

# CM2024

Communication  
Matters International  
AAC Conference

8-10 September 2024

University of Leeds

**Book of Abstracts**



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Communication  
**Matters**

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## **MONDAY**

### **Keynote: Empowerment: Taking Risks, Expanding Horizons, Realising Potential**

Waller, Annalu - Author

**Submission ID**

107

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Best Research Evidence

**Abstract**

Low expectations of others results in fewer opportunities to realise our individual potential. We all need to be challenged by supportive and knowledgeable mentors and guides to expand our horizons. This is especially true for people who use AAC where opportunities to learn and develop are often mediated by others responsible for providing accessible tools and strategies. While role models play an essential role in challenging attitudes which lead to a mindset of mediocrity, there is a temptation to dismiss “high-flyers” as having unique abilities. Instead, such examples empower us to set and revisit goals, and to explore and innovate approaches with those with different abilities, fostering independence, resilience and agency. Annalu will bring her experiences as researcher, educator and someone with a lived experience of cerebral palsy to empower others on their lifelong journey.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

### **1.1: Self-advocacy for AAC users**

Moulam, Beth - Author

**Submission ID**

12

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Personal Stories and Case Studies

**Abstract**

Transitioning into adulthood and the world of independent living means being equipped for leading your own team, dealing with new life situations, and making sure you achieve your goals. Speaking up for ourselves, so we can achieve what we want in life is a skill everyone needs to learn, not just those of us who use AAC. At its simplest level self-advocacy is being able to communicate our needs, but we all know it isn't always as easy as it sounds. Sometimes the way forward is getting support from another person to help us express our views and wishes and help us stand up for our rights. When we do this, we are using an advocate. For many people advocacy isn't something that just happens. It is skill that develops through childhood, into teens and then continues in adulthood. At the core of advocating for ourselves is communication, however, being able to communicate is only a part of the picture. We also need to develop the confidence to do this. Self-advocacy can be achieved through 5 steps:

- Be authentic: be yourself and know what you want to achieve.
- Know your rights, do your research: we all have the right to be heard, know what you can expect and what to expect of others.
- Demonstrate self-determination: learn to develop decision making skills for both daily activities and bigger life events.
- Communicate effectively: different situations often need different approaches, but these are underpinned by planning, preparation, and practice.
- Learn for the future: be reflective after each opportunity to self-advocate using a simple 3 stage approach, ready for next time.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

**1.2: Developing a neurodivergent AAC service: 1 year on**

Robinson, Helen - Author; Darley, Sally - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

27

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

At the Barnsley Assistive Technology Team, we are committed to providing a Specialised AAC assessment that is considerate of a diverse range of communication styles. Over the past two years, we have endeavoured to make our assessments as neurodiversity affirming as possible. At The 2023 Communication Matters conference we presented our journey so far. One year on, we have learned valuable lessons and are continuing to make changes. Our presentation will reflect on the impact of the changes we have made, offering perspectives from ourselves as clinicians, from a referrer and from the parent of an autistic AAC user who has accessed our service. A year into delivering our course on Autism and AAC, we will discuss the impact this has had and the reactions we have encountered when presenting viewpoints that often challenge speech and language therapy theory and practice. We will relate this to the Neurodiversity Zones of Growth (Kerry Murphy, 2023) and discuss the challenge of affecting change when many AAC service delivery models are anchored in the medical model of disability and pathologisation of autism (Brea-Spahn and Bauler, 2023). The popularity of our Autism and AAC course has shown us that there is growing appetite for information regarding neurodiversity affirming AAC practice. We will share our experiences of managing the overwhelming interest in the course alongside managing the demands of an increasing number of referrals for non-speaking autistic individuals. We have considered how to adapt the course for different audiences and ways we can share the content beyond the boundaries of our service area.

### References (Optional)

Brea-Spahn, M.R. and Bauler, C.V. (2023) 'Where Do You Anchor Your Beliefs? An Invitation to Interrogate Dominant Ideologies of Language and Languaging in Speech-Language Pathology', *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 54(3), pp. 675–687. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1044/2023\\_LSHSS-22-00135](https://doi.org/10.1044/2023_LSHSS-22-00135). Kerry Murphy (2023) The Neurodiversity Growth Zone, [www.eyfs4me.com](http://www.eyfs4me.com). Available at: <https://www.eyfs4me.com/general-9-2> (Accessed: 26 February 2024).

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## 1.3: Worlds apart – a cerebral palsy perspective on communicating and learning in a second language

Graz, Heather - Author; Qi, Huiwen - Co-Author

### Submission ID

108

### Format

Platform

### Submission Topic



Personal Stories and Case Studies

**Abstract**

We live in a global world where advances in technology and transport make it possible to live, learn and work in a different place to where one was born and grew up. Being able to understand and use a language well enough to achieve one's goals plays a key role in the success of these opportunities. For people with communication difficulties, this includes having access to the right augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) and/ or assistive technology (AT) tools and having opportunity to learn the language of their new country. We present a first-hand account of communication-related experiences of a Chinese student with cerebral palsy who studied a postgraduate degree in Britain. In this presentation we cover topics including use of AAC strategies and AT devices for communication and learning as a non-native English speaker; learning English as a second language as an adult student; managing cerebral palsy-related challenges in a new country, and different experiences of cerebral palsy across western and eastern cultures. Finally, we present tips and recommendations for other students with cerebral palsy who may be considering moving abroad to study, work or live.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

**1.4: Stories of Success: How Students who rely on AAC can thrive in a Mainstream Setting.**

Madera, Annamaria - Author; Stanton, Marion - Co-Author; Col-Cats, Kizzy - Co-Author; Rota, Stefania - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

55

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Personal Stories and Case Studies

**Abstract**

How can professionals work together to ensure AAC users' barriers to learning and inclusion are overcome in Mainstream Educational Settings? This Platform Presentation will provide an overview of personal stories and case studies that demonstrate how professionals can work collaboratively to successfully support AAC users in mainstream educational settings to communicate and access the curriculum. Presenters will provide practical tips and strategies

that have effectively been used in mainstream schools to ensure an inclusive learning environment and will also consider what inclusion means from a student AAC User's perspective. There is an increasing emphasis on the need for inclusive practice in Education, with the spotlight moving away from Special Needs Schools and towards inclusion with Mainstream educational settings where possible for learners with special educational needs. Many professionals face a growing demand for educational placements and support for students who have communication and or learning difficulties within traditional mainstream settings. The presentation will outline a model of how inclusion for AAC users can look and what is needed to ensure students who rely on AAC are able to thrive within mainstream education. The effective use of support staff, specialised AAC software, curriculum adaptations, professional training opportunities and collaborative working form the basis of this. This Paper/Presentation is Sponsored by Communication and Learning Enterprises – a not for profit organisation that supports AAC Users in Education.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

**Details of sponsorship**

Communication and Learning Enterprises Ltd (office@candleaac.com)

## **1.5: AAC and Literacy – a specialised AAC service exploring literacy practice**

Bailey, Susie - Author

**Submission ID**

82

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

'How do I teach literacy to them?' This is the most common question I am asked by teachers (and parents), in my role as Advisory Teacher for the Communication Aid Service East of England (CASEE). Our service works with across the full age range of young people and who have a variety of AAC needs and are at different points of their literacy journey. People supporting children using AAC understand the difference developing literacy skills can make to enable fully autonomous communication. This presentation tells the story of how my colleagues and I at CASEE, have started to develop AAC and literacy training as part of our

training package, for whole schools and for individuals. The training is based on The Comprehensive Literacy for All approach (Erickson, Koppenhaver 2019) and this presentation describes my learning journey, and the reflections of teachers and schools involved and putting theory into practice. It addresses the key questions of:

- What were the necessary 'starting points' for the teachers and schools?
- What were the common barriers and how were they addressed?
- How was the training changed and adapted?
- What was the feedback from the school on the impact of the training?
- Where do we go from here?

### **References (Optional)**

Erickson, K and Koppenhaver, D (2020) Comprehensive Literacy for All: Teaching Students with Significant Disabilities to Read and Write. Brookes Publishing Co

### **Level**

General Session

### **Age Group**

Child

## **1.6: What don't we know? A workshop about knowledge gaps and how to fill them**

Broomfield, Katherine - Author; Lee, Andrea - Co-Author

### **Submission ID**

42

### **Format**

Workshop

### **Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

### **Abstract**

The presenters both trained as speech and language therapists (SLTs) over 20 years ago. The theories and training that underpin SLT clinical practice have changed very little in the last two decades and yet the availability of AAC has changed dramatically. We have both had cause to notice a gap between the knowledge about communication from our clinical training, the lens through which we were trained to view communication success, and the tools and skills that we now need to inform our practice. Katherine discovered that she was unable to fully understand or represent the experience of communicating using AAC in her research if she only attended to the speech and language messages available in the data. She had to look more deeply into the nature of the interaction, the context in which it took place and the relationship between the person using AAC and their communication

partner to really get to the nub of where shared understanding was generated<sup>1</sup>. Within her clinical practice, Andrea frequently observes that goals for AAC intervention are not always aligned contemporary developments about the nature of personal, social, and emotional communication that is important to people who use AAC<sup>2</sup>. Whilst some areas of AAC may remain appropriate for post qualification CPD, the authors believe the contemporary theories, evidence base and observation skills which underpin holistic AAC assessment and support need to be embedded in core SLT training<sup>3</sup>. We invite anyone with experience of or insight into this knowledge gap to join us at this interactive workshop to explore what we don't know, what we should know, and how we can better educate ourselves and each other about communicating using AAC. We aim to take the feedback from this workshop back to our professional body, the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

### References (Optional)

1. Broomfield K, Sage K, Jones GL, Judge S, James D. The Unspoken Voice: Applying John Shotter's Dialogic Lens to Qualitative Data from People Who have Communication Difficulties. *Qualitative Health Research*. 2023;33(1-2):3-12.  
doi:10.1177/10497323221139803
2. Kirsi A., Launonen, K., Smith, M. M., Stadskleiv, K., and Tetzchner, S., von. 'Strategies in Conveying Information about Unshared Events Using Aided Communication'. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy* 38, no. 1 (1 February 2022): 78–94.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/02656590211050865>.
3. Murray, J., Lynch, L., Goldbart, J., Moulam, L., Judge, S., Webb, M., Jayes, M., et al. 'The Decision-Making Process in Recommending Electronic Communication Aids for Children and Young People Who Are Non-Speaking: The I-ASC Mixed-Methods Study'. *Health Services and Delivery Research* 8, no. 45 (November 2020): 1–158.  
<https://doi.org/10.3310/hsdr08450>

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## 1.7: Karl Dean AAC Stories

Dean, Karl - Author

### Submission ID

53

### Format

Platform

### Submission Topic

Personal Stories and Case Studies

**Abstract**

I am a 51-year-old man, I have been using AAC since I was 15 years old, so my talk will be about my experiences using AAC's. I have a lot of funny stories using my AAC. When I was 15 years old, I received a light talker. It was the first voice synthesizer augmentative communication device, and it was not very clear. Without my light talker I wouldn't be able to do many things. I don't think I would have got on as well at college, as I didn't have any friends coming with me. As I went to a 'special' school, so it was a big step to go into a mainstream college and then University. The light talker was a valuable tool for socializing. For the first few years at college, I learnt more outside the classroom by socializing. It was like going into a new world. The light talker has made me much more independent as I can order take ways. (especially important) I used to always to go into the pizza shop, as it was easy access to get into. They would get the money out of my pocket after I had typed in the order. Then they would put the food in the bag and hang it on my wheelchair. I have done speeches before for organisations and also I am a standup /sit down comedian, Here is me on the stage <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLzP5laxs8I>

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## 1.8: Conn@ct, development of an intervention for communicative participation with peers.

Koster, Sandra - Author; Cornel, Ans - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

25

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Best Research Evidence

**Abstract**

Within a partnership of AAC specialists, a question arose in 2022 regarding therapy for young adults between the ages of 18-30 years (post-school) with complex communication needs. Despite their high-tech speech-generating devices, these young adults often have difficulty with communicative participation with peers. Due to limited communication, they have less opportunities to build and maintain social relationships. Intervention Conn@ct has been developed to improve this communicative participation. It is based on scientific research consisting of systematic literature search, semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire. Multi-component intervention Conn@ct focuses on the most important factors

that emerged from this research: stimulating social interaction between peers through supporting staff in disability support services or parents at home, strengthening the social network of the young adult and the use of new technology. The young adults are encouraged to actively participate throughout the entire intervention process. The process starts with mapping the social network, methods of expression and skills of the individual, current technology use, strategies used by communication partners and shared interests or activities with peers. Based on these shared interests and activities we think of how the young adults can get in touch more easily. This can be achieved by applying quick ready-made phrases within these joint activities, by sharing photos and videos or by using social media. The supporting staff and parents receive training on how to stimulate social interaction with peers. Parents and support staff are also involved to explore with the young adult how he/she can expand the social network by undertaking new activities or further developing social roles. In the pilot phase that is currently running, it has already been experienced that Conn@ct increases communicative participation. The presentation provides an overview of the Conn@ct research and intervention.

### References (Optional)

- Bosse, I., Renner, G., Wilkens, L. (2020). Social Media and Internet Use Patterns by Adolescents With Complex Communication Needs. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 51, 1024–1036. [https://doi.org/10.1044/2020\\_LSHSS-19-00072](https://doi.org/10.1044/2020_LSHSS-19-00072)
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- García, J.C., Díez, E., Wojcik, D.Z., Santamaría, M. (2020). Communication Support Needs in Adults with Intellectual Disabilities and Its Relation to Quality of Life. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17. Geraadpleegd op 3 oktober 2022, van [https://mdpi-res.com/ijerph/ijerph-17-07370/article\\_deploy/ijerph-17-07370-v2.pdf](https://mdpi-res.com/ijerph/ijerph-17-07370/article_deploy/ijerph-17-07370-v2.pdf)
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- Teachman, G., McDonough, P., Macarthur, C., Gibson, B.E., (2020). Interrogating inclusion with youths who use augmentative and alternative communication. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 42(5), 1108-1122. doi: 10.1111/1467-9566.13087

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

Adolescent

## 2.1: Our Futures: Update

Moulam, Beth - Author; Hewson, Helen - Author; Whittle, Helen - Co-Author; Murphy-Mann, Saffron - Co-Author

### Submission ID

83

### Format

Platform

### Submission Topic

Personal Stories and Case Studies

### Abstract

At CM2023 Helen Hewson and Beth Moulam ran 2 workshops with AAC users to understand what they wanted for their futures. The 'Our Futures' findings around the support and training AAC users wanted in the short, medium, and long term were then fed back to the Board of Trustees in November 2023. The findings were distilled down to priorities, based on the workshop attendee's feedback. These include:

- Developing leadership skills
- Exploring workplace opportunities through training
- Promoting greater AAC user self-knowledge of their own resources including hardware capabilities and software utilisation. This information has been instrumental in focusing the Trustees on the future needs of all membership groups, including AAC users, and resulted in:
  - Developing the conference theme of Empowerment for All for 2024.
  - Setting up a new Trustees sub-group to promote the different community groups within the membership. The session will update on work in progress including the intention to survey AAC users, the membership generally, and the wider AAC community about their priorities for the future.

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## 2.2: A service evaluation of AAC provision for people with aphasia

Ackford, Shani - Author

### Submission ID

39

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

Providing Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) for people with aphasia (PWA) can be challenging as difficulties with accessing spoken and written language can also make accessing powered (high tech) AAC difficult. The literature points to two ways to present AAC vocabulary for PWA: grid displays (Petroi & Corwin, 2014) and visual scene displays (VSD) (Blackstone, 2004; Dietz, 2006). The success of powered AAC for PWA is also influenced by how well the AAC system matches the skills of the PWA, and the support provided by communication partners (Taylor et al., 2019). As an SLT in a Specialised AAC Service, I wondered what outcomes we were achieving with this group and how we could improve the service we provide for PWA who require specialist AAC assessment. I completed a service evaluation through a retrospective case note review, with objectives to gather data on the following: - The AAC display designs recommended and provided for loan. - Therapy Outcome Measures (TOMs) (Enderby & John, 2019). - Progress towards goals set, situations in which AAC was used and linguistic complexity of utterances. The results showed that as a service we had recommended mostly grid displays and these were largely highly bespoke, outcome measures showed increased activity and participation, but little-no change in wellbeing, and 25% of the PWA did not keep their powered AAC. In this presentation, I will outline the literature that informed the service evaluation, present the results, and discuss the conclusions and service changes made. I will also outline future plans including collaborating with PWA through PPI to develop research questions.

**References (Optional)**

Blackstone, S.W. (2004). 'Visual Scene Displays'. *Augmentative Communication News*, 16:2, p.1-15. Dietz, A., McKelvey, M., and Beukelman, D. (2006). 'Visual Scene Displays (VSD): New AAC Interfaces for Persons with Aphasia'. *Perspectives on Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 15, p.13–17. Enderby, P. and John, A. (2019). *Therapy Outcome Measure: User Guide and Scales*. J&R Press Ltd. Petroi, D., Koul, R., and Corwin, M. (2014). 'Effect of number of graphic symbols, levels, and listening conditions on symbol identification and latency in persons with aphasia'. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 30, p.40–54. Taylor, S., Wallace, S.J., and Wallace S.E. (2019). 'High-Technology Augmentative and Alternative Communication in Poststroke Aphasia: A Review of the Factors That Contribute to Successful Augmentative and Alternative Communication Use'. *Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups*, Vol. 4, p.464–473.

**Level**

Specialist Session

**Age Group**

Adult



## 2.3: Beyond communication: Enhancing language and literacy in education with tailored AAC and technology solutions

Graz, Heather - Author; Tyler, Becky - Co-Author; McNaught, Kirsty - Co-Author

### Submission ID

106

### Format

Platform

### Submission Topic

Personal Stories and Case Studies

### Abstract

In order for an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) user to make the most out of education and training opportunities, it is essential to have an AAC system that is personally-relevant and customised to one's individual needs and preferences. However, having the AAC system is only a first step in being able to learn and communicate as easily as other students. This is because the communication challenges in higher education can be extremely varied and dynamic. These challenges become even larger when reading and/ or writing difficulties are also present, such as those associated with dyslexia. As a team of presenters, we share a case study that showcases a collaborative approach to solving these challenges, ensuring access to a university curriculum and demonstrating learning and knowledge by an expert eye-gaze AAC user who has dyslexia. The AAC user will describe their experience of overcoming these literacy-related challenges in higher education. A technology consultant and postgraduate researcher will explain how technology was used to do this. We will present some of the processes we have developed for streamlining the identification of new specialist vocabulary and keeping the student's AAC device up to date, as well as supporting dyslexia-related literacy challenges. We discuss ways we worked on to overcome specific spelling difficulties so that the AAC device's word prediction functionality could be used more confidently with unfamiliar words. We finally present insights relating to wider study skill challenges, and considerations to be kept in mind as this evolving intervention package moves forward.

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## **LT2.4: The International Communication Rights Alliance: collaborating to uphold communication rights**

Prain, Meredith - Author; Matthew, Jacob - Author; Moulam, Beth - Co-Author

### **Submission ID**

36

### **Format**

Lightning Talk

### **Submission Topic**

Best Research Evidence

### **Abstract**

Communication needs arise from a broad range of disabilities including physical, cognitive and sensory. It is also recognised that many people have multiple disabilities creating complex and individual communication needs. The International Communication Rights Alliance (ICRA) formed in 2020, originally as an ISAAC initiated UNCRPD working group. Membership of the ICRA is diverse and includes people from across the globe representing relevant State, National and International bodies including ISAAC, ICEVI, WFDB, and Dbl, as well as individuals with a specific interest in communication rights. Since it's formation, the ICRA has: - Developed policy and call to action documents - Created a repository of accessible COVID-19 resources - Given two presentations to the UNCRPD committee - Provided a workshop to members on how to engage with the CRPD reporting process - Undertaken an analysis of CRPD concluding statements with relation to communication rights This presentation will provide an overview of the ICRA and the work undertaken to date, and present the findings of an analysis of the concluding statements of the responses of the CRPD committee to reports from 38 countries. The findings highlight key areas requiring advocacy with regard to communication rights.

### **Level**

General Session

### **Age Group**

All Ages

## **LT2.4: Enhancing Classroom Communication: Tips for Effective Modelling and Overcoming Barriers**

Lawrence, Jenny - Author

### **Submission ID**

13

**Format**

Lightning Talk

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

Successful implementation and retention of an AAC device requires effective and consistent modelling within a person's everyday environments. For children therefore, this includes both at home and at school. However, there are often a number of barriers which can prevent AAC being embedded within the classroom effectively. Through speaking with education professionals, it is often reported that some of the most common barriers include:

- Learning how to navigate the different devices and vocabularies within the classroom.
- Understanding the practical steps to creating a total communication environment.
- Considering ways to increase access to the curriculum for AAC users. This presentation will highlight some real-life solutions which will support delegates to navigate these challenges within their own settings. Attendees will also be provided with practical resources to implement within their own classroom. During this presentation, I will use Liberator products to demonstrate the features I will discuss. However, the ideas can also be implemented with other AAC supplier products.

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

Child

**Details of sponsorship**

I am an employee of Liberator Ltd.

**LT2.4: Visual interaction analysis as a method of capturing talk, visible actions, and unspoken orientation to artefacts in multi-party interactions mediated through AAC.**

Hrastelj, Laura - Author

**Submission ID**

76

**Format**

Lightning Talk

**Submission Topic**

Best Research Evidence

**Abstract**

This lightning talk will highlight a potentially useful method of video analysis for researchers interested in interactions mediated through AAC, demonstrated with a worked example from the author's PhD project. The study aimed to examine multi-party interactions mediated through hi-tech AAC in a special education setting. As part of the project, children (n=3) and adults (n=4) could use creative methods such as photography and collaging to explore the children's views on school. Consequently, the video analysis method needed to capture talk and visible actions as well as the participant's orientation to the material artefacts in their environment. Visual interaction analysis (Heath and Luff, 2018) was originally designed for the qualitative analysis of workplace interactions such as surgery (Heath et al, 2018) where unspoken orientation to artefacts in the interactional context is critical. It combines elements of Conversation Analysis (CA) used in many AAC interaction studies (Higginbotham and Engelke, 2013) whilst having the additional benefit of illustrating the visual in minute detail. This is particularly helpful in capturing the everyday interactions of children who use AAC but are multi-modal communicators as there are frequently instances where no talk (spoken or AAC utterances) is observed, and analysis methods must fully capture the child's use of other communication modes. The approach was time consuming but revealed how both adults and children contribute to co-construction processes in multi-party interactions mediated through AAC. It is a methodology that values the participant's skills and techniques in achieving their own aims and practices. For researchers looking to illuminate visual co-construction processes involved AAC interactions and highlight the skills and achievements of children who are learning to become aided communicators, visual interaction analysis is a thoroughly useful tool.

**References (Optional)**

Heath, C. and Luff, P. (2018) 'The Naturalistic Experiment: Video and Organizational Interaction.' *Organizational Research Methods*, 21(2) pp. 466-488. Heath, C., Luff, P., Sanchez-Svensson, M. and Nicholls, M. (2018) 'Exchanging implements: the micro-materialities of multidisciplinary work in the operating theatre.' *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 40(2), 2018/02/01, pp. 297-313. Higginbotham, D. J. and Engelke, C. R. (2013) 'A Primer for Doing Talk-in-interaction Research in Augmentative and Alternative Communication.' *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 29(1) pp. 3-19

**Level**

Specialist Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## 2.5: Linguistic Interventions for children developing language via AAC: a scoping review

Martin, Catherine - Author; Blandford, Hannah - Co-Author; Chatzidamianos, Gerasimos - Co-Author; Jayes, Mark - Co-Author; Rodgers, Lucy - Co-Author; Murray, Janice - Co-Author

### Submission ID

35

### Format

Platform

### Submission Topic

Best Research Evidence

### Abstract

Children who use AAC are often developing language users and increase their linguistic skills via AAC. Much of the existing literature focuses on how to choose an appropriate AAC system for a child and how to organise the vocabulary within the system. Less is known about how to enable children to develop their linguistic, and specifically semantic and grammar skills, whilst they learn to communicate. The impact of this knowledge gap is that children using AAC may not be supported to develop their linguistic skills in line with their potential. This National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) funded scoping review aims to explore the breadth and depth of the literature regarding linguistic interventions used with child AAC users. It aims to describe the variety of approaches used including those developed for speech and adapted for AAC use. This will enable mapping of the approaches available for SLTs, schools and families supporting child AAC users linguistic development. The study follows the Joanna Briggs Institute scoping review methodology (Aromataris et al 2024) and PRISMA-ScR checklist (Tricco et al 2018). Relevant peer reviewed literature will be identified using a published protocol and search strategy. Data will be extracted to map available information related to these questions: \*How children's linguistic skills are described and assessed. \*How different linguistic interventions are chosen and who is involved in decision-making \*Which linguistic skills the interventions target. \*How interventions are delivered i.e. who is involved and where they are delivered and the frequency of sessions \*What outcomes are achieved and the nature of the relationship between outcomes and baseline characteristics of research participants. The findings will summarise the questions that are answered by the available literature and identifying gaps. This presentation will explore the process of completing a scoping review and present preliminary findings.

### References (Optional)

(1) Aromataris E, Lockwood C, Porritt K, Pilla B, Jordan Z, editors. JBI Manual for Evidence Synthesis. JBI; 2024. Available from: <https://synthesismanual.jbi.global>. <https://doi.org/10.46658/JBIMES-24-01> (2) Tricco, A.C., Lillie, E., Zarin, W., O'Brien, K.K., Colquhoun, H., Levac, D., Moher, D., Peters, M.D., Horsley, T., Weeks, L. and Hempel, S., 2018. PRISMA extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR): checklist and explanation. *Annals of internal medicine*, 169(7), pp.467-473.

### Level

Specialist Session

**Age Group**

Child

## 2.6: Self-created Film, AAC and Story-sharing in school and home!

Legel, Mascha - Author; Grove, Nicola - Co-Author; Soto, Gloria - Co-Author; Waller, Annalu - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

104

**Format**

Workshop

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

How might the enabling advantages of audiovisual-technology be harnessed to support and enrich access to shared personal narratives, at home and at school? We introduce and describe a novel teaching method in combination with a research method (for evaluation): Film as Observable Communication (FaOC) explores how audiovisual/film-media, created by aided narrators themselves, may be used as one of the underpinning building blocks in personal storytelling. As individuals, in order to share our stories dynamically, we may adopt strategies from a diverse constellation of resources, for example: spoken/written/signed language; gestures; eye-pointing; facial expressions and, as described here, other visual cues such as images. Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) technologies and/or supports assist people with limited functional speech in expressing their thoughts, ideas, and emotions. The unique, multimodal properties of self-created film distinguish it as a practical medium for storytelling, one that goes beyond the conventional borders of language. A strength of today's increasingly affordable audiovisual digital technology is that we now have the means to support AAC users, also with severe motor disabilities, in becoming their own filmmaker-storyteller. A mobile phone, or in combination with AAC devices, can assist filmmakers in capturing their favourite moments, from their own perspectives. Most important in the FaOC-process, is the employment of these film-resources during a conversation, to share stories. How useful and fun would it be to merge self-created film and AAC-technology to support users in sharing their stories? In this presentation, with video-examples, we describe the use of ethnographic methods in combining film-media with AAC-technologies, both in school and at home. Alongside some tips to explore the use of self-created film in story-sharing (Grove, 2014), the first FaOC-research results will be shared. Bring your own unique personal film-footage to share your story at the workshop, to explore the possibilities of Images and Words!

### References (Optional)

Legel, M., Soto, G., Grove, N., & Waller, A. (2017, September). Musketeers for Storytelling and Film in AAC. In Communication Matters: CM2017 National AAC Conference. Legel, M., Grove, N., Soto, G., Waller, A., Steenbergen, B., Van Balkom, H., & Deckers, S. (2018, July). How was your day? My Film, My Story! teaching method. In 18th Biennial Conference of the International Society of Augmentative and Alternative Communication: AACcess All Areas. Grove, N. (2014). The Big Book of @Storysharing. Speechmark/RKP

### Level

Introductory Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## 2.7: Rejoice the Revoice! Exploring the Concept of Technoableism from AAC User's Perspectives

Lee, Andrea - Author; Boyes, David - Co-Author; Toogood, Jonathan - Co-Author; Preece, Jamie - Co-Author; Moran, Charlie - Co-Author

### Submission ID

65

### Format

Platform

### Submission Topic

Personal Stories and Case Studies

### Abstract

The presenters are all members of an AAC user research forum. This is an AAC user led group and members feel that it is important that all methods of AAC are given equal value. Andrea Lee and Charlie Moran are speech and language therapists and will present the concept of voicing or re-voicing as a highly valuable AAC tool. These methods include the use of a chosen speaking partner who the AAC users instruct to give voice to messages which may be produced through gesture, signing, paper-based AAC or speech which is only intelligible to familiar partners. In addition, users have found many situations when messages produced on high tech AAC devices need re-voicing which they will demonstrate and discuss. The concept of technoableism will be introduced based on the definition that it is "a belief in the power of technology that considers the elimination of disability a good thing, something we should strive for" (Shew, 2023) and listener's will be asked to reflect on potential personal clinical bias towards different AAC methods that they may unintentionally be showing in their practice. AAC users Jamie Preece, David Boyes and Johnathan Toogood will share their personal experiences of using partner re-voicing as an AAC tool and how this has not always been valued or accepted. They will demonstrate the differences

in their styles and their preferences. They will each then share stories of times when they have faced normativist or technoableist discrimination due to their choice to use this method of AAC. Andrea will then conclude the session providing a clinical perspective on the need to advocate for user's rights to choose and use their preferred methods and the need to support both users and partners to develop the skills and partnership required for voicing or re-voicing.

**References (Optional)**

Shew, A. (2023). Against Technoableism. W.W.Norton & Company Ltd.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## **2.8: 3-D animation in interactive on-screen language assessment for people with learning and physical disabilities who need AAC**

Doherty, Andrew - Co-Author; Brophy-Arnott, Bernadette - Co-Author; Arnott, John - Author; Zografistou, Dimitra - Co-Author; Whittles, Dearbhail - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

86

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Best Research Evidence

**Abstract**

A previous investigation on interactive on-screen language assessment showed positive outcomes with clinicians and people with learning disabilities and communication difficulties [1], with particular significance for those who cannot manipulate, or interact with, real physical objects. Use of AAC (augmentative and alternative communication) can assist people with cognitive, physical and communication impairments [2]. It is important therefore that clinicians can assess their language and physical skills accurately when AAC technology is to be recommended. A client with physical impairment may not be able to interact appropriately with real objects, however, making accurate language assessment using conventional methods challenging for the clinician [3,4]. Computer-based on-screen language assessment involves a client carrying out tasks for a clinician, selecting and moving symbols and images on-screen, allowing the clinician to assess their language level



and record their progress. Previous project work on this used two-dimensional (2-D) on-screen representation of items [1]. Three-dimensional (3-D) imagery with animation was identified then as a significant avenue for further investigation, potentially allowing a greater level of realism in the movement of items relative to each other and a more detailed language level assessment. Relatively complex linguistic concepts might be represented and assessed more easily. 3-D representation with animation was therefore developed and evaluated with clinicians and with adult clients who had learning disabilities and physical and communication difficulties. Clinicians responded very positively to the 3-D presentation during usability review and proposed refinements for the design. Clients were able to carry out tasks successfully on the system and expressed positive views about it in a Talking Mats® exercise. An important outcome was that a more detailed exploration of client understanding of concepts such as prepositions (e.g. “under”, “in”) could be attempted using the greater realism and flexibility of the 3-D display.

### References (Optional)

1. Oliver Simpson, Bernadette Brophy-Arnott, John Arnott and Nicola Stewart. 2024. Development of an interactive computer-based language screening system for people with learning and physical disabilities who require AAC. *Communication Matters Journal*, 38:1, 7-10.
2. David R. Beukelman and Janice Light. 2020. *Augmentative & Alternative Communication: Supporting Children and Adults with Complex Communication Needs*. (5th Edition). Brookes Publishing Co., Baltimore, USA. p.303.
3. Darren Chadwick, Susan Buell, and Juliet Goldbart. 2019. Approaches to communication assessment with children and adults with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 32: 336-358.
4. Mark Moseley, Linsey Howart, Leigh McLoughlin, Sarah Gilling and Diane Lewis. 2021. Accessible digital assessments of temporal, spatial, or movement concepts for profoundly motor impaired and non-verbal individuals: a pilot study. *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive technology*, 16: 350-360.

### Level

Specialist Session

### Age Group

Adult

## 3.1: Learning Language and Vocabulary as an adult using AAC.

Stack, Scott - Co-Author; King, Judy - Author

### Submission ID

17

### Format

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Personal Stories and Case Studies

**Abstract**

We all learn new language skills and vocabulary throughout our lives. However, as adults we can find it more difficult to learn new things, with challenges of opportunity, time, and memory! As an adult using AAC, I wanted to improve my language skills and also use a wider range of vocabulary. However, I have had some challenges along the way and continue to do so! My older body means I get more tired, and my older mind affects my memory. All this affects my motivation and confidence. Learning communication at school happened throughout the whole day. We were immersed in Language, Learning and Living! As an adult, where I live, I am the only AAC user. I have less opportunities to communicate and staff don't give me time, so I say "yes" a lot! I know I want to improve my language skills and have a Speech and Language Therapist weekly to assist me. Print outs of symbols get tidied away, staff don't have time to chat with me, and talking to myself could get me into trouble! I feel angry when I can't remember the words and I worry about making mistakes. The only time that I meet another person using AAC is at Communication Matters. I haven't yet found a group of older adults using AAC to meet up with. This presentation will discuss the difficulties of learning new vocabulary and language skills, the challenges of doing this in a care home, the positives, and the strategies to overcome the challenges. I will discuss some tips for learning new vocabulary and give some ideas for working on language skills. It will conclude with the 5 Golden Rules of Adult AAC Language Learning!

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

### **3.3: Empowering Voices: AAC Safeguarding Strategies**

Sharples, Andrea - Author; Sephton, Francesca - Author; Glynn, Megan - Co-Author; Robinson, Rebecca - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

69

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

This presentation will explore the distinct hurdles faced by AAC users when it comes to understanding and communicating safeguarding information. We'll delve into the statistics concerning abuse among disabled individuals to highlight the critical need for safeguarding support for AAC users. ATtherapy will provide insights into their organisation and show some bespoke resources designed to aid AAC users in early intervention and prevention of safeguarding issues. Anonymised case studies will be discussed to illustrate practical applications. Join us for an interactive discussion on existing safeguarding tools and strategies beneficial for AAC users and their support network.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

**LT3.4: Empowered by the 'Ripple Effect'.**

Boyle, Melanie - Author

**Submission ID**

49

**Format**

Lightning Talk

**Submission Topic**

Personal Stories and Case Studies

**Abstract**

In this lightning presentation we will delve into a mother's journey to finding her child's voice through AAC. Communication-Angel is an AAC consultancy offering a range of services to support AAC communication partners. We aim to educate and empower communication partners to create meaningful connections with their AAC users. Beth Moulam wrote a blog post back in January 2024 titled The Ripple Effect. In it she describes a need for change and raises awareness of how communication partners can empower AAC users. "Change comes from bottom-up and top-down processes...I would describe the bottom-up as the ripple effect." Beth Moulam, <https://www.bethmoulam.com/the-ripple-effect/> The participant in our case study experienced and is continuing to experience a ripple effect which stemmed from her first signing up to Communication-Angel's AAC Club. She has changed the attitudes of others in her child's support network, changed her own teaching style and prompted her child's school to embark on their own communication partner journey through in-service training and in school AAC coaching. The ripple effect has reached young people beyond her own child. This legacy continues to travel and grow as practices change and experiences of parents and teachers are shared. Join us to learn more about this inspirational journey.

### References (Optional)

<https://www.bethmoulam.com/the-ripple-effect/> Kent-Walsh J, Murza KA, Malani MD, Binger C. Effects of Communication Partner Instruction on the Communication of Individuals using AAC: A Meta-Analysis. *Augment Altern Commun.* 2015;31(4):271-84. doi: 10.3109/07434618.2015.1052153. Epub 2015 Jun 10. PMID: 26059542. Senner, J. E., Post, K. A., Baud, M. R., Patterson, B., Bolin, B., Lopez, J. & Williams, E. (2019). Effects of parent instruction in partner-augmented input on parent and child speech generating device use. *Technology and Disability*, 31, 27-38. DOI: 10.3233/TAD-190228

### Level

Introductory Session

### Age Group

Child

### Details of sponsorship

Communication-Angel is an AAC Consultancy training families and educators in using AAC with non-speaking children.

## LT3.4: AI: Sharing your Magical Story, with your Own Captured Images and Words!

Legel, Mascha - Author; Norrie, Christopher - Author; Deckers, Stijn - Co-Author; Spanjers, Ronald - Co-Author; van Balkom, Hans - Co-Author

### Submission ID

105

### Format

Lightning Talk

### Submission Topic

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

### Abstract

Words are the building blocks of language and communication. If you want to say something and communicate with others, you need words. If you experience difficulties with speech, or live with complex communication needs (CCN) and/or motoric impairments, learning language can be challenging. Telling a personal story often costs a child with CCN a lot of time and energy to find and use the correct words. Often the images and words of their personal experiences are prepared or programmed into their augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) supports by others (parents, teachers or speech therapists), for example, into a BIGmack (single switch device), a back-and-forth booklet, or a speech generating device, so that the child can tell their personal story. Modern AI

technologies, such as automated image object recognition, offer novel and unique possibilities for this target population to navigate their language acquisition journey more independently, and build up a personalized database of vocabulary. Children can collect images and automatically recognize words from their own perspectives. By moving through the world with an AI app on a mobile-device, users can discover and capture the world of words proactively. This offers new opportunities, but also presents many challenges. Standard AI apps remain very limited in terms of object recognition, and are often not accessible by people with a physical disability and/or who need AAC support. In order to be able to investigate what this unique technology can offer children with little or no natural speech, a user-driven prototyping approach was initiated. A Dutch-Scottish team has developed a prototype, named Wizard of Words, to empower children with CCN to benefit from intelligent image processing technologies to explore their world. During the presentation, results from the first case study will be shared...and some magical moments in the design process will be unveiled.

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## **LT3.4: AAC Implementation through Joint Working in a Special School**

O'Donoghue, Anne - Author; Gallimore, Alice - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

88

**Format**

Lightning Talk

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

We propose a Lightning Talk on the topic of an AAC implementation project “AAC Pilot Project” that we completed across an academic year in a Special School for Autistic children and young people. This was a joint project completed with education staff at the school, school-employed Speech and Language Therapists and an NHS Speech and Language Therapy Team. At the time of an initial audit, no high-tech AAC was being used in the school and PECS was the preferred form of AAC, with little extension of this system to more robust vocabularies. Practices did not reflect current neurodiversity-affirming thinking. The way the therapy teams were structured in the school impeded a joined-up approach. We had to change our way of working to a more collaborative approach to ensure that a whole school approach could be implemented. Our talk will celebrate the benefits of joint working having a

positive impact for the children and young people and their families. We will cover how we:

- Developed the project from an initial audit to establish a baseline of AAC usage to the final outcomes of the project.
- Established an AAC Working Party with Senior Leaders to drive the project.
- Gathered baseline information and used TOMS measures (Therapy Outcome Measures).
- Created the role of AAC Champions, to have advocates for AAC users and to cascade information within the staff team.
- Made links with Smartbox and facilitated a staff and parent training session.
- We will cover the challenges and benefits of the NHS and school-based SLTs working as partners to ensure the best service for children and families. Outcomes from our project showed success across TOMS measures. Two years on AAC continues to be embedded within the school.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## **LT3.4: Enhancing AAC with iOS Multitasking**

Lawrence, Jenny - Author

**Submission ID**

52

**Format**

Lightning Talk

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

The introduction of multitasking features in iOS devices offers users a more integrated and efficient AAC experience by allowing them to use more than one app simultaneously. Two of the key multitasking features available are “Split View” where two apps appear one the screen side by side and “Slide Over” where one app appears in a smaller window at one side of the screen that can be swiped away when not in use. The key benefit of multitasking is that it allows someone to continue to communicate using their AAC app while engaging with another app. This lightning talk will explore five ways in which iOS multitasking capabilities can be used in combination with AAC apps to enhance communication across different aspects of life with an aim to prompt discussion about how this can also increase participation and independence. During this presentation, I will use PRC-Salttillo apps to demonstrate the features I will discuss. However, the ideas can also be implemented with other AAC apps.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

**Details of sponsorship**

I am an employee of Liberator Ltd.

## **LT3.4: Secondment Opportunities in AAC Specialist Assessment Services for Community Speech and Language Therapists**

Duddy, Becky - Author

**Submission ID**

60

**Format**

Lightning Talk

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

This presentation will examine the benefits of offering a secondment to AAC specialist assessment service from a community Speech and Language Therapist perspective. SCTCI (Scottish Centre of Technology for the Communication Impaired) was set up in 1987. Our team carry out AAC assessments across Scotland in 12 contracted healthboards. We are a Team of Speech and Language Therapists and Health Care Support Workers who have specialised into technology-based communication. We provide support to SLT teams during the process of assessing an individual who would benefit from AAC. This team comprises of a manager, two SLTs and two Health Care Support Workers. In late 2023 we offered an 18 month seconded post which was filled by a Community Paediatric SLT. This talk will be presented by our seconded SLT, Becky Duddy. Becky will describe key ways she was supported by her teammates as she navigated her new role. The aim of sharing this information is to help others who are starting out in an AAC assessment role and to help teams who are taking on new members or offering seconded positions. Becky will discuss the lessons learned during secondment which can be taken back to SLT community teams. As well as being a team member at SCTCI Becky also has experience of referring to our service for support as a Community Paediatric SLT. Becky will use her experiences to discuss the importance of positive working relationships between community SLT teams and AAC specialist services and sharing AAC knowledge among SLT colleagues.

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

### 3.5: Examining the Evidence on Gestalt Language Processing and Natural Language Acquisition Protocol for Children or Adults: Communication, Behaviour, or Language Outcomes

Hemsley, Bronwyn - Author; Bryant, Lucy - Co-Author; Bowen, Caroline - Co-Author; Shane, Howard - Co-Author; Dixon, Gaenor - Co-Author; Grove, Rachel - Co-Author; Beals, Katharine - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

37

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Best Research Evidence

**Abstract**

This systematic review aimed to identify any language, communication, or behaviour outcomes of interventions based on Natural Language Acquisition (NLA) and Gestalt Language Processing (GLP). In March 2024, the multidisciplinary team [1] searched multiple scientific and grey literature databases and located no controlled or uncontrolled intervention studies. As well as the foundation text on NLA/GLP intervention [2] and two critical book reviews on the theory of natural language acquisition [3,4], there was a small number of peer-reviewed journal articles which contained theoretical commentary and/or described stages of an NLA/GLP intervention [5]. In the 12 years since Blanc (2012) published on “the journey from echolalia to self-generated language” [2], NLA/GLP based interventions have achieved widespread popularity through largely uncritical promotion through the website ‘Meaningful Speech’ [6], and NLA/GLP workshops, webinars, social media, blogs and podcasts [7]. This is concerning in the absence of a strong theoretical foundation or evidence arising from treatment studies. People on the autism spectrum, their parents, and clinicians deserve the highest level of scrutiny of interventions purported to be of benefit. Programs that are not effective cost them learning time and money that could be spent on effective interventions. Independent research in peer-reviewed literature is needed on the outcomes of the intervention on communication, language, and behaviour. In this presentation, we will outline the methods and findings of the systematic review, and what this might mean for clinicians following evidence-based practice. We will also compare



several characteristics of the approach (e.g., neuro-affirming practice; person-centred approach; strengths-based principles; naturalistic play; echolalia as a function of communication) that are not unique to NLA/GLP approaches and are part of well-established language interventions including direct language instruction, aided language stimulation, visual supports for language, augmentative and alternative communication, expansion and elaboration, and modelling of language structures to learn generative language.

### References (Optional)

[1] Hemsley, B., Bryant, L., Bowen, C., Grove, R., Dixon, G., Beals, K., & Shane, H. (2024). A systematic review of gestalt language processing interventions in children or adults with communication disability. PROSPERO International Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews. [https://www.crd.york.ac.uk/prospero/display\\_record.php?RecordID=518468](https://www.crd.york.ac.uk/prospero/display_record.php?RecordID=518468) [2] Blanc, M., Natural language acquisition on the autism spectrum: The journey from echolalia to self-generated language. 2012, Madison, WI: Communication Development Center Madison, WI. [3] Quill, K.A., Book Reviews: The Units of Language Acquisition. Ann M. Peters, Cambridge University Press. First Language, 1983. 4(12): p. 232-238. [4] Gupta, A.F., Book Reviews: The Units of Language Acquisition. Ann M. Peters, Cambridge University Press. Child Journal of Child Language, 1984. 13(1): p. 180-184. [5] Blanc, M., A. Blackwell, and P. Elias, Using the Natural Language Acquisition Protocol to Support Gestalt Language Development. Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups, 2023. 8(6): p. 1279-1286. [6] Meaningful Speech. <https://www.meaningfulspeech.com/> [7] <https://www.meaningfulspeech.com/podcasts>

### Level

Introductory Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## 3.6: The Missing Competency - Getting the Environment Right. How to support Organisational Change.

Leckenby, Katy - Author; McNeilly, Samantha - Co-Author

### Submission ID

40

### Format

Platform

### Submission Topic

Personal Stories and Case Studies

### Abstract

This presentation will cover the importance of getting the environment right when looking at successfully supporting the implementation of AAC. Ace Centre have worked with a selection of schools to look at how to facilitate organisational change and the part that policy can play in that journey for any organisation. Too often the focus is solely on the competency of an individual using AAC and does not look at barriers in the environment that hinder success. The presentation will case study some of it's partnering schools and the journey they went on to produce their AAC policies and the free guidance document that Ace Centre created in response to supporting schools going through this organisational change.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

### 3.7: My journey so far.

Judd, Sam - Author

**Submission ID**

91

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Personal Stories and Case Studies

**Abstract**

In November 1997 I graced this earth with my presence. However, fast forward a few years and it looked as if my short but sweet stint on this world was coming to its conclusion. Yes, I was having a brain stem stroke. I was only four! Spoiler, I survived, but only just. I now am a full-time wheelchair user and I speak through an electronic communication aid. My current version is made by Liberator. In the years since the stroke, my life has taken me in many weird and wonderful directions from graduating from university (go me!) to founding a disabled led comedy night to getting a hand squeeze from Idris Elba (Yes, that actually happened) to reading my poetry to students at Kirklees College. I have even written a script for a feature film which I hope to direct. However, it all wouldn't have been possible without my tried and trusted talker. It has had upgrades over the years with different suppliers and models coming and going. The concept though, giving a voice to the voiceless remains the same and never ceases to amaze me. I have had dark moments in my life but those moments are few and far between. My life experiences on the whole, have been overwhelmingly positive. This is partly due to my incredibly supportive and loving friends and family but also having the means to interact with the world. My communication setup isn't perfect, admittedly, but it is far better than nothing. This paper will inspire other AAC users to

think creatively about what doors the technology can unlock for them, and hopefully make medical professionals reconsider what is possible.

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

**Details of sponsorship**

Liberator

### **3.8: Caregiver perceptions of the use of AAC by children and young people with Down's syndrome: An exploratory survey**

Scougal, Elaine - Author; Melinger, Alissa - Co-Author; Waller, Annalu - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

41

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Best Research Evidence

**Abstract**

Individuals with Down's syndrome can experience verbal communication challenges across their lifespan, including a high likelihood of intelligibility difficulties, impacting daily interactions (Kent & Vorperian, 2013; Kumin, 2006). AAC can, therefore, be beneficial. This includes unaided AAC modalities such as keyword signing and gesture, and aided modalities, including the use of communication books and voice output communication aids (Wilkinson, 2021). To date, research involving the use of unaided and aided AAC by children and young people with Down's syndrome has mostly taken the form of intervention studies. The lived experience of how AAC is accessed, supported, and used by this group is, however, relatively unreported. Due to this, an exploratory online survey was developed to gain insight into the 'real-world' use of AAC by children and young people with Down's syndrome (3 to 18 years), completed by 264 caregivers across the UK. Drawing upon the quantitative and qualitative data, this presentation will highlight the AAC modalities being used and the support being received relating to verbal communication and AAC. Contextual influences on communication experiences will be also discussed. The results illustrate limited adoption of voice output communication aids among this group in addition to discrepancies in AAC use between home, school, and wider social contexts. Further, despite

keyword signing being the most used form of AAC reported in the study, its use, in the absence of alternative AAC modalities, appears to present barriers in wider social contexts due to required communication partner knowledge and training. Dissatisfaction related to support received for verbal communication and voice output communication aids will also be discussed. This session will thereby highlight the need to extend understanding relating to AAC use, decision-making, and related support involving children and young people with Down's syndrome, providing scope to further enable societal participation and independence.

### References (Optional)

Kent, R. D., & Vorperian, H. K. (2013) 'Speech impairment in Down syndrome: A review', *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 56 (1), 178–210. Available at [https://doi.org/10.1044/1092-4388\(2012/12-0148\)](https://doi.org/10.1044/1092-4388(2012/12-0148)) Kumin, L. (2006) 'Speech intelligibility and childhood verbal apraxia in children with Down syndrome', *Down Syndrome Research and Practice*, 10 (1), 10–22. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3104/reports.301> Wilkinson, K.M. (2021) 'Introduction to how augmentative and alternative communication can promote communication, speech, and language in individuals with Down syndrome across the lifespan', in Wilkinson, K.M. and Finestack, L.H. (Eds.). *Multimodal AAC for Individuals with Down Syndrome*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Baltimore, MD.

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## 4.1: Empower your communication, Empower your life!

Davies, Mick - Author; Street, Mark - Author

### Submission ID

63

### Submission Topic

[Exhibitor Session](#)

### Abstract

Abstract – Presented by Mark Street (Commercial Director) and Mick Davies (Regional AAC Consultant). The wait is over... join us to learn about the exciting launch of Empower. Empower is our latest software platform which hosts a variety of AAC vocabularies. It has been designed to be intuitive to setup and personalise for the AAC user, whilst having a modern look and feel. The script has been re-written to allow all vocabularies to have access to popular Liberator features such as Word Finder, Vocabulary Builder, IR Remotes and Mobile Phone functionality. With an integrated Web Browser and access to Join-in Apps, a comprehensive range of accessible apps with basic and advance controls right at your fingertips, switch press, eye gaze or headtracking dwell. Join-in Apps available at

Launch will include: WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, TikTok. In this talk we will look at some of the new features and demonstrate how programming and navigation has been made easier than ever before. We are excited to share this with you and answer any questions.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## 4.2: Developing a new vocabulary system for people with Aphasia

Clay, Daisy - Author; Woerthuis, Carina - Author

**Submission ID**

122

**Submission Topic**

[Exhibitor Session](#)

**Abstract**

Aphasia affects approximately 350,000 people in the UK, and reflects a broad range of strengths and difficulties with spoken and written communication. Research shows that AAC can be of great benefit in supporting people with aphasia, not only to help in the recovery of language skills, but also to augment communication. At Smartbox, we have been developing new content for Grid to support people with aphasia. This talk will offer an exclusive insight into the development process, and provide a preview of this forthcoming range of content. Our new grid sets will consist of a collection of different communication tools and vocabulary options, to reflect the broad range of needs among people with aphasia, and how these may change over time. Options will be available for those who need high levels of support to navigate and use AAC, through to those who can be fully independent communicators and may simply need support for word-finding and fluency. This new content has been developed in consultation with experts in aphasia and AAC from across the UK, US and Germany. In this talk we will be sharing insights into our research, design and user testing processes, and we invite you to learn more about this brand-new AAC resource, before it launches in the UK in early 2025.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

Adult

## 4.3: Unlocking Communication: Enhancing Classroom Communication and Learning for Autistic Students

Langley, Alice - Author

**Submission ID**

126

**Submission Topic**

[Exhibitor Session](#)

**Abstract**

This session will explore how AAC can be implemented in a classroom for Autistic students. We will focus on strategies that can be used throughout the day and how schools can access TD Snap in their setting to ensure that their students have access to a robust communication system throughout the day. This session is beneficial for both Speech and Language Therapists as well as School staff looking to support students in school whilst reducing waiting times for those waiting for an assessment.

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## 4.4: AAGI: Augmentative and Alternative Gesture Interface

Yoda, Ikushi - Author

**Submission ID**

124

**Submission Topic**

[Exhibitor Session](#)

**Abstract**

Augmentative and Alternative Gesture Interface (AAGI) is the gesture interface software for individuals with motor dysfunction who cannot use normal interface switches. These users have cerebral palsy, quadriplegia, or traumatic brain injury and experience involuntary movement, spasticity, etc. Our aim is to provide these individuals with an easy and low-cost

interface for operating Windows PCs, controlling indoor environment, playing games, and maintaining contact in-house. To this end, we utilized commercially available RGB-D cameras, and developed a non-contact, non-constraint interface. We collected effective 1745 gestures from 80 persons with motor dysfunction and classified voluntary movements based on body part. Based on this data, we researched and developed seven recognition modules dependent on body parts and two independent recognition modules. The seven recognition modules are Head, Around-Eyes, Mouth-Tongue, Shoulder, Finger, Knee, and Foot. The two recognition modules are Front object and Slight movement. Currently, the software is provided free of charge. Please check our HP. If you install our software and only connect the designated camera to your Windows PC, the gesture interface is available. We have started the spread of software in Japan. We have held classes for Japanese Association of Occupational Therapists and lend PCs and RGB-D cameras in free to hospitals and care centers for introduction of the software. Over fifty medical facilities are now utilizing the software for inpatients. The users use the software for controlling Windows PCs, games (PC games, Steam, Nintendo Switch, SONY PlayStation and MS Xbox), home electric appliances, etc. We will be fully utilizing the software in Europe.

### References (Optional)

<http://gesture-interface.jp/en/>

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## 4.5: Smile Smart Technology

Tennent, Matt - Author; Quick, Christian - Author; Causemann, Robert - Co-Author

### Submission ID

125

### Format

Platform

### Submission Topic

[Exhibitor Session](#)

### Abstract

Smile Smart Technology is a family-run enterprise dedicated to providing solutions for personal independence through Assistive Technology. We help source specific device solutions for your personal requirements and work with our multi-disciplinary colleagues to provide training and therapies to children and adults with disabilities. Our range of services facilitate greater independence for users to perform tasks that they wish to accomplish, by increasing, maintaining or improving their functional abilities. Our aim is to help develop

personal freedom of expression, maximise communication capability and increase motivation by finding the best practical solutions, to our multi-disciplinary colleagues and support teams. We offer advice, support and bespoke solutions based upon individual requirements. Our team regularly visit schools, private homes and clinical centres providing assessments, training and other support services. The leading UK Rehadapt Mounting specialist, Smile Smart Technology hold an unrivalled selection of Rehadapt Mounts along with our own in-house mount adaptations. Mounts can be used for communication aids, laptops, tablets including iPads, cameras and switches and are an essential element of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## 4.6: Developing voice banking technology for a range of communication needs

Smith, Alice - Author; Tomarelli, Lynda - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

120

**Submission Topic**

[Exhibitor Session](#)

**Abstract**

SpeakUnique have developed voice banking technology for people with healthy, impaired and unintelligible speech. Join us in this session to hear more about how our technology caters to adult AAC users with different speech needs. We will give an overview of our three distinct services, which includes: Voice Build for people with healthy speech who know they will go on to lose their voice, Voice Repair for people whose speech is already impaired at the time of recording, and Voice Design which can use old recordings of someone speaking to recreate their voice, or use Voice Donors to create a voice that matches their desired regional accent, cultural influence and age. We will also discuss how to determine which service is most suitable for an AAC user and how the voices can be accessed through a range of different AAC devices. We'll cover recent updates to our technology and recording platform, and leave time for any questions about how voice banking can help people using AAC.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**



Adult

## 4.7: Me and My Senses

Mackay, Margo - Author

### Submission ID

115

### Submission Topic

[Exhibitor Session](#)

### Abstract

Talking Mats Ltd was delighted to receive funding to create a brand-new sensory resource for children and young people who have Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) and sensory integration/processing difficulties. The funding to create this resource was awarded by the Communication Trust from the Communication Consortium Grants Programme – funded by The Rayners Special Educational Trust. This resource is important as sensory assessments can typically involve a mixture of formal and informal questionnaires and checklists which are carried out with Parents/Carers, Education Staff, and may also involve observations of the child in their environment. The issue is that Child Voice is not always routinely, or effectively, included in these assessments, or in subsequent planning and intervention. This resource enables children and young people with sensory integration difficulties to have a voice in their therapy assessment, planning and intervention. It supports all practitioners, regardless of their level of sensory integration training, to gain an individual's voice of their 'lived' sensory experiences, needs and challenges. It is divided into the following topics: My Spaces & Things I Do My Senses 1: Proprioception & Interoception My Senses 2: Vestibular My Senses 3: Taste, Smell, Hearing, Seeing, Touch Use of the resource may contribute to sensory integration evaluation but does not replace a full sensory integration assessment, however it may equally work as a stand alone-tool. We hope that professionals from healthcare, education, in both mainstream and specialist settings, as well as colleagues in social care will value this resource. It is available as a physical resource and is part of the suite of resources on the Digital Talking Mat. In this session we will also demonstrate some of the updates now available to those using the digital platform.

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## 4.8: Predictable 7 - integration AI tools in AAC

Bright, Rebecca - Author

### Submission ID

94

### Submission Topic

[Exhibitor Session](#)

### Abstract

The opportunities to integrate AI tools (such as Chat GPT) into AAC are explored with examples of how Predictable utilises these tools within a text-based app. This presentation will overview the development process that led to integrating these features, explore the features in the current version of Predictable (version 7), and discuss the benefits, limitations, and opportunities for AI features.

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## 5.1: Career progression with AT Mentors

Gilmour, Gregor - Author

### Submission ID

8

### Format

Platform

### Submission Topic

Personal Stories and Case Studies

### Abstract

I am going to tell you about my journey from voluntary mentor to co manager of AT Mentors. My Presentation will cover the difference between the voluntary Mentoring and work that I have done to having a paid job that has career progression. AT Mentors has a structured progression path which has enabled me to work my way up and we will look at this in more detail. I do not feel that I would of been able to progress like this in any other organisation. The way that this path has been tailored allows Mentors to choose what level they want to work at. I always knew I wanted to get to the top and I will explain the process that got me

there. I will also talk about the courses and training that I have done to underpin my role as mentor and to further my personal development. AT Mentors was set up by AT Therapy, we are a group of high level competent AAC users who have paid roles working as AAC mentors in schools, homes and the community.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## 5.2: Planning to be a AAC user- fears, plans and the reality!

Robinson, Helen - Author; Robinson, Claire - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

26

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Personal Stories and Case Studies

**Abstract**

AAC use is often seen as long-term and continuous, however for some people AAC use might be planned and for a relatively short time. Voice Feminisation surgery (Glottoplasty) is a procedure undertaken by some transgender women, in the hope of achieving a more gender affirming voice. A laser is used to reduce the length of the vocal cords and increase the pitch. Glottoplasty is used alongside speech and language therapy. Immediately after surgery, the person is not allowed to use their voice for seven days. After this, a daily allowance of ten spoken words is permitted for the next month, gradually increasing speech use until normal voice use after six weeks post-surgery. When Claire opted for Glottoplasty, she began considering how she would navigate daily life without the use of her voice for a month, with the support of her wife Helen who is a Speech and Language Therapist working for a regional specialised AAC service. The two of them also considered the risks associated with the surgery and chance of long-term voice damage and AAC use. Claire and Helen will share their perspectives on planning for short term AAC use, the concerns Claire had and how she chose the AAC strategies, exploring both paper and powered AAC options. Claire also spent several weeks prior to her operation practicing being an AAC user, quickly realising the challenges of trying to keep up with speaking colleagues despite having access to AAC. Claire will share insights into being a temporary AAC user, including what worked well and what frustrated her. Helen will share what she learned as a communication partner and through listening to Claire attempt to navigate working life without speech, and the

insight this has given her into the experiences of AAC users and their communication partners.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

Adult

## 5.3: Using AAC to teach words, concepts and categories - time to rethink practice?

Robertson, Euan - Author

**Submission ID**

73

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

As children grow and develop language they learn new words through exposure and explicit teaching, they develop knowledge of word meanings by experimenting with those words and through a process of trial and error and correction from adults around them. Children develop category knowledge by learning what fits into a category and what doesn't. AAC users can miss out on some of these developmental opportunities due to lack of exposure to AAC and symbolic language, AAC being introduced later in life or an over reliance on the message "just model". This session will examine the routes children using speech take to learning categories, concepts and vocabulary. Participants will identify the challenges AAC users face in exploring some of these pathways and the barriers they face to acquiring this learning. The presenters will challenge some of the current assumptions around AAC users acquiring category, concept and vocabulary knowledge through exposure to modelling alone. They will propose some strategies that could be used to better support communication partners (in particular educators) to meet the challenges in developing AAC users language skills. The session will include an interactive and in depth review of literature around vocabulary development and the opportunities this presents for AAC users to further develop category and concept knowledge when paired with explicit instruction and targeted and thought through exposure to modelling. The use of well considered and thought through modelling, pre teaching of curricular vocabulary and explicit vocabulary instruction combine to become a powerful force in teaching language. The presenters will demonstrate examples of how these skills can be paired with visual organisers and other tools to ensure educators and speech and language professionals provide non speaking children equal opportunity to develop and grow their language skills.

**References (Optional)**

Baxter, Droop, van den Hurk, Bekkering, Dijkstra, & Leone (2021). Contrasting similar words facilitates second language vocabulary learning in children by sharpening lexical representations. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, Beck, I.L., McKeown, M.G., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction*. New York: Guilford Press.

Biemiller, A. & Boote, C. (2006). An effective method for building meaning vocabulary in primary grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98(1), 44-62.

Bracken, B. & Panter, J. (2011). Using the Bracken Basic Concept Scale and Bracken Concept Development Program in the assessment and remediation of young children's concept development. *Psychology in the Schools*, 48, 464-475.

Marzano, R. (2020). *Teaching Basic, Advanced, and Academic Vocabulary*. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Resources

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## **LT5.4: Speech and Language Therapist's perspectives of their ability to support people with aphasia (PWA) with using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC): A Service Evaluation.**

Clare, Rachel - Author

**Submission ID**

84

**Format**

Lightning Talk

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

**INTRODUCTION** Aphasia is an acquired language disorder which occurs commonly post-stroke and can occur in other conditions such as brain injury and type of dementia. Due to these language difficulties, using Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) can be difficult for People with Aphasia (PWA). Research suggests that Visual Scene Displays (VSD), a form of AAC, can be a useful for PWA (e.g. Brock et al., 2017). It is unknown whether practising Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) are aware of and use VSDs.

**METHOD** A survey was sent to adult SLTs across six counties to investigate their confidence and perceptions around using AAC with PWA. The survey contained 16 questions.

**FINDINGS** 33 SLTs completed the survey from four counties; all worked with

PWA. 45% work in multiple settings, with most (61%) working in 'general community'. Confidence: One participant (3%) answered they felt 'Extremely confident' to 'How confident do you feel in assessing people with aphasia for AAC?. 39% answered 'Somewhat confident', 27% answered 'Neutral' and 30% answered 'Somewhat not confident'. AAC Used: 88% answered they used paper-based communication books or picture charts. 36% respondents mentioned using alphabet charts. 9% respondents specifically mentioned using Partner Assisted Scanning. 58% of the respondents referred to some form of power-based apps. 18% mentioned either 'text to speech' or a specific text-to-speech software. VSDs were not mentioned. One respondent answered 'Not finding much hugely successful'. VSDs: 55% of participants answered 'no' to 'Are you familiar with Visual Scene Displays?'. 6% answered 'Yes I have heard of them and confident in using them'. CONCLUSIONS The findings suggest that many SLTs are not aware or confident in assessing or implementing AAC for PWA. Only 6% of the SLTs were familiar and felt confident with VSDs, whereas the evidence base suggests that VSDs are particularly useful for PWA.

### References (Optional)

Brock, Koul, Corwin & Schlosser (2017) A comparison of visual scene and grid displays for people with chronic aphasia: a pilot study to improve communication using AAC.

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

Adult

## LT5.4: Cornwall Local AAC Service - paediatrics

Lethbridge, Rachael - Author; Davies, Jennifer - Co-Author

### Submission ID

96

### Format

Lightning Talk

### Submission Topic

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

### Abstract

CAACAT (Cornwall AAC Assessment Team) is a multi-agency team based in Cornwall which supports AAC assessment up until the young person's 18th birthday. It is made up of professionals from Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (CFT) and Cornwall Council. As the Local AAC service (paediatrics) we support referrals made to the specialist AAC service and those who are seeking high-tech AAC equipment but don't meet the specialist criteria. We have a loan bank of high-tech AAC equipment which we manage using a Mobile Device Management service. The Technical Officers maintain equipment, respond to

breakages and provide software and device training for effective use. Following AAC assessment completion, Cornwall Council's AAC Team provide long-term support including education advice, transition support, access arrangements, further training and AAC social events. This presentation shares the insights we have learned in Cornwall about joint commissioning, the assessment process, management of devices and long-term support at a local level.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

Adult

## **LT5.4: Dynamic Assessment: Exploring the Case for Wider Distribution to Support Learners Living with Complex Communication Needs**

Norrie, Christopher S. - Author; Deckers, Stijn R. J. M. - Co-Author; Radstaaque, Maartje - Co-Author; van Balkom, Hans - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

99

**Format**

Lightning Talk

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

In education, static test formats in common use - norm-referenced, and restricted to one assessment point - yield little or no evidence of how a child solves a problem set for them, or what support they might need from others (or from their environment) to learn. The presumption here is that the testee fully comprehends the task or challenge before them and can respond, unencumbered by personal traits, impairments or sensitivities, to deliver an accurate picture of their abilities or potential. For many - for example, young emerging communicators with complex communication needs who may be living with motoric, cognitive, sensory and/or communicative impairments - this presumption can prove flawed. In fact, for an array of subjective reasons explored in more detail in this presentation, it may skew the accuracy of such tests to the extent that the results are simply invalid as a predictor of learning potential - with negative implications for the child's pedagogical support that may prove longstanding. Dynamic assessment (DA), pioneered by researchers such as Feuerstein, Rand, and Hoffman; and Campione and Brown, has shown much promise as a means of circumventing many of the uncertainties introduced by a traditional static test approach. It sets out to achieve this by leveraging integrated training to accurately assess a

student's responsiveness to learning opportunities. However, to date DA has seen limited uptake, and therefore, impact upon the practices of clinicians and educationalists. We seek to raise awareness of the advantages that may accrue from wider familiarity and availability of DA, with a particular focus on the field of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and the potential gains for young learners with additional support needs, and the Team Around The Child (TATC).

### References (Optional)

Bamford, C. K., Masso, S., Baker, E., & Ballard, K. J. (2022). Dynamic Assessment for Children With Communication Disorders: A Systematic Scoping Review and Framework. In *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology* (Vol. 31, Issue 4, pp. 1878–1893). American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. [https://doi.org/10.1044/2022\\_AJSLP-21-00349](https://doi.org/10.1044/2022_AJSLP-21-00349)

Nazari, B. (2012). Teach-to-Test Instruction of Dynamic Assessment: A Critical Overview. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & Literature*, 5(4), 56. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/jtl3.468>

Snell, M. (2002). Using dynamic assessment with learners who communicate nonsymbolically. *Augmentative and Alternative communication*, 18(3), 163-176.

Tzuriel, D. (2013). Dynamic assessment of learning potential. *Self-Directed Learning Oriented Assessments in the Asia-Pacific*, 235–255. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4507-0\\_13](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4507-0_13)

Tzuriel, D. (2021). Dynamic Assessment of Culturally Different Children and Children with Special Needs (pp. 167–206). [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-75692-5\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-75692-5_7)

### Level

Specialist Session

### Age Group

Child

## LT5.4: What have we learnt about supporting AAC users from the Rett UK communication programme?

Campbell, Tracey - Author

### Submission ID

103

### Format

Lightning Talk

### Submission Topic

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

### Abstract

The Rett UK Communication Programme, previously known as the loan programme, came into being in 2017. During that period we have given 92 individuals and their communication



partners access to 1:1 support and an eye-gaze device for a period of up to 6 months. The team at Rett UK are continuously reviewing the success of the programme and adapting it to improve the outcomes for individuals with Rett syndrome. This platform presentation will discuss how the programme came to being and the various formats we have used during the 7 years the programme has been running. Moreover, the presentation will examine what we have learned about supporting individuals to become competent communicators and their communication partners to be effective ones. There will be observations about the difference in expectations and skills of families since the start of the journey to now. This will help us explore good practice for giving communication partners the tools they require to help the individuals they support on their communication journey.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## LT5.4: AI to Generate Symbols Representative of Everyone

Danger, Charlie - Author

**Submission ID**

101

**Format**

Lightning Talk

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

In many communities, the available Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) systems are primarily based on pictographic symbols that reflect languages and cultures different from those of the community itself. This issue is particularly pronounced in resource-limited countries where, although communication aids are accessible, they often lack cultural representation. This typically stems from the high costs associated with customizing symbols and the lack of support needed to maintain stylistic consistency with larger symbol sets. Generative AI tools offer promise for enhancing AAC usage across diverse contexts by facilitating the rapid development of symbols through automated processes, complemented by participatory evaluations. In 2024, Global Symbols was awarded a grant from Microsoft to enhance our existing free Symbol Builder tool. This upgrade harnesses AI to rapidly create localized, culturally-relevant symbols at a significantly lower cost compared with traditional graphic design. During this session, we will discuss our journey, demonstrate the capabilities of the AI, and explore the future possibilities for creating symbols that are truly representative of all users. Global Symbols is

a non-profit organization that promotes and helps to enable the use of culturally representative communication symbols in communities around the world.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## 5.5: SLPs' perceptions of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) for verbal autistic children.

Busuttil, Mariah Amber - Author; Agius, May - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

9

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Best Research Evidence

**Abstract**

According to Zisk & Dalton (2019), there are 3 types of speech experienced by speaking autistic individuals, which are: intermittent speech, unreliable speech, or insufficient speech. Some speaking autistic individuals make use of various communication methods including augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) to supplement their communication. At present, there is limited academic research on the recommendation of AAC for verbal autistic individuals. Moreover, various autism advocates have voiced their experience with discovering AAC (Donaldson et al., 2021). According to Evidence-Based Practice (EBP), the client's perspective should also be part of one's professional practice. Moreover, as per the trajectory of the neurodiversity movement, adaptive functioning should be promoted and autism should be embraced as part of one's identity (Kapp et al., 2013). The purpose of this study was to explore the perception of local Maltese SLPs, regarding their potential consideration of AAC for speaking autistic children using an explanatory sequential mixed method study. Utilising purposive sampling, this study comprised of a questionnaire completed by 50 participants as the quantitative phase (phase 1), and a focus group of 4 participants as the qualitative phase (phase 2) of the study; data mixing was carried out after analysing the results from each phase. Data from phase 1 (questionnaire) further professional development in the field of AAC outside of University, resulting in a more positive perception of AAC. High-tech AAC was highly encouraged by participants and the importance of multimodal communication was acknowledged. Results obtained from phase 2 (focus group) highlight how the SLP's perception colours their consideration of AAC for speaking autistic children; this confirmed the questionnaire results. This research highlights

the crucial role of SLPs in the decision-making process and in providing access to AAC for speaking individuals with ASD.

### References (Optional)

Donaldson, A. L., Corbin, Endeavor\*, & McCoy, J. (2021). "Everyone Deserves AAC": Preliminary Study of the Experiences of Speaking Autistic Adults Who Use Augmentative and Alternative Communication. *Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups*, 6(2), 315–326. [https://doi.org/10.1044/2021\\_PERSP-20-00220](https://doi.org/10.1044/2021_PERSP-20-00220)

Kapp, S. K., Gillespie-Lynch, K., Sherman, L. E., & Hutman, T. (2013). Deficit, difference, or both? *Autism and neurodiversity. Developmental Psychology*, 49(1), 59–71. <https://doi.org/10.1037/A0028353>

Zisk, A. H., & Dalton, E. (2019). Augmentative and Alternative Communication for Speaking Autistic Adults: Overview and Recommendations. *Autism in Adulthood : Challenges and Management*, 1(2), 93–100. <https://doi.org/10.1089/AUT.2018.0007>

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## 5.6: Empowering a Positive Shift in Systematic Mindset

Boyle, Melanie - Author; MacGregor, Ceanna - Author; Radke, Katie - Co-Author; Joy, Hannah - Co-Author; McShane, Kirsten - Co-Author

### Submission ID

58

### Format

Workshop

### Submission Topic

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

### Abstract

This workshop will be presented by a group of AAC advocates who met during the Communication Matters Conference 2023. We offer a combination of personal and professional experiences from our roles as SLT, SEN teachers, parents and AAC consultants. One common barrier we encounter daily are those with a fixed mindset. We know this is harmful to the AAC users and potential AAC users in our settings. Low expectations across the board from parents, school staff, the budget holders, health and medical professionals and speech and language therapists. In contrast, individuals with this mindset often leads to the perception that a child's ability to communicate is fixed and cannot be improved through AAC methods. Consequently, they may hesitate to explore or invest in AAC interventions, fearing that they won't yield significant results. On the other hand, a growth mindset recognises the potential for AAC to enhance a child's communication

abilities. Those with this mindset understand that with proper support and resources, children can learn to effectively use AAC systems to express themselves. Before we ourselves built our knowledge around AAC, we were doing our best. However, now that we know better we aim to do better by encouraging and educating others to switch to a growth mindset. Belief in the untapped potential each of our children, students and clients have with the right support and access to AAC tools signifies our aim for them to do better. We aim to provide a forum for the exchange of lived experiences and ideas on how best to overcome the barriers created by a fixed mindset. We will also share insights and trends we found within our research. We believe this shared knowledge will better equip all of us to empower a positive shift in systematic mindset.

### References (Optional)

Dweck, C. et al. (2015). Mind-Set Interventions Are a Scalable Treatment for Academic Underachievement. *Psychological science*. 26. 10. DOI: 10.1177/0956797615571017  
 Donnellan, A. M. (1984). The Criterion of the Least Dangerous Assumption. *Behavioral Disorders*, 9(2), 141-150. DOI: 10.1177/019874298400900201  
 Beukelman, D.R. & Mirenda, P. (2013). *Augmentative and Alternative Communication: Supporting Children and Adults with Complex Communication Needs* (4th ed.). Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing Co.

### Level

Specialist Session

### Age Group

Child

## 5.7: In Conversation about the AAC Connection

Holmes, Joanna - Author; Moulam, Beth - Co-Author

### Submission ID

21

### Format

Platform

### Submission Topic

Personal Stories and Case Studies

### Abstract

Since September 2023, just after the last Communication Matters Conference, Beth Moulam an AAC user and Joanna Holmes, parent of an AAC user and former Speech and Language Therapist have been admins on a new Facebook discussion group 'The AAC Connection'. The AAC Connection Facebook group was set up to include AAC users and any communication partners. It includes parents, teaching staff, speech and language therapists, community members, personal assistants, hairdressers, guide leaders and many more. The AAC Connection has gone from strength to strength with over 2400 members at the time of writing this abstract. Topics of discussion have included, support for education and exams,

using AAC in sport, communication rights, research opportunities and including people in research, mental health support, communication partner training opportunities, AAC problem solving and much more. This presentation will take the form of a conversation between Beth and Jo about the themes in the group and the challenges of bringing together a group with such a diverse range of experience and opinion. Beth and Jo's conversation will be interspersed with video interviews from members of the Facebook group who will share some of their experiences and some of their favourite/ most challenging conversations from the group. Attendees at the presentation will see an active and developing conversation about some of the most pertinent themes raised by AAC users and communication partners. in an environment where everyone's contribution is welcome.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## **5.8: Enhancing Normalization and Participation: A Non-contact Switch System for Patients with Severe Motor Dysfunction - Social Implementation Phase**

Nishida, Daisuke - Author

**Submission ID**

38

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

We have developed Augmentative and Alternative Gesture Interface (AAGI), a non-contact switch system for people with motor dysfunction. The AAGI can be used to encourage social participation and normalization. Now, more than 100 persons with severe motor dysfunction tried and over 10 persons have used for over 1 years. We will expand the use of AAGI all over the world as well as Japan. AAGI is an application system that recognizes the user's small movements with a commercially available 3D camera with their own computer. The core technology is an application of image recognition, which is developed based on the concept of high detection accuracy, easy setup, and non-contact usage. Once the AAGI is set up, it can be used reproducibly even if the user moves and returns to the original location. The accuracy of this device can be applied to e-sports. One example of a participants with sever motor dysfunction due to Duchenne Muscle Dystrophy, is playing the internet connected racing game "Mario Cart" or sandbox game "Minecraft" with his friends

around the world. The system can be the interface to the Metaverse and connect with his friends and society in a world beyond his physicality. So this system can be used to encourage social participation and normalization, such as "playing," "learning," and "working." This system has been approved as a eligible for daily living equipment by local government (Kashiwazaki City, JAPAN) and the patient will get benefits under the Comprehensive Support for Persons with Disabilities Act. We will expand our activities throughout Japan and around the world to support persons with sever motor dysfunction.

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

**P1: Suffolk Communication Aids Resource Centre (SCARC) The importance of a local Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) service**

Chubb, Della - Author

**Submission ID**

1

**Format**

Poster

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

Suffolk Communication Aids Resource Centre (SCARC) is a local Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) in Suffolk supporting young people to explore power based AAC, who do not meet the criteria of National AAC commissioning. SCARC has been in situ for 25;0 years and is keen to share the journey of the importance of a local AAC service, how to commission and run such a service and what a difference it makes for the young people we support. Furthermore, we are keen to share the effectiveness of AAC for our young people with Learning Disabilities (LD) who often don't meet National commissioning criteria for power based AAC and how we liaise with a range of local health, education, care and community services to share the joy of AAC.

**References (Optional)**

National AAC Commissioning: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2016/03/guid-comms-aac.pdf> Local AAC Services - Communication Matters: <https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/what-is-aac/assessment-routes/local->

services/ SCARC website: <https://www.wsh.nhs.uk/Services-A-Z/Childrens-services/Childrens-community-services/SCARC/Suffolk-communication-aids-resource-centre.asp>

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## **P2: Strangers to Siblings: Building Sibling Relationships via a Pilot Sibling AAC Group**

Jackson, Kate - Author; Laurendet, Amelia - Author

**Submission ID**

70

**Format**

Poster

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

Background: The Craighalbert Centre is a charity that supports children with severe motor impairments (SMI) and their families. It operates as a school, offering integrated learning, therapy and care. All students are non-speaking and have access to personalised AAC. Families have raised concerns about the superficial quality of the relationships between their children with SMI and neurotypical siblings. Parents and carers have reported that their neurotypical children will physically interact with their siblings (e.g. give them a hug) and initiate interactions (e.g. show them a video), but will not engage in conversations and reciprocal play. We have hypothesised that neurotypical children's lack of competence and confidence around using Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) may be impacting their ability to have robust and meaningful interactions with their siblings. Aims: Our aim is to improve the quality of sibling interactions by running a pilot sibling AAC group that focuses on teaching neurotypical children the skills to use AAC. Methods: The group will comprise of 4 sessions at the centre, facilitated by 2 Speech and Language Therapists. The initial session will focus on familiarising children with their siblings' individual AAC systems, how to provide aided language stimulation and how to be a "SMART partner". During the following sessions, staff will set up highly motivating activities (e.g. pool play) and the children will be supported to practise interacting with their siblings, using the skills they were taught in the initial session. Each session will be video recorded. Language samples will be elicited from the video recordings to identify age-appropriate vocabulary to add to students' AAC. Pre and post-interviews will be conducted with parents/carers and siblings,

followed by thematic analysis, in order to gather information on the impact of the group.  
Results: Once the group is complete, the results will be analysed.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

Child

**P3: Piloting a national specialist Augmentative and Alternative Communication service to support the AAC needs of children with disabilities in Ireland, and their local team.**

Devlin, Jessica - Author; Dolly, Aisling - Co-Author; Moran, Maeve - Co-Author; Gleeson, Nicole - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

92

**Format**

Poster

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

In response to the reconfiguration of paediatric disability services, the Central Remedial Clinic (CRC) in Ireland piloted an expansion of their national Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) service. Traditionally, the current service supports children with primary physical disabilities. Due to the reconfiguration of services, the CRC's AAC team received an increase in referrals of children with neurodevelopmental disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disability who didn't meet pre-existing referral criteria. This initiative investigated the potential for the CRC's AAC service to support children, their family/caregiver's, and local team beyond the current referral criteria. Participants included 15 local speech and language therapists (SLTs), 19 children and their parent's. The principles of assessment remained unchanged; however, changes were made to the delivery of the assessment to facilitate client needs. A mixed-methods approach was utilised to assess the feasibility of expanding the service. Quantitative data was collected from outcome measurements including communication logs, the Communication Function Classification System (CFCS) and a survey capturing perceptions of the service from parents and SLTs. The open-ended boxes of the survey obtained additional comments qualitatively analysed. Quantitative feedback identified parents and SLTs found the service very beneficial, information provided prior to the assessment was very useful and they felt



very included throughout the assessment. 100% of SLTs reported they would refer to the CRC AAC service again. The qualitative feedback from SLTs had four distinct themes: expansion of AAC knowledge, client centred appointment, thorough appointment, and clear communication. Parental themes included suitable location and the assessment process. The pilot indicates that the expansion of the service to meet the needs of children with neurodevelopmental disabilities is beneficial. Further insight into the benefit of the service and service delivery could be provided by increasing the sample size and exploration of suitable locations for service delivery.

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

Child

**P4: Aided language and AAC in the classroom**

Ebbage-Taylor, Meaghan - Author

**Submission ID**

45

**Format**

Poster

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

Implementing aided language and AAC in the classroom can often feel overwhelming for teachers. This presentation will draw upon personal experience implementing aided language and AAC in the classroom environment as a teacher and practical ways to effectively support classroom staff, drawing upon the evidence base. This presentation will be structured around Money and Thurman's (1994) model of communication, ensuring means, reasons, and opportunities for learners to use aided language and AAC. Means will be considered in terms of how learners are using aided language and AAC communicate. This includes insuring access to aided language displays and robust AAC, underpinned using core vocabulary and the descriptive teaching model (Van Tatenhove, 2009). Reasons will be considered in terms of why learners communicate. This includes giving opportunities to use a range of language functions (Light, 1988) within the classroom. Opportunities will be considered in terms of enabling learns 'to say whatever they I want to say, to whoever I want to say it to, whenever I want to say it' (Porter, 2018). This is fundamental to the successful implementation of aided language and AAC in the classroom.

**References (Optional)**

Light, J. (1988). Interaction involving individuals using augmentative and alternative communication systems: State of the art and future directions. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 4, 66–82  
Money, D. and Thurman, S., 1994. Talkabout communication. *Coll. Speech Lang. Ther. Bull*, 504, pp.12-13.  
Porter, G. (2018). *Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display Communication Books: Introductory Workshop*. Melb: Cerebral Palsy Education Centre  
Van Tatenhove, G. (2009). Building Language Competence with Students Using AAC Devices: Six Challenges. *Perspectives on Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 18(2), 38-47

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

Child

## **TUESDAY**

### **Plenary: How my words work**

+ Lion, Jamie - Author

**Submission ID**

116

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Personal Stories and Case Studies

**Abstract**

I'm Jamie and this is Lion, we bounce around being helpful & making things. So many things... accessibility things, crime fighting things and sometimes even things in space. Millions of people use things we made everyday. We're also semi speaking. Helping my communication flow has been a lifetime of experimentation and learning. In recent years we stumbled on some very subtle, but very useful questions; Am I unable to speak? Am I incapable of speech in this context, or am I out of speech capacity for the day? Distinguishing between my ability, capability and capacity opened the door to new ways for me to communicate. This talk presents a deep dive into our experience of communication. We'll share the map we're using to find our way and some of the tools and techniques which enable us to understand and to be understood.

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

**Details of sponsorship**

AssistiveWare are paying for my speaker's fee

## 6.1: Starting a conversation about identity, sexuality, individuality and AAC

Preece, Jamie - Author; Sullivan, Emma - Co-Author; Tams-Gray, Fin - Co-Author; Pullin, Graham - Author

**Submission ID**

61

**Format**

Workshop

**Submission Topic**

Personal Stories and Case Studies

**Abstract**

We want to start a conversation that is currently not happening enough, if at all. A conversation about the identity, sexuality and individuality of people who use AAC and about how AAC could do more to support this aspect of their lives. This is a conversation that needs to happen in many different ways, at many different levels at once. People need AAC to give them the freedom to create and explore their sexuality. They need to be able to build, maintain, navigate and nurture relationships, whether platonic, romantic or sexual (Preece and Lee 2023). And they also need to be able to discuss their sexual identity with others. At the same time there needs to be increased awareness and acceptance of the sexuality of people who use AAC: among carers, professionals and AAC developers and manufacturers. And beyond all this, people who use AAC should be directly involved in debate and policy making relating to the ethics of sexual freedom and agency. Co-panellists will include Patrick Bates, Jonathan Toogood, Kate Caryer and Alyssa Hillary Fisk. Between us, the presenters are LGBTQ+ and straight, non-binary, female and male, disabled and nondisabled, neurodivergent and neurotypical, creatives and academics. Our conversation will combine speech synthesis, revoicing and direct speech. We intend to invite Darryl Sellwood to join us remotely from Australia, due to the relevance of his PhD (Sellwood 2019). Our plan is to develop one or two themes in some early online conversations and then to expand on these in the session itself. We will facilitate the dialogue, as we did in a discussion panel in Cancun (Pullin et al 2023). Our concern closing the session will be how to continue the conversation: we will share our own thoughts and invite further ideas from our audience.

**References (Optional)**

Preece Jamie and Andrea Lee. 2023. 'Jamie: Who Chooses my Words?' Communication Matters 37(3). Sellwood, Darryl. 2019 Lived experiences of people with complex communication needs: Romantic and sexual relationships, Flinders University, College of Nursing and Health Sciences. Pullin, Graham, Jamie Preece, Darryl Sellwood, Meredith Allan, Kevin Williams, Katie Brown, Todd Hutchinson, Jeff Higginbotham. 2023. 'Imagining alternative futures for AAC together – what interactions do we want with each other?' Discussion panel at ISAAC 2023, Cancun, Mexico.

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

Adult

## 6.2: Enhancing Self-Expression for Autistic Students using AAC

Levy, Erin - Author

**Submission ID**

78

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

Self-expression is a multifaceted process that reveals our identity, personality, feelings, thoughts, and opinions. We express ourselves through various channels, including movement, clothing choices, and even our hairstyles. Additionally, our communication—whether through body language, facial expressions, spoken words, or gestures—plays a crucial role in conveying who we are to others. Glaser (2016) aptly stated that “self-expression” is perhaps one of the most vital ways for people to connect, navigate, and grow together. In this presentation, we delve into the question: “How can autistic students using augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) express their true selves to their classmates, and convey their self-identity?” While customizing AAC devices is crucial for this purpose, we explore additional strategies to empower individuals with self-expression. We will review various ideas from voices to the use of chosen communication modalities. Moreover, we recognize that self-expression extends beyond spoken communication and will explore ideas outside of the AAC device itself. For individuals using AAC, this essential aspect of self-expression can sometimes be overshadowed. Schools face the challenge of balancing diverse educational goals across domains. Amidst these competing priorities, personalizing AAC and use of additional modes of expression may inadvertently take a

backseat to focusing on expressing words and/or pre-stored messages. We will introduce tools and techniques that enable educators, caregivers, and peers to dive deeper into the interests of autistic students. This presentation aims to shed light on the intersection of AAC, self-expression, and the unique journey of each student. By fostering an environment that values self-expression, we can empower autistic individuals to communicate, connect, and thrive.

**References (Optional)**

Benefits of Expressive Art Therapy for Children. (n.d.). Retrieved May 25 2023, from <https://www.georgetownbehavioral.com/blog/expressive-art-therapy-for-children>  
 EyeGazeGirl. (2020). <https://becky019.wixsite.com/myart>  
 Glaser, J.E. (2016). Self-expression: The neuroscience of co-creation. Retrieved March 23 2023, from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/conversational-intelligence/201602/self-expression>  
 SAIL. (2020 November 16). Self-expression among the disabled. Retrieved March 23 2023, from <https://sailhelps.org/self-expression-among-the-disabled/>  
 Steigler, L (2021). "A Language Based Approach to Managing Echolalia", ASHA Website

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

**Details of sponsorship**

I am employed by Tobii Dynavox

**6.3: AI in AAC systems: current work and future research priorities**

Slaughter, Rohan - Co-Author; Griffiths, Tom - Co-Author; Waller, Annalu - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

59

**Format**

Workshop

**Submission Topic**

Best Research Evidence

**Abstract**

At CM2023 the UoD team facilitated a Workshop: Towards a code of practice to support the positive use of AI (artificial intelligence) in AAC. We will provide a summary of our findings from the workshop. This session will offer delegates an overview of the state of current work around the use of AI in AAC systems. This will include how such systems are leveraging the

opportunity afforded by LLMs (large language models) and allied systems (Yang & Kristensson, 2023). The team will provide a summary of existing literature and current research in this field, contextualised through a discussion of how legislation, regulation and legal precedent are impacting the development, implementation and risk management of such systems. The team at Dundee have a long-standing research and development interest in the use of language models to improve communication, particularly through rate enhancement and the generation of personalised conversational narratives or stories that promote social acceptance, social closeness and personality projection (Waller, 2019). AI has the ability to greatly accelerate this, however there are inherent risks of simply plugging these technologies into existing AAC systems without considering factors such as the user's understanding and acceptance and inherent bias. There are potential solutions to these risks such as the inclusion of safety features (often called guardrails), user explainable AI systems and a modular design for systems that include AI, where the 'engine' may be swapped out should that system be deprecated, degraded or discontinued, due to developing case law, legislation or regulation. The session will include a demonstration of an existing bespoke AAC system that supports rate and narrative enhancement for literate keyboard users. We plan to use this as the basis for discussion around how future AAC systems might be developed to capitalise on the opportunities presented by LLMs and allied technologies.

### References (Optional)

Waller, A. (2019) 'Telling tales: Unlocking the Potential of AAC Technologies', *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, 54(2), pp. 159–169. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1460-6984.12449>. Yang, B. and Kristensson, P.O. (2023) 'Designing, Developing, and Evaluating AI-driven Text Entry Systems for Augmentative and Alternative Communication Users and Researchers', in *Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Mobile Human-Computer Interaction. MobileHCI '23: 25th International Conference on Mobile Human-Computer Interaction*, Athens Greece: ACM, pp. 1–4. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1145/3565066.3609738>.

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## LT6.4: "I'll give you two choices" - the experiences of an AAC user with Rett syndrome

Loffler, Romi - Author; Campbell, Tracey - Co-Author

### Submission ID

72

### Format

Lightning Talk

**Submission Topic**

Personal Stories and Case Studies

**Abstract**

Romi is an AAC user with Rett syndrome. She attended an Additional Support Needs school, near to Glasgow. She now attends a mainstream course at her local college. We think Romi is the first person in Scotland, if not the UK, with Rett syndrome to be given this opportunity. Romi will share her communication journey, including her interactions with different professionals. Romi maintains that the experience of AAC users is far from ideal, and problems arise from professionals putting barriers in the way of potential AAC users. Romi wants to impress the idea that communication for AAC users is much easier with someone who believes in you and is relaxed.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

**LT6.4: Now you can hear what I say, let me show you what I can do ! - an insight into how Assistive Technology (AT) makes things possible for me -**

Sagoo, Harchie - Author; Sagoo, Bob - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

44

**Format**

Lightning Talk

**Submission Topic**

Personal Stories and Case Studies

**Abstract**

I presented at Communication Matters Conference in 2022, on my experiences with Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) and my journey to where I am able to communicate and access aspects of my life, with a little support every once in a while! But its not enough for me just to be understood. I want to show what I am capable of doing. I am more than my AAC device. I want to share with the delegates how AAC has helped and given me the ability to access so much more, and how I now want to experience more of what life has to offer me. I want to talk about how technology not only helps me, but also makes things possible. I want to share how I am able to access so much like gaming, social media and things around the home. My mum showed me a quote which I really like, it said communication is about people, not devices. My devices empower me, and though they

help me communicate, or speak for me, they are MY feelings, thoughts and words. I hope I will have the chance to present at this years conference. Thanks

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

**6.5: Applying a co-research model to explore collaborative practice between speech and language therapists (SLTs) and parents of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) users.**

Hayward, Sarah - Author; Holmes, Joanna - Author; Hayes, Daniel - Co-Author; Clarke, Michael - Co-Author; Bloch, Steven - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

23

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Best Research Evidence

**Abstract**

Poor collaboration between SLTs and parents is a major factor in the lack of uptake and or rejection of AAC strategies and tools by families. We present our experiences from the application of a co-research model between a parent and SLT researcher to address collaboration challenges using participatory action research methods (PAR). PAR is a co-learning research process between 'communities' and researchers which involves problem identification, action and reflection leading to further inquiry and action for change. Aim To present research reflections addressing the impact of personal and professional experiences on power relations in co-research models. Methods A co-research model was adopted between a parent stakeholder and SLT researcher to facilitate a series of parent workshops. Co-researchers are involved in activities such as the design of research materials, recruitment, data collection, data analysis and dissemination of findings. The co-led parent workshops involved creative methods such as drawing, clay, mind maps, problem trees and Talking Mats™. Sorting and rating tasks were used to generate quantitative data for concept mapping. A structured reflection process was used to explore the experiences of the researchers. Results Working in a co-research partnership led to insights on the impact of personal and professional experiences on power relations. The impact of the co-research model was seen across the project in increased diversity and representation of participants,



greater engagement by participants and reduced researcher influences on data collection. Barriers to co-research include current research funding models. Conclusions Working in co-research offers benefits for both researchers and community partners. Further work is needed to facilitate these partnerships.

### References (Optional)

Doak, L., Rethinking family (dis)engagement with augmentative & alternative communication. *Journal of research in special educational needs*, 2021. 21(3): p. 198-210.  
 Smidt, A. and R.N. Pebdani, Rethinking device abandonment: a capability approach focused model. *Augmentative and alternative communication*, 2023: p. 1-9.  
 Karnieli-Miller, O., Strier, R. and Pessach, L. (2009) 'Power relations in qualitative research', *QualHealth Res*, 19(2), 279-89.  
 Kindon, S. L., et al. 2007. *Participatory action research approaches and methods: connecting people, participation and place*. London, Routledge.  
 Ozano, K., et al., *Guiding principles for quality, ethical standards and ongoing learning in implementation research: multicountry learnings from participatory action research to strengthen health systems*. *Health policy and planning*, 2020. 35(Supplement\_2): p. ii137-ii149.

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## 6.6: Talking with my Feet

Lee, Andrea - Author; Boyes, David - Co-Author

### Submission ID

64

### Format

Platform

### Submission Topic

Personal Stories and Case Studies

### Abstract

DB is a highly effective communicator who uses a 400 cell Bliss symbol board which he accesses with his left foot. DB learnt to use Bliss symbols at school and has maintained and developed this system during adulthood. He is a disability rights and political activist, a musician and a Liverpool football fan. DB has used Bliss symbols to give presentations and deliver teaching about disability and equality, to write poetry, affirmations and a book about his life and is currently writing about disability rights. He will demonstrate his use of the 400 Bliss symbols board and his recent developments towards trialling bliss on a high tech AAC system. More importantly, he will explain how Blissymbolics as a concept-based system gives him the tools to express novel, complex and abstract concepts. Andrea Lee is a

speech and language therapist who has supported several clients using Bliss symbols. She will present the journey she and DB have shared to explore adaptations needed to his board and options for using high tech AAC to expand his Bliss vocabulary. Andrea will discuss Bliss symbols as both a historical and a contemporary AAC option and emphasise the need for professionals working in AAC to understand concept-based AAC as an alternative to picture-based systems, and/or pre-defined word or message-based voice output AAC systems. Many adults who used Bliss in the past may have 'lost' some of the communicative flexibility of Bliss through transitioning onto picture-based systems. The key message from this presentation is that AAC practitioners have a responsibility to ask about potential past Bliss use and to offer Bliss solutions if appropriate. This session will link to a workshop which will allow participants to explore available resources, learn the basic concepts and experience communicating with Bliss symbols.

### **References (Optional)**

Jennische, M., & Zetterlund, M. (2015). Interpretation and construction of meaning of Bliss-words in children. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 31(2), 97-107. Davies, E. (1985). The development and application of Blissymbolics. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*, 1(3), 281-294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026565908500100305>

### **Level**

Introductory Session

### **Age Group**

All Ages

## **6.7: A Tool for Life**

Grayston, Aimee - Author

### **Submission ID**

51

### **Format**

Platform

### **Submission Topic**

Personal Stories and Case Studies

### **Abstract**

During this presentation, using my own experience, I will be discussing how children and young people (up to the age of 25) can use their communication aid devices in education, work, play and leisure to promote their independence, allow them to make choices and help reach their potential. I shall additionally explore the problems they could face doing this and suggest how they could overcome them. I shall also be speaking about strategies young individuals can use to develop their social networks. Firstly, I will be discussing how communication aids can help young people learn and study independently throughout the

school years and at university. This is through installing apps, relevant to what they are learning about, and word processing software on the computer system of a device. I will also be talking about possible problems they could face with this and address how they could be overcome. Similarly, I shall explain about how young adults could use these computer systems to do a job and access work opportunities. Additionally, I shall discuss some problems I have faced being a communication user in work and how I overcame them. Furthermore, I will explore how young people can use their system's computer to access play and leisure activities, like their non-disabled peers do with their technology in the modern era and beyond that. Moreover, how communication aid software itself could be used as a toy will be investigated too. Also, I will talk about how communication aids can help children get more involved in imaginary play with their companions. Finally, I will be giving practical advice on how users with communication problems can make connections with peers at school and work and develop them into strong, enjoyable friendships and maintain them.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

**Details of sponsorship**

Sponsored by Liberator

## **6.8: Tri-athleting Assistive Technology (AT) : a clinician and user experience.**

Bhoola, Ereshini - Author; Egan, Eoin - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

20

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

Compass is the Specialised AAC Service for West London. We assess and provide Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) for those with complex needs. We make recommendations based on a person's needs and provide support to help them achieve these. Our service is for adults, who have difficulty communicating using speech and have physical difficulties, that further impact their ability to communicate. AAC is a vital component of Assistive Technology (AT) that empowers individuals towards independence.

The role of AT, including AAC, is to bridge the gap between an individual's abilities and the demands of their environment. In this joint presentation, we will explore Eoin's personal journey as an AAC user, focusing on his experiences, barriers encountered, and key learning points that contributed to his success. Eoin's utilization of AT extends to collaboration with Environmental Control Service and Wheelchair Service, showcasing the interconnected nature of various assistive technologies in enhancing his quality of life. Throughout the presentation, we will delve into the user's viewpoint, examining aspects such as usability, accessibility, customisation, and support. By sharing Eoin's insights, challenges, and triumphs, we aim to provide valuable understanding and actionable insights for both users and clinicians navigating complex AT environments. Our overarching goal is to equip attendees with the knowledge and tools necessary to better understand and meet the diverse needs of users within complex AT setups. By enhancing the overall experience with technology and identifying contributing factors to success, we can empower individuals like Eoin to lead more independent and fulfilling lives.

**Level**

Specialist Session

**Age Group**

Adult

## 7.1: The Grid Pad 13 design process revealed

Waits, Adam - Author; Fitzgerald, Neil - Author; Sagoo, Harch - Author

**Submission ID**

123

**Submission Topic**[Exhibitor Session](#)**Abstract**

Grid Pad 13 is a sleek and powerful new communication aid packed with industry firsts and innovative new features. Join us to learn more about the development process at Smartbox and the crucial role that AAC users and professionals play in this journey. When we set out to create Grid Pad 13, our guiding principle was to reduce as many barriers as possible for the people who use communication aids. To help us achieve this, we worked alongside a group of 40 AAC users and professionals who provided feedback on our ideas and helped us identify the most important features. Throughout the R&D process, we consulted with this group to test concepts and ensure they worked in the real world. Once the device was prototyped, we worked closely with a core team of AAC users to put the device through its paces. The result is Grid Pad 13, the fastest communication aid currently available on the AAC market. Unique features include a full-colour wide-angle second screen, programmable and user-accessible Smart Buttons, a 13" daylight-readable display, modular access options, custom audio design and personal speakers. In this talk, you will learn more about the outcomes of our development phases and the insights our research provided. You will

also hear directly from Harch Sagoo, an AAC user and one of our Grid Pad 13 product testers.

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## 7.2: Explore Tobii Dynavox's MND Pathway

Langley, Alice - Author; Gregory, Rob - Author

**Submission ID**

127

**Submission Topic**

[Exhibitor Session](#)

**Abstract**

Join us in this session as we delve into Tobii Dynavox's comprehensive ecosystem of products and supports tailored specifically for individuals diagnosed with Motor Neuron Disease (MND). Our mission is to empower these individuals, enabling them to actively participate in the world around them. We'll explore how our software is designed to be fast to implement and requires as little learning as possible. Our range of software for communication and computer access is also designed to require very little programming and adaptation by those that are supporting AAC users. Discover how our technology can enhance communication, foster independence and improve overall quality of life for those affected by MND.

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

Adult

## 7.3: AssistiveWare Proloquo - 5 unique features to enable classroom instruction

Robertson, Euan - Author

**Submission ID**

118

**Submission Topic**[Exhibitor Session](#)**Abstract**

AssistiveWare Proloquo is a next generation AAC app offering the largest AAC vocabulary to students of all ages. In this interactive session we will look at the unique features of Proloquo which enable it to be used to further communication, language and learning. Join us to examine ways educators across the world are already using this AAC system to develop communication skills, higher level language and literacy skills and afford all students, regardless of ability, access to the curriculum in a meaningful way. Embedding symbolic language across a learning community has often presented a huge challenge to those in the field of AAC. The extensive vocabulary available in Proloquo allows opportunity to embed symbols in all aspects of learning. The ability to form a team and share this vocabulary reduces barriers to implementation and allows maximum exposure to symbols for beginning communicators. Using symbols to anchor abstract concepts makes learning more accessible for all students and can increase educators confidence in using these tools. Relevant to educators, speech and language therapists and parents this workshop will explore Proloquo and offer implementation ideas from the experiences of parents and professionals using the app in their daily lives. Come and join this vibrant discussion and leave with practical ideas to develop in your setting.

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

Child

## 7.4: AAC Resources: How can AAC Software be used in the curriculum to support learning?

Madera, Annamaria - Author; Stanton, Katie - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

56

**Format**

Workshop

**Submission Topic**[Exhibitor Session](#)**Abstract**

This Workshop Presentation will look at resources and software that have been created using AAC Software to support curriculum access for AAC users. The presenters will explore how and why these resources enable independent access and achievement using the 'Input, Elaboration and Output Model' of learning. The emphasis is on ensuring that AAC software supports curriculum access with the least physical effort for the AAC user, in the shortest time with the maximum level of independence possible. Traditionally AAC software has been exclusively used for Communication; we propose that not only can AAC software be used for this purpose but can also be used to support curriculum access and learning alongside communication. The presentation will guide the audience through an entire learning experience demonstrating how this can be achieved; with a practical demonstration of the learning experience using AAC software and opportunities for the audience to see how curriculum resources and content can be made accessible for a variety of AAC users. The presenters will also discuss and demonstrate how AAC users' communication systems can be incorporated into the learning experience to ensure a holistic approach to communication and learning. Audience members will be challenged to consider barriers faced by AAC users when accessing 'traditional' curriculum and learning materials and how available AAC resources and AAC software can be used to overcome these barriers to ensure AAC users have equal access to learning resources and materials. This Paper/Presentation is Sponsored by Communication and Learning Enterprises – a not for profit organisation that supports AAC Users in Education.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## 7.5: my-own-voice: Voice banking and AI

Magnusson, Susanne - Author; Mazars, Nicolas - Author

**Submission ID**

114

**Submission Topic**[Exhibitor Session](#)**Abstract**

Acapela Group is a text-to-speech company (fully owned by Tobii Dynavox AB Publ) with more than 30 years of experience in the speech industry. 'My-own-voice' is a service developed by Acapela Group to re-create voices that may have otherwise been lost to disease. It takes only 15 minutes to record the phrases that will allow to create a digital copy of your voice. All you need is a computer (desktop/laptop), an external USB headset and an internet connection. More than 5,000 users per year take advantage of the service to create a copy of their digital voice in one of the 24 languages offered. The digital voice can be used in multiple applications/products. The presentation will focus on my-own-voice v4. We will cover all the aspects of a voice banking journey for a user. Learn about the latest novelties:

voice banking for adult (24 languages) and children (19 languages), the new AcapelaMOV that allows recording on a mobile and much more.

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## 7.6: Printing PODD books, the easy way

Foulger, Ian - Author

**Submission ID**

117

**Submission Topic**

[Exhibitor Session](#)

**Abstract**

Join Jabbla UK's presentation where we'll introduce the ground-breaking integration of PODD Books into Mind Express 5, revolutionising how individuals can build PODD Books. Imagine effortlessly printing entire PODD books with just a few clicks. With Mind Express 5, you can print all pages in one go, individually or double-sided - saving time and effort. Not only that, but the ability to swiftly Find & Replace symbols & text streamlines personalisation. Authored by Gayle Porter, PODD offers versatile formats, from traditional communication books to our cutting-edge AAC devices. Dive into the intricacies of PODD Communication books, available in various forms including one-page opening, two-page opening and the innovative two-page opening plus a side panel. Delve deeper into the construction and utilization of PODD books with detailed information and access methodologies directly embedded within each template. Our support files, conveniently accessible from the templates, provide comprehensive guidance for seamless implementation. Experience the power of PODD Direct Access Book Templates in Mind Express 5. Don't miss out on this opportunity to witness the future of creating PODD books. Visit our presentation to learn more.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages



## 7.7: Ace Centre Resources: Revitalize and Enhance Your AAC Toolkit

Voizey, Tina - Author; Peel, Gabriella - Co-Author

### Submission ID

128

### Submission Topic

[Exhibitor Session](#)

### Abstract

At Ace Centre, our mission is to empower individuals with complex communication needs to express themselves and achieve their potential. We understand that achieving this requires comprehensive support for them, their families, and the professionals who assist them. This support comes in the form of accessible tools, valuable information, and expert advice. In this session, we will showcase our legacy of creating, adapting, and sharing resources developed by our multidisciplinary team and their experience. We will delve into some of our most enduring and popular resources, exploring the motivations behind recent updates and the improvements made. Highlights of this session include: - Alphabet Charts: Discover new personalisation options that enhance usability and effectiveness. - Symbol Charts: Learn about new layouts designed to support physical and visual access. - The Pragmatics Profile for People who use AAC: Experience the improved user interface that streamlines assessment and application. - Look 2 Talk: Explore the new free version of our award-winning guide for creating an eye pointing communication book - Developing an Effective AAC Policy in Education Settings: Gain insights from our revamped guide on how to create a robust AAC policy that fosters inclusive education. Join us to learn how these free and accessible resources can elevate your AAC toolkit and help you provide better support to those with complex communication needs. This session is an invaluable opportunity for educators, therapists, caregivers, and AAC professionals to gain practical insights and enhance their practice. Don't miss out on the chance to learn how you can revitalize and enhance your AAC toolkit with Ace Centre's resources!

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## 8.1: Design and Quality Considerations for Accessibility

Lenartowicz, Adam - Author; Lenartowicz, Joe - Co-Author

### Submission ID

48

### Format

Platform

### Submission Topic

Personal Stories and Case Studies

### Abstract

The word "accessibility" means different things to a lot of different people, for instance many holiday cottages which are listed as "wheelchair accessible" may have a flight of steps up to the front door despite having level access inside. Similarly, Assistive Technologies like AAC can have unexpected impediments that prevent people with complex access needs getting the best out of their systems. This presentation will discuss the ways in which accessibility of AAC and AT can go horribly wrong! Inconsistently laid-out pages are awkward to use and users with limited access can get stuck if software is poorly designed. From tiny power buttons on VOCAs to awkward positioning of buttons on computer joysticks, we've seen it all! We'll also discuss how AT is sometimes designed for low expectations of the potential abilities of the AAC user, for instance large-button keyboards having no function keys like f5 that are essential for more advanced computer use, or AAC packages that associate the need for large cells (therefore limited grid size) with limited vocabulary needs. We aim to stimulate discussion about quality and design considerations to improve product standards and to promote better user experience. It will be of interest to all practitioners, providers, designers and manufacturers as well as people who use AAC.

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## 8.2: A Walk in the Park: Learning and Teaching Observation Skills for Communication.

Robertson, Euan - Author

### Submission ID

74

### Format

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

Traditional interventions which teach skills to communication partners, often focus on modelling as best practice in AAC implementation. Whilst modelling has an important place in the repertoire of skills of a communication partner, it is often taught in isolation and without solid foundation in observation. Observation is a critical skill to master when working with AAC users and is fundamental in establishing what and how to model. Observation is often implicit in AAC training yet requires understanding what to look for and how to describe and respond to it. This workshop will train AAC specialists to deliver training on observation for communication partners. Educators and parents are often told “just model” by professionals supporting AAC implementation. This message is often overwhelming and confusing for communication partners. There is clear evidence which points to the benefits of modelling, but this requires some cognitive effort on behalf of the communication partner. Communication partner training often focuses on the need to “point to symbols as you talk” but this does not address the cognitive load associated with deciding how and what to model. Often, there is an over reliance on core word modelling without equipping communication partners with the skills required to observe beginning AAC users communication signals and respond to those. Observing communication signals allows communication partners to label and respond to these signals encouraging and formalising their use by beginning communicators. By giving communication partners a robust formula with which to respond to communication signals we can reduce the cognitive load on communication partners and embed good communication habits. The presenters will ask attendees to participate in a shortened version of the workshop and provide opportunities for questions and feedback throughout.

**References (Optional)**

Dorney, K. E., & Erickson, K. (2019) Transactions Within a Classroom-Based AAC Intervention Targeting Preschool Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Mixed-Methods Investigation. *Exceptionality Education International*, 29, 42-58. Retrieved from <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/eei/vol29/iss2/3>

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## **8.3: When ye ken, ye ken! Attempting to define the magic moments of AAC practice.**

Anderson, Lesley - Author; Roberston, Alex - Author; Hanschell, Amy - Author

**Submission ID**

93

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

We work in a small adult acquired SLT team who work across Tayside supporting local AAC provision. We were inspired last year through our attendance at CM Conference by the consideration of a future vision of AAC service delivery. This presentation is an opportunity for us to examine what we currently do well, what makes it good, and what we and our service users value. We want to reflect both as individual therapists, and as a team on what motivates us to continue to “do better” despite the current landscape of stretched resources and capacity. The motivators that come from those “magic moments” - the ones that you want to return to the office and relay to a colleague. The intangible moments that stick with you. Little wins, big impact. We will evaluate our journey of service development through the eyes of some of our service users, reflecting on what empowerment means in our day-to-day practice. Consideration will be given to the impact of the Scottish AAC legislation in empowering us as clinicians to shape our local AAC service. We want to highlight the value we place on service user autonomy and individuality within the provision of AAC. Building positive therapeutic relationships is central to our practice. We value getting to know people, in order to find the best fit solution for them. Finally, we will share our thoughts on how in the context of imminent service change in our SLT team we hope to retain our values and harness opportunities for change so we can better support AAC users beyond equipment provision to help achieve their broader communication goals.

**References (Optional)**

Broomfield, K., Judge, S., Sage, K., Jones, G. L. and James, D. (2023) 'Using longitudinal qualitative research to explore the experience of receiving and using augmentative and alternative communication.' *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 'First online' published 14th of November 2023. [Accessed on 22nd of November 2023] DOI: 10.1111/1460-6984.12981 Hengst, J. A. and Sherrill, M. H. (2021) 'Augmenting Communicative Environments for People With Acquired Neurogenic Disorders.' *Topics in Language Disorders*, 41(1) pp. 27-46. [Online] [Accessed on 17th September 2022] DOI: 10.1097/tld.0000000000000245 Light, J., McNaughton, D., Beukelman, D., Fager, S. K., Fried-Oken, M., Jakobs, T. and Jakobs, E. (2019) 'Challenges and opportunities in augmentative and alternative communication: Research and technology development to enhance communication and participation for individuals with complex communication needs.' *Augmentative Alternative Communication*, 35 (1) pp. 1-12. [Online] 'First online' published 19th January 2019. [Accessed on 17th September 2022] DOI: 10.1080/07434618.2018.1556732 McNaughton, D., Light, J., Beukelman, D. R., Klein, C., Nieder, D. and Nazareth, G. (2019) 'Building capacity in AAC: A person-centred approach to supporting participation by people with complex communication needs.' *Augmentative Alternative Communication*, 35 (1) pp. 56-68. [Online] 'First online' published 27th February 2019. [Accessed on 17th September 2022] DOI: 10.1080/07434618.2018.1556731 Scottish Government (2016) *Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Act* [Online] [Accessed 8th of April 2018]

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/14/part/4/enacted> Smidt, A. and Pebdani, R. N. (2023) 'Rethinking device abandonment: a capability approach focused model.' *Augmentative Alternative Communication*, 39(3), pp. 198-206. [Online] 'First online' published 21st of May 2023. [Accessed on 2nd of December 2023] DOI: 10.1080/07434618.2023.2199859

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

Adult

## **LT8.4: Hosting my first p w u a a c chat**

Norman, Maddy - Author

**Submission ID**

2

**Format**

Lightning Talk

**Submission Topic**

Personal Stories and Case Studies

**Abstract**

Abstract in this talk I am going to talk about the experience of hosting my first ever p w aac chat. The process of the event and what happened. It is about a page long but my tobii speaks it fast. Starting at the beginning. I go through the whole process from start to finish. Welcome to ask questions. Once I have finish speaking.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## **LT8.4: Are my PC Eye and my Gridpad just AAC devices, or can they empower me to organise my life?**

Bates, Patrick - Author

**Submission ID**

6

**Format**

Lightning Talk

**Submission Topic**

Personal Stories and Case Studies

**Abstract**

My name is Patrick Bates, and I live in Coventry, where I receive 24-hour care support from my Care Team, which I employ myself. I have been using the Eyegaze for the last 15 years, both as my communication aid and as my computer access via my PCEYE. I use my Eyegaze constantly, from morning till about midnight each day. When I am out and about, I use my Eyegaze, and then when I get back home, I transfer to my desktop computer with the PCEYE, where I do a range of activities, including writing this presentation.

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## **LT8.4: My Experience of English Language Development as a Deaf AAC User**

Clarke, Nadia - Author

**Submission ID**

31

**Format**

Lightning Talk

**Submission Topic**

Personal Stories and Case Studies

**Abstract**

I was born with Cerebral Palsy and Deaf. I went to a mainstream Primary and Junior school, where I had an AAC and was taught using BSL. The schools did not have any knowledge of my AAC, and they did not have the time to support me to use it. I used pictures and a few basis words, which was good to help me understand what was happening around me. However, the schools were not aware how important my AAC was for developing my English

skills. When I was 5 years old, I had a cochlear implant so I could hear words, but I did not know what they meant. When I moved to high school there was a little bit more understanding about my AAC and its importance for my English development, but my English level was still quite low and I failed many of my exams. Growing up I felt lazy because I was a Deaf BSL user, which impacted my English development and I found it difficult to learn and understand. I grew up in a very busy, inclusive family, and my parents worked hard to give me the same opportunities as my siblings. They believed in human rights and the right to communicate, and we were encouraged to communicate with one another using lots of different ways. When I went to college, they had more understanding of my AAC and supported me to use it and they were able to teach me English, which improved my lip-reading skills and 7 years ago I stopped using pictures altogether on my AAC. As an adult my English skills have improved so much, I now prefer to use my AAC and Sign Supported English to communicate rather than BSL.

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## 8.5: Coordinating a Multi-Agency Approach to Supporting the use of AAC in Specialist School Settings

Green, Helen - Author; Lethbridge, Rachael - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

68

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

The Specialist Intervention Team (SIT) is a process driven service with ongoing training and multi-agency working at its core. An integral part of the success of the pilot can be attributed to the network of professionals, working jointly with the SIT to ensure that pupils needs are identified and that they are placed within the correct pathway of therapeutic support. This presentation will have a specific focus on the work of SIT alongside Speech and Language, AAC advisory teams and providers in Cornwall and Devon. An audit conducted across four Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools identified that: - A significant cohort of pupils were unable to access the school's universal provision. - Specialist services, most notably Speech and Language were less accessible due to capacity. - Some pupils showed a change in presentation/deterioration in health/wellbeing whilst on service waiting lists. - Others didn't access appropriate targeted intervention in school, therefore there was a lack

of evidence for effective referrals and/or the graduated response wasn't clear. The aims of the Specialist Intervention Team (SIT) are to: - Provide a sustainable intervention resource for pupils, working innovatively in SEN schools, across a multi-academy trust, with multi-agency partners. - Support early identification of pupil's therapeutic needs, providing personalised outcomes and specialist support. - Further develop an equitable offer within the schools, enabling fair access to therapeutic services and support. - Create professional career pathways, supported by expertise. Developing and retaining highly skilled staff. Multi Agency Working across the Trust has improved, supporting with embedding of specialist speech, language and communication recommendations into universal provision, reducing referrals for specialist support through timely, targeted intervention, and improving accuracy of referrals for specialist speech and language support. The SIT has now been extended beyond its initial 2-year pilot with plans to be made permanent.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

Adult

## 8.6: Bliss is for Everyone: Communicating using Blissymbols

Waller, Annalu - Author; Lee, Andrea - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

97

**Format**

Workshop

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

Blissymbolics, based on an international writing system developed by Charles K. Bliss (1965), was first introduced as an AAC system in 1971 in Toronto, Canada. Unlike other graphic representation systems which enable AAC users to encode messages, Bliss is a generative language – one or more Bliss-characters forming a Bliss-word. Although Bliss user can generate their own spelling of words using a subset of characters, the Authorised Vocabulary (the dictionary of Bliss-words) contains more than 5,000 Bliss-words, allowing for universal publication and translation of Bliss resources and texts. Each Bliss-word is glossed in 19 languages, including English ([www.blissymbolics.org](http://www.blissymbolics.org)). This workshop will introduce the Bliss language equipping participants with an understanding of the basics the language and the ability to recognise a subset of Bliss characters. Participants will have the opportunity to generate novel concepts using the generative capabilities of using both high and low tech resources and tools. Myths around the complexity of Bliss will be challenged by



demonstrating how Bliss can be used to support expression from simple utterances through to complex linguistic interactions. Although Bliss is often viewed as being less transparent than other AAC symbol systems, Bliss symbols are translucent and learnable (Luftig & Bersani, 1985; Poupart et al, 2013). The workshop will conclude with an interactive discussion on the role of Bliss in the 21st century and its place within the repertoire of AAC strategies. The workshop will be led by the authors who are trustees of the UK Bliss charity ([www.blissymbols.co.uk](http://www.blissymbols.co.uk)), established in 1977. Although Bliss use in the UK has declined, it is important for everyone to have a basic working knowledge of Bliss to support lifelong Bliss users. This workshop complements a presentation by an expert Bliss user who will demonstrate how the language allows him to express novel concepts and ideas.

### References (Optional)

Bliss, C.K. (1965) *Semantography (Blissymbolics): A Logical Writing for an Illogical World*. Semantography (Blissymbolics) Publications, Australia.

Jennische, M. and Zetterlund, M. (2015) 'Interpretation and Construction of Meaning of Bliss-words in Children', *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 31(2), pp. 97–107. doi: 10.3109/07434618.2015.1036117.

Luftig, R. L. and Bersani, H. A. (1985). An Initial Investigation of Translucency, Transparency, and Component Complexity of Blissymbolics. *Journal of Childhood Communication Disorders*, 8(2), 191-209. <https://doi.org/10.1177/152574018500800209>

Poupart, A., Trudeau, N. and Sutton, A. (2013) 'Construction of graphic symbol sequences by preschool-aged children: Learning, training, and maintenance', *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 34(1), pp. 91–109. doi:10.1017/S0142716411000622.

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## 8.7: Seventeen years using AAC- My story

Omar, Abdi - Author

### Submission ID

71

### Format

Platform

### Submission Topic

Personal Stories and Case Studies

### Abstract

I am Abdi Omar, an inspiring entrepreneur who is living with Cerebral Palsy, a condition marked by impaired muscle coordination, typically caused by damage to the brain before birth. This hugely affected my jaw movement and communication, but never stopped me

from having a voice. I believe I can bring a unique perspective to the table, from my first AAC method was a light pointer with a communication book to now using a more high tech communication aid. When I participated in this event last year it fulfilled me to know that my story can inspire and educate other AAC users, but this year it is much more than that. This year I make it my duty to inspire next generation of users, as well as providing useful educational information to teach teachers and staff on how to bring the best of their students with communication aids. This year I will tell you different methods to help students or clients to be more comfortable using their devices. Why am I qualified? Good question. every week I teach 13 students who uses devices to speak. They are all different levels, and thus I believe I can bring a wide variety of educational information to the event. I can't wait to see you in September.

**Level**

Introductory Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

**8.8: The viability of 'AACtion Heroes'. Participant perspectives on a child-led approach for exploring the views of school-aged children who use aided AAC and their peers with complex communication needs (CCN) in a special education setting.**

Hrastelj, Laura - Author; Murray, Janice - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

75

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Best Research Evidence

**Abstract**

This presentation will detail the first author's PhD project and the development of 'AACtion Heroes': a child-led approach for exploring the views of school-aged children who use aided AAC and their peers with complex communication needs (CCN) in a special education setting. Children (n=3) and adults (n=3) participated in 6 weekly sessions with the researcher, utilising creative methods to co-create children's personal storybooks which detailed their perspectives on school. Weeks 1 –5 included a post-session reflection with the adult participants to discuss what supported the children to express their views. Semi-structured interviews with the adult participants and a symbol-supported interview with the

hi-tech AAC user were conducted to gain participants' views on the viability of the approach for use in the everyday special education setting. Thematic Network Analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001) of participant interview data was conducted. Three global themes emerged from the data: the existing school system; the experience of participating in 'AACtion Heroes'; and imagining the future. Findings suggest that the current school system limits children's opportunities for agency (Gillett-Swan and Sargeant, 2018). 'AACtion Heroes' provided a context in which adult educators could interact differently with the children, giving them more time, and following their lead. For the hi-tech AAC user, it offered a space to try new things such as photography and a consistent opportunity to use his hi-tech AAC system. Adult participants discussed the value of reflection. 'AACtion Heroes' was perceived as a viable and innovative approach for hearing the views of school-aged children who use hi-tech AAC in the special education setting. It provides a potentially useful form of communication partner training, i.e., collaborative reflective practice with adults who support children who use AAC. There is no one-size-fits-all approach for understanding and supporting AAC interactions: as expressed by adult participant Kate, "we are learning together".

### References (Optional)

Attride-Stirling, J. (2001) 'Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research.' *Qualitative Research*, 1(3) pp. 385-405. Gillett-Swan, J. and Sargeant, J. (2018) 'Assuring children's human right to freedom of opinion and expression in education.' *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 20(1), pp. 120-127.

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

Child

## 9.1: Peer Support & Mentoring

Elliott, Verity - Author

### Submission ID

29

### Format

Workshop

### Submission Topic

Personal Stories and Case Studies

### Abstract

Communication Matters (CM) would like to present this newly funded project (with thanks to the National Lottery England) along with a range of opportunities for AAC users, parents, carers, schools and colleges and speech and language services. CM Communication

Clubs are an opportunity to develop communication skills and to meet in a friendly, supportive and social environment. Most clubs will be in person but some sessions could be on-line via Zoom or Teams. A wide range of topics and resources can be provided along with support and guidance. It is hoped that Communication Clubs will be available in a variety of locations across England. AAC users who have achieved the Level 1 Award in Mentoring qualification are best placed to assist with these sessions and this workshop will be an opportunity to find out more. The workshop will include personal stories and case studies, activities to help find out what would you like from your club, opportunities to share ideas with others and next steps. This is an exciting development and Communication Matters are delighted to be continuing and developing this project. Communication Matters also has funding for a wide range of opportunities to complete accredited learning and development from Entry Level 2 to Level 2.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## 9.2: A Complex Access Case Study

Ackford, Shani - Author; Conroy, Lisa - Co-Author; Anderson, Cat - Co-Author; Lee, Tor - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

87

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

**INTRODUCTION** Cat is a 25 year old with Cerebral Palsy with complex access needs. Cat grew up in Hong Kong and had AAC input from a range of international AAC specialists. Cat was referred to AAC WEST by National Star College for a joined up MDT AAC assessment to relook at her AAC set up, with the aim of increasing her access and functional communication. On referral she was using a low tech AAC accessed with a combination of eye pointing and partner assisted scanning, and a high tech communication aid accessed with eye gaze. However communication partners had difficulty establishing which were the intentional selections due to frequent mishits. **MANAGEMENT AND OUTCOME** Cat had an extended period of assessment between December 2021 and March 2023. In this presentation we will take you through: - Cat's complex presentation and what we learnt about Cat's eye movements. - The access options that we explored to meet her complex access needs including: 1. Variations in eye gaze software settings and unusual

combinations for eye gaze access. 2. Switch access options. - The vocabulary design and organisation; bespoke 2 hit keyboard and messages with confirmation clicks. - The programming and Mind Express 5 software features that allowed us to do this programming. DISCUSSION Cat's presentation required extensive assessment and trials to try to meet her complex access needs. We worked with 3 different suppliers to trial bespoke software settings to combine with hardware solutions. There was strong team work between her dedicated PA team, National STAR College team, family, AAC WEST, suppliers and most of all Cat to provide continued review and refinement of recommendations, in pursuit of Cat's goal to achieve functional communication.

**Level**

Specialist Session

**Age Group**

Adult

## 9.4: Exploring factors leading to AAC abandonment

Scott, Julia - Author; Clay, Daisy - Author; Reichelt, James - Author

**Submission ID**

80

**Format**

Workshop

**Submission Topic**

Best Research Evidence

**Abstract**

A workshop to explore how the AAC industry can help to reduce device abandonment. Our research found that 93% of professionals have experienced someone stopping using their AAC device or app. Smartbox have recently carried out a funded research project, exploring the many reasons which contribute to why someone might no longer use their AAC system, despite an ongoing need. Many AAC users, families and professionals shared their experiences through surveys and interviews. A literature review of the most recent research in the field also helped to reinforce findings. Environmental factors around the AAC user, such as support networks, training, availability across environments and personal attitudes were identified as some of the most influential barriers to success. While some of these factors identified can help Smartbox to improve future products and processes, other factors are harder to tackle on our own. In this interactive workshop we would like to explore as a group how we can help to reduce AAC abandonment. Topics for discussion: As a community, where can we come together to make the most impact? Training and support are critical to successful AAC adoption. How can we ensure everyone has access to it? We would love to have input from a wide range of people to discuss how we can make an impact together.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

**Details of sponsorship**

Smartbox and SpeakUnique conducted this research with funding from Innovate UK

## 9.5: Development of a parent-reported outcome measure for the communication of children with neurodisability

Buckeridge, Katherine - Author; Abrahamson, Vanessa - Co-Author; Forbes, Lindsay - Co-Author; Pellatt-Higgins, Tracy - Co-Author; Sellers, Diane - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

113

**Format**

Platform

**Submission Topic**

Best Research Evidence

**Abstract**

The term 'neurodisability' encompasses conditions such as cerebral palsy (CP), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), acquired brain injury (ABI) and epilepsy (Morris et al., 2015). Some children with neurodisability are unable to rely on speech to communicate and so use a range of augmentative and alternative communication methods and strategies to get their message across. Current instruments designed to measure the outcomes of speech and language therapy interventions lack specific attention to communication outcomes that are valued by non-verbal/non-speaking children with neurodisability, their families and support networks. This PhD project aims to develop a novel parent-reported outcome measure which can be used to evaluate change in the communication of children over time. For the first phase of the study a qualitative meta-synthesis was conducted to systematically identify and synthesise the qualitative evidence about which communication outcomes children, their family members, and healthcare professionals and educators think are important to achieve. We found 47 papers containing qualitative data meeting the inclusion criteria from research situated in 14 countries. The views of 35 children, 183 parents, 6 other family members, 42 healthcare professionals and 18 educators are represented in the synthesis. Three main analytical themes were identified: experiences of communication and expectations; adapting to and acceptance of Augmentative and Alternative Communication; and becoming an autonomous communicator. Publication of the meta-synthesis is currently under consideration by a peer reviewed journal. The second phase of the study entailed online interviews with 26 parents from the UK and focus groups with 15 speech and language

therapists. The data analysis from this phase has been undertaken using a Framework Approach (Richie & Lewis, 2008) to identify potential items to be included in the outcome measure. A Delphi survey is planned for the next phase. My presentation will cover the work undertaken to date.

**References (Optional)**

Morris, C., Janssens, A., Shilling, V., et al. (2015) Meaningful health outcomes for paediatric neurodisability: Stakeholder prioritisation and appropriateness of patient reported outcome measures. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 13 (1): 1–9. Richie, J., & Lewis, J. (Eds.). (2008). *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. Sage.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

Child

**Details of sponsorship**

This research was funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey, Sussex. The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NHS, the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

## 9.6: Generative AI and the field of AAC: Let's Get Practical for Ethical Accessibility

Hemsley, Bronwyn - Author

**Submission ID**

50

**Format**

Workshop

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

The field of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) has been built on the use of communication technology advancements - and has driven many advancements in the wider world in relation to communication technologies to benefit everyone. The new technologies wrapped up in Generative AI (GenAI) will be very important in driving developments in AAC, and people with experience using AAC will be driving developments. With this intersection of both AAC and GenAI, it is all the more important to have inclusive

'ideas' being generated by natural humans (that is, the ones who are not digital identities only) making sure that this includes humans who have a wide range of views and experiences. We know that AI is limited because of its use of large data sets, and problems with producing outputs that reflect entrenched racism and ableism, as well as gender stereotypes. People are no longer sure who created the material that is produced using GenAI. All 'humans in the loop' of using and checking AI outputs and products have a role in ensuring that GenAI improves so that its products and outputs make society more accessible and more aware of the rights of disabled persons and about accessibility. In this workshop, the audience will participate in small and large group discussions to generate ideas and priorities in GenAI advances for people who use AAC and their families and supporters, including professionals working in the field. The discussions will focus on opportunities and inclusions for developing a safety framework that will help to ensure people who use AAC are included in GenAI without losing their own AAC voice to an 'artificial' intelligence in GenAI. The audience will base their discussions around recent research on GenAI and AAC and the best available guidance on use of GenAI in disability.

### References (Optional)

[1] Scarinci, N., Hemsley, B. (2024). Ethical conversations: what are the implications of AI for AAC development, use, and implementation?, *Journal of Clinical Practice in Speech-Language Pathology*, DOI: 10.1080/22000259.2024.2316940 [2] Berube et al., (2024). Proactive behavior in voice assistants: A systematic review and conceptual model. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*. 14(2024)100411 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2024.100411> [3] Harrer, S. (2023). Attention is not all you need: the complicated case of ethically using large language models in healthcare and medicine. *The Lancet, eBioMedicine*, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/ebiom/article/PIIS2352-3964\(23\)00077-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/ebiom/article/PIIS2352-3964(23)00077-4/fulltext)

### Level

General Session

### Age Group

All Ages

## 9.7: Pathways for trial and provision of Electronic Assistive Technology (EAT)

Clarke, Zoe - Co-Author; Darley, Sally - Co-Author; Broomfield, Katherine - Co-Author; Rogers, Jodie - Co-Author; Martin, Suzanne - Co-Author; Garrett, Claire - Co-Author

### Submission ID

95

### Format

Workshop

### Submission Topic



## Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

Electronic Assistive Technology (EAT), encompassing communication aids and environmental control systems, holds considerable potential to enhance the lives of many individuals. In England, specialized services with comprehensive service specifications have been established. While the introduction of these services represented a significant advancement in assessing and delivering specialised EAT, there's also acknowledgment of substantial variation in terms of skills, knowledge, available equipment, among our local teams. This variability potentially has two effects. It can impact the quality of referrals into the specialised services and it can limit opportunities for individuals who could benefit from EAT, but might not meet the specialised service criteria, to explore alternative technology options. At Communication Matters 2023, work was presented from South Yorkshire discussing the findings of a report examining local care pathways for EAT (1). One key area identified was how people could access technology assessments if they were not following the specialized pathway. Additionally, Kent and Medway Communication and Assistive Technology Service presented their equipment provision service (2), which has been operating for a significant period, sharing insights from their review of the loan bank's functioning. This work identified that several teams are either implementing or developing pathways for more local access to technology, often through loan banks. In this workshop, we'll provide a brief overview of four example equipment pathways, sharing their models, successes, and challenges. The remainder of the workshop will focus on discussions with the audience about the necessary elements for these pathways, drawing from their experiences and identifying opportunities for improvement to advance these pathways further.

**References (Optional)**

1. Broomfield, K. Clarke, Z. Access to electronic assistive technologies: A project exploring local services and pathways to accessing technology in South Yorkshire, Communication Matters Conference 2024
2. Garratt, C. Provision and Abandonment of Assistive Technology: An evaluation of the KM CAT AAC equipment provision service, Communication Matters Conference 2024

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## **P5: A Bigger Umbrella: Combining AAC and Speech-Enabling Technologies to Improve Health Outcomes in Intensive Care Units**

LaValley, Mimi - Author; Chavers Edgar, Tiffany - Co-Author; Wu, Mengxuan - Co-Author; Schlosser, Ralf - Co-Author; Koul, Rajinder - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

67

**Format**

Poster

**Submission Topic**

Best Research Evidence

**Abstract**

Tools for nonspeaking mechanically ventilated and tracheostomy patients in intensive care to access communication include low- and high-tech AAC as well as speech-enabling technologies such as speaking valves, electrolarynx, and talking tracheostomy tubes. The evidence base for the efficacy of AAC and speech-enabling interventions to improve patient health outcomes continues to grow, but research that weighs comparative advantages and trade-offs is scarce (Zaga et al., 2019). Likewise, policy and institutional culture factors may limit the extent to which these tools are used in combination with explicit aims to empower patients experiencing temporary or long-term voicelessness. Therefore, a discussion of considering communication intervention goals with both speech-enabling and AAC modalities under one umbrella to improve health outcomes for hospitalized patients is needed. There are limited studies that demonstrate efficacy of intensive care communication interventions in terms of their impact on patient health, but preliminary evidence suggests that recovery time, duration of hospitalization and voicelessness, quality-of-life, anxiety, accuracy of pain assessment, and overall patient comfort may be impacted by better patient communication supports in hospital settings (LaValley & Koul, 2023). Considering that each of these outcomes is associated with increased probability of complications after hospital discharge, comparative research and more well-defined communication standards have potential to advance public health in addition to increasing efficacy of speech-language pathology practices. We will present the extant research in this area synthesized using PRISMA-ScR scoping review methodology, including quality appraisal and effect size measures (Tricco et al., 2018). We aim to continue a dialogue that can inform future directions of research into communication and health outcomes for mechanically ventilated and tracheostomized patients. We will discuss evolving lines of research and professional practice for AAC and speech-enabling tools under a shared umbrella to empower communication-vulnerable hospitalized patients.

**References (Optional)**

Zaga, C. J., Berney, S., & Vogel, A. P. (2019). The feasibility, utility, and safety of communication interventions with mechanically ventilated intensive care unit patients: a systematic review. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 28(3), 1335-1355.

LaValley, M., & Koul, R. (2023, November 16-19). AAC interventions for mechanically ventilated and tracheostomized critical and acute care patients. [Conference session]. American Speech-Hearing Association Convention, Boston, MA.

Tricco, A. C., Lillie, E., Zarin, W., O'Brien, K. K., Colquhoun, H., Levac, D., & Straus, S. E. (2018). PRISMA extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR): Checklist and explanation. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 169(7), 467-473.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

**P6: Five ceramic objects to seed conversations about AAC futures**

Tams-Gray, Finley - Author; Pullin, Graham - Co-Author; Brown, Katie - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

90

**Format**

Poster

**Submission Topic**

Personal Stories and Case Studies

**Abstract**

Between Things is a collection of interactive ceramic objects designed and created by Fin Tams-Gray, Katie Brown and Graham Pullin. This design collection aims to seed conversations about AAC which the designers and co-researchers believe are not being had enough. Through the lens of speculative design (Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, 2001) each object identifies an area within the field of AAC which is important and yet we feel is not being considered when designing AAC futures: such as turn taking and returning to previous points in a conversation. Between Things is important as a series of placeholder objects to start conversations about AAC without being anchored to the frustrations of reality - and to be able to discuss each of these specific topics in isolation. For example, it's hard to talk about being comfortable with silence without referring to body language, or turn taking, because naturally these things are entangled and related. Between Things allows an observer to focus on specific issues around AAC and investigate each separately, but also be able to see the relationships between each. Between Things was fabricated in Duncan of Jordanstown Collage of Art and Design in Dundee's ceramics workshop by Katie Brown with assistance from Sean Kingsley, with embedded technologies designed and implemented by Fin Tams-Gray. This project was created in the context of our collaborations with co-researchers Jamie Preece and Emma Sullivan. A demo video of Between Things was shared during our Communication Matters keynote talk last year (Graham Pullin, 2023). This poster will showcase Between Things' final physical and technical forms using large format striking imagery, and communicate the intent, outcomes, and ethos of the project.

**References (Optional)**

Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby (2001) Design Noir: The Secret Life of Electronic Objects  
 Graham Pullin (2023) Making with Mentors  
 Jeffery Higginbotham (1999) Slipping Through the Timestream: Social Issues of Time and Timing in Augmented Interactions  
 Naoto Fukasawa, Jasper Morrison (2007) Super Normal

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

**P7: Using the silent voice inside your head to communicate**

Woods, Rosemary - Author; Kerr, David - Author

**Submission ID**

15

**Format**

Poster

**Submission Topic**

Best Research Evidence

**Abstract**

People with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD) are believed to be developmentally delayed and pre-linguistic (Goldbart and Caton 2010). In contrast, a research study recorded the Sub Vocal (SV) speech of participants with PMLD to demonstrate production of meaningful sentences (Woods et al 2023) and identifying linguistic competencies significantly more advanced than those currently attributed to them. Participants communicated, self-advocated and responded to a range of questions, despite their complex communication needs. Method: 20 participants recorded sub vocal utterances, using the Blue Yeti microphone and Adobe Audition 1.5. via a Toshiba laptop. Recordings were investigated for language content, structure and listener intelligibility. However, this system does not operate in real time, and requires manual recording, amplification and playback procedures to function. Nevertheless, the results of this research are vitally important for individuals with PMLD, indicating a pathway towards the use of SV speech as Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). Current AAC technology for people with PMLD has been very limited (Isaacson & Quist, 2011) as the understanding that language is lacking has obscured the need for AAC solutions. However, an audible demonstration of the participants' language emphasizes the urgent need for exploration and development in this field. The means to enable SV utterances to function communicatively already exists by capitalizing on the advances in digital technology present in language processing software, speech recognition systems and AI, offering the potential for synthesised speech, more easily recognisable to the human listener, and with minimal processing delay. The significance of such a development in the lives of the participants is immeasurable. From enforced silence to a position of communicating with words to converse with others is a seismic shift that is potentially possible, with the development of AAC to facilitate the meaningful use of existing SV speech.

**References (Optional)**

Goldbart, J & Caton S (2010) Communication and people with the most complex needs: What works and why this is essential. Research Institute for Health and Social Change Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) MENCAP Issacson, M. D., & Quist, R.W. (2011). Human factors in the evaluation and use of assistive technology. In O. Wendt, R.W. Quist, & L.L. Lloyd (Eds.), Assistive technology: Principles and applications for communication disorders and special education United Kingdom: Emerald Group Publishing Limited. (pp. 123-169). Woods, RH, Kerr, D, Woods, LF, Raghavan, Cornelius,P, Brown, A (2023) Children and young adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities: Evidence of intelligible subvocal language, Research in Developmental Disabilities, Volume 143, 2023, 104633, ISSN 0891-4222, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2023.104633>. (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0891422223002111>) [https://authors.elsevier.com/sd/article/S0891-4222\(23\)00211-1](https://authors.elsevier.com/sd/article/S0891-4222(23)00211-1)

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

All Ages

## **P8: Empowering Individuals: Establishing an Assistive Technology and AAC Service for Adults with Acquired Brain Injuries in Ireland**

O'Connor, Alanna - Author; Donnellan, Caroline - Co-Author; McGettrick, Grainne - Co-Author; Connolly, Anne - Co-Author

**Submission ID**

110

**Format**

Poster

**Submission Topic**

Clinical and Professional Service Delivery

**Abstract**

Acquired Brain Injury Ireland (ABII) is the leading provider of community-based neuro-rehabilitation services for adults with an acquired brain injury in Ireland. ABII offers a suite of services including assisted living, case management, community rehabilitation, clubhouses, and vocational rehabilitation. Ireland does not have a specific pathway for assistive technology (AT) or AAC, which results in significant variance in access. AT and AAC can offer tools to enhance accessibility and inclusion as part of an individual's rehabilitation. In 2022, ABII established its CreATe service to improve access to digital assistive technologies for adults with an acquired brain injury. It is funded by a grant from the Government's National Programme for People with Disabilities. CreATe is a clinically led programme

available to anyone accessing ABIL services. It aims to empower individuals through an interdisciplinary approach, to use AT and AAC as part of their individualised rehabilitation plan. The service is innovative, agile and dynamic to ensure it is person-centred. It is led by Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy in collaboration with Rehabilitation Assistants. CreATe has developed a unique service, which offers staff consultations, remote and in-person assessments, a loan library, and acts as a support to other programmes and organisational departments. Guided by the individual's goals and preferences, CreATe holistically explores potential supports, which have included AAC, physical access solutions, accessibility adaptations, environmental controls, leisure activities, and more. CreATe emphasises the importance of trialling, evaluating, and implementing AT and AAC in everyday life to achieve a sustainable outcome. To further the impact of the service, each assessment and intervention aims to empower both the individual with their bespoke AT/AAC system and staff with knowledge and skills that they can apply to other individuals. CreATe is excited to share our insights in the pursuit of empowering individuals through AT and AAC.

**References (Optional)**

World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund 2022. Global report on assistive technology. Genève, Switzerland: World Health Organization.

**Level**

General Session

**Age Group**

Adult