

Royal Hospital for
Neuro-disability



Compass specialised AAC Service

Who are Compass?

Compass are the specialised service for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) in West London for adults who have difficulty communicating using speech. Our team includes Engineers, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists and Technicians.

What is Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)?

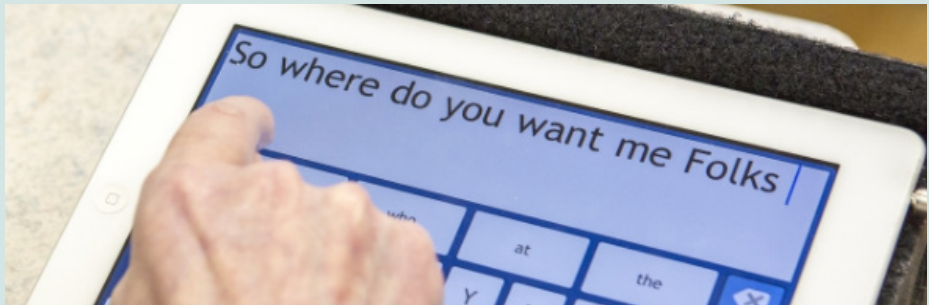
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is a term used to describe devices or systems that help people to communicate if they have difficulty speaking. There are different types of systems that can be used.

Low-tech AAC refers to paper-based systems like an alphabet chart or using a pen and paper to write messages. High-tech AAC systems, such as the one in the picture on the *right*, refer to computerised devices. Even if you use a high-tech system, having a low tech system is important. For example, having a paper chart can be easier and quicker to transport, use in different locations and during hospital admissions.



How does high-tech AAC work?

Communication devices can enable you to type messages on a keyboard or select stored phrases which the computer then speaks out loud. There are lots of different voices to choose from. For people that have difficulty with reading and spelling, pictures can be used to support their language needs.



How will it help me?

When used successfully, AAC can help you to express yourself and communicate with others. For example, you can use it to chat to your family, tell carers what you need, ask questions and use it at medical appointments.

How can I use a device if I can't type using my hands?



There are lots of different ways to control the equipment using whatever reliable and consistent movements you may have. These can include using switches, joysticks, or using your head or eyes to select items on the screen.

Where and when can I use AAC?

We aim to set up a device so that you can use it wherever and whenever you need to. We may attach the device to your wheelchair, a desk stand or a floor stand depending on your individual needs.



Do I need to be good with technology to use high tech AAC?

No, we will provide you with all the training you need to use the equipment provided. Learning to use any new system requires time, practice and commitment from you.



What will my family/friends/carers need to do?

The people in your life, such as family and carers, play a very important role. They will need to adapt to you using the device and be patient when you are typing messages, and help you to practise using it. They can also help with setting up the device, charging it and reporting any technical issues. We work closely with you and your family/carers to ensure you have all the training you need to use your device.

What happens during an assessment?

- We try to see you, either at home or in a community setting, or remotely, such as on Zoom, within 6 weeks of receiving your referral.
- Each of our visits last about 1 hour and we may need to see you again to complete our assessment.
- We may try different pieces of equipment with you to get an idea of what meets your needs.
- We work with you, the people who know you and your local speech and language therapist/

occupational therapist to set goals with you. We recommend a system for you, and then pass your care back to your local professionals to support you to use this system in your daily life.

When can I get a device?

When you are referred to Compass, we will screen the referral to make sure you are eligible for our service. If we accept the referral, we will aim to complete our assessment with you within 6 weeks, but hopefully sooner. We will arrange for the equipment to be with you as soon as possible if it is felt suitable for you to trial it. You will need to practice using the device regularly in your everyday life during this trial period. If the trial is successful and is aiding your communication, you can keep the device for as long as you need it. Once we have recommended, and provided you with, a system, we pass your care back to your local professionals to support you with using it.



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