

Key principles

- ❖ Equality is about treating the child accordingly.
- ❖ Every child is unique.
- ❖ Give the child time to explore.
- ❖ A positive attitude to focus on the child and understand their achievement.
- ❖ Manage risk effectively.
- ❖ Listen to and discuss details with parents.
- ❖ Follow their lead.
- ❖ Consistency is key.
- ❖ Textures help expose children to different objects.
- ❖ Children learn through play; this should be encouraged.
- ❖ Provide a choice.

Sense (ND)

Sense website:

<https://www.sense.org.uk/get-support/support-for-children/play-toolkits/>

Welsh government:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-12/191209-support-for-children-and-young-people-with-multi-sensory-impairment-in-educational-settings.pdf>

NSPCC:

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/support-us/ways-to-give/donate/?source=ppc-generic&gclsrc=aw.ds&&gclid=Cj0KCQiAx9mABhD0ARIsAEfpavR0BQ541P2Ta_Kc6g5XWXksbxRUCkt3o_U6JiXko2ox17Ibl3BnQYaAiyBEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds

Deafblind UK:

<https://deafblind.org.uk/>

Seashell trust:

<http://www.seashelltrust.org.uk/blog/deafblind-awareness-week-object-cues>

Childline:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Why do we use touch cues?

Through using touch cues children are able to feel secure and safe, simple touches can form trusted routines and interaction.

Touch cues are a physical prompt made on a child's body. They prepare the child that something is about to happen to them.

(Image 1)



(Image 2)

Background

- ❖ A touch cue is a touch that is done repeatedly in the same place on the body in the same way before you do something with a deaf-blind child. This informs them something is about to happen.
- ❖ This will help them to feel calm and feel safe, with the aim of creating meaningful communication, allowing the child the ability to convey their needs feelings and daily experiences through repetitive reassurance.
- ❖ Without developing a form of communication deaf-blind children will become withdrawn, leaving them without the understanding of a world beyond their reach.
- ❖ Communication allows multi-sensory impaired children the ability to explore and learn about their environment. (Seashell trust 2019)



(Image 3)



(Image 4)

Do's

Consistency: All caregivers need to give the same touch cue.

Repetition: The same cues should be used repetitively every day.

Wait: Observe the child and wait for their response to what is about to happen.

Routine: The cues are to be used during all routines and activities.

Don'ts

Never grab a deaf-blind child's and place it on something!

Always use the hand under technique. This will encourage the child to decide how they feel about the activity, if they remove it, they have had enough.

(NTAC 2002)

Challenging Behaviour

challenging behaviour must be addressed. This can be an indicator that the child is uncomfortable.

Please follow the following information if you believe this is becoming an issue.

- ❖ Make notes describing to behaviour.
- ❖ Identify if it repeatedly occurs.
- ❖ Identify what happens immediately before and after this behaviour.
- ❖ Assess if this behaviour is of benefit to the child.

(NTAC 2002)



(Image 5)

This rationale combined with its accompanying leaflet will consider touch cues and how when implemented on a child who is multi-sensory impaired form a communicative tool. Included in this leaflet will be some helpful points to follow to ensure the child is reassured in a familiar way during their time in the educational setting, with guidance of how to observe the child and identify challenging behaviour. This rationale will provide the theory regarding non-verbal haptic communication and explain why communication. It will also consider why the leaflet was created in its format and its creativity. Also, within this rationale we will consider ways of comfort and communication with a multi-sensory impaired child, and ways they can communicate their feelings and how they develop and consider some of the legislation in place to support them.

This leaflet has been designed to offer a practitioner some information as to why touch cues are an integral part for a child with a multi-sensory impairment. Multi-sensory impairment is a term used to describe an individual with a combined sensory impairment such as deaf-blind. According to sense (2019) the legal term is deaf-blind it is common practice to be referred to as having multi-sensory impairment. For the purposes of this leaflet, we will use the term multi-sensory impairment, this term is more appropriate as a severe impairment can be related to sensory processing and brain function (Sense 2019). This leaflet has also been designed using a double sided try folded format to give the teaching assistant easy instant access to the information included to allow for convenience of reading. The range and use of colours have been done deliberately to demonstrate the effects of colours has on a multi-sensory child. Colour therapy or Chromotherapy suggest colours affect our moods and emotions, thus impacting our well-being and senses arguing that colours are symbolically linked to our subconsciousness and influence our flow of energy (De Giorgio 2014). Colours have a deep meaning with each colour having its own magnetic frequency which interacts within the brain, with this in mind the use of colours in an education setting can affect the child. Research suggests sensory impaired children are stimulated through bright colours, arguing neutral colours are unstimulating (Disabled living 2019).

As a teaching assistant having the ability to communicate effectively with your student, for one who has multi-sensory impairments finding ways you can execute communication effectively can be challenging. Human beings communicate through five different senses, sight, smell, sound taste and touch, once one is removed the others become much more effective (Tokuyama 2017). Individuals who have multi-sensory impairments become more reliant on other

communicative senses such as touch and smell (Tokuyama, 2017). Communication is an important aspect of human's social behaviour, we use it to learn, to play, and to interact with others. Children learn to communicate from birth, as they grow, they learn to communicate their needs through signs, words, and pictures. For a child with multi-sensory impairments communicating is quite different, they need to develop a way to communicate a reason to communicate, and something they need to convey in order to communicate (NTAC 2002). Individuals with multi-sensory impairments can communicate in various ways, it is important that the communicative aid is suited to the ability of the individual, some examples include Braille, sign language/Makaton, and lipreading (Department of Health 2014).

This leaflet offers a teaching assistant an informational guide on how to effectively communicate with children through touch. Communication through touch or 'haptics' is not localized to a specific part of the body but refers to sensitive areas that the individual can come to recognize as markers for information (Knapp, Hall 1997). This is a non-verbal form of communication that develops socially and emotionally from early childhood, (communication theory 2019). Non-verbal communication is defined by Sheth (2017) as a communicative system which uses various features at once to support expression, these are described as kinetics/body language, proxemics/space, haptics/touch, oculosics/eye contact, posture, vocals, and appearance. Through touch individuals are able to interact with children, this lets them feel safe and they build a routine and establish interaction, each touch conveys a unique message such as fear, love or gratitude, however, haptic communication is also interpreted through the environment it occurs, the who, what and why the touch occurs allows us to differentiate if it is professional, friendship punishment or arousal (communication theory 2019). Piaget's theory of cognitive development suggests children start to understand the language of touch from a month old, arguing it is one of the first forms of interaction they develop (Piaget, 1999) The history behind non-verbal communication can be traced back to the 1800's Charles Darwin (1872) argued that humans and animals would unintentionally display open emotion, suggesting that animals communicated non-verbally, and as humans are derived from animals, they share similar characteristics. This supports the theory that haptic communication or touch is an integral part to building relationships. Children who have multi-sensory impairments are taught how they can communicate through touch, these are referred to as touch cues, and through continuous repetitive messages anticipation is formed and they also develop attachments to different objects that symbolise their needs (seashell trust 2019). A touch cue is a touch that is done repeatedly in the same place to indicate to the child that

something is about to happen to them, NTAC (2002) suggest these cues create a positive awareness especially when parred with passive awareness every time they are used, reinforcing the message of what is about to happen. The notion that children with multi-sensory impairments anticipate something is happening with a specific touch was developed by Ian Van Dijk, who reinforces this within his assessment framework suggesting how this touch becomes a learning process Van Dijk *et al* (1997). Many children who have multi-sensory impairments are tactually defensive, they have no idea when, where, or when they will be touched, if it will be pleasant or if it will hurt (Aguilera, 2017). Some of the signs of communication from the child we need to be aware of are often quite subtle. How the cue is interpreted can take on many forms, Aguleria (2017) suggests body movements facial expression sounds and behaviours indicate if the child is happy with the cue and what is about to happen to them. When supporting a child with little or no communication having the ability to recognise the cues of happiness or discomfort are not easy to see. These signs have been included within the leaflet to inform the practitioner what to look for when moving the child to ensure they are fully aware of what is happening and are consensual to the situation. Simple indicators such as pointing nodding hugging or looking for a certain person or object can be interpreted to understand what the child needs and help to support them communicate however, in cases of challenging behaviour it is vital that the child is able to convey that they are frustrated or needing to be understood. These guidelines are also included within the leaflet to help the practitioner understand what they can do in such situations (NTAC 2002). Within a multi-sensory environment sensory cues such as 'flutters' can be seen as a form of communication, Convenlo *et al* (2018) argues that through the frequency of eye flutters can be interpreted in high and low, they conclude that the flutters are a form of communication and a direct reaction of the touch cue.

The Welsh government recognise a need to support children with multi-sensory impairments. They suggest a child is still eligible to an education regardless of disability, learning difficulties or impairment, their education should encourage them to learn to communicate and mobilise with the access to the information to learn (Welsh Government 2019). Much of these guidelines have been considered within the key principles section of the leaflet along with policies of an education setting, this guide has been included to inform the leaching assistant of what will be expected of them and how to ensure the child have a good experience when attending (sense ND). Furthermore, the United Nations convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC) (1989) article 23 states that children with a disability still have a right to a full and 'decent' life,

suggesting, that children that are multi-sensory impaired should be supported along with their family.

The leaflet also reinforces the teaching assistant how to use the hand under technique, and its importance when caring for a child with multi-sensory impairment, it is suggested that this technique is always used for the child to have the independence of choice, and a way of expressing discomfort (Sense ND). Multi-sensory impaired children do not learn in the same way as those who are not sensory impaired, with this in mind the Welsh Government (2019) suggest cognitive education should be improved through routine and structure. Repetition encourages learning and should be encouraged through accessible formats and matched to the child sensory needs, this will create a language allowing the child to take on a more active role in their education and development (Welsh Government 2019) The repeated stimulus of behavioural learning is necessary when reinforcing learning, Wiebell (2011) argues that by singular repetition the stimulus is reinforced and remembered. This reinforcing support can be associated within Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (1977), he argues that children's environment is nested within an arrangement of structure. This structure shows the various systems that surround the child, these include their parents, family, carers, teachers, local authority and so on. They all impact on the child, when this communicative holistic approach is applied to the classroom, it strengthens the development of the child (Guy-Evans, 2020).

To conclude we can see that this leaflet has been carefully created to inform a teaching assistant within an education setting of the importance of using touch cues. This comprehensive guide reinforces that through the repetition of touch cues the child is reassured and can feel safe in the setting. The colour palette highlights how the use of colour can be stimulating for a multi-sensory impaired child, offering stimulus and interaction. Through following their lead and providing choice, independence and trust can be built with the teaching assistant allowing them to observe the small cues the child uses to communicate, this structure goes on to develop a language with the child, while consciously remembering these indicators can often be complex. Non-verbal communication comes in many different forms, from this rationale we can see how language and communication work together and new ways must be sought in order to ensure an individual who is multi-sensory impaired can communicate effectively. We can see that when working with multi-sensory children there is a responsibility to ensure cues are consistently frequent. Having a multi-sensory impairment impacts every individual in a different way, with many severe cases experiencing little or no language and no ability to listen

to those around them. No child should be left in the dark, locked in their bodies needing a way to communicate themselves out.

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Images

Image 1 and 3 and 4 Available at: <http://clipart-library.com/colorful-cliparts.html> Accessed 19th January 2021

Image 5 available at: https://www.vhv.rs/download/iiobhxm_color-clipart-splash-transparent-color-splash-png-png/

Image 2 Available at: <https://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http%3A%2F%2Fclipart-library.com%2Fimg%2F1076047.png&imgrefurl=http%3A%2F%2Fclipart-library.com%2Fhandprint-border-cliparts.html&tbnid=texa9K75uhr6-M&vet=12ahUKEwiNtZLlpsTuAhUZahoKHTb4AgYQMygBegUIARCuAQ..i&docid=AhesB-HNDPpCJM&w=180&h=584&q=colorful%20%20hands%20png%20border&hl=en&ved=2ahUKEwiNtZLlpsTuAhUZahoKHTb4AgYQMygBegUIARCuAQ>

