



Supporting Communication Needs in Kent

A Service Overview

Liz Collins
Business Director

Who Are Find A Voice?

- Registered charity no. 1058697
- Started in 1996 by Joy Butcher and Alastair Dutch OBE
- Originally called the Kent Language and Communication Centre
- Need for AAC advice and support identified
- Initially children orientated, need for adult support quickly recognised



Joy realised that there must be many other parents of children with communication difficulties who were struggling to access support and equipment



The Development of the Service

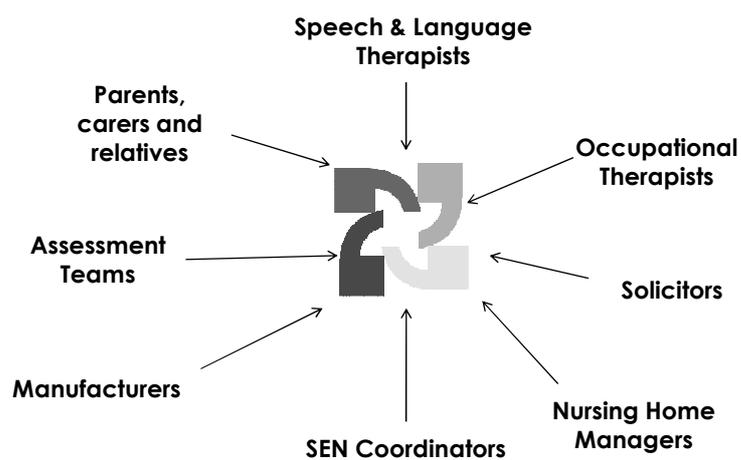
- ❑ Introduction of advocacy service
- ❑ Move into dedicated premises
- ❑ Development of library containing equipment and media
- ❑ Involvement with County strategy and various groups/committees
- ❑ Development of outreach services to venues in Kent, Medway and East Sussex



The Find A Voice centre in Ashford – originally a GPs surgery



Who Uses The Service



The Resource Library

- Switches
- Switch access toys and rewards
- Sensory items
- Low tech AAC devices
- Mid tech AAC devices
- High Tech AAC devices
- DVDs and videos
- Books
- Makaton resources



The library items are catalogued by type and available in hard copy at the library. Individual catalogue sections can also be downloaded from the Find A Voice website at www.findavoice.org.uk



Outreach Services

Currently 18 venues across Kent, Medway and East Sussex

- Special schools
- Children's centres
- Day Centres
- Portage groups
- Hospitals
- Residential homes
- Home visits for elderly and infirm



The running costs of the outreach project are currently supported until November 2011 by the Lloyds TSB Foundation for England & Wales

 **Lloyds TSB | Foundation for England and Wales**

Our Clients' Views

"Find A Voice is a very useful resource for us. It enables us to trial equipment with pupils for longer periods of time so we can get a more comprehensive idea of their skills and find the one that suits the pupil the best. We can also borrow fun equipment for the children, so it is not just all work but also play!"

Liz, Lead SLT, Special School

"Thanks for all your help. Until I spoke to you we never realised that such equipment existed. Liz is making small steps, but everything that she can communicate is an immense bonus for her, the family and the staff at the home."

Barrie, husband of an acquired brain injury client

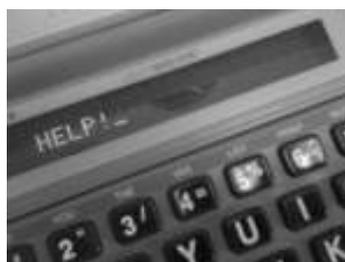
"By trying out the switch toys and communication aids brought into the centre by Find a voice, we are able to observe the children's responses and interests so we are better informed as to what will work best for that particular child. The service has allowed us to improve our service delivery greatly. There are so many communication aids on the market, which are often very expensive, so by having the opportunity to try them out for six weeks with our children, it gives us a far better guide of how to spend our limited budgets."

Freya, SLT, pre-school children



Advice and Advocacy

- National advice line
- Discussion forum
- Assistance with communications
- Advice on available options
- Grant making trusts
- Other sources of funding, i.e. Masonic Lodges, community groups
- Help with personal fundraising ideas and resource packs
- A sympathetic ear!



Case Studies - David



David has Cerebral palsy. A relative contacted Find A Voice to see if there was anything that we could do to assist with his communication.

After looking at a few devices, he borrowed a 32 Message Communicator from us to trial. The experience of the product and the impact on David's quality of life was

used as evidence to support a successful bid to Kent County Council for funding of David's own communicator.

When asked what he would do without his Message Communicator David grabbed hold of it and refused to let go!



Case Studies - Nicola

Nicola lives in supported housing in Kent. She was referred to Find A Voice by a new support worker who knew of our services.

After trialling a couple of different types of mid and high tech devices from our resource library, she decided that a hand held PDA -based aid would suit her lifestyle the best as she gets out and about a lot.



Nicola and her support worker collecting the Chat PC 4 from the Find A Voice centre

Working with Nicola and her support worker, funding was successfully obtained from Kent County Council for a Chat PC 4



Case Studies - Anne



Anne is a young woman with cerebral palsy living independently with her disabled husband.

She had a very old Lightwriter which had broken and could not be economically repaired.

With our help Anne achieved agreement from her local PCT and Kent County Council to joint fund a new Lightwriter. In the interim period Find A Voice was able to supply her with a loan device so that she did not lose her communication with those around her.



Case Studies – Charlie and Barry

Charlie

Charlie has just turned 18 and has a progressive disorder.

We were contacted via our website by her SLT when she reached the stage where normal methods of communication were becoming difficult.

Having already trialled a device direct from the manufacturer for a short period, we were able to provide Charlie with a Dynavox VMax (whom she has fondly named 'Max' and refers to as her 'best friend').

'Max' will stay with Charlie until she can no longer use him.

Barry

Barry is in his 50s and has suffered a stroke, which has caused him to lose his speech almost entirely.

His SLT contacted us as she had trialled a TouchSpeak with him via the manufacturer.

Using the SLT reports detailing the difference the TouchSpeak had made to Barry's quality of life, we were able to secure funding from Kent County Council's OT and Sensory Services to purchase a piece of equipment which is with Barry on 'lifetime' loan.



Case Studies – Philippa and Louise

Philippa

Philippa and her husband, John, live in Somerset. Philippa has lost her speech subsequent to a brain injury and was using a Lightwriter which is no longer working and not repairable.

John contacted us via our website to ask for help. He has already managed to secure 50% of the cost of a new device from the local PCT, but the county council are unwilling to help even on this basis.

With our help John has made appeals to a local grant making body, his local Masonic Lodge and is also carrying out a sponsored silence to raise funds.

Louise

At the age of 27 Louise suffered a stroke and was no longer able to continue her career as a police officer.

We were contacted by one of Louise's former colleagues who knew of the work of Find A Voice.

We were able to secure funding from Kent County Council's Occupational Therapy stroke budget to purchase a Dynavox Xpress for Louise.

She is now pursuing a full-time university course; something which would not have been possible without a communication aid.

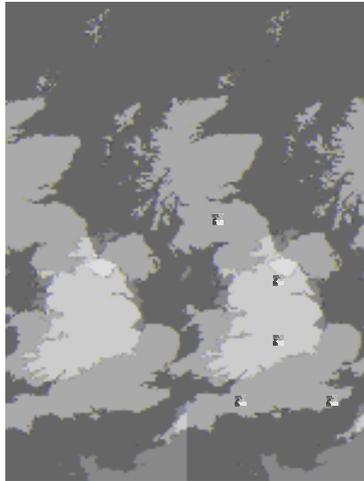


Funding the Service

- Core funding – Kent County Council SEN Strategic Services
- Outreach – Lloyds TSB Foundation for England & Wales
- Corporate sponsorship
- Donations – many from library users
- Varied programme of fundraising events
- Library equipment - grant making trusts and organisations
- Specialist teaching provision to adults with learning and/or communication difficulties in ICT, life skills and functional skills in maths and English



Our Vision for the Future



- Hubs serving regional areas
- Satellite offices
- Links with other organisations

Find a Voice

Supporting families and
professionals since 1996

Thank you for listening

For further information on our services
please call Liz Collins on 01233 640 443 or
email elizabeth.collins@findavoice.org.uk