

Employment – a realistic goal for those with severe communication impairments?

OR Employment – an aspiration for those with severe communication impairments?

# My personal experience with AAC

- “N” at 2 years
- “A” back at home with Mum and Dad

# Introduction

- Benefits of employment
  - financial independence
  - increased self esteem

Light, Stoltz and McNaughton 1996

- Low rates of employment, below 15%

Bryen, Carey and Cohen 2005

# UK perspective

- Challenges regarding changes in funding for those with complex needs - personalised budgets
- UK has few pwuAAC in employment. The reasons for this need to be researched and the opportunities for those living in the UK need to be explored.

# Good job matches

McNaughton and Beukelman 2010

- Fulfilling work activity
- Appropriate time commitment
- Committed employer
- Obtaining needed supports

# Research Questions

- 1 What current support is available to prepare PwuAAC as they leave School or College?
- 2 How could this support be improved?
- 3 The value of employment for those who use AAC
- 4 What other ways could pwuAAC be supported into employment

Preliminary findings presented today

# Method

- Focus group
- Online focus group Joinson 2001, McNaughton, Symons, Light and Parson 2006
- Audio recording
- Transcribed verbatim
- Coding to allow identification of themes Attride and Stirling 2001
- Qualitative analysis

# Participants

## Criteria:

- 18-30 years old
- Use high tech AAC
- Able to give informed consent to participate in a focus group



# Focus group

- Took place over 2 sessions:
- Session 1, 2 attendees, therefore joint questioning
- Session 2, 3 attendees, 5 potential but 2 chose not to take part

# Questions

- When you were at school did you talk to people about what you would do when you left school?
- Spoke to friends at school not teachers
- Did you do anything at school that helped you think about what you would do after you had left school?
- Some schools had lessons where discussions about the future took place, but not all
- Did you do anything at home that helped you think about what you would do after you had left school?
- Spoke to Mum/spoke to cousin

- Did you do work experience?
- clean laptops/ supported to look after babies in a Nursery/No/garden work with Dad
- “clean laptops rubbish”
- “Would like to do work experience in a garage or shop”
- “boring”
- Is getting a job something you are interested in?
- Easier to say Yes to this if they had a clear idea of what would be a good job for them “on reception here” “in a garage”, “no clear idea”
- OR are there other things you would like to do with your time since leaving school? What are they?
- Volunteering discussion

- What barriers have you discovered that make it difficult to get a job?
- Physical difficulties/transport requirements
- “I don’t let anything get in my way”
- What would you think would be helpful in getting a job
- Work experience, friends to help me, driver
- What could schools /College do to make it easier for you to get a job?
- Work experience

- Have you considered self employment?
- One person said their talks to schools about their use of AAC was a form of self employment
- Do you know other people who use AAC, who work?
- 2 participants knew other students who had left college who had a job but no-one famous

# Next steps

- Explore influence of parents employment experiences and expectations
- Discussion sessions/workshops alongside skill development to help develop opinions
- Work experience to allow opinions to develop about what they would like to do

# What I learnt

- Lots of clarification around the questions needed for pwuAAC because often new ideas
- Questions with Yes/No answers are not the most helpful in focus group for encouraging discussion
- Practical issues – Health and Safety legislation changes
- Willing involvement
- Time it takes to organise and transcribe a focus group
- These ideas were new to many participants and parental expectations effects what conversations occurred at home

- Different experiences of people with acquired disabilities and congenital disabilities.  
Planning needed before other focus groups.
- Influence of parents employment experiences
- Lots of communication strategies used, so difficult to capture all of them equally in a group discussion.



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