

Michelle Whitton, BSc (Hons) SRSLT MRCSLT

Michelle Whitton has been practising as a Speech and Language Therapist since 1985, graduating from the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne. She is a registered member of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists and holds certification to practice from the Health Professionals Council. Since qualifying, most of her clinical experience has been with children and adolescents with special needs as well as Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).

She completed the training course "Expert Witness" organised by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists in 1996. She has produced a number of reports for solicitors around England and Scotland, working independently and now as an associate of Bush and Company. Michelle Whitton also holds a postgraduate diploma in Paediatric Dysphagia from the Manchester Metropolitan University (June 1998). She has wide clinical experience of a variety of communication problems associated with cerebral palsy, acquired brain injury, neurological syndromes and autism, and also has expertise in working with clients with complex needs and sensory loss.

Michelle Whitton has both clinical and academic experience. She has expertise in AAC and has worked at Lancaster University in communication aid development and produced language

software. She has worked both in the USA and in Europe in delivering support and training to communication aid users and their families and carers. At the University of Manchester she acted as academic tutor for studies in complex needs and communication, and provided clinical supervision to undergraduate students of speech and language pathology.

She now works part time at a Scope College of Further Education with students who have a wide range of needs from profound and multiple disabilities to physical disability; her work includes assessing, supporting and reviewing student's use of alternative and augmentative means of communication and computer technology as a member of a multi-disciplinary team. She advises educational and student support staff on working on communication across the curriculum and provides staff training programmes. Advice on dysphagia management is also included in this role. She also works privately, on a consultative basis, for the local Nuffield Hospital providing assessments on acquired communication loss and dysphagia.

Michelle Whitton is a member of a SCOPE special interest group in cerebral palsy, Communication Matters UK; ISAAC (the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication) and the RCSLT Medico-legal special interest group.

Career Summary

- **Sept 1985 - Jan 1987: General Speech & Language Therapist, East Cumbria Priority Services Trust**

Community services covering the spectrum of communication disorders to clients living in rural location.

- **Jan 1987 - May 1987: Specialist Speech & Language Therapist, Special Needs, Lancaster Priority Services Trust**

Specialist locum post focused on clients of all ages having special needs and speech & language disorders.

- **May 1987 - Sept 1990: Specialist Speech & Language Therapist, Resettlement, South Cumbria Community Services Trust**

Adults with a variety of disabilities were seen in a long stay residential hospital where a programme of resettlement into the community was underway.

- **Sept 1990 - June 1993: Specialist Speech & Language Therapist, Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC), Scope, Beaumont College, Lancaster**

Beaumont College offers further education to young people with disabilities (typically cerebral palsy or acquired head injury). For many students realistic communication depends on using the latest technology and communication aids.

- **June 1993 - June 1996: Specialist Speech & Language Therapist, Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC), University of Lancaster**

An electronic communication aid, ORAC, was developed in the school of Engineering at Lancaster University. This three-year project put the therapist at the leading edge of technology offering experiences in a newly developing clinical field. Achievements are summarised as follows:

- System Development - ORAC & Eclipse systems and software
- Training - developing and delivering University based courses in AAC
- Marketing & Business Experience – working in a commercial setting
- Software Development & Publications
- 'Eight is Great' language software, April 1992
- 'Talking Lifestyles' October 1996
- 'Introduction to ORAC' training video, June 1995

Clinical Experience in this post United Kingdom

Established national support to ORAC users through a telephone help line service and setting up of regional support centre for therapists, parents, carers and end users. Vital clinical feedback from these centres, allowed relevant technological developments to take place.

USA

Seconded by Dr Joan Bruno to Augmentative Communications Dept, Children's Specialised Hospital, Mountainside, New Jersey, USA (July & August 1994 & 1995). Provided intensive therapy and training to parents, families & children using a variety of electronic communication systems.

Europe

Clinical input to undergraduate training (Speech) to Trinity College, Dublin, March & December 1995. Provided training support and advice to Central Remedial Clinic, Dublin and Cerebral Palsy Ireland, Dublin from 1994 to December 1996.

- **September 1996 - December 1997**
Lectureship, Learning Disability & Multi-Sensory Impairment, School of Speech Pathology, University of Manchester

This involved two key roles:

- 1) **Academic Tutor** to post graduates reading MSc, Advanced Diploma & Certificate qualifications
- 2) **Clinical Tutor** to undergraduate speech students reading BSc (Hons) in Speech Pathology

Other Assignments

- **June 1996 - December 1997, Horizon European Initiative in Training for Employment and Support using Technology, Central Remedial Clinic, Dublin**

Acted as trainer to the Horizon European TEST project in Ireland, developing services for young adults with physical disabilities. The project linked with other European partners in Portugal, Italy, France and Belgium.

- **May 1997 to Present**
Specialist Speech & Language Therapist (AAC) to Scope in providing assessment and therapy services to young people post school age with Cerebral Palsy, associated physical disability and head injury. Various levels of learning disability are prominent in this client group. Role also includes training for all involved personnel in communication and technology, plus management of dysphagia for this client group.

Michelle Whitton also carries a varied **private practice** and undertakes **Medico-Legal work**.

Conferences

Presented papers at the following:

- Communication Matters, UK 1993
- Communication Matters, UK 1994
- International ISAAC Conference, Maastricht 1994
- Communication Matters, UK 1995
- RCSLT Golden Jubilee Conference, 1995
- Communication Matters, UK 1996
- Communication Matters, UK 1997
- International ISAAC Conference, 1998
- Communication Matters, UK 2000

Professional Information

- Registered member RCSLT, membership no 7017
- Member of RCSLT Medico-legal special interest group
- Elected committee member, North West Special Interest Group in Communication Technology, 1996-1997
- Completed the RCSLT Expert Witness Course, May 1996