

## **The AAC Care Pathway as part of a Regional EAT Strategy**

Carole Glendinning

### Aims of the Session

The session will describe the development of a regional Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) Care Pathway, including the process map and the documentation. The benefits of a Care Pathway and the future involvement of professionals and users in its continued use and development will be discussed.

### Summary of the Key Points

Access to Communication and Technology (ACT) were commissioned to carry out a project to look at the Electronic Assistive Technology service across the West Midlands. As part of this project, two working groups were set up to look at the Environmental Controls and AAC services, regionally and locally. As a result of this, a team of Speech and Language Therapists met over a period of 2 years to develop the Care Pathway documentation as it stands today.

A process map and documentation have been produced which supports the local assessment and intervention procedure, outlining the timing and appropriacy of referral to specialist AAC services. Along with this is a guide to support professionals in local assessment and implementation of AAC, promoting multidisciplinary working and identifying any major gaps in local services, i.e. lack of funding or of specific professionals.

In the initial stages of this work, AAC users were invited to voice any frustrations and difficulties they had experienced while AAC was being considered. They were, of course, also asked to give their positive stories of situations where the whole process had been extremely smooth and efficient. This information contributed to the development of the new models of service delivery provided by the Regional Service. It was also used to produce guidelines to improve the consistency of care to clients who have AAC needs.

However, implementing a Care Pathway on a regional basis is challenging and there are barriers to its success. These will be outlined and discussed during this session.

### Learning Outcomes for the Participants

- To be aware of the West Midlands Regional AAC Care Pathway as part of the Regional Eat Strategy and to have an understanding of the process map and documentation developed.
- To be aware of the benefits of a regional AAC Care Pathway and the challenges in it's development.