**Physical Restraints Vs Communication**

The purpose of this article is to explore issues raised by recent press discussion about physical restraint but also my experience with my 24 year old son, both over many years and in the present. I also have worked within the care industry and I have had to leave because I can no longer do physical restraint (which I was told was required) because of having a ruptured bakers cyst and I have been told that I have a tilted kneecap. I have used Makaton more than I have used physical restraint.

The current CQC guidance in reference to physical restraint is set out below:

<https://cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20160422_briefguide-Restraint_physical_mechanical.pdf.pdf>

During my time with a previous company I found that all too often the people we support have difficulties with communication. Staff wanted me to stay at their setting because I am able to use Makaton. It was tea time and staff were asking what sandwiches people wanted. The person I was supporting had very little communication but did know Makaton. I am guessing this is something that was learned at school. I signed “Do you want a meat or fish sandwich ?” “You need to stay here !” said the staff .”No,” I replied, “You need to be able to communicate !”

On the other hand, some staff said, things like “I don't know why you bother. They don't even know what day it is !” This is unacceptable. Makaton, from what I have seen personally, stops in secondary education - I don't know why but it does. When Mark was at school work experience was painting teachers’ fences and washing their cars. Why ? Again I don't know why this happens . The “Aaww bless” approach was certainly apparent during Mark’s time at secondary school and has continued into organisation land. “They can't help it” is the mind set, when a lot of the issues that I have seen boil down to lack of communication or not being able to know how to communicate with people who require extra support. If I needed support would I be part of the them-and-us set up ? Would I need restraining? Possibly, if someone didn't understand me or what I wanted (which can be frustrating) or if I was frightened. As I am a woman and can get frustrated anyway during my cycle - how would I feel having a communication difficulty? This would be unthinkable . I would sincerely hope that I was being supported by someone who could communicate with me in a sensitive manner without “aww bless” and treat me as a woman of my age and not a child.

Mark has had a very different life from those supported by ‘service land’. His work experience at the BBC Weather Centre in London were among a few experiences. He did spend some time in service land which ended after a bad experience. Mark is now supported by his local community which includes college and going to his local pub and catching up there with Grecia, bar staff at the Anchor Pub. She said that if anyone gives Mark a hard time they're out !!!. Donut Studios (local arts centre), and NJUK hair salon where he pops in for a chat are also supportive. Mark also enrols in community events like Bolsover Lantern Parade. His lantern was Iron Man and he won first prize for his efforts. Mark does have a communication difficulty but the whole community support him and no physical restraint has been used. The bouncers are no more likely to pounce on him than anybody else !

Mark did not speak until he was 5 years old. When he started school everyone used Makaton and I vowed I would learn it too and be really good at it. It enabled Mark to express his wants, needs and interests. Cheryl, my daughter, is 3 years older than Mark. As I was on my own it was important that we could all have a positive relationship with each other – Makaton and communication can be fun.

Mark is now hunting for a Saturday job as he is at college during the week. Yesterday we were all invited to our neighbours New Year’s party. Mark has already bought a thank you gift. Mark has control over his bank card but finds letters a problem. This is where sufficient support steps in.

There was a woman we know in a her 50s who had the opportunity to dress up as a rock chick and sit on a Harley Davidson. Eight years later we saw her out with support worker and asked how everything was and had she had a similar experience ? No. She was still at home. Family described her as having been a naughty girl. This leaves me wondering whose benefit is this for? The woman in question is now in her 60s, not a girl. Where is the good communication and her person centred plan ? Have ‘organisation land’ and family put in their recommendations ? Families should be listened to and respected, certainly if bad practice is taking place. However, it’s about the individual and for the individual – The 2014 Care Act and wellbeing, like good communication, should be at the heart of it.

In addition to this a trainer expressed how she wanted to be treated if she ever required support – “I want white towels !” I said, “What if white towels were not available ?” “No no”, she said, “I want white towels !”. I later asked her about the people we support - she showed little interest in them making choices. “You staff know clients better than they know themselves !” So wrong and on so many levels !

I too have been hit. The reaction was, “Aww, they can’t help it !” The person is unable to control their hands – yet the person in question is quite able to eat a chocolate biscuit independently !

Nothing happens for one reason but for several reasons. This includes lack of communication between shifts. And bad staff relationships within the workplace all bring stresses to the clients. As a result, because of the inability to communicate, behaviours can and do take place.

Makaton was introduced by Margret Walker in the 1970s, with adults, to aid inclusion into the clients' community. This has also been found to reduce frustration and what is described as challenging behaviour was described by Margaret Walker in1987:

<https://www.makaton.org/aboutMakaton/theMakatonCharity/history>

Skills for Care talk about how among support workers there is high turnover of staff. ( Facing Facts , Shaping the Future- adult social care workforce consultation)

<https://consultations.dh.gov.uk/social-care-workforce/facing-the-facts-shaping-the-future-adult-socia/>

I believe that much of the crisis is about staff being valued. Helen Sanderson talks about “bringing your whole self to work”

[https://uk.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=yfp-t-s&p=helen+sanderson+ted+talks](https://uk.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=yfp-t-s&p=helen+sanderson+ted+talks#id=1&vid=987c488081b1b77a370268402b7ed226&action=click)

and the use of a one page profile.

I have worked with some fairly good staff who have some interesting hobbies that may be of interest to the clients that we support.

I tried to explain this recently. I spoke of my own son being supported by our local community (as opposed to 'official' support by organisations) and the adventures that he has. To illustrate, I say, imagine that I was brought up on a farm with horses and a few other animals and the client I support has had a similar life and misses it.

During my induction week I spent two days learning techniques of physical restraint and I later had regular refreshers either at staff meetings and also yearly.

Yet there was only half a day on communication, which was not even stage 1 of the Makaton core vocabulary which has a total of 8 stages followed by the additional materials. To learn Makaton well can be done over three days !

Those days were very informative and involved, among other things, playing around with sentences that can be used daily. I have done this with both my children.

Bibliography:

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<https://uk.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=yfp-t-s&p=helen+sanderson+ted+talks>