

In June 2012 the Scottish Government published 'A Right to Speak' – guidance for people who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). This includes eight recommendations, the first two of which are relevant to this project:

- AAC services to demonstrate the effectiveness of AAC interventions by promoting the implementation of AAC research on specific, targeted and universal AAC interventions.
- National statistics on AAC to be gathered by relevant agencies to support future gathering of cost effectiveness data on AAC to ensure that AAC funding is sustained in the longer term.

In response, NHS Education for Scotland (NES) commissioned research to critically appraise existing methods of measuring outcomes for use in AAC (NES, 2013; Boa, 2014). This research showed no standardised outcome measure existed for use with people who use AAC and recommended investigation of the use of an adapted version of Therapy Outcome Measures (TOM) (Enderby et al, 2006). Prior to this project, the necessary adaptation to TOM for AAC had not been finalised or tested for validity and reliability. Therefore, NES commissioned Talking Mats and Professor Pam Enderby to undertake a project to test the reliability and validity of TOM AAC.

What is TOM AAC?

Therapy Outcome Measures is an outcome measure used by many rehabilitation professionals to measure the impact of their interventions. Based on the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO ICF, 2001), a professional administers TOM before and after an individual's intervention. An 11-point ordinal rating scale has six defined points in relation to four descriptors – impairment, activity,

Therapy Outcome Measures for AAC

Sally Boa and Joan Murphy report on the project to develop TOM AAC

participation and wellbeing. The RCSLT recognises TOM as a 'best fit' measure (Powell, Ward and Lowenthal, 2015).

We led the follow-up project (funded by NES) to test the validity and reliability of TOM AAC. A summary is in 'Communication Matters Journal' (Boa, Murphy and Enderby, 2014) and the full report is available online (<http://tinyurl.com/ojuhltl>).

Feedback seminar

The third edition of 'Therapy Outcome Measures for Rehabilitation Professionals' (Enderby and John, 2015) is now available (www.jr-press.co.uk). This includes 47 scales for different conditions, one of which is specifically for use with people who use AAC. Following the launch of the new edition, we held a seminar for professionals who had been involved in the validity and reliability testing. Table one shows the key points agreed by seminar participants when discussing three key questions about implementation and use of TOM AAC.

We hope AAC professionals will now start using TOM AAC in routine practice and will be able to contribute to the RCSLT's outcome framework development work. Visit: <http://tinyurl.com/qeehs8m> ■

Dr Sally Boa, Dr Joan Murphy Talking Mats. Email: sally.boa@nhs.net and joan@talkingmats.com

This project was carried out in collaboration with Professor Pamela Enderby (University of Sheffield)



References & resources

- Boa S. Outcome Measures in AAC. *Communication Matters Journal* 2014; 28:2, 14-16.
- Boa S, Murphy J, Enderby P. Testing the validity and inter-rater reliability of the Therapy Outcome Measure for AAC. *Communication Matters Journal* 2014; 28:3, 34-35.
- NHS Education for Scotland (2013). *A critical appraisal of existing methods of measuring outcomes in relation to augmentative and alternative communication: Final report*. <http://tinyurl.com/oh63xmc>
- NHS Education for Scotland (2014) *Testing the reliability and validity of the Therapy Outcome Measure for AAC: Final report*. <http://tinyurl.com/ojuhltl>
- Scottish Government. A Right to Speak. 2012. www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/06/8416
- World Health Organisation. *WHO-ICF: International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health*. Geneva: World Health Organisation, 2001.

Table one: Key points about the implementation and use of TOM AAC

| What will change practice? | What will make the experience better for AAC users? | What next? |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use at every initial assessment ■ Make it part of AAC toolkit ■ Use it to chart progress ■ Use it at times of change ■ Use it as goal setting tool ■ Use it prior to discharge ■ Use with other disciplines ■ Include it when applying for funding ■ Use it to compare AAC systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clarity of user's pathway ■ More realistic goals ■ Show improvement/maintenance ■ All professionals using the same benchmark ■ Will result in improved services ■ Use to give feedback to AAC users and families ■ Will make AAC intervention more functional and holistic ■ Will help everyone see the bigger picture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Just use it ■ Make it available to all AAC services ■ National data collection ■ Training ■ AAC SIGs |