

# Caregivers in residential care facilities’ perspectives on the communication needs of children with complex communication and their role in supporting communication.

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## Introduction

- Caregivers in residential facilities are the most frequent communication partners of children with complex communication needs (CCN).
- A need exists to understand caregivers’ perspectives of their role in facilitating communication, as previous research indicates that this is challenging.

## Methods

A qualitative research design was used to explore the views, knowledge and perceptions of 7 caregivers in a residential care facility in Tshwane using semi-structured interviews.

## Results

- Most caregivers believe that children with CCN do communicate using non-verbal methods like non-speech vocalisations and gestures.
- However, they found it difficult to understand these communication attempts.
- The children were seen as completely dependent on the caregiver to understand their communication attempts.

## Conclusion

While caregivers’ attitudes and beliefs regarding the children’s communication were positive, they lacked knowledge and skills needed to facilitate communication development.  
Training on communication and AAC is urgently needed for caregivers in residential care facilities.

Caregivers in care homes urgently require training in communication and AAC to meet the communication needs of children in their care.



### Thematic analysis results: Sub-aim, theme and sub-themes

Caregivers' understanding of communication	Caregivers' knowledge of the communication needs of children with CCN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identified that communication was:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. receptive e.g., “a way of understanding one another”</li><li>ii. expressive e.g., “when two people speak”.</li><li>iii. working together in unity e.g., “It is to work together”.</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All had an expectation that children with CCN could communicate BUT they struggled to know how to develop language beyond non-verbal communication like crying.</li><li>• Most children could be classified as beginning communicators.</li></ul>
Caregivers' knowledge of communication skills of children with CCN	Caregivers' views of their roles and responsibility in supporting communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• They could identify how children with CCN were currently communicating expressively via actions e.g., “she will grab a cup then I know she is thirsty”.</li><li>• Their receptive challenges, e.g., “they don’t understand what we are saying”.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The following roles were identified:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. supporting daily routines</li><li>ii. teaching</li><li>iii. communication support e.g., “need to communicate with them in different ways... we talk to them using actions”.</li></ul></li></ul>