

## Introducing Augmentative and Alternative Communication



Every human has the right to a means of communication.

“To promote the design, development, production and distribution of accessible information and communications technologies and systems at an early stage, so that these technologies and systems become accessible at minimum cost.” UNCRPD, 2006

Just as children are not born speaking their mother tongue, but need lots of repetition and demonstration, children using assistive voice technology have the same requirements.

Access to a device and modelling its use by everyone around them is important.

### **Outdated methods**

Some older methods of teaching the use of communication technology involved denying children things they wanted until they asked using their assistive support.

This was damaging in a number of ways.

- It stressed the child whose limited methods of being understood were suddenly not being heard.
- It harmed the development of a trusting relationship with the caregiver.
- It meant that a technology device, which might open the world of communication for the child was seen as a negative thing, and of course, the child then “failed” at using it too.



## Supportive methods

To support a child to use assistive voice technology.

1. Ensure the child has access to the technology at all times.
2. Ensure everyone at home and school uses the technology at times to communicate to the child e.g., when anyone is having a biscuit, they could press the biscuit button on the device, similarly when the child is being given a biscuit (assuming they like biscuits!).
3. Accept any other modes of communication used by the child e.g. eye- or finger-pointing—use of a new device should add to any communication they have already, not take from it.
4. Record phrases and voices that the child loves and have fun!