



KEYCOMM NEWS

The Keycomm Newsletter

October 2014

Welcome to the Keycomm Newsletter!

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the Keycomm newsletter - Autumn already! The summer already seems a distant memory, and we've been hard at work here at Keycomm. We hope you'll enjoy this packed issue, which includes the first installment of our feedback from the recent Communication Matters Conference in Leeds.

Staff News

We were very sorry to lose our Assistive Technologist, Fil McIntyre, to Beaumont College in Lancaster earlier this year. However, we think that the job looks perfect for him and we wish him all the very best. We'll miss you, Fil!

However, we are delighted to be able to welcome two new members of the Keycomm team: Annie Welsh and Heather Baillie. Annie and Heather will be our AAC Technical Instructors, and will be helping to support the technology we loan out. They will start in October - we can't wait!

In This Issue

- Feedback from the 2014 Communication Matters Conference
- New equipment
- Staff changes at Keycomm
- Book giveaway
- Details of our upcoming courses
- AAC study group

Courses at Keycomm

Don't miss out on the courses we're running at Keycomm! Give us a call on 0131 311 7130 or email Janet at Janet.1.ramsay@ea.edin.sch.uk to book your place.

30/10/2014	3.30pm - 5.30pm	Introduction to AAC
7/11/2014	1.30pm - 3.30pm	IPAACKS/AAC Competency Framework
19/11/2014	4pm - 6pm	Using iPads to Improve Communication
15/01/2015	10am-12 midday	Introduction to the CODES Framework





CM Conference 2014



The 2014 Communication Matters conference took place at Leeds University from 14th-16th September. Four staff from Keycomm were in attendance - Deborah, Nicky, Mel and Susan. This meant that we were able to attend a good range of seminars, and now we can share what we learned with you! We also presented our own seminar on the CODES Framework and presented a poster on the forthcoming Toolkit for Teachers that will go alongside CODES, so we were kept very busy! We all really enjoyed the conference and would like to thank Communication Matters and Meet in Leeds, who both did a fantastic job respectively organising and hosting the event.

We learned so much at the conference that we've had to split our feedback over two issues. This issue you'll hear from Susan and Deborah, next time you'll hear from Mel and Nicky. Please get in touch if you have any questions.

Update on the Chatable App from Therapy Box - Deborah Jans

Chatable is being upgraded and will be available by the end of September 2014. Some of the new features include a new range of voices from Nuance which will include a Scottish female voice and an Irish voice. The other key feature is the integration of Skype into Chatable so you can use your Chatable grids to communicate via Skype. (You must have Skype downloaded onto your Ipad as well as Chatable). The last key new feature is the availability of voice banking for both Chatable and Predictable. This is possible due to a partnership with Model Talker, a voice banking service. The procedure to develop the voice based on your own voice is a bit onerous and includes banking up to 1600 words and emailing them to the Model Talker people. They will then send you a file of your voice to go into Chatable and Predictable. We will have to try this at Keycomm and can let you know how we get on. If you already have Chatable on your iPad, the upgrade will be free.



CM Conference 2014



Information Resources and SpeechBubble - Susan Henderson

Katharine Buckley, a Speech and Language Therapist from the ACE Centre, presented this session which covered some great low-tech resources that they have developed as well as an update to the SpeechBubble website. Their work had been made possible by a DfE grant.

The resources that have been developed include some ebooks on various topics to do with AAC, some low-tech charts, and resources for working with parents (similar to the Hanen approach). The resources will be available by the end of the year from their website, www.acecentre.org.uk.

SpeechBubble will be a website that allows you to compare different AAC systems. It will be transparent, so you can see who has recommended a bit of kit for a particular need and will be user friendly, too. To help them put the finishing touches to the site, they have asked that people help them by completing a short survey at <http://j.mp/sbq2>

At Cloze of Play, Sally Conner - Susan Henderson

This seminar was led by Sally Conner, a Speech and Language Therapist at Ingfield Manor School, which is a Scope School in the South of England. Sally had created a whole year's curriculum for 5 different communication groups. The groups were timetabled for one session a week and were divided by communication need, not class. Although the individual groups had different activities/strategies, the whole school practised the same songs and signs. Sally had used a ProxTalker and/or a ProxPad in her sessions, and found them a very useful resource for this kind of group work - but I felt you could easily adapt the curriculum for other kinds of device, too.



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TaSSels: Tactile Signing for Sensory Learners- Deborah Jans

This session was presented by Denise Charnock a teacher who developed the TaSSels system. She is very passionate about the system and presented it very well to a small group. This session began by describing the importance of Touch and how they developed the system. The system is mainly a system of touch cues to support early stages of communication. One of the main functions of the system is to alert the learner that something is going to happen. There is also a small core vocabulary of 50 signs which are very functional for learners from 3 years to 19 with complex communication needs. The signs are developed with certain criteria in mind which included adherence to safeguarding approval and no control or restraining of the learner. The TaSSels system can be purchased for £125 and they provide various types of training from awareness of the system to being trained to a high level of competency. They are also considering developing an adult focused version for young adult learners who have left school. For more information go to the website: www.pavpub.com

Supporting AAC Users with Literacy using Clicker 6 - Susan Henderson

Anne Williams, from the Cornwall Augmentative Communication Team, spoke about how teachers had sometimes found it difficult to adapt lessons for users of high-tech AAC. She made the good point that sometimes the focus can be on the "here and now" for children who have complex physical needs, but that we must also make sure we are preparing them academically for the future. In her project, she focussed on phonics lessons in primary, and built grids in Clicker 6 that could be accessed via Eye Gaze. She hopes that the resources she made will be available in "Learning Grids" soon.



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Review of AAC Stroke Cases to Identify common practice and consider outcomes - Deborah Jans

This session was presented by two staff from the Barnsley Assistive Technology Team. They were concerned about the lack of positive outcomes for patients using AAC systems who have had a Stroke. They decided to use a case study template and compare the AAC journeys of 11 patients that had been referred to them. They were looking for common themes so they could then do a critical appraisal of the literature. They identified the following common themes: motivation, resilience, social structure, how vocabulary was organised, and social networks. It wasn't very clear on what their next steps would be.

Symbols or Text, Wordbanks or Worksheets: Supporting Students who Use AAC to Access the Curriculum- Susan Henderson

This session was led by Marion Stanton from CandLE Ltd. Her session largely focussed on one pupil who went from being able to write two simple sentences to sitting, and passing, 5 GCSEs in just 5 years. Her negotiations with the exam boards were very interesting and she is happy for her case to be quoted should schools run into any difficulties. She also made interesting points about how we should have different expectations of disabled learners - but in a positive way! For example, just because we would need a break after an hour of work, an AAC user may not. She also warned against an overreliance on phonics programmes for AAC users as they need to also learn whole words and work in the way that they prefer - a concern I have for all children, but that's by the by! For more information, visit www.candleaac.com.



CM Conference 2014



What is New in Proloquo2Go and Proloquo4Text - Susan Henderson

David Niemeijer from AssistiveWare took us through Proloquo4Text, which we have covered in a previous newsletter, and also told us all about the new features to expect in the next update to Proloquo2Go. There are a lot of exciting additions, and for me the most important things are:

- You can transition from “basic” to “core” vocabulary without having to start again
- The core word vocabulary has been redesigned, and you can add activity pages which mirror this, but change key words. For example, a page all about the shops would still have all your core words in the same place, but would include extra words such as “buy” or particular products.
- Grammar has been improved - you can turn on or off every tense and use adverbs more easily
- The edit interface is now clearer and easier to use
- Proloquo2Go is going to be multilingual - at first it is only available in Spanish, but it is eventually going to cover many more languages.
- The update will hopefully be released in a couple of months' time.

During the question session afterwards, AssistiveWare confirmed that they are not planning to develop an app for Android, and that they had no plans to use GPS to automatically change grids etc, as in ChatAble. They did however say that GPS may be used to influence predictive text in the future. I left the session enthused and looking forward to getting my hands on the new update!



CM Conference 2014



Developing an Effective AAC Service Within the NHS and Education Settings - Deborah Jans

This session was led by the Speech and Language Therapist and described some innovative ways to provide an AAC service within Bradford where time and resources are limited. They developed various ways to improve knowledge and skills of AAC within the NHS and education settings. They developed a communication link meeting to pass on skills and make sure there was equitable services across their authority, they also had a multi-agency forum for discussion of pupils with high level of needs. They had organised information advice days rotating around the special schools once a term as well as a newsletter going out once a year to all schools and families. They also used the YOU MATTER Parent Training course developed by the Ace Centre to work with the families on implementing AAC within the home and developing their knowledge of communication and AAC.

The You Matter training course brings together parents of children with significant speech difficulties and their supporting professionals. It was developed by the Ace Centre to identify a way of creating an effective working partnership between parents, teachers and health professionals. It is a ready made course that gives you all the resources you need to run the course and a tutors guide. The course is divided into 8 short sessions which can be run over 2 full days or 4 mornings. A video session similar to the Hanen training is offered as well. It is well looking into if you are thinking of running parent courses. For more information, see www.ace-centre.org.uk



CM Conference 2014



The Psycholinguistics of Word Production applied in AAC - Susan Henderson

Dr Bruce Baker led this session, and he spoke about how, for the most part, the words in our utterances come to us automatically with no need to consciously search for them. He suggested that for fluent AAC users that they enter words onto their communication aids in a similar unconscious manner. We got to watch an interesting exchange between Dr Baker and a fluent AAC user who typed using his toes, and he confirmed that, for him, this was the case. Unfortunately, the session ran out of time so did not get onto how this related to different AAC methods. An interesting point was made at the end, however, when an AAC user asked a question. Dr Baker pointed out that he had taken some time to type the message and that this can cause communication partners to feel uncomfortable, or indeed that people may give up. He suggested that instead the AAC user should set his device to read out each word after it has been typed, rather than wait for the whole message.

Poetry Workshop, Jonny Fluffypunk & David Young - Susan Henderson

This was the first session I attended, and it was loads of fun. It was led by a poet (Jonny) and a young AAC user (David) who had worked together on a project called *Seen But Seldom Heard* (see "Plenary" section of our report for more details). At the start of the session, no-one felt they could write a poem, and by the end we had all produced something that we felt quite proud of! We were also treated to a recital of some of David's poetry. A great experience and start to conference for me. Poems available on request!



CM Conference 2014



Getting Communication Right: The Cornwall Communication Charter one year on!- Deborah Jans

Presented by Sally Mills from Cornwall Adult Learning Disability Team- This session described how they implemented and developed and engaged the local communities around a Communication Charter. This charter is now taken up by the city council as well as local businesses and third sector agencies. The Communication charter has at its heart that "Communication is a right, a need and the law. Different ways of communicating should be respected and valued". They based their intervention on the 4 tiers of service delivery in the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists Position paper on working with Adults with Learning Disabilities in 2010. The 4 tiers are Tier 1-Capability in the Community, Tier 2-Capability in Mainstream-Tier 3- Capability in specialist learning disabilities services and Tier 4- Specialist intervention. Tier 4 were the young people who required individual Speech and Language Therapy intervention. This project started with the Tier 3 services and worked its way around to local mainstream community. This approach appeared to be a phased in approach to community based intervention. How did they do it? They had flash mob Sing and Sign sessions in the middle of the shopping precinct (they seem to have a lot of flash mobs down in Cornwall), a week of activities during launch week and they had the backing and involvement of the Council. They also developed a communication leaders training scheme and developed a logo and branding for their Communication charter. They also developed a toolkit for services and agencies to audit themselves on certain criteria. All in all they had put a lot of work into it and it was growing from strength to strength being taken up by more agencies and mainstream services.



CM Conference 2014



Plenary Sessions

Everyone attended two plenary sessions at the conference, and both were incredibly inspiring.

On Sunday we got to watch the documentary *Seen but Seldom Heard - the Story so Far* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq7_qtnjxig) all about a collaborative project between Bournemouth University and Victoria Education Centre seeking to challenge dominant perceptions of disability through poetry and performance. We were then treated to a live performance by Dave Young - you can see more of his work at www.daveyoungarts.weebly.com.

On Monday we heard from Toby Hewson, CEO of *Just Different*, which is a registered charity that creates positive social attitudes towards disability and difference among children and young people. Toby spoke about living with Cerebral Palsy and the challenges and opportunities he has had along the way. In particular, he spoke about his committed and enthusiastic parents and an older man who also had Cerebral Palsy that was a mentor to him and his parents. He was a very inspiring and funny speaker - to find out more visit www.justdifferent.org

Lost Voice Guy

We weren't hard at work all the time - our entertainment on the second evening of Conference was provided by Lost Voice Guy, otherwise known as comedian Lee Ridley. Lee is a veteran of the Edinburgh Fringe and let us have a taster of the set he performed this summer. If you haven't heard of Lee, check out his hilarious (and sometimes blue) comedy here: www.lostvoiceguy.com

New Equipment

We have had some new equipment to trial at Keycomm recently and, as always, we want to share what we found with you!

ProxPad Choice Maker Review - Deborah Jans

Logan Technologies now has a new device called ProxPad choice maker. It uses the same RFID technology as the ProxTalker but has a unique touch or swipe action to access it. You can use tangible objects or symbols and attach a tag onto it which attaches a recorded message onto the object or symbol. Once you record a message onto a tag it is saved on that tag unless you change it.

This will be useful for users who can hold an object or symbol/photo but may not be accurate in touching a cell. It is simple to change the access to touch directly or swipe over the pad.

Recording on each tag can be a bit cumbersome at first but once you do it, the recordings are saved. This could also be very good within a group as each participant could have their own bank of messages and use only one device.

The ProxPad runs on AAA batteries and is lightweight to carry around. There is no case for it at the moment but that is something Logan Technologies are considering. They do sell pocket wall hangings and a folder for the ProxPad as extras.

In addition, there is a free Ipad app which you can access which has symbols on it already set up for printing up for the different size tags. You can either print straight from the app if you have a wireless compatible printer or email them to yourself and then print them out. This is a nice bonus and it is FREE!

Price: £550 +VAT, available from Logan Technologies. For more information check out their website: www.logan-technologies.co.uk .We are hoping to have a few in our loan bank for anyone to try out.



You can activate the ProxPad by direct touch or by swiping over it.

Launch of *Special World* magazine

Inclusive Technology have launched a new, free online magazine called *Special World*. It aims to link 125,000 special education teachers, speech therapists and occupational therapists in 150 countries. To find out more, visit www.specialworld.net

The AAC Scotland website is here!

Developed by CALL Scotland, the AAC Scotland website offers practical and useful AAC resources, some of which were commissioned by NES. Take a look at www.aacscotland.org.uk

New Equipment cont...

Allora Review - Phillipa Rewaj

A keyboard and switch accessible text to speech communication device, the Allora from Techcess is the latest rival to the Lightwriter. Slightly bulkier than the Lightwriter, the Allora features the same dual screen display, however with the added bonus of a detachable viewer display. The detachable viewer display can be worn by the user using a lanyard, or placed closer to the communication partner, for those who may struggle to see the screen from across a room. As the sound output can be switched between the main device and the detachable viewer display, it also means this may be a good option for communication partners who have a hearing impairment. However the range is limited – when we tested it at the Keycomm base, we were able to get from the back office to the front door (about 15 metres) before the connection was lost.

The keys on the keyboard are large, rubberised and require a little more effort to press than the Lightwriter keys, so they may be a good option for those who accidentally press other keys when they type. It also has a keyguard to help guide fingers. However the keyboard layout cannot be altered, so comes either fixed in QWERTY or ABC layout. The display features green text on a black background, which is higher contrast and easier to see than the Lightwriter display, and text size can be altered on both the viewer and user displays. It also has a predictive text function to help speed up message construct.

The Allora comes with switch scanning as standard, meaning that a user can move between direct access and switch access without changing devices, and is a little more reliable than the scanning function of the scanning Lightwriter. It also comes with the option to add on text message and environmental control functions as extras. The leather carry bag comes with a short handle and across the body strap with an open front, allowing the device to be used whilst still in the carry bag.

All in all, the Allora offers some nice features and while it may not be suitable for all, it is a good alternative to the Lightwriter to bear in mind when considering text to speech devices for literate AAC users. Keycomm has initially purchased two devices for its loan bank while we test out the reception from our service users.



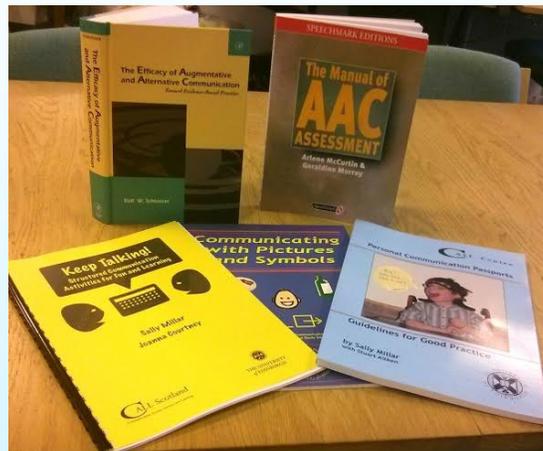
The Allora ranges in price from £2,550 to £2,990 depending on configuration.





Book Giveaway

Keycomm still have some books to give away that we received from NES through the *Right to Speak* project. If you would like any of them, please get in touch! The books are: *The Efficacy of Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, *Personal Communication Passports - Guidelines for Good Practice*, *Communicating with Pictures and Symbols* and *Keep Talking! - Structured Communication Activities for Fun, Developing and Using a Communication Book, Making Communication Even Better and Learning*. First come, first served!



AAC Study Group

Phillipa and Nicky have started a study group for those interested in keeping abreast of academic and professional literature in the field of AAC, as well as sharing ideas and resources. The group meets every few months and is well attended by staff from a variety of backgrounds from across the Lothians. If you are interested in joining this friendly group, please contact Keycomm.

Have you enjoyed this issue of the Keycomm newsletter? Is there anything you'd like to see more of? We'd love to have your feedback - give us a call or email Susan on susan.henderson@ea.edin.sch.uk

Contacting the Keycomm team

Why not tear this page off and pin it to your noticeboard, or put it in your diary?

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