



Regional Communication Aid Service (RCAS) Patient information leaflet



Visiting assessment and loan service



Overview

We work with people of all ages who have severe speech impairments. Most can communicate with very few people, if with anyone at all.

We help people to make real improvements in communication in daily life, using communication aids to build a better total communication system.

We have referral criteria set nationally and are a specialist regional service.

We provide NHS services to;

- County Durham
- North Cumbria
- Gateshead
- North/South Tyneside
- Newcastle
- Sunderland
- Northumberland
- Teesside

If you live outside of these areas contact your local specialist communication aid service hub.



How can this service help me?

We can help you decide if a communication aid or speech aid might help and, if it would, what might work best for you. We are then generally able to offer you a loan of the equipment to trial.

We send a written report and action plan, as agreed with everyone at the assessment. We include information about the recommended equipment and how you will be supported by ourselves and your local therapy team.

We also may include extra information for example: illustrations of equipment; suggested improvements to seating and positioning.

We may recommend modifications to your existing equipment (e.g. armchair, wheelchair, etc.) or recommend completely customised items. These are normally provided through the NHS, by the Regional Technical Aid Service.

Who uses this service?

We see people of all ages with severe communication problems, especially people who have severe speech impairment.

Most people we see communicate only with a small circle of familiar people, if with anyone at all.

Many people we see have a severe physical disability. Some people we see are able to walk independently, or with help or a mobility aid. Some use a wheelchair and/or a special seating system and some may spend most or all of their time in bed.

Some people have problems with hearing and/or vision. Some people have learning disabilities or language impairments.

We also see some people who have problems with writing as well as speech.

We always involve important communication partners in the assessment.

Who will I meet?

One or more members of our assessment team.

For the assessment you will meet a Clinical Engineer, Speech and Language Therapist, and/or Occupational Therapist . Depending on what your needs are we may visit with a Clinical Technologist, Speech and Language Therapy Assistant or an Assistive Technology representative from the Regional Technical Aid Service.

Information in our referral form helps us to identify the knowledge and expertise that we need to bring to your assessment.

If we feel we need to involve anyone else, we will ask the referrer to consult you about this.

Can you come and see me?

The visiting assessment team normally goes out to visit people, taking equipment for them to look at and try out.

It is usually better if we travel to see you, rather than you travelling to see us. We are then able to meet you where you feel most relaxed, which helps us to understand;

- Your needs and circumstances, your aims, abilities, skills, personal commitments, etc.
- The needs and circumstances of your communication partners: your family, close friends, carers, teachers, therapists, and others helping or working with you.
- How and why communication difficulties happen, as well as why communication is sometimes more successful.

What happens at the assessment?

Generally we begin by getting to know you a little more and discussing what you would like from a communication aid. We will involve you in this as much as possible.

We will take into account your current communication skills and bear this in mind during the assessment process. Many people require support during the assessment, e.g. using an alphabet chart or family member, to help them contribute. We are used to assessing people who may have limited concentration levels or may fatigue quickly and are able to tailor the assessment to meet your needs.

We may then move on to show you some different communication aids and discuss the benefits they may have for you. We encourage you participate in this process as much as possible and provide your opinion as you are able.



How long does an assessment take?

Some visits are shorter and some are longer, but most take between 1 and 2 hours

Sometimes we can make a recommendation after just one visit. This is usually because we have asked for important information beforehand, via the referral form.

Occasionally we need to make further visits to complete the assessment. Sometimes there are related problems, e.g. with seating or wheelchairs. These might be resolved with another visit, or by involving other services, e.g. your local wheelchair service or the Regional Technical Aids Service.

At the end of the short term loan we will arrange a review appointment. This will enable us to see how you are using the equipment and if the equipment is meeting your needs.

At the review we will decide whether you will be able to be provided with a long term loan of the equipment through our service. If you do not meet the nationally agreed criteria for us to provide you with a long term loan we will work with the referrer to secure funding from other routes.

If you are provided with a long term loan from our service then we will complete follow up visits to review your equipment. This will help us make sure that the aid is still meeting your needs. We will also complete annual safety checks of the aid.

Please contact us if you want to know more about the Regional Communication Aid Service.

Contact Details

Regional Communication Aid Service
Walkergate Park
Benfield Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE6 4QD

Tel: 0191 287 5240

What if I have a comment, suggestion, compliment or complaint about the service?

If you want to make a comment, suggestion, compliment or complaint you can:

- talk to the people directly involved in your care
- ask a member of staff for a feedback form, or complete a form on the Trust website www.ntw.nhs.uk (click on the 'Contact Us' tab)
- telephone the Complaints Department Tel: 0191 245 6672
- email complaints@ntw.nhs.uk Please note that information sent to the Trust via email is sent at your own risk
- We are always looking at ways to improve services. Your feedback allows us to monitor the quality of our services and act upon issues that you bring to our attention.
- You can provide feedback in the following ways:
 - the quickest way for you to do this is to complete our short online survey at www.ntw.nhs.uk/poy
 - complete a Points of You survey, available on wards, reception areas or from staff.
 - some areas of the Trust have electronic feedback touch screens, staff can help you to use these.

Further information about the content, reference sources or production of this leaflet can be obtained from the Patient Information Centre. If you would like to tell us what you think about this leaflet please get in touch.

This information can be made available in a range of formats on request (eg Braille, audio, larger print, easy read, BSL or other languages). Please contact the Patient Information Centre
Tel: 0191 246 7288

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