

Subject: **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)
– Part 4 of the Health (Scotland) Act 2016 :
Communication Equipment And Support**

Purpose: The purpose of this report is to update the Integration Joint Board on the commencement of Part 4 of the Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Act 2016 – the Provision of Communication Equipment.

Recommendation: Members are asked to:
i) Note the update in relation to Part 4 of the Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Act 2016 Duty to provide or secure Communication Equipment and Support (Provision of communication equipment).
ii) Note the potential financial risks associated with this legislation and;
iii) Otherwise note the content of the report..

Glossary of Terms	
NHS AA	NHS Ayrshire and Arran
HSCP	Health and Social Care Partnership
AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication
SLT	Speech and Language Therapy
IJB	Integration Joint Board
AHP	Allied Health Professional

1.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
1.1	Recent legislative changes around Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) provide duty on Scottish Government Ministers to secure provision of : a) Communication equipment, and b) Support in using that equipment, To any person who has lost their voice or has difficulty speaking
1.2	AAC in Ayrshire and Arran is currently provided by the Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) Service, with assessment and support provided by the SLTs. There is no dedicated resource available for AAC equipment in Ayrshire.
1.3	This legislation has the potential to make a significant difference to the lives of children and adults with communication difficulties.
1.4	There is risk that this legislation creates increased demand for AAC, with associated

	increased financial pressure.
2.	BACKGROUND
2.1	Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) refers to any method used to replace or supplement speech and can be signing, 'low tech' methods, such as picture/symbol charts or alphabet boards, simple voice output devices, as well as highly complex dedicated 'computerised' equipment and software.
2.2	AAC is used by an individual who has little or no intelligible speech. This can be as a result of a range of conditions including motor neurone disease, stroke, and head injury, learning disability, cancer or cerebral palsy. It is estimated that about 1 in 100 people may have significant difficulties expressing themselves. This means in Scotland there could be more than 50,000 people who might benefit from the use of some kind of AAC system, or 1360 people in North Ayrshire.
2.3	The Scottish Government published 'A Right to Speak' in 2012 with recommendations to improve services for people who use AAC. It was supported by £4million of funding over 3 years (2012-15) to NHS Boards and NHS Education for Scotland to develop Services and support the purchase of AAC equipment. 'Now Hear Me' – the final report published at the end of the 'A Right to Speak' highlighted the progress that had been made in meeting the aspirations that were set out at the start of the 'A Right to Speak' project, however differences remained in the provision of AAC equipment and support across Scotland.
2.4	<p>On 6th April 2016, the Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Act 2016 was given Royal Assent after previously being passed by the Scottish Parliament. Part 4 of the Act relates to the Provision of Communication Equipment. It states that: "The Scottish Ministers must, to such extent as they consider necessary to meet all reasonable requirements, provide or secure the provision of—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Communication equipment, and b) Support in using that equipment, <p>To any person who has lost their voice or has difficulty speaking."</p> <p>The update to the legislation came into force on 19 March 2018.</p>
3.	CURRENT AAC SERVICE DELIVERY IN AYRSHIRE AND ARRAN
3.1	Individuals who are identified as requiring access to augmentative or alternative methods of communication will in most cases be known to speech and language therapy (SLT). The SLT will identify and introduce appropriate communication support strategies or signing, low or simple tech methods of AAC to the individual and provide support and training to those around the individual. A small number of people with highly complex needs may require assessment and support from an AAC specialist and will be referred to the SLT Departments' AAC Service in Ayrshire and Arran.
3.2	<p>Staffing resource</p> <p>The AAC Service is staffed by a 0.5wte Specialist Speech and Language Therapist providing AAC assessment, support and training across Ayrshire and Arran. SLT professionals are responsible for the assessment and review of individuals with communication needs utilising the specialist resource as required. SLT staffing has reduced across Ayrshire and Arran (core staffing has dropped by 3.7wte – equivalent to 11% of core workforce - over the last 3 year period.) This has impacted</p>

	on the ability of SLT to provide ongoing support on the 'use' of AAC equipment. Changes in delivery of SLT as part of Service Level Agreements with education authorities has contributed to this significant reduction in SLT posts. SLT works in partnership with the education placement of each young person.
3.3	The lead responsibility for AAC service was delegated with AHP (Allied Health Professional) services to South Ayrshire IJB. Following devolution of AHP services to each Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), the responsibility for SLT assessment, support, and AAC equipment for the people of North Ayrshire, now sits with North Ayrshire HSCP.
3.4	<p>Equipment provision</p> <p>There is no dedicated budget within NHS Ayrshire and Arran for the purchase, or maintenance, of AAC equipment for children or adults. Adult provision is a one off purchase normally through SLT budgets. Funding requests for AAC equipment for children are currently made to the appropriate Education Services. There is no formal arrangement in place regarding AAC funding with any of the three education authorities, however requests are often successful.</p> <p>Simple high tech AAC equipment has been funded by the establishment that the young person attends. Following assessment and trial loan of complex high tech AAC, a funding request with supporting report is made by the AAC specialist. The process varies across partnerships and can involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • request for funding made by Head Teacher to education authority; and/or • Request for funding with supporting info from Head Teacher made to education group that supports 'accessibility'. <p>No formal commitment is in place from any authority to fund AAC.</p>
3.5	<p>Equipment Bank</p> <p>The AAC Equipment Loan Bank, was established over 25 years ago, and was boosted with funds from 'A Right to Speak'. This has continued to support the provision of equipment to children and adults over the last 3 years. The AAC loan bank provides short term (assessment) and long term loans of equipment for a range of devices that are frequently required. All AAC equipment loans are tracked and returned when no longer in use, and in most are able to be 'recycled' for future use. There is no identified budget for the purchase of replacement equipment or the maintenance of AAC equipment within the AAC Equipment Loan Bank.</p>
4.	IMPLICATIONS FOR AYRSHIRE AND ARRAN
4.1	The Scottish Government's Assisted Communication team have been working with partners, including NHS Boards and nominated Executive Leads for Augmentative and Alternative Communication in each NHS Board area across Scotland, to ensure readiness for commencement, and will continue to work with partners to support the delivery of the legislative duty and the wider programme of work. This includes Publication of the guidance to support implementation of this legislation and the detail around potential associated costs.
4.2	In addition to a lack of formalised arrangements being in place for the purchase of AAC equipment, additional financial risks include; budgetary responsibility - funding for AAC equipment for children by education authorities may stop if it is perceived by education authorities that legislation has now normalized AAC provision as a Health Board responsibility.

4.3	It is anticipated that there may be an increase in demand following the increased awareness raising of voice output communication equipment. Through development of technology and the 'media profile' of 'providing a voice' for individuals could result in increased referral rates.
4.4	Equipment Bank – the availability of up to date AAC equipment for the AAC Assessment Loan Bank is required to allow the communication impaired population of Ayrshire and Arran who are referred to the AAC Service receive a high quality assessment. This will require investment to replace worn items and ensure up to date technology is utilised.
4.5	The 2012 – 2015 Scottish Government National consultation process concluded that AAC spend across all stakeholders was unable to be quantified due to the range of equipment, the unpredictable nature of requirement, and the variant supply routes. Therefore there remains a significant and as yet un-quantified financial risk across a range of partners.
4.6	There is a requirement to quantify the financial risk and agree a funding strategy between health, social care and education. In addition the participation of 3rd Sector organisations is recognised and valued. Work has been ongoing locally and nationally to identify current numbers of people who use AAC. A 'snapshot' is currently being undertaken of numbers of people who use AAC by the Scottish Government Assistive Communications Team.
4.7	<p>To support this legislation Ayrshire and Arran AHP Senior Team are collaborating with Scottish Government Leads to develop a framework to assist in estimating Board spends across Scotland. Initial evidence would suggest the following costs.</p> <p>Total Projected Costs per year for AAC Service that meets the Scottish Governments Legislative Duty : This figure for each partnership area is based on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projected annual costs for repairs and warranty of AAC equipment • Updating loan bank of equipment (2018-19) and maintaining this loan bank • Purchase of equipment for individuals following assessment • Partner agencies ceasing to purchase AAC equipment <p>Cost per partnership; NAHSCP £42,000 - £80,000 SAHSCP £37,000 - £70,000 EAHSCP £38,000 - £72,000 Potential Total Annual Cost of AAC Ayrshire and Arran – £117,000- £222,000</p>
4.8	This legislative amendment, the associated duty of provision and the associated financial risks should be noted by the IJB. Guidance to support the legislation is currently being developed, and may have an impact on the costs associated with delivering AAC in Ayrshire and Arran.
5.	PROPOSALS
5.1	<u>Anticipated Outcomes</u>
	This Act could make a significant difference to the lives of many people with communication difficulties.
5.2	<u>Measuring Impact</u>

	<p>Work has been ongoing locally and nationally to identify current numbers of people who use AAC. A 'snapshot' is currently being undertaken of numbers of people who use AAC by the Scottish Government Assistive Communications Team.</p> <p>The SLT service are monitoring local spend on AAC devices.</p>
6.	IMPLICATIONS

Financial:	Section 4.7 details the current costs associated with delivering the service across the three Ayrshire Partnerships. With a projected total cost across Ayrshire and Arran – £117,000-£222,000 .
Human Resources:	No human resource implications arising from this report
Legal:	This report details the requirement as set out in Part 4 of the Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Act 3rd 2016 Duty to Provide or secure Communication Equipment and Support (Provision of communication equipment).
Equality:	At this stage, there is no action plan in place to mitigate potential adverse impacts. However, particular groups have been identified where training is required which may be extended to wider partners and individuals to raise awareness and education in the use of AAC communication equipment and support.
Children and Young People	Timely provision of appropriate AAC supports the wellbeing of children and young people with communication needs in North Ayrshire.
Environmental & Sustainability:	Nil .
Key Priorities:	Timely provision of appropriate AAC supports the Partnership's strategic ambitions around tackling inequalities, and improving mental health and wellbeing.
Risk Implications:	There is an identified risk in relation to financial sustainability to deliver the intention of the legislation. There is a need for further clarification in relation to the current funding streams associated with AAC across Health Board, Health and Social Care Partnerships and Council based Education Services.
Community Benefits:	Not applicable

Direction Required to Council, Health Board or Both <i>(where Directions are required please complete Directions Template)</i>	Direction to :-	
	1. No Direction Required	x
	2. North Ayrshire Council	
	3. NHS Ayrshire & Arran	
	4. North Ayrshire Council and NHS Ayrshire & Arran	

5.	CONCLUSION
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5.1	<p>Members are asked to note the potential impact of this legislation on the provision of AAC in Ayrshire and Arran; the positive impact this may have for children and adults with communication difficulties living in North Ayrshire, and the associated financial risk.</p> <p>The AHP Senior Team will continue to collaborate locally and nationally; to monitor demand for AAC, and to quantify any financial pressures as a result of this legislation.</p>
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