

**A multi-level approach
to communication improvement**

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Kalorama

Centre for the deafblind

Beek-Ubbergen - The Netherlands

64 residential clients - adults from 31 to 98 years old

living in 8 residential groups

+

approximately 100 non-residential clients

Institutional experts

Expert-team supporting the clients:

- communication experts
- experts on self-reliance
 - doctors
 - psychologists
- experts on leisure-activities

Basic considerations

**Goals: selfdetermination +
rehabilitation**

Means:

- **rich environment - physical, social**
 - **offering facilities for learning**
 - **offering facilities for leisure**
- **offering psychological and emotional support**

Learning facilities for communication

Individually & in groups:

- learning different communication techniques -
fingeralphabet, sign language, four-hands sign language,
Lorm etc.
- enhancing linguistic competence
 - enlarging vocabulary
- learning to express experiences, opinions etc.

Basic questions

Is the client aware of all his communication-
needs?

Is our training efficient?

Are we offering enough?

Case

- non-residential client - male, 56 years old, married, Usher (deaf, very narrow vision, cataract)
- family: wife (deaf), 2 sons (one deaf, one hearing)
 - limited social support system

Case

Individual communication training programme (sign language, 4-hands, vocabulary)

Goals:

- improving + enlarging communication techniques
 - improving individual expression abilities
 - decreasing social isolation

Case

Evaluation after 1 year:

- communication skills improved
 - social isolation persists
- social isolation within family increases

Case

Are we offering enough support?

No! because:

- communication programme is only beneficial to the client in a very limited way
 - social environment does not respond
- client's position within family becomes increasingly isolated

Case

Extra support:

- helping the family to apply client's communication skills in daily life
- informing other care providers of client's specific communication problems and needs

Case

+ :

decreasing tension within family – clients stays 3 days a week at Kalorama

- psychotherapy – learning client to deal with his marginal position within the family
 - offering help in enlarging social network
- appointment of case-manager to coordinate support to client and other family members

Case

Results of larger support-effort:

- client's communication skills are embedded in larger social and therapeutic context

+ in general:

- greater awareness with our care-takers and experts of the larger scope of communication needs
- greater awareness of need to coordinate different support efforts by all care-providers

Thesis 1

Improving communication should always involve a multi-level approach

Thesis 2

**Self-determination is not hampered
by involving different care-takers and family
members in improving the client's communication
abilities**

Thesis 3

Care-takers often have a better view of the needs and possibilities of their clients than the clients themselves.

They should use this advantage in optimizing the support given to the client

