BENJAMIN FRANKS

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Assistive technology specialist, educator and disability advocate with extensive experience supporting children, young people and adults with communication and access needs. Experienced in augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), individual and small-group support, accessible learning and collaboration with speech and language therapists (SLTs), occupational therapists (OTs), families and education teams. Seeking an SLT assistant or relevant experience opportunity, with the longer-term aim of progressing towards a speech and language therapy apprenticeship. Brings a person-centred approach, lived experience of disability, a neuroscience and psychology background, and commitment to learning through supervision and further training.

EXPERIENCE

Independent Assistive Technology Specialist | Self-employed
August 2011 - Present

- Provide person-centred AAC and assistive technology support for children, young people and adults with physical disabilities, communication needs, dyslexia/literacy difficulties and access-to-learning needs.
- Work with AAC/AT users, teachers, OTs and SLTs to improve access, independence and participation; advise families, schools, colleges, local authorities and individuals.
- Develop support plans, equipment recommendations and implementation guidance; help families, carers and staff use technology confidently and consistently.
- Contributed as an Assistive Technology Consultant to a working group involving Havering LEA and North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT). Maintain knowledge of AAC/AT, NHS and education pathways, SEND practice and disability policy.

Assistive Technology Specialist | NHS - North East London Foundation Trust
London | September 2011 - January 2016

- Worked with OTs, SLTs, educators and service teams to identify appropriate assistive technology solutions and implementation pathways.
- Prepared assessment reports summarising access needs, equipment recommendations and service considerations; evaluated AAC/AT products and translated technical options into practical recommendations.

Assistive Technology Coordinator and Teacher | Charlton School
London | January 2002 - July 2011

- Led classroom-based assistive technology support for students with complex access and communication needs, enabling participation in the curriculum.
- Taught science, ICT and humanities and acted as co-tutor for a Key Stage 4 group. Worked with staff, healthcare professionals and external vendors to resolve communication, access and technical barriers.

EDUCATION

University of Sussex | Applied Child Psychology
Academic year 2024/25 | Master's-level study: 45 credits completed

Completed credited modules in Contemporary Issues in Child Psychology (70%), Educational Psychology (53%) and Professional Assessment of Children (54%); average 59%. Study included child assessment planning, psychological case conceptualisation, developmental research methods and evidence-based intervention planning. This was master's-level study, rather than a completed master's degree.

University of Sussex | BSc (2:1), Neuroscience with Psychology
July 2020

Northbrook Further Education Centre | Diploma, Access to Health
Worthing | July 2017

ACE Centre Advisory Trust | Postgraduate Diploma, Assistive Technology
Oxford | September 2010

Institute of Education | PGCE Science course - not completed
London | 1998

Course not completed; withdrew because appropriate support and adjustments were not available. PGCE not awarded; no QTS held.

University of Sussex | BSc (Hons), Environmental Science
July 1996

Acland Burghley School | A-levels and GCSEs
London | A-levels: July 1993 | GCSEs: July 1991

A-level subjects: Biology, Chemistry and Geography. GCSE grades A-C, including English, Maths and Science.

EXPERIENCE (CONTINUED)

Assistive Technology Specialist (Communication Teacher) | Charlton School

May 2000 - April 2002

- Supported students individually and in small groups to identify effective recording, communication and curriculum access strategies.
- Worked with students and teachers to increase independence; assessed assistive technology needs and advised on devices and software, informed by emerging products.

Assistive Technology Specialist | Centre for Micro-Assisted Communication (CENMAC)

London | November 1999 - April 2002

- Supported students with physical disabilities across London to overcome barriers to recording work and accessing ICT.
- Delivered training and INSET for teachers, students and families, including government-funded access technology training for mainstream and special schools.

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Communications Officer | University of Sussex Students' Union

October 2017 - July 2021

Built and maintained relationships with student, community and stakeholder groups.

Course Representative | School of Psychology

October 2020 - June 2021

Liaised between students, academic staff and professional services, communicating concerns and feedback. Facilitated discussions and collaborated with other representatives to support outcomes.

School Governor | Linton Mead Primary School

September 2007 - July 2011

Helped shape school priorities; completed training in education and safeguarding law, served on interview panels and gave evidence at employment and disciplinary tribunals.

REFERENCES

Available on request.

RELEVANT SKILLS

- Communication and participation: AAC support, alternative access methods, communication technology and reducing barriers to learning and independence.
- Working with people: one-to-one and small-group support; adapting explanations and resources; training families, staff and professionals.
- Collaborative practice: working with SLTs, OTs, teachers and service teams; clear assessment reports and practical recommendations within assistive technology roles.
- Learning and reflection: neuroscience with psychology; master's-level child psychology study; evidence-informed practice, SEND knowledge and disability advocacy.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS AND INTERESTS

Eye-tracking and speech-to-text technology; accessible digital content and user-centred design; web development; app development for Mac, iPhone and iPad; EHCP and SEND technology advice. Research interest in ototoxicity and hearing loss.