








## Learn, Connect, Grow: Supporting Kent's Learning Disability and Autism Workforce Event 1 Report

	<p>Canterbury Christ Church University hosted a learning event for those working with people with learning disabilities and autism.</p>
	<p>Katie Potts presented her work on Makaton in Kent schools.</p>
	<p>We asked groups about the support needs of the people they worked with</p>
	<p>They said they worked with people with sensory impairments, communication, and mental health issues</p>
	<p>They said that they would benefit from education in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• communication with people of all ages.</li> <li>• Enabling community living and person-centred care</li> </ul>
	<p>Participants said they valued the teaching and networking opportunity and would share learning with their teams.</p>
	<p>Canterbury Christ Church will host more events in 2024 including the Kent Surrey Sussex Learning Disabilities Community of Practice Conference.</p>

## Situation

Canterbury Christ Church University ratified a Strategic Vision for Learning Disability and Autism. This recommended further work was required to ensure the education of current professional health and care courses covered the Health and Care Act 2022 requirements for Mandatory training, while also supporting the development of ongoing engagement with specialist health, care, and education providers to improve the University's education and training offer.

## Background

To assist this development, a programme of learning disability and autism workforce events are planned for 2024, with three objectives:-

- 1) Develop a consistent space to facilitate productive dialogue and creative collaborative action in identifying key learning disability and autism workforce challenges & solutions.
- 2) To enable the employability of CCCU students through offering a platform to share research and practice, opening event to students with a specific interest in learning disabilities and Autism.
- 3) Utilise a knowledge mobilisation model to support the sharing of new knowledge, research or practice and implications for the learning disabilities and autism workforce in Kent and Medway.

This programme has been a collaboration with three University groups:-

- LOUD Group - consisting of experts by experience with learning disabilities,
- Learning Disability Education Group – consisting of providers and academics.
- Autism Reference Group – a mixed group of experts by experience, academics, and other stakeholders.

## Assessment

A knowledge mobilisation model will be employed to structure these events. Knowledge Mobilisation is concerned with generating new understanding and knowledge through interaction (Hayes et al, 2020).

The events will be two hours in length, with the first hour being masterclass focused on sharing new knowledge, evidence, or practice, that relates to people with learning disabilities, autistic people and autistic people with learning disabilities. The second hour will be some facilitated activity to develop ideas for workforce development – see Appendix 1.

### *Event 1*

The first event presentation was opened by Professor Jane Perry and delivered by Canterbury Christ Church University MSc student Katie Potts, presenting her research “How can Makaton be embedded in the School Community?” which included some Makaton teaching.

### *Data*

Two data sources were collected and reviewed,

- 1) Participants were asked to identify the support needs of the people with whom, they worked, this was collected on a Padlet (Marsden, 2023).
- 2) Participants' evaluation of the event collected via Microsoft Forms.

This data was reviewed using a thematic analysis approach.

## Results

### *What are the support needs of the people you are working with currently?*

In response to the above question, participants' responses were themed – see Appendix 2. The three themes identified were: -

1. People with learning disabilities and autistic people with a range of needs including sensory impairments, expressive communication issues and mental health issues.
2. Education and training for staff in adjustments in communication, using signs and symbols from childhood through adulthood.
3. Enabling individuality and community living through understanding and working alongside.

The first theme outlines the support needs of the people that participants were working with across the various health, care, and education services. The second and third themes indicate the knowledge, skills and capabilities staff would require working in those environments, which resonate with person-centred care and augmented and alternative communication methods. It could be assumed that some of the preponderance of communication could be the result of the Makaton presentation.

Future events will build upon this response, to explore the perceived competencies required to undertake participants' work.

### *Evaluation of the event*

An online form collected participants' feedback on the evening using three short answer questions. The raw data and analysis can be found in Appendix 1, the results of this theming are: -

#### *One thing I liked about the session.*

- 1) Makaton education and research with people with learning disabilities and autistic people.
- 2) Fascinating interactive and informative research presentation
- 3) An opportunity to network with people from a range of diverse backgrounds.

#### *One thing I'd change about the session.*

- 1) More time to discuss, practice and network with others.
- 2) Preparation, venue heating and food
- 3) Improved equity through developing a workforce pipeline.

*One thing I'll do as a result of the event.*

- 1) Use Makaton signs and symbols in education and practice.
- 2) Share learning with my services workplace and staff.

*Attendance*

This first event had a capacity of 50 places that were first advertised on 15th January, all places were taken by 20th February, a wait list was run, and communications were sent for participants to release places if they were unable to attend. 26 participants arrived for the event, and close inspection of attendance data supplied by Livio, those booking closer to the time of the event were more likely to take up their place.

It was observed that one or two more round tables could have been arranged for this event, however, more detailed data would need to be collected from participants on registration to mitigate health and safety concerns.

## Recommendations

- 1) Future events will be rotated between the Canterbury and Medway campuses across different times of the day.
- 2) Topics to include: -
  - a. Apprenticeships,
  - b. Co-Production,
  - c. Consultant Practice,
  - d. Mandatory Training.
- 3) Explore opportunities & develop a strategy across the Kent and Medway system for developing a workforce pipeline with requisite knowledge and skills for working with people with learning disabilities and autism and their families.
- 4) In December 2024 Canterbury Christ Church University will host the Kent Surrey Sussex Learning Disability Community of Practice Conference at the Medway Campus.

## References

Haynes, A., Rychetnik, L., Finegood, D., Irving, M., Freebairn, L., & Hawe, P. (2020). Applying systems thinking to knowledge mobilisation in public health. *Health research policy and systems*, 18(1), 134. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-020-00600-1>

Health and Care Act 2022

Marsden, D (2023) What are the support needs of the people you are working with currently? Available at <https://cccu.padlet.org/danielmarsden/what-are-the-support-needs-of-the-people-you-are-working-wit-99143a2u0pc4q6iv> last accessed 3rd April 2024.

## Appendix 1 K&M Learning Disability and Autism Workforce Event plan

Nature of session:	Learning Disability and Autism Workforce Development Event	Session location:	AH3.31 Terrace Room Augustine House
Length of session:	2 hours	Session date:	29 <sup>th</sup> February 2024
Number of students:	<50	Level of learners:	External audience, system leaders, providers, health, care and education
Aim of the session:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4) Establish a safe space to facilitate productive dialogue and creative collaborative action in identifying key learning disability and autism workforce challenges &amp; solutions.</li> <li>5) To enable employability of CCCU students through offering platform to share research and practice, opening event to students with a specific interest in learning disabilities and autism.</li> <li>6) Utilise a knowledge mobilisation model to support the sharing of new knowledge, research or practice and implications for the learning disabilities and autism workforce in Kent and Medway.</li> </ol>		
Intended Outcomes of the session:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Share local-based practice research in the relevant field and undertake a Makaton update.</li> <li>2) Share current University offer relating to health care and education courses.</li> <li>3) Understand the challenges of contemporary health care and education for staff working with people with autistic people and/or people with learning disability.</li> </ol>		
Learners preparation for the session:	Mail shot, with what3words and map of the building.		

Time	Teacher activity	Learner activity	Resources
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Pre event	Set up Reception, Admin desk, promotions, Catering – T&C’s – funding requested Room set up – Housekeeping emailed.		Posters?
5pm	Welcome, housekeeping and agenda for the evening		
5-05	Dean and PVC welcome – Jane Perry		
5-10	‘How can Makaton be embedded into schools and their wider communities?’ & Makaton update + time for questions		
6-10	Group work set up – Padlet with Groups set up in columns –  1) What are the support needs of the people you are working with currently? a. Have these needs or are these needs changing? b. What could/should be done differently?		<a href="https://cccu.padlet.org/danielmarsden/what-are-the-support-needs-of-the-people-you-are-working-wit-99143a2u0pc4q6iv">https://cccu.padlet.org/danielmarsden/what-are-the-support-needs-of-the-people-you-are-working-wit-99143a2u0pc4q6iv</a>  Padlet Group QR codes
6-35	Group feedback		
6-50	Conclusions & evaluation – next event 30 <sup>th</sup> May 3-5pm at Medway Campus		Evaluation

Post Event	Clear up, debrief, feedback review and theming		
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## Appendix 2 Participants contributions relating to the people and the support needs with whom they work

Theme	Evidence
<p>1) People with learning disabilities and autistic people with a range of needs including sensory impairments, expressive communication issues and mental health issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learning disabilities, but mostly mild - moderate</li> <li>• adults with learning disabilities and autism across supported living provisions</li> <li>• one Autistic Lady who was hard of hearing and who was unable to communicate verbally</li> <li>• Supporting individuals with mental health, learning disabilities and/or autism.</li> <li>• supporting a range of needs</li> <li>• learning disabilities, autism, people that are hard of hearing.</li> <li>• have high support needs</li> <li>• Not all frustration are MH we over pathologise</li> </ul>
<p>2) Education and training for staff in adjustments in communication, using signs and symbols from childhood through adulthood.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• require adjustments to the environment in order to flourish.</li> <li>• . I am really impressed with makaton</li> <li>• how this can transition from childhood to adulthood</li> <li>• I recognise that our staff need to have access to training around this topic</li> <li>• We utilised signs, symbols and pictorials to reinforce communication. It would be amazing to see more front line sectors and businesses using Makaton.</li> <li>• A great opportunity to share experiences</li> <li>• Lots to take back with me.</li> <li>• One of the best 2 hours of input in my first 6 months.</li> <li>• Higher Education - mostly training nurses, paramedics, midwives, allied health professionals, social workers</li> <li>• around sensory, language - a coproduction</li> <li>• children to older adults.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to support their ways of communicating and sharing their world</li> <li>• Being able to communicate effectively with others</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p>3) Enabling individuality and community living through understanding and working alongside.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognising individuality people are different not just a label</li> <li>• Lack of understanding ie making judgment</li> <li>• Not understand the difference between a person compression vs the communication</li> <li>• what is important to them, what is important for them and understand their starting points</li> <li>• Working alongside the young people</li> <li>• Enabling individuals to function in the community.</li> <li>• Working alongside mentors and students within local colleges and universities.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 3 Participants Evaluation Data

Themes	Individual feedback comments
<b>THEME 1: Makaton education and research with people with learning disabilities and autistic people.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about makaton</li> <li>• MAKATON INPUT</li> <li>• Lovely to see how we can get makaton in the wider community</li> <li>• Introduction to Makaton</li> <li>• The raising awareness of Ld, autism and communication</li> <li>• Great speaker who was approachable and easy listening</li> <li>• Opportunity to revise some Makaton skills; chance to learn more about the embedding of Makaton in education;</li> <li>• Research</li> </ul>
<b>THEME 2: Fascinating interactive and informative research presentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So interactive and informative</li> <li>• very informative. Great handouts</li> <li>• Learning about the research study</li> <li>• Presentation</li> <li>• Really fascinating presentation from Katie. The information was really positive and</li> <li>• Good presentation.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>THEME 3: An opportunity to network with people from a range of diverse backgrounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Meeting new people and hearing about their backgrounds</li> <li>• The diversity of the group</li> <li>• has given opportunity for my organisation to grow.</li> <li>• Networking with interesting likeminded individuals</li> <li>• The range of different professions represented.</li> <li>• A good opportunity to network, also enjoyed Katie's research.</li> <li>• networking opportunities</li> </ul>

Themes	Individual feedback comments
<b>THEME 1: More time to discuss, practice and network with others</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More time to practice skills</li> <li>• I think it's excellent but more time networking</li> <li>• Would have liked chance to know more about other participants &amp; where they work</li> <li>• Would have been good to have more discussion time</li> <li>• More time to practise and use makaton in a fun way</li> </ul>
<b>THEME 2: Preparation, venue heating and food</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snacks</li> <li>• Food &amp; more relaxed seating</li> <li>• Heating</li> <li>• A minor point really, I think the air conditioning was up a bit too cold to sit for two hours in it.</li> <li>• Clarity about what the event would involve prior to attending</li> </ul>
<b>THEME 3: Improved equity through developing a workforce pipeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More around workforce development including pipeline</li> <li>• exploring barriers/challenges and solutions for inclusivity/equity</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

Themes	Individual feedback comments
<b>THEME 1: Use Makaton signs and symbols in education and practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will be using Makaton with clients</li> <li>• practice more makaton</li> <li>• Probably sign up to makaton resource pack. Thank you for including me!</li> <li>• Use makaton more than I do already</li> <li>• Feedback information to the Makaton Charity</li> <li>• Look into Makaton</li> <li>• Practise and use symbols one a day</li> <li>• Use Makaton more in teaching and double attempts to generate a Makaton friendly environment where I work.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within school setting we are exploring BSL curriculum implementation so this had added another consideration for thought for inclusion,</li> <li>• more research into how much this is used within mainstream and if supported by Ehcp and communicators, and what this provision looks like into KS3,4 adult hood, and employment and what we need to do differently</li> </ul>
<p><b>THEME 2: Share learning with my services workplace and staff.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share event with my team</li> <li>• Training for Staff. Personal development.</li> <li>• Share with my work place</li> <li>• Move forward with slt</li> <li>• Share what I have learned about makaton</li> <li>• Reinforce makaton within our services</li> <li>• Spread the word of using Makaton</li> </ul>