NHS
York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Children's Therapy Team

Speech and Language Therapy Advice Sheet

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

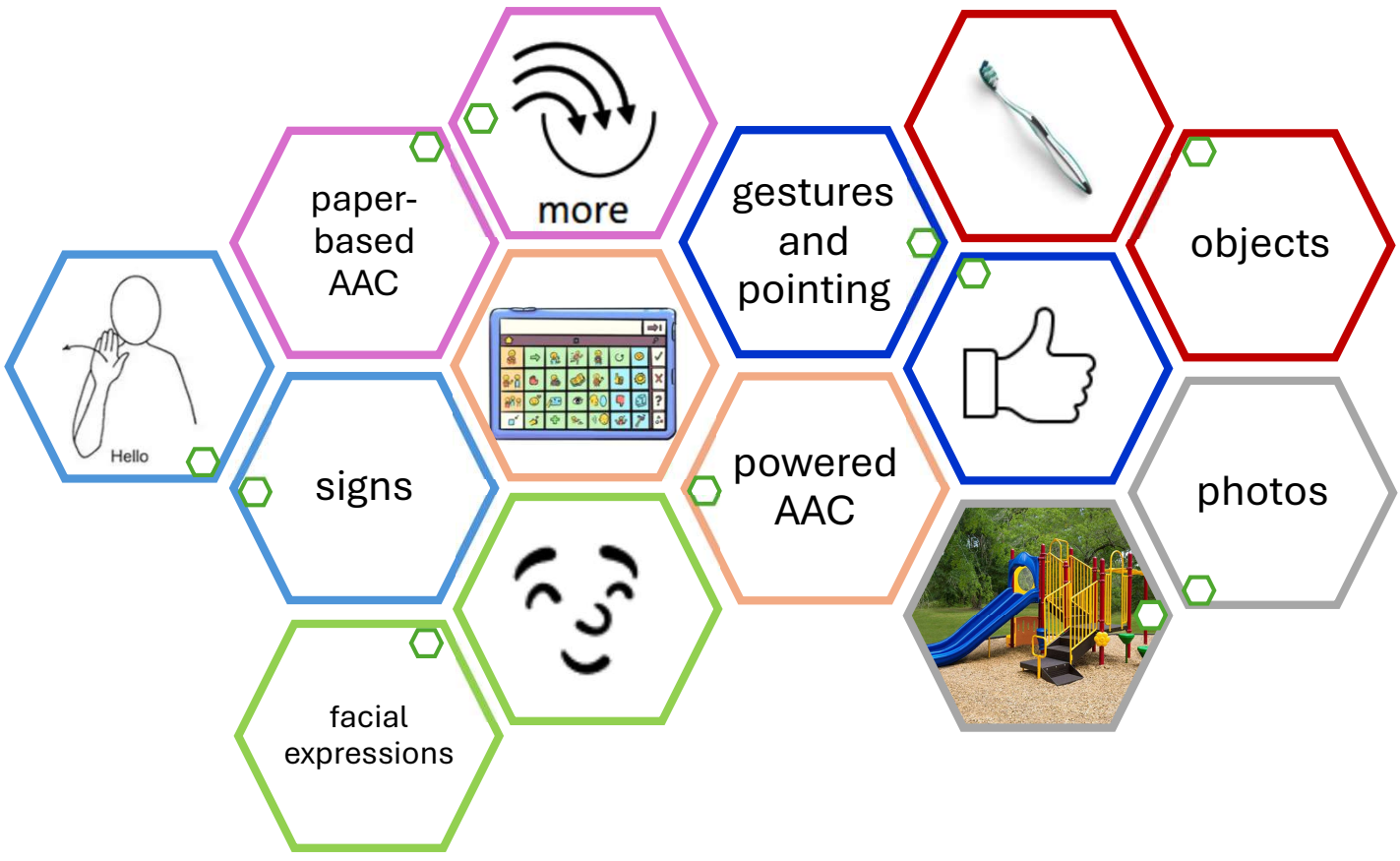
What is AAC?

AAC stands for '**augmentative and alternative communication**'.

- **'Augmentative'** means that it helps to make communication clearer. It means using something alongside speech.
- **'Alternative'** means using a different way to communicate instead of speech.

Some people will use AAC as well as speech, and others will use it instead of speech. Most will use it in both ways.

There are lots of different forms of AAC. This includes:



Is AAC right for my child?

Your child will likely already be using some forms of AAC! Think about the ways that your child already communicates. For example, do they:

- Lead you by the hand to show you something?
- Show that they are sad in their facial expression?
- Point to the toy they want?
- Use photos on your phone or in the house to request something (e.g. a picture of the park to say they want to go there)?
- Bring you a cup when they want a drink?

This is all AAC! It is important that we accept and respond to **all** forms of communication – this is called **'total communication'**.

There are some more formal methods of AAC that could be used to support your child's current AAC. This includes signing (e.g. Makaton), paper-based AAC (e.g. a communication board or book) and powered AAC (e.g. an app on an iPad**). No method of AAC is 'better'** – it's about finding the right approach for your child. This is something your speech and language therapist can help with.

Further resources

If you would like to explore more formal methods of AAC, please look at the following websites:

- **Communication boards-**
  - https://acecentre.org.uk/resources/all?category=symbol-charts
  - https://hub.thinksmartbox.com/topic/printable-boards-super-core-learning/
  - https://www.fluentaac.com/communication-boards
- **Makaton –** https://makaton.org/

To learn more about how to use symbols, you can attend our training 'Getting started with symbols'. The link to book on to this is on our website (below).

We also have a number of communication boards available on our website, as well as two advice sheets covering 'core words' and 'communication boards'.

If you have tried using these strategies and you are still concerned about the impact of your child's communication differences, you can:

- Look on our website for further information and advice: York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust - Speech and language therapy (yorkhospitals.nhs.uk)
- Contact us via our 'Request for Help' line – see our website for further details