



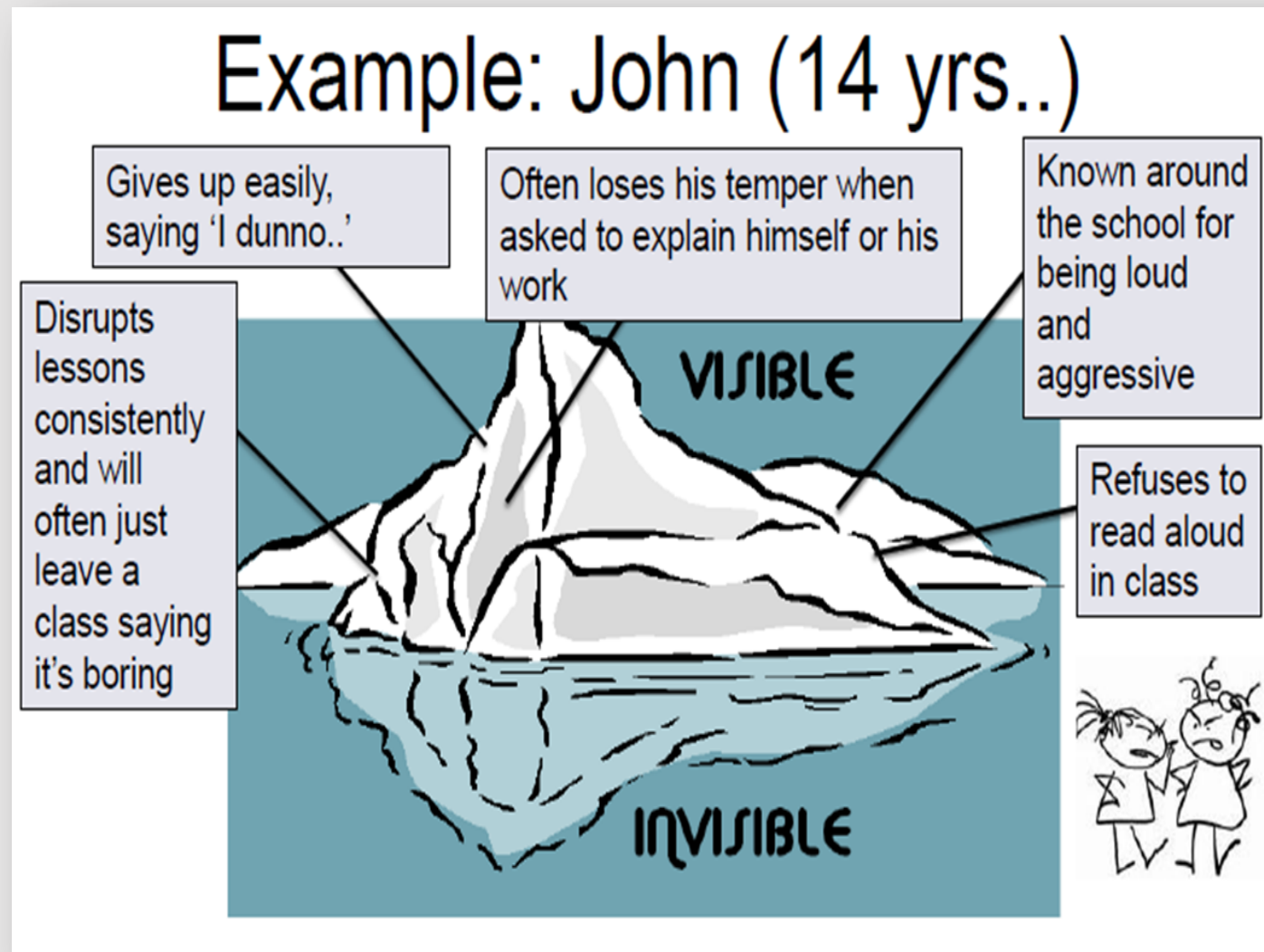
Vivienne Foley, M.Sc. Consulting
Speech & Language Therapist

Law Society of Ireland, Blackhall
Place, Dublin 7

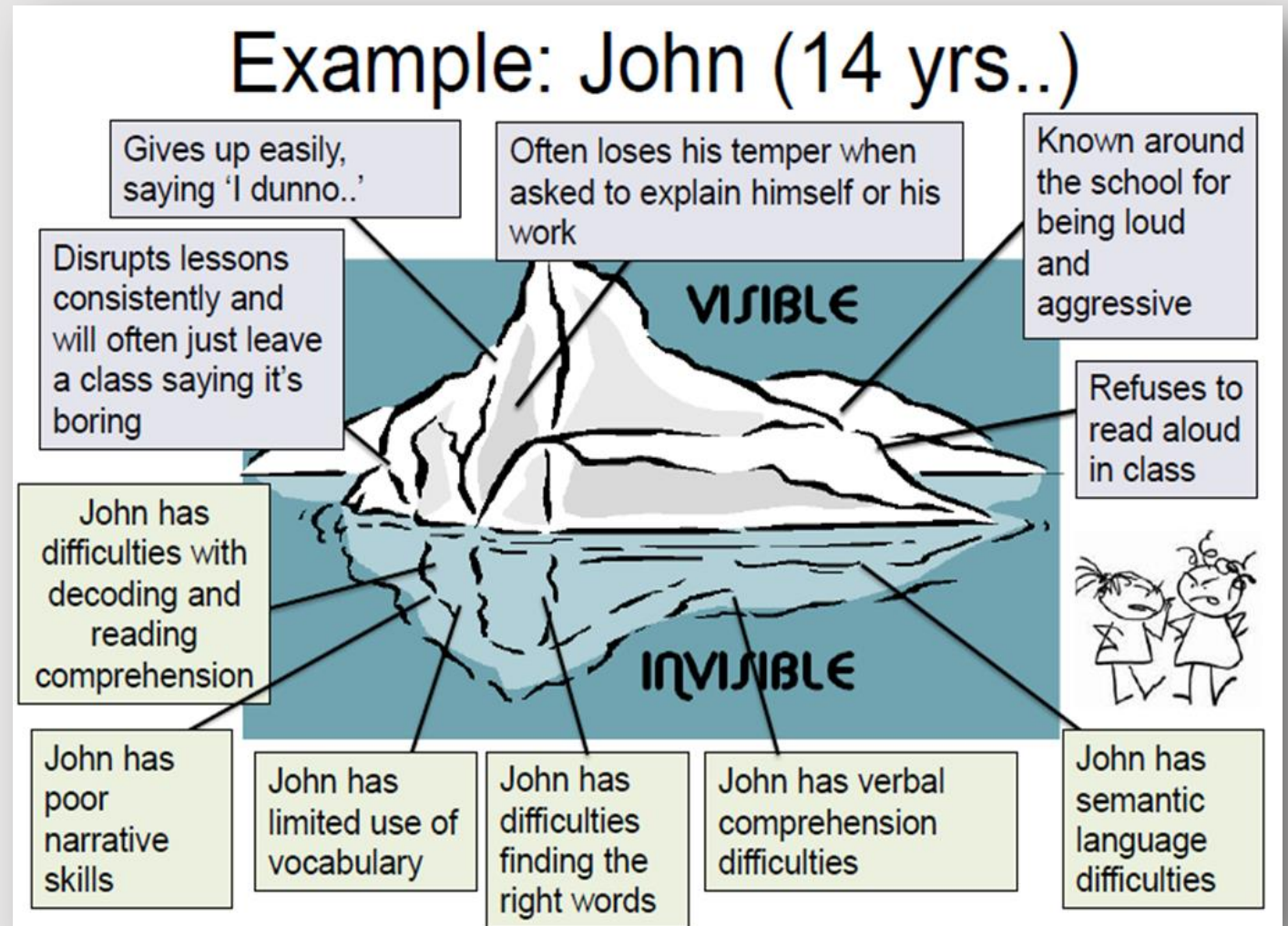
Speech, Language and Communication Challenges for Juvenile Justice

29 November 2018

Working with Teenagers: **Visible** and Invisible Problems

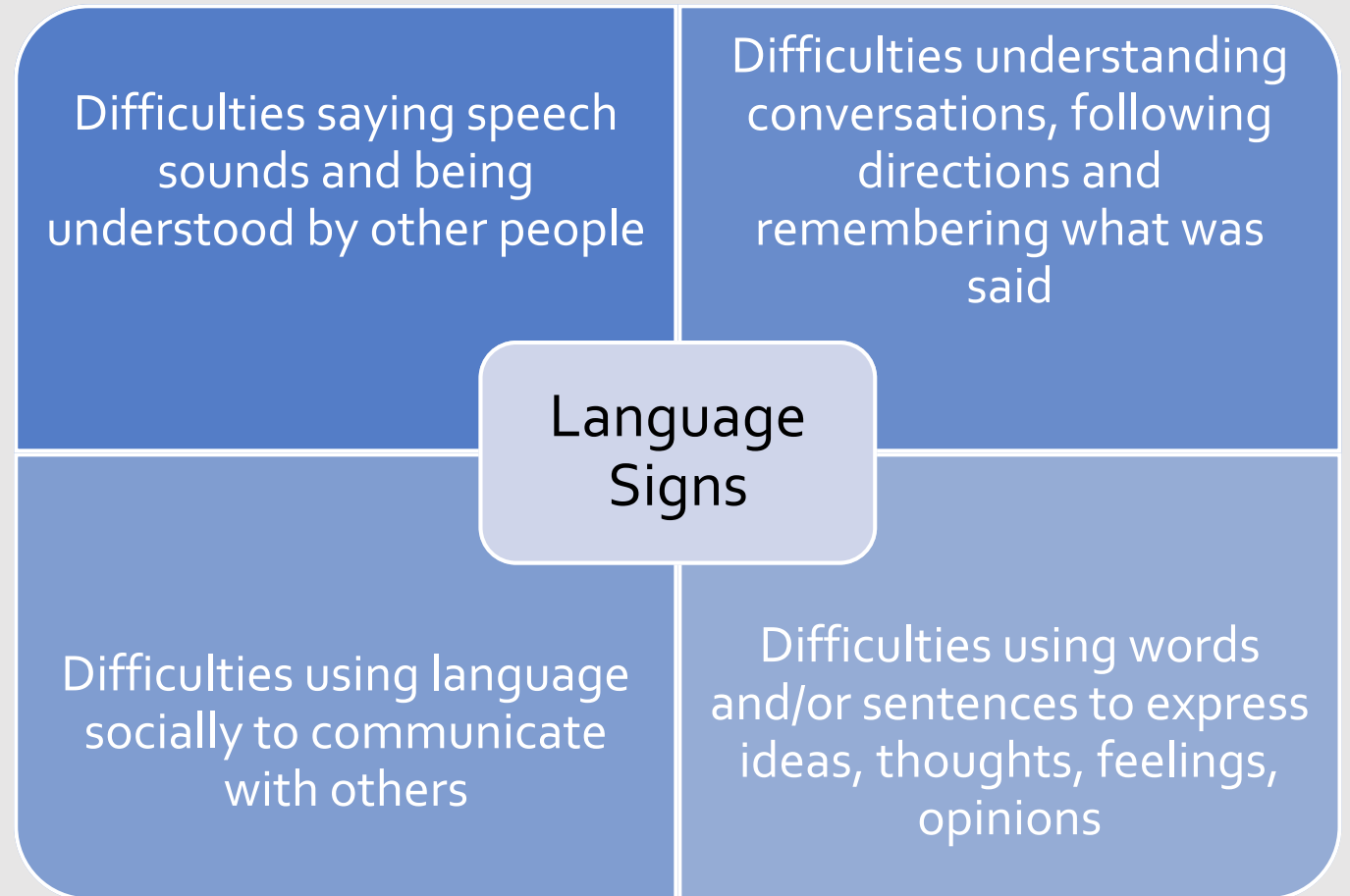


Working with Teenagers: Visible and Invisible Problems



Language Impairment

What are the signs?



Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)

What is it?

- Language problems **severe** enough to interfere with daily life, **poor prognosis**, not associated with a clear biomedical aetiology (Bishop, 2017).
- May be primarily receptive, expressive or mixed.
- Those with diagnosis of a **receptive language disorder** most at risk
- Obstacles to **learning, making friends and emotional well being**
- DLD may co-occur with other neurodevelopmental disorders like ADHD and ASD.

Persistence and Severity

Hidden but common

- A significant proportion of language difficulties can be **long term** even with intervention (Stothard, Snowling et al, 1998)
- Educational achievement and self-esteem is negatively impacted
- Literacy research study of students in Junior Cycle in a disadvantaged area indicated literacy several years below age level (Bizell & Foley, 2011)

DLD

- Can be lifelong, with continuing language difficulties
- Can have a functional impact on participation in many aspects of life
- Can be helped with specialist support
- Affects about 2 in every class of 30 primary school children

Hidden
but common

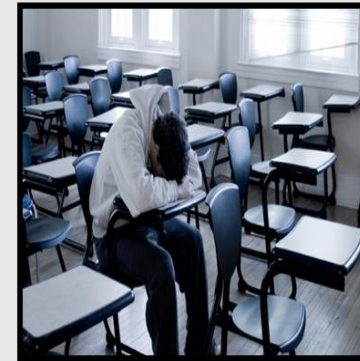


RADLD Campaign Raising Awareness of DLD

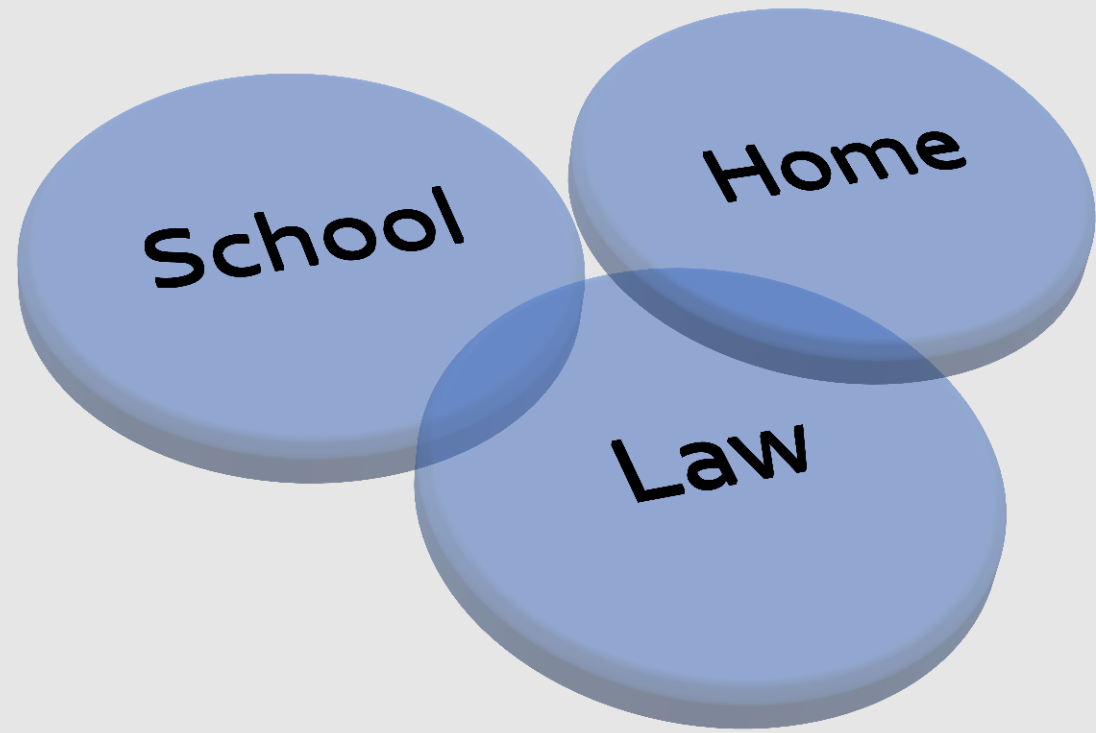
Receptive Language Impairment (SRLI)

- Comprehension difficulties make children very vulnerable in relation to education (Hooper et al, 2003). Implications for self-esteem, social-communication and mental health;
- **Receptive language** (comprehension) deficits mirrored in **reading comprehension** and **social comprehension** impairments.
- Adolescents develop strategies to 'mask' these hidden difficulties

Impact on Teenagers



Impact on Teenagers



Young Offenders

Oral Language Competence, Risk
Protector/Predictor, Prevalence



Language Impairment and Risk

- Language difficulties **rarely recognised** in young offenders and never cited as a risk predictor
- Prevalence in adolescents in custody is **much higher** than that seen in the general population, estimates ranging from 60-90% compared to 7-12%, respectively (Hughes, N. et al. 2012) .
- New Zealand study identified 64% of Young Offenders had language impairment compared to 10% of youth in controls (Lount, Purdy & Hand, 2017)
- 75% of youth in a community centre in the U.K were found to have speech, language and/or communication need (SLCN) (Gregory & Bryan, 2011)

Oral Language Competence and Disadvantage

- Oral language is a key competency acquired in the first 5 years of life
- Interpersonal, academic and vocational goals are facilitated in a pro-social way which reduces the risk of offending (Snow & Powell)
- Research indicates that up to 42% of young children in disadvantaged areas of Cork city presented with language delays and impairments. This was reduced to expected estimates of up to 7-8% with early intervention
- **Happy Talk** is an **early intervention** approach which empowers parents and teachers to facilitate language development in the 0-6 year age group

Education & Exclusion

- Education is protective factor (Smart et al, 2003) and there is an over-representation of young people **excluded from school**
- Young people who are not in school miss opportunity to form positive peer relationships where language plays a central role
- These young people are more likely to **associate with others who are involved in criminal activity** (Quintin et al, 1993).

Compounding Risk Model

- Children who start school with language difficulties are **immediately disadvantaged** (Snow, 2001, Locke et al. 2002)
- Without age-appropriate language, literacy and numeracy skills, pupils have difficulty accessing the curriculum successfully
- Low levels of language leads to literacy difficulties and lower educational achievement which are risk factors for **mental health and offending** (Tomblin et al, 2000)
- Young offenders are a vulnerable group whose difficulties may best be understood as a **compounding risk model** (Bryan et al, 2015)



*'The basic motivating
factor for all human
social behaviour is a
lifelong need for human
recognition'*

(Dusay & Dusay, 1989)

Co-Morbidity

- ASD clients may present with most complex presentations: low mood, challenging behaviour, severe anxiety, language and literacy disorder, eating disorder, psychosis, selective mutism
- **The universal deficit in autism is an impairment in social judgement**
- Social deficits that are part of ASD may mean that social **anxiety** is more common in this population (Chang et al, 2010)
- Challenging behaviours occur at higher rates in ASD population due to poor communication and problem-solving skills (Matson & Williams, 2013)
- Up to 45% of young offenders in UK have ADHD

Co-Morbidity

- Persistent difficulty with language and literacy development has been linked with a greater chance than normal of the development of both **mental health problems** and involvement in **criminal activity** (Clegg et al. 2005).
- A review of the literature by Benner et al. (2002) suggests that 71% of children with identified **emotional and behavioural difficulties** have underlying language difficulties.
- Beitchman et al. (1999) suggest that communication difficulties tend to be misinterpreted as **non-compliance and conduct problems** in the classroom environment.

The Court Context

Youth Justice:
Young person's experience



- Formal, unfamiliar environment
- **Language demands increase** in length and complexity
- Vocabulary and concepts are challenging: intention, motivation, prediction, decision making, inference
- **The voice of the young person needs to be heard**

The Court Context

Youth Justice:
Young person's experience

Language Difficulties impacting YP
in Court (Lavigne and van Rybroek, 2011)

- Difficulty processing complex sentence
- Difficulty following directions
- Poor auditory memory & sequencing
- Restricted vocabulary
- Topic continuity
- Deficits in narrative skills
- Failure to grasp inferences
- Difficulty reading social cues
- Limited ability recognising and expressing emotions
- Deficits in higher order thinking skills involving thoughts and motives of others
- Emotional dysregulation



The Court Context

Role of the Lawyer

- Promote a fair outcome
- Support YP in understanding
 - What wrong it was alleged was committed
 - What are the key issue(s) involved
 - What defences are available to him/her
 - What are the possible consequences
- Scaffold like a teacher in supportive education
- Build bridges to understanding
- Key strategies to address deficits
- **Intervention needs to be specific to the YP's identified needs**



Communication Strategies

- Engagement in face to face manner
- Neutral, **gentle** tone
- Address the young person by name
- Pause, **wait for 10 secs at least**, Listen
- Speak **slowly** & use simple vocabulary
- **Repeat** key information
- Use concrete language, avoiding abstract constructs involving inference
- Allow YP to tell **or draw** their story
- Choose questions carefully - not too many
- Avoid tag questions and negative statements e.g. "*you didn't do that, did you ?*"
- Open Questions involve what happened, how, why, where. Closed Questions are easier (who, what , where, when)
- Time concepts are difficult (involving before and after)

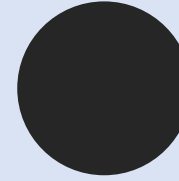
Communication Strategies

Resources & Tools



Communication Strategies

Resources & Tools



Visual Schedules for
understanding & predictability

What is this about?
How long will it take?


What this is all about...	
The things we need to talk about/decide are...	1)
	2)
	3)
We are going to talk for _____ minutes	
We will finish at _____	
I can have a break, I can tell _____ I want to stop.	
I can say if people are not making sense or I want them to say something again.	

What is this about?
How long will it take?
What was that all about?

How will they let you know if it is not making sense?

Did you check at the end that they knew what that had been all about?

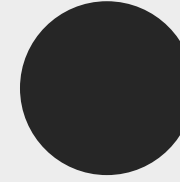
Do they know what is going to happen next?



www.talkingmaddness.org

Communication Strategies

Resources & Tools



Receptive Language / Comprehension

The infographic is divided into two main sections. The left section has a yellow background and contains five speech bubbles. The first four are white with black text, and the fifth is a teal bubble with white text. The right section has a white background and contains text and an illustration.

Do you understand?

Got that?

All OK?

That makes sense, doesn't it?

Yep, all good

Watch out – are you checking understanding effectively?

Most of us won't say when we are confused or unsure. We do not want to feel shamed or stupid.

Try asking young person to tell you what they think you said.

Review and write it down.

A cartoon illustration of a person with a large question mark above their head, looking confused. They are wearing a blue shirt and have their hands raised in a questioning gesture.

www.collegeadmissions.org

Communication Strategies


Resources & Tools

3

Restricted vocabulary Code

Break it down

"You are charged with Possession of Instruments for Conversion."



Charge
Possession of Instruments for Conversion
Charge = what the Police say you did
You had things to use for stealing a car
jacked
in your hands
the good body
the good body

Look out for jargon

Explain it

What words might be confusing?

Write down the jargon word or phrase if you need to use it

Explain it simply

Draw it

If it is important, make sure you check it now makes sense



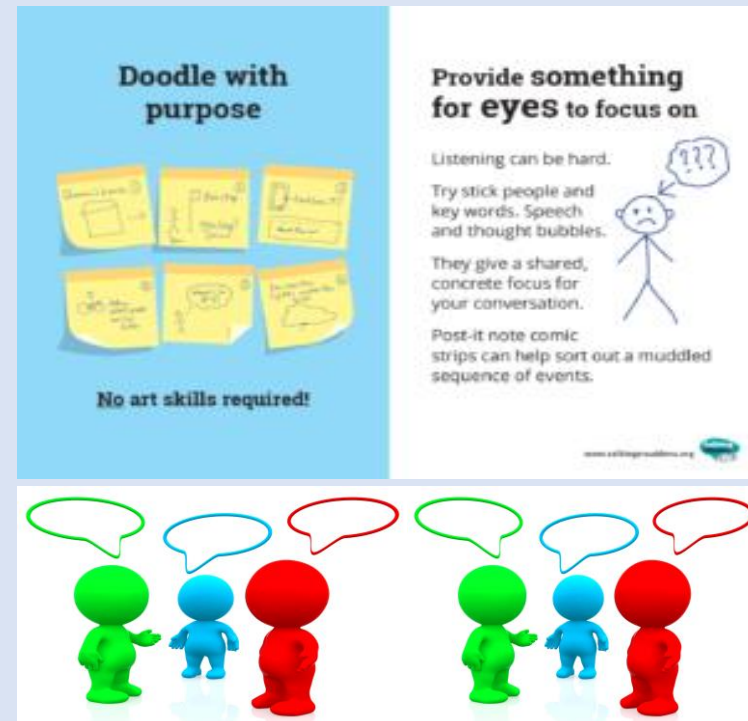
www.zetingsolutions.org

Communication Strategies

Resources & Tools

4

Comic Strips & Speech Bubbles for thinking

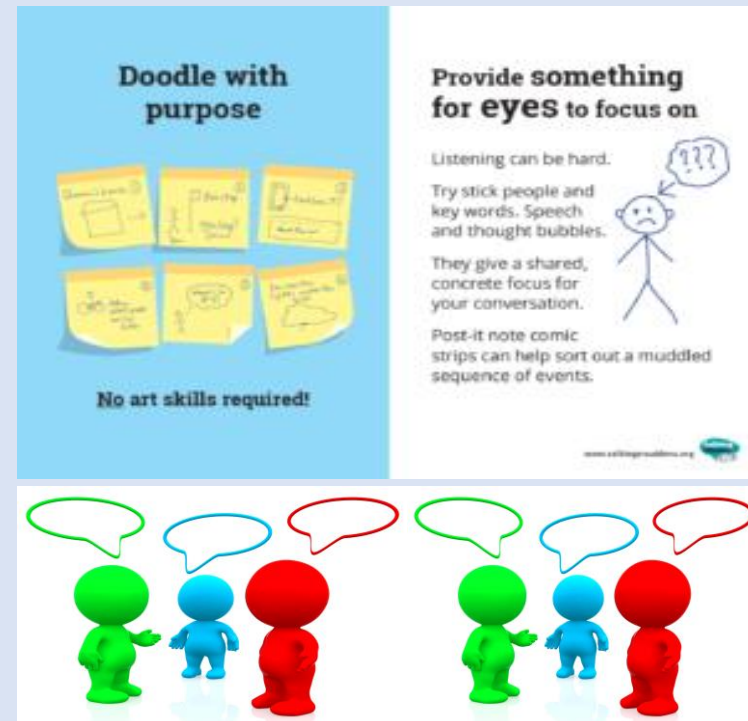


Communication Strategies

Resources & Tools

4

Comic Strips & Speech Bubbles for thinking

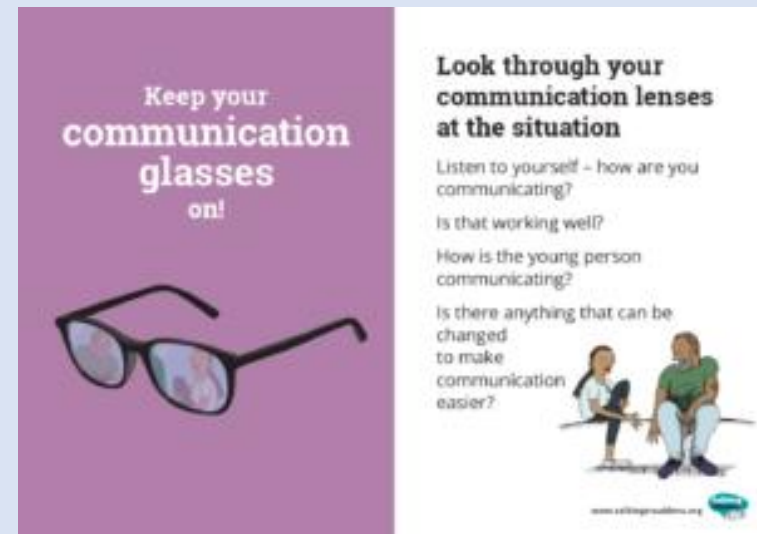


Communication Strategies

Resources & Tools

5

Observe -Wait -Notice - Respond -Adapt



Communication Strategies

Resources & Tools

5

Template

Who? 	Where? 	Start the story 
What happened 	What happened next? 	The end 

*Children need to
understand
and
be understood*

- Strengths and challenges - tailor language to the appropriate level of understanding
- Effective communication the bedrock of the legal process
- Is it possible to have a fair trial without a language profile?



Recommendations

- Up to date assessment report with a profile of Young Person and a signposting for future
- Verbal intermediary who can interpret reports and young person, guide and support in court.
- Training for professionals involved in the justice system
- Research base in Ireland to promote better outcomes

References

- Beitchman, J,H; Douglas, L; Wilson, B; Johnson, C; Young, A; Atkinson, L; Escobar, M. & Taback, N. (1999). Adolescent substance use disorders: Findings from a 14 year old follow up study of speech /language impaired and control children. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, **28**, 312-321.
- Clegg, J; ,Hollis, C; Mawhood, L & Rutter, M. (2005). Developmental Language Disorders: a follow-up in later adult life. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, **46**, 128-149
- Gregory, J. and Bryan, K. (2011). Speech and Language therapy intervention with a group of persistent and prolific young offenders in a non-custodial setting with previously undiagnosed speech, language and communication difficulties. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, **46**, 202-215.
- Hughes, N. et al. (2012) *Nobody made the connection; the prevalence of neurodisability in young people who offend*. London: Office for the Children's Commissioner.
- Hughes, N., Chitsabesan, P., Bryan, K., Borschmann, R., Swain, N., Lennox, C. & Shaw, J. (2017), *Language impairment and comorbid vulnerabilities among young people in custody*. *J Child Psychol Psychiatry*. **58**: 1106-1113.

References

- Lavigne, M. and Van Rybroek, G; 2011, Breakdown in the Language zone: the prevalence of language impairments among juveniles and why it matters. *University of California-Davis Journal of Juvenile Law and Policy*, **37**, 46-47.
- Lount, S.A; Purdy, S.C. & Hand, L (2017). Hearing, Auditory Processing and Language Skills of male youth offenders in Juvenile Justice residences. New Zealand.
- Quinton, D; Pickles, A; Maughan, S and Rutter, M. (1993). Partners, Peers and Pathways: assertive pairings and continuities in conduct disorder. *Development and Psychopathology*, **5** 763-783.
- Snow, P.C. and Powell, M.B. (2011). Oral language competence in incarcerated young offenders: Links with offending severity. *International Journal of Speech Language Pathology*, **13**, 480-489.
- Tomblin, J.B, Zhang, X; Buckwater, P and Catts, H, (2000). The association of reading disability, behavioural disorders and language impairment among 2nd grade children. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, **41**, 473-482.
- www.talkingtroublenz.org



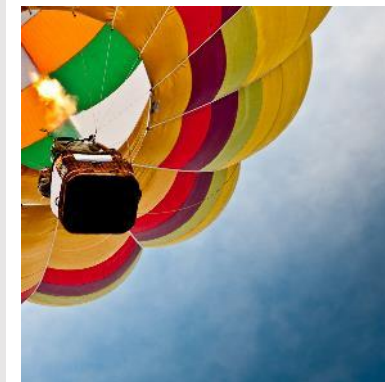
Questions



Language &
Communication
Challenges



Co-Morbidity



YP Experience



Ground Rules



Adapting
Communication



LANGUAGE PROFILE