**Clarification regarding Referrals to NHS England Specialised AAC Services**

**September 2019**

1. NHS England Specialised AAC Services have been advised by the NHSE responsible Commissioner, Carolyn Young, that we have a duty to be equitable to all patients and that we require that patients accessing our services are referred from a professional, preferably a Speech & Language Therapist (SLT) in a statutory service role i.e. an NHS / local authority / education funded professional involved in the patient’s care.
2. If there is an Independent but no statutory SLT employed, the Specialised Service will seek to refer to a statutory Speech & Language Therapy Service. Where this is not possible (for example, if there is no NHS Speech & Language Therapy service – see 4 below), there is an expectation that funding would need to be in place for the Independent SLT/Practitioner to commit to supporting not only the AAC assessment but also the implementation of resulting prescribed recommendations and/or equipment.
3. If there is only an Independent SLT/Practitioner in place, any statutory service employed professional involved in the care of a patient can send in the referral to the Specialised AAC service, with the support of the Independent SLT/Practitioner. The Specialised AAC service would then undertake an assessment (inviting the Independent SLT/Practitioner to the appointment) and prescribe the equipment that meets the needs of the patient.
4. If there is no local NHS provision (as is often the case, for example, for adults with lifelong conditions such as Cerebral Palsy), Specialised AAC services will endeavour to seek local SLT support. In the interest of supporting such clients, who have been lifelong users of Voice Output Communication Aids, Specialised AAC services may accept referrals for these clients without a local SLT, but would raise this as a concern with the local SLT Manager.
5. As per 3 above, ‘Equipment Only Requests’ made by Independent SLTs / Practitioners must be supported by the local professional (statutory service employed) multidisciplinary team. The Specialised AAC service will then quality assure the equipment request and either purchase the equipment, or carry out their own assessment as they deem appropriate.
6. The NHS England Commissioner and the Specialised AAC Services are aware that there is a variation in what local SLT Services are able to support; a key focus of our work programme currently being undertaken is to support and develop expertise within these local services.

**Services will interpret on a case-by-case basis**

See: **“Commissioning Policy: Defining the boundaries between NHS and Private Healthcare” April 2013 Reference NHSCB/CP/12** *NHS Commissioning Board* page 8:

“An individual who has chosen to pay privately for an element of their care, such

as a diagnostic test, is entitled to access other elements of care as NHS commissioned treatment, provided the patient meets NHS CB [*commissioning Board*] commissioning criteria for that treatment. However, at the point that the patient seeks to transfer back to NHS care:

* the NHS CB is at liberty to request the patient be reassessed by an NHS

clinician

* the patient will not be given any preferential treatment by virtue of having

accessed part of their care privately, AND

* the patient will be subject to standard NHS waiting times”

**For further information, please contact Carolyn Young (NHS England Commissioner) via email:** [**Carolyn.young2@nhs.net**](mailto:Carolyn.young2@nhs.net)

**Some examples:**

**Private Rehabilitation Centre -** A privately run rehab centre with its own SLTs funded by the local authority to care for an individual – referrals would be accepted

**Charitable Special School -** A privately run special school with their own SLTs, funded either by the school or LEA – referrals would be accepted.

**Charitable Day Centre -** A privately run day centre with their own SLTs (+MDT) funded by social services to look after the people attending the centre – referrals would be accepted

**Local Education Authority (LEA) School with LEA(School) funded SLT**– referrals would be accepted

**Independent SLT** **funded by parents, who is seeing the child in LEA schoo**l – referrals would not be accepted without support from school

**Independent SLT seeing a patient at home with no involvement of school** **or local NHS SLT service** – referrals would not be accepted before seeking local SLT involvement – ask GP to refer to local SLT