

Abstract No. 5.5

Wednesday 6th September 2017 at 14:15-15:00

**Title: «What does language mean for me? »**

Presenter: Annika Maria Johannessen, Statped, Norway

Co-presenters: Olaug Grude Hobberstad, Klepp kommune, Norway

Main focus: Mainly practice/Congenital deafblindness

Abstract: Due to the difficulties of language acquisition in the population of people with congenital deafblindness, only a few manage to develop language to their full potential. To be able to conduct a proper intervention towards language acquisition, we have experienced the importance of systematic intervention and good collaboration within the system, to facilitate the person with congenital deafblindness's language development.

This workshop will take the participants on a unique journey on how a man with congenital deafblindness and CHARGE syndrome learned language. At the age of 29 (in 2010), he had knowledge of approximately 400 visual signs (he could match sign and pictures), but did not use any of those signs in a communicative manner. He only communicated with emotions, vocalization, hand-guiding and bodily expressions. During the last six years, the staff have collaborated closely together with the competence system for deafblindness to introduce a bodily/tactile sign language. Today he can talk about how access to language changed his life primarily within the topics of accessing information, his mental health, reduction of social isolation and maintaining social relationships.

The workshop will emphasize how the intervention process towards a tactile language for the man with cdb and his partners progressed. We will highlight both the perspective of core intervention strategies (bodily-tactile togetherness, bodily-tactile language acquisition based on bodily/tactile experiences in context) and how the system managed to facilitate the intervention.

The main part of the workshop contains a video interview of a man with cdb, where he shares his personal story and tells about his own experiences of learning a tactual language and how this had an impact on his emotional life.

We want the participants to ask questions with a primary regard for the two perspectives we propose:

- a) What the intervention strategies were and how did the process develop?
- b) How the system facilitates such intervention?

We also want the participants to discuss with us some of the topics that the man with cdb raises himself (eg. Access to information, mental health, reduction of social isolation etc.).