

PMG 2016 – INSPIRING, INFORMATIVE & THOUGHT PROVOKING

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Part of my role as Lead OT in a college for young adults with physical and learning difficulties is to provide a high level of specialist seating for the students, in conjunction with our local wheelchair service. Having returned to work in February following 12 months' maternity leave, I needed to update my knowledge of equipment, and developments in policy and practice in the field of posture and mobility. My physiotherapy colleague and I both felt that the programme at the PMG 2016 conference could support our professional development and, as we work for a charity, we applied for a bursary for one of us to attend. I was delighted to receive the email to say I had been successful. This meant a great deal to me from a professional development perspective, and also to the college from a financial perspective.

The opening address of the conference by Ade Adepitan (Paralympic ambassador, TV presenter, and wheelchair basketball champion) was truly inspirational. It was a great example of the determination and support needed for a young person with disabilities to achieve in a 'mainstream' world. It is fantastic to know that Ade is passing on his positive attitude and experiences to young disabled people as patron of *Go Kids Go*. [Illustration: Ade Adepitan talking to delegates at the *Go Kids Go* stand, PMG Conference 2016].

The balance of time for attending lectures and for exploring the equipment exhibition was excellent. The equipment stands provided a great opportunity to see and try out new products, as well as talk to the exhibitors about particular student needs. I really felt I gained up to date product knowledge which will be very useful when looking at equipment provision for the students at college in the next academic year.

In the lectures I attended, there was a focus on assistive technology and integration between wheelchairs, communication aids and environmental controls. Whilst I found the case studies were well-prepared and an excellent demonstration of this integration, the solutions provided often involved a great deal of bespoke work from technicians and engineers, meaning that the application of these solutions would be very limited at centres without access to such specialist services. On reflection however, this probably reinforces the need for further development of technologies that provide easily adaptable solutions to satisfy the needs of people with complex access issues.

One lecture particularly applicable and helpful for me was given by Michael Mandelstam, independent legal trainer. His presentation entitled *Safety, equipment, restraint: mental capacity and human rights* was very informative, and provided excellent examples of good practice when using wheelchairs such as the need to define when restraint is permissible, as well as the importance of documenting the decision-making process with regard to such issues. Michael gave information on applicable laws, including the Care Act 2014, Human Rights Act 1998 and the Mental Capacity Act. This is something I will definitely be applying to my professional practice, and including in service development and policy within my department.

I would like to thank Olwen and the team at PMG for this opportunity, and praise them on the excellent organisation of the conference.