



A Sunfield Fact Sheet

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

What is AAC?

Effective communication occurs when the intent and meaning of one individual is understood by another – this can be conveyed in the form of speech, eye contact, text, gestures, facial expressions, touch, sign language, symbols, pictures and speech-generating devices, among others. As human beings, we use communication for a variety of reasons, all of which are vital to our well-being and development.

When faced with challenges in communication, our learning, confidence, relationships and self-awareness are just a few of the many things that can be affected. The term Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) defines a set of tools and strategies that can be used to overcome the everyday communicative challenges faced by those with a wide range of affective conditions, enabling them to more effectively understand, or be understood by, others.

Which AAC Sunfield tools and strategies do Sunfield use?

At Sunfield, every child and young person undergoes thorough initial and on-going assessments of their individual needs and abilities, including evaluations of their communication skills. We may introduce one or more tools and strategies, including but not necessarily limited to:

Signalong

Signalong is a sign-supporting system, which is intended for use in conjunction with (rather than as a replacement for) speech. It is based on British Sign Language and uses BSL signs wherever possible. However, it also allows for a wider range of hand signs, and presents them slightly differently, using additional descriptions and simple line drawings for each sign, which are developed according to the Signalong system. Signalong is a total communication system, which incorporates body language, facial expression and voice tone to reinforce the message.

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

PECS is a phased system of communicating through the exchange of pictures. Initially, single pictures can be used to clearly and consistently express preferences, responses and needs, with a book of regularly used pictures being developed over time. As confidence and competence increases, several pictures can be used to convey more complex messages and sentences, and the communication can be expanded to a wider variety of scenarios, audiences and locations.

Use of Assistive Technology

Sunfield also utilises a range of technological devices, including i-pads, proxtalkers and Go-talk devices, to support communication, based on our Speech and Language Therapists' assessment of what will best meet each young person's needs.

Further reading

Signalong – <http://www.signalong.org.uk/>.

PECS – <http://www.pecs-unitedkingdom.com/>.

Assistive Technology – <http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/resource-library/assistive-technology>.