

# You Matter

A training course that **brings together** parents of children with significant speech difficulties and their supporting professionals

"A brilliant course!  
Should be available to all  
parents, carers and teaching  
assistants involved with AAC"



**NHS**

*Milton Keynes  
Community Health Services*

**ace**  
**centre**  
Giving people a voice...

**For more details of the You Matter Project contact:**

**ACE Centre Advisory Trust**

92 Windmill Road

Headington

Oxford

OX3 7DR

Tel 01865 759800

[info@ace-centre.org.uk](mailto:info@ace-centre.org.uk)

[www.ace-centre.org.uk](http://www.ace-centre.org.uk)

## **You Matter Project Coordinators**

**Amanda Bousaki (Milton Keynes PCT)**

Amanda is the Early Years and Adult Learning Disability Coordinator for Milton Keynes PCT. She is an experienced speech and language therapist who has worked within the field of AAC for the over fifteen years.

**Sarah Lloyd Cocks (Kent County Council)**

As SEN ICT Strategic Manager for the LA, Sarah has led all aspects of ICT for pupils with SEN and has worked with health authorities to develop multidisciplinary teams for assessing and supporting the technology requirements of pupils with complex needs.

**Clare Latham (Milton Keynes PCT)**

Clare is a specialist speech and language therapist. She is a well-known author in the field of AAC, working extensively in the field of paediatric learning disability.

**Rachel Moore (Project Manager, ACE Centre)**

Rachel is a speech and language therapist with over fifteen years of experience in specialising in the field of assistive technology and AAC for children with complex physical and communication difficulties.

© Crown copyright, 2011.

You may use and re-use the information featured in the publication(s) (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/>.

Any enquiries regarding the use and re-use of this information resource should be sent to e-mail: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

Published by the ACE Centre Advisory Trust, 92 Windmill Road, Headington, Oxford OX3 7DR Registered Charity No 1040868

Copyright is acknowledged on all company and product names.

# You Matter

## A 60-second summary

You Matter resulted in better outcomes in terms of communication development, service delivery and cost effectiveness, and all the materials will be available in 2011.

For children with significant speech difficulties, it's the parents who can hold the key to developing effective communication for their child, *if* they are provided with the appropriate support.

The You Matter course brings together families and professionals on an equal footing in order to provide practical and positive ways forward for the children's AAC (Alternative and Augmentative Communication) needs.

It gives families the tools and the support needed to set their own goals, solve their own difficulties and become active decision-makers in supporting their own child's communication. It provides an opportunity for professionals to learn from other disciplines, and gives families the platform to share practical experiences for the benefit of *all* involved.

The course can be delivered with the minimum of preparation. All of the course materials and handouts are provided, including Powerpoint presentations, feedback forms and video resources.

### Providing parental confidence

Parental confidence, a key recommendation from the Lamb Inquiry (2009), reduces animosity between parents and health or school professionals. You Matter is invaluable for providing more realistic expectations for parents, reducing requests for tribunals and out of county placements.

### Providing parental ownership

You Matter gives parents the skills and the understanding to effectively take ownership of aspects of their child's communication, reducing the burden and minimising funding for the supporting professionals.

### Integrating into educational objectives

You Matter outcomes can be integrated into long-term objectives and short-term targets for children with a statement of special education needs.

### Fulfilling government initiatives

You Matter training supports the Early Intervention agenda and is in line with principles of the Early Support Programme, such as family centred working, informed choice and early intervention.

## **2 | You Matter**

Bringing together parents and professionals to support AAC

# About You Matter



The teaching assistants  
and parents were  
becoming a team  
*- tutor feedback*

The course is divided into eight short sessions to be run flexibly, for example, over two full days or four morning, afternoon or evening sessions.

## Session One

The first session aims to introduce participants, draw out their hopes and concerns, recognise the pressures they may be under and explore their expectations of the course. Overall aims for the course will be agreed during this session, matching what the participants want to gain with the information provided within the course content.

## Sessions Two and Three

These sessions look at facilitating communication through aided systems. This is done by considering:

- What is meant by communication
- The five stages of communication development using aided systems
- How to select vocabulary at the right level for a child
- How participants' communication affects the child's progress
- How participants' communication will change as the child gains skill

On completion of the first three sessions, participants can be offered the opportunity to be videoed at home or in school with the child. This opportunity is aimed to help participants to review their own style of interaction as well as express privately any concerns they may have about their child using aided communication.

## Session Four

Session Four reviews the video experience and looks at involving others in the child's communication system. It includes:

- The difficulties faced by children using aided communication when learning to communicate through their system
- The different types of communication we all use
- How the participants' role changes as the child gains skill



Wonderful view of how  
to proceed with new  
found goals and info!

- parent

### Sessions Five, Six and Seven

These sessions bring in feedback from the video sessions, looking at where perceived communication problems lie, and address areas the participants choose to focus on. Session Seven finishes by discovering participants' longer term aims for their child's communication and looks at setting achievable goals for the future.

### Session Eight

The final session is an additional half day which looks at each child's personal aided communication system. Participants need to bring in their child's system and either the appropriate communication aid supplier or someone who is familiar with the different systems needs to be available. It's a session for participants to gain confidence with the programming of the systems, and/or the creation of pages or other low tech materials.

A variety of activities are included during the course for participants to investigate some of the issues through working together in small groups.



# Course tutors



Our informal approach really encouraged the parents to share and to learn from one another, and helped them to feel that we were all part of the same team and equals in the process

- *tutor feedback*

It's recommended that tutors have at least three years working experience in the field of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), with experience of supporting families in the home environment and of working in an education context.

A less experienced professional in an assisting role will find the course to be an excellent opportunity for learning, both from participants as well as the course materials. Where more than one professional takes a leading role on the course, having tutors from different disciplines is a real advantage.

At least two tutors are recommended, and a tutor to participant ratio of at least 1:5 is recommended, primarily because of the activities required in the video sessions.

## Optional tutor training course

An optional one-day You Matter Tutor Course will equip tutors with all the required information necessary to deliver the You Matter training, including setting up and organising the training for maximum impact, how to fully utilise the resources materials, and issues regarding the videoing of parents and children. Options for course follow-up will be covered, along with techniques for measuring outcomes.

Contact the ACE Centre on 01865 759800 for details.

## Notes for course tutors

Parents and educational staff are, for the most part, highly motivated to learn. They come eager to support the child who they can see is having difficulties. They want to grasp aided communication and help the child as best they can. However, deep down, they may also come with mixed feelings about their child's recommended communication system. This system is possibly not working as well as they had hoped and disappointment, frustration and guilt can be very real. It's important that these feelings are recognised and respected so that real learning can take place. In addition, every family and parenting style is unique, each educational staff member is unique, so your training will need to fit with each of the participants own hopes and communication style.



At last I feel part of a club! - *parent feedback*

What makes the task easier is that there is no single result from this course. What matters is that participants gain a deeper understanding, develop their own knowledge, look at the child's communication in a different way, and match this learning to their own hopes and personal communication skills. This will help the participants to come away knowing that they do really matter and that what they do makes a difference.

To achieve such individual learning it is important that the course tutors keep their minds open, create an atmosphere of acceptance, and encourage all ideas, approaches and solutions. There are no rights or wrongs. Trainers and participants alike have experience to offer and much to learn from each other. This course considers communication now and the communication skills that participants hope will be achieved for the future. The latter can be a emotional area, and it's important to be aware of participants experiencing these difficulties, and support them accordingly.



# Course materials



Have learnt so much and had fun. Particularly loved the Boardmaker session and also gained knowledge and confidence

- parent feedback

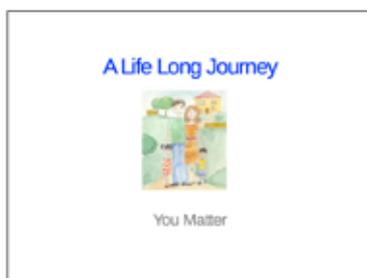
The You Matter course pack contains all the materials you will need:

## Tutor Guide

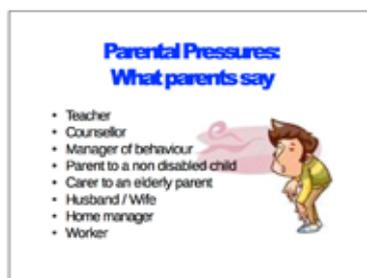
A comprehensive guide to support the trainer in delivering the course with the minimum of preparation. All the activities are explained and the resources needed for each activity are identified. Also contains annotated graphics of all the Powerpoint slides used in the course

## Powerpoint presentations

Powerpoint presentations are provided to illustrate key points, and they include a number of carefully selected videos to highlight issues throughout the training.



Slide 3 emphasises that communication is not just for today, but is something we all develop throughout our lives. What participants are learn on the course will help on that lifelong journey.



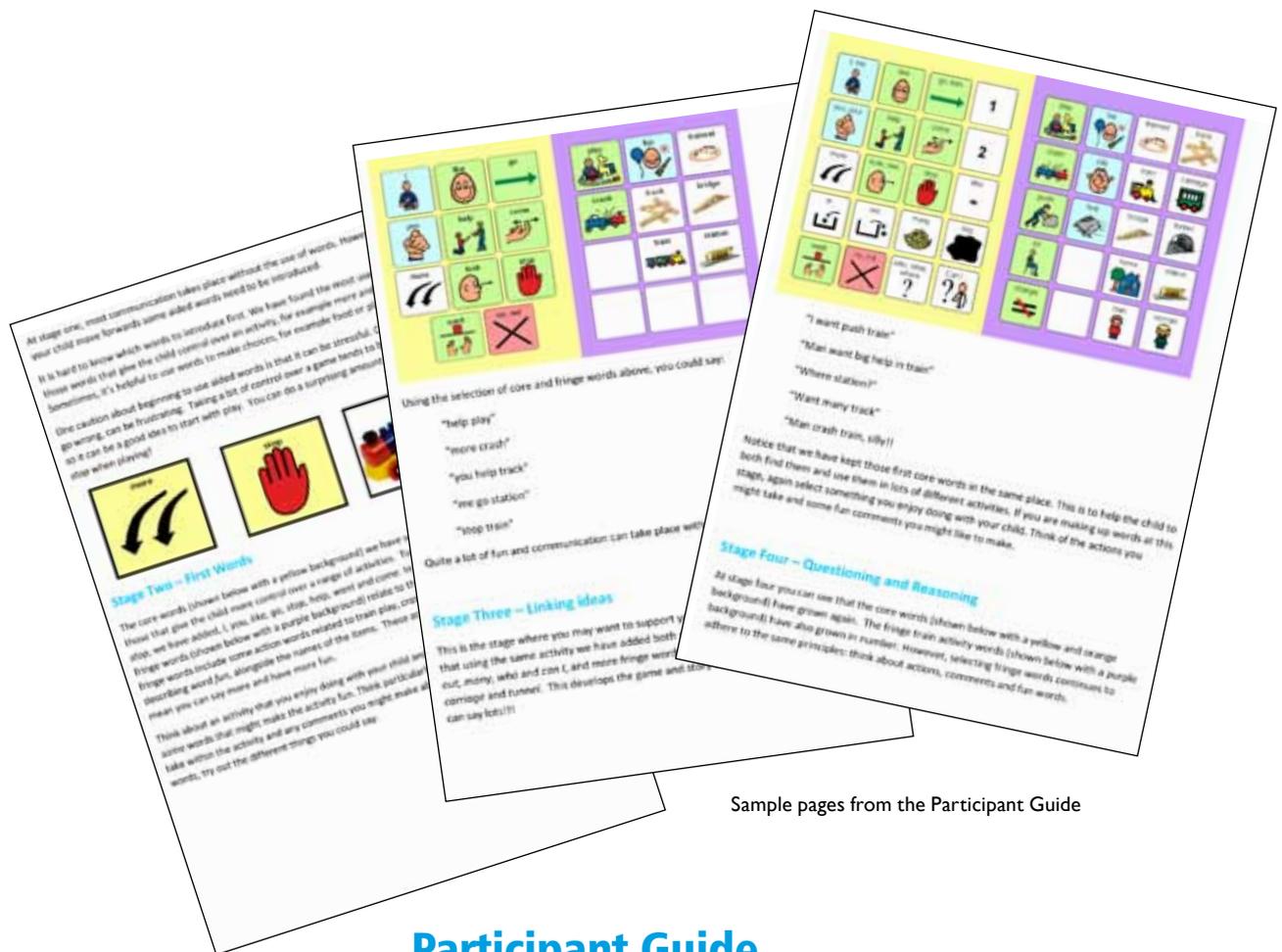
Slide 8 looks at pressure. Parents of a child using aided communication are fulfilling many roles and these roles create many pressures. This slide is used to encourage participants to think about their many roles and the pressures they are facing day to day.



Slide 68 introduces the idea that our communication changes as the child gains skills. Here the tutor will emphasise that the child cannot progress unless someone gives them more advanced language and models it for them.

## Resources

Ready designed resources (for example, symbol-based charts) are provided on DVD for use during practical activities.



Sample pages from the Participant Guide



All the staff who helped run the course came away with a huge feeling of satisfaction that we had really made a difference and helped these parents on their respective journeys with AAC - tutor feedback

## Participant Guide

These guides are for distribution to all participating parents and professionals, and provide a reference both during and after the completion of the course. Information presented during the course is addressed, along with issues and common worries associated with aided communication and the effect it may have on a child's potential to speak.

The guide describes five stages of communication development and encourages parents to consider where their child might be placed within the stages, as well as examining the essential and changing role of parents as their child's communication develops.

The participant guide includes:

- Information about communication and why it is important
- common worries around the use of alternative communication methods
- discussion around the five stages of communication identified during the course
- case study examples
- links to useful websites

# Other aspects to consider



It was brilliant going on a course with parents to get their point of view and what they need from us - *nursery nurse*

## Course venue

Course organisers are strongly encouraged to choose a neutral venue where participants can feel comfortable and are able to express themselves in an unthreatening environment. This may exclude the child's school or home.

## Flexible timings

Tutors are encouraged to consider extending the availability of the venue and the course staff after each session. Parents don't always wish to leave immediately after the training session is over, and it provides valuable time for informally discussing course content and any issues arising from it.

## Who to invite

Inviting a mixture of parents, other family members, teaching assistants and close professionals is an important aspect of the 'You Matter' course.

Within some local authorities, teaching assistants are provided with little or no training on aided communication and how to support it. However, they are often expected to support a child's complex communication system including both low and high technology. You Matter offers an excellent means to increase their knowledge and skill level.

## The importance of video

Video is a key element of the You Matter course, providing powerful illustrations to support course material as well as a tool for enabling parents to review and monitor the ways in which they interact and communicate with their own child.

For example, parents frequently find it difficult to include other young family members while managing their child's AAC system. This issue is brought to life through video examples in the course material.

The course materials contain a selection of video case studies to aid course delivery, but in addition, parents are encouraged to use video to examine

Still from a course video illustrating how siblings can play together without the need for adult intervention, both using the communication system of the non-speaking child.



So useful to see real life scenarios, problems and good techniques

- parent feedback

and monitor their communication with their own child. The videos are not designed to be shown to the course group unless parents are happy for this to happen. Where parents do feel able to share their videos, valuable discussion will often result through the interaction with other group members.

Course tutors will be expected to organise sessions to video parents and their children at home. Parental handouts are included to describe the reasoning behind the video sessions and to give an opportunity for them to plan. Parents are encouraged to identify activities which are particularly motivating to their child and to check that appropriate vocabulary is available within their communication system.

*"Videoing is such a powerful tool and really enables a person to stand back and watch what they are doing. It really facilitated reflective practice. I feel that they [parents] came up with relevant feedback without me needing to be too directive." - tutor feedback*

*"Initially I was daunted but very glad I took part, I was able to reflect and actually see what I had achieved." - parent feedback*

In the pilot courses, feedback showed that the video was the aspect that was most valued by the parents – both watching and being videoed.

## Group dynamics

Participants can consist of parents of children with significantly different ages and cognitive levels. In this way, parents can offer each other support with their own experiences and illustrate issues covered in the training.

*"My child started like that and it worked really well – it's worth doing." - mother of an older child*

The course encourages relationships between parents to develop. Many families do not have the opportunity to interact with other parents of a child using aided communication, and the course enables them to discuss a whole range of related topics.

# Outcome measures



It was really good to have parents there because they brought so much to the table and I think TAs really benefited from hearing from them - *tutor feedback*

Funders will need a guarantee that the You Matter course will provide positive outcomes for children and their families as well as being cost effective in the longer term. Pre and post evaluation of parameters surrounding the child's communication is available, and is identified in different ways:

- Using the course to setting a series of measurable targets together with parents and closely-involved professionals.
- Standardised pre and post course questionnaires include questions about the perceived functional communication of the child and parents' attitudes towards it.

Alternatively, targets can be set as part of the service provision already in place. You Matter can link into long-term objectives and short-term targets for children with a statement of special education needs. These can be linked to Individual Education Plans and are regularly reviewed and adapted.



# The You Matter Project



I have learnt loads and it's a big thank you because I wouldn't have known a lot if it wasn't for this course!

- *parent feedback*

This guide is based on the findings of the You Matter project which was carried out as part of the Becta Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) Innovative Projects funding stream. The project aimed to highlight the importance of providing training for parents and closely-involved professionals in supporting a child using aided communication.

The project developed two very different models of training courses, each offering contrasting perspectives on how parent-directed training can be successfully delivered.

As a result, the project has developed a range of ideas for putting training into practice leading to the same desired outcomes for parents, professionals and ultimately the child.

During the training all those taking part were asked to provide extensive feedback to inform this guide. In addition, an opportunity for in-depth discussion was provided during a workshop which followed the delivery of the courses. This workshop was attended by managers of services as well several lead/highly specialist speech and language therapists who had been delivering You Matter training courses.

Further details of the project can be found at [www.ace-centre.org.uk](http://www.ace-centre.org.uk)

## Project Coordinators

### **Rachel Moore (Project Manager, ACE Centre)**

Rachel is a speech and language therapist with over fifteen years of experience in specialising in the field of assistive technology and AAC for children with complex physical and communication difficulties.

### **Amanda Bousaki (Milton Keynes PCT)**

Amanda is the Early Years and Adult Learning Disability Coordinator for Milton Keynes PCT. She is an experienced speech and language therapist who has worked within the field of AAC for the over fifteen years.

### **Clare Latham (Milton Keynes PCT)**

Clare is a specialist speech and language therapist. She is a well-known author in the field of AAC, working extensively in the field of paediatric learning disability.



Our parents were keen,  
hardworking, open to  
suggestions, want the  
best for their children,  
and we can all learn a  
lot together

*- therapist feedback*

**Sarah Lloyd Cocks (Kent County Council)**

As SEN ICT Strategic Manager for the LA, Sarah has led all aspects of ICT for pupils with SEN and has worked with health authorities to develop multi-disciplinary teams for assessing and supporting the technology requirements of pupils with complex needs.

The staff of the You Matter project would like to thank all those involved in the piloting of the courses.



The You Matter course is designed for parents of children with significant speech disabilities, together with professionals closely involved with the children, including teaching assistants, teachers, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists.

The aim of the course is to bring together families and professionals on an equal footing in order to provide practical and positive ways forward for the children's AAC (Alternative and Augmentative Communication) needs.

The course can be delivered with the minimum of preparation. All of the course materials and handouts are provided, including Powerpoint presentations, feedback forms and video resources.

The You Matter courses has been designed by experienced AAC professionals and piloted in three counties.



ACE Centre Advisory Trust  
92 Windmill Rd  
Headington  
Oxford  
OX3 7DR

Tel 01865 759800  
info@ace-centre.org.uk  
www.ace-centre.org.uk

Registered Charity No 1040868  
Company Registration No 2961300  
VAT No 663587987

[www.ace-centre.org.uk](http://www.ace-centre.org.uk)