

DSS1026 Assistive Technology – Communication Assistive Technology & Training Tier Two Service Specification

1. Introduction

This Tier Two Service Specification provides the overarching Service Specification for nationwide Specialist Communication Assistive Technology Assessment and Training Services (the Service) funded by Disability Support Services (DSS). It should be read in conjunction with the DSS Tier One Service Specification, which details requirements common to all services funded by DSS, and the performance measures and reporting template for the Services.

2. Service Definition

The Service provides specialist assessment and training to people who have complex communication needs. This includes assistance with face-to-face communication, written communication and accessing the environment. The Service also includes working and cooperating with other agencies in the community, and the health and education sectors to meet the Service objectives.

2.1 Key Terms

The following are definitions of key terms used in this Service Specification:

Term	Definition
Communication Assistive Technology	Any item, piece of equipment or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customised, that is used to maintain or improve communication of disabled people.
Provider	Means the provider contracted by Disability Support Services to provide Specialist Communication Assistive Technology Assessment and Training Services

Person/People	People of all ages, who are eligible for publicly funded health care in New Zealand, who have been assessed as having a physical, intellectual, sensory or age related disability (or a combination of these) that is likely to continue for a minimum of six months and result in a reduction of independent
	function to the extent that ongoing support is required (long term disability).
Service Users	People who have complex communication needs or difficulty accessing their environment and have been assessed as being eligible for the Service.
Ministry of Health's Equipment and Modification Services (EMS) Assessor Accreditation Framework	The Accreditation Framework for health professionals undertaking assessments that may subsequently result in service requests for equipment and modification services for people with disabilities.
Needs Assessment Service Co-ordination (NASC)	NASCs are funded by the Ministry. Their roles are to determine eligibility, assess the Person's level of disability support needs, inform People / families / advocates of what the support package contains, discuss options and coordinate support services to meet those needs. NASCs coordinate such services, but do not provide the services themselves.

3. Service Objectives

The objectives of this Service are to:

- I. Enable Service Users to communicate more independently and effectively.
- II. Support people, including Service Users family or whānau and other relevant support people, to communicate more effectively with Service Users.
- III. Raise awareness in the community regarding the impact of communication impairment on the lives of Service Users and on those who interact with them and supporting increased inclusion within their community.
- IV. Minimise the impact of communication impairment on the Service User and their family/whānau.
- V. Increase Service User's level of participation in their home, work, school, and social environments.

4. Service Performance Measures

Performance Measures form part of the Results Based Accountability (RBA) Framework. The Performance Measures are set out in Appendix 3 and Annex A of the Outcome Agreement.

5. Service Users

People who have complex communication needs or difficulty accessing their environment.

5.1 People not eligible for this Service

- I. People eligible for Ministry of Education funded services (for access to the school curriculum only).
- II. People eligible for ACC funded services.
- III. People with personal health conditions who do not have a long-term disability as defined above; with the exception of those whose needs may be covered within the Chronic Health Conditions – Long Term Support funding stream.

5.2 Costs

There are no costs to be paid by the Person or Service User.

5.3 Access/Entry Criteria

Initial referral to the service may be from a Person, family/whānau, teachers, health and education organisations, GPs, carers, a Ministry approved needs assessment process, or community agency.

All requests for services are responded to within three working days of receipt of the referral. Services will be provided to Service Users on acceptance of their referral.

6. Service Components

6.1 Where Services are delivered

The Service is expected to be available nationally, reflecting population patterns, including appropriate access for Māori and Pacific peoples, and people living in rural areas.

It is expected that the settings in which the Services are delivered nationwide will be varied and will be provided in the most appropriate context, depending on the Service User's needs. The provider will endeavour to ensure that:

- appropriate facilities are available in which an assessment may take place, and where equipment and resources may be set up and trialled.
- staff travel to the Person's residence where necessary to complete the assessment process, equipment trial and initial training.

6.2 Planning and delivering services

Services will be provided within usual business hours, or, where necessary, at a time to suit Service Users, which must be agreed between the Provider and the Service User. Timely access is expected through monitoring and management of waiting times.

All components of the Services will be carried out in accordance with recognised industry standards:

- Clinical staff will have skills and experience in specialist assistive communication assessment and solutions, including professionals in the areas of occupational therapy and speech language therapy who hold the appropriate professional registration, annual practising certificate (where required), qualifications and have the appropriate accreditation and credentialing as part of Disability Support Services EMS Assessor Accreditation Framework.
- Technical and administration support will be available to clinical staff to support the use and application of a wide range of communication assistive technology solutions.

6.2.1 Prioritisation

The Provider will develop and implement a process and policy for prioritising referrals to ensure that those who have the most urgent need for an assessment receive Services first. Based upon need, priorities will generally be established by reference to the following criteria:

- People with progressive conditions are seen as soon as possible.
- People who require troubleshooting or crisis management are responded to as soon as possible.
- A review of the Service User's needs when the equipment is no longer meeting their needs is completed as soon as is practicable.

6.2.2 Assessment, training and support

The Provider will provide the Service to the Person and/or Service User and key support people. The Service will include:

- specialised assessment of the Person's communication needs, abilities and goals, including liaison with the Person and/or their key support people, including family and whānau, education and/or health personnel, residential support staff before and during the assessment process
- trial of possible solutions (including software, resources and/or equipment) including customisation of trial options
- completion of a written report including recommendations and if required, submission of a service request for consideration of DSS funding of equipment or resources to the Ministry's contracted provider for equipment and modification services (including quotes)
- recommendations for DSS funded equipment based on the most costeffective solution to meet the Service User's needs and consideration given to integrated systems where the Service User has other specialised equipment such as a powered wheelchair
- delivery of the equipment, initial set up and training in the use of the equipment
written information about use of the equipment
- follow-up and ongoing support, if required, to the Service User and relevant others to ensure continued success of technology solutions and further development of the skills of the Service User and support people (at around three months and again at twelve months following the supply of the equipment)
- referral of the Service User to other agencies to assist with communication i.e. support staff, teacher, service coordinators working with people who have sensory impairment, as appropriate
- advice and support regarding alternative funding and support options.

The Provider will remain available for troubleshooting and responses to equipment breakdown. If challenges with the equipment and its application cannot be resolved, a new assessment will be undertaken.

The Provider will provide and maintain an appropriate computer and phone network to ensure it operates efficiently.

The Provider will ensure technological support is available to the Service User, clinical team and other Communication Assistive Technology Assessors regarding the technology they use. This will include:

- specialised augmentative and alternative communication devices
- computer and mobile technology
- alternative access/peripherals to the technology

mounting options for wheelchairs and other equipment people with physical disabilities require, in order to access the technology

- customisation of the equipment as and when required to the best possible standard and timeframes within the available resources
- environmental control techniques.

6.2.3 Trial Equipment

A comprehensive range of trial equipment will be available. This may be used during the assessment for trial purposes. The Provider will establish an ongoing equipment acquisition process to maintain current technology options for trial by People.

6.2.4 Group Training

The Provider will develop resources and provide training in the use and application of communication assistive technology, in a range of different formats and to different audiences, to:

- guide families, whānau and support people, and other referrers to make appropriate referrals to the Provider
- support ongoing positive communication outcomes support People who have similar communication needs
- introduce strategies to support the development of communication and upskill key personnel who are providing support for People, including the use and application of low-tech equipment and resources. This could include marae-based training sessions and also sessions in community homes to train staff who support People with intellectual disabilities.
- train EMS Assessors who wish to up-skill in communication assistive technology (Credentialing Level 1 and 2 of the DSS EMS Accreditation Framework).
- provide training in key centres nationwide where people can attend to receive further support and/or consultation.
- provide and or support the provision of at least 50 regional days in each twoyear period. Regional days are designed to give both school-aged students and adults an opportunity to meet others who are using communication devices, develop networks, learn from each other and problem solve any issues.

6.2.5 Community-related Services

The Provider will:

- provide information about communication assistive technology and its services in a range of suitable formats to relevant stakeholders
- provide support and training to relevant sector and consumer groups when requested
- promote the services' role to the community.

6.2.6 Support Services

The following external support services will be available to be utilised as needed to enable effective communication with all people involved during the assessment or training processes:

- Interpreter services (including NZSL)
- Kaumatua services
- Ministry of Education staff
- Occupational Therapists
- Speech Language Therapists
- Specialist wheelchair and seating therapists • School/workplace personnel
- Others as relevant.

Where such services are required, the Provider will be responsible for covering any relevant costs of engaging the service.

7. Guidelines/Policies/Legislation

The Provider will provide Services in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in the Agreement containing this Service Specification, which is entered into under section 10 of the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000.

The Provider is required to abide by all relevant New Zealand legislation.

8. Exit Criteria

A Service User exits this Service when:

- they have achieved their communication goals, typically up to 12 months after the provision of equipment and management of initial training, or longer should further follow-up support be required

after they, or their relevant support people, have indicated their satisfaction with the equipment and its use, either verbally or by way of a follow-up questionnaire

- When a person leaves New Zealand to live permanently in another country, they may take their dedicated communication devices that have been funded by the Ministry with them. All equipment taken with the person when they permanently depart from New Zealand is gifted to them and becomes their property. No further refurbishment, replacement, repair or training will be undertaken once the person has departed permanently from New Zealand. • upon their death, or
- at their request.

9. Linkages

Linkages with the following services may be required at different stages of the assessment and training processes.

Agency/agencies	Linkage or Interface
Community therapists and child development services	Providers must be able to demonstrate linkages with community and hospital based medical practitioners and speech language therapists.
Equipment Services	Linkages must be demonstrated with Ministry funded Equipment and Modification Services providers and relevant equipment suppliers and manufacturers to maintain up-to-date databases on equipment available.
Specialist wheelchair and seating therapists	Linkages must be demonstrated with Ministry funded wheelchair and seating service providers.
Community and Support Services	Providers must be able to demonstrate linkages with community services required by People, including, but not limited to Māori providers, marae, Pacific primary care

	providers, Needs Assessment and Service Co-ordination (NASC) organisations, Workbridge, tertiary institution disability support coordinators, support groups such as the Motor Neurone Disease Association and other relevant disability groups or organisations. Linkages can be developed at local or national level to ascertain the best way of working together.
ACC	Linkages can be developed at local or national level to ascertain the best way of working together.

Other Government Departments	Linkages with other Government social services, including for example Work and Income NZ and the Ministry of Education and school personnel. Linkages can be developed at local or national level to ascertain the best way of working together.
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10. Exclusions

Technical support requests that do not relate to a Person's disability-related needs and equipment are not covered by this Service Specification.

11. Quality Requirements

Disability Support Services may conduct an:

- Independent survey to evaluate Service Users' satisfaction with the Service at any time.
- Independent evaluation of Service performance and effectiveness against this Service Specification, and its intended outcomes at any time.

12. Purchase Units

Purchase Units are defined in Health New Zealand's Nationwide Service Framework Purchase Unit Data Dictionary. The following table is a summary list of the Purchase Unit Codes associated with this Service.

Purchase Unit Codes	Purchase Unit Description	Measure	Purchase Measure definition
DSS1026	Assistive Technology – Comm. Assistive Tech. & Train	Assessment	Assistive Technology refers to a broad range of devices, services, strategies and practices that are designed to increase the functional competencies of people.

13. Reporting Requirements

Performance Measure reporting is set out in Appendix Three and Annex A of the Outcome Agreement.