

# Communication Aid Equipment Provision by Specialised AAC Services

*This document sets out the interpretation of the service specification (D01/S/b) by the Northern region (NE, NW and Y&H) specialised services as it relates to equipment provision. This document should be read in conjunction with the NHS England service specification.*

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**Status: Agreed as working draft by northern specialised AAC services.**

**To adopt from: 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015**

## AAC Equipment Provision Criteria

- 1. Provided by local services (commissioned by local commissioners - CCGs / local joint commissioning bodies):**
  - a. all low tech communication aids,
  - b. all non specialised communication aids, including all communication aids that require message formulation by spelling and through direct access (i.e. finger pointing) with the device.
- 2. Provided by specialised services (commissioned by NHS England):**
  - a. all other specialised, high tech, communication aids.

Where a person is assessed by a specialised service and the outcome is a non specialised device, this will be provided by the local service.

The following definitions have been developed to guide provision decisions. These definitions will be reviewed in case review meetings between co-operating services on a quarterly basis. This process will ensure consistent interpretation and will result in refinement on the definition and a clear equipment list.

### Low Tech Communication Aids

Are those devices that do not require power to operate (e.g. paper based).

### Non Specialised Communication Aids

Are those that are used for a limited range of communication functions. These devices are often termed 'light tech' and generally include some or all of the following features: they are used to produce a relatively small number of utterances; are used to produce only single-concept utterances; have overlays or physical interfaces; are battery powered; use recorded speech. Non specialised devices also include those devices that require message formulation by spelling and through direct access (i.e. finger pointing) with the device.

### Specialised Communication Aids

Are those devices that are intended for use for an individual with a severe speech impairment to achieve an extensive range of expressive communication. These devices may also be referred to as 'high tech' and 'powered' communication aids. These devices tend to include some or all of the

following features: use language packages within AAC software; allow for an extensive range of communication functions; use multiple pages of vocabulary and linguistic concepts which could not be replicated in other ways; use synthesised speech; are mains powered or charged; are based on a computer platform.

Specialised communication aids may be based on mainstream technology such as tablet computers or more dedicated hardware. They will include specialist AAC software, structured vocabularies, language packages or language systems loaded into the software and accessories (such as access methods, speakers etc.).

All communication aids provided will be locked by default to use only the communication functionality, unless there is clear justification for the use with other functions and there are resources in place to support these functions.

## **Equipment Provision During Service Convergence (Transition)**

Whilst specialised and local service provision is in transition to the new commissioning and provision model, specialised services may provide other communication aids on short or long term loan, if local services are not currently in place and/or budgets and/or custom and practice are not in place to be able to provide this. In these cases local commissioners will be contacted in order to identify the anticipated future need for this provision.