

Chailey Communication System (CCS) Manual For use

Who are we?

We are the Speech and Language Therapy Team at Chailey Clinical Services, which is part of Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust. Chailey Clinical Services provide flexible and specialist medical, nursing, therapy and equipment services to children and young adults with complex neurodisability. The service works closely with Chailey Heritage Foundation who provide specialist education and care services for children and young adults.

What is the CCS and who is it suitable for?

The Chailey Communication System (CCS) is a category-based vocabulary system. Each of its 18 categories comprise a number of subcategories and a potentially unlimited number of vocabulary items.

The CCS is suitable for children and adults with severe visual and physical impairment, resulting in no speech at all or limited/unintelligible speech. In addition, please note the following:

- The user must be able to communicate a reliable 'yes' response, which could be indicated through a physical movement, facial expression or their voice.
- The systematic structure and layout make it clear and predictable so that it can be learnt by people who require auditory scanning as an access method. (Auditory scanning is where the communication partner reads aloud the items in order, allowing time after each for the user's response).
- It is suitable for those communicating at one key word level as well as for those combining key words.
- The system is also suitable for people who do not have a visual impairment, but who have severe physical limitations and require a predictable structure.
- It can be used as a temporary system, while speech and language skills improve such as during a period of rehab, or it can be a permanent support system.

History

The comprehensive system was first introduced at Chailey Heritage in 1991, by a team lead by Valerie Moffat, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist and Lisbeth Meek, Specialist Teacher, working in conjunction with Widgit Software. Since then, hundreds of children, young people and adults have benefitted from using this communication system.

CCS content

The content of the CCS has been regularly updated and modernised. It has been produced using Widgit symbols. The Speech and Language Therapists have consulted with CCS users, their families, teachers, therapists, and nurses to ensure that the most relevant vocabulary is available.

The CCS now has a Problem category, to ensure safeguarding vocabulary is accessible. This category was initiated and trialled at Chailey Heritage School by Helen Dunman, a PSHE teacher at CHF, in liaison with members of the Speech and Language Therapy team.

The Different Versions

The CCS books are available in 3 versions which can be fully customised using Communicate in Print software by Widgit.

CCS Version	Symbols per page	Total words (approx.)
CCS6	6	3200
CCS15	15	1300
CCS45	45	530

Assessment is needed in order to determine the most appropriate version for an individual. The following should be considered:

- Receptive language ability
- Expressive language ability
- Ability to give a reliable 'yes' response
- Attention Level
- Memory
- Symbolic understanding
- Number/size of symbols per page
- Categorisation/subcategorisation skills
- Literacy skills

The 3 versions increase in terms of the number of vocabulary items. It is not necessarily the aim that a user will progress through the 3 versions, but rather that they will access the most suitable version for their physical, sensory, and cognitive abilities. The vocabulary can be personalised, so it matches the needs of the individual.

Purchasing a CCS book enables the buyer to have access to the electronic files only. It is the responsibility of the buyer to print the book.

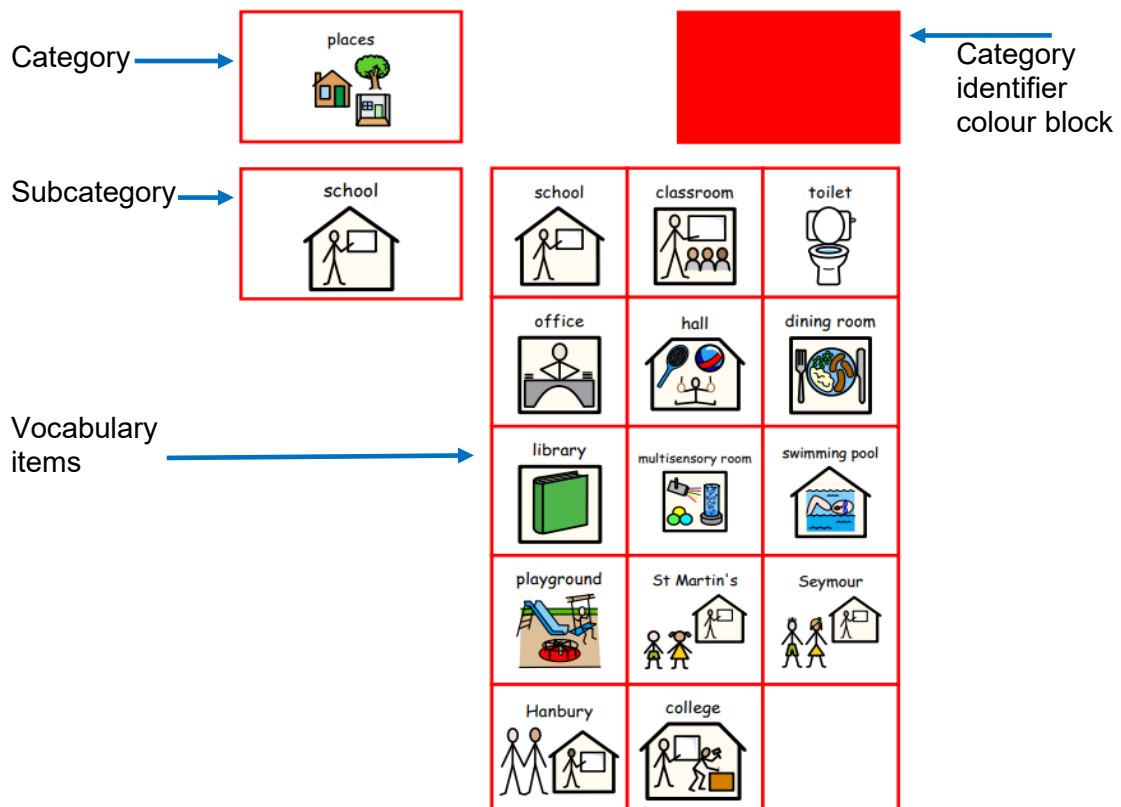
Each version includes 'growing up'/'private' words pages within the Body category. They include words relevant to under 10s and those relevant to over 10s and the pages that do not apply can be removed.

Organisation




The CCS is organised into 18 categories identified on the CATEGORY PAGE. The most frequently used categories appear first.



Within each category there are SUBCATEGORIES and within these subcategories are a number of VOCABULARY ITEMS. Vocabulary items can be single words or short phrases.



In order for a user to locate any vocabulary item, they need to go through these 3 levels. For example, to indicate the word 'classroom', the following is required:

1) CATEGORY	PLACES	places 
2) SUBCATEGORY	SCHOOL	school 
3) ITEM	CLASSROOM	classroom 

Vocabulary items may be found in more than one category depending on their context.

Categories are colour coded to assist with learning. These are largely based on the Fitzgerald key, with some additional colours added such as time = gold as in gold watch and world = brown as in earth.

Personalisation

The vocabulary in the CCS is based on experience of people using the system. However, additional vocabulary should be added throughout the user's life to reflect their developmental and changing needs, for example, adapting the vocabulary within the About Me, Problem, People, Places and Activities categories. Personalisation can only be made using the symbols that are obtainable from Communicate in Print software by Widgit.

Blank cells have been left in most subcategories to allow space for personalisation. A blank template page has also been provided for each category so that additional subcategories can be added.

Access methods

The CCS can be accessed using different methods, depending on the user's abilities:

Direct access

Users may be able to point to the symbols e.g., with a finger, fist, or head pointer. They may or may not need support to turn the pages.

Indirect access

1. Visual Scanning

- **LINEAR:** The communication partner points to each symbol in order, and waits/watches for the user to indicate yes when they get to the one they want.
- **ROW/CELL:** The communication partner points to each row in turn, waiting for the user's yes response, then points to each option within the row chosen. This skill needs to be learnt and can make access quicker.
- **PAGE:** The communication partner points to each page in turn and waits for the user to indicate yes. This can only be used when the user is familiar with the vocabulary, and / or can quickly scan the pages. This technique can speed up the communication.

2. Auditory scanning

- **LINEAR:** The communication partner reads aloud the items in order, waiting for the user's yes response.

Some users, especially when learning the symbols, use a combination of visual and auditory scanning.

With any scanning method, it is important to scan the symbols in the same order every time, left to right, top to bottom, in order for it to be predictable for the user.

Using the CCS

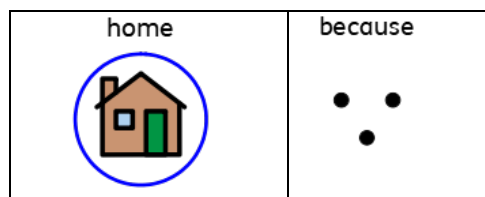
The CCS can be used to support understanding of language as well as a for a means of expression. The system should be used by the communication partner when they are communicating with the user to give exposure to the system and support them to learn where words are stored. This is called 'modelling'. Opportunities should be given throughout the day for the user to use the system for a variety of functions, such as expressing a need, conveying a message, or sharing an idea.

People can use their CCS to communicate in pairs or with a group, which may include personal and social topics. It can be used to develop essential

communication and social skills, for example listening, turn taking and eye contact.

Recognition of Symbols

Some of the symbols in the system are more easily recognisable than others. Some symbols, e.g., “home”, clearly illustrate the object or action they represent, while others are more abstract representations, e.g., “because”, and can be difficult to recognise without being first taught the meaning. Recognition of more abstract symbols will come through regular use and modelling. See examples below:



Teaching Categorisation

In order to use the CCS a person would need to have developed the concept of object permanence, be able to recognise and associate a verbal label to a common object and then establish the ability to categorise. These skills can be taught and practised in games with familiar objects and their corresponding colourful pictures, both at home or in an educational setting.

Teaching the category colours

Specific colours have been assigned to each of the categories based on the Fitzgerald Key. People can be taught to relate colours to the categories through exploration, practice, and games.

Handy hints when using a CCS

- Familiarise yourself with what is in the CCS so you can help the user.
- Model using the CCS yourself when communicating to users.
- Write individualised user instructions in the front of the user’s CCS book including how the individual indicates yes and no.
- Add a blank missing words page at the back of the book so that people can write down vocabulary that needs to be added as it comes up in conversation. Symbols can then be added when more convenient.
- Always read the categories, sub-categories, and vocabulary in the same order as consistency is extremely important to enable the user to anticipate and predict what is coming next.
- Do not assume you know what they want to say.

- Write down the words the user chooses as they may not be communicated in a clear order. This enables you to remember what has been said and check the message with the user.
- It can take a long time to learn a system therefore frequent ongoing modelling, exposure and use of the system is crucial.
- Remember that the personalised vocabulary requires regular updating.

Printing and collating

- The book should be printed in either A4 or A5 (usually A4) depending on the user's needs.
- It is advisable to put each page into a plastic wallet and then into a ring binder.
- It can help to put an additional fastening through each page, such as a treasury tag, to keep the pages in the correct order.
- Some users like to have their name and/or a photo on the front cover of the folder; others prefer to choose a favourite coloured folder.
- Create category dividers to aid navigation according to preference and need.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to all our colleagues at Chailey Heritage Foundation as well as all the children and young people who have used the CCS and taught us so much. We would like to give a special thanks to Valerie Moffat and Lisbeth Meek who pioneered the CCS. Their dedication, hard work and inspiration has affected and benefitted so many people.

We would like to acknowledge the staff team at Widgit Software for their support, technical advice, and invaluable help in setting this project up.



The symbols used in the CCS are Widgit Symbols © Widgit Software Ltd 2002-2023. www.widgit.com