

COMMUNICATION MATTERS (ISAAC–UK)
“MORE THAN JUST TALKING!”
Recap: 30th Annual Conference, Leeds, September 2016

The Communication Matters (CM) Annual Conference is always the most important event in CM's life as an organization, but this year's event was especially significant as 2016 marks its 30th Anniversary. To commemorate this special event, the conference opened with a Celebratory Tea Party, with musical performances and a stilt walker entertaining 250 attendees. In attendance were members of *1Voice*, a charity that supports children and families using communication devices.

This year the conference attracted a record number of presentations (90), more than ever before, and about 400 delegates & exhibitors. Our keynote speakers were Mr. Martin Pistorius, the international best-selling author of *Ghost Boy*, and Dr. Angharad Beckett, Associate Professor of Political Sociology and Deputy Director of the Centre for Disability Studies at the University of Leeds.

One of the Conference's highlights is the presentation of the Alan Martin Award, whose recipient is a person who uses AAC and made a significant contribution to the Creative Arts. In 2016 the Award was given to Jemima Hughes, who is a visual artist and works with animations. This year CM also held a CM's Got Talent competition, won by Helen Quiller with her song "The Moment Has Gone." While the Annual Conference is the home for the UK's AAC community, it attracts international delegates regularly from Australia, India, Netherland, Poland and Spain.



Besides the regular program, delegates could participate in a “Sign Out Loud” or (Sign and Sing) session; and could revive the tunes, feeling and exuberant style of the 1980s disco culture in an incredible fancy dress party.

CM Conference 2017

Organizing the Conference always takes a huge amount of work and effort, and we are grateful for all those involved in preparing and conducting this event. After this successful Conference, we are already planning for next year. We can confirm Professor Bronwyn Helmsley as next year's keynote speaker. Professor Helmsley works at the University of Newcastle, Australia (her research has focused on the use of Twitter by people with severe communication disabilities).

For more news about CM, the 2017 Conference, and other events, check out our website in the New Year: www.communicationmatters.org.uk

Submitted by Hilary Gardner

