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Communication Aids

Communication Aids are anything that help a person to communicate with others. It could be paper based, like a letter board or it could be an electronic device, these are known as Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices. Many AAC devices are symbol based, and some are text based.

Some people use Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCA) these tend to be higher cost specialist devices dedicated to communication which may have no computer functions available. They can include the Lightwriter, the Jive, Say-it-Sam, the M3, the Springboard Lite, Vantage Lite and Vanguard etc. AbilityNet do not advise on VOCA's, but would strongly recommend contacting an appropriate organisation or supplier for an assessment, please see details at end of this factsheet.

The success of any communication aid relies on the user, the family, school and speech and language service working together. Choosing an aid needs to involve the person who uses it and those who will support it; otherwise it can just end up confusing and frustrating the person trying to communicate.

AbilityNet will advise on the use of simple static communication devices up to 8 cells as well as on computers, PDAs and mobile phones running communication software. **We may be able to offer an assessment and loan equipment for people wanting to try these devices.** We would recommend that the family, school, speech and language therapist be present at any assessment.

Our main concern is to make sure that an individual has the right device to meet their needs. However, getting the correct equipment with the correct software, mounted in the correct place, controlled with a suitable method, will rarely be more than 40% of a solution. The rest, and in our opinion, the most important part of any given solution, is the personalisation, training, and ongoing support required to enable the user to deliver the conversation they require.

Useful Organisations

Communication Matters

Communication Matters is a jumping off point for getting information on Communication Aids and how to talk to someone using a communication aid. It also focuses on the needs of people with complex communication needs, who may benefit from communication aids.

Tel: 0845 456 8211

Web: www.communicationmatters.org.uk

Find A Voice

A charity that offers help and advice on communication aids for children and adults.

Tel: 01233 640443

Web: www.findavoice.org.uk

1 voice

1 voice is a charity that promotes families supporting each other to overcome the isolation that being unable to speak can bring.

Web: <http://www.1voice.info/index.html>

SCOPE

Scope is a charity that aims to drive the changes that will make our society the first in which disabled people are able to realise their full civil liberties and human rights. They have a very detailed set of factsheets on Supporting communication through AAC.

Web: <http://www.scope.org.uk/education/aac.php>

Talking Point

Talking Point is a website setup by the charity ICAN that offers a wealth of information and support on speech and communication issues.

Web: <http://www.ican.org.uk/TalkingPoint/Home.aspx>

AAC Information and Assessment Centres (UK)

These are a good point of contact for advice on communication aids in your local area. They provide an assessment and guidance service and should also be able to refer you to a local specialist.

Web: http://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/Resources/AAC_Centres/aac_centres.html

ACE Centre (Aiding Communication in Education)

Specialises in the needs of children with physical and communication difficulties. Offer assessments and a range of other services.

ACE Centre Oxford ,
Tel: 01865 759800
Web: www.ace-centre.org.uk

ACE Centre North,
Tel: 0161 684 2333
Web: www.ace-north.org.uk

The CALL Centre (Communication Aids for Language and Learning)

Provide specialist expertise in technology for children who have speech, communication and/or writing difficulties in schools across Scotland.

Tel: 0131 651 6235
Web: www.callcentrescotland.org.uk

Electronic Communication Aid Suppliers

A useful approach is to contact the suppliers of the specialist technology.

Communication Aids	Supplier
Range of communication devices	PRI Liberator Minerva Business Park Lynch Wood Peterborough PE2 6FT Tel 0845 226 1144 Web www.pri-liberator.com/

<p>Range of communication devices</p>	<p>TOBY CHURCHILL LTD Norman Way Industrial Estate Over Cambridge CB24 5QE Tel 01954 281210 Web: www.tobychurchill.com</p>
<p>Range of communication devices</p>	<p>Quality Enabling Devices Ltd Unit D16 Heritage Business Park, Heritage Way Gosport Hampshire PO12 4BG Tel 023 9258 0600 Web www.qedonline.co.uk/catalog/index.php</p>
<p>Range of communication devices</p>	<p>Possum AAC 8 Farnbrough Close Stocklake Park Industrial Estate Aylesbury Bucks HP20 1DQ Tel 01296 461002 Web www.possum.co.uk/comm_aids.htm</p>
<p>Range of communication devices</p>	<p>Inclusive Technology Ltd Riverside Court Huddersfield Road Delph . Oldham . OL3 5FZ Tel 01457 819790 Web http://www.inclusive.co.uk/</p>

Range of communication devices	<p>Smartbox Assistive Technology Smart House 4a Court Road Malvern Worcestershire WR14 3BL Tel 01684 897753 Web www.smartboxat.com/</p>
Software for the computer to aid communication	Suppliers
Range of software	<p>Sensory Software Ltd Smart House 4a Court Road Malvern Worcestershire WR14 3BL Tel 01684 578868 Web www.sensorysoftware.com/</p>
Range of software	<p>Widgit Software Ltd 26 Queen St Cubbington Leamington Spa Warwickshire CV32 7NA Tel 01926 33680 Web www.widgit.com/index.htm</p>