

Assessing for AAC and referring on to a Specialised Service: A guide for Speech & Language Therapists

Purpose of this document

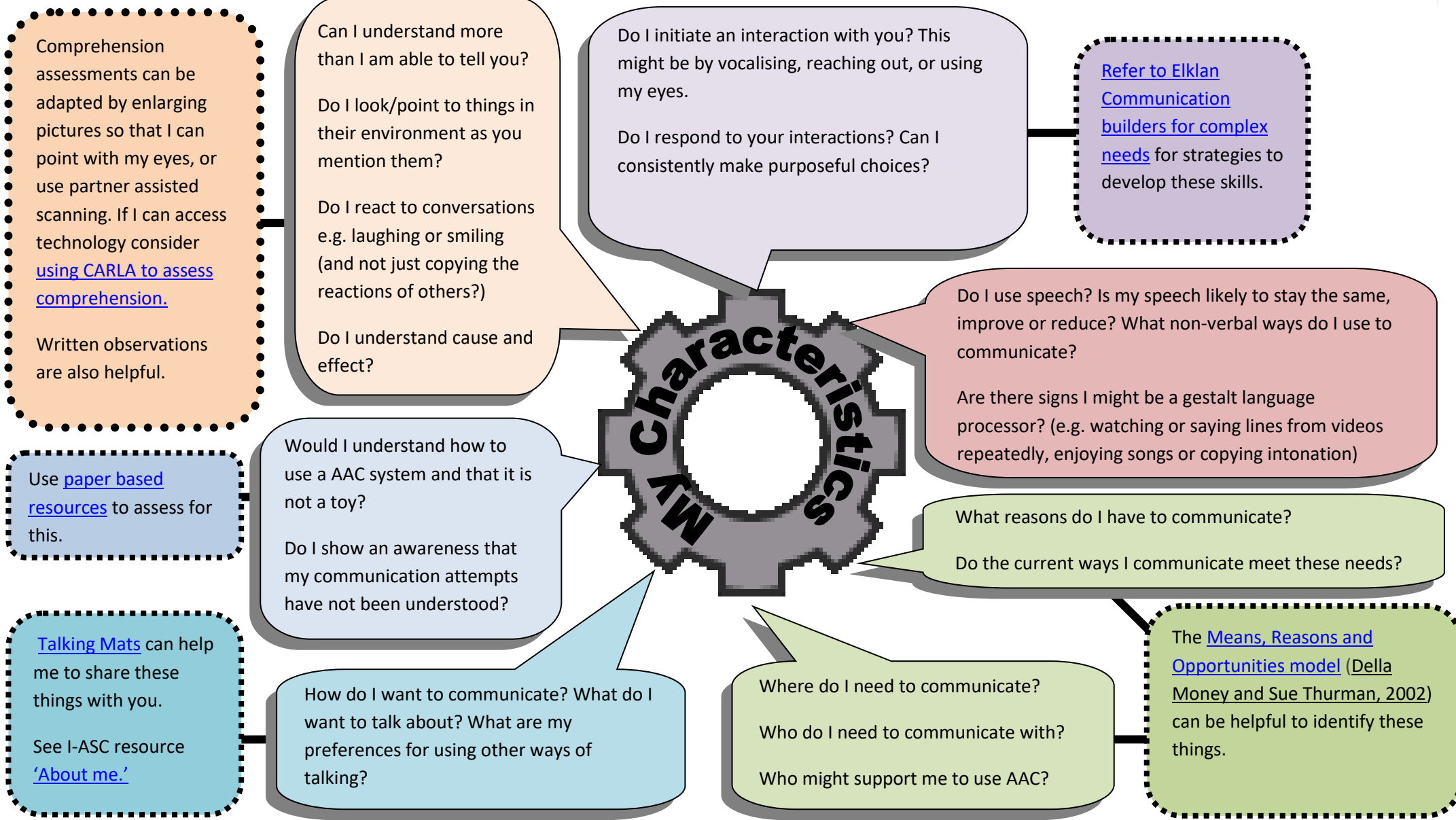
Knowing who might benefit from AAC, how to assess, and where to look for support can be tricky. This guide aims to:

- a) Outline the **key areas to consider as part of an AAC assessment**.
- b) Suggest **resources** that may support an AAC assessment.
- c) Identify **when** it would be appropriate to refer to a Specialised AAC service (in Yorkshire and Humber, this is the [Barnsley Assistive Technology Team](#))
- d) Identify **what the goals** of an AAC assessment might be.

This document has been developed with reference to the **I-ASC** Explanatory Model of Decision making.

Refer to the I-ASC website for more support and resources:
<https://iasc.mmu.ac.uk/>

This document is not intended to be part of the referral to a Specialised AAC Service but more as a guide to the information you will need to gather before considering a referral. You may of course include this completed document with your referral should you wish but the resources and assessments suggested in this guide would be a better place to fully record evidence you collect as part of the AAC assessment.





The [Eye Pointing Classification Scale](#) offers guidance on measuring progress and setting goals for eye pointing.

Could I use my eyes? Remember- eye pointing for communication is a very specific skill and different to using your eyes for vision.

Do I have any vision or hearing problems? Do I need to wear glasses or hearing aids? Can I see all areas of a page or screen?

Could I use a switch? To do this I need to be able to comfortably and consistently make a movement when I want to.

Remember, I might use any body part to operate a switch, such as my foot, knee, elbow, chin or nose!

The [Seven Stages of Switch development](#) can help progress these skills.

The [Switch Access to technology guide](#) can help with assessment and implementation.

The Ace Centre '[getting started with paper-based symbol resources](#)' offers advice on how to use partner assisted scanning.

Can I tell you 'yes?' If so then I could use partner assisted scanning to access a paper communication system.

Can I use my hands? Remember- this doesn't have to be 'pointing' with a finger, a person may use a fist, an elbow, a whole hand.

Consider enlarging pictures or words, spacing them apart, or using accessibility settings if you are using touch-screen technology.

Try these formal assessments (adapt them for me if I need this):

PALPA: Psycholinguistic Assessments of Language Processing in Aphasia (Janice Kay, Max Coltheart, and Ruth Lesser)

Frenchay AAC Screen

TASP: Test of Aided Communication Symbol Performance

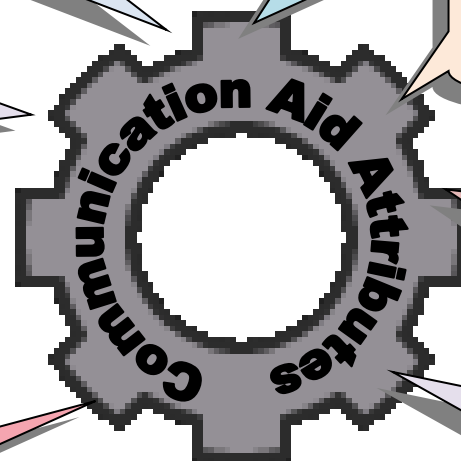
What are my literacy skills? Can I read? Can I spell?
Can I recognise initial letters?
Could I use predictive text?

Do I understand symbols?
Am I exposed to symbols in my environment?

To support direct touch assess to tablets, refer to

[Apple accessibility settings](#)

[Android accessibility settings](#)



If a voice output communication aid is being considered, what voice would I like? Would it be important for me to have a regional accent? If I had spoken language or still have it, have I banked my voice to use with a communication aid?

How durable does my AAC system need to be? Am I likely to throw it or drop it often? Are there other people in my environment who might be able to do this? If I dribble a lot I may benefit from something waterproof!

Does my AAC system need to be mounted to my wheelchair? How many wheelchairs? Do I use a standing frame?

Have the people supporting me already used AAC and do they have a preferred choice of hardware, software or vocabulary?

If a voice output communication aid is being considered, does it need to have a long battery life, or will I have opportunities to re-charge it throughout the day?

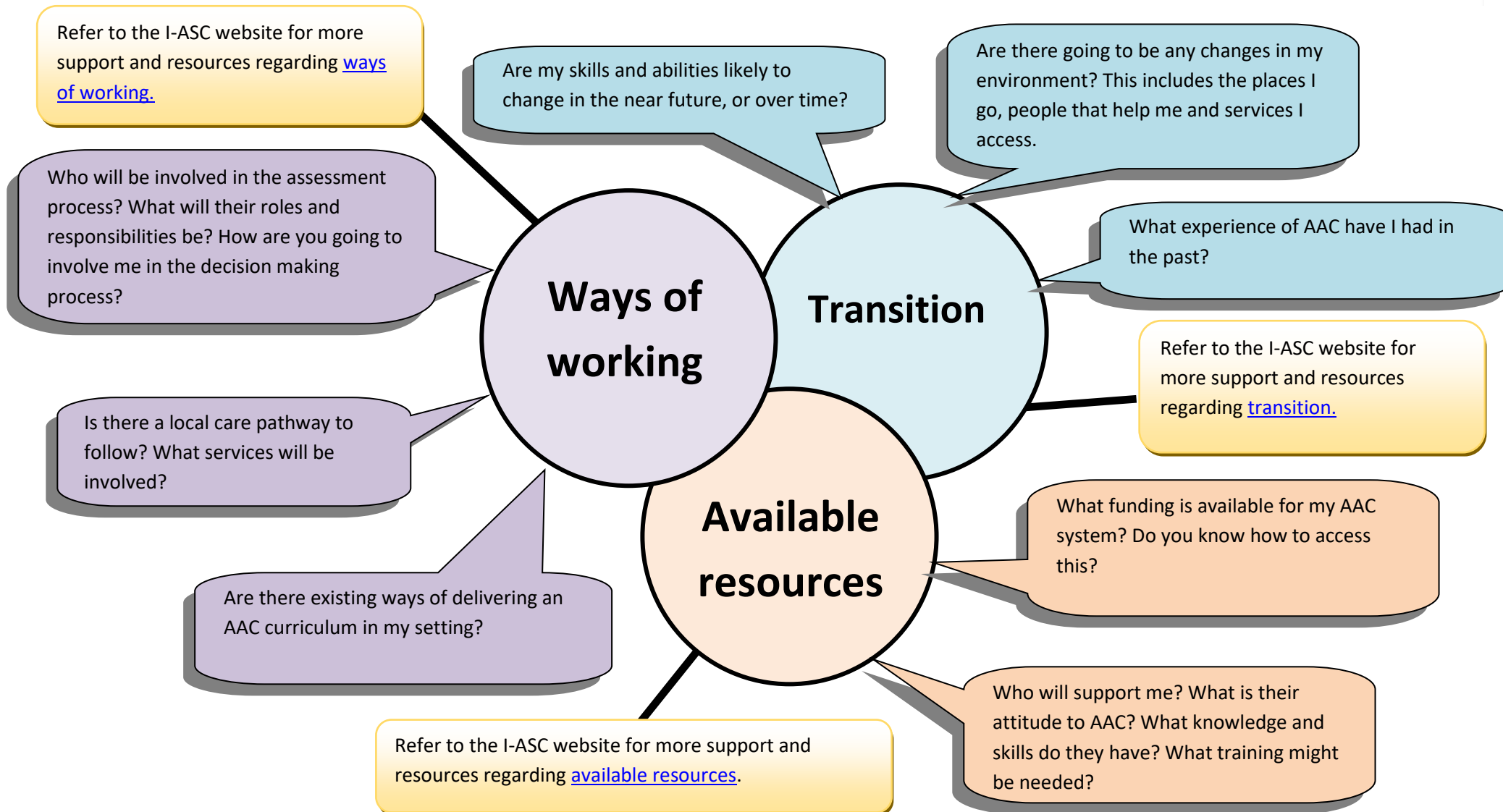
Will I want to carry my AAC system myself? If so, a bag or a case might be needed.

How should my vocabulary be organised? Do I show a preference for phrases (gestalt language processing) or am I joining single words together? (analytical processing) Do I understand categories? Do I need lots of fringe words?

Do I need to use symbols, words, phrases or a mixture?

You could use the [I-ASC Mind map and Spidergram resources](#) to help record the answers to these questions and [the I-ASC Pre-assessment reflective cycle](#) to check you have covered everything.

Please also refer to the I-ASC website for further resources regarding [communication aid attributes](#).



Can I access AAC in a reliable, accurate and efficient way? If not, I need support to find and practice an **access method**.



Can I tell you everything I want to? If not, I need support to **develop the vocabulary** in my AAC system and practice using it.

The Barnsley Assistive Technology Team can support you with a complex AAC assessment and meeting the communication goals of an individual. If we recommend a specialised communication aid, we will provide this. An individual who would access a specialised AAC service would have both of the following:

- a severe/complex communication difficulty associated with a range of physical, cognitive, learning, or sensory deficits;
- a clear discrepancy between their level of understanding and ability to speak.

In addition, an individual must:

- be able to understand the purpose of a communication aid;
- have developed beyond cause and effect understanding; and may:
- have experience of using low tech AAC which is insufficient to enable them to realise their communicative potential

For advice or information about how to make a referral, please visit our website:

www.barnsleyhospital.nhs.uk/assistive-technology/contact-assistive-technology/referrals/

Name:

DOB:

Date:

AAC Assessment notes

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Name:

DOB:

Date:

My characteristics

Use this space to make notes about my learning and communication skills:

What are my goals? What can you do to support me?

Name:

DOB:

Date:

My Access Skills

Use this space to make notes about how I can or might access a communication system:

What are my goals? What can you do to support me?

Name:

DOB:

Date:

My means, reasons and opportunities for communicating

Use this space to make notes about how I am currently communicating and how this is supported:

What are my goals? What can you do to support me?

Name:

DOB:

Date:

My AAC System Attributes

Use this space to make notes about what is important about the design of my AAC system:

Is there anything else you need to find out about?