

## **GUIDANCE**

<https://communicationmatters.org.uk/what-is-aac/guidance/>

This is guidance for people who work with someone who uses a **communication aid**.

A **communication aid** is an **AAC** system or device used by people who have difficulties with speech.

**AAC** is used to mean many different ways to help someone communicate. It could be simple things like pointing, signing, writing or drawing. It could also be using a special device like a machine that 'speaks' words for you.

### **Guidance for hospital staff**

The communication aid is an important piece of equipment and it belongs to the person.

They need to be able to access it.

Do not lock the communication device away for "safe keeping".

Make sure the it does not get lost or stolen.

You should:

- Check the equipment has the person's name on it

- Tell the person in charge of the ward about the communication aid
- Check who is responsible for the aid if it is being charged overnight

If the communication aid is not working properly you should contact the family or carer or the Speech and Language Therapy Department.

## **Communicating with someone using a communication aid**

You don't need to know how the aid works, but you do need to listen to what the person is saying with the aid.

Some communication aids speak with an electronic, computerised voice.

Don't be afraid to say that you can't understand the electronic voice. It can take time to get used to it.

It is OK to:

- Ask the person to repeat what they said
- Ask them if you can read the text on the screen

## **Guidance for Healthcare Staff**

Here are some tips that will help healthcare staff communicate better with people who use an AAC system:

- Give them a double appointment. They need more time and will be more relaxed
- Wait for them to reply to the first question before asking the next one
- Look at the person
- Speak to the person, not the support worker
- Don't pretend to understand if you don't
- Speak in short, clear sentences and don't use jargon

## **If you can't understand what the person is trying to say**

If the person has no speech you could:

- Ask questions that can be answered with a 'Yes' or 'No'
- Ask them how they tell you: 'Yes' and 'No'
- Ask them "Show me how you say 'Yes', Show me how you say 'No'"

- Ask them if they have any other way to help them communicate

If the person can write, offer them pen and paper.

If they can spell, but they can't write, write the alphabet on some paper and ask them to point to the letters.

If they have a communication aid, encourage them to use it.

If the person is trying to tell you something but you can't understand try these 3 questions...

1. Who are we talking about?
2. Where are we talking about?
3. When are we talking about?

## **Communicating without technology**

It is possible to communicate with people who have no speech and don't have a communication aid. You have to be a good listener.

If you get to know the person you will realise that every movement and every sound has a meaning. It will take time and patience to understand what these mean.

Firstly it is important to find out what they do for 'Yes' and 'No'.

Some people use signs and gestures to try to communicate with you.

Some people use objects to communicate. Pointing to objects can be a good way to communicate.

Some people use photographs to communicate.

It is important that people have whatever they need for communication close by them at all times.