

## **Zoe Clarke**

Having graduated from Cardiff University in 2001 with a first class honors degree in Integrated Engineering I was motivated to pursue a career using my engineering skills within Healthcare and so became a State Registered Clinical Scientist. The focus of my career has been on using my skills to enable individuals with severe physical disabilities to achieve independence and an improved quality of life.

I started my career as a Bioengineer in a Gait Analysis Laboratory where I developed an interest in Assistive Technology and quickly progressed my career in this specialism. Two key areas of Electronic Assistive Technology are Environmental Controls and Augmentative and Alternative Communication.

Environmental Control Systems (EC) enable people with significant physical disabilities to have more independent control over their environment, enabling them to call for assistance, control their television, phone, etc. via an alternative access method e.g. a switch or eye-gaze. Our service assesses people for EC systems.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) can be used when an individual has difficulty with spoken communication. AAC covers a range of strategies. Some AAC involves no technology, or paper and some AAC involves technology which can range from 'low' and 'light' technology to 'high tech' voice output communication aids. Our service looks at assessment for more 'high-tech' systems including looking at how people will access these.

I am now the Environmental Control Service Lead within the Barnsley Assistive Technology Team which has been commissioned by NHS England as the provider of specialised environmental control and augmentative communication services across Yorkshire and the Humber.

Throughout my career I have also undertaken research work, being involved in a number of projects and publishing in national and international journals. I have been an honorary researcher at the University of Sheffield and Deputy Theme Lead in the NIHR Healthcare Technology Co-operative 'Devices for Dignity'.

I am extremely passionate about Electronic Assistive Technology. As well as advocating for the empowering effect it can have, I also understand the importance of this technology being appropriately developed and provided in order to fit the needs of the diverse range of individuals who may potentially use it. I have a specific interest in the use of electronic assistive technology with people with learning disabilities.

I am extremely excited to have been selected for the WISE CSO Fellowship. I feel this is an amazing opportunity to develop skills, promote Assistive Technology and healthcare science in general and develop broader links across the NHS and beyond.