

## **HAND OUT.**

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### **The Effectiveness of the Present Funding System for Augmentative Alternative Communication and/or Electronic Communication Aids.**

Historically the responsibility for securing funding for this type of equipment has been left up to Education, Social Services and Health Departments to organise and left to the voluntary sector to make up the short-falls. In an attempt to remedy this funding disparity for children in need of this type of Assistive Technology the government invested money in the Communication Aid Project and this was managed by the British Education Communication Technology Agency and ran from (2002 to 2006).

DeRuyter, McNaughton, Caves, Bryen and Williams (2007) in their article Enhancing AAC connection with the World stated; the availability of new technology has changed how the AAC end user exchange information and communicate with others. Significant financial barriers however have prevented many individuals who use AAC from accessing the technology and computer-based activities available in today's Information Society.

Many areas of funding are operated on an individual basis i.e, each person requiring communication aid funding would need to apply separately to each area of funding be it; Local Education Authority, the Health Service, Social Services or Charities making the business of asking for funds to purchase communication equipment very long winded and drawn out and complicated.

### **The Preliminary Results of the Survey Show The Following:**

Question: Were you involved in finding the funding for your AAC equipment?

End Users (over 18 years old)	82.4%.
Parents (Child uses AAC)	66.7%.

Question: End Users and Parents were asked who funded the AAC/ECA Equipment?

End Users	Using Own Money	47.1%.
End Users	Charity Money	11.8%.
Parents	Local Education Authority	22.2%.
Parents	Communication Aid Project Money	22.2%.
Parents	Community Equipment Service	22.2%.
Parents	Charity	16.7%.
Parents	Own Money	11.1%.
Parents	Friend's Money	5.6%

Question: Did you experience problems in obtaining funding for AAC/ECA?

End Users	52.9%.
Parents	55.6%.
Therapists	55%.

Question: Service Providers and Assessors were asked who there is more funding available for?

Service Providers said children	81%.
Therapists and Assessors said children	60%.

Question: Waiting times for the funding to be secured for a communication aid device?

End Users over 1 month to over 1 year	82.4%.
Parents over 1 month to over 1 year	89.1%.

Waiting times of over one year are common and the longest in the survey responses was eight years to secure funding for an AAC device.

These are only the preliminary findings but however they already highlight the financial problems in a system that is fragmented and poorly funded.

However with some creative and careful planning some of these expenses can be offset by standardizing wheelchair mounting systems and keeping all equipment supplied with in common parameters. By good quality recycling and refurbishing equipment can be passed on from one end user to another so effectively someone needing an update or more powerful machine can be supplied with an upgraded recycled one.