**We asked young people with SEND what their ‘golden rules’ would be for good communication across services. They said :**

* Ask me what my access needs are, before you do anything else
* Tell me a bit about yourself before I meet you ( a photo profile or similar)
* Ask **me** how best to communicate with me
* Adjust your communication to ‘meet me halfway’.
* Offer me choices of ways to communicate e.g. email, text , face to face
* Think universal design and accessibility; things like captions on video calls should be business as usual
* If you can’t answer my question straight away, let me know you’re working on it and will get back to me
* Communicate directly with me, not just through my parents/carers
* Support me to advocate for myself and help me to develop the skills to do this effectively ( ‘let me have a say and give me some help to have a say’)
* Be prepared to develop your own skills in listening and communicating with me
* Make an effort to understand, and don’t judge
* Respect me, my experiences, and my perspective
* ‘How people talk to you and how they explain things is important; explain things clearly’

**What this might look like in practice**

* Always offering a variety of ways for young people to express their views
* Not assuming that speaking is always the ‘best’ way to communicate
* Drawing stick men on a note pad to illustrate a conversation, or using natural gestures; it doesn’t have to be hi-tech or look fancy. A helpful list of low-tech communication supports is available here <https://www.rhn.org.uk/content/uploads/2020/08/Low-tech-AAC.pdf>
* Recognising that speaking children and young people may benefit from using non-speaking ways to communicate at times. <https://www.assistiveware.com/learn-aac/support-communication-for-part-time-aac-users>
* Doing an activity together such as sensory play or making a model .
* Using texting or messaging apps. Mind of My own is a good alternative to this to address any safe-guarding concerns <https://mindofmyown.org.uk/>

**Activities to support pupil voice could include**

* Creating a Lego model of your ideal school to enable a child to show what they like and don’t like at school
* Drawing or sculpting from playdough someone who is important them such as a teacher , family member or pet. This enables them to start thinking about the qualities they like about that person, and any they would change. This can be done in the abstract to prevent it getting too personal, for example ‘what would the best teacher in the world be like?’
* Creating a ‘worry monster’ from art materials that represents their worries about transition, for older children this could be made more age appropriate by focussing on creating an anime character or super-villain
* Using a tablet to create an online book about themselves . One free and accessible platform for this is <https://bookcreator.com/>

**Some alternative and augmented communication (AAC) ideas that are free and easy to access**

* Free phone apps available from app stores such as C board ( picture based) and Speech Assistant ( text and emoji based)
* Drawing ( you don’t have to be an artist!)
* Note pad and pen ( sometimes it is easier to write down difficult things than find the words verbally)
* Talking mats – <https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/what-is-aac/types-of-aac/talking-mats/>

If you are interested in finding out more about AAC here are a couple of useful links

<http://complexneeds.org.uk/modules/Module-3.1-Communication---augmentative-and-assistive-strategies/All/m09p010a.html>

<http://www.autismtoolbox.co.uk/communication-supports-aac>