



Andrea Sharples

Clinical Director

Personal Profile

I am a Clinical Director at ATtherapy which was set up in 2012. ATtherapy have a range of services including Specialist Speech and Language Therapy, Assistive Technology services and an innovative award winning AAC mentor service. I have led our team to grow and expand and am now very proud of our team of over 20 staff including therapists, assistants and AAC mentors. I have led the expansion of ATtherapy to a UK wide service and we now have associate speech and language therapists around the country. Our AAC mentors are competent AAC (electronic communication aid) users who mentor those on our caseload who are just starting their AAC journey or who are not as competent at using their systems. Our assistive technologists provide invaluable support to the therapy and mentor teams as well to clients supporting and designing innovative AT solutions to enable clients to live their lives to the full.

I have extensive experience as a Specialist Speech and Language Therapist working with individuals who require augmentative / alternative communication systems (AAC) and assistive technology (AT). I have worked for the ACE Centre (a regional AAC assessment hub) as part of the assessment and training team and managed several national projects. I have also worked for the Manchester Universities at Access Summit as an Assistive Technology assessor for students who require both personal support and assistive technology to complete their degree and / or post graduate degree training. I have provided training for modules on AAC at a number of universities for undergraduate and postgraduate students. As a regular contributor to research projects at Manchester Metropolitan University I have been granted Visiting Academic status. I have also presented and developed AT and AAC training for parents and professionals both nationally and internationally. I am a regular speaker at national and local AAC training events. I am a registered trainer for AAC software implementation and work with all the leading AAC companies to consult on and develop new products and resources. I am a trustee of Communication Matters (CM), the UK chapter of ISAAC (International Symposium Alternative and Augmentative Communication). As part of this role I co-chair the CM the AAC User Focus Group. This is a group of highly competent AAC Users who provide feedback to CM on their activities and suggest topics and areas that CM should be focussing on. I have high expectations of all individuals and believe that positive relationships are the key to success.

Professional Qualifications

1990 – 1993 Leeds Metropolitan University – BS (Hons) Clinical Language Sciences

Employment History

[ATtherapy, Clinical Director · 2012 - Present](#)

ATtherapy was set up in 2012. I initially combined working independently with my ACE Centre and University roles. I now have a mixed clinical/management role and support a range of individuals in various settings. I lead the team in clinical skills and carry out regular supervision to ensure a high-quality service to all individuals and their families. We have a range of service level agreements in schools (mainstream and specialist) and a caseload of varied individuals, from parental referrals to highly specialist medical legal cases.

[Access Summit, Assistive Technology Assessor · 2009 – 2014](#)

My role as a specialist assessor was to provide support and assistive technology equipment recommendations to students with complex disabilities to support them in the completion of their degree or post graduate degree qualification.

[Ace Centre North, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist · 1999 - 2014](#)

Specialist multi-disciplinary assessment and training team, ACE Centre North. Here I gained extended experience of working with children and also adults with a range of needs such as complex physical impairment and acquired neurological conditions such as strokes and MND. I carried out large scale training events and supported development and dissemination of the accredited AAC/AT modules. I managed ACE Centre's involvement with several national projects.

[Pennine Care NHS, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist \(AAC\) · 1999](#)

Supporting children who had profound and/or complex needs such as Cerebral Palsy, Motor Speech Disorders, Autistic Spectrum Disorders and individuals with learning difficulties. I also supported a range of clients with acquired communication difficulties following traumatic brain injury.

[Together Trust Specialist Speech and Language Therapist · 1998 – 1999](#)

Providing support for students with autistic spectrum condition.

[Tameside and Glossop NHS Trust, Speech and Language Therapist · 1994 – 1998](#)

Working in special schools, mainstream schools and with adults with acquired and learning disabilities.

[Sandwell NHS Trust, Generalist Speech and Language Therapist · 1993 – 1994](#)

Working in community clinic, special schools and with adults with learning disabilities.

Training Provided

- International School of Brussels (ISB): Three-day AAC training and student support
- AT and AAC training to multidisciplinary team in Hong Kong
- Language Acquisition through Motor Planning (LAMP) training provided nationally
- LAMP Certified Professional scheme developed for the UK
- Annual presentations at Communication Matters conference
- Units developed by ACE Centre and accredited by Manchester Metropolitan University at undergraduate and post graduate levels in AAC and AT.
- Presented at national and international AAC conferences including Communication Matters, ISAAC, Autism Today conference, The Autism Show, ACE Centre Network Days, AAC CEN, Autistic Spectrum Disorder NW CEN
- Regular training events, e.g. Grid 3 software, AT to support recording, AAC assessment and implementation, communication for young children with complex needs.

Training Received

- Bond Solon Civil Law and Procedure
- LAMP training received in Texas, US (Center for AAC and Autism)
- LAMP trainers meeting and training, Arkansas, US (Center for AAC and Autism)
- ATtherapy are the sole UK based LAMP Centre of Excellence
- Specialist AAC assessment (ACE Centre)
- AAC software: Grid 3 Expert, Snap plus Core, Communicator 5, Unity, Easy Chat, Words for Life
- Annual attendance at Communication Matters conference
- International Symposium for AAC (ISAAC): Barcelona, Washington and Dublin
- Picture Exchange Communication System, Lori Frost and Andy Bondy, Pyramid Consulting
- TEACCH (Gary Mesibov)
- AAC and Literacy (Karen Erickson)
- Attendance at AAC CEN
- Attendance at ACE Centre Network Days
- Safeguarding training

- Intensive Interaction
- British Sign Language (Level 1)
- Makaton

Additional Skills

I am passionate and enthusiastic with excellent interpersonal communication skills. I believe in supporting all individuals to reach their full potential.

I enjoy training others and ensure that this is a core element of my role.

I believe in the importance of positive outcome measurements with individuals to ensure therapy is effective. I believe that knowledge of current thinking and research is key to effective outcomes for individuals. I am also passionate about providing assistive technology to meet individual's needs and so keeping current knowledge about technology is a vital part of my role. I have skills in leadership and management. Supporting the team positively is a key to success for the individuals we support.



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