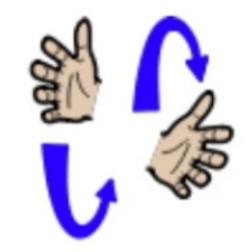**What is AAC?**

Augmentative and Alternative Communication

AAC is used to support talking when spoken words are difficult to understand and/or hard to produce.

Augmentative: Using systems to **support** spoken language. These are systems which are used **alongside** a person's talking. e.g.: key word signing, symbols, gesture.

An augmentative system may be used if your child is able to use some words but not enough to communicate in lots of different situations, or when their talking might be difficult to understand.

Alternative: Using an **alternative** system of communication to spoken language such as communication books, signing, symbol use or an electronic device.

This might be used when your child is not using speech, are using sounds, vocalisations or where speech is very effortful.

Communication: messages or information is given from one person to another

What is the best AAC system to use?

There are a wide range of systems that can be used – no system is better than another. Your speech and language therapist will work with you to find the best system based on your child's individual needs. Over time your child's needs might change so their needs will be reviewed and systems may change where appropriate.

It is important to remember that a range of different methods are often used so you might support your child by using signing and a symbol board alongside each other or at different parts of the day.

What about my child's speech?

It is important to give a child a communication system to help them learn how to use language to communicate. AAC provides people with a means of communicating with others so they can learn to enjoy interacting with others. AAC does not stop someone speaking. In fact, it can often help to improve speech.
For most people speech is usually quicker and easier than AAC so people will always use speech and gesture when they can. But all forms of communication are equally valid – whatever works best at the time to get the message across.