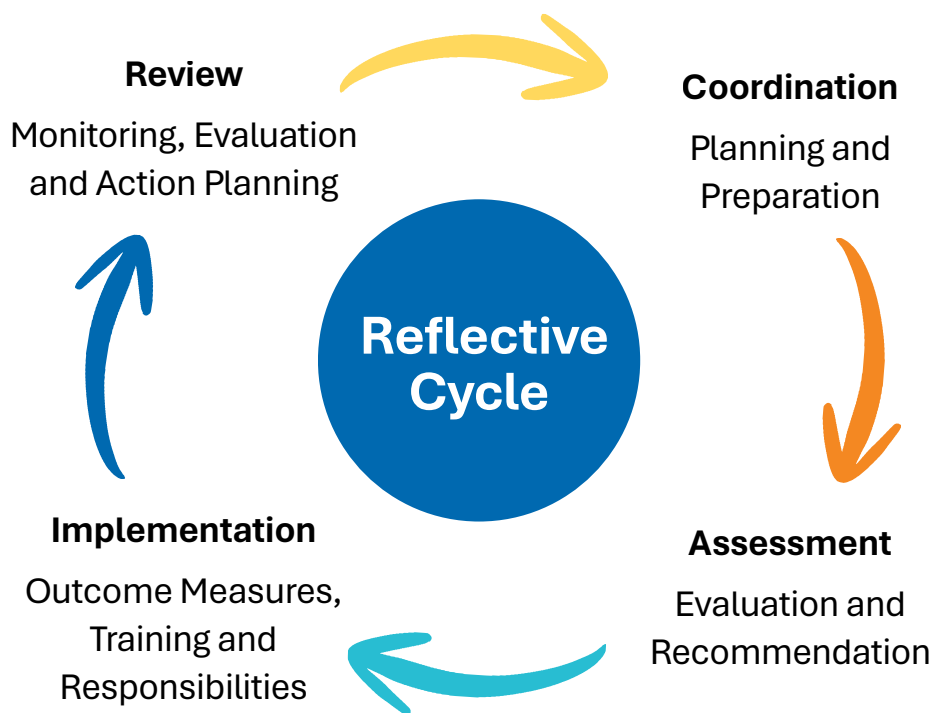


Pre-Assessment Reflective Cycle

Good reflective practice benefits everyone involved in the communication aid decision making process. These reflections might include a range different activities and approaches. For example, reflection could involve group discussions, writing down observations and/or collecting and analysing ‘insider’ viewpoints.

Each team member has a part to play in understanding if a communication aid will achieve, or has achieved, the best result for an individual. Reflections can also help the team to identify any lessons that could improve future decision-making process.

There are many different models which might be used, such as Gibbs’ reflective cycle (1988), Kolb’s learning cycle (1984), Schon’s reflective practice (1988) and Jasper’s ERA cycle (2013). The reflective cycle below is inspired by all of these sources and is presented in 4 stages. Where possible, we recommend reflecting at each stage of the process:



There are 4 overarching questions for any reflective cycle:

- What worked well?
- How do I know it worked well?
- What did not work as well as I might have expected and why?
- What might be improved for next time

These suggestions can be expanded or adapted for each stage of the assessment process.

Pre-Assessment Reflective Cycle

Step 1: Coordination

Planning and Preparation

This step lays the foundation for effective assessment and decision making. Thoughtful coordination ensures that the most appropriate people, information, and perspectives are in place before any formal assessment activity begins.

Purpose of the Coordination Stage

- To develop a shared understanding of the individual's communication needs
- To gather relevant information about the individual's characteristics, current communication system, and the environment
- To identify who should be involved in the decision-making process and what roles they will play

Key Activities

- Gathering background information on the individual - [see the About Me and The AAC Log tools](#)
- Considering the cultural, social, and environmental factors that may influence decision-making
- Identifying members of the AAC support team that can contribute to the decision-making process
- Agree on roles and ensure contributors understand what input is expected from them - [see Choosing Roles in AAC Decision Making and Implementation tool](#)

Reflection

When reflecting before the assessment, the following questions may be helpful:

- Who has been invited to contribute, and why?
- What has each person been asked to contribute?
- What information was particularly influential in shaping early thinking?
- What information was missing or unclear?
- Have any perspectives been overlooked at this stage?
- Looking back, what could be improved in the coordination process next time?

Pre-Assessment Reflective Cycle

Step 2: Assessment

Evaluation and Recommendation

This step brings together all available information to evaluate options and reach a shared recommendation about a potential communication aid to trial.

Purpose of the Assessment Stage

- To combine information gathered during the coordination process
- To explore different communication aid options systematically
- To reach a shared, clear and well-reasoned decision with all members of the decision-making process

Key Activities

- Holding structured discussions with the decision-making team, ensuring the user's views are central wherever possible - [see Assessment Leaflet, Spidergram, Competing Considerations, Cultural and Contextual Influencers tools](#)
- Exploring how different communication aid features and access methods align with the user's needs, preferences, and contexts.
- Identifying strengths and limitations of potential options
- Working towards a decision, often supported by the coordinator or evaluator who will be skilled in facilitating discussions - [see Communication System Recommendation Reflective Practice Checklist and Communication System Trial Plan tools](#)

Reflection

When reflecting during the assessment, the following questions may be helpful:

- Who attended the assessment, and what roles did they play?
- To what extent were the views of **all** contributors heard and valued?
- How were differing opinions explored and resolved?
- What compromises have been made to reach an AAC recommendation?
- Were all contributors given an opportunity to reflect on this assessment stage?

Pre-Assessment Reflective Cycle

Step 3: Implementation

Putting the recommendation into practice

This step allows the recommended communication aid to be trialled in real-world situations. A well-planned implementation phase is essential if the communication aid is to support the AAC user to achieve their communication goals.

Purpose of the Implementation Stage

- To ensure the recommended communication aid is appropriate
- To embed the communication system within everyday communication opportunities

Key Activities

- Document the communication aid recommendation clearly - [see Communication System Trial Plan](#) and [The AAC Log](#) tools
- Identify responsibilities for:
 - Purchasing the communication aid
 - Warranty, insurance and maintenance - [see Communication aid maintenance and breakdown plan](#)
 - Setting up and personalising the system
- Plan training for the AAC support team
- Establish short, medium and long-term communication goals - [see The AAC Log](#)
- Monitor use of the communication aid and identify potential barriers - [see Little Eureka Moments](#)

Reflection

When reflecting during implementation, the following questions may be helpful:

- How confident are members of the AAC support team in supporting the implementation of the chosen communication aid
- What early successes or barriers have emerged?
- Are there environmental or organisational barriers affecting use?

Pre-Assessment Reflective Cycle

Step 4: Review

Monitoring, Evaluation and Action Planning

This step explores how communication aids must be reviewed, adapted or retrialled, as communication needs and environments evolve. Based on this review, the cycle begins again to ensure communication aids continue to meet the AAC user's needs.

Purpose of the Review Stage

- To evaluate whether the communication aid is achieving desired outcomes
- To identify whether adjustments or supports may be required
- To inform future decision-making and learning

Key Activities

- Reviewing progress against agreed goals - [see The AAC Log](#)
- Collecting feedback from the child/young person and the AAC support team
- Evaluating consistency of use across settings
- Updating implementation plans where necessary - [see Communication System Trial Plan](#)
- Agreeing the timing and focus of the next review

Reflection

When reflecting during the review stage, the following questions may be helpful:

- What outcomes have been achieved, and how do we know?
- What aspects of the implementation process have worked particularly well?
- What has not worked as expected, and why?
- What changes or refinements are needed?
- What have we learned from this process that may inform future coordination and assessment processes?
- When will the next review will take place to ensure that outcomes continue to be achieved or worked towards?

Remember: this cycle is a continuous process of evaluating and updating decisions based on an individual's communicative preferences and needs.

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