

Wishing
you a
happy
2010

TalkingMats[®]

Accredited Trainers
Newsletter

Jan 2010

The Talking Mats Research and Development Centre

If you have been wondering why you have not heard from us for a while, it is because we have been very busy. On November the 18th the new Talking Mats Research and Development Centre officially opened. The University of Stirling has supported us in the development of the centre and this means that Lois and Joan have both taken a career break from the NHS in order to put time and energy into making it a success. Sally Boa and Jane Macer continue to support the work of the centre and their primary focus is on training though Jane has also been involved in some of the research projects. Tracy Oliver and Morag Place are both researchers within the team and their research projects are reported later on within the newsletter. Karen Crow is the administrator responsible for training and in October we were delighted to welcome Alison Hastings as the administrator with responsibility for sales. There are three main strands to our work:

1. Research: We have been carrying out research on communication disabilities for twenty years. We hope to continue with this programme of research and welcome discussions and possible collaborations with others.

2. Talking Mats resources: We have produced a number of training packages all based

on our research with different client groups. **Two new resources have been launched :**

Talking Mats and Young People focuses on consultation with young people using care services.

In deference to the great Scottish bard himself and launching on Burn's night !



To see ourselves as others see us this resource uses the Mats in a novel way to allow people to see each others' perspectives.

3. Training: We continue to offer a variety of training courses both locally and further a field. Our increasing network of accredited trainers is key to the strategy of ensuring a quality training program and courses are being run throughout the UK, Sweden, Finland and Australia.

The centre has no external funding, so we need to generate our funding through training, resources, research grants or external consultancies. We have 2 years to find a business model that will work for us and allow us to find a way of

enabling both the research and the practical clinical aspects to be sustained. Our aim is to establish ourselves as a not for profit enterprise that can support people with communication difficulties and your support in helping us to do this is vital.

Remember our new address

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The Talking Mats team at the opening but where is Sally ?



Talking Mats and Involvement in Decision Making for People with Memory Problems and Family Carers by Tracey Oliver

The diagnosis of dementia is being made earlier now than previously, resulting in an awareness that people with early and moderate dementia should be offered a degree of autonomy, and the opportunity to play an active role in making decisions about their day-to-day life¹⁻². Although autonomy is important, it is also acknowledged that people with dementia may have difficulty admitting they are having problems. Studies relating to health care decisions concluded that people with dementia and their families should be encouraged to discuss preferences³. However, many struggle because of their relative's communication and cognitive problems. Some of the most difficult decisions that have to be made are related to the ability of the person with dementia to carry out tasks of daily living, which are often the main reasons for having to consider care.

Previous research has established that many people with dementia can use the Talking Mats™ framework to express their views⁴. Based on this evidence, we wanted to explore if the framework could help people with early and moderate stage dementia and their family carers feel more involved in discussions about managing their daily living activities, than usual communication methods

Eighteen couples (person with dementia and family carer) were asked to discuss how the person with dementia was managing four topics of daily living: 'Personal care' (washing, dressing), 'Getting Around' (walking, using the stairs), 'Housework' (cooking, making the bed) and 'Activities' (watching TV, listening to music). Couples talked about the four topics using both the Talking Mats™ framework (Condition A) and their usual communication methods (Condition B). After both types of discussion, the couples were asked to complete a short questionnaire to determine how involved they felt in each type of discussion.

We found that, when compared to usual communication methods, the Talking Mats™ framework can help people with dementia and family carers feel more involved in decisions about managing their daily living activities. An unexpected but interesting finding was that the greatest increase in feelings of involvement in discussions occurred for family carers, who reported that the Talking Mats™ framework made them feel that their view was listened to by the person with dementia that they cared for.

These findings are important as they contribute in a practical way to the current debate on how to meaningfully involve people with dementia in decisions about their care. Importantly, they have implications for the organisation, delivery, regulation, and improvement of services to people with dementia.

Having established that the Talking Mats™ framework can help people with dementia and their carers feel more involved in making decisions, we plan to explore if exposure to the framework in the earlier stages of dementia can help the person with dementia at later stages when making key decisions about accepting care.

References

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Adapting to Aphasia By Morag Place

The project comprised of two research questions:

Question 1 How do people with aphasia and their partners succeed in everyday activities?

What do people with aphasia and their communication partners think about their communication and their identity?

The first question was addressed by observing couples completing a joint communicative task – imagining they were inviting someone round for a meal. There were two main findings from this observation: (1) communication partners use a variety of communication strategies to aid communication; (2) there is a power imbalance between the person with aphasia and their partner.

Common communication strategies used included presenting choices, repeating and rephrasing, using gestures, guessing, giving lots of time, and using writing, drawing or symbols. Feedback from participants during an information day to hear research results revealed that people with aphasia do not think there is one strategy which is helpful for all. Some can be helpful but some can be distracting and it may vary depending on the situation. Additionally, feedback from partners revealed that they were working very hard to provide strategies without being confident that they were helpful.

We also observed a power imbalance between the person with aphasia and their partner. Half of the partners took on a 'teacher role' where they corrected spelling, encouraged practice of reading aloud and pronunciation of words and steered and focused the person with aphasia during the joint task. Additionally, most partners took control of the task (asking the questions, reading aloud and providing the strategies). They did all this with the aim of supporting the person with aphasia to communicate and to make the ultimate decisions. Feedback from participants revealed that people with aphasia lack control over the conversation and felt positioned as childlike. The partner holds the position of power but feels forced into the role and both people feel uncomfortable with the situation.

An outcome of the research is looking at redressing this imbalance. Future research is planned to look at creating a small symbol set representing the most common strategies. People with aphasia would then be trained to use this to request the most useful strategy for them, thus handing control of the conversation, and strategies used, back to the person with aphasia. Use of the symbol set would involve three stages (1) acknowledging they have not understood, (2) determining which strategy they need, (3) requesting the strategy. This will require intensive training and a training programme will also be developed to deliver this. Additionally Propellor Multimedia are keen to implement the system into the REACT software in order to increase the intensity of training. We believe this meta-communicative symbol set and training programme would be a unique addition to the AAC field as it is aimed at giving meta communicative control to people with a comprehension difficulty rather than aiding expression.

Question 2 'what do people with aphasia and their communication partners think about their communication and their identity'? To investigate this we conducted Talking Mats interviews based on the Interpersonal Perception Method (Laing, Phillipson, and Lee, 1966), which systematically examines the perspectives of two individuals, including what each thinks the other thinks.

Previous research has examined the perspectives of people with aphasia and their formal and informal carers, but usually in isolation (one exception is Cruice et al., 2005). We have gone beyond all existing research by not only examining the perspectives of both sides simultaneously, but also by asking each what they think the other thinks. This enables three analyses: (1) the degree of agreement between both sides, (2) the degree to which each understands the perspective of the other, and (3) the degree to which each feels understood by the other.

These comparisons revealed some group divergences of perspective. We found the same misunderstandings about being spoken for and corrected as predicted by the literature (e.g., Croteau & Le Dorze, 2006): people with aphasia are more resistant to being spoken for or having their speech corrected than communication partners realise. We have also identified new areas of misunderstanding relating to confidence. Communication partners tended to lack confidence, and be unsure of how to cope. However, the people with aphasia perceived their communication partners as very confident and able to cope.

A key overall finding revealed that there was a huge underestimation of the misunderstanding which exists on both sides. This discrepancy was most extreme for communication partners. They tended to feel that they understood the person with aphasia very well, but in actuality there were significant misunderstandings. That such a pattern of misunderstanding remains unrecognised was an important finding and it provided the prompt to develop a Talking Mats resource which could target these misunderstandings at a single relationship level.

This research was conducted by Morag Place, Alex Gillespie and Joan Murphy

To see ourselves as others see us



a resource for comparing perspectives and enhancing understanding in relationships

As part of the research project each participants Talking Mats interviews were confidential, however, we realised there would be enormous benefit in allowing couples to see each others viewpoint and to discuss any differences. An outcome of the current research has therefore been the development of a new Talking Mats resource entitled '**To see ourselves as others see us: a resource for comparing perspectives and enhancing understanding in relationships**'. Materials include an instructional DVD demonstrating the package being used in a clinical setting as well as an instructional booklet, Talking Mats book, mat and symbols. For professionals working with people who have difficulty communicating, it is challenging to meaningfully involve them in decision-making while taking into account all points of view. This package is a tool for enabling this process. The new resource will allow professionals who work with people who have difficulty communicating and their families to hear each person's views. Any trained professional could use the resource to aid the negotiation, goal-setting or decision-making process with the ultimate aim of enhancing understanding within a relationship. The resource could be used to discuss any topic with any client group and will benefit couples who need a structured way of finding out how each feel about a given topic in and discussing issues in a non-threatening way.

Talking Mats and young people; a resource to support Consultation with young people using care services



In social care and education settings, young people are being encouraged to feed-back views on the services they receive and to reflect on their own needs and progress. The Talking Mats Centre at Stirling University has developed a new resource specially designed to facilitate consultation with young people. This has been created in collaboration with the pupils of Starley Hall School in Fife, an independent service for young people requiring residential support and education.

Through this simple technique young people with varying levels of confidence and communication skill can take part in a structured conversation and build up a visual picture of their views.

A resource package, containing 60 symbols, selected to facilitate the involvement of young people in target setting and reviews has been developed and has recently been favourably reported on by the Care Commission and by HMIE.

The symbols in the package are divided into 4 topic areas: Care & Learning, Rights, Progress and Environment. These sets provide a framework for discussion leading to recordable information reflecting a young person's views. This is a new client group for us so if any of you have contacts who would be interested in this please let us know.

The next edition of the accredited trainers newsletter will be produced for Sept 2010 so if you have anything you want to contribute

From your experience of running courses, your use of Talking Mats

Or even a day in the life of...please send to Lois who will be delighted to receive your contributions

Congratulations

Congratulations to Margo Mackay for receiving research funding to study the value of the WHO ICF children's version in conjunction with Talking Mats to assist young people in decision making.

Research news from Sweden

Dr Ulrika Ferm is a Research Speech and Language Therapist at DART (www.dart-gbg.org) a communication centre in Gothenberg, Sweden.

She is a member of the European 'Huntington's Disease Network and together with Masters Students has completed a research project using the Talking Mats framework with people with Huntington's Disease. Their results show in-

creased communication effectiveness with Talking Mats (compared to unstructured and structured conversation). She has written a paper which has been accepted for publication in the International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders (IJLCD) which will be available online soon.

Ulrika is currently working with 4 new students who are doing their masters theses about the



effectiveness of Talking Mats in group discussions for persons with Huntington's Disease and for persons with aphasia.

For further information about Ulrika's work, please contact Ulrika at : ulrika.ferm@vgregion.se

*Bit short of photos of Ulrika but here is Joan and Lois in lovely restaurant in Gothenburg with the latest group of Talking Mats accredited trainers. Ulrika who has been a trainer for sometime can just be seen sitting next to Joan at top left of picture and thanks to Mia (bottom left) also a long time accredited trainer for organizing such a great course. For the record **fika** is now well instituted into the Talking Mats morning routine !*

Update from conferences



Stop press

The aphasia project has been short listed for the national allied Health Profession awards in the category enhancing self care and independent living . Good luck Morag and Joan!

The advocacy project with people with learning disability becoming Talking Mats interviewers was cited as an example of good practice by Quality Improvement Scotland.

Mia's display of Talking Mats resources at DART was really impressive see below

Once again, the work of the Talking Mats team was represented at the Harrogate dementia Conference sponsored by Hawker Publications. This year we submitted two short presentations. The first focused on the role of Talking Mats in helping people with dementia and their carers to consider how they are coping with daily living tasks. The second presented a review of the TM training resource produced and delivered to care home staff in a project

completed this year. In addition to the presentations the Joseph Rowntree Foundation funded a stand in the main hall for the duration of the conference. Joan Murphy, Tracey Oliver and Jane Macer staffed the stand, meeting people interested in learning about the usefulness of Talking Mats in dementia care and making contacts with service providers and commissioners to promote good practice.



Training Update

A big 'thank you' to everyone who has been sending in their evaluation forms following any courses that they have run. We have taken on board the feedback received and have also had some discussion ourselves about the training. We have realised that, over the years, we have been adding more to the training, and as a result there is too much information for people to take in, particularly in session one. We have now reviewed and reordered the training so that there is a better balance between the two sessions. For future reference, we are changing the way we ask people to evaluate the training, so will only require you to fill in and send us a summary sheet with comments from participants.

How do you get the new training resources?

- For those of you who were trained as accredited trainers in March and October 2009, we will send the new materials to you within the next few weeks.
- For those of you who trained before March 2009 - once you have sent us your £50.00 accreditation fee, we will send the materials out to you. We are slightly late in requesting this payment due to our move, so the fee for 2010/2011 will be due in September 2010. We will send out agreements for 2009/2010 with the training materials.

Levels of Training

To meet different needs the Talking Mats centre are now offering four levels of training:

Basic training: This training is for people who want to learn how to use a particular Talking Mats package and gives participants the opportunity to practice using the symbols within their own work environment. It has more emphasis on communication in general. The need for this level has emerged from Jane Macer's project, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation - "*Training care home staff to use Talking Mats with people with dementia*" (a PDF of the findings is available from us if you would like to see it). If you think this level of training is appropriate for your organisation please contact us for the resources. This is a whole day training with and participants are not required to make a DVD.

Intermediate training: This is the training that accredited trainers are trained to offer, and allows participants to reflect on their own communication and to be more creative in terms of how to use and develop their use of Talking Mats. It is our experience that the process of making and reflecting on the DVD is the most effective way of impacting on practice.

Specialised training: The Talking Mats Team run courses tailored to organisation's individual needs.

Accredited training: This assessed course enables participants to deliver Talking Mats training within their own organisation and participants must have completed an intermediate training to be eligible for this. A list of current accredited trainers is on the Talking Mats website.

Welcome to the following new accredited trainers

From the March 09

Stirling course

Maria Venditozzi
Karen Wilson
Rhoda MacDougall
Nikky Steiner
Helen Paterson
Fiona Young
Taryn Moore

From the October 09

Stirling course

Carol-Anne Burnett
Alison Cuddington
Katherine Davies
Siobhan K Mack
Miranda Macaulay
Naomi Hewerdine
Anne McWhinnie
Elaine Watson
Kirsten Adamson
Daisy Dinwoodie

From the October 09

Gothenburg course

Christina Bergsten
Anna Blomberg
Brigitta Botold
Margret Buchhloz
Britt Claesson
Margareta Fjelner
Eva Holmqvist
Rose-Marie Johansson
Inger Landstrom
Elisabet Lindstrom
Ingrid Mattsson Muller



Here is Sally—we found her !