



Communication Matters Conference - 16th September 2014
Denise Charnock - Speech & Language Therapist

Development of TaSSeLs

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- Working in Sandwell, West Midlands
 - Orchard Primary Special School
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Aims of the session

- To introduce the TaSSeLs system and the resource materials
- To give an insight into:
 - Alert sign
 - Three approaches
 - Core vocabulary
- To experience using the TaSSeLs signs.

Background to TaSSeLs

- Multi-agency approach to teaching and learning within two special schools in Sandwell, West Midlands
- Children aged 3-19 years with severe / complex and profound learning disabilities including severe visual and hearing impairments
- Pilot project carried out across Sandwell, Coventry and Shrewsbury
- TaSSeLs resource published 2012

What is TaSSeLs?

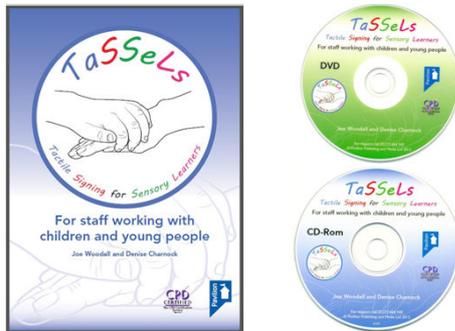
- A system of **touch cues** to aid understanding
- Designed to **support** the early stages of communication
- **Alerts** learner that *something* is about to happen
- Made up of a Core Vocabulary of everyday words used in **daily routines** and **frequently** occurring activities

Who can benefit from the use of TaSSeLs?

Learners who:

- Are making limited or no progress with other communication systems
- Have complex learning difficulties, some of whom may also have a visual impairment
- Require additional sensory feedback to aid their learning

The TaSSeLs resource



Why use touch?

- Touch is a vital channel of communication for learners at the earliest developmental levels
- It is the first sense we acquire as infants; we begin receiving tactile signals even before birth
- Learners with the most profound needs are *"constantly being touched, turned, handled, and placed in a variety of positions"* (Longhorn, 1988)
- *"Touch offers individuals with significant multiple disabilities access to communication"* (Goold and Hummell (1993))

BUT....

- We are working with vulnerable children and young people
- If physical contact between the adult and the learner does not take place, then the result is likely to be *"people's basic needs not being met"* (Hewett, 2008)
- Touch cues need to be appropriate whatever the age of the learner
- Value and respect the learner as an individual

So we ensured that....

- Sensitive areas of the body were avoided
- Any physical support and guidance offered did not control or restrain the learner at any time
- All Core Vocabulary signs and descriptions met Safeguarding approval
- To provide a 'life-long' communication system!

TaSSeLs

'sepety's plauku'

"brush your hair"

TaSSeLs



Activity

In pairs - facing each other

The TaSSeLs approach

'Alert' sign

3 approaches:

- Hand-under-hand (Preferred method)
- Hand-under-hand (Adapted method)
- On-body method

Ensures that the learner's adult partners are able to "connect or mediate a given experience at a level which is appropriate to their [the learners] needs" (McLinden & McCall, 2002)

Hand-under-hand (Preferred method)

- Non-controlling - the learner can withdraw their hands at any time
- *"Inappropriately guiding a child's hands can disturb or interrupt their early development"* (McLinden & McCall, 2002)
- *"Mental activity is considered to be more likely to occur when the child is actively involved...than when the child is passive"* (Exner & Henderson, 1995)
- Promotes the learners fullest participation and interaction
- Encourages shared attention rather than passivity

TaSSeLs



Activity

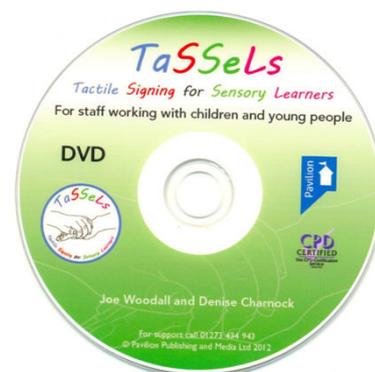
In pairs - facing each other

'Alert' sign

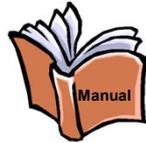


Goodbye (bye)

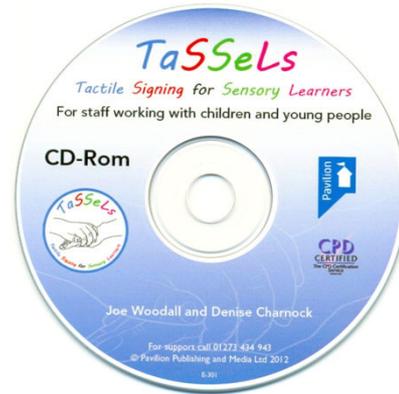
With one hand touch palm to palm (if physically possible) and wave gently from side to side.
(Adult's left hand to the learner's right hand or adult's right hand to the learner's left hand)



The TaSSeLs Manual



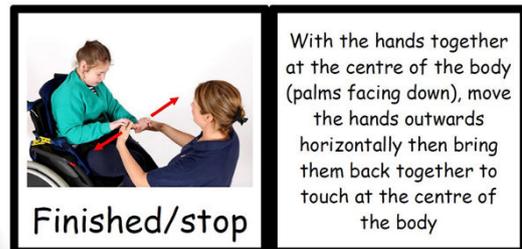
Content areas
Core Vocabulary



Prompt cards



Sample prompt card from CD-Rom



Setting TaSSeLs Targets

- Comprehension targets P1 to P4
- Expression targets P3 to P4

“A small change to the communication skills of a person with multiple disabilities has the potential to change their whole lives” (Kelly, 2000)

Individual Signing Profile

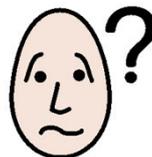
- Provides record of *all* signs being used with learner
- Can be included in I.E.P.s or Communication Passports

= CONSISTENCY!!

Support for implementing TaSSeLs

- **Training now available:**
 - Level 1 – Introduction to TaSSeLs (½ day)
 - Level 2 – Training for Professionals (2½ days)
- **Future developments:**
 - TaSSeLs Website
 - Swedish version (currently being negotiated)
 - Adult focused version

Thank you for listening



Any questions?

Contact us at:

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References

- Exner, C.E., and Henderson, A. (1995) *Cognition and motor skills*. In: McLinden, M. (2012) Mediating haptic exploratory strategies in children who have visual impairment and intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, Vol.56 (2), pp.129-139.
- Goold, L. and Hummell, J. (1993) *Supporting the Receptive Communication of Individuals with Significant Multiple Disabilities: Selective use of touch to enhance comprehension* (Monograph series No. 4). North Rocks, Australia: North Rocks Press and Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children.
- Hewett, D. (2008) *'Do Touch': The Intensive Interaction blog*. Wednesday, 10 September 2008., 16:00 [online]. Available at: <http://www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk/blog/user-contributions/lsquodo-touchrsquo/00046.html> (accessed 14 September 2014).

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- Kelly, A. (2000) *Working with Adults with a Learning Disability*. Bicester: Winslow Press.
- Longhorn, F. (1988) *A Sensory Curriculum for Very Special People: A practical approach to curriculum planning*. London: Souvenir Press Ltd.
- McLinden, M. & McCall, S. (2002) *Learning Through Touch: Supporting children with visual impairment and additional difficulties*. London: David Fulton Publishers.