

Talking Mats: A Communication Tool for Young People in the Youth Justice System

NAS Autism, Learning Disabilities &
Criminal Justice System Conference

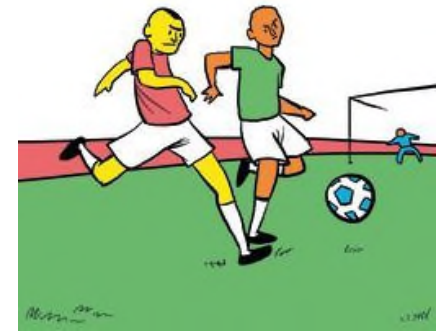
September 2021



Talking Mats Vision

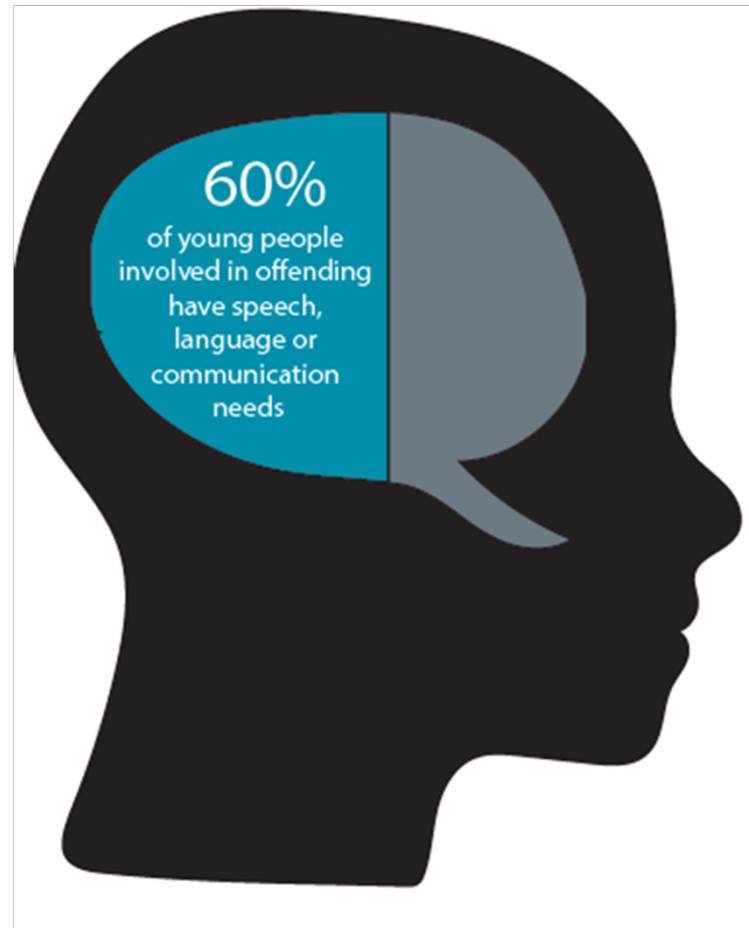


To uphold and enhance the rights of people with communication difficulties by increasing their capacity to communicate effectively about things that matter to them.



Plan

- Communication Needs of Young People in the Criminal Justice System
- What are Talking Mats?
- The Lundy Model of Participation
- Examples: Breaking Issues Down through Supportive Conversations
- Greater Manchester Youth Justice Project & Resource
- Talking Mats and Autism
- How to find out more



At least some level of difficulty with communication has been observed in 75%-90% of young people in custody (Gregory and Bryan, 2011; Khan, 2010; RCSLT, 2012; Snow and Sanger, 2011).

Nina Vaswani, Research Fellow, Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice (CYCJ) Speech, language and communication difficulties -2014

“Youth justice practitioners report a need for non-specialist brief tools and interventions that can be assimilated into standard practice, without having to rely unnecessarily on specialist services and interventions, that all too often have long waiting lists and introduce yet another professional into a young person's life”

Nina Vaswani, Research Fellow, Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice (CYCJ) Speech, language and communication difficulties -2014 p.9

The Evidence Base

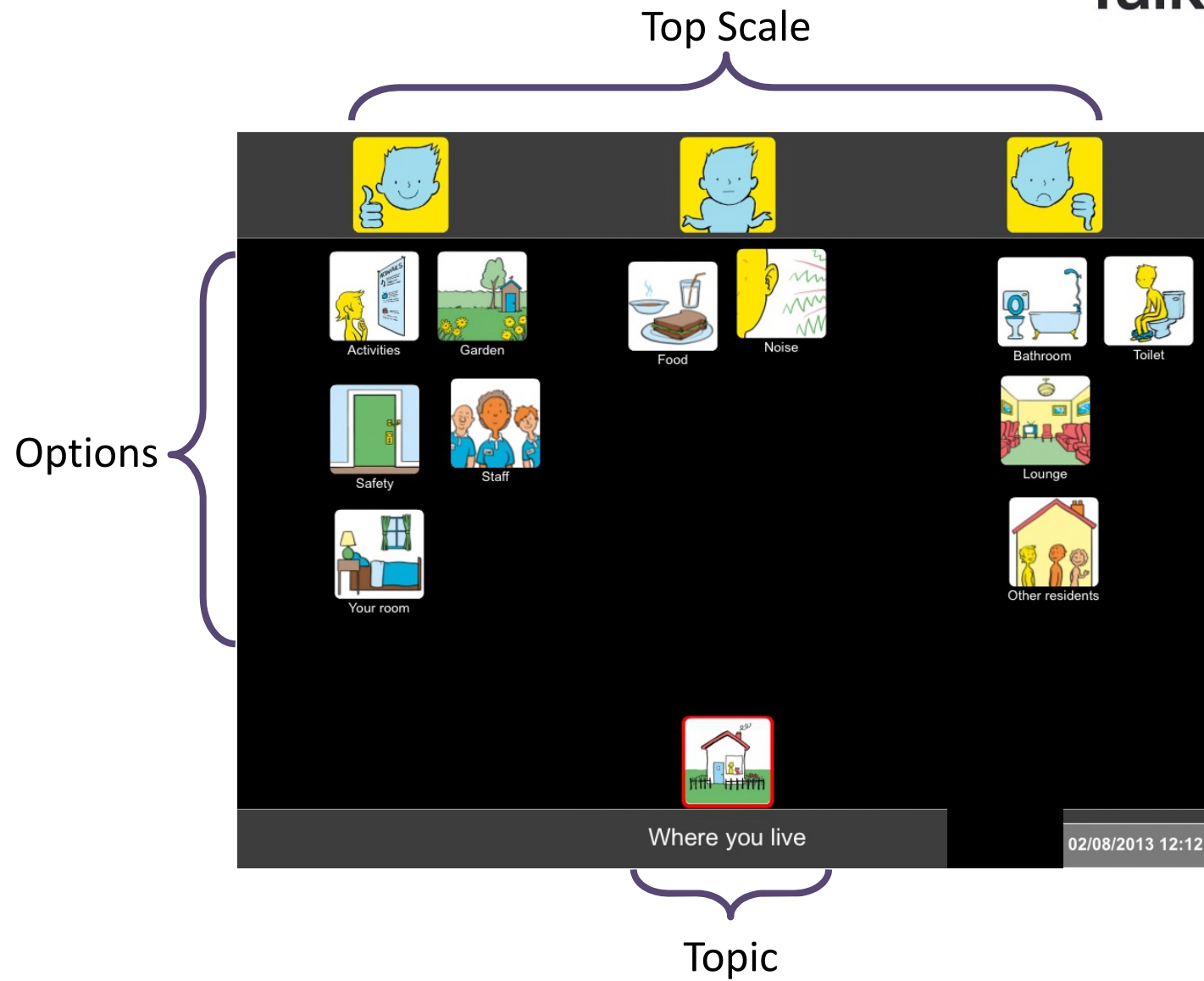
- Based on 21 years of research originating at The University of Stirling. Using TMs to aid communication in stroke, learning disability, dementia, children with additional support needs.
- Includes a portfolio of over 100 research papers from 23 different research institutions worldwide.
- Key research finding: Talking Mats help people say more, and the quality of what they say is improved.
- We have a very active Talking Mats Research Group led by our Research Associate Dr Jill Bradshaw from the Tizard Centre at the University of Kent.

Talking Mats is based on best practice interview techniques:

“You are trying to get an understanding of the lived experience of another person. It isn’t only words spoken that are important – part of the story will be told non-verbally...”

Reflective Practice







Lundy Model of CYP Participation

The Talking Mats
process is the
“epitome of rights-
based participation”

Lundy's Voice Model
Checklist for Participation as
included in Ireland's
National Strategy on
Children and Young People's
Participation in Decision-
Making 2015-2020

TalkingMats^{🗨️}



A Supportive Conversation: Breaking big issues down

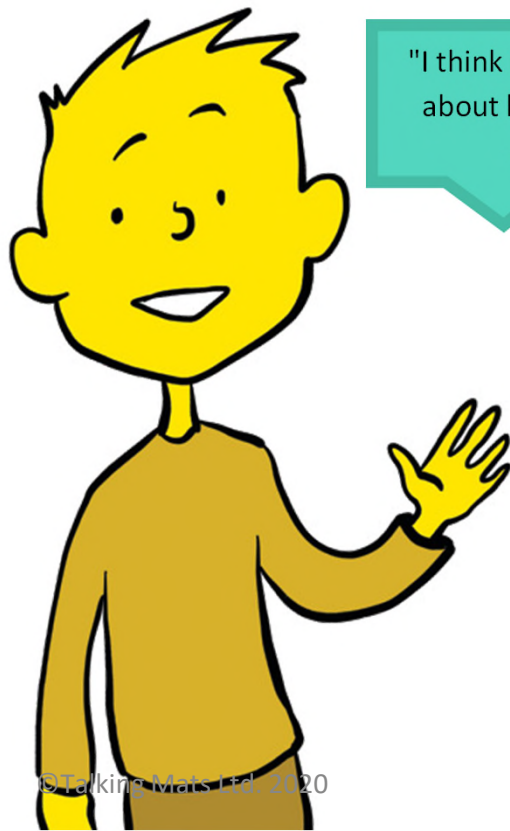


The listener found out that he has a lot of responsibility at home, the majority of which he feels is going well. He was most concerned about maintaining relationships (had just split with his girlfriend) and coping when things change, especially in relation to his mum's health. He also discussed not being able to do as many activities as he used to. We agreed to have a further conversation to discuss support with change and more access to sport with his young carer champion.

Talking Mats in Action

Video: Ronnie

How do Children and Young People feel about using Talking Mats?



"I think it was pretty fun; It's about how you are feeling about stuff"

"It was nice to be able to talk about me without being interrupted"

"I think it went ok-it was fun and easy to describe my feelings because I don't like talking"

"helped me think about things at home"

"Other people should do Talking Mats. It helps"

"It calms me down. It's very helpful".

"It gives you a chance to talk to a youth worker"

"I think it's a good way for people to understand how you feel"

"It was nice to talk about things"

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Talking Mats

Greater Manchester Youth Justice Project

- For Practitioners working across GM YJS to access Talking Mats training then introduce this approach into their work, supporting person-centred planning and practice at a universal level.
- To work collaboratively to develop a YJS resource set, including a trial/pilot period with service users.

Evidence Base

- Young people who offend often present with language/learning difficulties, many of which have been previously undiagnosed. <https://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/justice-evidence-base-2017.pdf>
<https://www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/where-slts-work/justice/>
- Finding ways to hear the young person's voice is key both for the young person and also for organisations in order to deliver appropriate and effective care. Talking Mats can be an effective tool for opening up conversations with young people who offend. <https://www.talkingmats.com/communication-needs-in-youth-justice/>

Outcomes

24 multi-agency practitioners, including all the SLTs across GM YJS, received Talking Mats training. A subgroup was formed to develop bespoke resource sets for this population.

These sets are designed to support young people to explore and express their feelings about:

- Places and Spaces
- Relationships
- My Youth Justice Experience

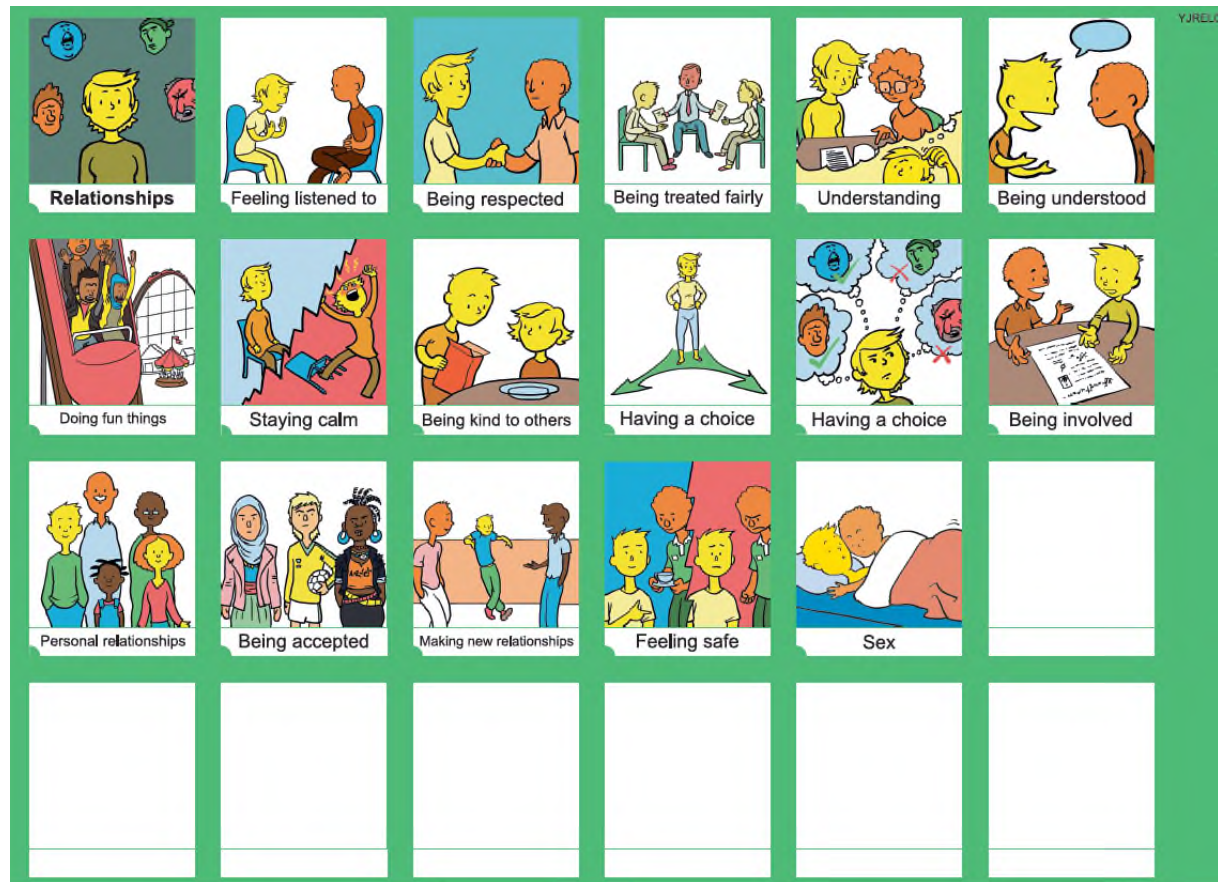
TOPIC: Places and Spaces

TOP SCALE:
Safe/ Unsure/ Not Safe







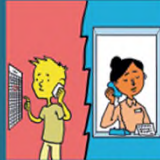
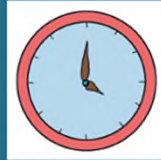










Topic: Relationships

TOP SCALE:
Going well /
Sometimes going well /
Not going well



Topic: My Youth Justice Experience

TOP SCALE:
 Going well /
 Sometimes going well /
 Not going well

 Youth Justice Experience	 Getting here	 Meeting place	 Your workers	 Contacting workers	 Workers being on time
 Understanding	 Asking for help	 Feeling safe	 Activities	 Things you've learned	 Health
 People in your life	 Living life differently	 Reparation	 Future plans		

Conclusions



1. Practitioners understand more about the dynamic process of communication and the responsibility of the listener to adapt their language to make communication accessible.
2. Increased participation of YP in the YJ service, allowing them to have more agency in decision making.
3. Improved understanding and use of the Talking Mats process to break down a topic using visual images, and to scaffold a conversation

Implications and Future Directions

- We plan to launch this resource in Autumn 2021. The resource will then be available to purchase for professionals working in YJS across the UK and beyond.
- 6 practitioners have gone on to do advanced TM training, and Fiona Taylor, NHS Salford SLT Service Lead, accessed TM Licensed Training in June 2021, to enable increased delivery of Talking Mats training across the GM area, skilling up the local workforce and rolling out consistent use of the Talking Mats approach.

Autism: How can Talking Mats help?

Please see the updated
Autism Guidelines on our
website for more details

Visual framework

Allows communication without speech

Allows time for processing and reflection

Less stressful than face to face interaction

Makes abstract concepts more concrete

Supports understanding of views being different

People can use it independently to self manage and support decision making

Find Out more:

Scan code using Phone camera or click code



Free Resources



Blog



Research and
Consultancy

Further training:
Accredited training and
specialist seminars.

www.talkingmats.com



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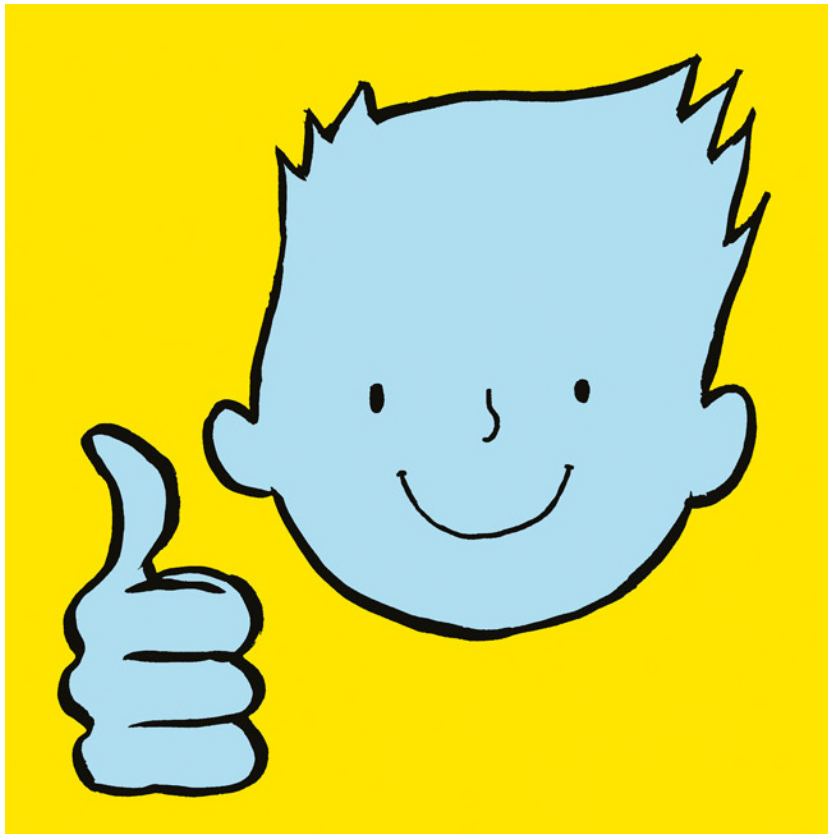
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Thank You



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