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Communication Aids

Selecting the right communication aid for an individual will depend on many factors such as their method of access and personal preferences. We would always recommend that a specialist assessment should be sought through a speech & language therapist or communication aid centre.

We do not advise on standalone Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCA), but will advise on the use of a PC to support an individuals' communication needs. If a VOCA is likely to be of benefit to an individual we would strongly recommend contacting an appropriate organisation or supplier to assess your needs.

Our main concern is to make sure that an individual has the right device to meet their needs. However, please be aware that 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.

What is a Communication Aid?

A communication aid is anything that helps an individual communicate more effectively with those around them. This could range from a simple letter board to a more sophisticated piece of electronic equipment.

It is not essential for the user to be able to read text in order to use a communication aid. Many aids are symbol based and still provide full functionality in order to communicate with others.

An electronic communication aid can be a device that has been purposely built for that job, and does nothing else, or a standard computer running specialist communication aid software with the added benefit of being a computer as well. AbilityNet may be involved when the method of communication is based around a standard computer.

Useful Organisations

Communication Aid Centres

These should be your first point of contact for advice on communication aids. They are generally Health Service based. They provide an assessment and guidance service and should also be able to refer you to a local specialist.

A list of communication aid centres is available from Communication Matters.

ACE Centre (Aiding Communication in Education)

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

ACE Centre, 92 Windmill Road
Headington, Oxford OX3 7DR
Tel: 01865 759800
Web: www.ace-centre.org.uk

ACE Centre North, Units 11 & 12
Gatehead Business Park
Delph New Road, Delph
Saddleworth OL3 5DE
Tel: 01457 829444
Web: www.ace-north.org.uk

Communication Matters

Focuses on the needs of people with complex communication needs who may benefit from communication aids.

Communication Matters
c/o The ACE Centre, 92 Windmill Road, Headington, Oxford OX3 7DR
Tel: 0845 456 8211
Web: www.communicationmatters.org.uk

Communication Aids for Language and Learning (CALL)

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

Communication Aids for Language and Learning (CALL)
University of Edinburgh, Paterson's Land, Holyrood Road, Edinburgh EH8 8AQ
Tel: 0131 651 6235/6236
Web: www.callcentrescotland.org.uk

Find A Voice

Charity that offer help and advice about communication aids.

Find a Voice
49 Beaver Lane, Ashford, Kent TN23 5NU
Tel: 01233 640443
Web: www.findavoice.org.uk

Electronic Communication Aid Suppliers

A useful approach is to contact the suppliers of the specialist technology. The addresses for these suppliers are in our Suppliers factsheet.

Product	Supplier
The Grid and Windbag	Sensory Software
Range of products	Liberator
Lightwriter	Toby Churchill
Range of products	Prentke Romich International
Range of products	QED
Range of products	Cambridge Adaptive Communication

* Messages charged at standard rate. You will receive two confirmation messages charged at £1.50 each. AbilityNet will receive your donation net of charges applied by mobile network

operators and a processing fee. If you have any questions regarding this service, please call 020 7549 2222.