



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

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Autism in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Information for Early Years Settings



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Part 1 : Information

Section 1 : What is autism?



Imagine trying to find your way through the crowd with only jumbled signposts to follow and directions which you can only partially understand ...

Imagine what it feels like to be alone in a foreign country, lost in a crowd of 2,000. Picture your confusion as you struggle through a chaotic muddle of legs, faces and bodies.

For an autistic child, ordinary situations can feel just like this. But as they try to make sense of the world around them, autistic children face the added problem of feeling that they are 'different'.

Much has been written on the subject of autism – an in-depth description could easily take a whole book. This section will summarise the main aspects that any interested professional needs to know.

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. More than one in 100 people are autistic and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK.

“Reality to an autistic person is a confusing, interacting mass of events, people, places, sounds and sights. There seems to be no clear boundaries, order or meaning to anything. A large part of my life is spent just trying to work out the pattern behind everything.” - A person with autism

What causes autism?

The causes of autism are still being researched. Many experts believe that there is not one single cause and that amongst other influences, multiple genetic factors are likely to be involved. However, it is clear that autism is not caused by emotional deprivation or the way a person has been brought up. There is no link between autism and vaccines. Much research has been devoted to this issue over the years and the results have comprehensively shown there is no link.

Autistic children have differences that are based in biology and brain development. As a result, autism affects the way that a person communicates, interacts, and experiences the world around them.

Can people with autism be helped?

Autism should be seen as a *difference* rather than a *disadvantage*. We should consider the strengths of an autistic child as well as the differences. Both strengths as well as barriers to learning may arise as a result of the areas of difference.

The way that the autistic child is supported and educated can make a big difference to their learning and wellbeing. Research shows that, if their needs are recognised and appropriate support is given, a significant number of autistic children will experience relatively few difficulties in their school lives and into adulthood.



Section 2 : Signs of Autism

How autism can affect children?

Autistic children have differences in three areas of development – social understanding and communication; flexibility of thinking, the way they process and understand information; and sensory processing and integration. Every child will have a range of abilities within each of these areas and many autistic children will have high levels of anxiety as a result of these differences. We need to look at these differences in terms of both the strengths and challenges that might arise.

Social understanding and communication

Neurotypical children do not need to be specifically taught social behaviour and social understanding as it is something they mostly just seem to acquire. Autistic children however, think and interpret information differently, often finding it very difficult to understand the social behaviour of other people. This means that they sometimes behave in socially inappropriate ways.

Some children seem to be indifferent to other people, they may not want to play with other children and only join in with an activity if an adult insists. For autistic children other people's opinions may have little or no significance so they may say or do exactly what they want, and may not respond to the usual methods of praise and positive attention. Their behaviour and reactions may be confusing to their peers who may therefore avoid interactions with them.

Communication is a predominantly social act. Given the difficulty autistic children have with social interactions it is therefore not surprising that they have similar difficulties in understanding communication, and therefore developing skills in this area. These children may be later in learning to speak or may not develop speech. They may have very little language, they may echo what is said or talk a lot about topics of great interest to them.

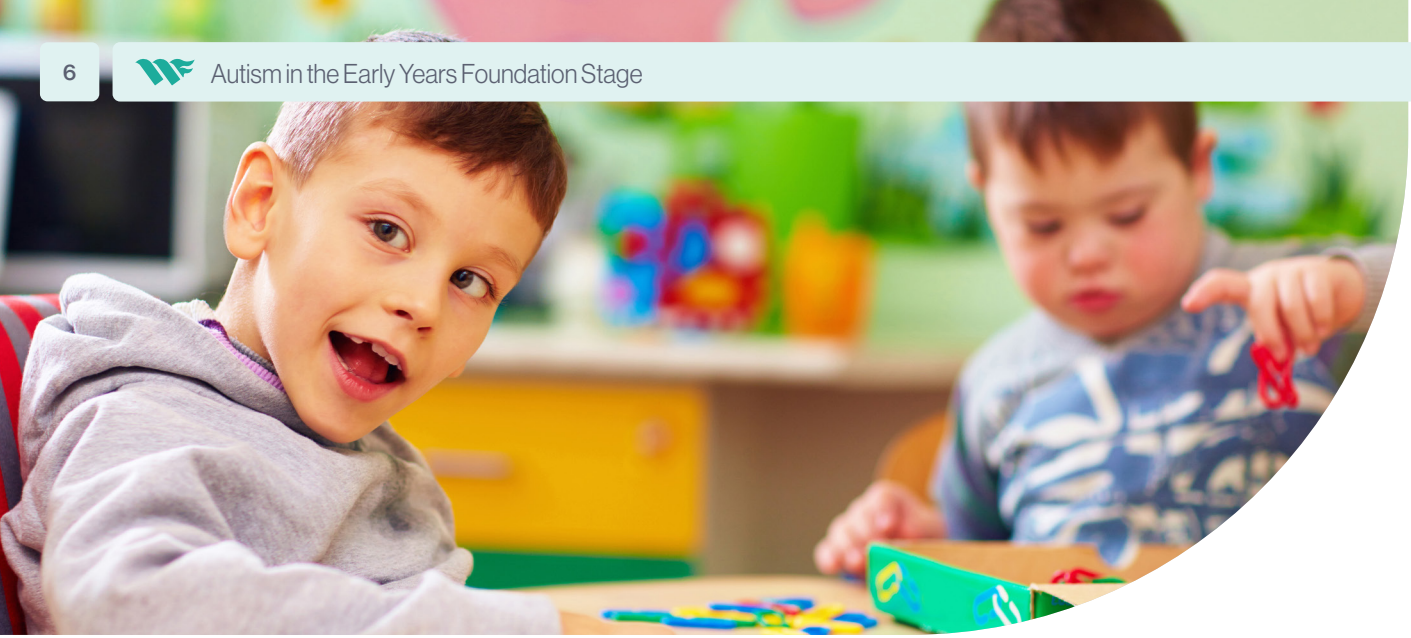
Some children develop good language skills but find it hard to use them socially or see another's point of view. Conversations can be very one-sided. Their eye contact may be poor.

Flexibility of thinking

Autistic children may play with toys in a different way to other children, preferring to arrange toys in a certain way, collect specific objects, or spin and turn toys repeatedly and watch them move. They tend to play alone or alongside, rather than with other children. Some autistic children develop special interests in certain toys, topics or activities which may dominate their play. They may be unable to play imaginatively, unless it is in a very stereotyped way recalling observed actions.

When new skills are learned they will be linked to the situation in which they are acquired, and therefore are often not generalized by the autistic child.

If familiar routines are changed or disturbed, autistic children may exhibit very fearful and bizarre behaviour.



Sensory processing and integration

Some autistic children have a different perception of sound, sight, smell, touch, taste, movement, spatial awareness and internal sensations and may be over or under sensitive to some or all of these senses. This can explain their reactions to changing clothes, food, noise, toileting etc. and has implications for their home and early years environments. They may not make appropriate eye contact, either finding it hard to look or staring intently. Some children may not be able to look and talk or listen at the same time, being confused by all the sensory stimulation they receive.

Some autistic children may appear clumsy and uncoordinated within certain activities, for example seeming to have poor gross motor skills but very good fine motor skills or vice-versa. They may struggle to sit still and are always on the go, seeking movement.

Remember that a diagnosis of autism can be given without all the above signs being exhibited and children without autism may also display some of these behaviours.

Strengths of autistic children

All autistic children are individuals, and they will have differing abilities. If they are interested, they may be able to concentrate and focus in detail on an activity. This absorption in a task can mean they develop a high level of skill and play at one activity for longer periods than many others. Generally, those with autism are better able to process visual information than that which is presented verbally.

Autistic children can be very different from each other because:

- The three areas of difference may not all be affected to the same degree
- All children have their own personalities
- All children have a unique family and environment which impacts on their development
- Their behaviour will be affected by their access to education and the quality of that education

Co-occurring differences and conditions

Other conditions often co-occur with autism, and it is important to discuss with parents and other professionals any additional conditions a child may have. Co-occurring conditions can include, for example a learning disability, epilepsy, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), visual or hearing impairments. Autistic children can also have co-occurring differences in their eating, sleeping and toileting patterns.

Part 2 : From Understanding to Intervention

The following strategies although designed for autistic children may be of use for children with a variety of differing needs.

Every child is different and what works for one may not work for another. These strategies should be tailored to the specific needs of each individual. Remember that parents and carers know their children best and will probably be able to assist in the development of approaches within your setting.

Section 1 : Transitions

Preparing for and managing change is important for all children, but this is particularly so for those with autism. Change includes starting at a new setting, arriving and departing, and transitions between activities over the course of a day.

Staff and parents will need to prepare the child for any changes. Knowledge of the child and what they are likely to require before transition is essential.

Section 2 : Physical Environment

Some autistic children experience differences with sensory stimuli. They may be over-sensitive or under-sensitive to certain sounds, sights, smells, tastes or textures. Even the number of children present may have an overwhelming effect on the child.

How can we modify the environment to reduce anxiety for autistic children?

- Structure in the environment helps children make sense of what can be a confusing place. Are areas of the room clearly divided and labelled with pictures or symbols to show what activities can take place there?
- Clutter and distraction may be inhibiting, and a low arousal setting is likely to be the most reassuring. Try to create a low distraction area within the setting - this may be a quiet room, quiet book corner with cushions or even a tent
- Have you taken into account that smells, sounds and lighting may be distracting?
- The setting needs to be calm and focused, allowing opportunities for relaxation

Staff need to be aware that they and the other children are part of the environment. Therefore, many of the issues listed above also need to be considered in relation to people:

- Be aware of the child's need for space
- Warn the child of any approaches – it is often best to approach autistic children from the side
- Consider their positioning at an activity, they tend to be most comfortable working alongside others rather than opposite them
- Wherever possible adopt a calm and quiet manner

Some autistic children may have a lack of awareness of their own safety and of other hazards.

- You should undertake a risk assessment which takes this into account.

Some autistic children may not seem to react to pain. They may not cry when hurt, so it is important that they are carefully observed when on play equipment.

Section 3 : Communication

Most early years staff are used to dealing with children who are not yet talking. However, autistic children may present a new challenge as for them language and communication develop separately. A young autistic child may have no spoken language or may have an advanced vocabulary and a very adult sounding speech pattern. But, in both cases they may have little understanding of communication.

Autism teaches us that language is not always 'a form of communication' so in working with autistic children we have to be prepared to teach both language and communication.

Something to communicate about

Autistic children have wants and needs but may have little awareness of them or may not be able to communicate them in ways that others can understand (some of the behaviours seen in young autistic children are their attempts to communicate). Teaching about communication therefore, must start at the very beginning:

Help the child have joint attention (a shared focus of attention between the child and adult) with others:

- Start by playing alongside the child and imitating them
- Vary the pace of imitation so that the child is waiting for it and beginning to appreciate the turn-taking
- Introduce some variations and try to entice the child to imitate you

Help the child understand eye contact as a signal:

- Engage in an activity that the child needs you for
- Stop the activity abruptly – most children will look at the adult to see why s/he has stopped 'playing'
- As the child looks, say 'Oh, would you like some more?'
- Eventually the child will understand that looking is the signal to continue, and will start using eye gaze as a communicative signal

Help the child understand what they are feeling in situations when you are certain what this is. Look for clear situations of happiness, fear, anger and then help the child know what they are feeling as well as what led to it and how you want them to express it.

Something to communicate with

A child who is not speaking needs to be given a way of communicating. Children with speech may also need a system of pictures and symbols to help them express themselves (especially if they are in the grip of a strong emotion such as anger or fear). The problem is deciding on the best system for the child and in such situations the advice of a specialist teacher or speech and language therapist should be sought.

Something to communicate for

Children have to have a reason to communicate; that means they must not be able to do everything for themselves, nor have every need anticipated. Autistic children need to learn to see others as sources of having their needs met, and practitioners and parents will need to see how the child is communicating (at whatever level) and make the most of it.

Communicative functions

Autistic children, if they communicate at all, do so usually for only 2 or 3 purposes. These are request, protest, and, for those with speech, 'lecturing' about a favourite topic. The child will also express emotions especially frustration, anger and fear, but usually as a direct act (behaviour) without any communicative intent.

Before beginning to teach communicative functions, a simple observational assessment should be undertaken using the checklist for communicative functions form (Appendix 1). This checklist is useful when trying to understand the ways in which a mostly non-verbal child communicates. Each communicative function or reason for communicating may be expressed using any number of communicative means or ways to communicate through actions and behaviour. To use the checklist, simply go through each communicative function and check off the communicative means that apply. For example, if a child requests objects by pointing, looking and moving closer to them, you would check off all three of these pre-verbal means in the "request object" row.

When teaching communicative functions start with request ('I want...'), then protest ('no'); further functions are difficult to teach and specialist advice may be required.

Understanding instructions

- Give instructions confidently and say exactly what you mean, using simple language. Autistic children need direct instructions, not wrapped up as questions or statements, or offering them opportunities to refuse (e.g. say 'John, reading time', rather than 'Would you like to come and sit down now John, it's time to read; or 'John, coat on', rather than 'Please get your coat before you go out to play')
- Try to avoid using phrases that the children may take literally such as: 'I laughed my head off', 'I've got frog in my throat', 'It's raining cats and dogs', 'Cat got your tongue?', 'Go and wash your hands in the toilet'

Provide visual supports for verbal instructions. Using visual strategies can support understanding and learning, and promote independence by:

- Enabling the child to 'see' what they need to do and what is happening next
- Providing additional time for processing
- Being available after the spoken instruction is given. They can be looked at, sequenced, rehearsed, and learned
- Helping the child identify and carry out the stages of a task



Section 4 : Helping children become more flexible

- Provide a predictable and safe environment – it helps autistic children if they know what to expect to be happening in different places, and where to find things
- Offer a consistent daily routine – routine is often very important for autistic children, so having fixed aspects of the day can be beneficial e.g. snack times, quiet times etc
- Introduce changes gradually with good communication - autistic children can learn to cope with changes if they know what to expect, giving them information, if possible visual clues, can really help
- Teach what 'finished' means – lots of activities have no clear end point so one needs to be created, e.g. you can play in the sand for 10 minutes (use a sand timer), you can play on the bike until the whistle is blown etc. Sign 'finished' to reinforce the message
- Make choice meaningful, but not too complex for the child to understand – it is good to start with choices of just two things, e.g. 'Would you like to do a puzzle or paint'? If you can, support the choice with either object or picture clues
- Provide information about what is happening or is about to happen – by letting an autistic child know what is happening next, you are removing the element of surprise which they may find distressing

Section 5 : The Curriculum

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is truly inclusive and can be adapted to meet the needs of all children with careful planning and an understanding of the implications of autism. Essentially an autistic child needs to develop 'learning to learn' skills in order to access the curriculum – sitting for short periods, looking, listening, attention, concentration, enjoyment and simple self-help skills, such as toileting and dressing. A lot of practice may be needed.

The following are some general tips for supporting learning:

Personal, Social and Emotional development

- Talk to parents and observe the child closely to find out their interests and motivations
- Note the child's favoured activities and use these as potential rewards e.g. 'Jigsaw first, tickle next'
- Specifically teach imitation skills, 'Watch medo this!'. Use hand over hand to support this at first, if necessary
- Slowly involve one other child in joint play activities with a shared focus such as, each child having their own scoop but working together to fill one bucket with sand. It is important to limit the resources in joint activities to minimize distraction. Help the autistic child notice what the other child is doing. Gradually extend this by asking the child to copy what the other child is doing
- Play simple turn taking games, initially just with an adult
- Give clear visual clues to help prepare the child for new activities
- Introduce the language of feelings through everyday situations. Talk about how you are feeling and why and also describe the child's feelings for them
- Help the child develop an awareness of themselves and others by playing mirror games together
- Encourage the child to start to point to other people the adult names

Communication and Language

- Use attention grabbing toys and activities
- Adults should use a simple running commentary of what the child is doing as they play
- Copy any noises or words that the child says
- Use an expressive, sing-song voice as this may help to gain the child's attention
- Specifically teach pointing
- Create situations that prompt the use of communication e.g keeping a favourite toy or food item out of reach
- Use visual or musical cues to supplement verbal instructions

Physical development

- Have clear safety rules which the child can understand, using visual prompts to reinforce
- Give the child the opportunity to explore a new space in their own time. At first this may be with no other children present
- Teach playground games such as chase, initially with just an adult and then gradually introduce other children
- Provide plenty of movement breaks throughout the day, especially during sitting activities
- Provide activities for the child to develop an awareness of space, such as moving through obstacle courses
- Plan regular activities to develop core strength and balance such as dance and yoga. Programmes such as BEAM and Smart Moves may be suitable for older children
- Provide activities that involve crossing the midline, such as pushing cars or trains around a track or transferring objects from a basket on one side of the body to another one positioned on the other side
- Help the child recognise when they need help with personal care and how to ask for it



Literacy

- Provide 1:1 or small group opportunities for a story and singing time if the child has difficulty focusing in a large group
- Use interactive books, such as 'lift-the-flap' and noisy 'press the button' books
- Use puppets and props to bring stories to life and help the child relate to them
- Enhance stories through the use of sensory resources, such as musical instruments and sound makers, textured materials and scented items
- Be aware that the child may quickly learn how to decode words but that the ability to understand the meaning of what he reads may take longer

Mathematics

- Whilst the child may recognise numerals, they may need lots of support with the counting principles
- Use favourite toys, real objects and everyday experiences for counting
- Focus on learning through concrete experiences as a child may struggle with more abstract thinking
- Autistic children often like activities such as jigsaw puzzles as they are predictable, they can be repeated, they are visual and there is an end product
- Introduce mathematical concepts such as matching through a variety of simple activities. Start by encouraging the matching of real objects to real objects and then real objects to photos of these objects. Match pictures to pictures and then match objects to more generalised pictures
- Introduce sorting into sets of 'the same'. When the child is secure with this, teach them how to sort a variety of objects and pictures into more generalised categories, such as animals and vehicles

Understanding the World

- Start from the child's own interests, no matter how unusual
- Explicitly show the child in a step-by-step way how to use the resources and develop their play. For example, provide identical sets of coloured blocks and encourage the child to copy a simple structure built by the adult. Move on to providing photos of the steps to follow when building a model from a construction set
- Ask parents to provide photos from home to help the child recall and share his wider experiences and family
- Set up simple problem-solving tasks
- Use ICT to support learning





Expressive Arts and Design

- Offer a variety of textures and sensory experiences and see what the child can tolerate
- Offer only one activity at a time and gradually support the child in extending the range of messy / sensory play activities they enjoy
- Try some of the following sensory activities if the child is reluctant to join in with larger scale messy play:
 - Start with a shallow tray with a little warm water – tip in some marbles or raisins (with close supervision) and encourage the child to watch them move and possibly touch them
 - Add fruit cordial into a shallow tray of water and encourage the child to dip in his fingers and lick them
 - Use a wind- up toy in a shallow tray of water
 - Place a mirror in the bottom of a shallow tray of water and encourage the child to look at themselves and touch their reflection
 - An adult to pour water from a jug held up high, saying ‘ready, steady, go’ and encouraging the child to watch
 - Have a small set of water-based animal figures and a set of land-based figures. Encourage the child to sort the animals and throw all the water-based figures in the water tray. Alternatively, use boats and cars to sort
 - Use a decorator’s brush or paint roller dipped in water, squeeze bottles or plant sprayers to make marks on the pavement
 - Adult to build a sandcastle, count ‘1, 2, 3’ and encourage the child to knock it down
 - Draw in shallow trays of wet sand with long-handled tools
 - Use ‘real’ activities to introduce sensory play, such as watering plants, washing the bikes, planting seedlings etc.
 - Make edible paint using fruit purees, melted chocolate or a mix of cornflour, water and food colouring
- Encourage role play by starting with situations and resources that are very familiar to the child
- Model imaginative play and encourage the child to copy. Repeat the same play over several sessions to encourage awareness and understanding

Section 6 : Play

Early years staff need to recognise that when working with autistic children rather than teaching through play, play itself has to be taught. The following examples may help children develop functional play. Many young autistic children have poor self-occupancy skills and lack the imagination to truly experiment and examine toys. Because of their rigid behaviours they seem disinterested in trying new toys and experiences.

- Introduce new toys/activities in a one-to-one situation, demonstrating how to use the toy/access the activity.
- Gradually increase the range of toys/activities the child is familiar with.
- Provide a structure for making choices during 'free time' so that the child is aware of what options are available to him. This can be helped by showing the child 2 objects that relate to a potential choice e.g. a lego brick and a paintbrush. If the child understands photographs or pictures a choice board can be created.

Interactive play

- Imitating: the first step consists of 'tuning in' to the child so that eventually they will 'tune in' to you. Imitate vocally and physically
- Play games such as 'peek-a-boo' and 'round and round the garden' with appropriate use of timing, pausing, anticipation and climax. These can be fun for young autistic children well beyond the age at which they would usually be used.
- Set songs: e.g. 'Wind the bobbin up', 'The wheels on the bus' and 'Five fat sausages' benefit from repetition. Again, the use of dramatic pauses, allowing the child to take the lead, can create variety in routine.
- Try introducing flexible songs: e.g. 'Here we go round the Mulberry Bush' in which the words can be changed to suit the situation.



Developing simple play structures

- Have a time when you play one-to-one with the child in a defined area. Simple recognisable toys, which motivate the child, are collected into a box (if possible two sets so sharing is not essential). Start by imitating the child, reinforcing the child's initiatives and gradually guiding play.
- Extend from imitation to parallel play – imitate the child and gradually provide new ideas.
- Visual scripting a picture story accompanied by matching toys prompts the child to play out the story. Over time introduce additional toys to allow variety.
- Taking turns in games using props to indicate whose turn it is e.g. a hat.

Section 7 :Toileting

Some children find toileting very difficult. You may find that an autistic child who is dry at home may need nappies at nursery - others may use other places than the toilet, not realising that this is inappropriate. They are not being naughty, they are just struggling to understand what is required of them.

To tackle any toileting problems it is important to take it one step at a time. It is worth considering, based on discussions with the child's parents, whether or not to use a potty, or to use a toilet from the outset.

Try and establish a routine. For example, take the child to the toilet or potty about 20 minutes after every meal. You can also look out for non-verbal signals that indicate the child wants a wee or poo. Parents should be able to advise on this. Take the child to the toilet and encourage them to sit on the toilet or potty. Try and get them to sit for a short period of time, say five minutes, before you let them off. If they don't do anything let them off but return a short while later, especially if they give signals that they are about to do something in their nappy or pants.

It is important to keep a record when a child goes to the toilet e.g. did a wee, did a poo, pants wet, just sat etc. This will give useful information in order to determine whether visits to the toilet should have shorter/longer intervals and whether a child wets/poos at around the same time daily. Timings of visits can then be adjusted accordingly. For a child who dislikes using the potty/toilet, it may be useful to give them a favourite book/toy to use while getting them to tolerate just sitting down. For a child who holds on to their urine, it might be worth plying them with their favourite drinks throughout the day. Rewards for using the toilet need to be instant so that the child relates the reward with the correct action. Set up a reward system when toilet training. Rewards usually need to be real things such as allowing the child to undertake a favourite activity. Children with autism may not understand praise or tokens such as stickers.



Section 8 : Eating

Snack times and lunch times can be particularly difficult for autistic children at nursery. Some are very sensitive to certain textures or flavours, or are frightened of trying new foods. Many are overactive and find it hard to sit down and eat at a table. It is therefore important to take things in small steps and praise the child for their progress. They may find eating as part of a group overwhelming - sitting the child at their own table and gradually introducing other children may help.

Lunch time must be a very consistent routine with, perhaps, a personal table mat so that the child knows that it is time to sit down and eat. Encourage the child only to eat when sitting. Keep returning him to his chair to sit for a few minutes to eat. Be very clear what you are working on, e.g. favourite foods, so that the child wants to sit down and eat.

Gradually build up the amount and variety of food presented to the child. During the early days, only present the foods that the child knows and likes. Then put one small new item in the middle of a favourite food e.g. one pea in a jacket potato and gradually build up. If he shows interest in other foods, by all means then try the new food, unless the child is on a special diet. Give praise once the food has been swallowed, and not before. If the child leaves food on their plate, just remove their plate without comment. Don't make a big fuss about what is left. Accept it may be better for a child to initially use his fingers, rather than a spoon/fork, if you just want him to eat. Teach one skill at a time.



Part 3 : Graduated Approach

What to do if you are concerned about a child's development and/or behaviour

This booklet is not intended to be used as a way of diagnosing young children with autism. Diagnosis requires specialist assessment by a multi-agency team. Therefore, if you are concerned about a child's development and/or behaviour, please be aware that it is not appropriate to use the term autism until it has been confirmed through the diagnostic process.

As with any child, be sensitive and careful when discussing your concerns with parents.

Settings must adhere to the statutory guidance in the SEN Code of Practice, following the Graduated Approach. Where a setting or parent expresses concerns that, despite appropriate early education experiences, a child:

- Is making little progress
- Is working at levels significantly below those expected for a child of a similar age
- Has persistent emotional difficulties
- Has sensory or physical problems
- Has communication or interaction difficulties

It is particularly important in the early years that there is no delay in making any necessary special educational provision. Delay at this stage can give rise to future learning difficulties, loss of self-esteem and to behaviour difficulties. Early action to address identified needs is critical to the future progress and improved outcomes that are essential in helping the child to prepare for adult life.

Part 4 : Signposts

Advice and Training

Private, voluntary and independent settings requiring advice should contact their Area SENCO.

A variety of training courses are available within Westmorland and Furness Council. Look out for courses advertised through SLA online and through the Early Years monthly online communications and the Facebook page.

Useful Tools

Liverpool Social Communication and Play Journal

september_2022_social_communication_and_play_journal_with_tracking_sheet.pdf (openobjects.com)

This Social Communication and Play Journal has been compiled to help practitioners record observations and track the progress of a child in relation to their social communication and play. It also supports parents/carers to understand the significance of what their child is doing now, what their child is likely to do next and how they can support them to make further progress.

Supporting Children with Sensory Processing Needs in the Early Years

27174_wfc_supporting_children_with_sensory_processing_needs_in_the_early_years.pdf (openobjects.com)

This booklet gives practical advice and information to early years settings to help them understand and meet the needs of children with sensory processing differences.

Supporting Children with Behaviour

https://fid.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/kb5/westmorlandandfurness/directory/advice.page?id=geL7IKT5_3E

Information to support early years practitioners in understanding the reasons why a child may be displaying certain behaviours, together with practical strategies to try in the setting.

Useful Websites

The National Autistic Society – www.nas.org.uk

A useful site with a variety of factsheets for both parents and professionals, information about services, courses, approaches and current autism research.

Ambitious about Autism - www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

Lots of information about autism including behaviour, assessment and diagnosis, education, health and care plans and much more. There is also a freely downloadable booklet 'Right from the Start: A guide to autism in the early years'. This is a practical toolkit containing a wealth of straightforward information in one place to guide parents and carers through their child's journey in the early years (0-5 years). This booklet will also be useful information for early years settings.

Autism Education Trust – www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk

Look out for local training opportunities developed by the AET. Modules include Good Autism Practice, Play, Anxiety, Transitions and Toileting which will be delivered by the Early Years Team. The website includes useful tools such as the standards, competency and progression frameworks.

Westmorland and Furness Local offer – Families Information | Autism Information and Support Hub (westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk)

The Autism Information and Support Hub on the Local Offer has information about what autism is, the assessment process, how parents and settings can get help and a range of videos to support an understanding of autism.

Families Information | Listings in SEND Local Offer (westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk)

On the occupational therapy section of the Westmorland and Furness Local Offer you will find videos and information about sensory processing, together with an environmental audit tool to support early years settings in meeting children's needs.

Glasgow and Clyde NHS – www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/resources/

This website has a wide range of useful resources which are downloadable including core stability activities, crossing the midline, sensory boxes, readiness for toileting and much more.

Contact – www.contact.org.uk

The website has lots of information and advice for parents of children with a special educational need or disability. This includes introduction to Disability Living Allowance videos, information on support groups, a 1:1 telephone service for parents and much more.

Do2Learn – www.do2learn.com

Simple picture cards are provided here to print, cut out and make your own visual communication tools, with or without words.



Appendix

Checklist of Communicative Functions and Means

Wetherby 1995

Child's name:		Date of Sample: (mm/dd/year)															
Context:																	
COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS	COMMUNICATIVE MEANS																
	Pre-verbal										Verbal						
Behavioural Regulation	Physical manipulation										Immediate Echo						
	Giving										Delayed Echo						
	Pointing										Creative One-word						
	Showing										Creative Multi-word						
Social Interaction	Gaze Shift										Other						
	Proximity										Other						
	Head Nod / Head Shake																
	Facial Expression																
Joint Attention	Self-injury																
	Aggression																
	Tantrum																
	Crying / Whining																
Other Functions	Vocalising																
	Other																

Communicative Functions

The Communicative Functions are divided into the following categories:

Behaviour Regulation	Communicative actions used to regulate behaviour for obtaining or restricting environmental goals.
Social Interaction	Communicative actions used to direct another's attention to oneself for social purposes.
Joint Attention	Actions used to direct another's attention for purposes of sharing the focus on an activity or event.

Communicative Means

The Communicative Means are divided into two sections called Pre-verbal and Verbal. The following is a brief description of each mean or action listed in the checklist.

Pre-verbal

Physical Manipulation	Touching, trying to operate a toy
Giving	Giving an item to another person for a specific purpose (eg to request help with activating the item or to express an interest in it)
Pointing	Pointing to an item for a specific purpose
Showing	Showing the item but not releasing it
Gaze Shift	Looking briefly in the direction of an item out of interest
Proximity	Moving closer to the item out of interest or away from it in protest
Head Nod / Head Shake	Indicating interest in an object through nodding or protesting by shaking head
Facial Expression	Smiling, frowning, etc
Self-Injury	Hitting, biting, banging self
Aggression	Hitting, biting, punching, kicking, scratching others
Tantrum	Screaming, throwing self down on floor
Crying / Whining	To make needs known
Vocalising	Any speech-like sounds that are not full words
Other	Word approximations such as "bu-bu" for "bubble"

Verbal

Immediate Echo	Child repeats what is heard immediately after hearing it
Delayed Echo	Child repeats what was heard earlier in the day or on a previous day
Creative One-word	Spontaneously uses a single word (eg, saying the word "milk" can be to request it, to comment on seeing or having it, or to ask if that is what is in a cup)
Creative Multi-word	Spontaneously uses two or more words

