



The effect of the provision of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) on the mental health and wellbeing of Children and Young People (CYP) with complex communication needs



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Public Summary:

This project looks at the impact the provision of a communication aid has on the mental health and wellbeing of children with complex communication difficulties.

The impact has been measured through the use of semi structured interviews with the parents of two primary school aged children and the Speech and Language Therapist of one of the children. These interviews took place when the children received their device but had not been shown how to use it, and 6 months later. At the same time points, the parents were asked to complete a Psychosocial Impact of Assistive Devices Scale (PIADS) questionnaire.

Stakeholders were consulted on the content of the interview questions and the selection of the questionnaire.

Thematic analysis has been used to review the

interview data and summarise the impact of the provision of AAC for these children.

Themes from the initial interviews included frustration, and the development of strategies. These strategies included different ways the children used to communicate and the strategies the parents used when they didn't understand their child, to minimise their child's frustration and sadness.

Themes from the second interviews included identity, in not wanting to appear different and confidence; the confidence of both children to communicate had increased, as had their speech. There was also a feeling of positivity from the parents in the second interviews.

The data from the PIADS showed that the self-esteem scores for both children increased following the provision of the communication aid.



Public and Community Involvement:

The local Young Persons Advisory Group (YPAG) was approached for feedback regarding the participant information sheets and acted on their advice.

The generation of the interview questions and the selection of the most appropriate questionnaire was done in collaboration with stakeholders with experience of AAC.

The parents of two children who had a child being seen by the local Specialist AAC Service and the Speech and Language Therapist of one of these children were recruited to the study.

Dissemination:

To date there has been no final dissemination of the project. This will be done through a journal article which is being prepared, and a presentation at the Communication Matters conference, providing the submission of an abstract is successful.

YPAG will be contacted to ask if a final summary of the project can be given to the group, including the outcome of their advice.

The project will be presented at a Chailey Academic meeting.

Dissemination during the project included a blog, presentation and a poster.

Impact and Implementation:

The results of this pilot study are being incorporated into documentation to highlight the gap in service provision for those who need a communication aid but do not meet the criteria for acceptance into NHSE specialised AAC services.

What next?

Funding will be sought to continue research in this area. This will not only look at the impact communication aids and other AAC have on children and young people, but also adults with different conditions.