

# The decision-making process in recommending electronic communication aids for children and young people who are non-speaking: the I-ASC mixed-methods study

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## Plain English summary

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## Plain English summary

This research looked at how people choose communication aids and match them to children and young people who cannot speak. The results of the research were used to develop tools and resources. These resources will help professionals, families and young people to make communication aid decisions.

The Identifying Appropriate Symbol Communication (I-ASC) project had two researchers with personal experience of using communication aids. The project also evaluated the success of our public involvement approach.

We held discussion groups with professionals after an assessment appointment. We interviewed children, young people and adults who could tell us about their experiences of how they got their communication aid(s). We interviewed parents and the professionals who knew the communication aid users. We asked professionals to answer two surveys. A total of 354 people were involved in looking at communication aid decision-making and 22 people were involved in the evaluation of the public involvement activities.

The process of deciding what is the best communication aid is not straightforward. Decisions are affected by many things, for example professionals' experience, access to services or the service structure. These factors vary across the UK.

We found that during actual appointments everyone present focused on the child's physical access abilities and motivation to use a communication aid. By contrast, when professionals were asked to say what they would do in an imaginary situation (when presented with a description of a young person), they said that they would focus more on language, communication and learning abilities. In addition, things that professionals chose as important were not necessarily the important choices for family members, children and young people.

This research informed the development of guidance tools (URL: <https://iasc.mmu.ac.uk/>).

The public involvement evaluation suggests that inclusion across all aspects of a research project would benefit from additional resources, for example more staff time, some training and personal support (URL: <https://iasc.mmu.ac.uk/publicinvolvement>).

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