

TRANSCRIPT: Communicating by eye gaze

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Jack has cerebral palsy. He's unable to express verbally but cognitively he's very able. Because he was unable to use either his arms or his legs, we decided that the best way for him to communicate would be through eye gaze.

The progress that he's made is just fantastic. We started off in the nursery with the just simple 'yes' and 'no' – 'yes' on the left hand, 'no' on the right hand - just to be able to answer questions.

We then realised that he needed to communicate more so we then made up a paper-based communication book. We also use an E-tran frame where we can look at Jack and ask him to find a certain symbol and he makes a definite eye contact look, and then look at the teacher to say that's what he wants.

By using a paper-based communication book, we were able to allow him to engage with us but it was always through adult interaction, rather than him being able to spontaneously say, 'I would like this', which is why we moved to the Tobii C12, which is used through eye gaze. It picks up wherever his pupils are looking and, by looking at the symbol he wants, then it will speak the word.

At the moment, it's all very new and what we're just getting him to do at the minute, is just to be able to navigate around the screen. It's really very difficult because as he looks at something, if his eyes flicker, it will automatically go to another option. So he has to work really hard to keep looking for about ten seconds and then he gets what he wants.

I put programmes onto it for Jack. He's got a template which he's able to talk about school, he's able to talk about things at home and then he has a separate template with literary targets on.

We work very closely with home, so I'm in contact with mum asking what she would like us to put on it. But then I'm also asking Jack, 'Well what would you like to talk about?' and then I would give him options, and he would look at his 'yes' band. If I say, 'Would you like that?', 'Yes'. If I gave him an option and he didn't like it then he would tell me, 'No'.

You can see that he's a lot happier. He knows that we're understanding him. He doesn't get so frustrated because the communication aids he had before it was very, very limited, whereas now there's lots of rewards from using his communication aid and it is personalised to him.

In the future, what I would like to see Jack doing is to be using it all the time. At the minute, it's almost like we're giving him a voice for so much time during the day and then we're taking it away from him. Whereas ideally, this is gonna empower him to feel that he's in control. So, it's to be able to use it within the classroom for everyday

activities, to be able use it when going home, to be able to use to go out shopping with mum, to be able to use it just like me and you, to be able to speak all the time.

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