# POLICY & PROCEDURE

**OBJECTS OF REFERENCE**

**AIMS**

* To ensure that all Staff know what is considered good practice in use of ESTABLISHMENT’s Objects Of Reference (OOR) system.
* To provide a consistent and uniform experience for all Learners in use of OOR.
* To help provide an inclusive environment for Learners experiencing Profound Intellectual Impairments (as well as for other Learners for whom OOR is deemed to be suitable)
* To promote emergent communication skills.

## PROCEDURES

* There are no prerequisites for the ESTABLISHMENT OOR scheme. All individuals on the scheme will benefit from a consistent caring approach.
* OOR are kept within an OOR bag. New Learners to the scheme will be provided with their own OOR bag containing a suitable set of OOR.
* 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 Learners use exactly the same OOR to represent a particular POLE (Person, Object, Location or Event) within the curriculum (For example, all Learners use an identical cup to represent drink time). Under a **differentiated** scheme, all Learners would use the same object but the object itself may vary (for example: all Learners use a cup to represent a drink period but each Learner has his or her own particular cup – different styles, colours, shapes, textures are allowed). Under an **individualised** scheme, all Learners have an individualised OOR to represent the POLE (For example, one Learner may use a cup, another a straw, and yet another any item utilised specifically at this time).
* ESTABLISHMENT operates a **shared** OOR scheme. For example, all Learners on the scheme use an identical blue plastic cup as the OOR for the break session. ESTABLISHMENT views shared schemes 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 of reference are self-contained entities. As such, all multi-sensory elements must be contained within the OOR itself: the cup must have a particular smell, taste, feel, shape, colour … 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.
* Learners have individual sets of OOR.
* Initially, the Learner’s OOR set will be limited in number. Ideally, this number will not exceed 5: three is the typical ESTABLISHMENT number (Personal Care, Break, and Meal OOR).
* Learners who are hoisted as a part of their daily routine will be provided with an OOR for the hoisting procedure.
* As Learners become more familiar with OOR, so more OOR may be included in their OOR bag.
* 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 present **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 choose to ignore the OOR, staff should attempt to get the Learner to acknowledge the presence of the OOR and then place it (preferably) in line of vision (on the Learner’s knee for example) before moving to the POLE,
* Staff should follow 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 the 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 of reference 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. Staff 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 needs are not being properly met with any OOR then it is the individual staff member’s responsibility to raise this matter at a team meeting 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 for the POLE. While there should be no focus on 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 where 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 outline in the table below, it is NOT expected that:
* development will be commensurate for each object in the set. That is development may be faster on some objects than on others;
* 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.
* all Learners will develop at the same rate.
* Quality assurance of the OOR scheme is provided by Personal Tutor teams and by the Speech and Language Therapy Department. During registration a designated member of the team should check the contents of the OOR bag before presenting it to the Learner to ensure that the appropriate items are present (a list should be contained in each bag). If an item is missing or damaged, the team member should seek a replacement from the Speech and Language Therapy Assistant. Likewise, if ‘alien’ OOR have somehow found their way into the OOR bag, these should be returned to the Speech and Language Therapy Assistant.
* At the end of the day, the staff member designated to check OOR bags should ensure that the bag is removed before the Learner leaves for home. While, ideally, the OOR set should be in use at home, too many have not returned and the scheme becomes very difficult to manage. Duplicate sets of OOR are to be made available to families in the future at cost.
* Staff may wish to develop their own OOR for use to reference POLEs within a specific session. This should always be done in close liaison with the Speech and Language Therapist.
* 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 below). If in doubt consult the Speech and Language Therapist.
* Learners will take their OOR sets with them when they move on from ESTABLISHMENT.

## EDUCATIONAL COMPONENTS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OOR SYSTEM

* To help develop anticipatory skills.
* To reduce confusion and apprehension.
* To help promote inclusion for individuals experiencing Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties.
* To help develop early ‘emergent’ communication skills.
* To help with the development of cognitive/early thinking skills.
* To help the Learner express preferences, communicate needs, make choices, make decisions and choose options that other people act on and respect;
* To help promote self-advocacy or the use of a range of systems of supported advocacy;
* To help prepare Learners for an adult life in which they have the greatest possible degree of autonomy;
* To increase the Learner’s awareness and understanding of his/her environment and of the world
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**EVALUATION**

* All Learners experiencing Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties have an Objects of Reference bag with appropriate OOR.
* Learners carry OOR to POLE
* Learners match OOR to DOORWAY on reaching specific POLEs.
* Learner’s Core targets make specific reference to OOR.
* Occasionally, a Learner reaches Stage Five level of development with a specific object. Learner performs an expressive act with OOR.

**This Policy is reviewed and updated each year**

**NAME Date mm/yy**

**DEFINITIONS of TERMS USED**

Learner The person experiencing PMLD to which the OOR is presented.

Significant Other A staff member, a Family Member, Other who interacts with the Learner on a daily basis.

POLE Person, Object, Location, Event; These are the things for which the object may be a referent.

Intolerant Learner rejects the Significant Other (staff member) or OOR in some way; either by screaming, nor responding, pushing away, throwing away or other negative response

Tolerant Learner accepts Significant Other Presenter and/or OOR. Tolerance is a continuum: the learner may only accept for a brief period to begin.

Dependent Learner is dependent on Significant Other presenting the OOR. Learner does not ask for/ point at / retrieve etc the OOR him/herself.

Independent Learner will attempt to retrieve OOR him/herself without instruction.

Extraneous The OOR has NO meaning to the Learner. The Learner just ‘accepts’ the OOR as an item in his/her personal space without making any connection to a POLE.

Meaningful The Learner demonstrates an understanding that the OOR is connected in some way to a POLE

Receptive The Other (staff presenter) is attempting to communicate with the Learner through the OOR.

Expressive The Learner is attempting to communicate to the Other through the OOR