



*Press release – For immediate release (26.09.2012)*

## **Communication Matters welcomes AAC inclusion in Clinical Advisory Group's recommendations for specialised services**

Communication Matters, the lead UK organisation dedicated to supporting children and adults who need augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), has today (26<sup>th</sup> September) welcomed the Government's decision to accept the recommendations of the *Clinical Advisory Group for Prescribed Services*, including the proposal that specialised AAC services and equipment should be nationally commissioned from April 2013.

Communication Matters is calling on the Government to adopt a costed and evidenced solution developed in partnership with Jean Gross CBE, formerly the Government's Communication Champion for children, that would result in a phased approach to commissioning of specialised AAC hub services.

This 'hub and spoke' model would ensure that NHS Commissioning Boards took responsibility for service delivery to the 10% of complex AAC cases via regional hubs and the Local Health and Wellbeing Boards commissioned the remaining 90% of services.

Dr Janice Murray, Chair of Communication Matters, says: "*Communication Matters welcomes the recommendations of the Clinical Advisory Group for Prescribed Services and the Government's acceptance of them in full.*"

*We have been campaigning for specialised AAC to be included and this is a positive step for adults and children who require AAC services and equipment in the UK. However, we still have a long way to go to ensure these recommendations become reality.*

*"Every person has the right to a voice, yet many people are currently being deprived of this because they aren't being supplied with the equipment and support services which enable them to speak. AAC makes a monumental difference to the lives of many children and adults with little or no speech, it gives them a means to communicate and the ability to have control and make effective choices in their lives.*"

*"For too long, there has been a postcode lottery in AAC provision, a shortage of Specialist Professionals and battles between health and education commissioners over whose responsibility it is to meet the needs of these children and adults. This is unacceptable and has to change to ensure our members can fulfill their life potential.*"

*“The challenge now is to ensure the Clinical Advisory Group proposals are taken forwards by the NHS Commissioning Board Authority in consultation with the Secretary of State for Health. Communication Matters look forward to working with the Department of Health and the NHS Commissioning Board Authority on developing these proposals further.”*

In the UK today, it is estimated that 260,000 children and adults will need AAC at some point in their lives. 10% of them, 26,000, have the most complex needs, which demand access to specialised AAC services and equipment.

AAC is a specialist service, however traditionally there has been a lack of secured funding and services to support the complex needs of AAC users. They have had to battle not only to receive funding for the equipment they need, but also to have access to specialist services for assessment and support.

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### ***For more information***

For more information or to arrange a interview with a Communication Matters spokesperson, please contact Laura Smith at Consilium Communications on 07766651366 / [lsmith@consiliumcommunications.co.uk](mailto:lsmith@consiliumcommunications.co.uk)

### ***Notes to editors***

#### *About the Clinical Advisory Group for Prescribed Services report*

- The Clinical Advisory Group for Prescribed Services report is available to download here <http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/09/cagreport/>
- The report was supported by 60 clinical expert groups and recommended which health services for treating people with complex conditions should be nationally commissioned from April 2013. This report included the recommendation that specialised AAC services and equipment should be nationally commissioned by the NHS Commissioning Board.
- Last year in the National Year of Communication, Jean Gross CBE, formerly the Government's Communication Champion for children was instrumental in developing a cost-effective and evidenced model of AAC provision in partnership with Communication Matters. These are outlined in reports available here <http://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/page/national-standards-aac-services>
- Jean Gross CBE identified in her final *Two Years On* report (2012) that only one in ten of the former SHA's were commissioning regional AAC services as defined in the NHS Specialised Services National Definition Set. This report can be viewed here <http://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/news-item/2012-cm-welcomes-final-report>

#### *About Communication Matters*

- Communication Matters is a charitable organisation which covers the whole of the UK. We work to achieve a world where all individuals have a right to a 'voice' through the provision of equipment and on-going support services.
- Communication Matters values people who use any form of communication and promotes the individual's right to participate in all aspects of life by using their most appropriate means of communication to express their thoughts, feelings, needs and desires.
- The term AAC is used to describe the different methods that can be used to help people with disabilities communicate with others. As the term suggests these methods can be used to supplement or as an alternative to speech.
- People (children or adults) may have difficulty expressing themselves in a way that is understood by others. This could be due to lack of speech, difficulties with speech intelligibility, motor speech difficulties (controlling the physical movements necessary for speaking), and can result from many congenital or acquired difficulties e.g. cerebral palsy or stroke.
- Communication Matters is managed by a Board of Trustees elected by its Associate members. The Trustees volunteer their time and expertise to run the organisation.
- For more information, visit [www.communicationmatters.org.uk](http://www.communicationmatters.org.uk)