

Communication System Assessment Planning Checklist

Planning a communication system assessment for a child or young person is a complex process requiring the consideration of many competing factors. Take a moment to reflect on your plan to ensure you are gathering all relevant information.

Child characteristics Note down what information you already have about the child's abilities, challenges and preferences and what information needs to be gathered and how?

Age: *9 years 2 months*

Child preference (communication system): *We don't know anything about Gita's views of her communication abilities, or her views on the communication book. There are suggestions that she doesn't use it as much as she could so really important to find out more here.*

Cognitive skills: *We know that Gita attends a special/ist school but we don't know what this means in terms of her abilities or what curriculum she is following. We don't know anything about Gita's general cognitive skills including attention, memory, focus, learning style, and insight.*

Communication ability: *We know a little about what she has available, i.e., her symbol communication book. We know that she seems to use it with her sister, and perhaps not with some of her teachers or friends. We know that some people describe Gita as unable to speak. We don't know anything about the type or number of picture-symbols. We don't know when or where she uses it, or how well she uses it. We don't know if she uses other modes of communication, e.g., speech*

Diagnosis: *We know she has cerebral palsy (CP) which is severe enough for her to use a wheelchair. We know she has a hearing loss which seems to be corrected with hearing aids. We don't know enough about the effects of her CP on her ability to use some speech, vocalisation or gesture; or how it affects her ability to handle and manipulate objects or how well her hearing aids are working for her.*

Expectations and aspirations: *We know that some staff believe that an electronic AAC system would suit Gita better. We don't know what she or others, including her family, hope for her future journey with AAC. We don't know her predicted needs, goals for AAC, hopes, and expectations.*

Linguistic level: *We don't know anything about Gita's existing levels of language ability, or her literacy skills; and we don't know what graphic symbol knowledge she has*

Motor abilities and operational competence: *We know she is capable of driving her own wheelchair. We don't know how she controls it. We don't know enough about the effects of her CP on her ability to use some speech, vocalisation or gesture; or how it affects her ability to handle and manipulate objects. We don't know anything about Gita's operational competence with her communication book, e.g., can she turn the pages, does she know where vocabulary is located.*

Personality and temperament: *We know that Gita likes to play out with her brother, that she has a best friend, that she thinks of others (ice-cream!). We know that she likes and dislikes different subjects at school. We don't know if she gets frustrated with things that are too difficult, e.g., Maths. She also likes and dislikes different people in school. We know that she enjoys LOL dolls and youtube videos. We don't know if she is lazy, or merely unmotivated to use her symbol-communication book with specific people.*

Progress and communication opportunities: *We don't know how long she has had her symbol-communication book, or what levels of language and communication it offers her. We don't know how well she uses her symbol-communication book. We don't know where she uses it and who she uses it with.*

Communication aid attributes – existing system

Note down what you know about the child's existing communication system: What is it? How does it work? What are the child and family views on the features listed below?

We don't know much about her current communication board, but it is important to find out about and why it is not working well for her

Aesthetics: *unknown*

Reliability: *unknown*

Data storage and processing: *unknown*

Consistency and intuitiveness of design: *unknown – request that the board is brought to the appointment.*

Ease of editing: *We know Mr Roberts and Smita have been adding symbols – need to learn more about this.*

Graphic representation: *not known – important to find out what she has already learned and how we can draw on this learning.*

Vocabulary: *reported that she does not have access to enough vocabulary*

Access features

What is already known about how Gita accesses communication?

Access method: *We don't know how Gita accesses her communication board or controls her power chair. This information will help inform possible access options for her new system?*

Mounting and positioning: *We don't know how her communication board is made available to her – is it always on her tray or only available some of the time?*

Transitions

Are there any major life transitions or other changes expected in the next 2-3 years?

Future planning: *We know that making friends is a priority for Gita and her family and she will be starting in a youth club soon. She will be transitioning to secondary school in the life of this AAC system*

Available resources

What do we know about the resources available to support a new AAC system?

Attitude: *We know that there are mixed views on how the board works and where it is helpful – need to explore school and home perspectives towards AAC.*

Cost: *We need to find out what funding options are available for a communication aid.*

Intervention: *We know Mr Roberts is providing support, we need to find out what intervention might be available to implement a new system.*

Support: *Gita's sister Smita is providing some support currently – we need to find out what else is available to support implementation.*

Team knowledge and skill: *The information gathered suggests that there are mixed levels of knowledge and skill in the team. It will be important to determine roles and responsibilities for implementing a new system so Gita has the support she needs.*

As this was an initial appraisal Ways of working are unknown so, no content in this area included at present.

Priorities for a first stage of the assessment

1. **Gaining a comprehensive understanding of Gita's receptive and expressive language abilities and her communication abilities across all modalities.**

Plan: language assessment (and potentially literacy) and communication log

2. **Understand more about her current system**

What works about her current system and what does not? Why is it only working in a limited way and what are the range of views on the communication system? What strengths can be drawn on for a new system and what would everyone want extra in a new system?

Plan: discussion of communication board and spidergram activity

3. **Available resources How might a system be funded and what supports are available to implement a new system**

Plan: roles and responsibilities checklist

Priorities for second stage of assessment (<https://iasc.mmu.ac.uk/i-asc-explanatory-model-of-aac-decision-making/>)

1. **Feature matching process**
2. **System trialing**