

SPEAK EASY

Low-Tech Solutions for Inclusive Two-Way Communication in Healthcare

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Introduction & Background

Effective communication remains a persistent challenge for patients with disabilities, particularly in busy hospital and healthcare environments. Patients with intellectual disability, sensory impairments, or limited English proficiency often face significant barriers during clinical interactions, leading to misunderstandings, increased anxiety, and poorer health outcomes.

To address this, the Speak Easy project was initiated to **support more inclusive communication between healthcare staff and patients** with communication difficulties. As part of this initiative, two visual communication boards were developed: a generic version suitable for widespread use, and a customisable template that allows clinical teams to tailor communication boards to their specific service or patient needs.

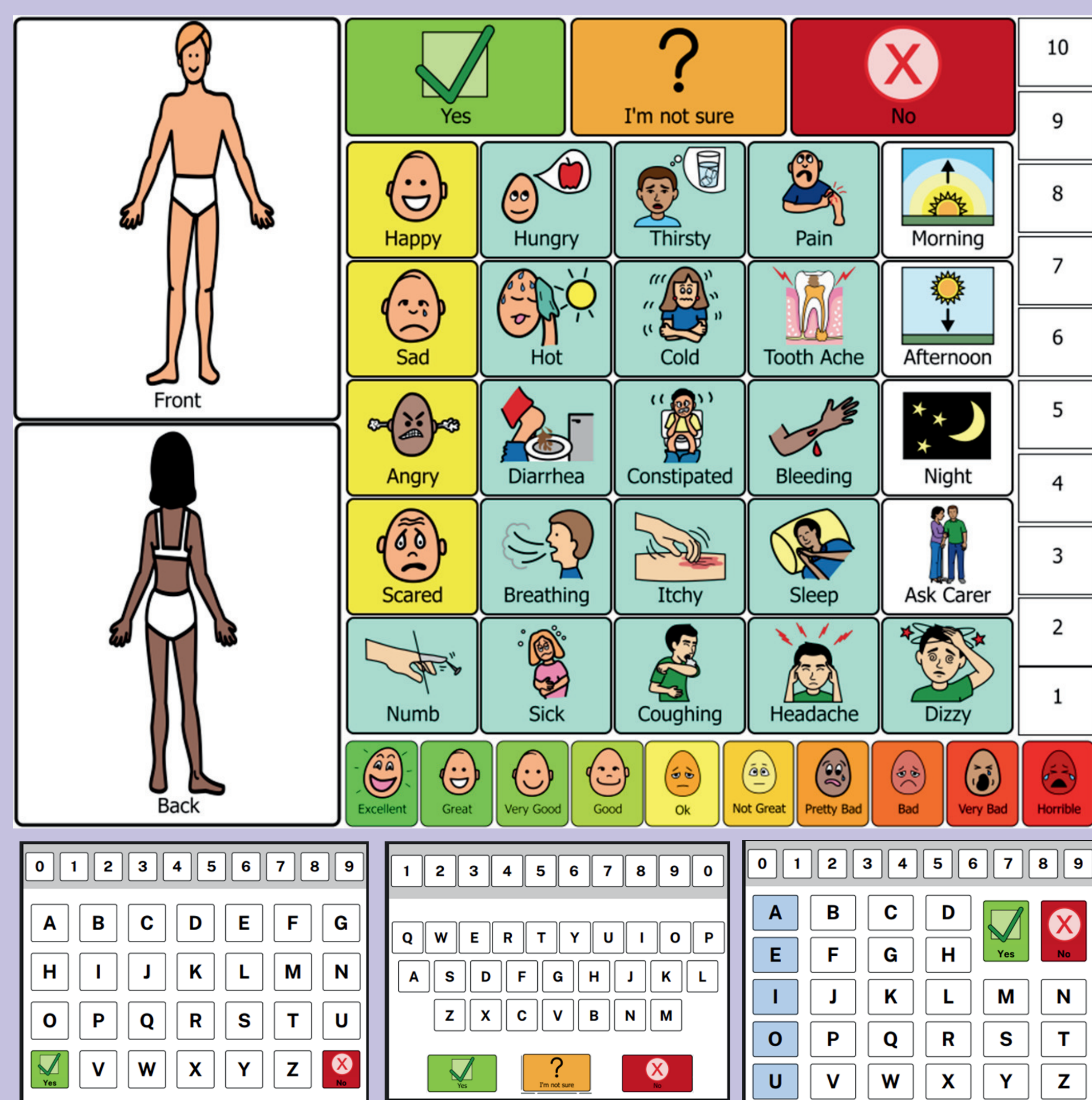
Speak Easy represents a simple, scalable intervention designed to empower staff, reduce communication barriers, and improve the care experience for patients who may otherwise struggle to express their needs and preferences.

Project Aim

To develop a **practical, low-tech** communication resource to support **inclusive, two-way communication** between healthcare staff and patients that is **freely available, adaptable, and easy to use** in real-time clinical settings.

Methodology

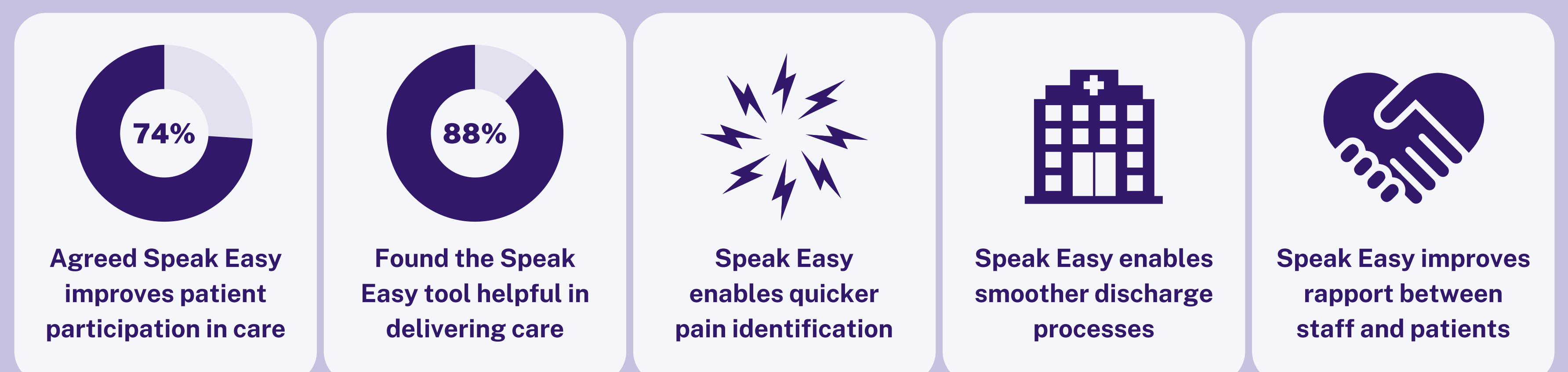
Speak Easy was co-designed in partnership with healthcare staff and patients through focus groups and feedback sessions. An iterative methodology was employed, with ongoing refinement based on direct user feedback to ensure the resource was practical and relevant. The final product is hosted on the SWS intranet and GoShare Healthcare platform.



Results

- Reduced misunderstandings, improved patient confidence, and enhanced care outcomes
- Positive staff feedback on usability and impact in clinical settings
- Introduced “keyboard” options for faster use, based on staff feedback
- Developed a customisable version with inbuilt image library and option to upload images
- Demonstrates the value of user-centred design in developing practical, inclusive tools
- Shows that simple, co-designed innovations can bridge communication gaps and support patient-centred care

Staff Feedback



Conclusions

- Speak Easy demonstrates that low-tech, co-designed solutions can have a transformative impact on communication and inclusion in healthcare.
- By addressing barriers faced by patients with diverse needs, staff and patients are able to communicate more effectively.
- The tool fosters equity and person-centred care, and supports a healthcare system that is responsive, compassionate, and accessible to all.
- Even small, practical innovations can make a big difference when developed collaboratively and designed for everyday use

Next Steps

The next steps for Speak Easy include continuing to gather ongoing feedback from staff, patients, and carers; nominating ward champions to enhance awareness and promote adoption; and exploring options to provide wider access to editable versions of the tool.

For more information

Contact the **SWSLHD Disability Resource Team**
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Or visit our website by scanning the QR code.



References

Scan the QR code (left) for a full list of references.