**Why use AAC?**

By the time you attend for your child's first AAC assessment, it is likely you, and your child may already have developed lots of great ways to communicate. You may have strategies that are fast and work well at home. Sometimes families feel they don’t need AAC as they understand everything their child says or communicates. However, AAC is not intended to replace the excellent personalised communication systems many families have developed. Instead, it should support existing communication and add new opportunities.

**The family and child’s personalised communication system is recognised and valued.**

Many successful adult AAC users continue to use their personalised systems, developed when they were young, to effectively to communicate every day. They may use informal methods with their families and personal assistants to communicate quickly and effectively. These methods often assist communication in places where AAC is not so good (such as in the swimming pool). This personalised system can be more discrete when talking about private matters in public. However, AAC can provide people of all ages with a way to communicate on the phone, to make friends when out socially and to communicate more formally. For example, telling a doctor what their symptoms are when unwell, or by contributing to presentations at school.

**AAC can complement personalised systems and open up new opportunities**

Personalised systems often rely on shared knowledge and experience, the routines of everyday life and skills that have been developed between communication partners. Children who use AAC may have really good skills getting their messages across with family and those who know them well, and when talking about things that happen regularly. However, they may find it challenging to communicate with less familiar people, to talk about things outside the immediate context or to use the phone. The introduction of AAC is aimed to complement personalised communication systems and provide children with the opportunity to communicate with people who don’t know them so well and to
communicate less obvious messages. During the I-ASC study, participants shared their ‘Little Eureka Moments.’ These were moments when a child used AAC to communicate in a new way or showed skills others did not realise they had. These moments showed the value AAC can have for children.

Why using AAC at home is important.

As AAC is often used to support communication with less familiar people and about less common topics, some people may think that AAC is best to use in school and not at home. However, learning how to communicate with AAC takes time and practice. Having opportunities to use AAC with those who know the child best can help develop AAC skills. Finding ways to use AAC at home (to create stories, discuss TV or play games) can help children to build skills they can then try out with extended family, friends, and teachers.