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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.

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,
Hollinwood Business Centre
Albert Street
Hollinwood
Oldham OL8 3QL
Tel: 0161 684 2333
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

The CALL Centre (Communication Aids for Language and Learning)

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

The CALL Centre
University of Edinburgh, Paterson's Land, Holyrood Road, Edinburgh EH8 8AQ
Tel: 0131 651 6235
Web: www.callcentrescotland.org.uk

Find A Voice

Charity that offer help and advice about communication aids for children and adults.

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.

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/
Range of communication devices	TOBY CHURCHILL LTD Norman Way Industrial Estate Over Cambridge CB24 5QE Tel 01954 281210 Web: www.tobychurchill.com
Range of communication devices	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
Range of communication devices	Possum AAC 8 Farmbrough Close Stocklake Park Industrial Estate Aylesbury Bucks HP20 1DQ Tel 01296 461002 Web www.possum.co.uk/comm_aids.htm
Range of communication devices	Smartbox Assistive Technology Smart House 4a Court Road Malvern Worcestershire WR14 3BL Tel 01684 897753 Web www.smartboxat.com/

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