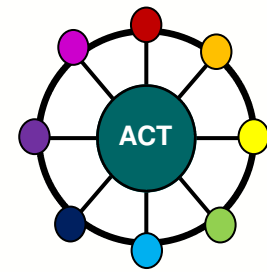




# Access to Communication & Technology (ACT) Bulletin

February 2016



## Welcome

Welcome to the third edition of the ACT bulletin, our quarterly publication aimed at keeping you informed of our progress as we move towards building a better ACT service together with you, our stakeholders.

We are very keen to improve communication between ourselves and our users, so if you have any questions, comments or ideas for future developments, please get in touch.

### Access to Communication and Technology

West Midlands Rehabilitation Centre

91, Oak Tree Lane

Selly Oak

Birmingham

B29 6JA

Tel: 0121 466 3050

E-mail: [ACT.ACT@bhamcommunity.nhs.uk](mailto:ACT.ACT@bhamcommunity.nhs.uk)

Website: [www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk](http://www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk)

## Focus on Referral to Equipment Provision Pathway (REPP) Project

ACT is working hard to deliver specialised services for AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication), EC (Environmental Control) and Computer Access in line with the NHS England national service specifications. The REPP project team have been mapping our current pathways to identify delays and inefficiencies. This will help us to deliver the pathway from referral to equipment provision in 18 weeks by April 2017. The REPP team have also been interpreting the new NHS England referral criteria for AAC and EC services to ensure equitable provision of services within England.

This edition of the ACT Bulletin aims to clarify these new criteria so that referrers can be confident when ringing the ACT Referral and Advice Helpline.

## Referral Criteria

ACT is commissioned by NHS England to accept all referrals that meet the national AAC and/or EC referral criteria. In order to ensure we understand the unique requirements of patients we accept referrals by phone which are taken by clinicians from the service. Further information on how to make a referral is on our website (<http://www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/about-us/services/rehabilitation/act/>).

### Referral and Advice Helpline Opening Times

**0121 466 3028**

**Monday, Wednesday and Friday**

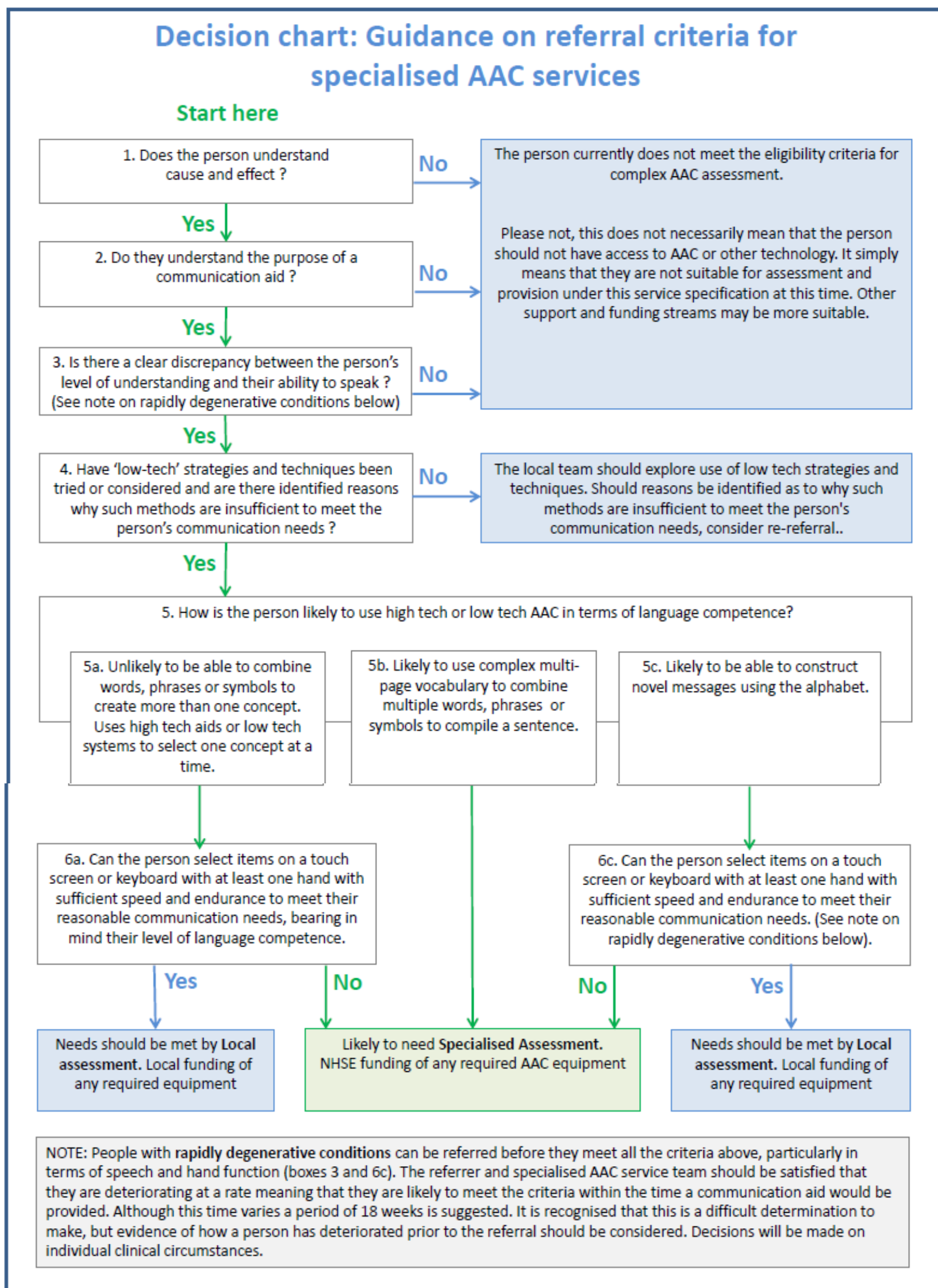
**9am to 4pm**

We are happy to discuss queries and offer support by phone even if at an early stage of exploring Augmentative and Alternative Communication, Environmental Controls & Computer Access. The helpline team can also advise even if the client is not living in the West Midlands or your query is not about a specific patient.

Currently, ACT is not taking referrals for clients who do not have a GP in the West Midlands. Please contact us if you want to discuss this further.

## Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) Referral Criteria:

A decision flow chart has been developed and agreed nationally by the AAC Subgroup (of the NHS England Clinical Reference Group for Complex Disability Equipment) which patients can be accepted by specialised services, and which patients should be the responsibility of the local AAC (SLT) service:



Specialised AAC service referral decision chart. V4.1. August 2015.

This is in the context of the service specification document for AAC which says:

“Specialised AAC services will work with their local AAC teams to build their capacity to manage directly the needs of 90% of the region’s AAC population and to jointly manage the needs of the 10% of the region’s population that require powered communication aids or specialised AAC assessment.”

For further information please view the D01/S/b Complex Disability Equipment – Communication Aids Service Specification ([http://www.communicationmatters.org/sites/default/files/downloads/standards/specialised\\_aac\\_services\\_specs\\_june\\_2014.pdf](http://www.communicationmatters.org/sites/default/files/downloads/standards/specialised_aac_services_specs_june_2014.pdf) )

## Environmental Controls (EC) Referral Criteria

“Environmental Controls assessment and provision will be for people who meet the following criteria:

- Profound and potentially complex physical disability, such that they are unable to operate standard (remote) controls for functioning independently in the home
- Cognitively and physically able to operate EC equipment consistently
- Able to demonstrate sustained motivation to use the EC equipment
- Individuals who require multiple control functions integrated into a single means of access and for whom multiple devices, each with separate function, are inappropriate
- Where individuals have a variable condition (e.g. progressive neurological condition), the above criteria can be applied with regard to the person’s anticipated, as well as current needs”

The specification for Environmental Control System is available on the following link

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/d01-com-dis-equ-env-con.pdf>

## Computer Access Referral Criteria

“The specialised service will assess and provide equipment for a patient who meets the above criteria and who:

- Is unable to access their computer through standard means (mouse, keyboard etc) but would be expected to be able to use the equipment with the provision of suitable aids or adaptations
- Demonstrates an intention to require access to IT to support independence and daily living
- Does not have computer access difficulties solely related to sensory difficulties (i.e. visual or hearing difficulties)
- Does not intend to use the computer primarily for educational or work situations or environments
- Has a level of literacy adequate for the tasks they wish to be able to achieve, or have ongoing access to adequate training and support to achieve this”

## Waiting times

Last year we appointed additional clinical staff to increase our capacity. New team members have undertaken a significant amount of training and are now able to carry out assessments independently, therefore our waiting times are reducing.

ACT currently prioritise patients who:

- Are in rehabilitation provision
- Have a rapidly degenerative condition e.g. Motor Neurone Disease.

Priority referrals requiring a specialist assessment are currently (February 2016) being offered an appointment within 6 weeks.

Standard referrals continue to be added to the waiting list. The service is currently managing a waiting list for specialist assessment of 75 people with the longest wait from June 2015. Other specialised services also have waiting lists.

From April 2016, ACT will be working to the full NHS England prioritisation criteria so that priority will also be given to:

- Patients who have communication aid equipment currently but that has ceased to be functional or is significantly unreliable, in order to meet their communication needs
- Patients facing a transition to a new sector / school / college / workplace environment
- Patients who are at risk of developing significant psychological / challenging behaviour as a consequence of their inability to communicate without a communication aid

By April 2017, ACT aim to be able to offer an assessment appointment for all referrals within 6 weeks of receipt of referral, with priority patients offered an earlier assessment.