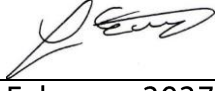


Services covered by this policy:	General Pre-school Children's Service	The Hamlet at Home Adult Services
Post holder(s) responsible for this policy:	Operations Manager	
Date approved:	21 st February 2025	
Approved by:	Lorraine Ewing	
Signed:		
To be reviewed:	February 2027	

A. Policy statement

Our belief is that everyone at The Hamlet should be happy and safe, is unique and valued, can explore choice and opportunities, is encouraged to unlock their potential, can communicate in their own way and is part of the wider community.

This policy shows how The Hamlet ensures effective communication with Hamlet Users and those involved in their care throughout its relationships with them. It is written to ensure compliance with: (i) the Accessible Information Standard, which is a mandatory requirement from July 2016 under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and (ii) those elements of the “fundamental standards regulations” that require care providers to be communicating effectively with their service users.

B. Purpose of this policy and why we have it

The Accessible Information Standard

The Accessible Information Standard requires all health and care providers to carry out the following actions to ensure that their users' communication needs are being fully and adequately addressed throughout their care, treatment and support.

The Hamlet is legally required to:

- find out if an individual has any communication/information needs relating to a disability or sensory loss and if so what they are
- record those needs clearly and in a standard way on all of an individual's care records and documents
- highlight them in their support plan so everyone who has to communicate with that person and has access to their records can address their communication needs in line with the individual's communication plan
- where required and relevant, pass on to others an individual's information/communication needs and how they should be addressed
- ensure that individuals receive information which they can access and understand and receive communication support if they need it throughout their care and support.

The Hamlet will work in partnership with Hamlet Users to identify and assess their needs, which involves listening to the Hamlet User and their preferred method of communication.

The Hamlet will always treat all Hamlet Users with dignity and respect and have their needs for privacy respected.

The Hamlet will ensure that Hamlet Users agree to any care, treatment and support proposed, and where they lack the mental capacity to give their consent every effort is made to reach a decision which would most likely reflect their decisions if they were able to communicate them directly.

We will seek the views and opinions of Hamlet Users and stakeholders on the services provided and standards achieved. By listening to its Hamlet Users as well as through the formal regular questionnaires and “customer” surveys.

C. Scope of this policy

- The Hamlet Users
- Parents/carers/home support staff of Hamlet Users
- The Hamlet staff
- The Hamlet Volunteers
- Educational or work placements e.g., Occupational Therapy or Nursing
- Visitors

D. Policy

The Hamlet is committed to ensuring that it develops the most effective ways of communicating with Hamlet Users and uses all of the means needed and available to ensure that communications are effective. It will make all reasonable adjustments to ensure that it communicates with a Hamlet User with a recognised information/communication impairment; and for that Hamlet User to communicate effectively with everyone involved in meeting their care needs.

It recognises that people can communicate with one another in many different ways, for example: by speaking and listening, through gestures and expressions, in writing, by using pictures and symbols and through touch. People may also use assistive technology or equipment.

To be responsive to individuals’ communication needs The Hamlet adopts a “whole person” approach by identifying the most effective means of communicating with that individual, which is also based on their views and preferred ways of communicating. The results are written into their [support plan](#) and highlighted in it, particularly where other than standard means of communication are required.

The Hamlet actively recognises and encourages the following communication methods:

Method	About the method
Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC)	Includes Eye-Gaze technology, tablets and apps
Body language and posture	Conscious and unconscious movements and postures such as hunching or folding arms

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Method	About the method
Drawings	Staff may use drawings to explain something to a Hamlet User, or a Hamlet User may draw to express their feelings about something.
Eye contact	Making, seeking or avoiding eye contact
Facial expression	Includes smiles, grimaces, raising an eyebrow or blinking rapidly
Gesture	A movement of part of the body, especially a hand or the head, to express an idea or meaning e.g. pointing
Intensive Interaction www.intensiveinteraction.org	Can be used if someone is reluctant to, or disinterested in, interacting with other people. Techniques such as turn taking, mirroring, rhythm and repetition, and sharing personal space can be used to support communication exchange that is initiated and led by the Hamlet User, and in turn promotes a positive interaction.
Objects of reference	Objects used systematically to represent an item, activity, place, or person; e.g. car keys to mean getting into the car.
Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) www.pecs-unitedkingdom.com	Hamlet Users are taught to approach another person and give them a symbol of a desired item in exchange for that item. By doing so, the person can initiate communication. A Hamlet User can use PECS to communicate a request, a thought, or anything that can reasonably be displayed or symbolised on a picture/symbol card.
Photographs	Photographs can be used to represent places, people or activities.
Signalong www.signalong.org.uk	Key word signs are used with speech to aid understanding and give Hamlet Users tools to express themselves
Social Stories www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/communication/communication-tools/social-stories-and-comic-strip-conversations	Short descriptions of a particular situation, event or activity, which include specific information about what to expect in that situation and why. Social Stories might include Widgit symbols or photographs.
Switches	Can be used to control electrical appliances e.g. sewing machine or to play a recorded voice message. Switches can be pressed by any body part e.g. hand, knee, or head.

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Method	About the method
Symbols www.widgit.com	Widgit symbols can be used alone or with written words to help communicate something.
Tactile Body Sign	Especially useful for people who are blind and/or Deaf. Signs have a reference point on the Hamlet User's body, involve contact, sound and spoken language.
Talking Mats www.talkingmats.com	Talking Mats provide a 'thinking tool' to enable people to explore issues and help them to structure and verbalise their thoughts and preferences.
Verbalisation	The words we use can express what we want very well, if we have the skills to understand and use them appropriately.
Vocalisations, tone and pitch	Sounds we make e.g. shhhh, and the tone or pitch we choose to use can express how we're feeling.
Written words	Written words rely on very complex skills on the part of the Hamlet User. They may be used alongside other methods such as photographs or Widgit symbols.

The Hamlet also believes that behaviour is a form of communication that should be respected and responded to (see also [Behaviour Management](#) policy).

The Hamlet encourages Hamlet Users to communicate with support staff, peers and appropriate members of the community e.g. shop staff. The Hamlet staff will make the most of opportunities to communicate e.g. offering choices, making conversation, and taking part in activities.

Support staff, in addition to general training in effective communication, receive specific instruction on individuals' preferred and required ways of communicating. Each Hamlet User's [support plan](#) includes a 'communication' section detailing how they communicate effectively. Support staff are also expected to impart and share the facts of a person's specific communication needs and support plans with others involved in that person's care, support and treatment, but who might not have authorised access to the person's [support plan](#).

Hamlet Users who have difficulty in communicating their needs because of their difficulties or impairments will be offered or it will be recommended that they have access to specialist support. This may be an advocacy service (for those who have mental incapacity), advisers from organisations specialising in sensory impairments, or interpreters for Hamlet Users whose first language is not English.

The Hamlet will always respond promptly to any difficulties in communication with Hamlet Users and those involved in their care; and review regularly the effectiveness of its communication methods with individuals and for the service as a whole.

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Training

Support staff:

- are expected to have a reasonable grasp of English for communicating with Hamlet Users and will be required to develop a reasonable standard of English in order to do so; this, together with any issues relating to basic numeracy and literacy will be covered in the staff recruitment process so that remedial training can be recommended or provided in appropriate cases.
- Modelling and shadowing through probation with experienced staff.
- Communication and Behaviour Coordinator is available to offer training based on staff experience and knowledge.

E. Procedures and monitoring

Written communication

Do...

- ✓ Use FS Me font
- ✓ Use font size 12 or higher
- ✓ Use larger font for headings
- ✓ Use **bold** or another colour to make something stand out
- ✓ Use sentences shorter than 15-20 words
- ✓ Align text to the left or centre
- ✓ Use 1.25 line spacing or higher
- ✓ Be consistent with the words you use and layout you choose
- ✓ Use full words instead of acronyms (like NSAB) or abbreviations (like govt.)
- ✓ If you must use a word that might be unfamiliar to the reader, make sure you explain what it means
- ✓ Use numbers instead of words (7 instead of seven)
- ✓ Use photos to show what a piece of text is about
- ✓ Use photos of named people, with permission
- ✓ Ask someone to read what you've written. Check they have understood what you wanted it to tell them.

Don't...

- ✗ Use CAPITALS or *italics* to make something stand out
- ✗ Underline things

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- ✗ Use a posh-sounding word or phrase if you can use a simpler one
- ✗ Justify text (this means distributing text evenly between margins)
- ✗ Use shiny or glossy paper
- ✗ Use photocopies of documents if you can print them from a computer instead
- ✗ Print in black and white if the document includes colours

F. Regulations (Health and Social Care Act) and other legal references

This policy should be read in conjunction with any other relevant Hamlet policies and accompanying procedures.

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