Treloar's

Policy/Procedure Name:	Inclusive Communication
Policy/Procedure Number:	TLT 005
Date of Approval:	
Effective Date:	January 2024
Revised Date:	N/A - replaces Total Communication Support Policy
Review by Date:	January 2025
Policy/Procedure Author:	Head of Speech and Language Therapy
Policy/Procedure Owner:	Principal
Management Committee Approved By:	Trust Leadership Team
Governor /Trustee Committee Approved By (where appropriate):	N/A
For Action By:	All Staff
For Information to:	All Stakeholders
Approval requested to upload on the Treloar's Website:	Yes √ (tick if requested)		
Who is carrying out EIA? (see details of EIA in appendix)	Lorna Woodcroft	Date of EIA?	15 December 2023

1. Policy/ Procedure Aim

The aim of this policy is to describe how Treloar School, College and Trust recognises, actively promotes and supports inclusive communication to ensure that barriers to communication are reduced for Treloar's students and stakeholders.

2. Policy Details

In line with our organisational values, Treloar's recognises and actively promotes inclusive communication.

Inclusive communication approaches will be used by all staff in the organisation to encourage and support students' learning, empowerment, achievement of their current goals and to prepare them for their future lives.

Treloar's will also strive to continually improve the way in which the communication needs of parents/ carers, staff and visitors are recognised and supported.

2a) Definition

Inclusive communication means:

- Enabling everyone to understand information by modifying it, and/or presenting it in an accessible way.
- Supporting people to use their preferred communication method/s to express themselves in whichever ways work best for them. This could be a combination of communication methods for each person and could change depending on different environmental factors.

Inclusive communication is about reducing barriers to communication, for everybody, everywhere. It therefore focuses on the process of making communication inclusive or accessible. For many this requires individualised approaches and specific support, as illustrated by the Triangle of Accessibility (fig.1) below (Mander, 2009). The Triangle of Accessibility clearly demonstrates that inclusive communication is a process requiring targeted, individualised resources together with appropriate communication partners.
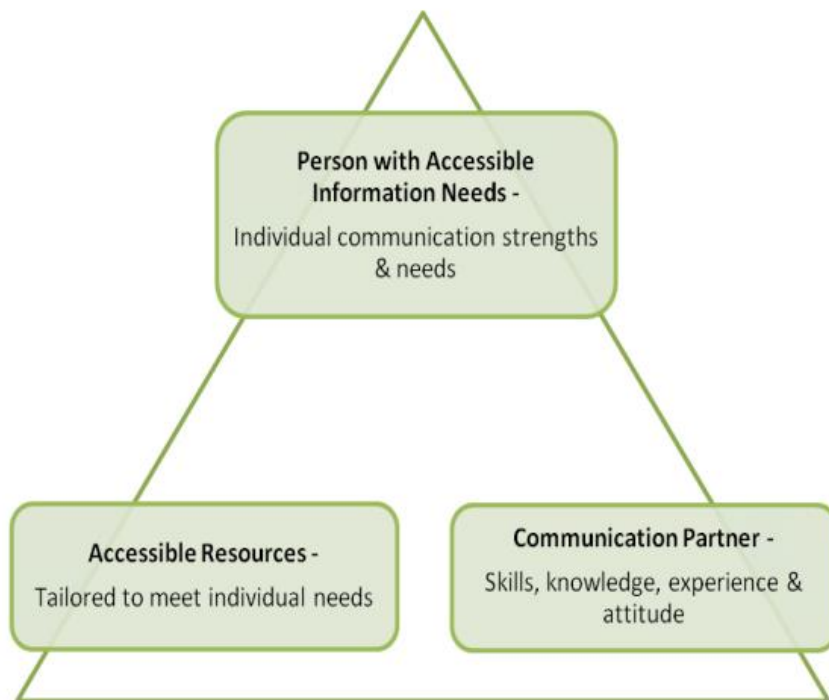
Fig 1: Mander et al, 2009[i]

2b) Rationale

Treloar's recognises that people use many ways of understanding and expressing themselves. Neurodiversity is valued and everyone should feel included. Neurodiversity describes the different thinking styles that affect how people understand and communicate with the world around them.

Treloar's supports the aims of the Accessible Information Standard[ii], which states that all students, staff and visitors who have information or communication needs relating to a disability, impairment or sensory loss should receive accessible information and communication support in a way that they can understand.

2c) Why is it important?

Inclusive communication:

- Helps people in communities to lead more independent lives
- Enables people to access services appropriately
- Gives individuals the opportunity to make informed decisions and self-advocate
- Helps avoid discrimination
- Reduces inequality and social isolation
- Meets human rights, policy and legal requirements: including the Equality Act and the Accessible Information Standard.

2d) Who / what it applies to

Inclusive communication is an overarching approach which applies to:

- Everyone and in all situations, not just people with communication support needs
- All communication at individual, organisation and population levels
- All modes of communication – face-to-face, telephone, written, online
- Both receptive and expressive communication
- People with a hearing impairment, sensory beings and AAC (augmentative and alternative communication) users.

2e) What Inclusive Communication encompasses

1. Communication methods – can include speech, AAC of various types (e.g. voice-output communication aids, low-tech AAC), signing (Makaton, BSL, tactile signing), non-verbal communication and others.
2. Making information accessible and easier to understand for all – e.g. symbolised versions, easy read language, pictures, objects of reference, Makaton (and other signing systems), specific support strategies such as Talking Mats.
3. Training and support – for staff, for parents/carers, for students, Governors and Trustees, for external people. Ensuring themes of inclusive communication are embedded across different training offered within the organisation. Support for families/carers to further develop communication skills at home and out in the community.
4. Communication environment – an environment that supports the communication needs of all the people who access Treloar's. This may include symbols, signage, objects of reference, promoting and using intensive interaction approaches[iii] and having key information (e.g. visitor information, student surveys and admissions assessment preparation) available in accessible formats.
5. Making sure everyone's views are heard and respected (students, parents/carers, staff, and other stake holders). This includes safeguarding and assessment of capacity for decision making.
6. Preparing for the future - transitions (into, within and onwards from Treloar's), coping with change, independence and life skills, understanding options, making choices and decisions.
7. Ensuring that the communication needs of different diverse groups and cultures are represented.
8. Using inclusive language which is straightforward and without the use of complex terms / jargon, together with seeking the opinions of those with lived experience.

2f) How we do this (Guidelines and Procedures)

Inclusive Communication within Treloar's will be achieved through the following:

a) Treloar's will aim to ensure that all students have access to functional communication, according to their individual needs.

b) Staff will be encouraged and expected to communicate appropriately with students and support them to use their individual preferred method/s.

c) Total communication – encouraging and supporting students to use a total communication approach where this best meets their needs.

d) Staff should be aware of factors that impact on communication, including sensory needs (sight, hearing and sensory integration) and know how to make appropriate adjustments.

e) Treloar's will support students in developing the skills to communicate with both familiar and unfamiliar people.

f) Treloar's will support people to understand information and communicate their opinions in whichever way works best for them. This includes the use of symbols, Talking Mats and easy read materials.

g) Students' individual communication needs will be assessed by Specialist Multidisciplinary Teams, including Speech and Language Therapy.

h) All staff will be able to access Continued Professional Development (CPD) which includes training to support students' communication needs and empowers staff to feel confident to understand and meet different people's communication support needs.

i) The main signing system in use across Treloar's will be Makaton. Makaton signs can be used to support students' understanding of language and to facilitate and encourage their expressive communication, even if that student does not use signed Makaton expressively.

j) The main symbol system in use across Treloar's will be Picture Communication Symbols (PCS), extended with photos and recognisable logos when necessary.

k) Treloar's respects/supports the use of other signing and symbol systems. Treloar's will make best efforts to support use of other languages, including BSL.

l) Treloar's will aim to follow the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists 'Five good communication standards'[iv] and the TALK acronym from the Communication Access UK project[v].

Fig 2: Communication Access UK Training

2g) Role of Treloar's Speech and Language Therapy team in supporting Inclusive Communication

At individual student level:

- Develop resources in liaison with the Multi-Disciplinary Team
- Complete assessments of students' communication needs, in liaison with other members of the MDT as needed
- Introduce, develop and maintain AAC systems for individuals
- Where appropriate, support with assessment of individuals' mental capacity
- Provide advice, information and training to staff, parents/ carers and visitors
- Plan and deliver appropriate therapy to support development of receptive and expressive language and communication

At whole organisation level:

- Design and deliver training to inform and upskill staff, parents /carers, Governors and Trustees regarding communication support and inclusive communication principles
- Contribute to relevant polices, procedures and organisational strategy to ensure inclusive communication approaches are embedded and reflect best practice across Treloar's
- Advise and support with accessible information for a range of purposes, focusing principally on the needs of students
- Work with others to support and advocate for students to be involved in developing inclusive communication approaches, e.g. staff training
- Be available to address specific sign and symbol requests and support staff to develop appropriate resources in their own work areas.

2h) How we monitor, develop and improve

Treloar's will do the following in order to ensure that it is monitoring, developing and improving inclusive communication:

- Collect feedback from students and staff
- Act upon feedback given
- Review best practice and evidence base
- Complete ongoing reviews of language and terminology
- Engage with Governors and Trustees
- Keep training up to date and relevant
- Continue to review current guidance around inclusive communication

3. Implications of Policy/Procedure

The policy applies to all staff employed by the School, College and Trust, including agency and temporary staff, students, Trustees and Governors, volunteers and contractors.

3.1 Training Requirements

See sections 2f, g, h above - guidelines and procedures, role of Speech and Language Therapy team, how we monitor, develop and improve.

3.2 Communication Requirements

How will the Policy/procedure be communicated:	1) Ensure that all new employees, staff and volunteers are made aware of the policy, understand it, and know where to access a copy and where to access the related procedures. 2) Ensure that all new employees, staff and volunteers know their responsibilities, and receive training in carrying these out. 3) Ensure that information regarding supporting students' collective and individual communication needs is available to relevant groups, through verbal and written communication, formal and informal training.
Who will ensure the above communication is carried out::	1) Head of Speech and Language Therapy 2) Treloar Leadership Team 3) Treloar Senior Management Team 4) All managers/ Heads of Department
Do the changes made to this policy/procedure affect any other policies/procedures? If yes, has this been communicated to the policy/procedure author/owner	- Student Involvement policy - Facilitated Communication position statement - Intensive Interaction policy Yes

3.3 Inclusive communications

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as large print, audio description or a colour background, please contact quality@treloar.org.uk

Easy Read version of Policy available internally and on Treloar's website.

3.4 Other Implementation Requirements

4. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Head of Speech and Language Therapy, in conjunction with other key staff and the Treloar Leadership and Senior Management Teams.

5. Links to other related policies, procedures or documents (internal)

- Student Involvement policy
- Facilitated Communication position statement
- Intensive Interaction policy

- Treloar Student Charter
  - Training programme that includes relevant regular training available to all staff to develop skills in supporting communication needs, e.g. 'How to be a good communication partner' training sessions.

6. Further sources of information (external)
- UK Legislative drivers – Human Rights, Disability Discrimination Act, Equality Act
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) | Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD) (un.org)
- United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy: UN Disability Inclusion Strategy
- Giving Voice campaign: Giving Voice campaign – How to get involved | RCSLT
- Communication Access UK project: Communication Access UK – Inclusive communication for all (communication-access.co.uk)

7. References
References included in policy wording (see footnotes/ endnotes at bottom of document)
i. Mander C. (2009) The Triangle of Accessibility, In: Jenkins C. Communication and Intellectual Disability. University of Portsmouth. Course Notes.
ii. https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/accessible-info-standard-overview-2017-18.pdf
iii. Intensive interaction - Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
iv. https://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/good-comm-standards.pdf
v. https://communication-access.co.uk/

Other references:
➢ https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/accessible-info-standard-overview-2017-18.pdf
➢ https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents
➢ https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/factsheets/equality-act.html
➢ https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2011/09/principles-inclusive-communication-information-self-assessment-tool-public-authorities/documents/0120931-pdf/0120931-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/0120931.pdf
➢ https://inclusivecommunication.scot/
➢ https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/guidance/inclusive-communication
➢ https://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/20162209_InclusiveComms_final.pdf
➢ https://www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/inclusive-communication-overview/
➢ https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/inclusive-language-words-to-use-and-avoid-when-writing-about-disability
➢ https://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/good-comm-standards.pdf
➢ https://communication-access.co.uk/
➢ https://makaton.org/
➢ https://www.gov.scot/publications/principles-inclusive-communication-information-self-assessment-tool-public-authorities/pages/5/

- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/213689/dh_134205.pdf
- The six principles of inclusive communication - Welcome to the Inclusive Communication Hub
- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/inclusive-language-words-to-use-and-avoid-when-writing-about-disability
- https://www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/clinical-information/augmentative-and-alternative-communication/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CAAC%20is%20a%20set%20of%20tools%20and%20strategies,touch%2C%20sign%20language%2C%20symbols%2C%20pictures%2C%20speech-generating%20devices%2C%20etc.

8. Definitions

<u>Glossary</u>

- **Communication** - Communication can take many forms such as: speech, a shared glance, text, gestures, facial expressions, touch, sign language, symbols, pictures, speech-generating devices, etc. Effective communication occurs when the intent and meaning of one individual is understood by another person.
- **Communication partner** – someone who facilitates an exchange of communication between themselves and the AAC user.
- **Accessible information** - information which is able to be read or received and understood by the individual or group for which it is intended.
- **Communication support** - support which is needed to enable effective dialogue between at least two people.
- **Total communication** – a person-centred approach which accepts and responds to all communicative responses from individuals. The focus is on the individuals' needs first and then how the individual can be supported in the community.
- **VOCA - Voice Output Communication Aid** - electronically-stored speech as the method of communication.
- **AAC - Alternative and Augmentative Communication** - a set of tools and strategies that an individual uses to solve every day communicative challenges. AAC covers a huge range of techniques which support, or replace, spoken communication. These include: gestures, signing, symbols, word boards, book, VOCAs and communication boards.
- **Expressive language** – how someone communicates their wants and needs
- **Receptive language** – understanding words and language
- **EHCP - Education and Health Care Plan** - a legal document which describes a child or young person's special educational needs.
- **Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT)** – a group of professionals with different skills and experiences who work together to solve a problem or achieve a goal.
- **Sensory beings** – people whose experience of the world, and meaning within it, is primarily sensory. Often these are people who do not have access to language.

The five good communication standards (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 2013)
- Standard 1: There is a detailed description of how best to communicate with individuals.
- Standard 2: Services demonstrate how they support individuals with communication needs to be involved with decisions about their care and their services.
- Standard 3: Staff value and use competently the best approaches to communication with each individual they support.
- Standard 4: Services create opportunities, relationships and environments that make individuals want to communicate.
- Standard 5: Individuals are supported to understand and express their needs in relation to their health and wellbeing.

9. Revision History

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy procedure in last 4 years

Date	Page/para No.	Brief description of the change(s)	Change made by
November 2023	All	Significant updates made to Total Communication Support Policy, rewritten as this Inclusive Communication Policy. Updates based on current literature, evidence base and best practice.	Treloar's Speech and Language Therapy team*
*Head of SLT, Sally Mosley; Communication Support Specialist, Kathryn Swarbrick in consultation with all members of the SLT team.			

IMPORTANT NOTES:

It is essential for those with designated responsibilities to familiarise themselves with the sources of information, referred to above.

Policy documents describe mandatory minimum standards and will be subject to audit and review. Line managers are required to ensure suitable and sufficient arrangements are in place to meet policy requirements, including the provision of information and instruction to staff.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) - Stage 1

Name of Policy / Function/Decision	TLT 005 Inclusive Communication
Name of Assessor / Author /Lead	Lorna Woodcroft
Start Date	15th December 2023
This EIA is being undertaken because it is:	*Delete as appropriate* • Part of a project proposal submission • A result of organisational change • A result of new policy • A result of a policy revision Other:

Screening	
Does the policy affect employees, students or other stakeholder groups? Could the impact be significant to that group of people?	N
Is it a major policy with a significant effect on how our core business is delivered?	N
Does it involve a significant commitment of resources?	N
Does it relate to an area where there are known inequalities (e.g. gender pay gap, hate crime, accessibility of IT)	N

If the answer to any of these questions is 'YES' then continue to complete Equality impact assessment. If you are unsure about the answer to any of these questions please contact EDI Co-ordinator or Head of Quality for further support.

Has the screening identified the policy as having relevance to the any of the following groups?

Age	N	Disability	N	Sexual Orientation	N
Race	N	Sex/Gender	N	Religion or Belief	N
Gender Reassignment	N	Pregnancy or Maternity	N	Marriage or civil partnership	N

Have we shown due regard for the 9 protected characteristics within the policy/procedure/decision?	Yes ☐
Are all opportunities to promote equality taken within the policy/procedure/decision?	Yes ☐
Have we stated how we will monitor the implementation and impact of this policy/decision?	Yes ☐
Date of Screening	15th December 2023
Approval by EDI	Lorna Woodcroft
Refer Policy/Procedure to EDI Co-ordinator for further Stage 2 Assessment (if required)	Yes ☐ No ☐

[i] Mander C. (2009) The Triangle of Accessibility, In: Jenkins C. Communication and Intellectual Disability. University of Portsmouth. Course Notes.

[ii] https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/accessible-info-standard-overview-2017-18.pdf

[iii] Intensive interaction - Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust

[iv] https://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/good-comm-standards.pdf

[v] https://communication-access.co.uk/