

# A Practitioners Guide to Supporting People with Communication Needs in Lincolnshire

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**[Communication Tools](#) (Page 9):** A communication 'tool' is an umbrella term that describes the method e.g., techniques, resources, and/or technologies, to help someone to communicate more effectively with the people around them. Tools can range from pro-active and preventative to assistive and educational. A list of possible solutions and how they might help to aid communication is provided here as well as information on how to access them and the cost.

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## Introduction

The methods available to support someone's communication are constantly changing, with new software, technology, strategies, and evidence emerging; even the way in which we describe what we use to communicate varies.

Generally, however, a communication 'tool' is an umbrella term that describes the method used e.g., techniques, resources, and/or technologies, to help someone to communicate more effectively with people around them. These 'tools' can range from pro-active and preventative to assistive and educational.

Communication tools are also referred to as AAC devices. The term AAC ([Alternative and Augmentative Communication](#)) is used to describe the different methods that can be used to help people with a learning disability (LD) communicate with others.

This resource has been developed in response to feedback provided by you when supporting people with LD and communication needs. One of the key challenges described was the overwhelming number of emerging technologies available to support someone with their communication, and either not having an awareness of all the different tools available, or an understanding of what would be the most useful to meet someone's outcomes.

It is not possible, nor is it necessary, for you to be aware of, or skilled in all communication techniques or technologies. This resource gives some indication of the types of tools that are currently available for unaided and aided communication, including low and hi-tech solutions. It is not an exhaustive list but will help to provide ideas as to what different tools are useful for and how to access these.

## Practical Considerations

### Being a Good Communicator

Working with someone with a LD may challenge your idea of what communication is, and how you make yourself understood. **Effective communication** is about listening as well as talking. Think about your tone of voice, how quickly you speak, and how you use body language or gestures to emphasise what you are saying. Find out what somebody's communication support needs are before you meet them. This will help you plan how to best support them and who to involve, which will help them and make your communication clearer.

The following tools are examples that have been shared with you as part of your [Strength Based Workshops](#).

The **Conversation Preparation Tool** is designed as a prompt to help you think about any actions or considerations you might want to discuss with the person you are working with to ensure any future conversations are as person centred and strengths based as possible. It is not a checklist.

During the conversation use the suggested **structure and prompts** to support you in your conversations. Think about the purpose of the conversation, apply a structure so it flows naturally, and the person can communicate their situation, strengths, and desired outcome. If the person cannot communicate verbally use pictures/ nonverbal communication and/or technology to explore instead.

Use the structure and suggestions in the **Making Contact Prompt** to support you in contacting individuals and others, to get their input and set the tone of the conversation. Use this tool to inform the letters, emails, or phone communication you have with individuals and others prior to the conversation taking place.

There are also helpful question prompts for when you are completing an **assessment**, which is in line with the Adult Care assessment and eligibility domains.

In addition to our own resources that were developed as part of your **Strengths-Based Approach** workshops, Mencap have produced a guide, [Communicating with People who have a Learning Disability](#) that provides a brief introduction to communication, and the problems faced by someone with a LD. It also contains tips on how you can be a better communicator, and how you can help someone with a LD to understand, to be understood and become fully involved in their care and support plans by taking their communication needs into account.

To be a **good communicator** with people with a LD you need to:

- use accessible language
- avoid jargon or long words that might be hard to understand
- be prepared to use different communication tools
- follow the lead of the person you are communicating with
- go at the pace of the person you are communicating with; check you have understood and be creative

Source: [MENCAP, Communicating With People with A Learning Disability](#)

It is important to adopt a person-centred, strength-based approach when supporting someone with communication needs. Consider each person as an individual and focus on their communication strengths and what you can do to make communication between you as successful as possible.

**What do you think to this guide?**

We are looking for feedback. Click below to access the short, four-question survey.

<https://forms.office.com/e/0uZLnLpb5W>

Your answers are anonymous and will be used to develop the guide in the future. For further information or feedback, please contact [ServiceDevelopment@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:ServiceDevelopment@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

Thank you.

## Top Tips for Communicating Effectively

Several organisations have produced practice guidance to make communication easier. The following are suggestions of websites that include information on how you can be a better communicator and make your communication more inclusive. There are also tips on techniques that you could use so that people can participate fully in decision making during their assessment and care and support planning.

- Community Care Inform (CCI), has a LD Knowledge and Practice Hub, which includes a quick practice guide on [Improving Communication with Adults with Learning Disabilities](#). All staff in ACCW can access CCI.
- Communication Matters has some useful tips and [guidelines](#) to make communication easier – for the person and for you.
- Mencap developed a guide, [Communicating with People who have a Learning Disability](#) which provides a brief introduction to communication, and the problems faced by someone with a LD.
- The [Accessible Information Standard](#) (AIS). All organisations that provide NHS care and/or publicly funded adult social care are legally required to follow the AIS. The Standard sets out a specific, consistent approach to identifying, recording, flagging, sharing, and meeting the information and communication support needs of patients, service users, carers and parents with a disability, impairment, or sensory loss.
- [The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy](#) published Five Good Communication Standards, which set out the reasonable adjustments to communication that individuals with learning disability and/or autism should expect in specialist hospital and residential settings.

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## Current Training Opportunities

In addition to the Adult Care Mandatory Learning Framework, there is a wide range of learning opportunities available through [Lincs2Learn](#), which includes personal development materials and corporate programmes, as well as service and directorate specific training. The Adult Care and Community Wellbeing Directorate [Learning and Development Directory 22-23](#) details the training available to March 2023.

A variety of e-Learning and other resources are also available as part of the ACCW Learning and Development Hub on Lincs2Learn, with some others being available via our partners' platforms. For those of you who are unable to access Lincs2Learn (non-LCC employees), please refer to your own Workforce Development Lead or Team for information on available training opportunities.

The [Adult Care Procedures, Practice Guidance and Tools](#) website is an online resource for all Adult Care staff. This resource is constantly updated and provides a comprehensive overview of the service. It includes information about our values and practice guidance, through to guides on our policies and procedures, and is your go to place for finding out about how to do things. The hub also gives you easy access to key websites and resources to inform your practice and to support you to make effective and consistent decisions in line with the Care Act and other legislation.

The information will:

- Guide and inform practice
- Provide information about local policy and procedures
- Keep you up to date with local and national developments in adult social care

You can register for updates to ensure that you receive automatic notifications as soon as any changes are made to the site.

### Practitioner Feedback on LD Specific Commissioned Training

#### Positive Behavioural Support

*"The different strategies around communication with those with Autism and Asperger's was very helpful. I have a significant number of individuals that I work with who have Autism and Asperger's. It's given me a better understanding of how to formulate a 'Positive behavioural Support plan' and to implement it. I've used some of the strategies already with one individual."* - LD Qualified Practitioner Level 2

#### Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)

*"I found the learning extremely useful and how someone with PDA might be unable to cope with demands of them, and how conversations are required to be rephrased for better understanding."* - Community Care Officer AFLTC

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## Definitions

There are two main types of AAC: unaided communication and aided communication.

- **Unaided communication** does not use additional equipment. People typically use body language, gesture, vocalisation or signing.
- **Aided communication** uses equipment. This can range from **low-tech** to **hi-tech** methods and often uses pictures and symbols instead of, or together with words.

The different methods that can be used to help people with LD communicate with others have been divided into two categories: un-aided and aided (low-tech and hi-tech) and are defined below.

Category	Definition	Examples of Communication Tools and Systems
Un-aided	<p>A way to express feelings, wants and choices without speaking.</p> <p>People with LD often interpret body language and non-verbal communication in understanding simple everyday interactions.</p> <p>It is essential when communicating with someone with a LD to give them time to take in what is being said, and to communicate more slowly than you may normally, to allow them to process what it is that you are communicating.</p>	Writing, or signing (Makaton, which is based on British Sign Language), body language, pointing, facial expressions, or gestures.
Aided (low-tech)	Using <b>visual guides or cues</b> to aide communication is one important way of supporting people to have a	Widget, PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), photographs, pictures, line drawings, letters, or objects (items that the person has or can use if you are not understanding), easy-read symbols, and words, which can be used alone or in

	greater understanding of what is being communicated to them.	combination with other communication methods, to support decision making and involvement.
Aided (hi-tech)	Refers to a purpose-built device or a standard computer. Methods using computer technology do so at different levels of complexity but mostly focus on producing speech or text for people who find it difficult or impossible to do so for themselves. Many individuals use computerised versions of AAC picture systems, with the electronic device speaking aloud the symbols selected.	There are lots of different types of AAC including Grid pads, Eye Gaze Technology, Lightwriters and software for smartphones, iPads, and computers, that act as communication aids.

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## Communication Tools

The following table provides a list of possible solutions and how they might help to aid communication from simple letter or picture boards to more sophisticated computer-based systems. This is not an exhaustive list but will provide you with ideas and suggestions of tools to consider. **It is important to remain outcome focussed and person-centred when considering possible solutions.**

Low-tech solutions are not inferior to hi-tech solutions. What you choose will depend on personal preference, abilities, and needs of the individuals who you are supporting. The method of access and funding are also deciding factors (<https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/>).

Category Un-aided or Aided (low tech)	What is it	Who and what is it for	Outcome (benefits)	How to source	How much it costs
Un-aided	An E-Tran frame is a sheet of stiff, transparent plastic (perspex) onto which symbols or words can be stuck with Blu-Tack or Velcro	Some people who have communication difficulties also have physical difficulties and find it difficult to point to a book or chart or to handle communication cards. If they have good control over their eyes, they may be able to use an E-Tran frame.	A means of using eye-pointing as a way of communicating through pictures, symbols, letters, number, and words	<a href="#">E-Tran Frames - Communication Matters</a>	Free

Un-aided	Short signing videos demonstrating how to sign.	Short video clips signing greetings and common questions; emotions and actions; food and drinks; people; health and looking after yourself; travelling places, and holidays.	Assists inclusive communication to help someone to understand and be understood	<a href="#">Inclusive Communication Essex</a>	Free
Un-aided	A visual communication toolkit that helps people to express emotions and preferences, share news, and take part in community decisions	It can be used both individually and in groups of people with limited verbal skills	Existing visual aids are often based on conventional systems that must be learned - for example, green-amber-red for good-neutral-bad.  The advantage of this toolkit is that it is based on bodily experiences we all naturally use to	<a href="#">Visual-communication-aids-booklet.pdf (cardiff.ac.uk)</a>	Free activities available as a booklet for you to download and print

			express feelings or ideas.		
Aided (low-tech)	Communication Flashcards. Ready-made, low tech picture communication aids feature adult-appropriate pictures and topics	Easy-to-use communication books and boards	To help adults with speech and cognition challenges	<a href="http://sayitwithsymbols.com">Adult Picture Communication Boards (sayitwithsymbols.com)</a>	Free
Aided (low-tech)	<p>Photosymbols are pictures for Easy Read information. It is a photo library featuring actors with LD.</p> <p>There are over 5000 images in the library covering a wide range of relevant</p>	<p>Photosymbols make it easy for people to identify what the picture is to what the words mean.</p> <p>Click here to see how it works <a href="#">Photosymbols Guide</a></p>	Photosymbols are specially designed to use in Easy Read information	<p><a href="#">Welcome to Photosymbols</a></p> <p>Access the online shop to choose your subscription.</p>	<p><a href="#">Photosymbols Subscriptions</a></p> <p>A range of annual subscriptions to suit different teams, organisations, and individuals. Each package is for a minimum of 12 months and is</p>

	<p>topics relevant. The content is updated monthly to ensure pictures are topical and up to date.</p> <p>Easy Read templates with layouts for booklets, forms, posters, and invites.</p>				<p>worked out for the number of users.</p> <p>Some subscriptions have additional features that only some people need, like high resolution photographs or team libraries.</p> <p>For example, an individual subscription for 12 months is £240 with a licence for one named user.</p>
Aided (low-tech)	Beyond Words is a fast and convenient way to access pictures through an app to	The app brings together 1800+ pictures and 400 short stories and makes them	Main aim of the tool is to open conversations to check for understanding,	<a href="http://booksbeyondwords.co.uk">BW Story App - Short picture stories to enrich lives — Beyond Words (booksbeyondwords.co.uk)</a>	The app is free to download.

	<p>enable people to explore and understand their world and the things that affect their lives</p>	<p>available in one place.</p> <p>It is an easy-to-use mobile tool and provides a comprehensive library of resources that offer people with LD opportunities to better understand situations, make informed decisions, explore their feelings and emotions, and share their own experiences.</p> <p>Once the app is installed on a device, you can browse a selection of short stories and images, either by tapping on</p>	<p>support decision-making, share past experiences, prepare for new ones, and explore feelings.</p> <p>It also helps to remove barriers to understanding, reduce anxiety and enables people to make their voice heard.</p>	<p>Organisational subscription packages are available. An extra 'ebookshelf' feature can be enabled and customised to include limitless full-length eBooks; web version can be accessed through any internet browser. Based upon the size of the organisation and its requirements, a bespoke subscription package is put together.</p> <p>There is an option to upgrade to an annual subscription of</p>
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		the nine category buttons or by using the in-built search function.			£29.99 to access the entire collection of over 400 short stories.
Aided (low-tech)	Hear Me Now is an app primarily aimed at people with LD but could be used by others with cognitive or communication difficulties.		The app allows users to create boxes to store things that are important to them e.g., health, food, days out, family; within each box users can add any number of words, pictures, video, and audio. For example, the box might contain information on the user's latest prescribed medicines, which can be communicated in appointments	<a href="http://myhealthguideapp.com">Hear Me Now (myhealthguideapp.com)</a>  Hear Me Now is an app available for both Apple iOS and Google Android tablets. It is also a web service that allows remote access to app content.	Individual subscribers can purchase the app and service for £60 per year, which provides full access. You can subscribe online.  Organisations can bulk purchase tokens and distribute them to individuals, who will have full access to Hear Me Now. App users can grant remote access to their content to practitioners. If

		<p>with other health professionals, such as visiting the dentist.</p> <p>Hear Me Now users can upload documents into the app and store them all in one place e.g., the app may contain documents outlining the person's epilepsy plan, or a recent letter from the person's GP or hospital. These can be shown to their carers and can be shared with others remotely using Hear Me Now's Sharing facility.</p>	<p>required, remote access by practitioners can be controlled using Hear Me Now's vetting procedure, to suit the organisation's needs.</p> <p>Practitioners can also remotely push new content to app users, including new box content and alerts.</p> <p>Maldaba are available to assist organisations with introduction to Hear Me Now, including training sessions and responsive support for organisation staff.</p>
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			Users can record the details of friends, family, and carers in the contacts facility, and share their boxes with anyone in their contacts list.		
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## Specialist Services for Hi-tech Communication

### Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)

SALT do not have specific information relating to LD other than the information that can be found on their trust website, which is [Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Trust \(LPFT\) Learning Disabilities and Autism](#).

The Trust provides specialist health support to people with LD who require assessment and/or treatment for their physical or mental health, including support with behaviours of concern. The service will work with adults over 18 who have a diagnosis of LD and associated physical and/or mental health needs who are registered with a Lincolnshire GP.

#### The service includes:

- A single point of access (SPA) for all referrals
- Four community hubs - multi-disciplinary teams which provide the whole range of specialist learning disability professions
- Autism diagnosis and liaison. Providing a liaison service which supports access to mainstream health services and ensures reasonable adjustments are made
- County-wide community home assessment and treatment team

#### The service does not provide:

- A diagnostic service for assessment of learning disabilities
- Support with learning difficulties e.g., dyspraxia, dyslexia
- Specialist health interventions for people with autism or ADHD who do not have a learning disability diagnosis

Contact your local **Community LD Hub Team** if you wish to discuss a referral. The team will be able to provide advice and guidance, including signposting to other appropriate services as required.

For routine non-urgent referrals, a referral form, with guidance, can be obtained from our website [Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Trust \(LPFT\) Learning Disabilities and Autism](#) (see links to forms and guidance in "Professionals Referral Form" section) or via SPA.

For urgent referrals to the Community Home Assessment and Treatment (CHAT) team, contact can be made through SPA or directly to the team.

Contact details for the community hubs and CHAT team can be found on page 7 of [Learning Disabilities Professionals Brochure](#). This brochure is not specific to SALT and is for the LD service as a whole.

Referrals should be sent to our single point of access (SPA) who will direct to the most appropriate community learning disability hub. Referrals can be made in writing or using our referral form via the Single Point of Access (SPA).

- Email: [lincs.spa@nhs.net](mailto:lincs.spa@nhs.net)
- Tel: 0303 123 4000

### **Electronic Assistive Technology Service**

The [Electronic Assistive Technology Service](#) (EATS) provide specialist assessment and equipment for high tech AAC in the Lincolnshire area alongside support from your local SALT Team. They also offer free training on AAC which you can sign up for on their website ([Training: Electronic Assistive Technology Service](#)).

The [East Midlands Alternative and Augmentative Communication \(AAC\) Hub Service](#) provides a specialist communication aid service based in Lincoln and provides specialist assessment and equipment provision for children and adults who have significant expressive communication difficulties which require an AAC system.

The assessments can be carried out at the most appropriate place for the person e.g., home, school, hospital, care home, etc. Following an assessment, a recommendation will be made regarding the most appropriate AAC system for the person. This may be a low tech (symbol/paper-based system) or high tech (voice output communication aid) solution. The team works in partnership with the local SALT service, who is then responsible for on-going implementation of the communication system as required.

If you identify someone who you feel would benefit from an AAC assessment, you should refer to the local SALT service in the first instance.

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## Funding for Communication Tools

From a strength-based viewpoint, you would first consider all the possible options, such as the resources the person has available to them, or has access to, and determine if any existing communication tools and/or equipment could be repurposed or added to. You may want to consider if any grants are available.

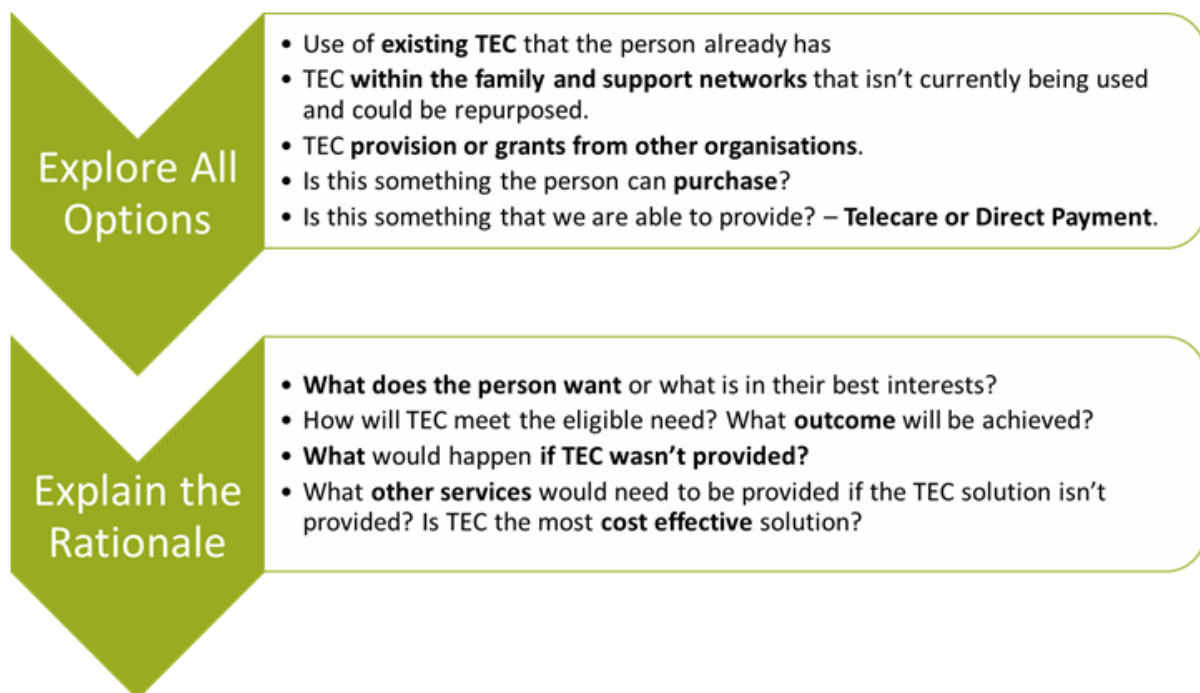
### Can communication tools be funded through Direct Payments?

As to whether TEC can be funded through Direct Payments needs to be decided on a person-by-person basis depending on the individual needs and circumstances.

Consideration needs to be given to whether the communication aid is something that should be provided by another organisation rather than us at LCC. If you identify someone who you feel would benefit from an AAC assessment, you should refer to the local SLT service in the first instance.

For LCC to provide a specialist communication aid the person would need to be assessed as eligible first, and the tool would also need to meet an eligible need as defined by the [Care Act 2014](#). Communication isn't an eligible need but is likely to be linked into other needs that are.

The following diagram summaries the main points to consider.



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## Suggested Resources

The following websites and organisations contain information on developing your communication skills and knowledge, as well as free access to resources that you could use or adapt.

- The [Means Reason and Opportunities Model](#) may be useful as this is a basic model to look at the building blocks of effective communication and how you can support. More is available online through a Google search ([Training \(beyondatautism.org.uk\)](#))
- A factsheet on [Communication Aids](#) outlining your options when selecting an electronic aid to make it clearer and quicker to communicate.
- There are many issues to consider when choosing the [right communication aid](#). Communication Matters have produced a factsheet, which includes things you might want to think about as part of an assessment.
- [About Makaton](#) - visit the Makaton Library to look at the wide range of free resources.
- [Say It with Symbols](#) - find free and low-cost communication boards, picture symbols and visuals for adults.
- Led by the [Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists](#) (RCSLT), a partnership of charities and organisations formed to develop the [Communication Access Symbol](#), a new disability access symbol underpinned by a **completely free training package and standards**.
- The RCSLT's [My Journey My Voice](#) project provides information on AAC, a downloadable booklet and audio recordings of people using AAC.
- [Change](#), a charity for people with LD, provides guidelines and practical advice to help you to make written information more accessible to people with communication needs.
- The [ACE Centre](#) is a registered charity providing support for people with communication difficulties. It offers assessment, training, and information services across England, with a focus on AAC and assistive technology.
- The ACE Centre also supported the development of '[SpeechBubble](#)'. This website provides up-to-date information on the latest AAC resources, including communication aids, software, and apps.
- [Inclusive Communication Essex](#) has a website dedicated to communication for people with LD and free online resources including pictures, easy read templates and signing videos. This is an Essex-wide training package that teaches the families and carers of adults with LD how to use a variety of different forms of communication.

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