

Communication, Learning and Technology Service

Wolfson Neurodisability Service

Information for families

Great Ormond Street Hospital
for Children NHS Foundation Trust

What is the Communication, Learning and Technology Service?

The Communication, Learning and Technology Service at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) is a multidisciplinary team that offers specialist assessment and advice on the communication and learning needs of children with severe communication impairment arising from physical and other disabilities. We aim to answer the questions that you have about your child's communication and other relevant aspects of their development.



Members of the team

Team content varies depending on the child's need. In our team we have the following professionals:

- **Speech and Language Therapist** – assesses communication skills using a variety of relevant materials
- **Occupational Therapist** – assesses for the best position for communication and the use of a controlled body movement to handle toys and to operate equipment
- **Consultant Paediatrician** – reviews the medical details including investigations and diagnoses, contributes to developmental assessment, assesses vision
- **Assistive Technologist** – applies extensive knowledge of latest hardware and software for communication to meet the needs of individual children
- **Clinical Psychologist** – undertakes detailed assessment of learning and academic skills, and general development

We are all experienced in working with children with severe communication impairment.

Who we see

We see children up to the age of 16 years, with severe communication impairments and associated developmental problems, arising from physical disability. Many of the children we see have cerebral palsy affecting all body movements, but we also see children with verbal dyspraxia, neuromuscular conditions, and children with no confirmed diagnosis. We see children with autism who may have additional speech difficulties. We can answer a wide range of referral questions; typical questions relate to relevant forms of augmentative communication, to development of switch skills, alternatives for handwriting and the expected future development for speech or learning.

Before the appointment

We will ask you and your child's therapists to complete pre-visit questionnaires. This will give us background information, and will clarify the role that our team will play. Do please also send us copies of recent assessment reports together with any therapy or education goals/targets.

At the appointment

Local professionals (from education or health) are welcome to attend; this should be confirmed in advance. Appointments may last up to three hours; please bring some refreshments for your child.

There are usually three parts to the appointment:

- **Discussion:** we explore your child's history and the questions you and your team want us to consider.
- **Assessment:** we assess your child's abilities and communication skills through play based observation and games. The assessment may also include tests of language understanding, current expressive methods, vision, physical skills, and other aspects of your child's learning. Devices and access methods are trialled as indicated. We then take 15 minutes or so to discuss our various observations as a team; this also gives your child an opportunity to have some refreshments in the waiting area.
- **Feedback:** We meet with you to discuss our findings and to make recommendations. You will be given a summary report to take away on the day. We will agree with you who will receive a copy of the full report.

After the appointment

You will receive a full report in the post. Any training and equipment recommended by our team can then be funded or purchased through appropriate local channels.

Does the Service loan equipment?

We have a range of communication devices, software and access equipment available to loan for up to three months, with training

offered if required. We ask for copies of the child's existing targets to help focus the trial and assess the impact of the device on a child's communication. Loans are designed to look at the impact on the child's current communication, as well as the local team's experiences of supporting a device. At the end of the loan we conduct an evaluation and write an objective report based on feedback from child, family and local team members. This report can be used to support an application for funding if appropriate.



Audit and research in the Communication, Learning and Technology Service

We collect clinical information about all children seen by our service. We use this patient data to understand more about the development of children with communication impairment. We also use this data to improve the quality of the service we deliver.

In addition, we are actively involved in ethics approved research projects and may ask you and your child if you are interested in being involved in a project if s/he is eligible. Participating in a research project will not affect your child's clinical care in any way.

Please let a member of the team know if you wish to discuss any of the above.

Contact details

For more information on the Communication, Learning and Technology Service please contact the clinic secretary on 020 7405 9200 ext 1144.

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Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust
Great Ormond Street
London WC1N 3JH

www.gosh.nhs.uk