

Bugzi loan scheme – improving accessibility and evaluation

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Summary

Early powered mobility design at MERU started 17 years ago and we have made continual service developments to improve accessibility for families. Most recently this has been in the redesign of the paperwork for the Bugzi Loan Scheme which will also influence future development and the longevity of the scheme.

Aims & Objectives

By redesigning the application, assessment and evaluation forms, we aim to improve access to the Bugzi Loan Scheme for families. Our new paperwork ensures a 1-step application for families to access the scheme. The new assessment and evaluation forms improve the quality of data held by the scheme so that we can develop our service and future-proof families' access to early powered mobility.

Background

MERU's first children's powered chair was made in 2002 and was called the 'E-Bug'. Further development followed and Bugzi was launched in 2005 for families to purchase. To improve access to early powered mobility, MERU and Queen Elizabeth Foundation (QEF) expanded the project; it was launched as a loan scheme in February 2013 to eliminate the financial barrier and, in due course, the scheme was rolled out to other centres around the UK so that families could access Bugzi closer to their own home.

We currently have seven centres who assess and provide Bugzi across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, with at least four more centres awaiting training, including a centre in Wales. Application (not referral!) to the scheme was historically via a form which needed to be printed, completed and signed by both a healthcare professional and a parent/guardian. The assessment paperwork asked some of the same questions as the application form, and the evaluation paperwork asked different questions again and had a poor rate of return.

In the redesign of the paperwork the following changes were made:

Application Form - Transfer of non-essential application questions to Assessment Form - essential information remained – body measurements; weight - compulsory nomination of a professional involved with the child - signature only by parents/guardians. Similarly-themed questions were merged.

Assessment Form - Removal of duplicate questions that were included in the Application Form - questions edited to fit both Assessment and Evaluation Forms – offering opportunity for direct comparison at the start, during and at the end of the Bugzi loan - essential loan information remained in a user-friendly format to ensure all legal aspects of loan scheme discussed at assessment.

Evaluation Form - Evaluation routine changed - 1 evaluation form used at all points of use (3 months, annually and at end of loan) - some evaluation questions same as at assessment.

By making the Application Form shorter and changing signatory requirements, we aim that a parent can complete the form in one go and not need to wait for a therapy or school appointment; likewise, a professional may complete the application and request the signature of a family member for

consent. We hope that this will mean that families are able to apply in a timelier manner. These anticipated impacts are difficult to measure; however we have had great anecdotal feedback from our collaborative partners:

The most important change for us as an organisation is the relaxation of the allied health professional (AHP) input – as early years powered mobility is brand new to Northern Ireland there is a lack of knowledge about the benefits of Bugzi and a reluctance for AHP's to sign forms, which has been a barrier to our families. (Mae Murray Foundation, Bugzi Loan Scheme Satellite Centre, Northern Ireland). We plan to use the information collected in the assessment and review forms to further evidence the effectiveness of the scheme – the proficiency of using powered mobility, progression of switch use, length of time in the chair, impact of powered mobility.

Discussion

Changes to the Application Form aim to improve accessibility to the scheme whilst also maintaining MERU's responsibility, as a third sector organisation, to uphold communication and improve awareness of interventions across services. We would like to further increase accessibility to the scheme by hosting a secure form online that families can complete. Review and end-of-loan documentation has historically had a poor rate of return. By adding a follow-up phone call at 3 months we have had a high level of good quality feedback:

Speaking to families on the telephone has meant we are able to get timely feedback from parents and to make any immediate changes early on in the loan, to enhance the children's experience of Bugzi (Jacqui Vogt, Bugzi Loan Scheme Volunteer Administrator).

The new Evaluation Form will be distributed via a personalised annual mail drop to try and increase participation in the feedback process; we would also like families to have the option of completing their evaluation securely online in the future. As MERU are in partnership with other centres to improve access to early powered mobility for children, we have worked to achieve General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance by using a secure, invitation-only, online platform to exchange documents. MERU's hope for the future is that with easier access to the application process we will increase the number of children in Bugzis and that, with better evaluation data, we can adapt and develop the Bugzi Loan Scheme to meet the changing needs of families living in the UK.

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