



# **New Siblands Total Communication Procedure**

## **Our Vision**

Achieving More Together

## **Our Mission**

Working together passionately to achieve the best outcomes for our SEND children and young people

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# Policy

## 1. Policy Statement

New Siblands School is committed to ensuring all children and young people with complex communication needs will have access to and use a Total Communication System that is functional and practical for their individual needs, within school, home, and community environments.

At New Siblands School (part of the Enable Trust) we believe that communication is the foundation of all learning.

Our ultimate vision for all children and young people is that they will establish a system of communication (Expressive and Receptive) in whatever form is appropriate for each individual. The method of communication can take many forms and can include one or a combination of the following.

Communication can be defined as a meaningful interaction between 2 or more individuals to request, resisting, choose, comment, ask questions, and develop social relationships.

## 2. What is total communication?

Total communication involves any means of communicating. Children and young people with speech & language difficulties or more complex special needs may need support to initiate and take part in communication and interaction. This means making use of all the ways of communication that are available to the children and young people.

This may include:

- Natural gestures
- Pointing
- Body language
- Facial expression
- Eye contact
- Vocalisations
- Intensive Interaction
- Musical Interaction
- Makaton Signing/BSL
- Objects Of Reference
- Photographs
- Pictures
- Picture Symbols (Widgit/PCS)

- Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCA)
- Eye Gaze system
- Speech & Spoken language.
- Writing

### **3. AAC**

#### **ALTERNATIVE AND AUGMENTATION COMMUNICATION (AAC)**

##### **What is AAC?**

AAC refers to the use of objects, symbols, communication boards, photographs, signing and electronic aids to help a child or young person to communicate. These are used by children and young people when they have difficulties with producing or understanding spoken or written language. Different children and young people can benefit from different levels of AAC, and this may alter as they get older or their language changes.

##### **Why use AAC?**

AAC may be used for a variety of reasons.

- As a bridge or stopgap to help the child or young person communicate whilst their speech and language skills are developing.
- To help the child or young person make sense of spoken language.
- To supplement their spoken skills, to be used alongside speech to help the child or young person make themselves understood.
- As an alternative means of communication, because of the nature of their difficulties, some children and young people are always likely to struggle with spoken communication. AAC can give them a voice and therefore some control over their environment.
- As a tool to develop language skills, to give the child or young person the experience of building their language skills, such as forming sentences when they can only produce sounds or single words themselves.

##### **Different types of AAC.**

Low tech:

- Signing eg: Makaton, BSL
- Communication boards
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- E-Tran frame

- Switches – BigMac  
(All the above involve using photographs, pictures, symbols)

#### High Tech:

- Voice Output Communication Aids with Grid 3 software. This can be on an iPad, Grid pad or windows-based systems.
- Eye gaze systems with VOCO chat software or Grid 3 software.
- Grid Player downloaded onto an iPad.
- Voice Output Communication Aid (VOCA)

VOCA is a communication system (usually computer based) where children can select a variety of symbols and photos to create functional requests to communicate within their environment. Access to this system requires some level of sentence construction and an awareness of categorisation.



- Makaton (Signing)

Makaton is a hand-based system where children learn to develop motor patterns or signs with their hands to communicate different activities/objects/requests and curriculum core language. Makaton is used as a visual and kinaesthetic support to aid the development of the spoken word and as a means of communicating everyday needs and wants. Some children or young people develop individual signs which are reliant on familiar adult interpretation and some others also start to relate their needs and feelings to gestures, which is helpful. Makaton is often a very useful back up to system based AAC. But being understood is one part of the issue and Makaton really helps children and young people to understand their peers as it is a 'group' activity and encourages children and young people to communicate with each other.



- Spoken Language

Some children and young people use spoken language to communicate their wants and needs. We initially focus on labelling single words through play and modelling from a supporting adult. When children and young people can label single words spontaneously, we model adding information such as if they say 'ball' the adult responds saying 'red ball'. Early communication skills are an everyday activity that must be part of their everyday experiences and cannot be taught in isolation.

Spoken language is heavily reliant on cognition and the social desire to communicate.



- Objects of Reference

For children and young people who are working with objects, an object of reference can help cue them into an activity. I.e: showing a cup for drink. It is important that objects are accessible and available at each point of transition across the day and familiar to the child or young person.



- Photographs

Photographs of the item or activity that the child or young person is accessing or transitioning to are the next step: real but 2D. In the visual hierarchy, photographs are harder to understand than objects but are potentially, easier to transition within a working environment. Once a child or young person can access photographs to help support their understanding, you should be able to transition over to photographs easily by just swapping out their Object of Reference for photographs.



- Attention Autism

Attention Autism is an intervention approach by Speech and Language Therapist Gina Davies which aims to work on the early fundamentals of language including awareness of others, attention, listening, shared attention, switching attention and turn-taking.



- Intensive Interaction

This is a pre-verbal approach that serves to help support children and young people to engage with a supporting adult or peer in order to develop their communication skills. By copying the actions or vocalisations of a child or young person we can help support them to develop the ideas that communication can influence interaction with our environment.



- Musical Interaction

Musical Interaction is an approach in which music and props are used to engage children through fun, familiar experiences, and song. It enables children to express their emotions and their personality through musical play whilst also developing fundamental social and communication skills.



- Communication boards

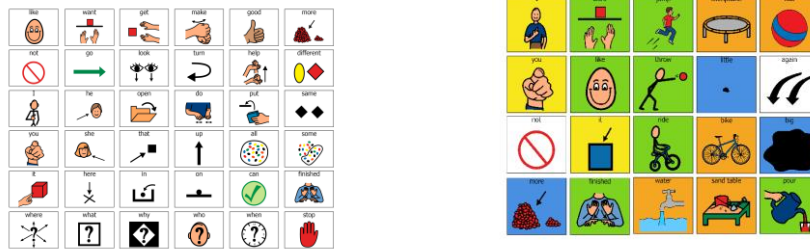
Communication boards are used for children/young people who have delayed language or very limited verbal skills. They are used to help develop their vocabulary and the development of sentence structures.

Our communication boards originated from boards online by Smartbox which is a communication software company. These boards have been adapted for children/young people in a variety of ways from simple to more complex boards.

Communication boards are a symbol-based core vocabulary system to help children/young people experience success with communication.

The boards can be used for requesting, commenting, labelling, asking, and responding to questions. I.e: 'I want banana', 'It's a banana', 'do you like banana'. Not all words will be on the simplified boards, but the adult modelling can point to a symbol and add in the word for example with the 'do you like banana' there may be symbols for you, like, banana. The adult can say 'do you' whilst pointing to the 'you' symbol.

It's important that the adults also use the board for modelling and extending sentence length by adding language, this helps the children/young people know how to use the boards.



- **Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)**

This is a symbol or photo-based system where children with social communication difficulties will learn to include others in their requests. PECS helps to teach children and young people to exchange a photo/symbol for a motivating object (phase 1). The 6 phases focus on acquiring a hierarchy of skills including, travelling with a picture to a communication partner (phase 2). Picture discrimination, choosing between a selection of photos/symbols (phase 3) and sentence constructions (phase 4) i.e. 'I want' plus picture for desired object.



#### 4. The role of the Speech and Language Therapist

- To work closely with school staff to promote the optimum environment for developing speech, language, and communication.
- To introduce, develop and maintain AAC systems for individuals as appropriate.
- To provide a monitoring system to ensure the quality of the work and provide appropriate and effective support.
- Discuss and set targets with teachers.
- To provide students with assessments where necessary.
- To input to Annual Reviews/Transition Plans where necessary.
- To plan and deliver appropriate therapy.



- To provide advice, information, and training as appropriate to staff, parents, and carers.
- S&LT to support CPD of Teaching staff in order to meet pupil needs.

## **5. The role of school staff**

- To make sure that Teir 1 of the S&LT Model is embedded in the curriculum and class environment.
- Access to a specialist language rich curriculum where S&LT is regularly involved in planning and review.
- S&L pedagogical techniques embedded in curriculum.
- Ability to seek advice about any initial language concerns, implementation of communication strategies and any additional CPD.
- Communication strategies implemented by class team in the classroom.
- Functional communication system in place and implemented consistently the classroom.
- Visuals – Eg: Class timetables, individual timetables, Now/Next boards. These are to be used consistently throughout the day including removal of the relevant symbol when the activity has finished.
- Communication boards – A range of communication boards must be available within the classroom and a range of activities. The adults must model using the communication boards with students.
- Use of makaton
- Objects of reference used in classes where appropriate.

## 6. Essential training for school staff

- Speech & Language Development.
- Introduction to Makaton.
- Use of AAC – Communication boards, PECS, Visuals
- Modelling using AAC.

Free training available:

School Videos:

- PECS -Phase 1- [https://youtu.be/C\\_y3UOpdgpk](https://youtu.be/C_y3UOpdgpk)
- PECS – Phase 2- <https://youtu.be/Yv22n5fQvFM>
- PECS - Phase 3- <https://youtu.be/2oK9aiQmhb4>
- PECS- Phase 4- <https://youtu.be/kAonxoLsQ6g>
- Communication Boards- <https://youtu.be/-a42pkLqeHA>
- E Trans Frame- <https://youtu.be/roahkwAioIE>
- Musical Interaction- <https://youtu.be/Cu53KobpwQw>

AAC West:

- Introduction on modelling AAC
- Core and Fringe Vocabulary
- Communication partner training
- Software training (Grid 3 & Grid for iPad) (for staff with children and young people in their class who are using VOCA's)

To access the training go to [ww.nbt.nhs.uk/aacwest](http://ww.nbt.nhs.uk/aacwest). The password is always 'AAC Training' (case sensitive and includes a space)

Smartbox

[www.thinksmartbox.com](http://www.thinksmartbox.com)

There is a selection of free webinars under the support and resources tab, then click on smartbox training.

Eg: Grid for iPad, AAC Implementation.

## Appendix A – S&LT Model

### SALT Model

#### What each Tier will look like?

##### Tier 4

Referral to specialist SALT for highly specialised support (outside SaLT Team's experience)

##### Tier 3

*Direct input from SALT*

AAC West pathway & referral (observations, initial assessment, trialling equipment – potentially a term's worth)

Weekly 1:1 as detailed

Blocks of therapy

Assessment and report – next steps, EHCP or provision

Review and advice (tier change)

Modelling/setting up new strategies in class – modelling by SALT to staff

TAC Meeting with parents

MDT involvement

Dysphagia assessment and support including sensory feeding

##### Tier 2

*Input from SALT team with oversight from SALT*

Support for children with established high tech communication systems including programming  
Highly trained Assistants, support assistants running 1:1 and small group sessions programmes overseen and reviewed by SALT. Pupils have SALT targets (EHCP linked) and reports written if needs change significantly.

Whole class work – e.g. vocab, word aware, attention autism (Class Teacher/Specialist TA led)

Pupils remain on SALT Caseload in this tier

##### Tier 1

*Needs met by whole class communication approach*

*Class team led with input from SALT team*

*Children not on SaLT caseload in this tier*

SALT in class modelling/leading session (after initial training and maintenance of programmes)

Visuals, communication systems (low tech visual communication system)

Good classroom practice including Communication Friendly Classrooms and inclusive approaches to support communication and regulation

CPD – training and review of staff team in line with audit outcomes

Curriculum review and development

Communication focus embedded across the curriculum to include all learners

## Appendix B – How to use communication boards

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### COMMUNICATION BOARDS

Communication boards are used for children/young people who have delayed language or very limited verbal skills. They are used to help develop their vocabulary and the development of sentence structures.

Communication boards originated from boards online by Smartbox which is a communication software company. These boards have been adapted for our children/young people in a variety of ways from simple to more complex boards.

Video demonstration is available online, the link has been sent to all staff but if you require it again, please ask.

Core boards are a symbol-based core vocabulary system to help children/young people experience success with communication.

The boards can be used for requesting, commenting, labelling, asking, and responding to questions. I.e: 'I want banana', 'It's a banana', 'do you like banana'. Not all words will be on the simplified boards, but the adult modelling can point to a symbol and add in the word for example with the 'do you like banana' there may be symbols for you, like, banana. The adult can say 'do you' whilst pointing to the 'you' symbol.

It's important that the adults also use the board for modelling and extending sentence length by adding language, this helps the children/young people know how to use the boards.

Core vocabulary should be I, want, more, finished, you, help, like, not. The core vocabulary stays the same on each page on the left-hand side. All other vocabulary can be in any position on the right-hand side. You do not need to put all the verbs, adjectives together. Symbols need to be random to encourage the child/young person to look and navigate rather than learning a sequence when using the boards.

It's important that the background of each cell colour is as follows:

**Yellow** = Pronouns such as I, me, you, etc

**Green** = Verbs/Action words such as want, run, blow, finished

**Orange** = Nouns/names of objects such as bubbles, balloon, plate, cup etc

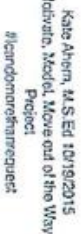
**Blue** = Adjectives/concepts such as big, little, wet, dry, more, etc

**White** = Numbers, colours, prepositions, emotions, small connective words

**Purple** = Wh question words.



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# Simple AAC

**S**how



Point to symbols as you talk  
This SHOWS the learner what to do and models language for them. It's okay to make mistakes and you don't have to point to every single word - just the important ones!

**I**nteresting



Remember to keep things fun!  
Relate your teaching to the AAC learner's favourite things to keep them INTERESTED. We all learn more when we are interested and motivated!

**M**onths and months



Learning AAC takes time  
Some learners will need MONTHS of modelling, to see and hear their AAC being used, before they are ready to start using it themselves. This is okay!

**P**ause



Give learners lots of time  
Learners might need longer to process what you say and respond. A PAUSE also shows it's their turn to talk. It can help to count to ten in your head to make sure you pause for long enough!

**L**anguage



Teach different types of words  
Try to remember all the reasons we use LANGUAGE. It's not just to ask for things! So model a range of words and how to use them - to comment, protest, ask questions and more!

**E**xplore



Give learners time to explore  
Allowing learners to 'play' with their device is okay! In fact, it's really important that we give learners time to EXPLORE their AAC and see what it can do.

**A**lways available



Make sure AAC is available  
AAC users need access to language all of the time! This can be a high tech device, or a low tech communication book. But if they don't ALWAYS have their AAC - they can't learn to use it!

**A**dd words





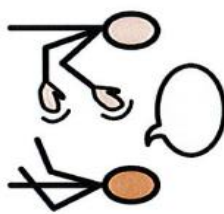


Add new words as you teach  
Once a learner begins to use their AAC, support their language development by ADDING WORDS to what they say. If they say one word, repeat it back and add another word.

**C**omment



Swap questions for comments  
Questions can be testing, not teaching. So instead of asking questions we know the answer to, say the answer instead, or just COMMENT on what is happening.

[thinkSmartbox.com](http://thinkSmartbox.com)

<p>To be given real choices</p> 	<p>To say no, refuse and reject choices</p> 	<p>To ask for what I want</p> 	<p>To share my feelings</p> 	<p>To be heard and responded to (even if the answer is no)</p> 
<p>To ask for and get attention and interaction</p> 	<p>I have the right to communicate</p> 			<p>To have and use my speech system at all times</p> 
<p>To ask &amp; know about my schedule/world</p> 				<p>To be taught how to communicate</p> 
<p>To have my speech system in working order and have a back up</p> 	<p>To be a full and equal member of my community</p> 	<p>To be treated with dignity and respect</p> 	<p>To be spoken with/not about</p> 	<p>To be communicated with in a sensitive manner</p> 



# DO'S AND DON'TS OF AAC



## THIS IS WHAT WE DO

- ✓ Aim high
- ✓ Use a well designed, comprehensive vocabulary (e.g. core vocabulary or PODD)
- ✓ Make sure AAC is available all day, every day
- ✓ Respect multimodal communication
- ✓ Use the AAC system to talk yourself
- ✓ Focus on key words when modeling
- ✓ Allow exploration and access to the whole vocabulary
- ✓ Provide wait time
- ✓ Ask open-ended questions
- ✓ Describe what you want to say using core words



## THIS IS WHAT WE DON'T DO

- ✗ Demand prerequisite skills
- ✗ Provide an AAC system with only a handful of choices
- ✗ Limit access to the AAC system
- ✗ Say "now use your talker"
- ✗ Expect the AAC user to communicate without you modelling how
- ✗ Think you always need to model grammatically correct sentences
- ✗ Create custom pages for specific activities
- ✗ Do all the talking
- ✗ Ask questions the AAC user knows you already know the answer to
- ✗ Focus on adding lots of vocabulary



