

# ©MUSIC-COMM

A music and communication  
group resource.



If you want to run a  
music and communication  
group  
but feel you don't have  
the musical skills then  
**MUSIC-COMM** is for  
you!

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2014

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## What is MUSIC-COMM?

**MUSIC-COMM** is a clear structured music and communication session within a mobile application. It has mostly original music with a well-loved classic. This guide takes you through how to run the music and communication group step by step.

## Who is MUSIC-COMM for?

This is a useful resource for anyone who wants to run a music and communication group. The repetitive structure of the pre-recorded music tracks frees you up to focus all your attention on the group. Group members will be listened too, will have the chance to share and learn new ways to communicate. The repetition and structure of the session offers familiarity and helps group members to feel confident to take part and often promotes initiation. No musical skills are required on the part of facilitators or group members.

## Why was the MUSIC-COMM App developed?

The popular and successful original MUSIC-COMM was developed to support staff working with adults who have learning disabilities. The **MUSIC-COMM App** has been created to meet the growing demand for music and communication groups for children. **MUSIC-COMM** allows the children to express themselves and interact with others. It is an enjoyable therapeutic activity that provides regular opportunity to practice and develop your communication skills in a supported and structured environment.

## Who developed MUSIC-COMM?

Karen Diamond is a Music therapist and has combined her knowledge and skills with Angela Crocker and Suzanne Smith who are Speech and Language Therapists.

## What communication skills does it work on?

A number of skills can be developed and practiced using MUSIC-COMM, these include:

- Motivation and confidence to communicate.
- Engagement and participation.
- Self and other awareness.
- Cause and effect.
- Eye-contact,
- Attention,
- Listening,
- Turn-taking,
- Spontaneous expressive communication through use of all methods, e.g. speech, signing, body action, gestures.
- Understanding through the use of routines, pictures, objects, spoken words and music.

## The MUSIC-COMM app Instructions

The Music-Comm session contains a structured format of 7 activities. Each session begins with a **hello** activity, followed by **news**, **music and movement**, **sign and sing along**, **choice time**, **sing along** then finishing with a **goodbye** activity.

### Starting a session

To start a group session press the 'Start Session' button.

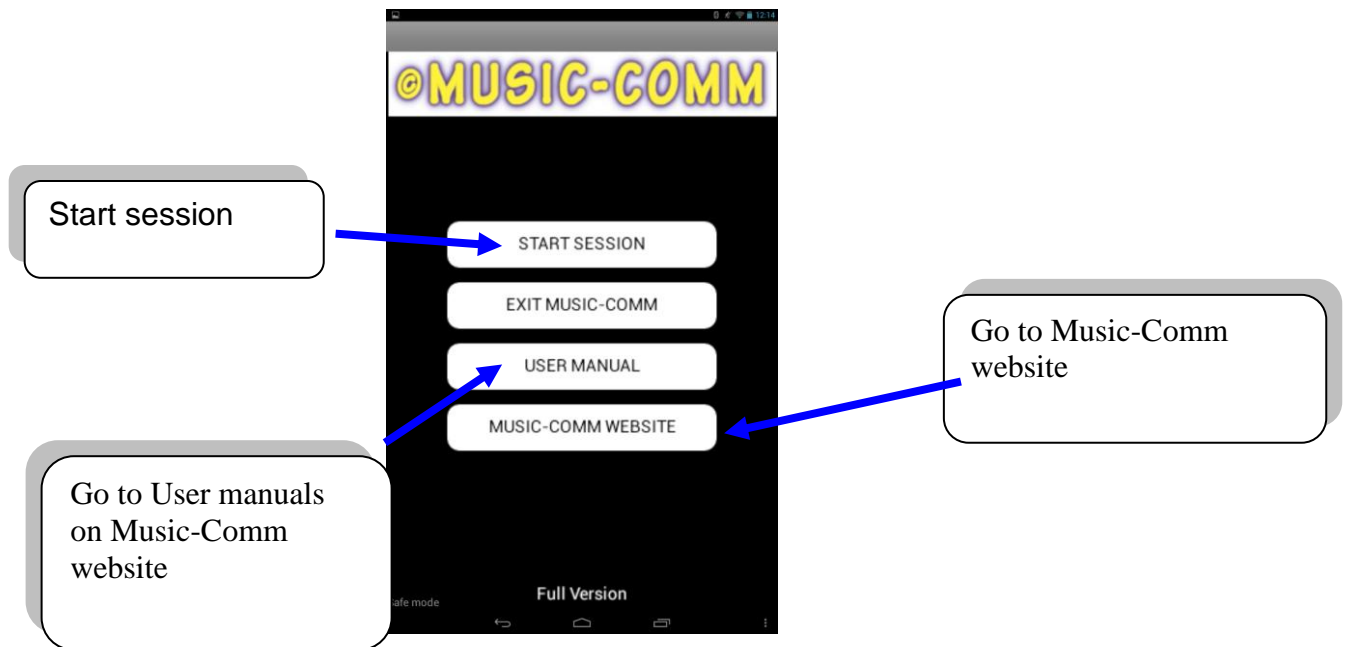


Figure 1. The main menu

### Using the schedule

The schedule consists of seven activities each with its own icon. The activities should be completed in order from top to bottom and only the activity that has a white icon can be selected.

It is recommended that the schedule is used to help members follow the progression of activities during the MUSIC-COMM group session. This reinforces the routine and allows members and facilitators to see

where to start, where to go and where to end an activity. The schedule will help participants to predict what will be happening next.

When members are familiar with the schedule it is possible to ask them to predict the sequence before changing the schedule. A member could be given the role of selecting the activity from the schedule.

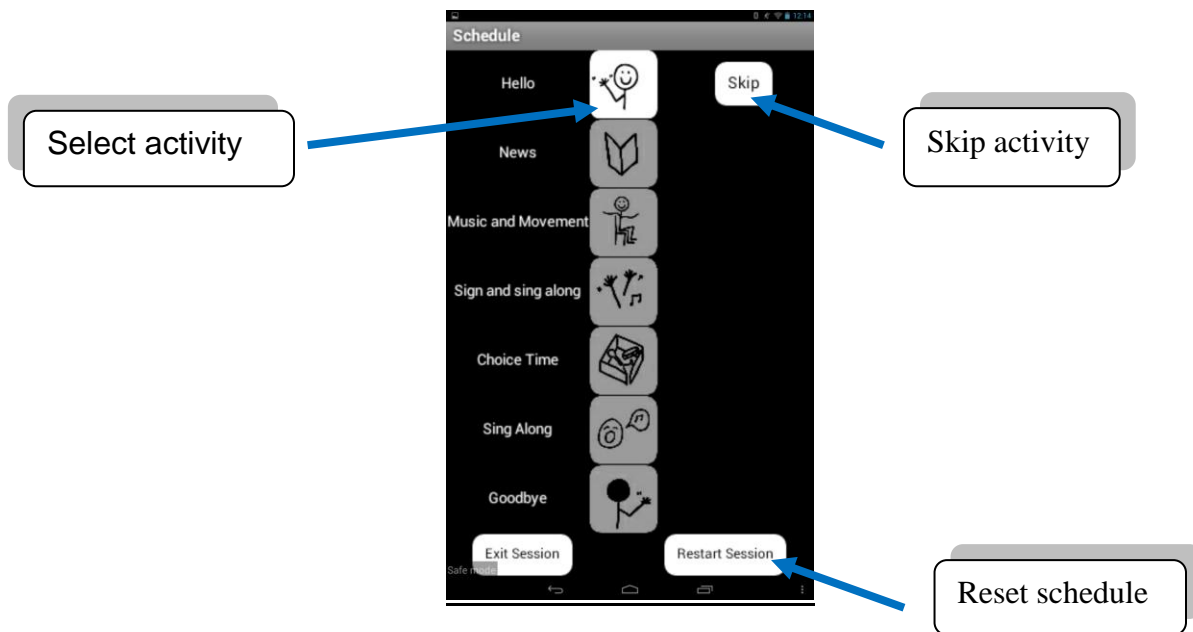


Figure 2. The schedule

### Selecting an activity

When an activity is selected, a new screen will open displaying the button to start that activity (see **Starting the activities**)

When the current activity has finished (the song has completed) the activity screen will automatically close and the application will return to the schedule where the next activity will be available to select. If the song does not finish the activity icon will not be removed from the schedule and the user will not be able to move on to the next activity unless the '**skip**' button is pressed. This will help to keep the activities in order.

### Skipping an activity

The user can skip any activity by pressing the **'skip'** button for that activity but it is advised to run the activities in order.

### Resetting the schedule

The user can reset the schedule at any time by pressing the **'reset'** button.

If at any stage the user wants to do an activity that no longer has an icon displayed in the schedule, the user can simply press the **'reset'** button and then skip to the required activity.

### Starting the activities

When the activity screen opens, the name of the activity is displayed along with the activities individual icon. The activity icon button is used to start and pause the song by tapping the button.

The song can be returned to the beginning by pressing the **'stop song'** button

When the song has finished, the activity screen will automatically close and the application will return to the schedule ready for the next activity to be selected.

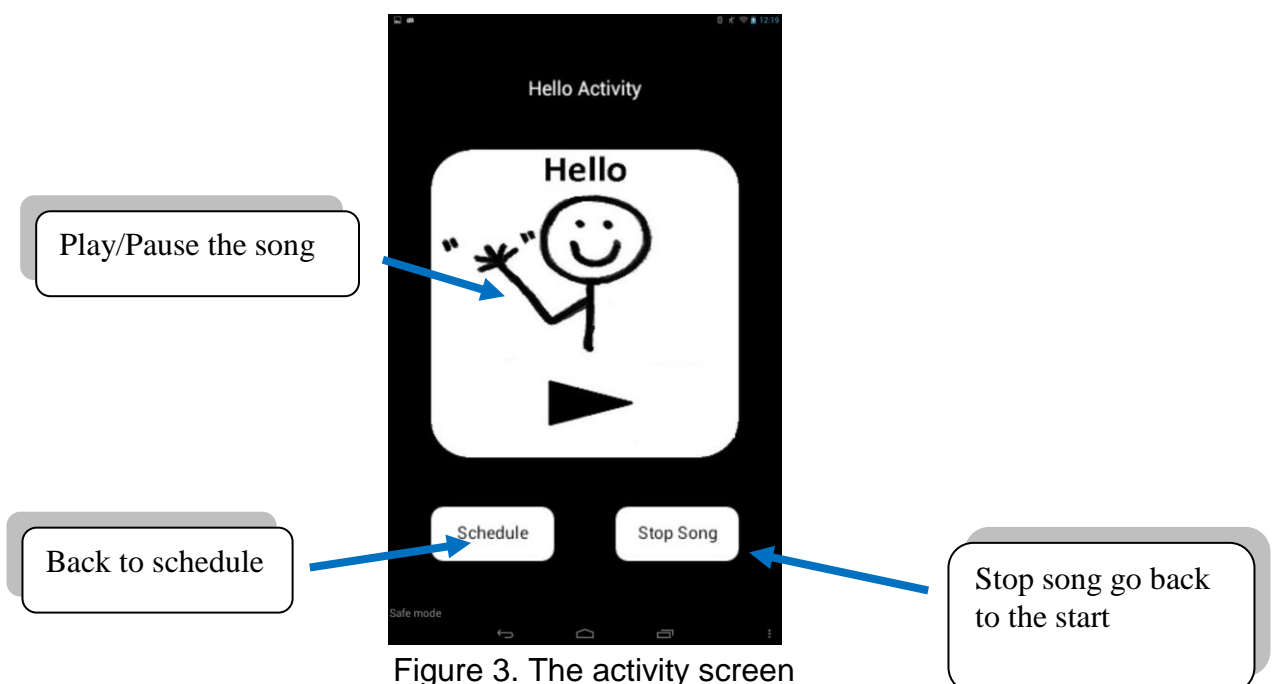


Figure 3. The activity screen

## The Activities explained



### Activity 1: HELLO

This activity is designed to provide a model of how to greet and an opportunity to practice greeting and will also increase member's awareness of other group members.

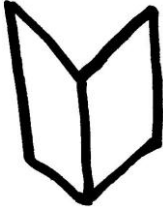
#### Instructions

- Play the hello song.
- Sing and sign along with the hello song.
- Say "hello" and sign hello to everyone in the group.
- When members are familiar with the activity, a member could be given the role of starting the song

#### Developing the activity

- If members have limited concentration skills it is best to shorten this activity by playing and singing a general hello but as the group become more familiar with the song it can be repeated to sing individual hellos.
- If members are unable to choose who to say hello to, then the facilitator can go round in a circle greeting each person in turn.
- A photograph of each member can be used to encourage members to identify who they are going to greet.
- Members can be encouraged to shake hands with others in the group when the song has been sung to them.





## Activity 2: NEWS

“Now it is time to tell everyone your news”.

This activity is introduced with the news song, which is sung along with signs. Each member is then supported to share some piece of news. It is useful to keep a record of the news. Drawing a picture for each piece of news makes the information more accessible. (See Appendix 2 for ideas on how to record the news from week to week.)

This activity aims to encourage members to communicate for the purpose of social interaction. It promotes self-esteem and confidence as others in the group listen to the person who is communicating something about themselves. Many members communicate for need satisfaction only and it is therefore important to communicate for the sole purpose of social interaction.

### Instructions

- Play the news song.
- Sing and sign along with the news song.
- Ask each group member to communicate something, which happened to them this week. All types of communication should be accepted, e.g. written , signing, vocalizations use of objects, pointing etc.
- Record all news. It is useful to draw a picture for each item of news making the words accessible.
- When members are familiar with the activity, a member could be given the role of starting the song

## Developing the activity

- When each member has given their news it can be useful to encourage the other members to recall who had which piece of news, e.g. “who can remember who said they were going shopping?”
- If a member has difficulty saying their news it can be written in a diary and read out.
- Photographs can be used to communicate special events, e.g. a holiday.
- Objects can be used to communicate events, e.g. birthday card.
- If time permits the news from the previous week could be recapped on and members could be asked about this, e.g. 'who had their birthday?' Or 'who was on holiday?'
- It is a good idea to display the news in the group room or on a notice board this promotes communication with others during the week.
- Keep a folder each week of all the news; this can be shared with families/carers on open days or reflected on with the group over time.



### **Activity 3: MUSIC & MOVEMENT**

“Now it is time for ‘music and movement’ “

The music and movement song go through a series of simple movements incorporating the head, hands and feet. In order to communicate effectively it is important to be aware of our own bodies and be able to orientate ourselves in space. These simple movements seek to encourage participation and increase activity levels. They help to promote hand function, which is especially useful for doing gestures and signs. They also help to raise levels of alertness and allow members to practice imitating movements. For those members with physical difficulties ideas and advice from physiotherapy has been really valuable.

#### **Instructions**

- Play the music and movement song.
- Sing and do movements in the music and movement song. Encourage all present to participate.
- When members are familiar with the activity, a member could be given the role of starting the song

#### **Developing the activity**

- The facilitator may choose to make up their own exercises. This would allow for the exercises to be more/less strenuous.
- The members may wish to suggest other movements to add on to the ones on the app or as an alternative.



#### **Activity 4: Sign and sing along**

“Now it is time for ‘Sign and Sing along’, using your hands to sing”

The group is encouraged to join in using their hands to gesture or sign along with the song which is being sung. Using this approach encourages combining signs in sentences and allows many children to participate in a way, which they previously may not have been able to.

#### **Instructions**

- Play the sign and sing along song.
- Practice so that you are confident at signing along to this.
- Encourage all present to participate.
- When members are familiar with the activity, a member could be given the role of starting the song



## **Activity 5: Choice Time**

“Now it is time for ‘Choice time’ “

This activity seeks to give group members the opportunity to communicate at a basic level via the use of voice and instruments. This should also encourage people to initiate communicating their likes and dislikes in other areas and aspects of their daily lives. A song is sung together, members are encouraged to participate using any method, e.g. their voices, clapping hands, tapping feet, swaying in time to the music or signing. Participating in group singing provides the opportunity to develop many vital communication and oral motor skills. It is very valuable to offer group members the opportunity to participate using whatever sounds and movements they can.

### **Instructions**

- Play the song.
- Pass the instrument box around the group encouraging each group member to choose an instrument through whatever method of communication, e.g. speech, signing, vocalization, pointing, looking, facial expression, etc.
- Support members to play along with the song.
- When members are familiar with the activity, a member could be given the role of starting the song on the app.

## **Developing the activity**

The lyrics of "She'll be playing in our band" could be altered and the more familiar version sung or to include an item of clothing someone is wearing or a colour e.g. 'he is wearing a blue sweat top to-day' or 'she has lovely red socks on today' etc – be adventurous you only need to ensure that the lyrics fit!

Everyone is encouraged to join in playing and singing with the first verse and chorus. In the subsequent verses only the member with the instrument mentioned in the should play e.g. 'she'll be playing on the drums' only the member with the drums should play, but everyone joins back in on the chorus again. The last verse includes all instruments and moves along at a faster pace before slowing again in the chorus. This encourages improved listening and waiting skills.

Photographs or symbols of the musical instruments could be used to facilitate choice making rather than the actual objects. This works on the looking skills and picture recognition skills of the members in the group.



## **Activity 6: Sing Along**

“Now it is time for ‘Sing along’”

This activity seeks to give children the opportunity to prepare for the end of the group by returning the instruments. The facilitator should ask for all the instruments back by naming each one and asking who has it, e.g. ‘Who has the drum?’ Each child should then be encouraged to put his or her instrument into the box.

### **Instructions**

- Play track
- The facilitator should ask for all the instruments back by naming each one and asking who has it, e.g. ‘Who has the drum?’ Each child should then be encouraged to put his or her instrument into the box.
- Sing along to this song, encourage participation.
- When members are familiar with the activity, a member could be given the role of starting the song.

### **Developing the activity**

One member could be asked to take the instrument box around gathering all the instruments back.



## **Activity 7 GOODBYE**

“Now it is time to say goodbye”

This activity provides a model of how to say 'Goodbye' appropriately as a goodbye song is sung and everyone is encouraged to say goodbye. Many members find 'closure' difficult and this song is important to help signify the end of the session.

### **Instructions**

- Play track.
- Sing along and wave goodbye.
- When members are familiar with the activity, a member could be given the role of starting the song

### **Developing the activity**

It is possible to repeat the 'goodbye' to sing goodbye to each person individually in the same way as the 'hello' song if time permits.



## **PLANNING YOUR MUSIC-COMM GROUP**

### **Size of Group**

Care needs to be taken when planning the group size, to ensure that the mix of abilities and needs are not too diverse. You also need to consider how many people you will feel comfortable working with, how the group size may impact on certain members and how many other people are available to work with you.

MUSIC-COMM runs better with at least two facilitators, as there is often a need to offer support to group members to help them fully participate. Ideally the group size should be between 6 and 8 not including the facilitators.

### **Closed or Open Groups?**

We recommend having closed groups i.e. groups which have the same members from week to week. Having different members involved each week can make it difficult to observe progress. Closed groups are more comfortable for members who find new situations difficult e.g. members within the autistic spectrum.

### **Environment**

You will need a room that is big enough to have the whole group sitting comfortably in a circle. It is important to minimise all noise and disturbances. This will help to maximise attention and listening skills. A quiet room big enough for the group to sit comfortably with good natural light and a window for ventilation is ideal.

### **Duration of MUSIC-COMM Groups**

The duration of groups will vary, depending on the ability of the group members to stay engaged and involved. They can last from 25 – 40 minutes. This depends on the number of activities used and on the number of members involved.

## **Frequency of MUSIC-COMM Groups**

We recommend that the group runs at least once a week, and where possible on the same day and at the same time. This provides a sense of structure and continuity for everyone. You may begin to observe members actively anticipating the next group indicating increased levels of awareness.

## **Setting up and equipment required**

If possible involve the members in setting up as this increases anticipation. Create a circle of chairs where everyone can be close to one another and ensure that you have all the equipment needed close at hand.

### **What you need - Equipment:**

- An Android phone or tablet with Music-Comm installed
- A speaker (preferably wireless Bluetooth)
- A Flip chart or paper and pens to draw and write up News.
- An instrument box with a selection of clean and safe musical instruments.

For the instrument box you will require an adequate selection of instruments to ensure that everyone has some choice in what they could play. It is recommended that these include:

Sleigh bells/Indian chimes

Tambourines

Maracas/ shakers

Small hand drums or larger drums

## **IDEAS ON HOW TO RECORD**

MUSIC-COMM is designed to be enjoyed in a social group, with activities that are useful to practice. You will undoubtedly want to record what has been happening from week to week to identify the activities which work best for you. However, you may wish to record how the individual members in your group respond and participate perhaps to include in their daily diary home or to assist with completing individual plans or reports for them.

We recommend that after each session you write a short note on the activities used and the member's participation in the session – what they found difficult, what they appeared to enjoy, if they were more vocal, focused, engaged etc. Over a period of time this will provide a fuller picture and will enable you to review the individual and group developments. An example of how to record has been included (there is a blank recording sheet in appendix 3).

## **MUSIC-COMM Junior Recording Sheet Sample Copy**

**Date:** 16<sup>th</sup> July 2008

**Group members:** smaller group today 3 off on holidays

James, Grace, Andrew, Molly, Carolyn, Jake.

### **Facilitators:**

Angela, Karen and Suzanne

### **Activities and Comments:**

Hello – used first hello song worked really well everyone sang individually in turn

News –lots of news from everyone

Music and movement –lots of energy – not all co-ordinated but that can be worked on.

Sign and sing along - coming together quite well

Choice time – we went shopping and everyone bought a separate item they seemed to like having their own turn.

Sing along – good participation.

Goodbye – sang goodbye as a group with lovely participation from each member.

### **Observations of each member:**

James – Took a really active part in today's group – very excited to be going on holidays to the family's caravan at the coast.

Grace – was a little bit shy during hello song but joined in and helped tidy up the instruments.

Andrew - concentrated really hard during music and movement and followed the movements much more closely than last week.

Molly – was really excited today because she and her sister were going to camping this weekend – good vocal use in sing and play.

Carolyn – helped set up the chairs and the Schedule today and was really involved in all the activities.

Jake – was a little reluctant to hand back the bells after sing and play but managed to and sang with everyone in the goodbye song.

## **COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Do I have to be a good singer?**

MUSIC-COMM requires no musical skill on the part of facilitators or participants. The app provides a vocal and musical support which can be sung or spoken along to.

### **Do we run MUSIC-COMM forever?**

MUSIC-COMM can run for as long as the members wish to come and appear to benefit from participating. Like all activities it is important to keep ideas within the activities fresh and make your own changes to the group. As you become more accustomed to running the group you will begin to extend and develop the activities.

### **Can we leave out a section?**

MUSIC-COMM is not prescriptive and should be adapted as necessary. You may find that you extend certain activities while omitting others as the group facilitator you are in the best position to decide.

### **What about members with autistic spectrum disorder/sensory impairment/physical impairment?**

Members with different needs benefit from the highly structured pattern of MUSIC-COMM and can be facilitated to join in with all the activities, see the notes on supporting members with autistic spectrum disorder/sensory impairment/physical impairment pages.

## **SUPPORTING MEMBERS WHO HAVE AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER**

MUSIC-COMM has been successfully used with people who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder and behaviour which may be challenging. For these members the repetitive, structured format and schedule has proved especially useful. In addition to this it has proved useful to:

- Run the group on the same day at the same time of the day.
- Ensure that there are no disruptions and minimize any
- distractions, e.g. close the window, unplug the phone.
- Keep the same facilitators and the same group members each week if possible keep the same seating positions.
- It is essential to have at least 2 facilitators so that if a member becomes distressed or engages in behaviour that is challenging to the group one facilitator can support this person. The main facilitator should remain in their seat and continue with the activities to the end of the group.
- Ensure that the schedule is placed in a prominent position.
- Keep spoken instructions to a minimum and supplement with as many cues as possible.
- Allow group members to participate as and when they wish. Never force members to stay seated if this causes distress or participate in a certain way. Some members will benefit from being observers to begin with and then will gradually move themselves into the group.

- During choice time, if a member doesn't want to hold or play and instrument it may be useful initially for a facilitator to hold the instrument and play beside the group member until they elect to play themselves. DO NOT take a group members hand and make them play!

These strategies have proved very helpful in establishing a calm and predictable environment for the members in groups. Only if the environment is carefully controlled in this way will the group member feel comfortable and relaxed enough to communicate. It is interesting to note that the communication seen in our sessions with members on the autistic spectrum has been very positive in nature and the members have used many more acceptable methods to communicate their needs and to express choices than would usually be the case.

### **SUPPORTING MEMBERS WHO HAVE SENSORY IMPAIRMENTS**

MUSIC-COMM has been successfully used with people who have hearing or visual impairments. For these members an effective planning ensures that they can participate fully along with their peers. It has proved useful to:

- Ensure that the visual and hearing status of each group member is known.
- Hearing Aids: For members with hearing aids check the batteries prior to the group and ensure that all hearing aids are switched on.
- If possible hold the group in an area with a loop system and turn all the hearing aids to the 'T' setting
- Reduce background noise, i.e. close windows and doors, unplug phones and turn off appliances. Some backgrounds



- noises cannot be reduced, e.g. water pipes, where possible try to ensure that people are positioned away from these distractions.
- Use an appropriate size of room with carpets and curtains to deaden echoes.
  - Glasses: Some glasses are for close work and others are for distance. Check if glasses would help the member participate more effectively and make sure they are clean and they are wearing them!
  - Make sure you choose a room with good lighting.
  - Interruptions by other people should be avoided.
  - It is important to provide sound cues for each activity. The music of each activity will act as a sound cue and using the same words to introduce each activity and by keeping the structure the same each week and will also act as a sound cue.
  - Spend some time helping members to explore the room prior to the group. Orientate them to where the door and windows are.
  - Members may benefit from all group members and facilitators being in the same seats each week to help them work out where they are. It may be an idea to allow the child with a sensory impairment to go around the group and shake the other member's hand.
  - Position them so that no one will come up from behind them.
  - Some members can benefit from having a support person who sits beside them and supports them through each activity.

## **SUPPORTING MEMBERS WHO HAVE PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS.**

Physical impairments should not exclude any person from participating in MUSIC-COMM groups. As for those with sensory impairments making some adaptations and effective planning ensures that they can participate fully along with their peers. It has proved useful to:

- Remember to give members with physical impairments the time and space to respond particularly during the music and movement and choice time activities.
- Try to resist the temptation to take a member's hand to play an instrument for them; it may be necessary to think of alternative ways they can create a sound e.g. 'Do they have more movement with their feet'? If so position the instrument there and encourage them to play it.
- When choosing an instrument, the member may not be able to physically choose one through touch. Perhaps they can eye point to their choice?
- Do you have access to Soundbeam or any other IT instruments and switches which the group member is more familiar with?
- Consider using table mounted instruments which are adapted for members with limited motor skills, or use arm cuffs to which you can attach a beater.
- Ensure that any instruments offered are placed within the member's reach or grasp and have a facilitator available to retrieve should the instrument fall.

- During activities such as music and movement and sign and sing along, members may benefit from you having a support person who sits beside them and supports them through each activity.
  
- Position the group member so that they can observe all that is happening in the group.

## **USING GESTURES OR SIGNS TO SUPPORT YOUR SPEECH**

We recommend that throughout MUSIC-COMM sessions you use key hand gestures or signs such as Makaton<sup>1</sup> signs. Using signs will help focus people's attention and improve their looking skills. The use of signs in a consistent structured programme such as this helps people to understand the spoken word and also encourages people to begin to use signs to communicate themselves.

We suggest that you supplement your speech and any signing with as many cues as possible so that clients with comprehension difficulties find it easier to understand. It is therefore important to use appropriate facial expression, gestures, and objects together with a pictorial representation such as Makaton symbols or the symbols described later in this book.

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<sup>1</sup> Makaton is a language programme which has been used in the UK for since 1972, and in over 40 countries around the world. It is well established method of encouraging and developing communication using speech, signing and symbols. For more information on Makaton look at their web site <http://www.makaton.mta.ca/> or contact your local Makaton tutor.

## APPENDIX 1 – NEWS RECORDING

Below is an example of how you could record the news from week to week using pictures and photographs.

Photo of group member
Photo of group member
Photo of group member
Photo of group member
Photo of group member

**James** - is going to the caravan

**Grace** - took her dog for a walk



FreeDigitalPhotos.net

**Andrew** -

**Molly** – and her sister are going camping.

**Carolyn** -

**APPENDIX 2**

**MUSIC-COMM Recording Sheet**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Group members:**


**Facilitators:**


**Activities and Comments:**

**Observations of each member:**

## Appendix 3- Song Lyrics

### Activity 1: 'Hello'

Hello, Hello, and how are you today?  
Hello, Hello, it's good to see you today,  
In music, in music, in music today.

Hello, \* \_\_\_\_\_, and how are you today?  
Hello, \_\_\_\_\_, it's good to see you today,  
In music, in music, in music today.

(\* left blank to insert names if you wish)

### Activity 2: News

#### What have I done?

What have I done?  
What have I done?  
What have I done since last time?  
I'll have to think, I'll have to think,  
What have I done since last time?

### **Activity 3: Music and Movement**

#### **Now it's time to move our bodies**

Now it's time to move our bodies, move to the beat.  
We'll start with our heads, then move our hands,  
And finish off with our feet.  
Let's move our head up and down to say 'Yes'.  
Then let's move it from side to side to say 'No'.  
Now rest your head and get your hands ready to move now.  
Take your right hand, hold it up, wave hello.  
Now take your left hand, hold it up, wave hello.  
Now rest your hands and get your feet ready to move now.  
Lift your right foot off the floor, try to kick it out .  
Now take your left foot off the floor, try to kick it out  
Now we've worked our bodies out, time for a rest

### **Activity 4: Sign and sing along**

#### **We've come together**

We've come together, to sign and sing our song.  
You may be happy, you may be sad.  
But we can bring the sunshine out.  
We'll help each other, we'll help each other to-day.

We've come together, to sign and sing our song.  
You may be happy, you may be sad.  
But we can bring the sunshine out.  
We'll help each other, we'll help each other to-day.

## **Activity 5: Choice time**

### **She'll be playing in our band when she comes**

#### **Verse 1**

She'll be coming round the mountain when she comes.

She'll be playing in our band when she comes.

She'll be playing in our band, playing in our band, playing in our band  
when she comes.

#### **Chorus**

Singing aye aye yippee yippee aye,

singing aye aye yippee yippee aye,

Singing aye aye yippee, aye aye yippee, aye aye yippee yippee aye.

#### **Verse 2**

She'll be playing on the drums...

#### **Verse 3**

She'll be playing the maracas ...

#### **Verse 4**

She'll be playing on the bells...

#### **Verse 5**

She'll be playing really quickly...



## **Activity 6: Sing along**

### **Come on in**

Come on in, the door is open wide.  
Come on in, there's plenty of room inside.  
Come on in, and shut the door  
There's always room for just one more  
Come on in, the fire is burning bright.  
Come on in, we're glad to see you tonight.  
Come on in, and shut the door.  
There's always room for just one more  
Come on in, and sit yourself down.  
Come on in, but don't you dare frown.  
Come on in, and shut the door.  
There's always room for just one more  
Come on in; leave your troubles at the door.  
Come on in, if your feet are tired and sore.  
Come on in, and shut the door.  
There's always room for just one more.

## **Activity 7: GOODBYE**

### **Goodbye to you my friends**

Goodbye, goodbye, to you my friends.  
Goodbye, goodbye, until we meet again.  
Goodbye, goodbye, to you my friends.  
Goodbye, goodbye, until we meet again.  
Thank you very much, thank you very much.