

Communication Matters National Symposium

Merry Christmas and welcome to the winter edition of our newsletter. Inside you will find a review of Communication Matters National Symposium, the ACIP day, meet our new team and find out about our latest training opportunities.

Debbie and Barbara attended Communication Matters' National Symposium this year. Here is a summary of some of the seminars they attended.

1. Apps for AAC: An Overview- This session was an overview of the apps available mainly on the Ipad/ Ipad. At the present time there are 143 apps for AAC. This number is growing daily. The presenter identified the following categories of AAC apps: Symbol Grid systems, Word prediction apps, PECS specific apps, Photo story apps, and Text to Speech apps. These are listed below.

Symbol Grid Systems:

Proloquo2go-Assistiveware

Touch Chat- from Silver Kite (Saltillo) similar to Alt Chat software. Word Power also available for it

Tobii Sono Flex- Tobii, there is a lite version which you cannot edit but is useful to use for assessment.

Has vocabulary for novel sentence building and also contexts which are activity based vocabulary

Scene and Heard- new from Therapy Box- use of visual scenes and use of videos to communicate.

Uses Widge symbols underneath the visual scene. Fully configurable.

My Choice Pad - Makaton, combines Makaton symbols with some signing practice

Grid Player-plays Grid 2 grids on your Ipad; no editing on device

Text to Speech apps:

Predictable- from Therapy Box, new updates to be coming in a few weeks time

Fixed Language apps: these apps are not editable

Small Talk range of apps- for Aphasia, vocabulary in list view vs. grid view

Phrase Board- for use in hospital

Helpful hints:

Look at vocabulary level available for communication apps

Look at different views available: list view, grid view

Look at symbols or photos or picture libraries available for the app

For more information go to appsforaac.net

2. The AAC Self Assessment Tool-Kit- This session was an overview of a project in Cumbria where the CandLE service worked with five special schools to help the schools assess their current AAC use in the learning environment. This is a web based self assessment tool kit. The tool kit comprises of a few different elements including an Observation schedule, an AAC assessment checklist, Criteria for AAC assessment eligibility, a Questionnaire to self assess your knowledge and skills and an Information exchange section which covers information about AAC. The idea is that the schools use the self assessment sheets and send in their data to the service. If you want to have a look at the tool kit you can access it at <http://www.candleaac.com/AACTool-Kit.htm>

3. AAC Standards for All- There are a number of organisations looking into identifying standards for services and professionals working in AAC. Communication Matters is developing standards for services. There will be a set of documents from Communication Matters. The first one now available is AAC Service Quality Standards for Commissioners. The aim of this document is to provide a quality standard for AAC services whether they be statutory, voluntary or through the private sector. The document is a set of quality statements based on key principles. Both the key principles and the quality statements are written from the perspective of an individual service user.

In addition, the **Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists** has also put together a document called RCSLT Resource Manual for Commissioning and planning services for SLCN- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) This document provides definitions and lots of information for commissioners on what AAC is to help them in the commissioning process. This is available on the RCSLT website.



Communication Matters is also working on a National AAC Competencies Framework to identify the different skills necessary to gain competence in working within the field of AAC. There will be 4 levels of competency: Foundation, Developing, Independent and Advanced. This is currently in development but will be available on the CM website when completed.

4. Using PODD books: How manageable are PODD books in a busy classroom?

This session was to outline the development and implementation of PODD books for 4 pupils in an English school.

PODD book – “Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display” book is a dynamic display book in a low tech form, it provides a combination of organised vocabulary strategies to work through. It categorises vocabulary, the vocabulary is consistently placed throughout the book, this aids in the efficient location of vocabulary.

The book does not need to be physically manipulated by the child a facilitator may carry out this role to aid communication between the child and communication partner. The top page will show the symbolised menu/contents of the book there may be up to 20 location/pages linked to this page, on each page there could be 9 – 20 buttons. A book with 2 top pages may have up to 40 location/pages again with 9-20 buttons on each, there are different layouts for different abilities.

There is an increased ability to navigate between pages and there is a range of core and fringe vocabulary. They felt the book compensated for the reduced use of gestures, facial expression and intonation.

The feedback they received from staff were:-
the books were huge and difficult to manage
positive about the language
required very little editing
the communication partner had a clear role
allows for spontaneity

Other issues included:-
the books were difficult to bind
difficulty to manage physically
negative responses when trying to use with a high tech device
very time consuming to make
and that child interacts with the facilitator not the communication partner.

Amongst the company presentations, here is one that caught everyone's eye.



Debbie and Barbara presenting Vital Voices

5. A New Way to Look at Symbols : Introducing Matrix Maker and News-2-You

The new Matrix Maker from Inclusive Technology has been designed to be the simplest and most affordable software for the making of overlays and education resources.

The promotion of this software clearly states it is so simple there is no need for a manual or training.

There are 9 categories of templates:

- communication aids
- communication books
- switching label
- grids
- worksheets
- games
- calendar schedules
- certificates

Once you choose the template required it comes up ready made.

Click on pictures (SymbolStix) images come up immediately it is also compatible with webcams and Google images.

The SymbolStix are free downloads of current pictures and the company will draw any requests for symbols free of charge.

Any changes you make to symbols such as size, text or colour, any grid you make maybe saved in the library by simply ticking a box.

Unfortunately you cannot put multiple symbols in one button.

The price is approx £129 for a single user copy.

And finally...

Your great work was represented again at Communication Matters, when Debbie and Barbara talked about the Vital Voices project. Find out more about Vital Voices and how you can get involved on our website. www.keycommaac.k.org



Your Communication: Your Rights!

A day was held on 7 November 2011 for 19 young adults who use AAC at the Faith Mission in Edinburgh. The day was hosted by Augmentative Communication in Practice: Scotland and the young people came from all parts of Scotland. The day centred around the theme of communication rights and public services. The day started with an exercise to make sure everyone knew what services were public, private or commercial. This was a fun exercise with everyone getting involved. The rest of the day focused on getting the participants' views on using public services and what public services can do to help them communicate better with people who have severe communication impairments and who use communication aids. This was led by Shirley Young and Claire Edwards from The Inclusive Communication in Scotland project. The Inclusive Communication Project aims to provide principles and recommendations for local authorities and government to make their communication more inclusive.

The project leaders were very keen to consult with young people who use AAC and they will be able to pass on the user's views through their project report. There is an introductory document already out from the project which is entitled "Principles of Inclusive Communication, an information and self-assessment tool for public authorities". You can download this document from the Scottish Government website.

The final session consisted of passing on information to the participants about how they might want to stay involved with the developments of AAC in Scotland. The information sheet passed out included the following suggestions: Contacting your local AAC Centre, Attend User events in your local area, Check the ACIP: Scotland website, read and contribute to the ContAACT newsletter, join in the discussion about AAC on Facebook.

We all had a great day and we were very pleased about the large turn out of young people. We are hoping to have more User Days in the coming year. Watch this space!



Welcoming...



Cait McSweeney graduated with a degree in Occupational Therapy from Queen Margaret University in 2010. Cait joined the Keycomm team in October and currently works part time with Keycomm. She also works with the Edinburgh Community Stroke Service so can be reached at Firhill Centre as well. "I'm quickly learning a lot working with this team and am really enjoying my role as an Occupational Therapist."



Melanie Ross, paediatric Occupational Therapist, has worked as part of the team at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children since 1998. Previously a psychologist, with a special interest in children's play. She joins Keycomm for 10.5 hours - between 9.30 and 2.45 on a Monday and Tuesday each week. She will be managing the SPLAT toy library and offers assessments and advice to develop play and access to toys for children aged 0-3 years with Additional Support Needs.

Codes in practice

In our last newsletter we introduced our Codes Framework, a practical way of measuring effective communication. This time we'll explain how we use the accompanying proformas.

Quick Look View Table - use this initially to identify skills the individual already has, and look for gaps which can then be targeted. Put a plus sign in the column if the skill is present, or if there has been experience of it, qualify your opinion in the comments box. We tend to evidence where and how this has been used. We also comment here when the individual has another successful and appropriate strategy that fulfills this skill. On the back sheet record where the AAC strategies are used and for what purpose.

Competency Joint goal setting and planning sheet - there are five of these, linguistic, social roles, social interactions, operational and strategic. The purpose of these are to help the key facilitators identify SMART targets and explain activities for how the skills identified from the Quick Look View Table will be acquired. The joint goal setting and planning sheets focus not only on skill acquisition but also upon skill application, so there is a further column to complete which asks you to identify how this newly acquired skill will be used within the natural environments, eg home, school, day centre, after school club, community. A lot of the time, this means transferring the skill from a one to one or small group situation into a larger setting and applying this skill to a functional task. There is a further monitoring column to record observations and provide evidence when reviewing targets.

Target sheet - the user friendly target record allows you to share targets with the individual and allows them to become involved in evaluating their own successes.

All the proformas can be found inside The Codes Framework booklet, and on the CD that accompanies it, that you will have received if you have attended our training. To date we have delivered 5 training sessions at KEYCOMM, and if you are interested in learning more there are further courses on Friday 27th January 1.30-3.30pm, and Friday 27th April 1.30pm-3.30pm

Dates for your diary

Courses

Did you know?
You can download booking forms for
our courses from KEYCOMM's
website, or phone Janet to book a
place



The Codes Framework

Friday 27th January, 1.30-3.30pm or Friday 27th April, 1.30pm-3.30pm

This course is suitable for Speech and Language Therapists and Teachers. Based upon the principles of Janice Light's communication competencies and the model of human occupation, we will guide you through KEYCOMM's Codes Framework which is a joint goal setting and planning proforma designed to monitor and extend communication effectiveness for the individual using AAC. Individuals attending the course will receive the Codes Framework pack which includes electronic copies of the baseline assessment and the planning and goal setting tool. Download a booking form from our website.

SLT's - New to the Lothians KEYCOMM Induction Course

Monday 30th January 1.30-3.30pm

This course is suitable for Speech and Language Therapists new to the Lothian region. This course will give an overview of KEYCOMM, AAC technologies, and the Codes Framework. Download a booking form from our website.

Codes Drop-in

Thursday 23rd February, 3pm-5pm

This drop in session is suitable for anyone who has attended our Codes course. If you have any questions about the framework or want support to put this into practice, please pop along. Booking not essential!

Ipads and Apps

Friday March 2nd, 1.30pm-3.30pm

This course will offer an insight into how the iPad can be utilised for communication and/or learning. We will look at a range of communication apps, pre-communication apps and apps for learning, consider the skills needed to use an app, and give hands on time to try out the apps. Download a booking form from our website.

Check out the website! We've added a couple more pages containing information about our projects and iPads

Something missing?
You can request a course by phoning and talking to us. Schools and centres can download our training menu to give you some ideas for in-service



THE KEYCOMM TEAM

As you have noticed, Melanie and Cait have now joined the team so here's an update of our contact details.

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