



Communication
Matters

Book of Abstracts

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Communication
Matters

more than just talking

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PLATFORM

1Voice Communicating Together: supporting young AAC users and families

Platform - Abstract ID: 148

Mrs. Helen Dixon (1Voice Communicating Together (SLT)), Mr. Gregor Gilmour (1Voice Communicating Together (AAC role model)), Ms. Janet Mayes (1Voice Communicating Together (parent)), Ms. Helen Quiller (1Voice Communicating Together (AAC role model))

1Voice provides networking and support to children and young people who use AAC and their supporters. It began as and has remained a member-led organisation, run by parents, professionals and AAC users. We will explain the benefits of membership for each of these groups. We will explain how our role models help young AAC users and their families, and discuss the role and importance of our regional branches alongside our better-known national events.

Our role models raise aspirations by showing children and parents what it is possible for AAC users to achieve. They lead full and interesting lives and have a strong sense of purpose. Some live independently. Some lead activities at our events and two are currently 1Voice Trustees. (Some have also become CM Trustees!)

1Voice is known for its national residential weekends, but our local and regional events are less well known. In 2008, recognising that some members were unable to attend national events and many wanted to meet more frequently, 1Voice began to form branches. Today there are many active branches with more being planned. We will explain how we organise and run our national and regional events, how we plan activities to support communication, and how you can get involved.

We will highlight our Lakes and Bay branch, which has existed as a group for 21 years. This branch has many longstanding members but also welcomes new families. We will explain how we set up the group (pre-1Voice), what kind of things we do, and why it is helpful to be a branch of 1Voice.

A hub's experience of developing AAC expertise in local speech and language therapy teams

Platform - Abstract ID: 38

Dr. Catherine Foy (Chailey Communication Aid Service)

Chailey Communication Aid Service was commissioned in 2015 by NHS England as a new regional centre to provide specialist assessment and provision of communication devices to adults and children with communication needs who meet the national criteria in Surrey, East and West Sussex, Brighton and Hove. Prior to the establishment of the hub Surrey and Sussex were acknowledged to have little access to AAC services.

It quickly became apparent that local teams in our area had no access to equipment to assess patients. In discussion with local SLT team leads it was thought that if teams could be provided with an assessment pack of lite and "basic" high tech equipment this would enable teams to better evidence whether their patients meet the NHS criteria for a specialist assessment and also to assess patients not meeting our criteria. The type of equipment needed was discussed and the budget that could be afforded to such a project determined. The equipment provided was different for the paediatric, learning disability and adult community teams.

When teams were provided with their equipment training was given on equipment usage and a discussion was had on which patients could benefit from what. The local teams were encouraged to become familiar with the different pieces of equipment and share how they used the equipment with their patients.

We sent a questionnaire to our local teams to ask about thoughts regarding the assessment equipment, if and how they had used the equipment, whether it had benefitted their service and how they had navigated the managerial aspects of equipment management.

Local teams said that they found the assessment equipment beneficial but highlighted needing time to learn how to use each piece of equipment and difficulties making the equipment accessible across sites and yet safe and accounted for.

A new descriptive tool to distinguish eye-pointing from other looking behaviours

Platform - Abstract ID: 138

Dr. Michael Clarke (University College London), Ms. Rosie Cooper (University College London), Ms. Laura McLaughlin (University College London), Ms. Gurveen Panesar (University College London), Ms. Gaby Aberbach (University College London), Ms. Katie Price (University College London), Mr. Tom Griffiths (Great Ormond Street Hospital), Mrs. Caroline Rose (University College London), Dr. Jenefer Sargent (Great Ormond Street Hospital), Dr. John Swettenham (University College London)

Clinical experience and examination of research literature suggests that the term ‘eye-pointing’ is used to describe a range of different ‘looking’ behaviours in children. A lack of consistent description is problematic for several reasons including that it hampers effective communication between professionals and with families. Our proposed classification scale therefore aims to provide a reliable and systematic method for describing looking skills in relation to eye-pointing.

Our methods for development and validation of the scale have involved four stages: (1) initial drafting of the classification scale, (2) nominal group process to examine level of consensus in relation to scale content, (3) delphi survey conducted with a wider group of experts to provide further examination of content validity and user guidance, leading to consensus agreement over two or more rounds of evaluation, (4) examination of inter-rater and test-retest reliability.

The scale provides five narrative descriptions in order of increasing functional limitation to which a child’s looking behaviour can be compared. For example, clear evidence of eye-pointing (level I on the scale) is observed when the child demonstrates a combined ability to fix gaze on an object, then shift gaze to someone’s face, and then return their gaze to the object. Alternatively, they may first fix their gaze on a person, then shift gaze to an object, and then return gaze to the person. The core skill set on which eye-pointing is dependant therefore includes gaze fixation, disengaging and shifting gaze, and social engagement with others. Applying these skills successfully incorporates also the inhibition of (other) eye movements and maintenance of focused attention. To date, the scale has been used with 50 children and demonstrates excellent levels of reliability.

The scale is freely available and we invite you to explore its use in your clinical practice.

A qualitative analysis of Clinicians' decision making in AAC assessments: emerging themes from a focus group series

Platform - Abstract ID: 93

Dr. Yvonne Lynch (Manchester Metropolitan University), Prof. Janice Murray (Manchester Metropolitan University), Ms. Nicky Randall (Barnsley Assistive Technology Service), Mr. Simon Judge (Barnsley Assistive Technology Service), Mr. Stuart Meredith (Manchester Metropolitan University), Mrs. Liz Moulam (Manchester Metropolitan University), Prof. Juliet Goldbart (Manchester Metropolitan University)

Identifying the most effective communication aid for individual children is a complex decision making process. This presentation draws on one workstream from the "Identifying appropriate symbol communication aids for children who are non-speaking: enhancing clinical decision making" (HS&DR: 14/70/153) project. Clinicians across the UK contributed to a series of focus groups to explore the factors they consider when making symbol communication aid recommendations. Purposive sampling was used to recruit practitioners based in local and specialised services. This included NHS, educational and third sector settings.

At each site, there were two components to the data collection process. Firstly, a family was invited for an appointment as part of their child's communication aid assessment. The appointment was video recorded as a basis for exploring decision making with the assessment team. Following the appointment, a focus group was held with the team, to review and consider the decision making processes. Across the dataset, we included a range of child profiles and assessment stages to simulate the complex array of factors that may impact on decisions. These focus groups were transcribed, anonymised and analysed using Framework Analysis. This presentation will explore emerging themes from the data and consider implications for policy and practice.

A Roadmap to Successful Communication using AAC

Platform - Abstract ID: 110

Mrs. Amanda Hartmann (AssistiveWare), Mrs. Jennifer Marden (AssistiveWare)

Successful and independent communication is the goal for many Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) users and their families. But the road to get there can seem rocky, windy and often lacking direction. With so many tools and strategies for AAC, how do AAC users find their way to success in their AAC journey? How do we keep them moving forward when road blocks get in the way? What are the best supports to use and the best opportunities to create, for an AAC user to become an effective communicator in any environment? What key steps can we follow on this roadmap to lead to successful communication? While there is no ONE WAY to achieve successful communication for an AAC user, as everyone has their own journey, there are key components that can be pieced together to make the journey as smooth as possible.

This workshop will give step by step practices that can support a symbol-based AAC user to achieve successful communication.

The basis of this workshop will focus on known best practices in AAC, such as providing a robust vocabulary based on a core word vocabulary, strategies around modeling (or Aided Language Stimulation) and communication partner skills.

We will describe common road blocks and ways to overcome them. We will look at everyday opportunities to develop language and real communication using core words. We will discuss ways to build engagement, develop language and integrate literacy. We will demonstrate tools that help with each step of the journey.

No matter where the AAC user is on their journey, this workshop will give some practical ideas to put them on the road map; and guide them to successful communication.

Please note: Practical examples will be made using AAC app, Proloquo2Go, however the principles can be applied to any robust AAC system.

A systematic review of Family-led interventions for children with Communication Disabilities.

Platform - Abstract ID: 14

Ms. Marica Gatt (Tizard Centre, University of Kent), Dr. Jill Bradshaw (Tizard Centre, University of Kent), Dr. Nicola Grove (Tizard Centre, University of Kent)

Aim: The aim was to identify the effectiveness of parent and sibling intervention programmes designed to support children with communication disabilities.

Method: A systematic review of the literature of family-led interventions was conducted. The methodology consisted of selecting the identified studies according to predetermined inclusion criteria. These were analysed following the National Joint Committee (NJC) Evidence-based Data Entry Instrument (June 2008). A total of 29 articles met all the criteria and consisted of 9 group studies and 20 single-case experimental designs which were included in the coding and analysis stage.

Results: The majority of the studies reported interactions with family members, involving mothers (62%), mothers and fathers (19%) and siblings (19%). While some studies reported the simultaneous involvement of mothers and fathers, the seven sibling studies did not involve the direct participation of parents in the interactions. The studies made use of story books and speech generated devices and micro-level interactions were reported. These focused on the development of pre verbal skills such as symbolic play, imitation, turn taking and joint engagement. Parent and sibling interaction skills reported included aided AAC modelling, use of pause time, expectant delay, use of open-ended questions and increased responsiveness to communicative attempts. Descriptive communication partner interventions included the use of modelling, use of scripts, visual supports, joint activities, video modelling and role play. By far the most frequently targeted outcome was improvement in interactional and conversational skills (45%) followed by an improvement in expressive communication levels and modes of communication (34%) and increased frequency of communicative functions (21%).

Conclusion: All the studies reported positive outcomes of family training and interventions. Gaps in the research and implications for further research were discussed.

Keywords: family interventions, communication disabilities, interactions, siblings

AAC as a Curriculum Subject

Platform - Abstract ID: 140

Mrs. Rachel Dempsey (Scope, Ingfield Manor School), Ms. Becky Ffrench (Scope, Ingfield Manor School), Mrs. Pip Edgcombe (Scope, Ingfield Manor School), Mrs. Niki Sherriff (Scope, Ingfield Manor School)

Ingfield Manor is a special school for students with complex physical and communication difficulties. Here, AAC is recognised as a subject in its own right that requires opportunities to be explored, understood and applied in real life contexts. Previously, AAC users were often missing the opportunity to learn the extensive vocabulary available to them to support their communication and learning. This resulted in passive students, unfamiliar with their vocabulary, relying heavily on adult support to initiate communication.

This prompted the need for change within the Secondary and 16+ departments. We wanted to ensure that the students were appropriately equipped to meet increasing communication demands as they got older. Change was implemented through the introduction of AAC as a curriculum subject, giving timetabled, structured opportunities for students to explore the language on their high and low tech devices through Aided Language Stimulation and modelling. Lessons also give opportunities to develop their access skills. An accredited City and Guilds 'Effective AAC' qualification was also launched, enabling the students to measure their own success and achievements.

Within two years, there was a clear improvement in the students' National Curriculum levels. This was reflected in the C & G qualification with 100% of students achieving their awards at differentiated levels, matching formal qualifications achieved by their verbal peers. The lessons have also had a positive impact on the development of the students' access and physical skills. Reports from staff show AAC students are now taking a more active role in initiating conversations and directing staff independently. Teachers have reported that students are better equipped to access other curriculum lessons.

To summarise, the introduction of AAC as a curriculum subject has had a positive impact on the students, families and staff team. This led to us winning the Pearson Shine a Light AAC award 2016/17.

AAC implementation for multilingual persons

Platform - Abstract ID: 98

Dr. Kerstin Tönsing (University of Pretoria), Mrs. Karin Van Niekerk (University of Pretoria), Dr. Georg Schläpfer (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research), Ms. Ilana Wilken (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research)

The majority of the world's population speaks more than one language. However, there is still a limited evidence base for the provision of AAC services in multiple languages.

In this presentation, we will report on the outcomes of (1) three focus groups with a total of 15 AAC service providers aimed at determining their current practices and orientations towards service delivery for multilingual clients in need of AAC; and (2) a quantitative survey of the communication practices and needs of 28 multilingual adults using or in need of AAC.

One online and two face-to-face focus groups were conducted. Transcriptions of the focus groups were analysed by means of an inductive thematic analysis. Although service providers were generally positive about providing AAC in multiple languages, their practices did not always reflect this orientation. Various factors influenced their practices. The need for evidence regarding learning demands of multilingual AAC systems was also highlighted.

Respondents for the survey were recruited via a communication empowerment programme and an email list. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize results. Respondent generally understood multiple languages (M=5.2; Range= 2-11). Literacy in English was generally higher than in other languages, in spite of English being the first language of only three of the 28 respondents. Partners used various different languages when conversing with the adults (M=3.2; Range=1-11). However, the adults, on average, did not express themselves in as many languages (M=2.1, Range=1-3). Computer-generated voices and text prediction in languages other than English were desired features of future AAC technologies.

The results from these two studies suggest that there is a need for access to multiple languages via AAC, and that some service providers have attempted to provide multilingual AAC systems. A research agenda to further develop evidence-based multilingual AAC practices will be discussed.

AAC Mentors

Platform - Abstract ID: 6

Mr. Gregor Gilmour (1voice and A T Therapy)

What is an AAC mentor?

AAC Mentors are high level, Competent AAC users that give support, assistance and inspire less competent AAC users. We work with them to show them just what can be achieved, if they use their device properly. We support and encourage them to use their devices at home, school and college. We also encourage them to use their devices in the community and for more social purpose like having a laugh with your friends.

It is good for AAC users and their families to meet high level competent AAC users so that they can see just what can be achieved. It gives hope to families and helps them to see a future for their child. In mainstream schools a lot of staff have never met an AAC user before. They are not sure of how that individual is going to cope at school or what they can do to make it easier. Meeting and talking with an AAC users that has been there and done it can be a really useful tool for them.

Myself, and 5 others have recently done a level 2 qualification in mentoring. Which Communication Matters helped us to get started. This was really helpful for us, turning our passion for helping other AAC users into a fulltime career. It gives us as AAC mentors a sense of purpose. We are using our disability to help and inspire others. More and more AAC users are getting involved with mentoring which is great as the more mentors there are the more people we can help.

Ace Centre LAACES Project - commissioning and developing local AAC services

Platform - Abstract ID: 35

Ms. Anna Reeves (Ace Centre), Ms. Sara Dale (Ace Centre), Ms. Karen Bailey (Ace Centre)

The commissioning of specialised AAC services by NHS England is resulting in improved equitable services and provision for an estimated 10% of the total population of children and adults who need AAC. However, commissioning responsibilities for the remaining 90% is still significantly variable. The service specification for specialised AAC services states that NHSE commissioned AAC services are required “to support the establishment, training and development of local AAC services”.

Ace Centre is committed to supporting commissioning of local AAC services and budgets for everyone who needs AAC. As part of our NHS Contract to deliver specialised AAC services across the North West and Wessex & Thames Valley regions, we have identified a number of Local Areas to collaborate with Ace Centre in order to develop a local AAC commissioning toolkit within our LAACES Project. Each pilot varies in population, geography and commissioning arrangements but all include AAC professionals who are committed to championing local provision for children and adults who need AAC.

The LAACES project aims to develop a range of resources and tools to assist professionals who work with people who need and use AAC in order to identify need to their local commissioners and present robust business cases to meet this need. This will include the coordination of online surveys, how to capture and present data, exemplar business plans and shared models for local AAC service provision.

Each LAACES pilot follows a similar path, including:

- Evidence of level of need /unmet need
- Local AAC Care pathway
- Indicative budget required for delivering local AAC service
- How this addresses local priorities and equity of provision
- Any ‘Invest to save’ opportunities this would realise

This presentation will report on progress to date with the LAACES pilot and consider key issues in developing the local AAC services commissioning toolkit.

Adapted Lego-Based Therapy for Adults with Learning Disabilities

Platform - Abstract ID: 105

Ms. Lois Thomson (National Star College), Ms. Dannii Keenan (National Star College)

Lego-Based Therapy (LeGoff et al 2014) is familiar approach to many professionals and family members supporting children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) with their social interaction and communication skills. The original approach was developed as a structured social communication programme for children with high functioning ASD, that focused on joint attention and shared goals (Baron-Cohen et al, 2010); with specific roles and routines to achieve a shared outcome. The approach seeks to use an individual's natural interests as a platform to develop social communication skills (Attwood, 1998) adopting a 'Can do' approach to learning and skill development; reinforced with praise and positive feedback.

Our keen interest in Lego-Based Therapy (LeGoff et al 2014), linked with our aspiration to promote social communication skills for individuals with more complex needs, prompted us to adapt this original therapy approach for individuals with a range of learning disabilities and those using Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) strategies.

Our work as Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) at National Star has enabled us to set up regular adapted Lego-Based Therapy groups; incorporating 3-5 learners within each group. These groups follow the rules and roles consistent with the original Lego-Based Therapy approach (LeGoff et al 2014); encouraging learners to take part in a safe and structured environment whilst working towards their own individual therapy targets. These may include; early social communication skills, core vocabulary development, sentence building skills and AAC navigation skills.

Discussion will also include how the adaptation of Lego-Based Therapy (LeGoff et al 2014) has opened up the opportunity for us to generalise this approach across a wider range of client groups and will also include examples of resources and AAC grid sets that have been used to develop, promote and support communication within this context.

An AAC User's Journey to University

Platform - Abstract ID: 85

Mr. Adam Lenartowicz (UVHS), Ms. Marion Stanton (CANDLE LIMITED)

Having a communication aid is vital. Without one I would not be able to show my understanding. With one I can engage in complex conversations. I am completing 6th form at Ulverston Victoria High School (UVHS) in Cumbria, a mainstream school I have attended for the past 7 years. I am planning to go to Newcastle University to study maths. The journey hasn't always been an easy one. Although I was strong in math's, in year 7 my literacy skills were underdeveloped. I had to repeat Year 1 literacy with the help of my AAC teacher/coordinator and teaching assistants. Only 4 years later I managed to get a grade C in GCSE English. However, maths and science have been my main interest. This talk will describe the steps that were needed to get me to the point where I was able to apply for a university place. My AAC teacher/coordinator, Marion Stanton and I will describe how subject teachers worked with the SEN department and how specialist input from a teacher who understands AAC is vital to the student being able to access the curriculum. We will go through the ways in which the curriculum was adapted and how I access exams. While the assistive technology I have used is important the biggest factor in my success so far has been the working together of my family and staff at school who have always been willing to think outside the box. I will be showing some video of interviews with some of my teachers. Of course, it helps that I really enjoy learning.

Analysis of a low tech AAC to improve scanning efficiency

Platform - Abstract ID: 82

Mrs. Samantha McNeilly (Ace Centre), Mr. Will Wade (Ace Centre), Mr. Euan Robertson (Ace Centre), Dr. Heidi Koester (Koester Performance Research)

A typical keyboard layout often used by those accustomed to computers is a QWERTY, typewriter style layout. However, research suggests non-standard keyboard layouts can increase the speed and efficiency of AAC communication, particularly when using a frequency based layout (Venkatagiri (1999), Leshner et al. (2009)).

This presentation discusses the analysis of an individual's 3 month language sample to improve scanning efficiency and how the principles of making an efficient letter layout can be applied to enhance scanning communication for an individual. Multiple keyboard layouts are considered in relation to the time taken to write sentences and the scan steps required to reach each letter.

Following analyses, a suggested layout for the individuals high tech device is then discussed; incorporating the new keyboard layout.

Becoming a Mystery Customer for Communication Access UK

Platform - Abstract ID: 56

Mrs. Catherine Harris (Communication Matters)

This session is specifically for people who are familiar with the aims and objectives of Communication Access UK and would like to become a mystery customer.

The content will include:

- The role of the mystery customer
- The role of the support worker
- Detailed focus on the mystery customer questionnaire
- The opportunity to do a mystery customer visit in the context of the session
- The opportunity to reflect on the visit with others
- Input on scoring in relation to minimum standards

Building blocks to literacy at home

Platform - Abstract ID: 168

Ms. Jules Whicher (Parent)

Jules will talk about the literacy work she has carried out with her son who has clinical Angelman Syndrome. With reference to the Four Blocks model, Jules will share what's in her literacy toolkit and will show the importance of a comprehensive communication system to support literacy.

Lots of practical examples about how to incorporate literacy activities into everyday life, and squeeze in opportunities that are fun and engaging for a student who would much rather be watching YouTube than learning his ABCs!

Clinical decision making in augmentative and alternative communication technology for children: A best-worst scaling approach

Platform - Abstract ID: 139

Dr. Edward Webb (University of Leeds), Dr. David Meads (University of Leeds), Dr. Yvonne Lynch (Manchester Metropolitan University), Ms. Nicky Randall (Barnsley Assistive Technology Service), Mr. Simon Judge (Barnsley Assistive Technology Service), Prof. Juliet Goldbart (Manchester Metropolitan University), Mr. Stuart Meredith (Manchester Metropolitan University), Mrs. Liz Moulam (Manchester Metropolitan University), Prof. Stephane Hess (University of Leeds)

Background: Children with significant speech and language difficulties related to a range of conditions may rely on communication aid technology to support language acquisition and communication. Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems often use graphic symbols to represent language for pre-literate children. The diverse characteristics of these children and the proliferation of technology means selecting the optimum system for a child is challenging. AAC device prescription has long lasting consequences for children and their development, but little is known about the decision making of clinicians in this context.

Aim: To conduct a preference elicitation exercise with prescribing clinicians to determine what aspects of children and of devices are important in decision making. **Methods and Results:** A list of child and device attributes (approximately 20 each) were generated following a systematic review of the literature, focus groups with 30 AAC clinical specialist stakeholders and discussions with 20 AAC field experts. Due to the large number of attributes we decided a two-part best-worst scaling (BWS) object case survey was the most appropriate data-gathering instrument. The survey was conducted online with clinicians using a D-efficient fractional factorial design and at time of writing was almost concluded. Preliminary results suggest that the most important child-related attributes were support from communication partners, communication ability with AAC and a child's determination and persistence, the least were educational stage, mobility, and primary diagnosis. For devices, the most important attributes were consistency of layout and navigation, vocabulary/language package(s) and durability and reliability, and the least important were appearance, cost and additional assistive technology functions. We describe how the results feed into a future discrete choice experiment combining both attributes of children and devices. This will both examine the trade-offs clinicians make and crucially, given the large heterogeneity in the patient population, the interactions between child-related and device-related factors.

Communication Access UK - progress so far.....

Platform - Abstract ID: 55

Mrs. Catherine Harris (Communication Matters)

Since 2015 Communication Matters has been committed to launching a symbol for Communication Access in the UK. This work has been driven by a steering group with representatives from Communication Matters (CM), The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) and the Stroke Association and has engaged with over 60 stakeholder groups. The aim has been to conduct a consultation on a potential symbol and agree the underpinning minimum standards which a business needs to meet if the symbol is to be displayed. The symbol is due to be launched in September 2017.

The project coordinator post which started in January 2017 has been funded through the John Ellerman Foundation. There has been the opportunity to input to both the strategic planning and operational arms of the project and, together with Toby Hewson, I have represented CM on the steering group.

We have now developed and piloted training packages for 'Introductory', 'Mystery Customer' and 'Train the Trainer workshops'. Involving people who use AAC in this process has been a key part of the project as they are fully involved as mystery customers and co-presenters for the business training events. Through the year there have been workshops at Specialist Colleges across the UK to promote the project and to recruit support. In March 2017 we delivered 4 workshops for staff at Leeds University which were very well received.

This session will give a summary of the progress and outcomes to date with information as to how people can become more involved.

Community: Participation, Inclusion and Identity

Platform - Abstract ID: 101

Ms. Ria Bayliss (Cardiff Metropolitan University), Dr. Jenny Mercer (Cardiff Metropolitan University), Dr. Calum Delaney (Cardiff Metropolitan University), Dr. Amanda Hynan (Leeds Beckett University)

We all exist within communities, and they contribute to defining who we are. Our participation and inclusion is mediated through our interaction, which raises inherent questions about the nature of community that is experienced by people who use AAC, and their individual relationships with it.

My doctoral research is investigating what participation and inclusion within community means to people who use AAC. The focus of the research is on how adult voice-output communication aid (VOCA) users experience, or identify with, community and their understanding of that relationship.

This presentation will report on both the methodology and findings from the first phase of the project. This phase consisted of two parts; a systematic review of the literature reporting qualitative studies that have examined AAC users' experiences; and an exploratory interview with a VOCA user. The aim of this phase was to identify themes relating to the lived experience of community/ies by people who use AAC, in order to guide the approach and focus of the second phase of the project. The themes drawn from the review of the literature and the thematic content analysis of the interview data will be shared to support a discussion around what has been found so far.

The second phase will consider the co-interpretation with AAC users of data relating to identity and the experience of community by them. The approach for this phase of the research will be described. The session will also give those who use AAC the opportunity to find out how their views and experiences could be included in the second phase of the research.

Creating a Complete Language Learning Environment

Platform - Abstract ID: 13

Ms. Jane Odom (PRC)

Given the advancements in and increased access to tablet technology, a wide variety of AAC solutions are available. Although hardware and software are ever changing, the need for quality therapeutic support remains constant. This talk will focus on therapeutic supports to promote language acquisition and effective communication with AAC. The focus will be on the importance of including all of a child's learning environments in the plan including home and school. By using the data built into many devices, we were able to develop a therapeutic plan for an entire classroom.

In thinking about the practice of AAC, it is common to consider hardware, software and support. Each area requires special attention in order to foster effective and efficient communication. Appropriate hardware decisions need to be made to meet the access needs of the client. Similarly, communication software needs to be scrutinized to ensure it will meet the linguistic needs of the individual, not only for today, but for years to come. Last, but certainly not least, the support of the AAC system needs to be planned and executed to help the individual find success. AAC support includes training in the operations as well as language structure of the system, clearly defined goals, an intervention plan, therapeutic supports to fulfill the intervention plan, professional development and tools to document progress.

Strategies will be provided on how the entire team worked on specific goals based on the developmental stages of language development. Data was taken directly from student's devices to determine whether or not there was carry through on the skills that were introduced. This information paired with observation, input from communication partners, social/geographical context and other communication modalities were used to help determine current level of functioning as well as provide insight into where to go next.

Developing a bespoke communication system in secondary school through to college and beyond

Platform - Abstract ID: 36

Ms. Judy King (Positive Communication), Ms. Lisa-Marie Eastwood (individual)

Developing useful, functional low and high tech communication systems for a person with complex physical and visual difficulties takes many years and is an on-going adventure!

This presentation looks at one personal account of how a range of communication strategies were developed from secondary school, into college and how we are planning for the future.

At 15 years old, we took the courageous decision to take a step back to working on basic switching skills using the Big Step and timed switching on autoscan with only 8 choices.

By taking a step back we have progressed to linear scanning on a high tech communication device with 15 choices per page linking to many more pages within pages.

The system was highly structured at the 8 choice level but has developed into a complex flexible system at the 15 choice level.

Vocabulary selection has been a group decision process between the individual, parents, PAs and therapists. Several situation specific vocabulary pages have been created including going shopping, going to the pub, night clubs and shisha bars!

The range of communication methods now include:

No tech – yes / no

Low tech – listener mediated scanning communication book

Simple high tech – yes / no switches and Big Step

High tech – Mobi2 single switch autoscanning on a linear auditory prompt scan.

Other high tech – iPad (Go Talk Now), iPhone and laptop with PA input.

Use of The Mobi2 means that college work can be completed independently, clear decisions made, instructions given and conversations initiated, led, followed and closed. However, it requires a quiet, concentrated environment and can be tiring. Therefore the range of communication systems is vital for easy communication giving presentations, instructions and socialising in different situations.

Development of Eye-Gaze Control Skills - Insights from a Typically Developing Population

Platform - Abstract ID: 124

Mr. Tom Griffiths (Great Ormond Street Hospital), Dr. Michael Clarke (University College London), Dr. John Swettenham (University College London), Ms. Charlotte Whitwood (University College London), Ms. Amy Cook (University College London)

The use of eye-gaze control technologies as a method to access computers and AAC devices is increasingly widespread for children with severe motor impairments. Often, such technologies are introduced to children at a young developmental age, with the goal of teaching them the core skills needed to control them.

Previous work by our team presented at this conference suggested that typically developing children with a developmental age between 18-24 months were not able to complete an activity consisting of learning the functions of two different onscreen buttons and using this knowledge to complete a cause and effect task. These children were developmentally mature enough to demonstrate established cause and effect in other areas. The research suggested that the development of sustained attention may be an important factor in learning to complete tasks such as these using eye-gaze technology.

This paper will present a follow-up study with another group of typically developing children. The study examines whether increasing the salience of visual stimuli and the reward generated by successfully completing a task allows the engagement of a developmentally younger population, allowing more effective assessment of their learning to use eye-gaze technology. This research is part of an ongoing programme of work with the goal of designing accessible activities to gain insight into how developmentally younger children with motor and cognitive impairments develop the skills needed to control eye-gaze technology systems.

At the time of submitting this abstract, data collection is underway, with children in the study trialling the activities. The results of these trials, together with the results of standardised assessments of language and cognition, will be presented in this paper. Presenters will demonstrate some of the resources used, present the findings and discuss the implications of this study for future research design and clinical practice.

Disabled young people providing mentoring and support

Platform - Abstract ID: 94

Mrs. Verity Elliott (Creativity in Practice Ltd), Dr. Hilary Gardner (University of Sheffield)

In early 2017 we were successful in receiving a grant from Awards for All which has enabled us to design and deliver a pilot project that will provide six disabled young people with an opportunity to gain a recognised qualification, Level 2 in Mentoring. Some of the young people are already involved in volunteering roles that include mentorship and it is evident that disabled young people are well equipped to support other disabled young people. Some are AAC users and all the young people are wheel chair users.

The qualification has been adapted and designed to meet the specific needs of the learners (the six disabled young people) and will be delivered over 4-6 months with induction and a number of taught sessions. The young people will also have the opportunity to work 1-1 with a named assessor.

We have consulted with young people and relevant organisations and we are excited at the prospect of delivering a pioneering opportunity that could be disseminated and offered more widely for other disabled young people across the UK. We will be presenting more information about the qualification including why it was needed and what outcomes the disabled young people have gained. In summary, we are aware that many disabled young people face significant challenges in learning and development, in particular in gaining a recognised vocational qualifications from Level 1 to Level 3 alongside the positive opportunities that mentoring can offer. The qualification gave the disabled young people the opportunity to gain a recognised qualification and more importantly, to help them understand the role of a mentor, the benefits of mentoring and that they also have the opportunity to demonstrate the skills and qualities of mentoring. Progression and what the young people do next is also a key outcome.

Early AAC - a pathway from pre-intentional communication to AAC

Platform - Abstract ID: 40

Ms. Andrea McGuinness (ATtherapy), Mrs. Hayley Power (ATtherapy)

Moving individuals with complex needs forward along a communication pathway that leads to a 'formal' AAC system is a challenge. The presenter has worked within this area for many years. This presentation brings together and further develops resources and therapy principles designed to support those with complex needs and enable those students with the most complex needs to build communication skills from pre-intentional communication towards communicative competence and use of symbols.

This step by step therapy approach builds on existing good practice in communication therapy and in particular AAC. Intensive interaction, non directive therapy, consistency of the communication system and parallels with spoken language development will all be drawn upon. The role of the communication partner and communication environment will also be discussed.

In addition to the underlying principles of the therapy approach, the author will share innovative high and low tech resources to support this therapy approach. Issues relating to complex physical access, cortical visual impairment and cognitive impairment will be discussed.

Case studies illustrating the points for discussion will be shown.

Following the presentation, a step by step guide to the therapy approach will be made available. The high and low tech resources will also be available. Participants will be able to use these within whichever format or software is currently used by the individuals they are supporting.

Empowering the Early Years Inclusion Service: promoting evidence informed practice

Platform - Abstract ID: 136

Mrs. Claire Hayward (Access to Communication and Technology - ACT), Ms. Siobhan Murphy (Access to Communication and Technology - ACT)

The early introduction of AAC is well recognised best practice (Ronski et al. 2015), but the importance of instigating AAC for very young children may not be reflected in service provision on the ground. The presentation describes the work of Access to Communication and Technology (ACT), the West Midlands Regional Specialist Service, in developing a relationship with our local Early Years Inclusion Service. We review the evidence base to support this collaboration, and present strategies to directly target barriers to the introduction of AAC for babies, toddlers and young children. While there is a considerable body of evidence for this age group where the focus of intervention is directed towards the child, there is a paucity of knowledge around the skills and needs of communication partners generally, and specifically in early childhood (McNaughton & Light 2015). The most pivotal of these partners will undoubtedly be the immediate family. AAC practitioners should therefore actively promote strong partnerships with services which work closely with families, to better understand their needs and to influence the communication choices available to them. We explore in particular the vital role Early Years teams have in working with parents and families around their expectations, and in helping them to prioritise communication skills.

McNaughton, D., & Light, J. (2015). What we write about when we write about AAC: The past 30 years of research and future directions. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 31(4), 261-270.

Ronski, M., Sevcik, R. A., Barton-Hulsey, A., & Whitmore, A. S. (2015). Early intervention and AAC: What a difference 30 years makes. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 31(3), 181-202.

Eye Can Talk - the story of a silent soul emerging

Platform - Abstract ID: 31

Mrs. Chantal Bryan (Parent), Mr. Jonathan Bryan (AAC user), Mrs. Sarah Giles (Teacher)

“Learning to spell has totally transformed my life” says 11-year-old Jonathan using his etran frame spelling board. This is the communication journey of our non-verbal son with Cerebral Palsy, from the label ‘Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties’ to getting high marks in Key Stage 2 SATs. His experiences highlight the importance of teaching AAC speakers to read, write and spell.

Method / Techniques

Before Jonathan overcame his profound and multiple *access* to learning, we had to find an access method that suited him. This meant trying various communication equipment and strategies before opting for low tech eye pointing. This access method was used to teach Jonathan literacy; whole word reading, phonics and predictive writing. Key to this success was dedicated time and 1:1 teaching. Having several people able to read Jonathan’s eye pointing validated this access method. He has a bespoke education, with some work at home. Lessons in a reduced timetable of English, Maths, Science, Music and Cookery are taken at mainstream secondary school.

Findings

Jonathan made astonishing progress academically, but more profoundly for us, his communication blossomed. After a year and a half of basic teaching a few hours a day he started to spell every word he wanted to say. Having spent 9 years unable to express himself, Jonathan’s words and thoughts have astonished us. His writing demands, deserves and commands our respect.

Conclusions

Jonathan and I passionately believe that every non-verbal child should be given the chance to learn to read, write and spell, so that their communication world can be opened up as it has been for Jonathan. Therefore, Jonathan has started a campaign for all children to be taught to read and write: www.change.org/teachustoo, which he has presented to the Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families. Jonathan writes eloquently on his blog: www.eyecantalk.net

Feedback from a study examining Speech and Language Therapists' perceived AAC competence

Platform - Abstract ID: 87

Ms. Jodie Rogers (Kent and Medway CAT Service)

There is now a national policy driver for improved and equitable Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) service provision across England, in which Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) play an integral role. However, literature suggests that some SLTs feel that they lack the training, experience and competence in the assessment for AAC. With a view to understanding how AAC competence can best be developed, a study was undertaken to gain a better understanding of SLTs' existing perceived AAC competence, and how their training and experience has influenced this.

Using a mixed-methodology, findings from a cross-sectional survey were used to identify levels of training, experience and perceived competence in AAC, and whether relationships existed between these variables. Interviews were then used to further explore and understand these findings.

This session will provide feedback upon the main findings from this study. A number of implications for AAC practice, alongside opportunities for future research, will also be discussed.

GazeNoTe: Developing a protocol for the assessment of early social communication skills for children with cerebral palsy

Platform - Abstract ID: 149

Ms. Katie Price (University College London), Dr. Michael Clarke (University College London), Dr. John Swettenham (University College London)

Introduction

This paper describes the social communication skills protocol developed for the author's postgraduate research thesis. There are few guidelines for the assessment of social communication skills for children with physical disabilities, despite reports and documentation of deficits in this important area of communication development. The procedure used in the author's thesis will be described and demonstrated in detail, and discussion invited.

Patients and methods

The children in the research study were from GMFCS groups IV and V (children using wheelchairs), and aged between 3 and 12 years. All participants were screened for their ability to use looking behaviours to give responses, and all participants had language comprehension abilities demonstrable to a minimum age equivalent level of 12-15 months. The accessible measure of social responsiveness/shared attention (GazeNoTe) was derived from activities from established assessments, supplemented by some novel tasks.

Results

Children with cerebral palsy gave reliable responses to the tasks offered, and a wide range of skills was seen. A number of children showed social responsiveness and shared attention skills at a level of development significantly below their language age/non-verbal age.

Conclusion

It may be useful to describe some of these children as having an autism spectrum disorder, and this will be discussed. However, given the wide range of social communication abilities shown in the study group of children with cerebral palsy, it seems important to work towards the development of such assessment tools as this protocol has investigated to identify deficits, and hence be ready to explore intervention for these early language and interaction skills. Possible interventions are presented to address any such identified deficits.

Having Pride - Exploring the personal impact of having a speech impairment

Platform - Abstract ID: 21

Mr. Simon Stevens (Self Employed)

In using the context of my recently published autobiography, *Having Pride*, I explore the impact of having a speech impairment on my life and my work.

Having a speech impairment from birth due to cerebral palsy has, like many AAC users, been my most significant difficulty. This has been in terms of the practicalities of interacting with others, as well as framing my physiological and sociological status in society.

I will explore how I have needed to successfully subvert social norms in order to be integrated, if not included, into many areas of mainstream society. I will explain and discuss how I have altered the common perceptions associated with a 'drooling spastic' to create a proud and confident professional in terms of social branding.

I will also explore the journey from a infant patient of a local mental hospital to a mainstream leader in terms of social media influence, and why we should celebrate the opportunities now available to people with speech impairments of all ages.

I will also explore my relationship with AAC as a part-time user through my life and how technology in general has played an very large and important role in assisting me to overcome practical barriers and achieve a level of opportunity previously unthinkable, and how I have rode the waves of new technology. I will also explore how technology has assisted in my autonomy and question how my autonomy was created in a nature or nurture discussion.

Finally, I will question how my special impairment has created and retained my internal and external identities, and what lessons SLT professionals can learn of my experiences to assist younger people with speech difficulties to understand and develop their own identities within a world of improved opportunities due to technological and social advances available to them.

I want more language

Platform - Abstract ID: 64

Ms. Catriona Burke (Access to Communication and Technology - ACT)

For children with Autism and communication difficulties traditional interventions have focused on requesting as a means of motivating them to communicate. There is also a tendency to introduce a small number of symbols at a time to reduce visual and cognitive overload.

This session will look at the communicative skills and behaviours of individuals with Autism, associated difficulties such as motor and sensory difficulties that impact on communication and communicative intent and the risks of not providing opportunities beyond requesting. The relationship between communication difficulty Autism and our perception of a person's potential for language acquisition will be discussed.

The evidence in support of providing a full language system and presuming competence for those on the Autistic spectrum will be presented as well as ideas on how to move clients on from requesting. Case studies of those who have succeeded with AAC will be presented including client's individual needs and what environmental factors impact on a successful outcome. The pros and cons of high tech AAC for this population will be examined as well as the benefits of low tech. There will be an analysis of how these individuals might meet the NHSE criteria for Specialist assessment and open discussion on how to support them at a local level.

I want to be a filmmaker: my filmmaking journey using AAC and assistive technology

Platform - Abstract ID: 127

Ms. Jemima Hughes (none)

In 2016 Communication Matters awarded me the Alan Martin award for contribution to the arts by an AAC user, in recognition of my filmmaking. I should like to present some of my short films and animations, explain how I make films as a deaf and disabled AAC user who needs switch control, and consider how my disabilities influence the content of my films.

In my presentation I will

- show some short films and clips from films I have made over the past ten years, many of which focus on aspects of disability; this will include my 2016 Arts Council funded animation *Imagination*, made for Channel 4 Random Acts.
- describe my filmmaking journey, and how as a deaf and disabled person and AAC user I have found opportunities to learn and develop my skills despite barriers;
- explain how I edit films using Grid 3 computer control for switch users, what works well and what is difficult;
- consider the role of AAC as both a topic and a means of communication in my films; I want the voices of AAC users to be more widely heard and accepted in the media;
- discuss the themes of my films, some of which present disability related issues, while others celebrate disabled people's lives and creativity, and some are not about disability at all. Disability is an important aspect of my identity, but it is not the only thing I am interested in.

Implementing evidence informed decision making in AAC for young children with complex physical needs

Platform - Abstract ID: 47

Mrs. Claire Hayward (Access to Communication and Technology - ACT), Ms. Julie Atkinson (Access to Communication and Technology - ACT)

AAC practitioners face a number of challenges when advising for children with complex communication needs and complex physical disabilities. Should increasing complexity of physical disability map to increased complexity of access method? How and when to introduce high tech whilst balancing the right of every child to a comprehensive language system?

Access to Communication and Technology is the West Midlands Regional Hub Service. When working with children with the most complex needs ACT will often advise a “parallel pathway” approach, separating out language system, access and voice output.

Experienced practitioners from the multi disciplinary team will share their model of clinical reasoning, informed by evidence drawn from a range of areas including theories of neuroplasticity, research from the field of AAC and around the needs of families of children with complex needs. Resources for skill development in each of the pathway strands will be presented.

We discuss challenges to this model of practice, and reflect on how the needs of this group of children may be met within the context of the NHSE service specification.

Involving people who use AAC in Higher Education to enhance the skills of undergraduate Speech and Language Therapy Students

Platform - Abstract ID: 19

Ms. Victoria Lundie (Birmingham City University), Ms. Helen Quiller (N/A)

The presenters will take the audience on a journey through the Speech and Language Therapy degree programme at Birmingham City University (BCU) and will highlight where service user involvement occurs and how this adds value to the student learning experience specifically in relation to their knowledge and skills within the field of Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC).

People who use AAC play a valuable role at BCU informing the development of the curriculum, supporting open days and interview days and playing an active role in a range of simulation activities both on site and out in the community.

The presenters will provide a range of perspectives on the involvement of people who use AAC. The perspective of someone who uses AAC, the perspective of the students and also the tutors at BCU.

FACE (the forum for accessing community experience) will be discussed, this is a network of people with a shared interest in health and social care in higher education who meet regularly to support learning and teaching on a range of programmes within Faculty of Health.

We will explore the impact of SU involvement on the student experience and discuss how this supports our undergraduates to be able to effectively support people who use AAC, their families, carers and other professionals whilst out on placement and as newly qualified practitioners.

There will be time to share and discuss best practice and for the presenters to answer questions.

Involving people with severe speech and physical impairments in the early design of a context-aware AAC system

Platform - Abstract ID: 153

Prof. Annalu Waller (University of Dundee), Dr. Zulqarnain Rashid (University of Dundee), Mr. Rolf Black (University of Dundee)

Despite the increased availability of VOCAs (both as dedicated devices and, more recently, as apps on mobile devices), the limited use and abandonment of such systems remains high. One of the major reasons for the abandonment of assistive technology (AT) relates to the poor usability of devices. The importance of engaging with end users in the design and development of technology is now embedded in software engineering standards and is seen as key to ensuring usability. User-Centred Design is a methodology which demands the early and continual involvement of end users. However, the inclusion of end users with complex disabilities, such as those with severe speech and physical impairments (SSPI), pose challenges for designers with the result that few products reflect a truly user-centred approach. Designers of AAC devices tend to employ proxy users in the early stages of a project, only targeting disabled users in summative evaluation studies. This paper addresses challenges faced by designers in the early stages of a research project developing a novel context-aware communication system. We will describe the larger ACE-LP (Augmenting Communication using Environmental data to drive Language Prediction) project and will present the results of two early design workshops, highlighting challenges encountered and solutions adopted when working with disabled users.

Is AAC really Sugar Free?

Platform - Abstract ID: 9

Mr. Patrick Bates (N/A), Mr. Simon Stevens (N/A)

When I go for an appointment with a Doctor or the wheelchair service, they always start, either by asking me if I know why I am there for, which is patronising; or by asking my Care Enabler questions, as if I am in the third person, and not in the first person, so this paper will explore the reasons why, this is the case; and we will hopefully answer the question, is AAC really sugar free.

Even when my Eyegaze, and the Health Professional can see I am using it to communicate, they still talk to my Care enabler, as in the third person. To explain what is wrong with me, I have had a new Doctor, at my surgery, actually crouched down, as if I was a young child.

While some people will say, they don't know how to react with a non-verbal person, I would say that the worse group for just assuming, I have a learning disability, are Health Professionals, but why, I would argue that they should be trained, about disability and the non-verbal patients do have a brain. In paper, we will explore why is the case; and how we may resolve this patronising attitude.

We all have an inbuilt expectation of everybody we meet, being socially uniform, to fit inside our preconceived constructs, unfortunately as everyone knows, this is definitely not the case; however these preconceived constructions are extremely difficult to overcome.

The title of this paper, is a play on, does he take sugar. It is still very much alive and prevalent in every walk of my life, and Health Professionals are one of the worse for talking to my Care Enabler, instead of having no preconceived constructions about who they are meeting, and therefore speak to me directly, as their client.

Keyword Signing in the context of Capable Communities

Platform - Abstract ID: 5

Ms. Sally Mills (Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust), Mrs. Sharon Hambley (Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust)

In Cornwall, the Learning Disability Team have been working with community partners through the Communication Charter training network to increase awareness and understanding of communication needs and support communities to adapt and facilitate communication needs through the use keyword signing and AAC. Community Partners include local care providers, local acute hospital, learning disability day centers, local Wether- spoon restaurants and the local theater cafe. Out of our varied training program the Keyword Signing sessions have for a long time been the most popular. This has led to a growing network of keyword signers and a capable community to support seasonal events to celebrate communication and enable service users to be part of them. The keyword signing network is underpinned by network meetings and a competency framework to ensure the growth and maintenance of keyword signing skills. Service user involvement within the training program as co-trainers and at events has also been key to its success and longevity. Signing volunteers, who are part of this network, also support the local Learning Disability Advisory Group. The network continues to grow and with it the range of communities gaining insight into communication needs and making reasonable adjustments to meet them.

Lisa Simpson – a unique choreographer

Platform - Abstract ID: 187

Ms. Lisa Simpson (Independent Choreographer)

Lisa Simpson is unable to speak but choreographs by using the Simpson Board; a flexible A3 sized laminated board covered in the words, diagrams and symbols needed to create a dance. It allows the user to indicate using their eyes or by pointing where, on a virtual stage, they would like the dancers to go and what sort of moves they should make. An assistant/translator who sits alongside the user, reading the board then speaks these instructions aloud to the dancers.

Lisa will speak about where the concept behind the invaluable choreography tool originated from and how she has set up her own company teaching people with and without disabilities, the Simpson Board methodology to enable other disabled people to create their own piece of work. There will be video clips throughout, showing Lisa delivering sessions as well as a warm up by one of the people who Lisa has been training. She also has Cerebral Palsy and uses a version of the Simpson board on her electronic communication aid

In addition, Lisa will be delivering a warm up showing how a person with a disability and no verbal communication can lead a group. Plus there will be a live demonstration of how the choreography tool works with a volunteer from the audience.

Meeting the needs of AAC users with rapidly degenerative conditions

Platform - Abstract ID: 115

Ms. Helen Murphy (Communication Aid Service East of England), Ms. Catherine Hale (Communication Aid Service East of England)

Background:

The recently commissioned AAC hub for the East of England explored AAC provision and support provided to clients referred to the hub in the latter stages of a rapidly degenerative condition. The responsiveness of both the service and referrers was explored, alongside demographic analysis of clients in order to reveal patterns regarding timing of referral and factors that influence outcomes for these clients.

Aim:

To ascertain if there is an optimal timing of referrals for clients with rapidly degenerative conditions and to explore if patterns exist regarding timing of referral/diagnosis/age/involvement of local services for clients for whom the hub input was and was not sufficient to meet their needs.

Methods:

An audit was carried out of all clients who had passed away during the first year of operation of the AAC hub. These were divided into two groups; Group A) who had received equipment/support which met their communication needs (i.e. high or low tech equipment which allowed them to communicate), and Group B) who had not received equipment/support sufficient to meet their communication needs (i.e. equipment provision not possible prior to passing away/being too unwell to utilise high-tech equipment/no low-tech equipment in place). Patterns exposed by the demographics of both groups were examined in order to inform future best practice.

Results:

The results will outline patterns exposed by the demographic analysis of the two groups.

Discussion and Conclusion:

Possible reasons for patterns will be explored and discussed, with findings to support future best practice in the area highlighted, e.g. optimal referral timing, the importance of local services providing support in the form of low-tech solutions prior to referral to the hub and the sub-types of any conditions which may warrant earlier referral and acceptance by hubs.

Mentoring at ATtherapy

Platform - Abstract ID: 62

Ms. Nadia Clarke (ATtherapy), Ms. Francesca Sephton (ATtherapy)

Employed individuals who use AAC describe a variety of benefits from employment including not only income earned but also the positive impact on their self-identity, confidence and social opportunities (McNaughton, Light, & Groszyk, 2001). Currently however employment rates are extremely low for AAC users. People who use AAC have the lowest employment rates of all disability groups which is thought to be due to a number of barriers including; communication and assistive technology barriers, few opportunities to find jobs, poor educational preparation, lack of appropriate supports and negative societal attitudes (Murphy, 2014).

Self – determination is the ‘process by which someone takes control of their life’ (Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003). This is referenced as a key skill to achieve successful employment. Nadia Clarke received her first AAC system aged five and in her teenage years Nadia has evidenced great self-determination from; independently travelling the world, talking in parliament, giving speeches at university, carrying out voluntary work, undertaking a college course, winning best employer of the year and finding paid employment. Nadia has learnt to use AAC competently and knows the barriers that people can encounter. Consequently, she is passionate about helping other disabled people which lead to her exploring mentoring opportunities.

Nadia now works as an AAC mentor for ATtherapy, an independent speech and language therapy company, where she has successfully gained paid employment and is working with families and young AAC users who are starting their journey with AAC. Nadia has relevant life experience and her role inspires others to use their AAC and raises expectations. This presentation is multifaceted sharing the impact of the mentoring role across several areas – the young person’s life, their families, professionals and work colleagues. It will also address the fundamental skills needed to be a mentor, highlighting useful training opportunities and support.

Musketeers for Storytelling and Film in AAC

Platform - Abstract ID: 125

Ms. Mascha Legel (Radboud University Nijmegen), Prof. Gloria Soto (San Francisco State University), Dr. Nicola Grove (University of Kent), Prof. Annalu Waller (Dundee University)

The aim of this presentation is to discuss the importance of storytelling and to describe how to use film making as a tool for storytelling in the educational and home environment. We will present the results of a research project titled “My Film, My Story”. The research examined the effect of Film as Observable Communication in Conversational Narrative.

Method

The research-project was implemented in several Dutch (special) education schools to introduce filmmaking as a way to promote the importance of sharing personal stories. This project involved close collaboration between AAC- users, their family, their schools and speech-and language pathologists. “My film, My Story” is generally based on the idea of “Film as Observable Communication“FaOC”, whereby children are taught to create their own films, through filming and editing, as tool for storytelling. With FaOC the children become the director of their story and film. In September 2017 the project will be completed, resulting in a practical evidence-based teaching method “My Film, My Story”. As a follow up, we will implement “Cam on Wheels”, which is Professional Education for Filmmakers, stimulating more inclusive education and possibilities for AAC students.

Results/findings

We will discuss the effects of using FaOC on the participating children’s Conversational Narrative skills, with specific emphasis on expressive language learning. The findings suggest that the conversational narrative with FaOC contained more topic development, through effective conversational repairs, resulting in a more symmetric interaction between the narrators. Implications for the application of storytelling and film as a means for AAC are discussed, as well as suggestions for future projects as Cam on Wheels. Film clips of the project will be presented.

Conclusion We hope that the participants can experience the enjoyment and effectiveness of storytelling and film. You don’t need to be a professional filmmaker to use film in AAC.

My child's need for the development of curriculum resources for high-tech communication aids

Platform - Abstract ID: 72

Mrs. Mary Briggs (Parent)

This presentation will focus on resources to support curriculum learning for children using high-tech communication aids.

I am mum to Toby, a 13 year old with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and very severe speech, language and communication issues. He is non-verbal and his development with signing and Grids have run parallel with each other to develop his communication skills.

As a teacher myself, I have been interested in trying to maximise his use of AAC to develop his progress in learning (rather than just communication). I have been frustrated by the lack of resources with a focus on the curriculum. With limited teacher/SaLT time for developing grids, I have often found him without the necessary grids to support his school work. E.g. when learning about the lifecycle of a butterfly he needs a specific grid on the subject, with words such as chrysalis and pupa and the appropriate verbs and adjectives on one page: this would enable him to discuss and demonstrate his knowledge and understanding of this transformation. Without this, he is often given yes or no questions, as the appropriate vocabulary is not in one place.

Firstly, I will share some curriculum grids that I have created for Toby that are specifically tailored to children working at the equivalent of higher P levels and lower national curriculum levels.

Secondly, I would like to discuss with you how these grids can be improved and broadened to be of benefit to other children and schools.

Thirdly, the presentation will be a forum for the audience to share their knowledge of resources for curriculum learning to help busy teachers, SaLTs and carers make the most of what is out there rather than reinventing the wheel. How can we pull these resources together and promote them to be of benefit to all?

My Experience

Platform - Abstract ID: 17

Mr. Damian Gentleman (Own Experience)

When I first went to primary school, I didn't like the devices they used because the accents they used were American which the other children didn't like.

Then I was introduced to AAC who showed me different communication aids so that I could learn to be independent even though I have cerebral palsy.

Using the AAC communication aid I was also able to go to Star college and later on go to University although I found the work a bit hard and had to leave. I found other courses such as Life Skills more helpful to me.

And now thanks to AAC I have a lot of independence. I own my own flat and also my own cottage which as from the end of this year I should hopefully be moving into.

Before I used high tech AAC I used a word board but it became difficult to use because it was difficult to explain things to people and explain what I wanted, One example is; When I lost my mum at a young age I was unable to explain how I was feeling.

The AAC device that I am currently using is an 'Accent'. It is run through the internet and is able to talk for me in sentences which allows me to explain. It works by pressing a picture which all have different categories and also it allows me to type on a keyboard. Now I have started to use a phone which I am very excited about because it has given me more freedom.

AAC have helped me talk without a carer and be more social. I can arrange and meet up with my friends, arrange my own appointments and go alone and go to a shop or restaurant and order on my own.

One man and his voice

Platform - Abstract ID: 167

Mr. Jamie Preece (.), Ms. Emma Sullivan (.)

My Cerebral Palsy affects my speech, most people cannot understand me. My presentation is about how 3 years ago, at the age of 37 I got my first communication device. I will discuss my life “before” - how I managed, how I believed I was not “clever enough” to use one and how having one has literally changed every single aspect of my life.

To start with, I had always believed I was dyslexic and would never be able to read and write like other people. To my amazement - once I started using communication software it became clear I had just never learned to read and write and that was the start of my journey into literacy. I still have a long way to go but I am loving every minute.

I use Grid 3 software, edit all my own grids myself and am now able to help other Grid 3 users remotely and in person. I created an interactive Grid 3 calendar (it took me 3 months) which Smartbox were so impressed with they bought from me and have published it for all users worldwide to enjoy. Naturally I am very proud of this. I sit on the interview board for Barnsley Hospital’s Assistive Technology department which gives me immense satisfaction.

Having the means to communicate has really opened my life up. I am now able to go anywhere independently and to do things I would never have dreamed possible.

The presentation will include photos, plenty of anecdotes and at least a few jokes!

Pathway to Progress: Systematically Grow AAC Skills

Platform - Abstract ID: 60

Ms. Carly Hynes (Sandfield Park School), Ms. Bethany Diener (Tobii Dynavox)

Receipt of augmentative-alternative communication (AAC) is not be the end of the story but the beginning; it starts a path to greater linguistic, operational, social, and strategic independence. Sadly, this is not the case for many augmented communicators who find that they are not challenged to grow and/or that their AAC system remains as it was when they first received it. Professionals and families with limited time may struggle to locate appropriate resources to facilitate growth and may not have the support or confidence to do so independently. With this in mind, a set of free, evidence-based resources have been developed to assist with systematic intervention including goal setting, lessons, and partner training. Centered around addressing all areas of competency (linguistic, operational, social, and strategic) for individuals with varying ability levels from emergent to independent, the resources offer a framework for identifying current ability levels, planning intervention, then carrying it out.

Sandfield Park School conducted a pilot project in which they utilised these resources to address individual students' AAC needs. Qualitative and quantitative data was gathered regarding student progress and engagement as well as staff utilization and satisfaction with resources and impact on planning time.

This session will present the resources used and review the results of Sandfield Park Schools pilot project. Application of these resources in a variety of settings and for a broad range of individuals will be discussed.

Performing Arts with an AAC Device

Platform - Abstract ID: 169

Ms. Madeleine Norman (AAC user)

Introduction

I am an AAC user and have a passion for the performing arts. I am going to share some of the experiences and problems i have had in the performing arts.

Background

i have both a GCSE in drama grade c and a BTEC first diploma in performing arts. I also spent 6 years at the Orpheus centre in surrey which was founded by Richard Stilgoe who wrote the music for starlight express and who used the money to set up the Orpheus trust in 1998. I currently attend song writing course at Papworth trust in Cambridge.

What are the positive points in performing arts as an AAC user?

i can use my own voice without having to be reliant on other people to be my voice which does not convey the true emotion I am feeling as that character. Also the audience can connect with me as a performer in my own right.

What are the negatives about performing using AAC?

If I forget to load the script in time I can get out of sync with the rest of the cast an example of happening was a play about The Fens at The Saxtongate Centre in Huntingdon where I couldn't find the line in time so it was late.

Another problem is because AAC devices have accents you are kind of restricted on what parts you can play for example you can't sound Elizabethan with a AAC device because of the flat emotionless voice device manufacturers provide at present. Maybe this could be a future development.?

If my device is broken or being fixed on the day of the performance it is not fun!

Conclusion

What I have learnt as an performer is to plan ahead but be flexible and adaptable to the situation.

Rapid assessment of functional vision skills for communication and access to AAC

Platform - Abstract ID: 119

Dr. Michael Clarke (University College London), Ms. Laura McLaughlin (University College London), Ms. Gurveen Panesar (University College London), Ms. Rosie Cooper (University College London), Ms. Gaby Aberbach (University College London), Ms. Katie Price (University College London), Dr. Jenefer Sargent (Great Ormond Street Hospital), Mr. Tom Griffiths (Great Ormond Street Hospital), Mrs. Joanne Randeree (Great Ormond Street Hospital), Mrs. Caroline Rose (University College London), Dr. John Swettenham (University College London)

Background

In order to use 'looking' for communication and access to AAC systems, children need effective functional vision skills. These core skills include the ability to fix, disengage, and transfer gaze, and to track moving objects. This skill set develops rapidly in infancy so that by 12 months neuro-typical children can demonstrate these abilities consistently. We know that children with severe motor disability who rely on 'looking' for communication are vulnerable to a range of problems with vision. We know also that when assessments of functional vision skills are carried out by specialist services, professionals working in nurseries and schools can struggle interpret the results and understand their implications for classroom practice.

In this session we will present a new functional vision skills screening tool, designed to be used by professionals who are not vision specialists. The aim of the tool is to identify children who are at risk of functional vision problems.

Method

The screening tool is comprised of a brief parent questionnaire and a short set of behavioural observation scenarios that can be conducted by people who are not vision specialists.

To date, the screening tool has been carried out with 50 children with cerebral palsy affecting their whole body and who have little or no functional speech. We have also carried out full assessments of these children's visual functioning (e.g. visual acuity, ocular-motor function), and language and learning ability.

The robustness of the procedure is being tested via analyses of inter-rater and test retest reliability, and sensitivity and specificity.

Results

Early analysis indicates that the procedure shows excellent levels of reliability and discriminates effectively between children with and without functional vision problems.

Conclusion

This simple procedure has excellent potential to aid professionals who are not vision specialists to identify children at risk of functional vision difficulties.

Rethinking technology design for and with children who have severe speech & physical disabilities

Platform - Abstract ID: 90

Ms. Seray Ibrahim (University College London), Dr. Asimina Vasalou (University College London), Dr. Michael Clarke (University College London)

Communication in its broadest sense enables people and things to ‘connect’. AAC technologies provide one perspective for supporting communication, predominantly focusing on language that is represented orthographically or symbolically. Unfortunately, these technologies are largely under-utilised by children as demonstrated by their ongoing abandonment. This prompts reflection on a number of questions including: (i) what does communication (‘connection’) look like when it involves children with severe physical disabilities, (ii.) what systems of resources come into play in communication involving these children, and (iii) are our assumptions that communication assistive technologies should focus on connection through the modes of words and speech accurate?

In a move towards improving the usability of technologies that are intended for children, the child computer interaction (CCI) community is increasingly developing and evaluating ways of involving children in the design process. Participatory design (PD), often undertaken in CCI, is underpinned by a set of core principles; empathy, mutual learning and empowerment. This approach holds exciting potential for understanding what children themselves value in communication.

The goal of this work is to rethink technology design for advancing communication that is socially situated and embodied. An inductive design-oriented research approach is taken to investigate peer interaction. The approach is guided by a social model of disability for thinking about technology and design processes that examine barriers within the wider context. In the first instance, fieldwork has involved five children aged 6-9 years who engage in aided communication. This presentation will offer a theoretical contribution for understanding communication that is socially constructed and embodied. It will also invite the Communication Matters community to engage in the next stage of this project, fostering a critical dialogue about the design of assistive technologies for advancing communication.

Rice, Rickshaws and Rehab!

Platform - Abstract ID: 66

Mrs. Ruth McMorran (Independent Consultant), Mrs. Vicky Healy (Speech and Language Therapist)

The Christian Medical College (CMC) and Hospital is a private, minority-run educational and research institute that includes a network of primary, secondary and tertiary care hospitals in and around Vellore, in South East India.

Last year two doctors, a speech and language therapist and an occupational therapist from the Physical Medicine Rehabilitation department at CMC presented papers at the 2016 Communication Matters Conference. This February we had the opportunity to spend two weeks working with and delivering training to the large rehabilitation team in Vellore.

In this presentation, we will look at the systems for supporting children and adults with spinal cord injuries and acquired brain injuries at CMC. We will discuss:

- the multi-disciplinary team approach
- the priorities of rehabilitation and the hierarchy of professions
- the importance of working with the whole family
- the use of inside and outside environments
- the value of training the whole team together
- introducing different styles of assessment
- the use of low-tech and high-tech AAC with both adults and children
- inventive problem solving dictated by financial restraints - low-cost and no-cost solutions
- the need for adaptation and modification of resources including attention baskets sourced from the exceedingly busy Ghandi Road, symbols systems with culturally appropriate images

Alongside we will describe some of the sights, the sounds, the smells and the tastes of India including the annual “Rehab Mela”. An innovative solution to providing effective follow-up care to people with spinal cord injuries who have already completed an intensive rehabilitation programme. An amazing weekend of entertainment, sports and social interaction for the “rehab graduates”, their families and the rehab team.

Rub a dub dub, three 'men' in a hub

Platform - Abstract ID: 155

Mr. Josh Mars (Barnsley Assistive Technology Service & Leeds SLT Communication Aid Service), Ms. Nicola Hayton (Sheffield Communication Aid Service), Mr. Simon Judge (Barnsley Assistive Technology Service)

The Barnsley Assistive Technology Team provides the Specialised AAC Service across the Yorkshire and Humber Region. Although the general remits of each of the Specialised AAC Services commissioned in England are shared, their evolutionary paths have differed. The Barnsley AT Specialised AAC Service structure was predicated on the desire to integrate AAC services with specialist knowledge and skills that existed prior to the commissioning of Specialised AAC Services.

Before the commissioning of Specialised AAC Services, there existed a number of pockets of AAC expertise within the Yorkshire and Humber Region. These included the Leeds SLT Communication Aid Service and the Sheffield Communication Aid Service. The business plan submitted to NHS England by Barnsley AT specified the inclusion of these local AAC services through a contracting process, as part of the delivery model. Since the commissioning of Barnsley AT as a Specialised AAC Service, the role of the locally based 'satellite' hubs has developed.

The defining of services and their remits has been an important aspect of this project, as have the experiences of the end users of these services (PWUAAC, families and professionals), including the continuity of care the model delivers. Various terms for services including 'Hub' and 'Spoke' are poorly defined, whilst the definitions 'Specialised' and 'Local' do not necessarily reflect the gradation between services and can be unhelpful in creating and reinforcing a conceptual 'them and us' structure. More nuanced terminology may be helpful.

How the relationship between Barnsley AT and its satellites has supported the delivery of AAC services in the satellite areas, but also influenced the interface with other AAC, general SLT and education services across the region will be explored. Reflections on the challenges and benefits of this way of working for the future delivery of AAC services in Yorkshire and Humber are considered.

Self-managing Long Term Conditions using the Digital Talking Mats

Platform - Abstract ID: 43

Dr. Joan Murphy (Talking Mats Ltd), Ms. Nicki Ewing (Talking Mats Ltd.)

Background

Self-management for people with long term conditions (LTC) is now a key government strategy to encourage people to take responsibility for their own health, behaviour and well-being. Currently the Digital Talking Mats (DTM) is used predominantly by professionals but its intuitive design means that there is great untapped potential for it to be used by individuals with LTCs as a self-management tool both in their own homes and in health and social care settings. Talking Mats received funding from The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland to look how using the DTM can help people with LTCs to manage their health and wellbeing and to recognise their own strengths and abilities.

Methods

We are working with 10 people with learning disability, 10 who have dementia and 10 who have had a stroke. Each participant has been given a personal digital licence and taught how to use the DTM. We asked them to complete six mats at home and then visited them a second time to see how they have managed and again in 6 months.

We designed:

- Accessible information sheets for participants and organisations
- Accessible instructions on how to use the DTM
- Six week evaluation sheet for visits 2 and 3

Results

We will present findings based on the following quantitative and qualitative data:

- How easy it was to use DTM
- How helpful it was to reflect on their self-management
- How many mats they have done
- The topics which they used
- The issues which have been raised by using the DTM
- How easy and useful it has been to record and share their views
- Who they have shared their mats with
- Self-management solutions that have been generated and implemented

Self-representation on social media for young people who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Platform - Abstract ID: 118

Dr. Amanda Hynan (Leeds Beckett University), Prof. Juliet Goldbart (Manchester Metropolitan University), Prof. Janice Murray (Manchester Metropolitan University)

It is well established that using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) has implications for all parties involved within face-to-face conversations. For the person who relies on AAC, there may be considerable challenges for self-representation especially through the use of personal narrative and humour. Discourse can become skewed towards being transactional (discussing concrete needs) rather than interactional (sharing experiences). Technological advances are providing increased opportunities for people who rely on AAC to engage with online social media through Internet access on specialised devices or improved access to mainstream 'Apps'.

This paper will present selected data from a UK-based qualitative research project, that explored the use of social media with 25 young people (aged 14-24) who rely on AAC. The specific data presented will illustrate how the integration of social media into AAC is enriching opportunities to explore self-representation. Discussion will focus on the impact of digital communication within the context of existing psychological and sociological identity theories and consider the potential consequences within offline environments for people who rely on AAC.

Semantic Organization Preferences of AAC Users

Platform - Abstract ID: 141

Ms. Jenna Lyons (University of Dundee), Dr. Alissa Melinger (University of Dundee), Prof. Annalu Waller (University of Dundee)

AAC researchers have highlighted the importance of matching the external organizational layout of an AAC device to the internal organizational layout of a user's mind. But what is the internal organizational layout of the AAC user's mind? Unfortunately, to date the cognition of AAC users has not been fully explored and generalizations from people without language impairments are not justified. The present research uses both quantitative and qualitative data to investigate semantic organizational preferences and link them to experience with AAC devices and/or other symbol-based systems.

We constructed an object-sort test in which participants were free to organize pictured objects according to any rule or requirement they wished. Nine stimulus sets, comprised of 9 images each, were designed to allow sorts by either common categories (things of the same type i.e all vehicles: lorry, fire engine, tractor) or themes (things which occur together i.e the fire service: fireman, fire engine, ladder). After completing the sort task, participants were interviewed about their organizational preferences. Thirty-three undergraduate participants without language impairment took part and we are currently testing adult users of AAC using an augmented structured interview procedure.

We will assess sorting preferences for the two groups of participants. Across participants analysed thus far, we observed variation in organizational preferences, with some participants consistently sorting categorically and others consistently sorting thematically. An on-going thematic analysis of the interview responses is aimed at understanding the sources of this variance. For instance, some responses from the undergraduate sample indicated that experience with symbolic systems (e.g., emojis) influenced their organizational preferences. The variability in responses reinforces the need for individual assessment to allow a match between the external organizational layout of an AAC device and the internal organizational layout of a user's mind.

Service user participation in research processes: rhetoric or reality

Platform - Abstract ID: 69

*Mrs. Liz Moulam (Manchester Metropolitan University), Mr. Stuart Meredith (Manchester Metropolitan University),
Prof. Janice Murray (Manchester Metropolitan University)*

Within the health service there has been a push over recent years for patient and public involvement (PPI) in research. We would like to feel that within 'our' field researchers from health, education, social care and product development have been ahead of this game, with many professionals already work alongside those who need AAC.

The I-ASC project (Identifying appropriate symbol communication aids for children who are non-speaking: clinical decision making) is funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). Automatically the research team included 2 co-researchers, one who uses AAC and a parent of a young woman using AAC. The project is advised by a critical friends group project, this includes a young adult who uses AAC and two parents of young adults. The NIHR expects all projects to include patients, and the I-ASC project was commended from the early stages for all the PPI aspects of the project, especially the breadth and depth of co-researcher involvement.

The presenters will begin with findings from a literature review of general PPI research, share the main challenges for successful involvement of 'health clients'. Then, discuss the I-ASC plan for PPI; from working on the funding bid, designing methodologies, receiving ethics and governance approvals from the NHS and the University, data collection involvement through to dissemination. They will share what has worked and what has created some intense head scratching, and how we might plan in future to avoid these issues.

The contributors include:

Co-Researchers Manchester Metropolitan University: Stuart Meredith and Liz Moulam

Critical Friend: Gregor Gilmour and Angie McCormack

Critical Friend/NIHR Advisory Board Member: Jenny Herd

Chief Investigator Manchester Metropolitan University: Professor Janice Murray

Session Attendees will be asked to reflect on and share their PPI research experiences and discuss novel approaches to overcoming barriers for future UK projects.

Social Media for Engagement: Safe and Enjoyable New Frontiers for People who use AAC

Platform - Abstract ID: 84

Prof. Bronwyn Hemsley (The University of Newcastle)

The Empowerment and Safety of People with Communication Disability in Social Media: Supporting **Persistence**, **Visiblness**, and **Reach** in Online Communities.

Social media technologies are designed to support persistence, visibility, spreadability, and searchability of materials published online. With the right technologies for access, funding, supports and safeguards, people with communication disability could become more persistent in engagement via social media. They could become more visible online even if isolated in real life. They and their families could grow the audience that they want to reach online, and know how to search for and find connections that work for them. This could include employment and social opportunities. In this talk, Bronwyn will explore how people who use AAC are becoming more 'visible' and 'persistent' in social media. Bronwyn will focus on the use of social media as a means to (a) increase awareness, understanding and knowledge of the field of AAC; (b) provide a forum for exchanging information on AAC; and (c) stimulate new ideas in the field of AAC and research to explore new possibilities.

Successful LAMP Implementation at Bridgeway Academy

Platform - Abstract ID: 74

Ms. Lindsey Paden Cargill (Bridgeway Academy, Center For AAC & Autism)

Successful AAC intervention cannot exist in a vacuum. Support must be available and strong from the parents, the administration, teachers, support staff and therapists. The willingness to be a part of a student's AAC use in home, therapies, school and community environments is known as "buy-in." This buy-in is one of the greatest hurdles to an AAC user's success. Bridgeway Academy, an education and therapy center in Columbus, Ohio, is currently supporting around 85 clients using the LAMP program. Bridgeway Academy defines communicative success with the following observations: 1.)increased bids for communication; 2.)autonomous communication; 3.)use in a variety of contexts and with a variety of communication partners; 4.)vocabulary size; 5.)frequency of AAC use throughout the day; and 7.)mean length of utterances.

During the last ten years of Bridgeway Academy's operation the strategies and culture around AAC intervention has gone through a theoretical shift that paved the way for increased success for our clients. These strategies have effected change at the one:one pull-out speech therapy level, classroom level, and at the level of communicating with and training parents and staff.

Through a practiced combination of direct training, immersive language practice, prompting inservices, peer mentors, classroom-based individual and group speech/language therapy sessions, materials development and very strong/skilled intervention strategies by the speech therapists, teachers and therapists at Bridgeway Academy demonstrate increased levels of "buy-in," comfort with teaching and prompting as well as a general acceptance that childrens' AAC devices are functionally an extension of each child's body.

This presentation will be a comprehensive description of the struggles of cultivating a group of successful AAC users as well as therapeutic and training strategies that have been shown to be successful at Bridgeway Academy.

Switch access: the first way forward

Platform - Abstract ID: 157

Mrs. Esther Dakin (Smile Smart Technology Ltd), Mr. Roger Dakin (Smile Smart Technology Ltd)

Switch access is a common access point to AAC devices. The argument is made that methodological approaches proposed in the past by researchers promoting joystick use in powerchairs over switch access should be rejected as an outmoded concept for those with complex needs due to the multidisciplinary and integrated nature of contemporary Assistive Technology

'The Dakin Method' is introduced as an assessment and teaching tool for access assessment and ongoing modification and training. Case studies are used to illustrate the approach which highlights the necessity to work with an interdisciplinary mindset to achieve best access.

Talk given by Esther Dakin, questions welcomed by Roger Dakin.

Testing Times with Technology: Pushing the Boundaries with Exam Access

Platform - Abstract ID: 32

Mrs. Hester Mackay (Kent & Medway Communication and Assistive Technology Service), Mrs. Karen Al Khina (Kent & Medway Communication and Assistive Technology Service)

Through this presentation we will consider how to find the balance between enabling students to access exams through assistive technology (AT) while still ensuring that examining boards can meet the requirements of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). We aim to show that extensive modifications to exam papers are not necessary. We will explore what can be achieved through the adaptation of normal ways of working in three case studies. Case Study 1 is a student in mainstream education with a degenerative condition who is about to take her GCSE's. Her normal way of working is using a mobile phone with an app which turns it to a remote mouse and keyboard to access a computer for written recording. In this case study we will look at what changes were made to her access method to make it acceptable to the exam boards. Case Study 2 is another student in mainstream education who is non-verbal and uses a symbolised communication package accessed through eye-gaze technology. In this case study we will look at the additional resources and training that were put in place to modify her normal way of working with her supporting adults to ensure it would be acceptable in exam conditions. Case Study 3 is a student in a special school whose cognitive ability was vastly underestimated until AAC was put in place. She is now working towards accessing exams in the future. In this example we will look at what AT options are being trialled as her current access method would not be acceptable in exam conditions. Finally, we will draw from our experiences as a Teacher and Occupations Therapist, the key things to consider when looking at exam access and how to support schools with getting alternative ways of working agreed by exam boards.

The Communication Project; increasing staff confidence and student participation at a secondary special school

Platform - Abstract ID: 49

Mrs. Kim Mears (TherapyThread)

In September 2016, a new initiative, called the Communication Project, was piloted at St Ann's secondary special school in London to provide speech and language therapy. The students attending the school have severe learning difficulties with a high number who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). The communication project worked with specific classes initially and with both the students and the staff, as current research suggested that in order to create an effective aided language environment everyone involved in communication needs to be supported. The aims were to increase the knowledge and confidence of staff and for the students to have identified methods of communication and to increase their participation in the school day. Data was collected initially by interviewing staff and videoing the students and then interviews and video were continued to be used through the year. A number of approaches were used including PODD, sensory stories and writing communication profiles as well as individualised training for staff and parents. In order to ensure that the input from speech and language therapy was a contributing factor for the success of the project, the classes were given a therapy break for half a term. The break meant that the class did not get direct input but therapists were available for advice. The break did demonstrate that input was still needed at this early stage and much of the momentum was lost, however it was quickly regained once therapy started again. Early analysis indicates that staff confidence and knowledge has increased and the students are beginning to participate more with increased access to a range of AAC. It has also become apparent that considerable time is needed to establish a new service however the approach of working with both staff and students appears to confirm positive findings from previous studies.

The cost-effectiveness of Boardmakeronline as a remote therapy package

Platform - Abstract ID: 121

Ms. Ruth Bettany (St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust)

Remote therapy is often provided to clients where the therapist is at a geographic distance from the patient or to promote self-learning and generalisation of skills. Online remote therapy packages allow SLTs to prescribe a distinct set of activities to meet a clinical target and measure performance over a network rather than relying on self-reporting. Boardmakeronline is a new product which allows remote therapy as an option alongside other functions of symbol making software such as print-and-use symbols.

Boardmakeronline has been trialled in Paddock School, a London special school, to augment existing therapies such as Colourful Semantics, Talking Mats and familiar language tasks. We found it to be motivating to students to use on whole class Smartboards.

As an NHS service we are under pressure to deliver more outcomes at ever decreasing costs. This session aims to discuss the cost effectiveness of using the Boardmakeronline package as a remote therapy option. This project aims to establish whether:

- There is an increase in take up of therapy activities within school in comparison to paper based resources.
- There is an increase in take up of therapy activities at home in comparison to traditional resources.
- The relative cost of providing Boardmakeronline as a remote therapy package in comparison to a staffing cost.

We will also discuss staff, student and parental attitude towards remote therapy.

The effectiveness of varying level of augmented input on the receptive language of children who require AAC

Platform - Abstract ID: 102

Prof. Shakila Dada (Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication, University of Pretoria), Prof. Ralf Schlosser (Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, Northeastern University, Boston, MA; and Department of Otolaryngology and Communication Enhancement, Boston Children's Hospital, Waltham, MA, U.S.A.)

Introduction: Input-output asymmetry is a contributing factor to the unique language learning environment as children who require AAC are exposed to a spoken language environment but must develop an expressive language system in a different modality (Light, 1997; Smith, 2015; Sutton, Soto & Blockberger, 2002). Augmented input aims to address the symmetry between language input and output for persons using AAC. Although several authors have presented strategies that use AAC to enhance input and comprehension of the messages presented to the person who requires AAC (e.g. Drager et al., 2006; Goosens', 1989; Dada & Alant, 2009; Romski & Sevcik, 1996), the dosage or amount of augmented input has received less consideration (Dada & Alant, 2009a; Romski & Sevcik, 1993; Schlosser et al., 2013; Sevcik, 2006). The aim of this study is therefore to determine the effect of varying levels of augmented input on the receptive language of children with LNFS.

Design: Within-subjects design with 12 children who require AAC was used to examine the effectiveness of three different levels of augmented input conditions (i.e., 20%, 40% and 80% respectively). The augmented input was provided using a Go Talk™ with Picture Communication Symbols. The dependent measures were i) understanding of directives that involve prepositions (Schlosser et al., 2013), and ii) action-agent and attribute-entity combinations (Tönsing, Dada, Alant, 2014).

Results: The results of the study will be discussed in terms of group-level data as well as individual participant data followed by a discussion of the appropriate inputs for children that require AAC. Limitations of the study will be highlighted.

The ties that bind us: Preparing to let go

Platform - Abstract ID: 107

Mrs. Liz Moulam (Parent)

My dream has always been for my daughter to fulfil her potential, to be happy, healthy and succeed in life. Before Beth was born I hadn't thought further than having a child who would go to the village school. This session will share my parental challenges in getting to grips with helping my daughter blossom and fly.

As a young adult Beth lives independently and has achieved many things, but even now we are realising there is much to do planning for the future, especially when her Dad and I are no longer there to support from a distance. We had coasted along until she was 6 or 7 when suddenly I stopped understanding her dysarthric speech so easily. Often, what she wanted to say was random, no longer in context, I became aware that she was not intelligible to others. At that time I'd recently stopped working so I put my energies into Beth's future (probably making myself quite unpopular with Beth's teaching staff and her therapy team).

My agenda became building for the future: the right equipment, being a good functional communicator, suitable vocabulary, appropriate academic support, developing social networks, getting experiences similar to her peers, transition(s) to/from school and beyond. Over the years Beth and I have laughed and cried together, and separately. We've had our share of ups and downs; I've withdrawn too quickly, and for too long, causing issues, I've been there too much at times, 'others' have tried to steer our agenda. It's a tricky balancing act requiring us both to dig deep, for me blending the role of parent with being mentor, friend, personal assistant and more. Preparing for independence is not just about Beth fulfilling her dreams, but being ready, willing and able to do it, a challenge we have embraced together.

The Use of Data Analysis Software to Assess the Skills of Children Who Use High-Tech Eye Gaze Systems

Platform - Abstract ID: 80

Ms. Emma Bowers (ATtherapy), Ms. Andrea McGuinness (ATtherapy)

For those who use high-tech eye gaze systems, there are often only subjective and anecdotal means of assessment to identify their progress and skills. Although qualitative data is necessary to inform target setting and reviews, this can mean that professionals can misinterpret results at times, and set competencies too high or too low. Consequently, there is a desperate need for a means of data analysis that provides quantitative results, and clear evidence of the individual's skills and progress made using high-tech eye gaze systems.

This project aims:

1. To assess the impact of two pieces of data analysis software on clinical decision making:
 - i. Tobii Dynavox's Gaze Viewer software,
 - ii. Inclusive Technology's Insight software.

This project involved working with 15 case studies. The subjects are children all aged between 5;00 and 15;00. These children use a range of eye gaze systems including the Tobii I12 Communication Aid or a tablet with a Tobii PCEye Mini or My Gaze 2 camera.

The presentation will discuss the differences between the two pieces of software. Both pieces of software provide quantitative assessment of an individual's skills when using eye gaze systems, but are very different. The results continue to require clinical interpretation, but offer analysis and objective tracking of skills. In addition to this the software has also demonstrated to professionals and families evidence of a users' skills. The case studies will be used to illustrate implications on clinical practice such as inform baseline assessments, formulate progress reports, contribute to target setting and tracking, offer valid information regarding users' abilities when this is questioned, identify visual skills when using eye gaze systems and track areas that require further therapeutic intervention.

The Voice Banking at Diagnosis pilot project

Platform - Abstract ID: 176

Mr. Richard Cave (Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability)

More than 80% of people with motor neurone disease (pwmND) will develop communication issues during their illness. Voice banking is becoming a popular way for people to communicate using their own synthetic voice when their natural voice has degraded.

Anecdotally, there appears to be an uneven level of knowledge of the benefits, challenges and practical considerations for voice banking amongst health and social care professionals, as well as pwmND and their carers/families.

Often by the time pwmND are referred to their SLT it can be too late for them to voice bank (a good quality voice is required).

At a recent MND Association Event, 60% of feedback responders indicated they attended to learn about voice banking. At the London AAC CEN (May 2016), of the SLTs who indicated their clients may be considered for voice banking, around a third felt confident working through the process.

The Voice Banking at Diagnosis pilot project aims to provide accessible information about Voice banking for professionals and pwmND – the goal is to support informed decision-making and timely completion of the process if the pwmND wants to go ahead.

Within the pilot areas, voice banking support workers will be trained to help pwmND to complete the banking process or to support local SLTs, and equipment may be provided. The service will be available to pwmND in partnership with SLTs and other relevant healthcare professionals, or where an SLT is unavailable.

This pilot is part of a wider two year project also looking at other elements of assistive technology and MND. The overall project is funded by the MND Association and will be based at the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability. It is hoped that if successful, voice banking at diagnosis, and other elements of the overall project, may be rolled out further across the UK.

Therapy Outcome Measures: National working party feedback

Platform - Abstract ID: 135

Ms. Vicky Styles (Bristol Communication Aid Service)

It is well documented that Outcome Measures (OM) should be an integral principle of clinical practise and there is increasing momentum in Health services to routinely collate clinical effectiveness data alongside the traditional quantitative data such as referral to treatment time data.

Outcome data has an important role to play in:

- Monitoring change in service users following interventions
- Practitioners and services managers reviewing interventions
- Informing commissioners of the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the services they fund

All three levels are crucial if services are to develop and remain sustainable.

Since AAC assessment service were nationally commissioned in 2014, each centre has been required to report Minimal Data Set (MDS) figures to commissioners (NHS England) but to date there has been no national requirement to report back on quality indicators such as OM.

Following on from the work completed by the CM Outcome Measures working party in 2012, a group of AAC practitioners from 10 AAC assessment services in England have come together to address how OM should be used nationally.

This session will present:

- The purpose for the national working party being established and the aims of the group
- The background and clinical rational for selecting the Therapy Outcomes Measures (TOMS) tool
- An overview of the AAC Scale and how the working party have adapted this to meet the needs of a specialised AAC assessment service
- How the specialised assessment services are embedding the collation of TOMS data into their clinical practice
- An overview of the data/reports that are being generated
- The development of an additional domain focussing on the role that support has on the effectiveness of AAC interventions
- How the working party have collaborated with the RCSLT OM project
- The working parties vision for how TOMs could be embedded into everyday clinical practise for all AAC practitioners

TOMS, Goals and Competencies: Clinical Decision-Making for Clients Attending an AAC Specialist Service

Platform - Abstract ID: 150

Mr. Tom Griffiths (Great Ormond Street Hospital), Ms. Kim Bates (Great Ormond Street Hospital), Ms. Katrina Macleod (Great Ormond Street Hospital), Ms. Anne Addison (Great Ormond Street Hospital), Ms. Leila Nicol (Great Ormond Street Hospital)

For professionals working in AAC, the use of outcome measures to track progress towards goals can be a vital part of clinical decision making. Robust outcome measurement can help ensure that intervention and support is appropriately provided at both an individual and service level. Equally, the setting and evaluating of appropriate, individualised goals facilitates the identification of appropriate AAC techniques and systems, allowing all stakeholders to make changes and adjustments to work towards the best possible outcomes.

This paper will present a case series of patients seen in the Augmentative Communication Service (ACS) at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH). All children (n=50) in the study were given loans of high-tech AAC systems and were set goals for the duration of these loans. The goals were categorised according to Janice Light's (1989, 2014) framework of communicative competencies and were evaluated at the end of the loan period at a multi-stakeholder meeting with the child, family, local professionals and members of the ACS team and goals were ranked according to level of achievement. An outcome measure - Therapy Outcome Measures (TOMS, Enderby et al, 2006) - was used to measure children's participation. Decisions for intervention were made as a result of these discussions.

The paper will present an analysis of the data generated from this group and provide insight into how the use of these goals and outcome measures guided the decision-making process for all those involved in the AAC assessment. The relationship between the achievement of goals and the decision to provide or make changes to the AAC system will be discussed. We will explain the assessment process, the evaluation and discuss how the use of this system and the data generated has guided the development of clinical pathways within a specialist service.

Using Data Visualization to Support Bilingual AAC Use

Platform - Abstract ID: 152

Mr. Russell Cross (Prentke Romich), Mr. Paul Andres (Prentke Romich Deutschland GmbH)

Some AAC devices can collect client-generated language and using such data can help inform decisions about intervention. The authors have developed an online tool that can turn the raw numerical data from some devices and apps into more intuitive graphic representations. The system was initially designed to analyze English but has been extended to work with German, and a Spanish version is in development. In this presentation, the authors will briefly present the underpinnings of the online analysis tool and demonstrate how it can be used by parents and professionals to work closely on developing and tracking intervention plans in different languages. The primary focus will be on how to create and upload target vocabulary lists, and how to compare these with actual language used by individuals whose data is being logged.

Using optical, physiological, and neurological sciences for troubleshooting eye tracking technology

Platform - Abstract ID: 68

Mr. Marc Viera (The Children's Trust)

For clients with complex neurological presentations, eye tracking technology can be a promising AAC access method. However, sales representatives' knowledge of optics and eye function tends to be enough to sell devices but generally falls short in articulating clinically reasoned strategies for challenging cases. For example, over the past ten years, I have never once heard a sales rep discuss the involuntary aspects of eye movements and its implications. As my employer is a charity that neither benefits nor suffers from the long-term sales performance of eye-tracking technology, the aim of this presentation is not to sell a product. Instead, this presentation aims to show through case examples how to use track status, calibration data, and hardware/software performance to make clinically reasoned adaptations based in optical, physiological, and neurological sciences to increase a client's likelihood of success using an eye tracking access method.

My background in engineering and in occupational therapy allows me a unique perspective of the interaction between the client's perceptions and experiences, the physiology and neurology around eye function, geometrical optics, eye tracking camera properties, and how the tracking software works. My experience of working with numerous difficult to setup/calibrate clients and multiple eye-tracking systems has given me the opportunity to hone a pathway that discriminates between machine malfunctions, track status issues, calibration issues, and layout issues, providing potential solutions for troubleshooting each of these issues.

This presentation highlights clinical reasoning for situations such as missing, jumping, flickering, and intermittent track status; variability in calibrating; and variability in target accuracy for the whole or part of a selection set, whether consistent or variable over time.

While this proposed pathway does not always result in successful eye tracking use, it does provide a clinically reasoned progression for clinicians to use in troubleshooting complex clients.

Vocabulary development in school-age augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) users

Platform - Abstract ID: 77

Ms. Lindsey Paden Cargill (Bridgeway Academy, Center For AAC & Autism)

A gap exists in the literature regarding practice guidelines for enhancing the language-learning environments of children who use SGDs. It is logical to suggest that children who utilize AAC would benefit from a linguistically-saturated environment with similar opportunities for their own motor planning and language development. The goal of this research is to determine whether an immersive speech-generating classroom would be more supportive of language development in AAC users with ASD than traditional treatment.

Participants attend an education center for children with autism and were in kindergarten and first grade and use AAC devices with the Words for Life (WFL) Language Program. Four aspects of language development were assessed: number of different words, parts of speech and frequency and duration of device use. Data were analyzed using Realize Language Software. Participants' language development were tracked/analyzed eight weeks prior to initiation of the treatment, eight weeks during treatment, and eight weeks post-treatment. Pre-treatment data will help determine students' current language abilities acquisition and frequency of SGD use. Treatment data comparison will determine whether the immersive classroom improved language learning and frequency of device use. Post-treatment data collection comparison determine whether improved rates of language learning and increased frequency of device use, continue post-treatment. The treatment group of 8 children with ASD, assigned to an immersive speech-generating classroom was co-taught by three speech-language pathologists and a special educator using the WFL software projected onto an interactive board. This enabled teachers to model and prompt language in a modality accessible to all students, allowing children to be exposed to models identical to their own mode of communication. The lessons focused on "the development and generalization of vocabulary and grammar across instructional, play-based and social contexts." The treatment group will be compared to a control who will receive classroom and therapy instruction as usual.

We'll meet again (at C.M.)!

Platform - Abstract ID: 113

Ms. Helen Quiller (AAC User/Trainer), Ms. Helen Dunman (Chailey Heritage Foundation)

Our story starts 30 years ago at a Scope school in Tonbridge. Helen Quiller was a young teenage student and I was a 21 year old fresh out of university, working at the school on the carestaff. After 2 years I decided to train as a special needs teacher. When I left I was given a beautiful painting that Helen had done with a switch operated airgun. The picture hangs in my home and I had often wondered what Helen and her friends were up to now. Fast forward to CM 2016 when I was thrilled to see Helens name on the programme and to meet up with her again. Having known her as a teenager it was wonderful to hear her presentation about her full life and communication journey over the years. I invited Helen to come down to Chailey Heritage to present a days workshop about her life to our older students (all but 1 are AAC users). We would like to share how we prepared for the workshop , how the students benefited from it, what the unexpected results were and our thoughts about extending this work in the future.

What does AAC mean to you?: An analysis of the meaning, value, and purpose of AAC to users and stakeholders.

Platform - Abstract ID: 59

Ms. Denise Abraham (Trinity College Dublin), Dr. Martine Smith (Trinity College Dublin)

Communication is often acknowledged as a basic human right. AAC allows those with complex communication needs access to communication and connection that would otherwise be impossible. However, although AAC has potential to have a transformative effect, this appears to happen in a minority of cases only. There remains significant work to be done in understanding and advancing the usefulness of AAC, so that it can have a greater impact for more people.

This research aims to discover the meaning, value, and purpose of AAC for users and key stakeholders. If this is ascertained, the team will be better placed to support AAC. Being aware of competing priorities between different stakeholder groups is a step in working towards unified implementation of AAC. This information can contribute to increased quality of service provision, aiming to bridge gaps where AAC is currently lacking in fulfilling its potential.

An online survey was used to collect data from people who use AAC, family members, health and education professionals. Thematic networks analysis was used to ascertain Global, Organising and Basic Themes which emerged from the data.

The findings indicate that for AAC to be successful, there are numerous factors related to the user, the system, and essential support that must be acknowledged. If these elements are addressed, AAC gives users the potential for self-fulfilment and autonomy, with access to opportunities that others take for granted.

The meaning and value of AAC is unique to each individual, although there are commonalities between people and stakeholder groups, as well as some key differences, which are further explored, as are clinical implications. The data indicate that AAC means communication, power, hope, and a voice, and is an essential right. Although it can be frustrating and challenging, it is worth the time and effort to bring freedom, connection, and self-fulfilment.

What does the literature tell us about the language and communication characteristics of communication aids?

Platform - Abstract ID: 117

Mr. Simon Judge (Barnsley Assistive Technology Service), Ms. Nicky Randall (Barnsley Assistive Technology Service), Dr. Yvonne Lynch (Manchester Metropolitan University), Mr. Stuart Meredith (Manchester Metropolitan University), Mrs. Liz Moulam (Manchester Metropolitan University), Prof. Janice Murray (Manchester Metropolitan University), Prof. Juliet Goldbart (Manchester Metropolitan University)

The work presented in this paper is part of the I-ASC research project: “Identifying appropriate symbol communication aids for children who are non-speaking - enhancing clinical decision-making”. I-ASC aims to improve decisions about the choice of symbol communication aids. A number of methods are being used to help meet this aim, including systematic reviews, qualitative investigations and discrete choice experiments.

This paper will present the findings from the second of three linked systematic reviews. The question for this review was: “what evidence exists to inform clinical decision making in relation to the language or communication attributes of graphic symbol based AAC systems?”

54,673 papers were identified by searching a wide range of literature using broad search terms related to the various synonyms for ‘Communication Aid’ and also ‘features’. The title and abstracts of these papers were initially reviewed to exclude those papers that were not related to AAC. The title and abstract of the remaining 1899 papers were then reviewed followed by a full text review of the remaining 502 papers. Quality appraisal of the remaining included papers was carried out using the Crowe Critical Appraisal Tool. Finally, a data extraction table was designed and used to extract the key findings of the included papers.

Despite the high return rate from the initial database searches, there are less than 15 included studies investigating the attributes of symbol communication aids. No studies were included where the primary objective of the study was to investigate a specific device attribute and no studies were included of symbol vocabularies/language packages that are observed as being currently used in practice.

This presentation will provide an initial summary of the findings of the review – providing an overview of what the literature tells us about the language and communication characteristics of communication aids.

‘The 13th Task of Hercules’ – Evaluating and choosing a symbol vocabulary.

Platform - Abstract ID: 131

Mrs. Helen Robinson (Barnsley Assistive Technology Service), Mrs. Andrea Kirton (Barnsley Assistive Technology Service)

The Barnsley Assistive Technology Team provides the Specialised AAC Service across the Yorkshire and Humber region. Many of our service users are non-literate and therefore require a symbol vocabulary or language system for their AAC system. The AAC market is saturated with varying symbol vocabularies from a range of suppliers and across a range of platforms. In order to find a useable clinical solution, it often requires a high level of skill to modify and sometimes rectify issues with the original product.

Our experience has shown that preferences for symbol vocabularies and language systems varies greatly from team to team across the region, and nationally. As our team developed, clinicians brought with them a wealth of experience and knowledge of different vocabularies, and through team discussions, the frustrations with often having to settle for a “not quite right” system became apparent. The variation in preferences and clinical rationales interested us. We felt it was important to explore and develop the team’s decision making processes in order to provide consistent advice and recommendations whilst still recognising the individuality of each client and setting. We set out to evaluate a range of symbol vocabularies with the aim of developing sound clinical reasoning for why we would recommend a specific vocabulary for any given client, and equally importantly why we wouldn’t choose a symbol vocabulary.

Vocabularies are often tied into software, hardware, an implementation approach or a specific company ethos. These factors all add to the number of variables, making a direct cross comparison impossible.

The project used evidence searches, feature comparison, clinician and user opinion and task analysis to gather information for evaluation. We will discuss the challenges of this task, describe the process we used to explore our questions and share the evaluation template we have developed.

POSTER

A person-centred approach to health planning

Poster - Abstract ID: 70

Mrs. Nikky Steiner (Assistive Communication Service Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust), Dr. Joan Murphy (Talking Mats Ltd)

In 2016/17 The Assistive Communication Service (ACS) developed a CQUIN to evaluate the application and impact of using a Talking Mats framework to support a person centred and inclusive approach to health planning and intervention.

This project recognised that concepts such as 'person centred' and 'inclusive' can be challenging to implement, measure and evaluate.

In conjunction with Talking Mats a project was designed to address this;

Project design;

1. 83 participants attended a two day course and were provided with Talking Mats resources to use in their practice (both the original and digital versions). Participants applied from different sectors; health, education and social care.
2. 3 accredited trainers were trained to develop sustainability of the approach across CLCH NHS trust. The new trainers will build staff skills and training on an on-going basis and provide local leadership and expertise.

The project was evaluated using the Kirkpatrick model of evaluation;

1. Participants' reaction to the training,
2. Participants' learning – Did they increase their knowledge skills and learning?
3. Behaviour – Did they apply their learning to the workplace?
4. Result – this was based on the impact that using the Talking Mats skills and resources had on the lives of people with communication disability

This presentation describes the very positive outcomes of the Talking Mats framework at different levels; client, staff and service.

AAC in the Curriculum – Supporting Working Memory.

Poster - Abstract ID: 99

Ms. Marion Stanton (CANDLE LIMITED), Ms. Saffron Murphy-Mann (CANDLE LIMITED), Ms. Daniela Balazova (CANDLE LIMITED)

Working memory is the thinking sketch pad on which we store information for a brief time while we work on another part of the problem in hand (Baddeley 2007). There is evidence that difficulties with working memory is widespread amongst students who have communication and movement difficulty (Jiali et al 2012). There is a danger of assuming that this indicates learning difficulty but car owners looking back to the experience of learning to drive will tell you that there was no way that they could think about anything other than the actual task of depressing the clutch and synchronising this with the gear stick before applying just the right amount of pressure on the accelerator. If you have a movement difficulty as well as the need to use a third-party device to communicate and to record your work your thinking sketch pad is compromised. The resultant difficulties with what might be considered simple tasks may lead teachers to simplify tasks to an earlier learning level. Learning occurs in the ‘zone of proximal development’. This is the space between a student’s current ability and what they can achieve with help (McLeod, S. A. 2014). If we misconstrue the student’s ‘zone’ and lower our expectations we run the risk of working within the sphere of the student’s existing knowledge where no new learning can take place.

This presentation will be suggesting ways in which the curriculum can remain challenging and age appropriate for the student who relies on AAC by breaking down the tasks horizontally rather than lowering the age or stage. It will also consider the way in which learning materials are presented so that the compromising of working memory is minimized.

AAC Tips to Grow Language

Poster - Abstract ID: 12

Ms. Jane Odom (PRC)

It is accepted that students who rely on AAC often have less advanced expressive vocabulary and language structures than that of their typically developing peers. Upon entering school, children who use AAC are still typically learning how to talk instead of talking to learn. Given this, communication partners across contexts need to help individuals who use AAC acquire language. This presentation focuses on what a family member, teacher or therapist can do to help an individual learn words; learn how to put words together; and increase sentence length using an augmentative/alternative communication device. It assumes that the communication partner is working with someone who uses an AAC system that is primarily word-based and gives access to adult forms of grammar.

It is good to think about the context of intervention (or where it is taking place), the individual who uses the system, the AAC system itself and then the communication partner. All of these elements interact with each other. The fourth element will be the communication partner, rather than the context, communication device or attributes of the individual who uses AAC.

The following tips to help someone grow language will be reviewed: learning the AAC system, modeling, choosing vocabulary targets, accepting all communication, responding to happy accidents, slowing down and waiting, commenting, asking open-ended questions as well as taking a person-centered approach.

Participants will learn the benefits of knowing someone's AAC system and how to model vocabulary and language. In addition, they will learn what types of words to focus on and how to comment and ask questions to promote language growth, rather than stagnation. A discussion around accepting and responding to all communication will address teaching other ways to achieve the same end. The presentation will end with the elements of taking a person-centered approach.

Bringing Language to Selma: Data Visualisation and Language Development

Poster - Abstract ID: 154

Mr. Paul Andres (Prentke Romich Deutschland)

How does an 11 year-old girl with a Minspeak system use language and how does she learn to communicate? Since her first experiences with simple-tech Selma's rate of learning has varied over the last eight years. She now communicates independently. She uses the German Minspeak vocabulary Quasselkiste 60 on an Accent 1400 with eye-tracking.

We recognize progress in individual users, but exactly how that progress came about is often harder to pin down. To help answer this question and to provide effective, real-time data for Selma's intervention planning, automatic data-logging on the Accent device was activated. The resulting stream of information was regularly analysed using the Realize-Language website and provided valuable insights for the intervention team and generated a series of interesting questions about how AAC users develop language skills.

The results were in turn automatically fed back Selmas device to provide a variety of daily "micro-lessons" which were created in direct response to the insights gained from the data analysis.

In this presentation we will examine and discuss the resulting insights into Selma's language learning development over the course of several months.

Determining Capacity for people with communication difficulties

Poster - Abstract ID: 42

Dr. Joan Murphy (Talking Mats Ltd), Ms. Nicki Ewing (Talking Mats Ltd.)

Too often people with communication difficulties are judged to not be capable of making decisions for themselves. This presentation will include the following:

1. What is meant by mental capacity?

Every adult has the right to make decisions unless proved otherwise and each individual has a different capacity to make decisions about different aspects of their life. In the UK the key Acts of Parliament are the Mental Capacity Act (2005) England and Wales and the Adults with Incapacity Scotland Act (2000). The UK Acts specifically focus on mental capacity and state that we must assume that someone has capacity unless it is established that the person has substantial difficulty in one or more of the criteria:

- Understanding relevant information
- Retaining information
- Weighing up the information
- Communicating views

2. How can Talking Mats help decision making and determining capacity?

Talking Mats supports these four criteria by allowing people to consider options and then make their decision. We have found that many people who would otherwise be judged not to have capacity can show that they can indeed understand and express their views so that they can be acted upon. Equally if someone cannot use Talking Mats this may be an indication that they do not have capacity for that particular decision.

3. Examples of how Talking Mats has been used in determining Capacity.

We have received several examples from practitioners of how Talking Mats has been used to help support capacity decisions. These will be used to illustrate the presentation.

4. Discussion of how others support decision making in a capacity context?

We will conclude with a discussion of how participants support decision making in other ways and will encourage people to share their experiences.

Developing a novel system to support language acquisition in children with CCN: An ethnographic study

Poster - Abstract ID: 106

Mr. Christopher Norrie (University of Dundee), Prof. Annalu Waller (University of Dundee)

Communication aids designed for use by young children are typically based on a word phrase retrieval system using a grid-based symbol access paradigm. What has become clear, however, is that such system interfaces have significant usability shortfalls for this particular user group; and that as such we may be failing these emergent communicators by hindering their capacity to acquire vocabulary during a critical developmental phase, and to their lifelong detriment.

This project is researching new ways in which we might support children with CCN more effectively in acquiring vocabulary and developing literacy skills using high-tech assistive technologies. To do so, a preliminary explorative ethnographic study is being undertaken to collect and analyse data on the means and efficacy of current practices in a participating school, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the domain and to establish control measurements for comparison during subsequent engineering and research phases. Over the course of a number of weeks, and using a mix of participant observation, field notes, and audio-recorded interviews with staff, the principal investigator will observe children and staff during the course of their day - thereby establishing a context within which the later phases of the project will operate, and building a rich understanding of current policies and practices as they relate to vocabulary acquisition. This will lay the foundation upon which it is hoped an innovative high-tech AAC “intervention” may be engineered.

Filling the gaps: Supporting AAC spoke services through provision of AAC equipment and training

Poster - Abstract ID: 79

Ms. Maria Touliatou (KM CAT Service), Mrs. Fiona Panthi (KM CAT Service), Mr. Martin Henderson (KM CAT Service)

The Kent and Medway Communication and Assistive Technology (KM CAT) Adult Hub Team provides a range of services. These include assessment and provision of Alternative and Augmentative Communication Aids (AAC). NHS England proposes an AAC joint working intervention model between hub and spoke (local therapists) teams. Through discussions with spoke teams it was identified that the spoke services were not adequately equipped with appropriate AAC assessment tools and resources to carry out their initial assessments with their clients.

In 2016, the KM CAT service provided 5 AAC cluster boxes to include AAC equipment and resources, along with face to face training to the spoke teams across Kent. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of this intervention a KM CAT audit will be carried out twice a year. Currently, the available data confirms that the AAC equipment provided is being used by the spoke teams and they are developing the relevant AAC skills through use of the equipment and resources.

From resistance to resilience: The impact of a VERP course on staff and pupils in a school for children with PMLD and complex medical needs.

Poster - Abstract ID: 181

Ms. Paula Marten (Chailey Heritage Foundation)

Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) is a strength based, usually group approach using video to enhance a professional's reflective practice, working towards goals the professional has set for themselves. Its values, beliefs and principles are the same as Video Interaction Guidance. It was chosen as a method to use in an independent special school for children with Profound and Multiple Learning difficulties, many of whom have complex medical needs, as a way of enhancing lesson observations and providing continuing professional development. Five teachers attended an initial training day, followed by three group supervisions and a final celebration afternoon. All teachers set their own goals relating to their interactions with pupils or colleagues. Qualitative data from short interviews at the end of the course and quantitative pre and post data demonstrate a positive impact of the VERP course on factors that contribute to feelings of work satisfaction as well as on professional development goals identified at the start. Ideas for future development are highlighted.

How SLTs use AAC to encourage functional communication with minimally verbal children with ASD: A Survey

Poster - Abstract ID: 86

Dr. Hilary Gardner (University of Sheffield), Mrs. Susan Brown (University of Sheffield)

This paper will present the findings of a survey of SLTs working in the field of ASD, which took place in early 2016. Professionals have been challenged to reassess how minimally verbal children with ASD are supported to communicate functionally and to look at success stories retrospectively, in order to determine why some children or systems have had significantly more success than others (Mirenda, 2008). Traditionally research has focused on what is possible with AAC & less on what is achieved in current practice. Therefore this study aimed to investigate how SLTs evaluate the need for and then implement AAC in the UK. It also aimed to document the range of AAC systems being used with the ASD population and with what level of perceived success.

The survey was undertaken in UK and the findings of thirty-nine SLTs are included (6 others being excluded due to lack of appropriate signed consent). Each therapist completed a short online questionnaire, designed to investigate current AAC service provision. All participants had worked or were working with at least one child with ASD, who had required an AAC system for implementation. Surveys were emailed to prospective participants via nine Clinical Excellence Networks across UK, with either an ASD or AAC focus. Participants mostly worked for the National Health Service (NHS) (62%), but also worked for state and private schools (18%), private practices (5%), local authorities, charities and other organisations. Results were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The SLTs' views and feelings on the supports and barriers to AAC service delivery for the ASD population were also explored. On average SLTs were using four to five different AAC systems with their ASD population. Certain systems were used almost universally. In addition it was found that knowledge of support organisations in the AAC arena was patchy.

Investigating the assessment procedures for children with Complex Communication Needs: The Participation Model

Poster - Abstract ID: 116

Dr. Elena Theodorou (Cyprus University of Technology), Dr. Eliada Pampoulou (Cyprus University of Technology), Mrs. Nikoleta Sampson (Cyprus University of Technology)

Research has shown the positive effects of using augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) interventions for enhancing communication of individuals with Complex Communication Needs (CCN). The relationship between assessment and intervention has been investigated and it has been found that comprehensive AAC assessment is of a great importance for successful AAC services and hence, this initial step of clinical procedure cannot be underestimated. A comprehensive AAC assessment covers elements such as language and communication, symbolic understanding, and the appropriate assistive technology. Previous research by the authors (in press) has shown that the AAC assessment process by Cypriot speech and language therapists is neither comprehensive nor systematic. In order to explore this issue in more in-depth, a questionnaire with open-ended questions was developed. The questions were based on the Participation Model (Baukelman and Mirenda, 2005) focusing on the participation patterns, the barriers to participation in communication situations and the effectiveness of existing strategies for enhancing participation. In this presentation, the focus is on the findings from the pilot study, for which six speech and language therapists completed the questionnaire. The findings show that speech and language therapists do not follow a systematic way of assessing the needs of children with CCN. Rather, the assessment procedure is driven by their own clinical judgment, and their decisions are not followed Evidence Based Practice. Assessment includes a number of areas such as language, communication and social skills, whereas the assessment of assistive technology is conducted by colleagues specialising in the specific field. In addition to the evaluation of the individual's needs and skills, they also assess his/her preferences, usually through observations of that person's behaviour. Finally, the participants expressed their understanding that for a successful AAC intervention, family and community support is of paramount importance.

Mothers and sibling interactions and children with communication disabilities.

Poster - Abstract ID: 34

Ms. Marica Gatt (Tizard Centre, University of Kent), Dr. Nicola Grove (University of Kent), Dr. Jill Bradshaw (Tizard Centre, University of Kent)

Aim: Mothers and siblings are important communication partners within the family support system. However, little is known about the inter-relationships between mother-siblings, sibling interactions and the effects of one dyad on the other during joint activities in families of children with communication disabilities. This current study addresses the social interactions of mothers, siblings and children with communication disabilities as well as the level of responsivity between mother-child, sibling-child and mother-sibling and child dyads and triads.

Method: This pilot study involved observations of 3 mothers, siblings and children with communication disabilities in various home activities. Data collection was undertaken using interviews and video recordings of mother-child, sibling-child, mother-sibling and mother-sibling-child interactions across home based activities. This was complemented by structured interviews, questionnaires and field notes. Observations involved ten minute video recordings of prescribed activities which were analysed for pre-identified behaviours. Data analysis was based on the principles of attunement in conjunction with a behaviour responsivity scale.

Results: Mother presented with a lot of directives and higher physical and verbal prompts especially when children are physically challenged. The children with communication disabilities presented with high level of dependency on their mothers. Siblings seem to mimic their mothers in the manner they respond and interact with their disabled siblings. Aided AAC systems were rarely used during these interactions. There were instances where the AAC system was used specifically within an educational context rather than to elicit function communication within naturalistic social interactions. In most of the conversations, mothers prompted their child to name objects turning the interaction into an instructional activity, rather than involve them in functional communicative interactions.

Conclusion: It is evident that siblings tend to establish more caregiving roles and imitate their mothers in their directive styles with higher level of engagement. Implications for further research are discussed.

Promoting Literacy for the Symbol-based Augmented Communicator

Poster - Abstract ID: 26

Ms. Bethany Diener (Tobii Dynavox)

Historically, individuals using augmentative-alternative communication (AAC) have struggled with developing literacy skills beyond what has been termed functional. Though the definition of functional literacy is not fixed, it often includes skills such as knowing the alphabet, comprehending community signs and being able to read names of important people and places as well as some common words. Those who began using picture symbols to represent language often remain what we might call symbol-based communicators with limited ability to express themselves using text-based tools. Many factors contribute to this, but those of us supporting these individuals must remind ourselves that literacy skills are key to full participation in the world; literacy helps us to develop academic skills but it is also a means of growing relationally, creatively, economically, and emotionally. How then do we promote literacy for symbol-based communicators? It is this question that we will aim to answer in this session. We will address myths and challenges regarding promoting literacy for the symbol-based augmented communicator with evidence regarding the importance of literacy for every individual and the ability of symbol-based augmented communicators to gain these skills. An approach to promote literacy will be suggested based on the relationship between communication and literacy development as drawn from evidence related to typical development and specific to augmented communicators. It is fairly easy to propose an approach and quite another to offer ideas and tools to carry it out. With this in mind, practical ideas and tools will be shared and demonstrated including but not limited to: building foundational literacy skills through daily play activities, systematic growth of core words in AAC through literacy activities, and systematic literacy instruction.

The early social communication skills of children with severe cerebral palsy

Poster - Abstract ID: 96

Ms. Katie Price (University College London), Dr. Michael Clarke (University College London), Dr. John Swettenham (University College London)

Introduction

Social responsiveness and shared attention underpin the development of language and communication. Children with more severe forms of cerebral palsy (GMFCS IV and V) are known to be more vulnerable to conditions over and above the physical impairments (including intellectual impairment and vision deficits). However, there are few guidelines for assessment of full communication profile skills.

This study aimed to trial tasks to describe the early communication skills of social responsiveness and shared attention for children with CP, who are unable to access more “standard” assessment procedures. These profiles were then compared with profiles noted in children with autism, and with children with Down Syndrome.

Patients and methods

57 children were included, in these three groups, matched for age, language and non-verbal abilities. The children with CP (n=32) were screened for their ability to use looking behaviours to give responses. A measure of social responsiveness/shared attention accessible by all three groups was derived from established mainstream assessments.

Results

Children with CP gave reliable responses to the tasks offered, and a range of skills was seen. A number of children showed social responsiveness and shared attention skills at a level of development significantly below their language age/non-verbal age. There was overlap in scores with the group of children with Down Syndrome, and the group of children with CP showed some overlap with the scores of children with autism.

Conclusion

Given the wide range of abilities shown in the group of children, it seems important to work towards the development of assessment tools to identify deficits, and hence be positioned to explore and ensure relevant intervention for these early language and interaction skills.

Using Total Communication to enable student voice and increase learner engagement

Poster - Abstract ID: 83

Mrs. Caroline Gosling (Bridge College)

This presentation will describe two frameworks developed and implemented by the Speech and Language therapy team at Bridge College to support students to participate more actively in their educational experience.

The tutorial process uses a Total Communication approach to regularly elicit students' views on their college experience and their future aspirations. The second framework has created personalised accessible targets for students so that students are empowered to understand what they are working on during their sessions and what it is they are working towards to achieve.

Bridge College has learners with a wide range of communication skills and abilities and the tutorial process has been part of a wider culture shift within college, seeking out student opinions and encouraging students to direct their enablers in order to facilitate change in their environments. Areas for further improvement will also be described.

“Sex, Lies & Videotape and AAC”: Communicating about problems

Poster - Abstract ID: 45

Ms. Helen Dunman (Chailey Heritage Foundation)

I teach students with severe physical and learning disabilities and complex medical and sensory needs who use AAC. I develop work which aims to educate students about some of the most sensitive areas, those often seen as ‘taboo’ for special learners. I developed a ‘Personal Safety’ course, which includes ‘bad ‘secrets’ and explores what is meant by a ‘good’ and ‘bad’ touch, a difficult but vital concept for students who receive intimate care. Although students began to progress in their understanding of these concepts during the course, they were unable to easily or effectively communicate about them, or alert someone that they had a problem.

Although the Chailey Communication System has a ‘Problem’ section, it was difficult to access and needed re-viewing. We realised we needed to make it as easy as possible for students to communicate about all sorts of problems, as well as personal safety. I felt the best way of doing this was to design a whole new category dedicated to ‘Problems’ to be scanned on the very top line of the menu page and for this to try and cover every type of problem from an annoying itch to a serious safeguarding issue or an upsetting relationship issue.

I have devised a useful set of concepts for an effective problem category, and with the support of our SALTs, the widget symbols and new category has been drafted. CCS will be updated shortly.

The ability to communicate about a problem is fundamental to all of us and I believe it is our responsibility as educators to empower AAC users with complex disabilities to have a voice in this area. I would like to share details of the new category as well as techniques used to structure communication, teaching and learning, and assessment in this field.

EXHIBITORS

A communication aid designed for you

Platform - Abstract ID: 175

Mr. Dougal Hawes (Smartbox Assistive Technology), Mr. Barney Hawes (Smartbox Assistive Technology)

The next generation AAC device from Smartbox is here. Join us as we walk you through the features and design of our most powerful communication aid yet, an all-in-one solution created for people with complex access and communication needs.

Built for fast, seamless communication, the integrated design of our newest device includes the very latest eye gaze technology, a powerful processor and battery for continuous all-day use. It has also been designed to work with any method of alternative access and can be adapted to suit your individual needs.

We'll round things up by explaining how design decisions were made in response to user research, and the needs of our users.

Ace Centre Publications

Platform - Abstract ID: 190

Ms. Rachel Stevens (Ace Centre), Ms. Katherine Dunlop (Ace Centre), Ms. Karen Bailey (Ace Centre), Ms. Sara Dale (Ace Centre)

Ace Centre are pleased to announce the release of their new and revised publications, which are designed to support local AAC services.

The very popular 'Developing and using a Communication Book' has been revised; we will share the new Second Edition, which will be supported with ready made templates in different software formats. Navigational improvements have been made, utilising a home page and tabbed pages. Vocabulary has been updated and examples are provided for both children and adults. Additional tools are also available in the appendices to help identify personalised vocabulary.

'You Matter - Education Edition' offers an updated off the shelf training course for teachers, teaching assistants and therapists that brings together parents of children with significant speech difficulties and their supporting professionals.

We will share our very successful 'Look2Talk', the award-winning guide for parents and professionals who need to make and use a communication book for children who communicate using their eyes alone, and our free 'Getting Started with AAC' iBooks. These have been designed to help families and professionals alike to get started with Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). We will share the 3 titles:

Book 1 - Getting Started with AAC: Designing and using alphabet charts

Book 2 - Getting Started with AAC: Using low tech symbol based systems with children

Book 3 - Getting Started with AAC: Access to low tech symbol based resources when pointing is difficult

All titles are available through our website.

Adult acquired AAC vocabularies, access methods and features by Liberator

Platform - Abstract ID: 188

Mr. Mark Street (Liberator Ltd)

We will be exploring the range of dedicated communication devices and their vocabularies specifically developed for those individuals (adults and children) with acquired conditions such as a traumatic brain injury, MND or Stroke. We will also be demonstrating the choice of access options including eyegaze, headpointing and switches, and how an individual can transition from one to the next with no vocabulary relearning as a condition deteriorates.

This will be an opportunity to see the following functionality in action:

- Communication – including spelling, quick messages and notebook/writing functions
- Computer Access – pages to access the internal computer and any external computer or laptop.
- Remote Controls- for TV, DVD, VCR, CD Player, and on/off switches for lights, computer and radio
- Accessories – including camera, phone, reminders and calculator

CALL Scotland - Supporting learners with communication difficulties since 1983

Platform - Abstract ID: 177

*Ms. Gillian McNeill (CALL Scotland, University of Edinburgh), Ms. Claire Harrison (CALL Scotland, University of Edinburgh),
Mr. Allan Wilson (CALL Scotland, The University of Edinburgh)*

CALL Scotland has been supporting learners with communication difficulties in schools across Scotland since 1983, particularly with regard to accessing the curriculum. This session will present case studies illustrating how learners are referred to CALL, receive a comprehensive assessment of their communication needs and can be provided with equipment from the CALL loan bank for evaluation as to whether it meets these needs.

In addition to working with individual pupils and the staff supporting them, CALL provides professional learning opportunities through a programme of courses run at CALL and bespoke training provided in schools and local authorities. CALL also provides regular, short webinars on different topics relating to assistive technology and communication. Nearly 100 past webinars can be viewed in the archive on the CALL web site. We now also offer online training, with fully interactive, tutor-led sessions delivered right to your desktop. Areas in which we provide training include:

- Software to Support Communication & Learning, e.g. Grid 2/3, Boardmaker
- iPads & Communication-Picture Apps for Early Level Communication
- Communication Friendly Schools
- Using Personal Communication Passports

CALL produces a wide range of mostly free resources to support communication in education, many of which will be demonstrated in this session. These include:

- Symbolised resources for shared reading
- Downloadable posters on the CALL Scotland and AAC Scotland web sites
- Online Learning Modules providing an **Introduction to AAC** and the newly completed guide to **AAC and Education**. We hope to be able to demonstrate the new AAC and Education modules during the course of this session.

Developing multimodal gaming technology to aid communication

Platform - Abstract ID: 186

Mr. Lee Blemings (Sensory Guru)

Sensory Guru is a leading sensory, assistive and interactive learning technology manufacturer and supplier. The company is widely renowned for developing innovative multimodal access technologies, which use gamification to promote communication, inclusion and interaction between peers that use alternative access methods. The past year has seen huge developments to the Sensory Guru product range, with the launch of Sensory Eye-FX 2.0, Magic Carpet and Magic Mirror.

The set of tools, techniques and strategies harnesses the latest in multimodal gaming technology to aid communication for people with complex needs.

New features include the ability for facilitators to measure cognitive ability and assess Eye Gaze suitability, as well as the development of a fully-fledged app store packed with hundreds of learning-based activities and games. The tools also have also been built with added flexibility which allows for full customisation and personalisation of applications by users.

This session will provide you with an overview of the need-to-know developments within the Sensory Guru product portfolio and give you an understanding of what the changes mean for AAC users.

It will also demonstrate how gamification and technology can be used to enhance communication for AAC users and improve social interaction, confidence and inclusion.

exploring easyChat a new vocabulary from Liberator

Platform - Abstract ID: 91

Mr. Mark Street (Liberator Ltd)

easyChat was launched last year at Communication Matters 2016 and since then it has undergone vocabulary and feature changes based on customer and client feedback. We are excited to share the latest easyChat vocabularies including:

easyChat Phrases, easyChat Core, easyChat Spell and easyChat Words.

Introducing Amego, the New Mind Express vocabulary package for literate users.

Platform - Abstract ID: 111

Mr. Ian Foulger (TechCess Communications Ltd)

Amego is a new text based vocabulary allowing speech communication via keyboard, word prediction, sentence prediction and pre-stored phrases.

Page layout is designed to be consistent for keyguard users. Access to social media, emails, text messaging and phone calls is also possible.

Remote control can be used to control IR devices and also other PC's and Macs over a wireless network connection. Uniquely Amego will dynamically adapt it's layout depending on what input method is selected by the user.

Main features include;

Ability for users to change colour scheme of the vocabulary.

Ability for users to personalise and edit their own index page by choosing what apps or features they want accessible using include/exclude page.

Ability to choose different keyboard layouts.

Easy toggling between word and sentence prediction when entering text.

Powerful phrase banks, including emoji's that can be easily edited by user

Wide selection of games integrated into vocab, ever wanted to play Tetris or Sudoku with eye gaze?

Other features include;

- Keyboard
- Contacts
- Phone calls
- Text messaging, chat history with contacts now shown.
- Integrated email; Sending and receiving of attachments is possible as well as setting to only allow emails from known contacts, no more SPAM!
- Calendar and alarm feature
- Control of windows programs
- Remote control of other PC's and Apple Macs wirelessly.
- Integrated music and video player
- Internet radio
- Calculator
- Camera and picture viewer
- Notes
- Internet browsing
- Environmental control
- Specifically designed control pages for; YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Skype, Kindle, Spotify, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Powerpoint

Literacy Learning and Communication Support for Students Who Rely on AAC

Platform - Abstract ID: 180

Ms. Marion Stanton (ScandLE Limited), Ms. Saffron Murphy-Mann (ScandLE Limited), Ms. Philippa Blackburn (CANDLE LIMITED)

The SCandLE accessible communication book has arrived! Developed in conjunction with students who use AAC and over a number of trials during the past three years we finally have a communication book which responds to the access needs of all students. It has a unique design and has been created with the pragmatic flow of language in mind. For the younger student the book is designed to promote early play skills. For the older student there is the facility to discuss personal issues and teen vocabulary. The book is available as a standard book or it can be completely individualised to the needs of the person who will be using it.

The SCandLE Literacy Programme is a comprehensive one which has been written to meet the needs of students who rely on AAC but can also benefit other students who are struggling with literacy. It includes assessment materials, resources for students with emergent literacy needs as well as for those who are entering into conventional literacy. It is based on a combination of the well researched 4-Blocks system and our own experience of delivering successful literacy programmes over the past twenty years. It includes high and low tech approaches and is designed to meet the curriculum requirements of the UK.

This session will describe both the communication book and the literacy programme in detail and there will be free resources available for those who attend. You can also find out how to become a demonstrator to receive the full resource for free.

Motivation through movement

Platform - Abstract ID: 158

Mrs. Esther Dakin (Smile Smart Technology Ltd), Mr. Roger Dakin (Smile Smart Technology Ltd)

Looking at both new **switching** products from Smile and their extensive range of **mounts**, members of the Smile team will introduce key products from both their in-house range including Flexi-rods and Softytops and take questions about the RehAdapt range of mounts and invite general questions on mounting and switch solutions. Smile also introduce the latest model of their switch access teaching tool, as they launch the 'Drivedeck'. A multi-user, line following, motivational teaching and access tool for those needing to learn switch access and those hoping to improve within the safe bounds of a line-following track or free driving environment. Specialist clinical centres and schools primarily use the Smile Smart System integral to the Drivedeck and Smart Powerchairs to develop switch access through the powerful motivation of movement. Students learn through the process of autonomous cause and effect. With focus upon the proven use by colleagues at centres of excellence, the Drivedeck is introduced along with its key functions, motivational outcomes and educational benefits in today's progressively interdisciplinary AT/AAC landscape.

Talk given by Esther Dakin, Billy Hunter, Matthew Tennent

Networking with ISAAC - part of the family

Platform - Abstract ID: 192

Ms. Nadia Browning (ISAAC), Ms. Meredith Allan (ISAAC)

This interactive presentation aims to enhance participants' knowledge in the goals of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC), how it is run, and highlight the ways that members can network with professionals and people who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) worldwide.

Communication Matters (CM) is one of the strongest ISAAC's Chapters. CM is part of a worldwide AAC community. ISAAC has currently more than 2000 members in 62 countries, including 15 Chapters. Every single one of us linked with ISAAC are working towards improving the lives of individuals with complex communication needs. As you may already know, ISAAC accomplishes this by sharing information and promoting innovative approaches to research, technology and literacy through AAC.

Networking is one of the most powerful tools in our professional and personal lives. ISAAC creates several ways to promote networking such as the biennial conference, LEAD program (promotes the leadership of people who use AAC), BUILD programs (connects the emerging AAC nations) and many others. The international ISAAC Conference 2018 will be held on the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia. This is the first time the conference will be held in the Asia-Pacific Region. Call for abstracts for the conference close 30 September 2017. What is your interest in networking in the world of AAC? Let's share and learn what networking opportunities ISAAC International has for you.

Phonics for All

Platform - Abstract ID: 193

Ms. Marion Stanton (ScandLE Limited)

Phonics for All in Grid 3 has arrived! Phonics for All is an innovative literacy programme which responds to the literacy needs of students who rely on AAC and others with complex communication needs.

It is well known that the inability to speak impedes the ability to acquire fluency with phonics. Phonics involves children learning to correspond the smallest units of sound (phonemes) with the letter or letters that make up the sound. In the normal situation phonics is taught in daily, rapid-fire sessions during reception, year one and year two. This involves children using vocalisation to sound out phonemes, blend the phonemes into words and then break words down into segments. A child who is using AAC is doubly disadvantaged as they will not be able to keep up with the pace of these lessons nor will they be able to produce the sounds. Additionally, year one students are generally expected to acquire phonics before tackling reading with comprehension. For a student who is going to take longer this is not an option.

Built on sound research Phonics for All provides the student who relies on AAC with the opportunity to activate phonemes independently, blend and segment words, develop working and short-term memory skills, develop auditory skills and develop comprehension skills in the context of the phonemes being taught. In addition to synthetic phonics, the approach that is normally advocated in mainstream school, Phonics for All introduces phonic strategies that also support the learning for students who take longer to acquire literacy.

This session will explain the research behind Phonics for All and go through the programme explaining the rationale behind each section.

We will also be sharing the curriculum resources we will be providing free of charge to those who buy Grid 3 from us.

Read, learn and have fun with Interactive Reading!

Platform - Abstract ID: 194

Ms. Daisy Clay (Smartbox Assistive Technology)

Learn about **Interactive Reading**, our latest animated content for Grid 3. Starring 'Pip' and his family, our bespoke reading scheme has been built for children using AAC and is suitable for those at the very earliest levels of literacy development. The stories and activities are created to teach phonics and sight words in line with national literacy programmes.

Join us to hear how Interactive Reading has been designed to motivate young readers through four stages – from very simple short stories based on 2-3 letter words, to longer stories using complex letter combinations and tricky sight words.

SCORE: Where Language Development, Literacy and AAC Meet.

Platform - Abstract ID: 191

Mr. Bart Noe (TechCess Communications Ltd)

Typically developing children learn to speak by being immersed in a native language community. The language is modeled all day long and children have continuous opportunities to hear, interact, acquire and develop new language skills. They learn by imitation. If children cannot produce sounds, then they cannot imitate what they hear and their language development will slow down dramatically. We can compensate this by providing a communication medium that can be imitated and reproduced. It is critical to support early AAC users with robust and well organized communication systems that make the combination of core and fringe vocabulary easy and logical, and allow the users to build and expand their language skills maintaining a consistent motor plan. SCORE, the focus of this presentation, is based on such principles and offers a unique approach that is robust and effective and also based on years of research. Learners and their communication partners use and practice with a set of selected focus words for a number of weeks and during several activities throughout the day, receptively as well as expressively. The idea is that if the child language development is facilitated and therefore improves, then the child communication skills will automatically follow. At school a child will learn to read and write. SCORE offers tools, both low tech and high tech, to support and facilitate writing sentences. Vocabulary in SCORE is presented in a way that is organized, easy to find, and consistent. The high frequency words are always provided as a (static) frame around the topic (dynamic) pages. And last but not least, SCORE is a powerful communication page set at the same time. It can be used as an AAC system at a very early stage to develop and increase language and support correct writing, hence improving the communication skills.

Support Ecosystem: Core First Learning, Pathways, and Boardmaker Online

Platform - Abstract ID: 183

Mrs. Tina Voizey (Tobii Dynavox), Ms. Bethany Diener (Tobii Dynavox)

Core vocabulary is a significant component of a robust communication solution. But how do we teach core words in a way that benefits every day communication as well as the long term goal of conventional reading and writing? Core First Learning is an easy way to teach students how to find, use, and read core words. This program leverages the transactional nature of communication and literacy and puts students on the road toward reading and writing. Beyond this, we know that successful engagement in school requires far more than knowledge of core words. Pathways for Core First (free) and Boardmaker Online together offer a comprehensive way to address the breadth and depth of skills required to fully participate in school and beyond. Join us to learn about this accessible and individualised ecosystem to support individuals with varying communication, learning, and physical needs.

Taking AAC to the next level with Proloquo2Go 5

Platform - Abstract ID: 166

Dr. David Niemeijer (AssistiveWare)

In this session we will provide an overview of the new features in Proloquo2Go 5 and how those can be used to support an effective AAC implementation. Proloquo2Go, is a symbol-based AAC solution for iOS designed to support not only communication but also language development. Version 5 adds several new features supporting effective AAC implementation including an easy to use search feature and a new progressive language feature aimed at introducing language in developmental order.

Search has been on the wish list of our community and of everyone at AssistiveWare for a long time. The new Search feature has been designed with a clinical perspective; not only will you see the path to the button you're looking for, Proloquo2Go will also guide you through the path step-by-step. If the searched button is located in your Storage, it will automatically be added to the user's vocabulary.

To make sure the user's language skills grow and the user doesn't become stuck at the same vocabulary, we introduced switching between levels and grid sizes within the same vocabulary in Proloquo2Go 4. Changing the grid size unfortunately isn't ideal for the user. As locations of buttons move, the person needs to re-learn how to find words. To make sure users reach their full potential, we always recommend selecting a large grid size. If this is considered too overwhelming for the user, we recommended hiding buttons and gradually revealing them as user skills grow. However, this is a time-consuming and complicated task. The new Progressive Language feature in Proloquo2Go 5 helps to quickly and systematically hide and reveal buttons in a developmental sequence.

Other new features include automatic online backups, support for Google Drive and iCloud and Text to Speech for the Proloquo2Go Apple Watch app.

Tobii Dynavox Update

Platform - Abstract ID: 184

Mr. Rob Gregory (Tobii Dynavox), Mr. Joe Naraynsingh (Tobii Dynavox)

It's been an exciting year for the Tobii Dynavox UK team and product line! We've seen our portfolio grow and our technologies move from strength to strength. We're providing better and bolder offerings and services whilst giving our current and future customers new and exciting choices.

We're looking forward to seeing you and showing you how we can work together to achieve the Power to Be You!

VocaTempo, ChatAble, Predictable: innovations across AAC apps

Platform - Abstract ID: 189

Mr. Swapnil Gadgil (Therapy Box Ltd)

The team from Therapy Box, University of Sheffield and Barnsley Hospital have developed an innovative means of accessing apps using speech recognition. While speech recognition is nothing new (Siri, Alexa et al) recognition of dysarthric speech locally on an iPad is a game changer for people who want to use their voice! VocaTempo will be introduced for delegates.

Therapy Box will also provide an update on Predictable - available on iOS, Android and Windows (with eye tracking) and will showcase ChatAble following its major redevelopment in 2017

What's New From The Shed?

Platform - Abstract ID: 178

Mr. Russell Smith (Dad In A Shed)

Another year has gone by, and Dad In S Shed have continued to develop, and source the best new products for AAC and SEN.

Join Russ from Dad In A Shed to see what new products are available, discover Articloud for Android, the most cost effective text to speech app on Android, and look at unique ways to enable ease of use for Tablet Based AAC.

The session will also give you the opportunity to feed back on what we do, helping us to tailor our products and services to exactly your needs!

What's new in Talking Mats?

Platform - Abstract ID: 44

Dr. Joan Murphy (Talking Mats Ltd), Ms. Nicki Ewing (Talking Mats Ltd.)

Self-Management Project:

Talking Mats has received funding from The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland to look at how using the Digital Talking Mats can help people with long term conditions to manage their health and wellbeing and to recognise their own abilities.

We are working with 30 people - 10 with learning disability, 10 with dementia and 10 who have had a stroke. Each participant has been given a personal digital licence and taught how to use the App. We asked them to complete six mats before visiting them a second time to see how they managed. So far the results have been very encouraging e.g.

'I wouldn't have bothered to have such deep thoughts if it hadn't been for Talking Mats'

'It made me think not just about dire thoughts, it prompted me to think about the good things'

We will present further findings during the presentation.

Conversation Sets

Having a conversation can be an enjoyable activity and is an important part of socialisation but is often hard for people with communication difficulties to take part and difficult for families, friends and staff to support these informal conversations as well as finding topics to talk about. We are developing a range of Talking Mats symbol sets called Conversation Topics which can be used by people of all ages and abilities to take part in conversations.

Keeping Safe

Taking time to ask *'How is your life going?'* can help people both reflect on their lives and raise concerns. Building a person's capacity to comment on small worries is critical to the raising of bigger concerns. The Keeping Safe resource consists of 3 topic symbol sets: Well-being, Relationships and Thoughts and feelings.

We will demonstrate the new resources and discuss how they can be used.

‘No-tech’ AAC – an introduction to simple, effective resources that could strengthen your AAC strategies.

Platform - Abstract ID: 185

Mr. David Weatherburn (Ability World Ltd)

‘No-tech’ resources are often an important component of AAC strategies used to develop communication skills, whether you support people who are experiencing PMLD or SLD, learners who are just starting to develop their communication skills en-route to a higher tech AAC system, or adults with acquired communication conditions. In this session we will take a look at some of the more popular resources that can be used on their own or alongside low-tech and high-tech AAC systems. We will also introduce the very latest communication and learning support products developed by Ability World.

We will look at the PMLD Choice Kit, various styles of communication board, communication/choice books and folders, small wearable aids and some other interesting items.

A primary focus of the session will be on their practical use to support communication for people of all ability levels, as well as choice-making, literacy, learning, environment labelling and time planning.

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