The *I-ASC* Pre-Assessment Reflective Cycle

Good reflective practice benefits everyone involved in the communication aid decision making process. Reflections can be made up of different activities and approaches, e.g., observations, insider viewpoints and analysis, group discussion and reflexive activities. Each contributor has a part to play in determining if a communication aid assessment will achieve or has achieved the best result for each individual child; and if there are lessons to be learned that might improve future decision making processes.

There are many different models which might be used, e.g., Gibbs reflective cycle (1988), Kolb's learning cycle (1984), Schon's reflective practice (1988). The *I-ASC reflective cycle* is drawn from all of these sources and is presented in 4 stages. Where possible we recommend reflecting at each stage of the process:

Review
(Monitoring, Evaluation and Action Planning)

Coordination
(Planning and Preparation)

Reflective Cycle

Implementation
(Outcome Measures, Training and Responsibilities)

Assessement
(Evaluation and Recommendation)

There are 4 overarching questions for any reflective cycle:

- What worked well?
- How do I know it worked well?
- What did not work as well as I might have expected and why?

- What might be improved for next time?

These suggestions can be expanded or adapted for each stage of the assessment process.

Step 1: Coordination

The planning and preparation stages for an assessment are critical. It is essential to seek out information about the child's characteristics and *current communication aid* and its attributes together with access features and the cultural and contextual perspectives that influence final decisions (see *I-ASC characteristics, features, attributes and contextual influencers*).

In this early phase it is important to decide who will be able to offer input into the assessment. This could include those who have, or agree to take up, a specific role, e.g., Observers, Champions and Evaluators (See *I-ASC choosing roles in AAC decision making and implementation*).

When reflecting before the assessment the following questions might be helpful:

- Who has been invited to contribute?
- What have they been asked to contribute?
- What information can each contributor offer?
- What was influential information?
- What information was missing?
- How could this initial process be improved? (this may be answerable retrospectively)

Step 2: Assessment

These are the evaluation and recommendation stages. The evaluation team; including the child/young person, parent/carer, speech and language therapist, teacher and all other relevant contributors, consider the information provided at the coordination stage.

The assessment will probably be led by the coordinator or the evaluator. They will have skills and experience in helping people to discuss their views, reach a consensus and make decisions.

When reflecting the following questions might be helpful:

- Who was in attendance at the assessment?
- What role did they play?
- To what extent were the views of everyone heard/known?
- What information, if any, was identified as missing that could have been useful? (It might be useful here to refer to the *I-ASC Explanatory model*)

- How was the information available used to inform discussion and decision making?

- How was a consensus reached?

- What strategies were used to unpick differences?

- What trade-offs needed to be made to reach an AAC recommendation?

- Were all parties given the opportunity to reflect on the decision making process?

Step 3: Implementation, and

Step 4: Review

The I-ASC project has focused on reaching the communication aid recommendation. As part of this the key output will be a plan for implementation and review. As a minimum it is recommended the following is documented:

- The communication aid recommendation

- Who is responsible for purchase

- Who is responsible for warranty, insurance and maintenance

- What are the short term, medium term and longer term goals and who is responsible for implementation, training and monitoring and action planning (see *I-ASC AAC Log, or I-ASC Communication System Recommendation Reflective Practice Checklist, or the I-ASC Communication Aid maintenance and backup plan* for some suggestions for organising this process)

- When the next review will take place to ensure outcomes are being achieved

There is an assumption here that the review will lead back into a reflective cycle of coordination and (re)assessment.

Reference sources

Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by Doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Further Education Unit

Kolb, D.A. (1984) *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development.* Englewood Cliffes, NJ: Prentice Hall

Schön, D. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think In Action*. Basis Books.