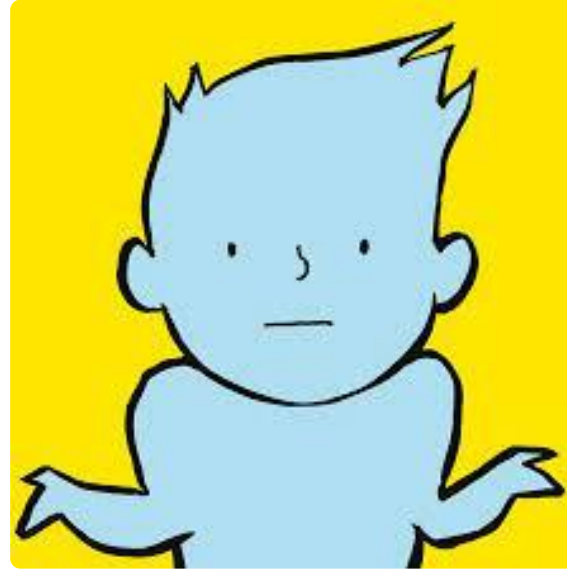


First Steps
10 minute
toolkit

www.talkingmats.com



Training

There are qualified trainers for Talking Mats – The Children’s Learning Disability Health Team (Tracey Clarke & Sarah Chorlton)

You need to have done the certified training (2 days) to call the intervention ‘Talking Mats’.

Talking mats can be used with any symbol system, line drawings or photographs. There are specific resources provided by ©Talking Mats Ltd which have been produced based on research.



What is it?

- A low tech picture sorting activity
- Most of the 'people' images are specifically without gender or ethnicity
- There is a top scale to indicate feelings about each topic / option
- Topic focussed indicated by a topic card
- A 'thinker' role and a 'listener' role
- The thinker places the 'option' cards in categories corresponding to the top scale
- Enables the 'voice' of the child/adult to be heard – choices, preferences and views
- Supports engagement and co-production
- Supports understanding of information and then to make reliable decisions and/or view points
- Can record the mat(s)
- Can use the completed mats for target setting and measuring change
- Provides evidence to refer onto other services



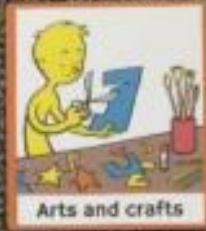
Who is it for?

- Preschool onwards
- Communication and interaction needs
- Social, emotional and mental health needs
- Cognition and learning needs
- Physical & Sensory needs
- Health needs





Games/puzzles



Arts and crafts



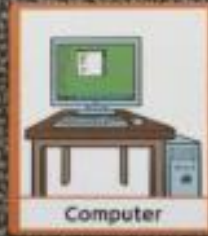
Sport



Cinema/theatre



Gardening



Computer



Reading



Numbers



Park



TV



Swimming pool



Shopping



Bike or scooter



Listening to music

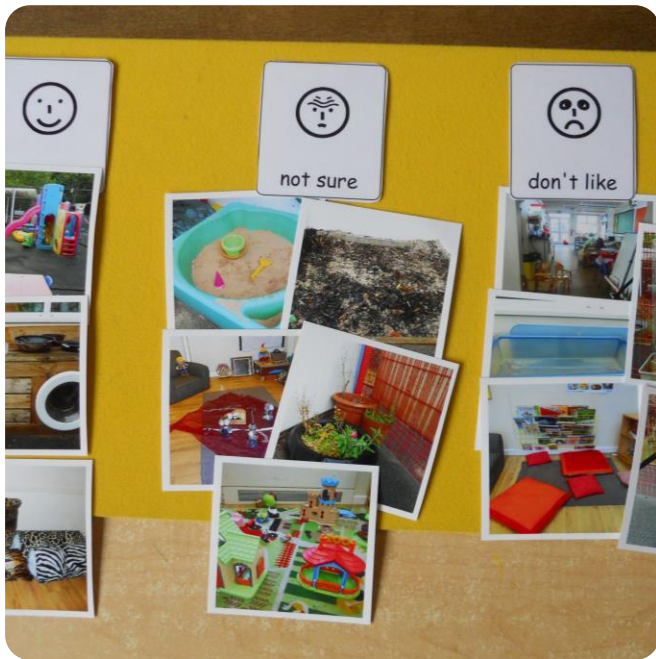
Talking Mat Principles

- **Introduction** – eg we are going to do a talking mat to find out what you think about Have the mat in front of the thinker
- **Talk about the Top Scale** – choose a top scale based on what you want to find out e.g. its easy..... I can do it sometimes Its difficult
- **Use Open questions** to encourage expression ie How do you feel about..... Use the same sentence throughout. Place the option card in front of the thinker below the mat
- **Use the blanks** - Is there anything else...? Mention you have blanks at the beginning
- **Check and change** – Recap the views made. Give time for the thinker to change
- **Record and agree action points** – photograph and create a support plan together

Research

Nationally there has been several studies supporting the effectiveness of Talking Mats to explore view points and then go onto to develop person centred interventions, especially in the fields of acquired health needs – stroke, dementia, motor neurone disease.

Some studies with children with SEND, especially in the fields of autism.



Using a talking mat approach in Early Years

- Pilot Study with five 4 year old children and one child of 3 years old – 6 children in total
- Used photos of activities and play spaces of their nursery – planned time to prepare this
- Used a simple top scale of 'like, not sure, do not like' using Makaton symbols
- Completed 2 mats for each child – Topics = 'Activities' and 'Play Spaces'

- Made adaptations for a child with Autism – objects presented as two named choices
- Reduced scale
- Then tried photos



Outcomes

- Reliable choices and preferences expressed by 4 year olds
- The one 3 year old child was less specific about where she placed the cards but was able to chat about her choices
- A better understanding of the child gained in a short period of time, more efficient than simply observing the child in the space, but both should co-occur.
- The use of photos of familiar objects immediately created conversation
- Supported the nursery staff with planning for the children and threw up some surprises!
- Supported children struggling with communication
- Encouraged the children to practice expressing their views

What next for my practice

What I have done so far

A talking mat approach has been used with young children with a range of speech, language and communication needs including selective mutism and autism.

It has also been used with young children reported as having social & emotional needs. Resources involved Widgeo pictures. Records included in written advice to parents, nurseries and schools.

Extend this use

Use a talking mat approach to capture choices, preferences and views for the EHCP process

Extend the use of a talking mat approach for the young children with emotional regulation needs to explore the effects of the learning environment and what motivates these children.

Use records of the mats to report to others and trigger other intervention

Develop the use of a talking mat approach amongst early years providers

