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ISAAC (UK) | UK Chapter of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication

Communication Matters - Research Matters: An AAC Evidence Base Press Release

For immediate release

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UK leads the way with launch of Research Involvement Network

What is believed to be the first ever research network of people who use communication or speech aids (otherwise known as AAC – Augmentative and Alternative Communication), their carers and professionals involved in assessment, training and support of users, has been launched by Communication Matters, the leading charity which supports all people with communication difficulties who need AAC technology and strategies to help them communicate more easily.

The Research Involvement Network will be available for academics and others doing research into AAC and will promote the involvement of people who use AAC in research projects. It is being set up as part of a 3 year research project run by Communication Matters called “Communication Matters - Research Matters: An AAC evidence Base” that has been funded by the National Lottery through Big Lottery Fund. In the past many academics and speech and language professionals carrying out research into the need for and provision of augmentative and alternative communication methods have found it difficult to find individuals who have the relevant experience that speaks to their specific research, as no register has existed.

The network will hold data about people who use AAC, carers and industry professionals who are willing to be involved in research and should become a central source of information for researchers. Access to the network will be through Communication Matters who will firstly authorise that the research project is both acceptable and suitable and will then contact members of the network who fit the specific criteria to ask whether they are willing to participate in the proposed project. Willing participants will then be put in touch with the researchers.

Dr. Janice Murray, a Speech and Language Therapist and Head of Speech Pathology and Therapy at Manchester Metropolitan University says, “In this field of research it is always challenging to find the most appropriate people to inform and advance our understanding of what is needed and what works. This network of people who use AAC, carers and professionals will, I believe, become a vital resource of information for researchers whose work will benefit those who need AAC now and in the future.”

The picture shows Simon Stevens, the first user of AAC to sign up for the network, and David Morgan of Communication Matters, who is Research Lead on the project, going through the network enrolment form. Simon Stevens is an Independent Disability Issues Consultant and Trainer.

For more information contact Communication Matters (as above) or visit the website www.communicationmatters.org.uk

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Notes

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is the term used to describe methods of communication which can be used to add to the more usual methods of speech and writing when these are impaired. AAC includes unaided systems such as signing and gesture, as well as aided techniques ranging from picture charts to the most sophisticated computer technology.

The Big Lottery Fund distributes half of the National Lottery good cause funding across the UK. The Fund is committed to bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need.