# How to use the spidergram resource

Background

This is a tool that has been used to compare different perspectives on topics of debate. For example, spidergrams can be used to compare the different perspectives of an AAC user, and/or their family, and the team around them, when assessing or reviewing AAC support needs. For each child or young person there might be several different spidergrams as this tool can be used for different AAC components (see examples below).

The Spidergram Step 1 (an overview of the process)

Your aim is to discuss and agree priorities that the team would like to be considered. The team can include, where appropriate, the child or the young person themselves. One way of doing this is to ask each person what they consider most important and least important in a new communication system, or about the AAC system they have now. There are *I-ASC* descriptions that have emerged from the research of *child characteristics, communication aid attributes, access features, ways of working, transitions, available resources* which might be helpful in deciding what to include in your discussions. We suggest not mixing factors from the different lists unless there is a strong reason to do so.
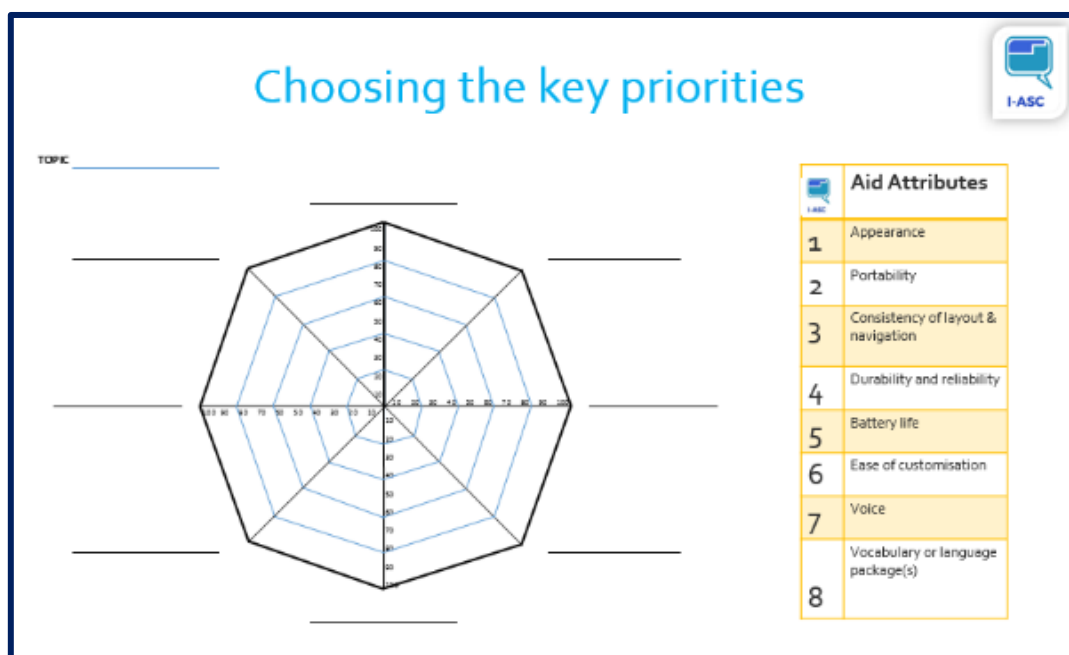
This example is for communication aid attributes but the labels can be changed to suit the needs in each assessment. The *I-ASC Alannah case study with examples related to aid attributes* might be useful to look at here.

The Spidergram Step 2

Brief everyone involved in the decision making process on how to use the spidergram. Each person ranks on a scale from 0 to 100 the importance of the factors agreed, making sure this is with the young person in mind.

The spidergram could be completed independently (remotely) or used as a discussion exercise during an appointment. This will take a considerable amount of time and should not be rushed. Besides using a *blank copy of the spidergram resource*, it might also be useful to share *examples of completed spidergrams (example below), and consider* the **I-ASC** *lists of characteristics, attributes, features or influencers.*

Some of this paperwork may be new to both colleagues and families, please make sure they understand what they need to do, and in the case of family members give them plenty time to think about their contribution. It might be useful to give out the **I-ASC** *AAC assessment leaflet* which explains the assessment process. Possibly meeting or contacting family members and new colleagues several weeks before the assessment appointment and discussing/showing them how to complete a spidergram might be helpful. Check with families if they need to receive a hard copy, and if helpful send them several blanks of the spidergram so they can 'have a go' before giving back their final version (s).

The Spidergram Step 3

If done ahead of an appointment meeting, all completed *spidergrams* should be sent to one person to co-ordinate a combined picture. By overlaying all viewpoints this becomes the main discussion tool, it becomes easy to see where everyone agrees and the key areas for further discussion.
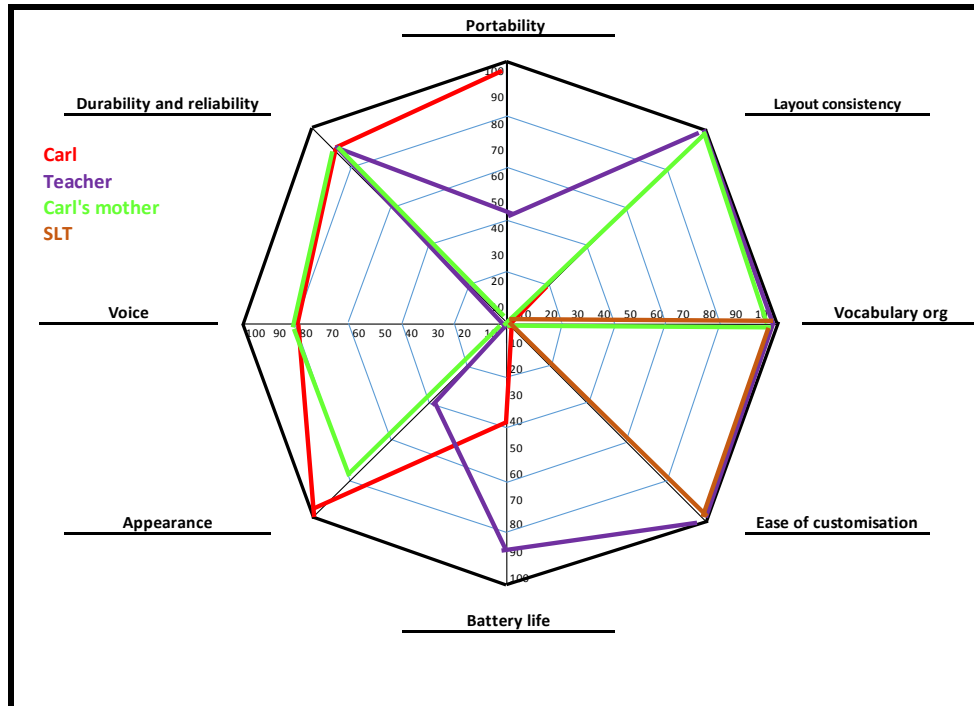
The Spidergram Step 4

In the meeting acknowledge the importance of all views having value. The child or family view is as important as that of a professional, and that of a teacher is just as key as that of a speech and language therapist. Agree where there is broad consensus on factors scored similarly. This may indicate the factor is important, less important or not relevant. In the *completed spidergram* example below, the 4 people taking part agreed on durability and reliability, layout consistency, vocabulary organisation and ease of customisation. There is no need to go into detailed discussion if everyone agrees the same position.

It is more important to move on to where there is a difference of perspective. In the example the participants would be discussing portability, voice, appearance and battery life. This is the time for each person to explain their own viewpoint. It is very possible that a professional will not have considered factors from the perspective of home life, or the child or family not being aware of the therapy or teaching importance of a factor. Listen to everyone and try to reach a consensus on how to move forward in matching the preferred AAC components to the child or young person.

The Spidergram Step 5

Following the discussions agree the decisions resulting from steps 1 to 4. Ensure they are explicit for everyone involved (provide notes, recap consensus and any remaining differences at the end of the meeting(s)). Provide a written summary for all people of what is agreed and why these decisions were made, especially if they arose from an original position of difference.