Personal Passports

What is a Personal passport?

- The name ‘passport’ was coined by Sally Millar at the CALL Centre, University of Edinburgh
- A passport contains important information about an individual with sensory and/or communication difficulties who cannot express the information for him/herself
- It is used to facilitate communication and understanding

Aims of a Personal Passport

- To provide accurate and relevant information made accessible to those involved with the individual
- To act as an advocate for an individual who is unable to express him/herself through spoken language
- To encourage consistency in the way people communicate with the individual and understanding of his/her needs
- To assist during transitions (meeting new people, starting at new places)

General features

- Selected information is presented rather than everything that is known about the individual
- Presented in the first person and interesting to read
- Use of photographs
- A useful process rather than just an end product
- Helps people to observe more accurately
- Includes and values family and carers
- An on-going document with regular updates
- Owned by the holder and the family (not the professionals)
- Respects the individual and the need for confidentiality

Passports are

- a practical and person centred way of supporting young people and adults who cannot easily speak for themselves.
● are a way of pulling complex information together and presenting it in an easy to follow format.
● written in the first person, owned by the person and go everywhere with them
● a way to provide information that can support positive interaction
● empowering and may thus limit the incidence of challenging behaviour arising from misunderstandings
● a way to record how a person communicates their needs and preferences
● a way to tell you about how the person’s sensory impairments impact on their ability to receive information from others
● not ‘finished’ documents and can be added to in the future as needs change

Based on Listening to Children - Sense CALL Centre/Sense Scotland

Remember - the Communication Passport:

● goes everywhere with the person
● states how best to approach the person and includes all methods of communication used ie ‘Total Communication Approach’
● tells you how the person both expresses and receives information
● Anyone who wants to interact successfully with the person will need to read it first.

Possible page topics (including the use of photographs)

● Title/cover page
● Introduction (All About Me)
● Important people/places
● Contents (colour-coded pages)
● The most important things you need to know about me
● Likes (how I express these)
● Dislikes (how I express these/ what you can do to help)
● Strengths (what I am good at)
● How I work best and how you can help
● Things I can do for myself
● Things I can do with supervision or physical help
● Things I need someone else to do for me
● My sight
● Listening and hearing
● My communication systems
● Things I am working on (individual programmes)
● Eating and drinking
Top Tips when creating a Personal Passport

- Having a clear reason for making the book helps with the time-scale, framework, content and perspective
- Take time and have patience as this helps create a more realistic picture of the learner
- Write the text before taking the photographs as it helps with the layout and saves time in deciding which photographs to take
- Use colour-coding instead of page numbering as it is easier to make changes
- Have a co-ordinator to cut down on confusion and unnecessary duplication
- Involving others means that many views can be reflected upon and valued (e.g. those of siblings)
- Make it personal, including photographs of the child’s own work where possible. This helps bring the book alive
- Write from the child’s perspective
- Present it well, use humour and make it real and interesting so that more people will want to read it
- Share the book with as many relevant people as possible
- Do not rush or under-estimate the workload


Constructing a Passport

What do we need to find out?

- How does the person communicate?
- How do they express their feelings?
- What senses are they using to process information?
- How do they like to interact?
- What motivates them?
- How do you/family communicate with the person?
- What opportunities does the person have to communicate?
- Do people listen and respond?
- Does the person make choices - what’s the best way to offer choices?
- What modes/systems are used to express and receive information?
- What is best - position, distance, direction, contrast?
How can we do it

- Observation - ‘watch me carefully and see what I do’
- Record communicative behaviours and check interpretation with others – ‘Best Guess Sheets’
- Use of Video
- Capture with a photograph - easier than trying to describe an expression in words
- Collate results
- Write a summary
- Compile a Personal Communication Passport
- Share information with others who have contact