

**The Rehab Group  
Communication with  
Service Users & Students**

**Applies Jurisdiction:**  Ireland ONLY

**Division:**  ALL

**Reference Number:** HSC-SEU-003

**Version Number:** V4

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**Title:** Senior Projects Executive  
**Date:** July 2019

**Approver(s):** Linda Coone  
**Title:** Interim Director of Quality and Governance  
**Date:** August 2019

**Signature:** 

**Effective From:** August 2019  
**Review Date:** August 2022

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## 1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Rehab Group recognises that communication is a human right. The ability to communicate well helps to build good working relationships with people who use our services. Therefore, it is important that staff have a good understanding of an individual's communication needs.

It is the policy of the Rehab Group to:

- Ensure that all service users and students are supported to communicate effectively and to the best of their ability
- Ensure that staff communicate with service users and students in a manner that best supports their understanding.
- Establish and maintain effective two-way communication with service users and students
- Encourage service users and students to give feedback on their experiences of Rehab Group services
- Consult with service users and students when designing and developing Rehab Group services and programmes.

## 2.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Outline and describe the measures taken to establish and maintain effective two-way communication with service users and students
- Ensure the communication needs and preferences in terms of expressive and receptive communication of every service user and student are identified and supported
- Equip staff, service users and students with the skills to communicate effectively
- Encourage staff to consider the many factors that influence means of communication e.g. age, ability, medical condition or cultural background

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- Ensure where required alternative methods of communication including recognised communication tools and assistive technology are used
- Encourage staff, service users and students to participate in training to ensure effective use of communication tools

## 3.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all services across all divisions of the Rehab Group.

## 4.0 DEFINITIONS

**Communication** – the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium. Means of sending or receiving information, such as telephone lines or computers

**Feedback** – Information about reactions to a product or service, a person's performance of a task which is used as a basis for improvement.

## 5.0 GENERAL PROVISIONS / PROCEDURE

- Communicate with potential service users and students
- Invite service users and students to sample Rehab Group services and programmes
- Include service users and students in feasibility studies
- Collect feedback from service users and students to inform existing services, identify good practice and address areas for improvement
- Encourage service users and students to complete questionnaires and surveys and participate in forums and focus groups
- Collect formal feedback through assessments, reviews, action plans, support plans, self-evaluation and audit

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- Facilitate the effective operation of an advocacy committee at local, regional and national level
- Encourage service users and students to use the complaints process and the appropriate appeals processes

## 6 .0 ROLES & RESPONSILBITIES

Management, staff, volunteers, service users and students are responsible for the implementation of this policy on Communication with Service Users and Students.

It is the responsibility of staff to be aware of individual communication requirements and preferences and adapt their communication accordingly.

It is the Rehab Groups responsibility to ensure effective two way communication takes place with service users and students.

## 7.0 EVALUATION & AUDIT

Compliance with this policy on communication with service users and students will be evaluated and audited though Rehab Group internal reviews and audits. This policy will be reviewed in line with the Rehab Groups policy on policies framework.

## 8.0 Related PPPGs

1. Provision of Information Policy
2. Positive Behaviour Support Policy

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## 9.0 APPENDICES

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**Appendix 3** – Essential Steps

**Appendix 4** – Guidance to support effective expressive and receptive communication when a person has complex communication support needs

**Appendix 5** – Skills Building

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### Appendix 1 – List of Authors/Reviewers

#### Authors List for New/ Reviewed Policy Area

The following names individual authors/ reviewers to this policy area.

<b>Division/Other</b>	<b>Name(s)</b>
Quality & Governance	Arlene Sweeney
Quality & Governance	Siobhan Barry
Operations	Anne Marie Scales
Behaviour Therapy Supports	Darragh O'Regan
Quality & Governance	Mary Hughes
National Representative Committee	Joanne Nelligan
CPAT	Edel O Connell

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\*Note that it is not obligatory for each division to be involved in a new policy/ review if the policy is not relevant; this should be decided by each division on a case-by-case basis.

## Appendix 2 – Read & Understood

I have read, understand and agree to adhere to the attached Communication with Service User & Students IRE Policy, Procedure, Protocol/ SOP or Guideline:

<b>Print Name</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>

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## Appendix 3 - ESSENTIAL STEPS

1. Consult with service users and students on all aspects of programmes and services.
2. Use feedback as a primary source of information to inform the design of new programmes or services and the review of existing services and programmes.
3. Seek current service user and student opinions on service provision through satisfaction surveys, exit surveys, monthly reviews, key working sessions, annual reviews and feedback forms.
4. Use feedback received from current service users and students on service provision to identify good practice, inform future services and programmes and address areas for improvement.
5. Seek feedback/input as an integral part of feasibility studies relating to new programmes or services through questionnaires, interviews and focus groups.
6. Facilitate the effective operation of local advocacy structures as a structure for service users and students to consider matters relating to programmes, services and facilities.

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## Appendix 4 – Guidance to Support effective expressive and receptive communication when a person has complex communication support needs.

Wherever possible and if required, the staff team will be provided with **guidance** from professional assessments (i.e. from a Speech and Language Therapist). This information should be documented in the service. The guidance will:

- Support staff to notice, interpret and respond to the person’s expressive communication attempts;
- Support staff to adapt staff communication and the environment to support the person’s receptive communication abilities and understanding their environment;
- Support staff to build and improve the person’s expressive and receptive communication abilities.
- Describe how the person expressively communicates;
- Describe what the person can communicate and how the person communicates these messages;
- Describe how to support the person to make choices;
- Describe how to communicate with the person to facilitate their understanding of directions, expectations, routines etc.;
- Describe the function of any behaviours that challenge.

### Expressive Communication - Support Provided by Staff should:

- Support the person’s expressive communication by noticing, interpreting and responding to the person’s expressive communication attempts. In particular, staff should ensure that they are familiar with the messages (functions) the person’s behaviour serves and be vigilant and responsive to this communication.
- Support the person’s expressive communication by ensuring that any augmentative and alternative communication system

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(e.g. Lámh, ISL, PECs, apps on iPad etc) is continuously available and functioning as intended i.e.

- Ensure where appropriate that PECs books, speech generating devices, iPad etc. include the appropriate and up-to-date symbols
- Ensure that relevant materials & devices are available and are organised according to the person's preferences and needs;
- Ensure that where necessary devices are charged and working
- Ensure where appropriate that everyone in the environment understands the signs the person uses etc.

### **Receptive Communication - Support provided by Staff should:**

- Ensure that the person has the required access to visuals and/or other supports which help them understand the routine and the expectations of the environment where necessary (e.g. visual schedules, visual menus etc; words, signs, pictures used to label doors etc.)
- Ensure that staff members adapt their communication style to match the person's needs e.g. non-verbally using gestures, facial expressions and positioning; verbally using shorter sentences, slower speech, silences and pauses etc.; supporting verbal language with gestures, visuals etc.

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## Appendix 5 – Skills Building – Complexed Support Needs

In order to support a person's communication skills a constructive, skill building environment which focuses on teaching people functional skills should be provided. It should where necessary support the person:

- To learn and use *the communication skills* they need to help them **effectively and acceptably communicate their needs and preferences** i.e. to ask for items, activities & interactions; to make choices and indicate preferences etc.
- To learn and use the *communication skills* they need to **effectively and acceptably reject items, activities and interactions** when they are presented as options and to ask for a break from or to finish activities / interactions.
- To learn and use the *communication skills* they need to help them **effectively and acceptably seek and ask for help when they need it** e.g. help to complete an activity, help to resolve a problem etc.

### Communicating with service users partaking in media or social media campaigns:

Members of the CPAT team regularly seek service users and students to take part in various advocacy and marketing campaigns. Managers are regularly asked to source such service users and students to be used as case studies. It is important that service users partaking in media or social media campaigns be supported to:

**Make an informed** choice as to whether they want their story in the public domain such as a media outlet or social media forum, which often involves the individual being identified and having their photo taken and on occasion speaking to a TV camera etc.

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Support students who are agreeable to partaking in media and social media work to sign a consent form which can be provided to you by the CPAT Department. It is important to ensure the service users understands that this consent forms allows CPAT to use the case study across social media, on rehab websites and may be later used in further promotional or advocacy work. Service users and students should be given the option of opting out of the use of their case study/image etc. for later promotional work should they so wish.

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