



# Objects of Reference

## Policy and Procedure at Redlands Day Centre, Banbury

### Aims

- To ensure that all Staff know what is considered good practice in use of Redlands Objects of Reference (OOR) system.
- To provide a consistent and uniform experience for all users in use of OOR.
- To help provide an inclusive environment for users experiencing Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (as well as other users for whom OOR is deemed to be suitable)

### Procedures

There are no prerequisites for the OOR scheme. All individuals on the scheme will benefit from a consistent caring approach.

OOR are kept within an OOR bag. New users to the scheme will be provided with their own OOR bag containing a suitable set of OOR – hung in dining room.

OOR should be safe for unsupervised use.

There are at least three 'types' of OOR schemes: shared, differentiated and individualised. Under a shared scheme, all users use exactly the same OOR to represent a particular POLE (Person, Object, Location or Event) within their daily lives (for example: all users use an identical cup to represent a drink). Under a differentiated scheme, all users would use the same object but the object itself may vary (for example: all users use a cup to represent a drink but each user has his or her own particular cup – different styles, colours, shapes, textures are allowed). Under an individualised scheme, one user may use a cup, another a straw, and yet another any item utilised specifically at this time).

Redlands operates a shared OOR scheme. For example, all users on the scheme use an identical blue plastic cup as the OOR for drink. Shared schemes are seen as easier to maintain and to manage. Furthermore, communication, by definition, is shared. In order for individuals to communicate with each other they have to share symbol sets. Communication between peers would be impossible with individualised symbol sets. OOR are complimented by the use of sensory cues to particular POLES. A sensory cue differs to an OOR on a number of key elements.



OOR are presented in the session prior to the movement to the POLE. Sensory cues are part of the POLE experience. OOR are self-contained entities. However, sensory cues provided at the POLE may come from a variety of different sources. Music may be played from one source and a particular smell may be provided from another. A single unique OOR is provided to represent the POLE. Multiple sensory cues may be provided at/within the POLE itself.

- Individual learners have individual sets of OOR
- Initially the learners OOR sets will be limited in number. We start with 3 (personal care, break, and meal OOR)
- As learners become more familiar with OOR, so more OOR may be included in their OOR bag. We have recently introduced a driving OOR (seat belt) and a Soundabout OOR.
- The more frequently the OOR can be reinforced the greater the chance of individual understanding. Early choices of OOR should, therefore, represent frequently occurring events (preferably more than once per day).
- OOR should be presented immediately prior to a change of POLE.
- On presentation of the OOR staff should move with the learner to the POLE. No delay is acceptable. If there is a need to open doors to allow for the movement of wheelchair, for example, then the door should be opened prior to the presentation of the OOR.
- The learner should be encouraged to take the OOR directly from the OOR bag. The bag should be presented with the appropriate OOR at the fore. If the learner is physically incapable of taking the OOR the staff member should assist the learner.
- Learners may be reluctant to acknowledge the OOR (stage one development) This typically takes one of two forms: The learner ignores the OOR or the learner drops or throws the OOR. If the latter occurs, staff should pick up the OOR and repeat the activity. This should happen approximately three times. At this point, the staff member should carry the OOR him/herself and accompany the learner to the new POLE occasionally displaying the OOR for the learner to see. Where learners ignore the OOR (typically this may occur with a few learners who are not ambulant) staff should attempt to get the learner to acknowledge the presence of the OOR and then place it in line of vision (on the learner's knee for example) before moving to the POLE.
- Staff should always accompany the presentation of an OOR with simple language and sign where applicable. Encourage the learner to



interact with the OOR's sensory aspects. If the learner has physical problems in interacting, staff may assist with this process by (for example) gently rubbing the OOR on the learner's skin (where the tactile aspect of the OOR is seen as important).

- Where possible, especially with ambulant learners, staff should allow the learner to lead the way to the POLE on presentation of the OOR. Does the learner demonstrate an understanding of where s/he is going? If the learner is obviously 'lost' then the staff member should guide the learner to the POLE allowing the learner to lead taking the final few steps into the room.
- At the POLE entrance (where the POLE has a marked entrance) staff should encourage the learner to match the OOR with DOORWAY (Door OOR). This is best achieved by removing the DOORWAY marker from its housing and holding it next to the OOR together in a position that the learner can easily see.
- When the POLE is reached the learner should return the OOR to the bag. Sensory cues may be utilised within the POLE to further reference the forthcoming activity. Learners must never return from a POLE clutching the OOR for the POLE as this presents a very confusing message.
- Staff should present the OOR consistently at every opportunity. They should never declare unilaterally that they consider the OOR to be inappropriate and decide not to go ahead with the presentation. Should staff feel strongly that a particular learner's needs are not being properly met with any OOR then it is the individual staff member's responsibility to raise this matter at team meetings where it may be properly addressed.
- It should be realised that it may only be after many thousands of presentations that a learner may begin to make an association between OOR and the POLE. Therefore, it is essential that staff are consistent and diligent in their efforts with the OOR scheme.
- Where possible, the OOR may itself be labelled with the symbol when presenting the OOR to the learner, the fact that the two are paired allows every opportunity for future progression.
- When learners indicate a need for their OOR bag or present an OOR to a member of staff, staff should immediately react to this presentation as if it were intentional. That is, they should move to the POLE or provide the requested object or event. The OOR should then be returned to the bag, as is normal procedure.
- While Stages of Development are outlined in the table ( on wall above hooks), **it is not expected that:**



1. Development will be commensurate for each object in the set. That is development may be faster on some objects than on others.
2. All learners will enter at Stage One and leave at Stage Five. Some learners may enter the scheme at Stage Two or even Stage Three. Some learners may never reach Stage Five. Some learners may leave the scheme before they reach Stage Five because they are ready for symbol use and OOR is no longer seen as appropriate.
3. All learners will develop at the same rate.

All bags should be checked in the morning prior to presenting to the learner.

At the end of the day OOR bags should be removed before the learner leaves for home and replaced on the hook. Duplicate sets of OOR have been made for some people to use at home.

Staff may wish to develop their own OOR for use to reference POLE's within a specific session. This should always be done in close liaison with the team.

Staff may wish to use OOR developed (as in the above point) to provide choices within the session. In this instance, two objects of reference are used to provide a choice – the learner indicating a preference. This should not be undertaken with learners operating at Stage One and Stage Two levels of development (see chart). Learners will take their OOR sets with them if they move on from Redlands.

**by Celia Chasey**

**with acknowledgements to Tony Jones (Managing Director - Liberator)**