Natural gesture, facial expression and actions and responses to the environment

People with profound and complex difficulties can use a wide range of facial expression, gesture and body movements to communicate. These include making eye contact, smiling, eye pointing or pushing people away. Staff can identify and then respond to these behaviours in order to develop intentional communication.

This example illustrates how staff interpret a learner's eye movement, respond and then reinforce the interaction.

> "When Sally is in the light and sound environment at her college, her eyes keep flicking across to the bubble tube. Staff respond to these signals by saying and signing, 'Do you want the bubble tube on, Sally? Shall we turn the bubble tube on?' If Sally looks over to the bubble tube again, staff switch it on. When it is switched off after a minute or so, staff wait for Sally to point to it again with her eyes so they can repeat the sequence." *Enhancing the Quality of Life*

This example illustrates how two individuals use their actions to communicate their desire to go swimming. It also demonstrates how staff can effectively interpret and respond to these actions.

> "After changing into his swimming costume, Vinny moves immediately to the door leading to the swimming pool. Staff interpret this as a sign of his eagerness to be in the water and a member of staff takes Vinny through the shower to wait at the poolside for the instructor. She talks about Vinny's enjoyment of swimming and the opportunity to watch the water while they wait for the instructor to start the session. Consuela, meanwhile, is pushing her enabler away and trying to pull her clothes back on. This is interpreted as a sign that she does not want to swim today, and Consuela sits with a member of staff at the poolside for the duration of the swimming session."

Using Objects

These ideas are based on the Enhancing Quality of Life Resource Pack, *Byers, R., Dee, L., Hayhoe, H. and Maudslay, L. (2002) Enhancing Quality of Life. London: Skill and University of Cambridge* which draws upon the experience of practitioners working with people with profound and complex learning difficulties across a range of contexts and in a variety of ways.

See references for details of how to order this resource.