Decision chart: Guidance on referral criteria for specialised AAC services

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1. Does the person understand cause and effect?
   - Yes
   - No
   - The person currently does not meet the eligibility criteria for complex AAC assessment.
     Please note, this does not necessarily mean that the person should not have access to AAC or other technology. It simply means that they are not suitable for assessment and provision under this service specification at this time. Other support and funding streams may be more suitable.

2. Do they understand the purpose of a communication aid?
   - Yes
   - No
   - The local team should explore use of low tech strategies and techniques. Should reasons be identified as to why such methods are insufficient to meet the person’s communication needs, consider re-referral.

3. Is there a clear discrepancy between the person’s level of understanding and their ability to speak? (See note on rapidly degenerative conditions below)
   - Yes
   - No
   - Needs should be met by Local assessment. Local funding of any required equipment

4. Have ‘low-tech’ strategies and techniques been tried or considered and are there identified reasons why such methods are insufficient to meet the person’s communication needs?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Needs should be met by Local assessment. Local funding of any required equipment

5. How is the person likely to use high tech or low tech AAC in terms of language competence?
   - 5a. Unlikely to be able to combine words, phrases or symbols to create more than one concept. Uses high tech aids or low tech systems to select one concept at a time.
   - 5b. Likely to use complex multi-page vocabulary to combine multiple words, phrases or symbols to compile a sentence.
   - 5c. Likely to be able to construct novel messages using the alphabet.

   6a. Can the person select items on a touch screen or keyboard with at least one hand with sufficient speed and endurance to meet their reasonable communication needs, bearing in mind their level of language competence.
   - Yes
   - No
   - Likely to need Specialised Assessment. NHSE funding of any required AAC equipment

   6c. Can the person select items on a touch screen or keyboard with at least one hand with sufficient speed and endurance to meet their reasonable communication needs. (See note on rapidly degenerative conditions below).
   - Yes
   - No
   - Needs should be met by Local assessment. Local funding of any required equipment

NOTE: People with rapidly degenerative conditions can be referred before they meet all the criteria above, particularly in terms of speech and hand function (boxes 3 and 6c). The referrer and specialised AAC service team should be satisfied that they are deteriorating at a rate meaning that they are likely to meet the criteria within the time a communication aid would be provided. Although this time varies a period of 18 weeks is suggested. It is recognised that this is a difficult determination to make, but evidence of how a person has deteriorated prior to the referral should be considered. Decisions will be made on individual clinical circumstances.