

April 23rd - Family Fun Day!

Staff from a number of specialist ICT and communication aid centres will be coming together to provide a Family Fun Day for children with special educational needs on Saturday 23rd April from 11 am until 4 pm. The Day will take place at the CALL Centre, Edinburgh and will also involve staff from KEYCOMM (Edinburgh), FACCT (Fife), SCTCI (Glasgow), TASSCC (Aberdeen), ASPECTS (Aberdeenshire) and Pass IT On (Edinburgh). Other organisations may also be involved.

This is a repeat of the very successful day held in May 2003, which was attended by over 150 children and parents. Come along if you would like to learn more about (and try out!) software, hardware and communication technologies that might help to support children with communication and/or writing problems. (Teachers, therapists, social work and social care professionals, or others, are also welcome.)

There is no charge for the day. Drop in for a couple of hours, or stay all day.



Contact the CALL Centre (0131 651 6236) for further details and to book a place.

Using Speech Output to Aid Inclusion

The process of inclusion has resulted in increasing numbers of students with reading difficulties attending mainstream schools, leading to demands on teaching and support staff to assist students through reading and scribing. The use of readers and scribes, while undoubtedly enabling students to access the curriculum, does little to either develop basic literacy skills or promote independent learning.

Adding Speech to Microsoft Word

CALL has obtained funding from SEED to develop and distribute a program (*WordTalk*) that adds text-to-speech facilities to *Microsoft Word*. *WordTalk* was originally developed by Rod Macaulay of TASSCC in Aberdeen, and adds an easy-to-use toolbar to *Microsoft Word* so that students who have difficulty reading electronic Word documents can use text-to-speech software to read the text. *Microsoft Word* is one of the most common electronic file formats in use in Scottish schools and so free distribution of *WordTalk* will enable local authorities and schools to meet obligations to improve communication and

delivery of school information under the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act, 2002.

WordTalk Training in May

WordTalk is currently being tested in local authorities across Scotland and should be available from the CALL Centre web site in April. We are also intending to run *WordTalk* training courses in several local authorities across the country in May - watch the CALL web site or contact us for more details.

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Latest on ASL Legislation

Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 Draft Code of Practice

The period for public consultation on the draft Code of Practice for the ASL Act 2004 has just ended. Aside from inviting written feedback by 25th February, the Scottish Executive held 14 public sessions in towns and cities across Scotland - from Orkney to Dumfries; from Oban to Peebles.

The sessions were organised by Children in Scotland and CALL Centre staff were actively involved, both in facilitating and as participants in some of the sessions. Although the Code will not be a legally binding document in the same way as the Education ASL (Scotland) Act, local authorities will have to show that they have had regard to the Code in their practices. To a large extent local authorities and other agencies such as health will refer to the Code for direction and guidance in supporting children and young people with additional support needs.

The Act is due to be implemented in Autumn 2005.

When publishing the Code, the Executive invited feedback on Regulations and papers associated with the ASL (Scotland) Act. These were:

- **Other Appropriate Agencies**

The Act specifies NHS Boards and social work services as other appropriate agencies and this paper sets out proposals for other agencies to be added to the list of appropriate agencies. The paper also asks about proposals for timescales for agencies to respond to requests for help from an education authority.

- **Co-ordinated Support Plan Regulations**

These Regulations set out the proposed form and content of the CSP, the time limits to be complied with in preparing and reviewing the CSP, the keeping, the transfer, the disclosure and discontinuance of the CSP.

- **Changes in School Education**

What actions education authorities need to take when a child or young person, with additional support needs, and for whose education they are responsible, has a change in their school education.

- **Dispute resolution**

How disputes, regarding functions of the authority under the Act will be dealt with.

- **Publication of information**

Main points of the Education Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act 2004

The main provision of the new Act is that education authorities must identify and support all children who would benefit from extra help with their learning. Main points of the new Act are:

- The term 'additional support needs' replaces 'special educational needs'. ASN includes all children who experience barriers to learning
- Records of Needs will be replaced by Coordinated Support Plans (there will be transitional protection for children who have a record but who will not get a CSP)
- Eligibility to CSPs is strictly limited to those children with enduring support needs (arising from complex or multiple factors) which require significant input from other than education e.g. health and social work.
- Children who get support only from education in the child's home local authority will not be eligible for a CSP, even if they have a lot of visiting teachers or other education inputs
- Health, social work and other appropriate agencies have a duty to "help" the education authority in its duty towards children with additional support needs.
- Assessment will be led mostly from school level. Parents will though be able to request a specialist assessment (though they are not bound to get it)
- Parents of all children with ASN will be able to request a place at an independent special school - at present this is restricted to children who have a Record of Needs
- The future needs assessment process is to end. Education authorities will have a duty to request information from appropriate agencies about the provision likely to be made for a young person leaving school, 12 months before they are to leave school. Education authorities must provide appropriate agencies with the date on which the young person is expected to stop school education
- There will be access to supporters and advocates (where they exist) for children and for parents
- There will be a mediation service, access to dispute resolution and an independent tribunal system (the tribunal will deal only with issues related to CSPs)

Guidance around issues on which authorities must publish information in respect of additional support needs.

CALL Centre together with Sense Scotland were invited to contribute to Section 4 of the Code 'Supporting Children and Families' and to take part in a two-day meeting with the Executive to discuss the final draft version.

Main points from the consultation

The new Act has far-reaching implications for children and young people with additional support needs, their parents, teachers and other practitioners. It is therefore perhaps understandable that discussions about the Code were lively, forceful and wide-ranging. Here are a few of the points raised:

- Simplify how the Code describes criteria for involving other agencies from within the local authority
- Present more realistic scenarios and use them to support authorities in their decision making.
- Link the scenarios to the flow charts.
- Revise Co-ordinated Support Plan template and consider how the CSP will relate to IEP, PLP, Individual Care Plan, forthcoming Integrated Assessment Framework and other formal planning tools and processes.
- Clarify roles of co-ordinator and contact officer.
- Incorporate good practice guidance on involving children, young people and parents into the main text of the Code rather than in Annexes.
- Use the Code to show how existing practices can continue to work but within the new framework e.g. Prescat meetings, staged intervention processes.

If you want to know more about the ASL (Scotland) Act 2004, Code of Practice or other Regulations and papers contact Stuart Aitken at the CALL Centre.

To read the CALL Centre response to the consultation on Code of Practice, refer to the CALL web site:

<http://www.callcentrescotland.org.uk>

During April and May 2005 additional Regulations and papers will be circulated by the Scottish Executive for public consultation. These will include:

- Transitional Arrangements for children and young people with Records of Needs
- Placing Requests
- Rules governing referral to the Additional Support Needs Tribunal

As the consultation papers are disseminated CALL will link to them from our website. So if you would like to give feedback watch out for the links coming up on the CALL site during April.

New Equipment

Here are reviews of a couple of keyboards that have recently been added to the CALL Centre Equipment Bank.

Frog Pad

This is small one-handed 20 key ergonomic keyboard supplied for either right or left handed use. (CALL has the right-hand version only.) All functions of a standard keyboard can be accessed. It has full sized keys designed to be used by a maximum of two fingers at a time, either simultaneously in a 'chord' or in a sequence of keypresses. The most commonly used letters are placed around the strongest fingers.



A certain level of dexterity is required and the whole business is relatively complex and not suitable for very young children or those with significant learning difficulties or coordination problems.

Connects by USB to PC or Macs (OS 9 and above), PDAs etc.

MyKids Keyboard and Mouse

This is an Anti-RSI design with fully functional but small keyboard and optical mini-mouse: the 'A' frame layout should ensure less strain on hands and wrists. This keyboard is suitable for younger users and those with small hands although the pastel colours used for base and keys may not appeal to older users. Comes with a free typing program that has characters floating across the screen carrying letters which you then press to gain familiarity with the keyboard - not a touch typing program but it is free from the internet <http://www.a4tech.com/en/typingfun>.



Other new keyboards and mice include:

- Virtual Keyboard
- Kensington Orbit Elite trackball
- Kidtrac Max USB trackball
- Maxtrac Pro USB trackball.

Communication Aids Update

DynaVox Systems

CALL Centre has recently added some new voice output communication aids to its bank of equipment. These are all 'dynamic screen' systems, i.e. symbols and words appear on screen on a series of linked displays and are selected (and speak out) by a touch screen press or switch selection.

Firstly, CALL now has a new **DV4**, a powerful and complex voice output communication aid. The DV4 has many excellent features that make it much better as a personal communication aid than any ordinary laptop or tablet computer could be. For example:

- Longer battery life (lasts throughout the school day)
- Better synthetic voice quality (VeriVox or DECtalk)
- Better amplifier and speakers (built-in) giving much louder voice output
- Bright daylight-readable TFT colour screen
- Wheelchair mountable design
- Wide range of finely tune-able touch screen and scanning input options
- Dynasyms and PCS (i.e. BoardMaker) or Rebus symbols can be pre-loaded
- 17 large pre-programmed (but adaptable/personalisable) page sets of vocabulary, covering a wide range of cognitive and language abilities.
- Specialised software geared towards fast communication
- No need to attach external keyboard or anything, to program

The older DynaVox 3100 was rapidly becoming the front runner and preferred choice for many, in the field of voice output communication aids (VOCAs). However- bad news! The new DV4 has been dogged by problems in this first year of its existence. The

US company that designed and made it released it long before it had been adequately tested and early purchasers and users have been plagued by a series of frustrating technical problems. To cut a long and rather painful story short, if your user can access by direct pointing on a touch screen, then the DV4 is a good option to consider. If your user is a switch and scan user, then there are still significant technical problems to be overcome and you might want to hold on to an old DynaVox 3100 for as long as possible, or wait for the new DV4 software Version 1.6 (coming in a couple of months we are told) to see whether that works properly, or consider a different device altogether.

This is not the fault of the UK distributor, Dynavox Systems UK and they do try to resolve any problems via their technical help line, but it is still unacceptable for switch users. CALL will try and keep you posted as to when a reliable version is available.

CALL has also just acquired a new **Mighty Mo** and a **MiniMo**, from the DynaVox range. These devices complement the 'top of the range' DV4 by offering digitised (i.e. recorded) speech output rather than synthetic speech output.

The Mighty Mo (£2,395) is the larger sized device- same size as the new DynaVox DV4 - while the MiniMo (£2,095) is the same size as the new MT4 (ex 'DynaMyte'). The Mighty Mo is more 'wheelchair mountable' while the MiniMo (smaller than an A4 sheet of paper) is more geared to an ambulant user. They are both jade green, as a nice change from black or grey etc. The two devices have exactly the same inner workings.

Please note that both of these new devices currently suffer from the same problems for switch and scan users as the DV4 though they could be an attractive option for touch screen users.

These two new recorded speech devices also (sort of) replace the much-loved DynaMo (though happily it will still be sold and supported for a while).

Here are some first impressions; we have not yet had time to give them an exhaustive going-over. Good stuff first - the Mighty and MiniMo offer:

- absolutely lovely brightly backlit colour screen
- significantly more memory (which will be VERY welcome! - 100 hours of recording is available (via inbuilt microphone), as compared to the DynaMo's un-upgradable 25 minutes.
- a USB pen drive for easy backup to a Windows-based PC, which is a huge improvement on the old backup system.

**Are Communication Aids a Mystery?
Want to know more about using Symbols?
An Introduction to Symbols
and Communication Aids
CALL Centre, Thursday 21st April, 2005
Contact the CALL Centre for details.
Tel. 0131 651 6235
<http://www.callcentrescotland.org.uk>**



Lib Lab Hip Talker

There are times when a portable communication aid is really useful for outings, shopping, going around the school. The Lib Lab Hip Talker from Liberator fits the bill.

It is shaped to fit in a bum bag and is attached around the waist. There is a clear plastic top to see the symbols and also to wipe clean. The Lib Lab talker can use various clip in guards. There are 3 interchangeable overlays with 12, 6 and 3 cells. Templates to make Boardmaker overlays are available to download from www.mayer-johnson.com. When cutting out the completed BoardMaker overlay you need to cut inside the guide- lines at the corners.

One point to consider when using the grid with 12 locations is that there are small cells right in the corners. With the position of the bum bag and the communicator it is quite difficult to activate the cell with your index fingers - use your thumbs instead. The 6-location grid is much easier to use with fingers.



The LibLab Hip Talker is easy to record into - just hold down the cell and speak into the microphone. The playback is good. You can just re-record over when you want to change. There is a total recording time of 300 seconds so there is plenty of room for longer message. You can also store messages for each level on a 3, 6 or 12 location. There is a little switch on the machine that you move between the different levels.

Available from Liberator, www.liberator.co.uk.

- a wide range of different input options (eg switch, joystick etc.), scans and settings (NB. scan and switch input does not yet work reliably!)
- infra red for environment control
- a range of pre-loaded, pre-recorded page sets suitable as 'starter' sets that can then be adapted and personalised for a variety of types of user (or removed and completely replaced with your own)
- pictures, sounds and photographs can be imported, and an in-built microphone is provided for recording extra speech.

Dynamo and MiniMo

Having said all that, I don't think the MiniMo provides a perfect replacement for the DynaMo, frankly, as it has moved up into a more complex category of device. The absolutely great thing about the new device - what we have all been waiting for - is the lovely bright colour screen, instead of the DynaMo's old black and white symbols on a rather dim LCD screen. But otherwise, it's £400 dearer and slightly bigger and noticeably heavier at 1.5Kg (the Dynamo only weighs 0.8Kg - may not sound much difference to you but it can make a big difference to a small child not too steady on his / her feet). It has a shorter battery life (because of the colour screen, presumably) at 8 hours as compared to the DynaMo's 12 hours. And while the DynaMo is delightfully simple and quick to learn how to program and use, the new MiniMo isn't really- it's got the same operating system as the DV4, which usually demands a one-day course before people can master even basic setting up and programming. So don't rush to throw away your old DynaMos just yet!

These devices are available for loan from CALL, but may have to be treated as complex devices rather than simple devices, so will not generally be sent out except to people who have had some training in their use (either through being part of an assessment team, or from previous experience), or who have attended a course). CALL does have an older DynaMo available for trial and loan, which could be a good assessment tool to evaluate whether the new MiniMo is likely to be useful.

Contact CALL for more details.

Needing to consult children about the services you provide?

How do you find out the views of children who have communication difficulties?

Come and find out!

Listening to Children

CALL Centre, Thursday 12th May, 2005

Contact the CALL Centre for details.
Tel. 0131 651 6235
<http://www.callcentrescotland.org.uk>

Using Technology to Sit SQA Exams

In 2004, 9,904 students applied to use special arrangements in Scottish Qualifications Authority examinations. Just under 70% of these students were described as having 'specific learning difficulties'. The type of arrangement used in examinations varies according to the student's disability or difficulty and the subject and nature of the exam. A student with specific difficulties with reading and writing, for example, may use one or more of the following accommodations: extra time; transcription of the paper; word processor or other ICT; reader and/or scribe.

ICT (e.g. a word processor) is used by students who need special arrangements, most commonly for papers that require generation of a large amount of text such as English Writing. ICT is not often used to help students read papers, although some schools have scanned papers into a computer using optical character recognition and used text-to-speech software to support students with reading or visual difficulties.

A previous project^[1] undertaken in 2004 by the CALL Centre, University of Edinburgh, for SQA, trialled Standard Grade examination papers in electronic format for students with additional support needs. Eight 2003 SQA Standard Grade examination papers in Adobe Acrobat PDF were provided by SQA: Biology, English Reading Text, English Reading Questions, English Writing, French Reading Questions, History, Maths 1 and Maths 2. 'Form fields' were inserted to enable students to type answers to questions directly on screen, and text-to-speech for reading the paper added using PDFaloud from textHelp systems. Six schools evaluated the exams with students who had used, or were planning to use, special arrangements in exams. Schools were provided with copies of Adobe Acrobat Standard and PDFaloud, and a CD with the examination PDFs. Staff and students were asked to complete a questionnaire designed to investigate the ease of use of the electronic examinations, and compare them with readers and scribes.

Project Results

31 students completed evaluation questionnaires with respect to 94 different PDF examinations. Overall, students regarded a human reader as being easier to use than text-to-speech software with the electronic papers. However, students were less familiar with the text-to-speech software than with readers and so it is reasonable to assume that they would find it easier with more training and practice. Many of the students commented that the synthetic voice was of poor quality and was

difficult to understand: if higher quality voices were provided this might improve ease of use. (The voices provided with the examinations were free: higher quality voices are available for extra cost.) In general, text-to-speech software was judged to be easier to use when reading examination papers in 'communication' subjects such as English, French and History, than in Maths and Biology.

For communication subjects (i.e. English, History, French) a majority of students scored typing as being easier to use than a scribe. Ease of use scores for the electronic communication subjects were considerably higher than scores for maths and biology. There was a difference between the ease of use of typing into PDF examinations between students and different schools: students with literacy difficulties appeared to find typing into PDFs easier than students with physical or visual difficulties. Combining these two factors, we find that students with visual or physical difficulties rated the ease of use of the maths/biology papers lowest, while students with dyslexic-type difficulties rated communication papers highest.

Students considered that the electronic examinations gave them far greater independence (mean of 4.79 for the use of text-to-speech and 4.68 for typing into the PDF, out of 5) than scribes or readers (scribe - 2.06 and reader - 2.00 out of 5).

27 out of 28 students (96%) felt that SQA should provide examinations in PDF for students requiring special arrangements.

SQA arranged for some of the completed electronic papers to be marked by subject markers. Feedback from the markers, and comments from school staff, suggest that the use of the electronic exam papers provides an accurate assessment of attainment.

The results indicate that staff and students would welcome the introduction of examinations in PDF for students requiring special arrangements.

Staff in the schools were positive about the electronic exams and their potential to increase independence. Another significant factor identified by staff is the potential for electronic papers to reduce the numbers of readers, scribes, invigilators and separate accommodation required for candidates who require special arrangements.

[1] Nisbet, P.D., Aitken, S., Shearer, N. (2004) *Trial of External Papers in Accessible PDF for Candidates with Additional Support Needs*. Project Report to Scottish Qualifications Authority. CALL Centre, University of Edinburgh.

Augmentative Communication in Practice: Scotland News



Successful Literacy for Children with Severe Communication Difficulties

Augmentative Communication in Practice: Scotland is proud to announce this exciting Study Day to be held at the Business Learning and Conference Centre, Dunfermline on **8th November, 2005**.

The speaker will be **Dr Karen Erickson**, Director of the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies, and Associate Professor at the University of North Carolina, USA. She is internationally known for her work in literacy and is much in demand as a presenter.



The Study Day will focus on how we can best help children with severe communication difficulties to overcome barriers to reading and writing, and open up to them the empowering world of the printed word. It will be of great interest to anyone supporting children who are significantly delayed in their ability to read with comprehension - including children who use augmentative and alternative communication, as well as those with autistic spectrum disorders.

The Study Day is being organised in conjunction with Communication Matters. Booking forms will be available very soon from the CALL Centre and from any of the other centres involved in Augmentative Communication in Practice:Scotland. Details from:

<http://www.acipscotland.org.uk>

<http://www.communicationmatters.org.uk>

Web Site

The new Augmentative Communication in Practice: Scotland web site will be launched at the beginning of April. It will contain information about the various centres, details of past and forthcoming Study Days, books and news of other events.

<http://www.acipscotland.org.uk>

Augmentative Communication in Practice: Scotland is an open group composed of people who have an active interest in Augmentative and Alternative Communication - users of AAC, families, carers and professionals from a variety of different disciplines. The organising group is made up of members of staff from the CALL Centre, KEYCOMM, FACCT, SCTCI and TASSCC.

Arts attAACked!

The Arts attAACk! day held in November proved to be very popular with the many AAC users who came along to the Corn Exchange in Edinburgh. The day gave everybody an opportunity to take part in workshops covering music, drama, dance and the visual arts and to find out more about the arts in general.

A DVD / video of the day will be available in April and will be sent to participants to provide a permanent reminder of the day. Further copies will be available from the various centres involved in Augmentative Communication in Practice.

We are looking at ways to make similar arts events accessible to AAC users in the future.



AAC User Awards

The organising committee have once again made available a sum of up to £2,000 which may be used to fund projects, which must directly involve one or more users of an augmentative communication system in Scotland.

Applications from users of augmentative communication systems are particularly welcome.

Possible projects might include:

- user attendance at a conference
- a visit to a multi-sensory play facility
- organising an event that brings users of augmentative communication systems together

Project money cannot be used to pay for a communication aid, or similar equipment, or for training.

Details and an application form can be obtained from any of the centres or from the web site:

<http://www.acipscotland.org.uk>

ICT and Inclusion

The annual CALL Centre ICT and Inclusion roadshow will take place from April 27th - 29th. The venues this year are as follows:

- April 27th, *Dean Park Hotel, Renfrew*
- April 28th, *Golden Lion Hotel, Stirling*
- April 29th, *CALL Centre, Edinburgh*

Now in its fifth year, ICT and Inclusion has become the leading opportunity for teachers, therapists, social work staff, other professionals, parents and carers in Scotland to find out about the latest computer equipment and software for disabled children and adults.

Fifteen of the UK's leading suppliers will be attending and demonstrating their latest products. In addition to the presentations by suppliers, there will be a series of seminars given by staff from schools, voluntary organisations and other professionals, focusing on the use of technology in schools and in the community.

Attendance at any of the ICT and Inclusion Days is free and a free buffet lunch is available at each of the venues. We ask people to let us know they are coming by returning the booking form in the brochure, or by booking online to give us an idea of numbers.



Further information is given in the brochure accompanying this edition of *New in CALL* and is also available on the web:

www.callcentrescotland.org.uk/ictandinclusion

Staff Changes

There have been a number of changes in CALL Centre staff since the last *New in CALL*:

- Susan Gibb, specialist teacher, left in August 2004 to take up a new post with North Lanarkshire Council.
- Samantha Maguire from our administrative staff left in March 2005 to start a new life in Australia.
- Fiona Balfour joined us as a specialist teacher in January 2005. Fiona previously worked at the Royal Blind School in Edinburgh.

CALL Centre

Communication Aids for Language and Learning

The CALL Centre is a research and service unit funded primarily by the Scottish Executive Education Department. Contact the CALL Centre for further information on any of our work.

The CALL Centre
The University of Edinburgh
Paterson's Land, Holyrood Road
Edinburgh EH8 8AQ
Tel 0131 651 6235 / Fax 0131 651 6234
Email callcentre@ed.ac.uk
<http://www.callcentrescotland.org.uk>

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