



Supporting People in Communities  
St Patrick's Centre

# ST. PATRICK'S CENTRE, KELLS ROAD, KILKENNY

## Policy Document

**POLICY TITLE:**

### **Policy on Communication and Provision of Information to People Supported Policy**

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Approved By:

Signed:   
CEO (Interim)

Signed:   
Board Member

### ***Mission Statement***

To enable people to live a good life, in their own home, with supports and opportunities to become active, valued and inclusive members of their local communities.

To enable a supported self-directed living (SSDL) model of provision which is underpinned by our beliefs, values and vision.

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## 1. Policy Statement

St. Patrick's Centre Kilkenny is committed to promoting autonomy for each person supported. This requires an ongoing process of communication to address individual needs. This requires truthful, open communication and an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. Effective communication is the cornerstone of informed consent and is essential to ascertain the person's will and preferences with regard to care, support and treatment. Effective communication can also identify any supports required in the decision-making process. A shared dialogue about care, support and treatment will ensure that information is both given and understood. A person's preferences and requirements for assistance with decision-making may change over time. An awareness of the person's supported personal story is an important aspect to promoting autonomy. The guiding principle of this policy is that each individual's rights and dignity are respected.

(HIQA guidance "Supporting people's autonomy", 2016)

St. Patrick's Centre (Kilkenny) is committed to clear and effective communication across the organisation to ensure:

- Good quality service provision
- Assist people supported in making informed choices towards a full and valued life.

*Communication is a process between two or more people which involves the sharing of feelings, information and/or ideas. Successful communication is central to participation in life allowing a person to form relationships, establish identities and to take up meaningful social roles in the community. Communication enables a person to contribute socially, educationally and vocationally (IASLT, March 2019).*

## **2. Policy Scope**

This policy applies to all staff working in St. Patricks Centre (SPC).

## **3. Policy Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that every person supported by SPC is communicated with and given information in a way that they can access and understand.

## **4. Values underpinning SPC practice**

- Rights based approach

“Communication is a basic need and a basic right of all human beings” (Brady et al, 2016).

The key role of all employees working with people living in SPC is to support and develop each person’s communication skills to enable them to live a self-determined life and to exercise control over their lives. Each person is supported to access an ordinary life and participate in socially valuable roles (Wolfensberger, 2000). Communication is the crucial element that enables such participation.

- Total Communication approach

A Total Communication approach will be promoted by SPC for all people supported.

Total Communication is an approach used to create a successful and equal communication between people with different language perception and/or production. To use a Total Communication everyone involved has to use all means of communication available to a person (e.g. non-verbal and verbal communication, signing, pictures, symbols, objects, written words, assistive technologies, etc.) in order to understand and be understood. All forms of communication are equally valued and promoted.

As part of Total Communication it is important that each person is recognised as having their own particular way of communicating and trying to be understood. This can vary for each person and is depending on the person’s level of spoken language, eye contact and body language.

- Person centred practice

Person centred practice is guided by how a person wants to live their life and what is required to make that possible. SPC acknowledges the importance of supporting each person to identify their dreams, wishes and goals and what is required to make those possible.

## **5. General Principals**

4.1 Employees must recognise that each person supported have their own particular way of communicating and ensure that each person's right to communicate is promoted and facilitated.

4.2 Employees must ensure that each person is assisted and supported at all times to communicate in accordance with the individual's needs and wishes (Health Act 2007, Care and Support of Residents in Designated Centres for Persons with Disabilities, Regulations 2013, 10 (1)).

4.3. All employees will work in partnership with the person, their families and significant others to reduce the impact of communication difficulties and increase independence, choice, participation and relationships.

4.4 Supporting successful communication for persons receiving services must be in line with person centred planning approaches and help to promote real and chosen priorities for people.

4.5 The Personal Plan will clearly and concisely document any particular or individual communication supports required by the person in accordance with the Health Act 2007 (Care and Support of Residents in Designated Centres for Persons with Disabilities) Regulations 2013, 10 (2).

4.5 Employees must support individuals to exercise their right to communicate to:

- Request desired or refuse undesired objects, actions, events and people.
- Express personal preferences and feelings.

- Be offered choices and alternatives
- Reject offered choices
- Access a telephone and appropriate media such as television, radio, newspapers and internet. Health Act 2007 (Care and Support of Residents in Designated Centres for Persons with Disabilities) Regulations 2013, 10 (3)(a)
- Request and receive another person's attention and interaction
- Ask for and receive information about changes in their routine and environment
- Receive intervention and supports to improve communication skills
- Have access to and are supported to use any recommended Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and other Assisted Technology (AT) services, aids, appliances and devices to promote their full capabilities. Health Act 2007 (Care and Support of Residents in Designated Centres for Persons with Disabilities) Regulations 2013, 10 (3)(b)(c)
- Have assistive technology devices that function properly at all times.
- Be in environments that promote communication as a full partner with other people including peers.
- Be spoken to with respect and courtesy, directly and not be spoken for or talked about in the third person while present
- Have clear, meaningful and culturally and linguistically appropriate communications.
- Be supported to establish and/or maintain contact with friends and families through on-line media, post, telephone and face to face.

4.6 LAMH is the recognised sign system for people who have communication difficulties.

Employees supporting people using LAMH will be facilitated to attend training.

4.7 Employees must provide clear information to people supported about what is happening throughout their day by using objects, pictures, symbols or words depending on the person's individual needs/preferences.

4.8 Written communication needs to be in an 'easy to read' format.

4.9 Individuals living in a designated centre will have a copy of the Statement and Purpose available to them and their representatives in accordance with the Health Act 2007 (Care

and Support of Residents in Designated Centres for Persons with Disabilities) Regulations 2013, 3 (3).

4.10 Individuals living in a designated centre will receive a copy of the Residents Guide in accordance with the Health Act 2007 (Care and Support of Residents in Designated Centres for Persons with Disabilities) Regulations 2013 20(1).

4.11 Employees will ensure that each individual in accordance with their wishes, age and nature of disability has access to advocacy services and information about their rights. Health Act 2007 (Care and Support of Residents in Designated Centres for Persons with Disabilities) Regulations 2013 (2) (d).

4.12 Employees will ensure that each individual and their representative are provided with a copy of the Complaints Procedure which is in an accessible and age appropriate format and includes the appeals procedure in accordance with the Health Act 2007 (Care and Support of Residents in Designated Centres for Persons (Children and Adults) with Disabilities) Regulations 2013.

## **6. Format of Information**

Any information given to people supported by St. Patricks Centre must be in a format they can access and understand easily. This includes:

- Written information in easy to read format
- Video format (throughout the use of IPAD)
- Audio format
- Objects of reference or other communication aids/systems
- Lamh

What specific format is used depends on the person's literacy skills, verbal understanding and ability to recognise photos/symbols. Staff working with each person should have a good understanding of the abilities and strengths of the person they support, and should make a decision on the best format for the person in consultation with the Supported

Person, the Person In Charge of the residence/centre, SALT and family and friends. . Each Person Supported must have an up to date Communication Passport to guide the staff team with the individual communication support needs and preferences of the person..

## **7. Making Information Easy to Read**

All SPC staff working directly with people supported will attend appropriate training in accessible information development. In addition, staff should use the following guidelines when making any information easy to read:

- Easy to Read documents are made up of short, simple sentences that will communicate the most important messages you need to get across.
- These are usually accompanied by pictures that will aid understanding.
- Complicated concepts can still be explained in Easy to Read documents.
- You do not have to rewrite a document line by line. Just make sure you capture the most important information.
- Keep your sentences short and start each new sentence on a new line.
- Explain difficult words if you need to.
- Put visuals on the left hand side of the written information.
- Make the font Arial size 14 minimum.
- Write numbers in numerical form i.e. 3, 5, 8 rather than the words three, five, eight.
- Avoid capital letters, apart from the beginning of sentences/abbreviations/where grammatically correct.
- Do not use bold/italics/ underlining in the main body of the text. You can use bold to show subheadings and to highlight certain words or sections.
- Use even spacing between words, keeping it consistent throughout the text.
- Avoid splitting words at the end of a line, i.e. do not use hyphens.
- Avoid running sentences over two pages.
- Do not over simplify if you are writing a document for adults e.g. Stomach/tummy.

Further guidelines and information can be found in:

“Make it Easy: A guide to preparing Easy to Read Information” (2011)

Inclusion Europe checklist: [www.inclusion-europe.co./checklist](http://www.inclusion-europe.co./checklist)

Mencap’s Make It Clear: [www.mencap.org.uk/make it clear](http://www.mencap.org.uk/make it clear)

## **8. Support to access information and make choices**

When providing information to any person supported by St. Patricks Centre, a member of staff will spend time with the person and give them any assistance they need to access and understand the information. Information will be provided to people as soon as possible, so that they have an adequate amount of time to understand the information and to make choices and decisions about it. If necessary, the information will be provided to the person more than once, to allow them to make properly informed choices and decisions.

Every person supported in St. Patricks Centre must be given choices throughout their day, including at mealtimes. These choices must be provided in different formats (i.e. using photos/symbols/objects of reference/verbal language) according to the individual person’s abilities and strengths. Staff working with each person should make a decision on the best format for the person in consultation with the person in charge of the residence /centre. Advice should be sought from other professionals (e.g. speech & language therapy) if the person in charge and the key staff are unsure of the most appropriate format to use.

## **9. Provision of information regarding day to day operations**

Information will be provided to people on a daily basis in their home or elsewhere in a format that they can access and understand. This involves providing:

- staff rotas using photos.
- daily activity schedules using photos/symbols/objects of reference/text.
- schedules of any planned outings using photos/symbols/objects of reference/text.

- signage on rooms around the building using photos/symbols/objects of reference/text.
- accessible notices regarding the complaints policy and procedure.
- accessible notices regarding emergency procedures and assembly points.

(The above may be accessed on person's individual IPAD, where appropriate)

The person in charge of the centre should decide on the formats needed for all of the above according to the abilities and strengths of each person living in the centre/attending the centre, in consultation with each person's key staff. Advice should be sought from other professionals (e.g. speech & language therapy) if the person in charge is unsure of the most appropriate formats to use.

Any staff rotas and schedules provided in the centre MUST be kept updated according to changes in staffing and daily routines. This is to ensure that all people in the centre have accurate information provided to them each day and reduces any potential confusion for people.

## **10. Local advocacy**

Each centre will have its own advocacy group which meets regularly, where this is practical and in the interests of best practice. This would ideally be a self-advocacy group with staff support provided. This can be facilitated at residents meetings, at least on a monthly basis. However, if the people supported in the centre are unable to advocate for themselves, then other forms of advocacy should be considered i.e. peer advocacy, family advocacy, staff advocacy or independent advocacy. The person in charge should consult with St. Patricks Centre Advocacy Working Group for advice around this.

Residents Meetings will:

- ensure that people in the centre are provided with information in a format they can access and understand, and are given assistance and time to properly understand the information being given.

- ensure that people in the centre are given opportunities to make choices and decisions throughout the day and are given the necessary assistance and time to make informed choices and decisions
- ensure that people in the centre are provided with information regarding the daily routine of activities, the daily staff rota and any planned outings or events. They should ensure that this information is provided in whatever formats are necessary for each person in the residence/centre to understand, and that any rotas/schedules are kept updated according to changes in the routine or in staffing.
- ensure that people in the centre are provided with information regarding major events, policies and any developments/ significant changes in the service. If the group feel that is necessary to ask someone from outside the centre to speak to people about a topic, they should talk to the person in charge to arrange this.
- ensure that people in the centre are informed about what type of personal information is kept about them, who has access to it and how they may see it. Please refer to St. Patricks Centre Data Protection Policy.

The person in charge of the centre should meet with the group on a regular basis to pass on information and to discuss any concerns, plans or issues.

## **11. Induction for new staff**

As part of a new staff member's induction into a centre, the staff member will be given time to:

- introduce themselves to each person in the centre and spend time with each person to get to know them
- discuss with each person's key staff what the strengths and abilities of that person are and what format information should be provided in for them
- review each person's communication passport ( if available) to help them learn how the person communicates and accesses information

## 12. References

- HIQA guidance “Supporting people’s autonomy”, 2016
- Health Act 2007 (Care and Support of Residents in Designated Centres for Persons with Disabilities) Regulations 2013
- IASLT, Speech and Language therapy service provision for adults with an intellectual disability and communications needs. March 2019
- Brady et al, 2016
- Wolfensberger, 2000