of every learner.

**Bespoke Touch Cues (BTCs)** – are touch cues that have been created from observations of the learner, and cues reflect their cognitive and sensory level of a specific learner.

- Signs must be referenced on the body at the beginning and the end of the sign.
- BTC's must be developed slowly at the pace of the learner's perception and processing skills

- All these BTCs must be ones that are comfortable and acceptable to the learner
- They must be offered in a consistent way by all adults around them so that the learner can begin to recognise the BTC.
- Adults need to always respect the learner's responses and change their approach to the learner in order to indicate that the learner has been heard.

**Bespoke Alerting Touch cues** – are used to indicate what part of the learner's body is going to be involved in an activity.

- All bespoke alerting touch cues (BATCs) are referenced on the part of the body that the intervention will happen. Example: touching the learner's cheek to alert that area of the body before wiping the learner's mouth.
- The role of BATCs are to give information to the learner and help them to avoid startle responses or experiencing anxiety when they do not know what is happening to them
- These BATCs are used shortly before the actual intervention occurs to help the learner to link the alerting cue to the action, using body emotional traces and meaning
- BATCs should be held in place for long enough for the learner to perceive the alerting cue.
- All these BATCs must be ones that are comfortable and acceptable to the learner
- BATCs must be offered in a consistent way by all adults around them so that the learner can begin to recognise the alerting touch cue.
- Adults need to always respect the learner's responses and change their approach to the learner in order to indicate that the learner's emotional response has been noticed and valued.

### **Questions to ask when getting ready for Touch communication**

Every Learner is different - Ask yourself, what do they need and how do they want us to communicate through touch

#### **What do they need us to communicate?**

- Are you alerting, giving information, sharing concepts?

#### **What do they want us to communicate?**

- What do they need to know, what do we want them to know?

#### **When do they want to be told?**

- How often? At what time?

#### **How do they want to be told?**

- Where on the body? What pressure, What duration?

#### **How can we ensure we are getting it right for the learner?**

- Observations? Respecting the learner's response.
- Creating a Communication passport so that all staff work consistency with the learner.
- The group of professionals and parents work together to make the communication passport.