

Talking Mats and The World Health Organisation International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health - Children and Youth: A framework for helping adolescents set IEP targets

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Executive Summary–September 2012

Involving young people in making decisions that affect their education can be both challenging and time consuming. A pilot study in Stirling secondary schools suggests that Talking Mats® can provide an effective solution.

This study examines whether using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health - Children and Youth Version ('**ICF-CY**') can be usefully combined with Talking Mats to provide a practical framework for decision making and target setting. It tests whether:

- combining Talking Mats and the ICF-CY framework was acceptable to secondary pupils with complex needs, and
- using the information obtained from them is helpful in setting targets for their Individual Education Plans ('**IEP**').

Twelve participants with Additional Support Needs, aged between 13 and 17, were interviewed twice, in each case at least two weeks apart.

One interview used the Pupil Contribution Sheet ('**PCS**'). The PCS is the standard method used for obtaining the views of pupils in Stirling schools and is included in their IEPs. The other interview used a Talking Mat together with ICF-CY. Participants were given a questionnaire to complete after each interview to record their impression of the interview. Both interviews were videoed and the footage was then analysed. Cognitive mapping was used to identify key findings.

The objective was to compare and contrast the interviews for each participant and to assess the extent to which ICF-CY combined with Talking Mats was helpful in setting targets for IEPs.

Analysis of the findings indicates that combining a Talking Mat with ICF-CY provides a significantly more effective framework for capturing the views of adolescents than a standard interview.

Together, they provide:

- a basis on which to identify problematic issues
- a wealth of information to inform decision making
- a non-threatening forum in which to raise sensitive issues
- a holistic picture of the issues affecting the pupil

An easy to use pack is being developed using the findings of this study and will be available by early 2013. It is being developed as a resource suitable for young people both with and without complex language needs.

The implementation of GIRFEC in Scotland, and the move towards interdisciplinary teamwork, will only increase the need for a pupil centred approach in supporting young people. GIRFEC will be a key driver of working practice for professionals who work with young people over the next ten years. The challenge for practitioners is not only to listen to the views of young people but also to allow them to become more involved in making important life decisions.

Talking Mats, when combined with ICF-CY, is a powerful tool with the potential to greatly enhance the nature of partnerships between pupils, parents and professionals.