Guy’s and St Thomas’
Assistive Communication Service
(GSTT ACS)

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Learning Outcomes

• An overview of our service
• An understanding of what AAC is and why AAC may be recommended
• Strategies to use where you work
• Know where you can find resources

• What else would you like to get out of today?
Assistive Technology (AT) Defined

- Assistive technology devices - any item, piece of equipment or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of (children) with disabilities

- AT service – any service that directly assists (a child) with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an AT device
  – *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004*
Different types of AT

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Environmental Control Services

- Lights, T.V, Bed controls, Doors, Computer Access, Phone
- North and South Thames services cover London
- North Thames: http://www.thh.nhs.uk/services/RECES/
- South Thames: https://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/service/community-services/assistive-technology-service/

- Other services: phone use
- Next generation text service: http://ngts.org.uk/
• Unaided and aided methods used by individuals with complex communication needs to supplement or replace natural speech
  – Unaided communication systems (no tech) rely on the user's body to convey messages Examples include gestures, body language, and sign language” (ASHA)
  – Aided communication systems include a range of strategies and tools
  – Low-tech letter or picture boards not requiring a power source
  – Mid-tech devices requiring a power source
  – High-tech dedicated computer-based systems
Guy’s and St Thomas' Assistive Communication Service

In June 2015, we opened as a Specialist AAC Service (SAS) or AAC Hub for Adults and Paediatrics.

North and South East London
- Waltham Forest
- Redbridge
- Newham
- Barking & Dagenham
- Havering
- Lambeth, Southwark, Lewi
- Greenwich
- Bexley
- Bromley
ACS Commissioning

- Assistive Communication Service, Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust
- Assistive Communication Service, Guys and St Thomas NHS Trust
- Adults: Compass Electronic Assistive Technology Service, Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability
  Paeds: GOSH Assistive Communication Service
Specialised AAC Services

- We are funded by NHS England
- We provide assessment, review and equipment for those with the most complex communication needs, and/or those who require a high tech powered communication aid = 10% of the AAC population (or 0.5% of total population).
- The remaining 90% of children and adults who need AAC will be supported by you (or other local AAC services).
  - You are commissioned by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), education and social care commissioners and overseen by Health and Wellbeing Boards that have been established in every Local Authority in England.
What We Do:

- Assessment, provision, set up and review of communication aids for people with complex needs
- Mounting of communication aids
- Training and support for therapists, clients and carers
- Maintenance, servicing, repair and recycling of equipment
- A resource for advice, support and information around all aspects of AAC
Who are we?

Our MDT:
- SLT
- OT
- Rehabilitation engineer (RE)
- Technician
- Admin
• “People with learning disabilities are especially likely to benefit from Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) due to the complex intellectual and physical impairments which will often accompany the communication impairment....AAC covers a range of high technology and low technology systems, including those involving no equipment, such as eye pointing, to high tech voice output communication aids. AAC is used with this client group to promote increased participation.”

• “The principle that “everyone can communicate” is the basis for AAC intervention. AAC utilises the diverse ways in which symbols can be interpreted, on their own and in combination with others, within human interaction (Bornman, 2006).”

• “The use of Talking Mats (Murphy and Cameron, 2008) to support and extend communication with persons with learning difficulties has been found to be successful in clinical trials and has been adopted broadly.”
UN Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities

- "Article 21 - Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information" states that
  - "Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice..."
  - "...Including by accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions."

- Article 9 - Accessibility, section 2.g. states
  - "Parties shall also take appropriate measures to promote access for persons with disabilities to new information and communications technologies and systems, including the Internet."
• **Quality Statement (QS) 12:** I can expect my local SLT/AAC team to identify that I have a need for AAC at the earliest opportunity.

• **QS 13:** I can expect my local team to know how to manage my AAC needs. If they are not able to then they need to know which specialist AAC Service to refer to.

• **QS 14:** At the point of referral, I can expect to receive information about the AAC Service to which I have been referred including the relevant service response timescales.

• **QS 15:** I can expect referrals to be made in a timely manner, with comprehensive information provided as agreed in my local team’s care pathway planning process.
Five Good Communication Standards, 2013

• ‘Transforming Care: A national response to Winterbourne View Hospital’ found failings around how we care for people with learning disabilities and/or autism with complex needs.

• The report identifies outcomes for individuals with a learning disability and/or autism plus mental health conditions or behaviours described as challenging, who live in specialist hospital and residential settings.

• The outcomes include:
  – Being safe
  – Being treated with compassion, dignity and respect
  – Being involved in decisions about their care
  – Knowing those around them and looking after them are well supported
  – Making choices in their daily life
  – Receiving good quality general health care
Five Good Communication Standards, 2013

• Good communication underpins all the outcomes (from previous slide).

• Most people with learning disabilities have some speech, language and communication difficulties. These can be hidden or overlooked.

• Everyone needs to know what good communication support ‘looks like’ and what reasonable adjustments they can expect.

• Implementing good communication is proactive and ethical as it prevents reactive and unethical restrictive interventions, such as the abuse and punishment as occurred at Winterbourne View.
Mental Capacity Act (2005)

The principles:

1) A person must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established that he lacks capacity.

2) A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision unless all practicable steps to help him to do so have been taken without success.

3) A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision merely because he makes an unwise decision.

4) An act done, or decision made, under this Act for or on behalf of a person who lacks capacity must be done, or made, in his best interests.

5) Before the act is done, or the decision is made, regard must be had to whether the purpose for which it is needed can be as effectively achieved in a way that is less restrictive of the person’s rights and freedom of action.
Mental Capacity Act (2005) continued…

• ‘Individuals should be supported where possible so that they can make their own decisions...All practicable steps must be taken to help him or her to do so.’

• AAC can be used in assessing a person’s capacity to make a decision in order to assist their understanding and aid their expression of their decision.
Talking Mats

• Talking mats is a tool used to help people to express themselves.
• It is not an AAC device
• It is used to help children and adults to express their preferences or feelings
• Help people with a learning disability to both understand what is involved in a decision and to then give their opinion.
• It is highly evidence based with the LD population

www.talkingmats.com
Examples of use in LD:
• Making decisions around their social and health care
• How they feel about certain people
• What activities they would like to do
• Where they would/wouldn’t want to live
Talking Mats
Talking Mats - short video

https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=talking+mats+learning+disability&&view=detail&mid=7EF1DCD9720E5B3EC6E37EF1DCD9720E5B3EC6E3&&FORM=VRDGAR
No tech

• Yes/no
• Gestures
• Signing
• Pointing
• Looking towards

You can use these to support comprehension
Low tech examples

- Choice boards
- Feelings boards
- Rating scales
- Objects
- Topic boards
- Partner assisted scanning books
- Communication passports http://www.communicationpassports.org.uk/About/
- Hospital passports http://easyhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/Hospital%20passport%20-%20JBC.pdf
Some useful free low-tech resources

• general communication board for paramedics
• visit to dentists
• visit to optician
• tracheostomies
Charts in other languages


Low-tech letter based

Consider

• Literacy
• Language spoken
• Size of chart or book if mobile?
• Adding useful phrases on the sides/back of chart
• White board wipe clean
• Boogie board
• Alphabet board
Medium - tech AAC

Recorded speech aids:

• Provide a voice at a simple level
• Great for quick or limited messages (e.g. ‘please could I have a coffee with 3 sugars’)
• Calling for help
• Good for different languages = translating messages
• Examples: Little/Big Mac with and without levels, Big Point, GoTalk, Quicktalker

Use in conjunction with the person’s other communication tools
Examples of apps

Text
iPad and Android: Predictable
iPad: Clarocomm
Android: Speech Assistant

Symbol/Photo
iPad: Clicker Communicator, TouchChat,
Proloquo2Go, Gridplayer, ChatAble, Pictello,
LAMP Words for Life, Compass, click n talk

Visual scene
iPad: Pictello, Snapscene/Scene and Heard
Accessible information

- Books beyond words

- Mencap ‘Am I making myself clear?’
  http://www.accessibleinfo.co.uk/pdfs/Making-Myself-Clear.pdf

- Use photos, gesture, drawing, simple language, objects
Top Tips

• Know how person communicates and how best to communicate with them (check if they have a communication or hospital passport)
• Think about what you will need to communicate, how you will communicate with the person, and plan for it
• Extended appointments for people with communication difficulties
• Use visual supports, gesture, simple language, objects
• Refer to local SLT
• Have rating scales available
• talking mats to consult
• Don’t talk about the person in front of them without including them
• Tell them what is going to happen/what to expect
• Any questions?
Guy’s and St Thomas’ Assistive Communication Service

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www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/ACS
www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/ACS