

# Using Talking Mats® to facilitate patient feedback in Speech & Language Therapy

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## Introduction

Gaining feedback from patients following consultation or treatment within the Health Care system is a priority for professionals.

Patients with communication, cognitive and/or literacy difficulties are often excluded from traditional feedback methods due to their difficulties in accessing the information or in communicating their opinions.

The Visual CARE Measure (VCM) has been developed, which is a similar 10 item questionnaire as the original CARE Measure but uses less complex language and additional picture symbols to support patients' understanding. Yet clinical judgement suggests that those with severe comprehension and/or expressive communication difficulties would still struggle to participate in the feedback process using this questionnaire alone.

Talking Mats (TMs) is a symbols based tool developed by Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) to facilitate those with communication difficulties to express their views, feelings and options in life ([www.talkingmats.com](http://www.talkingmats.com)). It supports patient understanding by providing a structured framework which uses visual, auditory and tactile channels, thus reducing cognitive demands.

This project explores the use of these two methods in facilitating feedback from patients with communication impairment.

## Aim

1. Obtain the views of patients (and their carers) on how empathic and patient centred the SLT had been during their inpatient rehab stay
2. Establish if the Talking Mats activity could facilitate feedback from patients with moderate - severe communication difficulties
3. Determine the time and resource implications in obtaining patient feedback using the above method
4. Ascertain whether this format could be rolled out across other SLT teams within GG+C

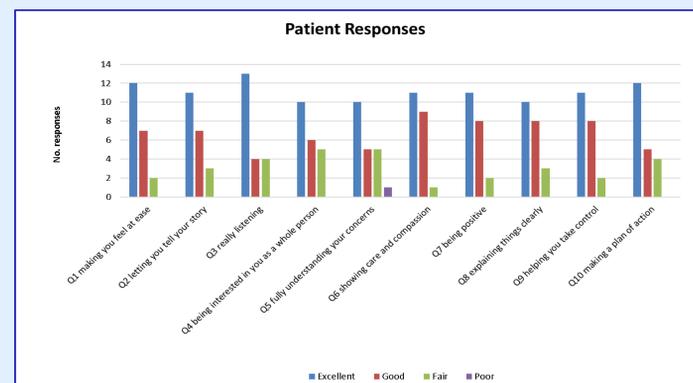
## Method

- An 8 week data collection period was identified between January and March 2016
- In-patients of wards 56, 57 and PDRU, QEUH, nearing discharge from the SLT caseload were identified
- TMs materials were devised using the VCM questions and picture symbols using a response scale of **excellent**, **good**, **fair** and **poor**
- A SLT or SLT Support Worker (SW) unfamiliar to the patient administered the TMs task
- The patient was asked to rate the SLT/SW most familiar to them during the rehab period
- The patient's carer/significant other was also asked to rate the identified SLT using the CARE measure

## Results

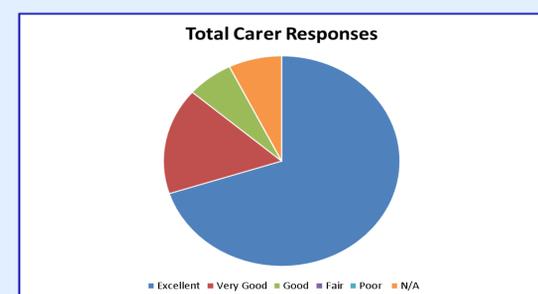
### Patient feedback

- 21/23 patients (average age 59yrs, range 23-93yrs) provided feedback. 76% of these were rated as having moderate-severe communication difficulties
- Qs 1, 3 and 10 responses indicated the SLT/SW was excellent at making the patients **feel at ease**, **really listening** and **making a plan of action**
- Questions 4, 5 and 8 relating to how good the SLT/SW was at being **interested in the patient as a whole person**, **fully understanding their concerns** and **explaining things clearly** received slightly lower ratings
- Time taken to complete the TM activity averaged 20 minutes per person



### Carer feedback

- 14/21 patients had a significant other able to provide views on the SLT identified. A return rate of 79% was achieved
- 94.5% of respondents rated the SLT as excellent or very good across all 10 questions
- No carer rated the SLT on any parameter as fair or poor



"X had a lovely manner and made my mum feel at ease. She was attentive, positive, compassionate and really helped my mum on her road to recovery. A credit to the Langlands team"

"Couldn't have asked for more. X has been very supportive and helped us enormously"

"...Her understanding, empathy and support has been outstanding...She has also been fantastic in dealing with family members and keeping us informed at all times of the care plan..."

## Conclusion

This project has achieved its aims. Positive feedback was obtained by both patients and carers, particularly in relation to the SLT/SW being excellent in making them feel at ease.

This study's approach could be replicated within other SLT teams and used as a means to gain feedback from patients with communication difficulties regarding how empathic and patient centered their clinical encounter has been within SLT.

Further studies could explore comparative methods of alternative patient and carer satisfaction feedback tools.

## Acknowledgements

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Useful websites: [www.caremeasure.org](http://www.caremeasure.org); [www.talkingmats.com](http://www.talkingmats.com); [www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)