



Autism
Education
Trust

Schools

Making Sense of Autism

Delegate pack



Supported by:



Department
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Liverpool
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Service



The Autism Education Trust Professional Development Programme

This module is part of the Autism Education Trust's (AET) professional development programme for staff in School settings. This has been created to help leaders and practitioners to understand the distinctive strengths and learning needs of autistic pupils. The materials provide pointers to teaching approaches, methods, and resources to use in educational provision and practice for this group of learners. The programme includes the following:

- The **AET Schools Standards**. These are created for leaders to enhance and embed inclusive practice in their settings. The standards framework can be downloaded for free from the AET website here:
www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources/aet-schools-standards-framework
- The **AET Schools Competencies**. These are created for individual staff to rate their knowledge, skills, and personal qualities against a set of descriptors that outline good autism practice. The competency framework can be downloaded for free from the AET website here:
www.autismeducationtrust.co.uk/resources/aet-schools-competency-framework
- The **Progression Framework and Progression Framework module**. This is an interactive assessment tool that helps practitioners identify learning priorities, set key learning intentions, and track progress for autistic children and young people in both mainstream and specialist educational provisions.
- A demonstration video for educational leaders on **Embedding the AET Autism Schools Standards in practice** this takes participants through the process of developing an action plan for embedding the **AET Schools Standards**, implementing them, as well as measuring and providing evidence of progress.
- A demonstration video on **Using the AET Schools Competencies to develop your own practice or that of your team**. This takes participants through the process of identifying the skills, knowledge, and understanding they need in order to enhance their practice in meeting the needs of autistic children. This includes drawing up a next steps action plan for professional development.
- A module entitled **Making Sense of Autism in Schools**. This is an introductory module to autism. The module supports delegates in developing their awareness, understanding, and acceptance of autistic children. The module supports participants in identifying reasonable adjustments that can make a difference to autistic children, as well as in developing a one-page profile.
- The **Good Autism Practice in Schools** module. This is a module for delegates who work directly with autistic children, and it provides guidance on processes and tools that can help participants to implement good autism practice both in terms of their own individual practice and in terms of making adaptations to the learning environment.



- A set of **topic-based modules**. These give more detailed information on certain topics to guide delegates on strategies and approaches related to the topic in question.
- A **Suite of Resources for Leaders**. This suite of resources will support leaders or leadership teams to create culture change across their schools. The resources will support leaders to fully embed the 8 principles of good autism practice as outlined in the Good Autism Practice Report.

Policy expectations

The AET Professional Development materials are designed to enable practitioners to meet SEND policy, and legal requirements and their equality duties whilst complying with the Ofsted common inspection framework (2019) and the Teacher Standards (2011).

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice (2014) states that:

Public bodies, including further education institutions, local authorities, maintained schools, maintained nursery schools, academies and free schools are covered by the public sector equality duty and, when carrying out their functions, must have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between disabled and non-disabled children and young people (SEND Code of Practice, 2014:17).

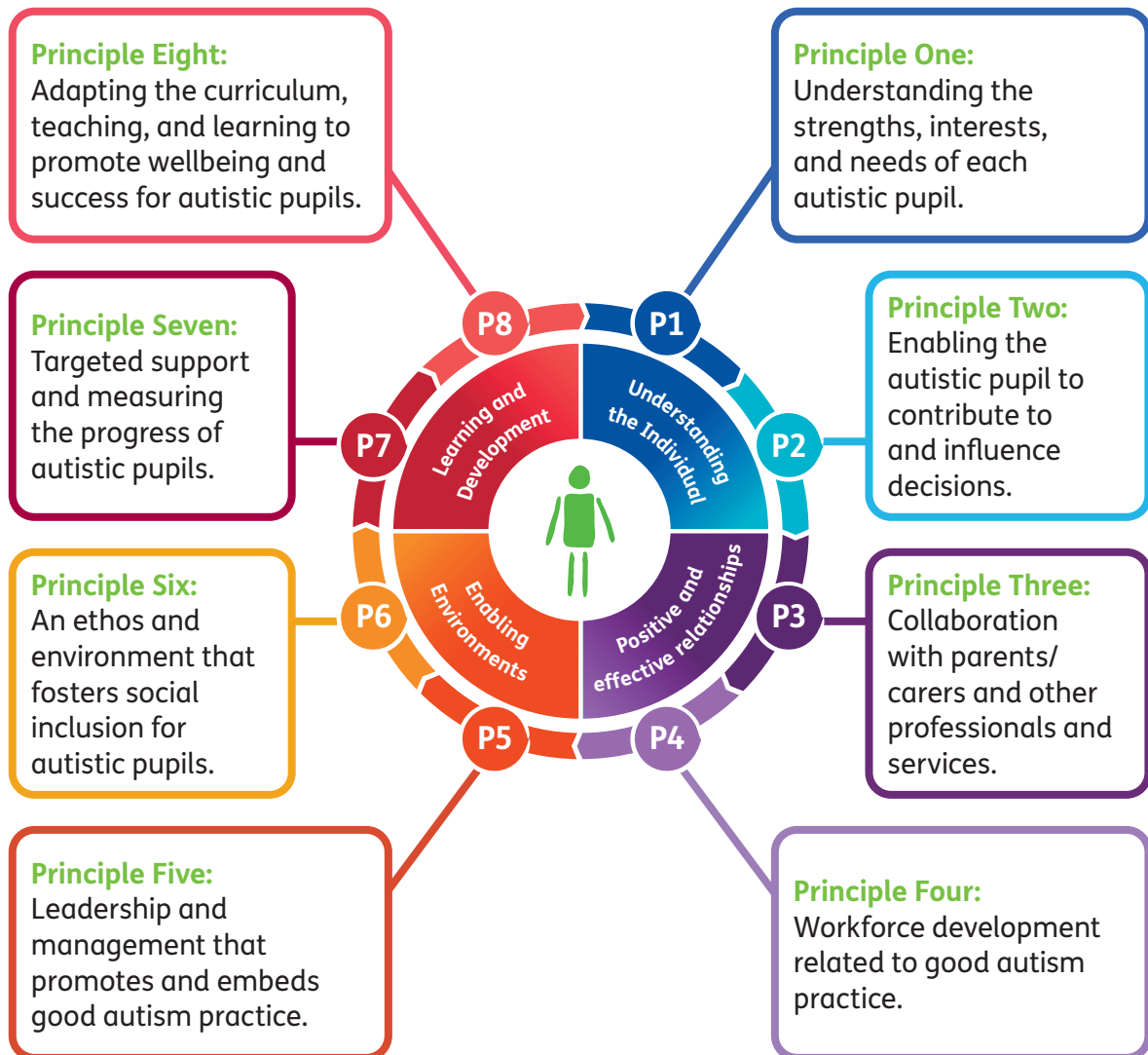
Ofsted (2019) will look for evidence that there are high expectations of pupils with SEND, that they are achieving well and are prepared for the next stage of their education or adult life. This includes ensuring that staff have a clear understanding of pupils, show awareness of the physical, social, and intellectual development of children, and know how to adapt teaching to support the education of children and young people at different stages of development.

The Teacher Standards (2011) set the minimum requirement for teachers' practice and conduct.



The eight principles of good autism practice

The AET professional development materials are embedded within the AET's key themes of 'Understanding the Individual'; 'Positive and effective relationships'; 'Enabling Environments', and 'Learning and Development'. The eight principles have emerged from an examination of the current evidence from research and practice, as well as key policies and the perspectives and insights of autistic individuals (Guldberg et al., 2019). The reports outlining this work are available for free on the Autism Education Trust website (www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk). They consist of two reports, the Good Autism Practice: Full Report, and the Good Autism Practice Practitioner Guide.





The AET Autism inclusion promises

This module will support you in fulfilling the **AET Eight Principles of Good Autism Practice**, and the **AET Inclusion Promises**. The AET eight principles of good autism practice are distilled into the eight Inclusion Promises to guide the practice of staff, and to provide a set of promises to pupils and parents/carers. The inclusion promises were suggested by the autistic young experts' panel to ensure the principles were also accessible for autistic pupils and young people and their peers.

We promise to:

- 1 Understand what you are good at, what you like doing, and when you might need help.
- 2 Listen to and act upon your ideas about how we can help you if you need it.
- 3 Listen to and work with the people who know you best and who you trust.
- 4 Make sure we are always progressing towards your goals and aspirations.
- 5 Make sure all staff know the best way to support you, both in and out of lessons.
- 6 Help you to get involved and be included in the activities you wish to participate in.
- 7 Work together to set achievable goals that are important to you, and that help you see how well you are doing.
- 8 Help you to feel safe, secure, empowered, and able to learn.



Who is this module for?

This module is an awareness-raising module for all staff in a school community, whether they be teachers, learning support assistants, school meals supervisors, or taxi drivers.

The module provides an introduction to autism and the reasonable adjustments that need to be considered when working with autistic pupils.

A note on terminology

Research shows that there is no single way of describing autism that is universally acceptable. We consulted our autistic young experts panel and the term that they would like the AET to use consistently is **'autistic person, pupil, or child'**. They preferred this phrase over 'person, pupil, or child with autism'.

The term **'co-occurring condition'** will be used when describing a person who has more than one diagnosable condition, such as autism and epilepsy or ADHD.

'Co-occurring difference' will be used when describing an individual who may have a diagnosed condition but also experiences generalised differences alongside, such as an autism diagnosis alongside generalised anxiety.

We use the term **'distressed behaviours'** rather than 'challenging behaviours' or 'behaviours that challenge' as this is a term our autistic young experts have asked us to use.

[Please click here to see the AET terminology guide for further information.](#)



The aims of the 'Making sense of autism in Schools' module

The aims of 'Making sense of autism in Schools' are to:

- Enhance your understanding and awareness of autism and the three areas of difference that affect autistic pupils.
- Equip you with the knowledge you need to begin to make reasonable adjustments in the way you support autistic pupils.

Learning objectives

After completing 'Making sense of autism in Schools', you will be able to:

- Understand the importance of getting to know the pupil as an individual.
- Approach autism as a difference rather than as a disorder or impairment.
- Understand the importance of identifying the strengths and needs of autistic pupils.
- Know how three areas of difference can affect autistic pupils.
- Appreciate how important it is to listen to and learn from the perspectives of autistic pupils.
- Reflect on and implement reasonable adjustments to support autistic pupils you work with.
- Have knowledge and understanding of the importance of one-page profiles and how to collect information for the one-page profile.

The structure of the module

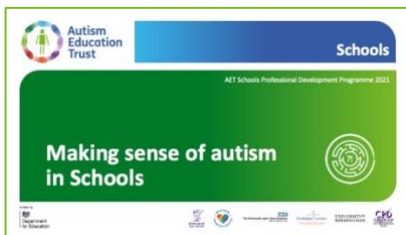
| | |
|----------------|---|
| Part 1: | Introduction to autism |
| Part 2: | Understanding the individual |
| Part 3: | Positive and effective relationships |
| Part 4: | Learning and development |
| Part 5: | Enabling environments |
| Part 6: | Creating the One-page profile |



The training materials

The MSA module will be delivered by an experienced AET trainer, either face to face or virtually, through a PPT presentation, videos, activities, discussion points, training materials and additional resources.

This section contains a table that identifies all of the key training materials and additional resources and how to access them.



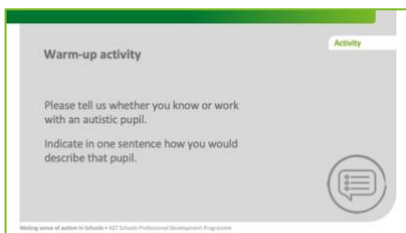
1 Welcome to the Making Sense of Autism in Schools Module. This is an introductory module to autism. The module supports delegates in developing their awareness, understanding, and acceptance of autistic children. The module supports delegates in identifying reasonable adjustments that can make a difference to autistic children, as well as support to develop a one-page profile.



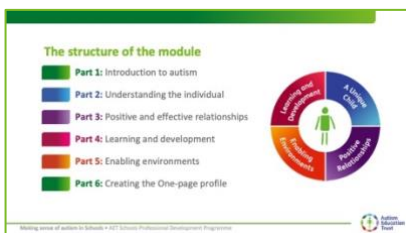
2 The aims of the MSA module give an overview of the teaching intentions that the trainer will deliver.



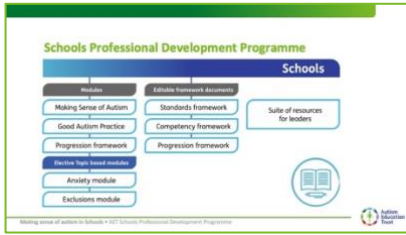
3 The learning objectives of the MSA module are specific statements describing what delegates will be able to do at the end of the session as a result of attending the training.



4 WARM UP ACTIVITY-5 Minutes. The trainer may also use this time to ask delegates to introduce themselves – who they are and what their role is.



5 The four key themes are represented in the visual here. With each theme there are main slides which cover content. The slides included below will cover the key training materials that are linked to the Schools MSA Module. Please note not all of the slides have been included in this table.



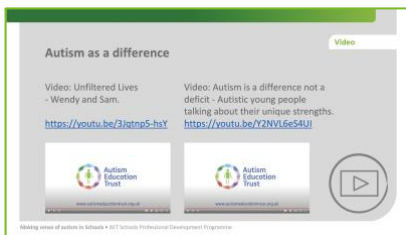
6 Trainers will explain the structure of the Schools Professional Development Programme.



7 Part 1



10 Quote - Breakey, C. (2006) 'The autism spectrum and further education: A Guide to Good Practice. London: Jessica Kingsley.

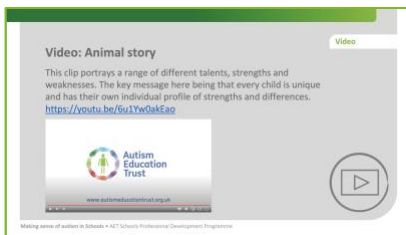


11 Video: Unfiltered Lives - Wendy and Sam.

<https://youtu.be/3Jqtnp5-hsY>

Video: Autism is a difference not a deficit - Autistic young people talking about their unique strengths.

<https://youtu.be/Y2NVL6eS4UI>



13 Video: Animal story – This clip portrays a range of different talents, strengths and weaknesses. The key message here being that every child is unique and has their own individual profile of strengths and differences.

<https://youtu.be/6u1Yw0akEao>



15 Case Study example or discuss real life anonymous cases – these may be provided by the trainer or delegates.



17 Video: Uneven Profile of Abilities (1 and 2) – Parents talking about their autistic child's strengths and talents alongside areas they may struggle with.

Video 1: <https://youtu.be/ZGUspeyKaz8>


Video 2: <https://youtu.be/bZMKhc4UnJQ>



Demand Avoidance Profile

You may have heard the term Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) or Demand Avoidant profile being used to describe autism. The existence of PDA as a 'diagnostic term' and how it fits within the autism spectrum is widely debated.

You can find further information about this topic on the NAS website and PDA website – links in delegate pack.



- 20 For further information visit:
- www.pdasociety.org.uk
 - www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/diagnosis/pda
 - [AET Terminology Guide](#)

Co-occurring conditions


Other conditions often co-occur with autism. Co-occurring conditions can include, for example:

- Learning disability.
- Epilepsy, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), or Tourette's.
- Visual or hearing impairments.

Pupils can also have co-occurring differences and these can include eating, sleeping, and toileting needs.

- 21 Link to NAS fact sheets on toileting, eating and sleeping.
- www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/physical-health/sleep
 - www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/behaviour/toileting
 - www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/behaviour/eating

AET Schools Competency Framework



I recognise that many autistic pupils have co-occurring conditions and experience high levels of anxiety and stress, and that these can create barriers to learning. I know that a pupil may display behaviour based on a combination of factors and I work hard to understand the causes and functions of the behaviour.

- 23 Link to Competency 2 in the Schools Framework.
- www.autismeducationtrust.co.uk/resources/aet-schools-competency-framework

Part 2

Understanding the individual

- Understanding the pupil



- 25 Part 2

Understanding the individual

Learning from autistic perspectives

To fully understand autism, it is important to appreciate how autistic people experience the world, and to listen to what autistic children tell us about their experiences.

The late Donna Williams, who was herself autistic, put it like this: *"...right from the start, from the time someone came up with the word 'autism', the condition has been judged from the outside, by its appearances, and not from the inside according to how it is experienced."*

(Williams, 1996:14)

- 26 Quotes are used to underline the key messages for each section and reflect the voice of autistic individuals.

Understanding the individual

Understanding the pupil

"A detailed assessment of need should ensure that the full range of an individual's needs is identified, not simply the primary need. The support provided to an individual should always be based on a full understanding of their particular strengths and needs and seek to address them all."

(SEND Code of Practice:96)

- 27 Guidance on the special educational needs and disability (SEND) system for children and young people aged 0 to 25, from 1 September 2014.
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

Understanding the individual

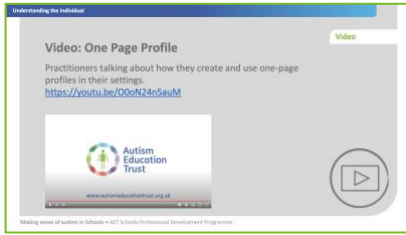
Understanding the pupil: the one-page profile




The first step in meeting the needs of an autistic pupil is to work with them to get to know them. All staff who work with the pupil must understand each pupil's needs to know how to support participation and learning.

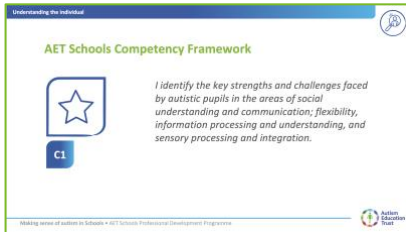
One way to do this is to create a one-page profile

- 28 Link to AET OPP Template – Trainers will share this template with delegates who have attended the Schools MSA training.



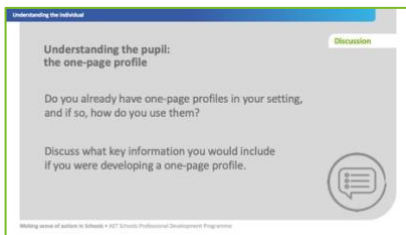
29 Video: One Page Profile - Practitioners talking about how they create and use one-page profiles in their settings.

<https://youtu.be/O0oN24n5auM>



31 Link to Competency 1 in the Schools Framework.

www.autismeducationtrust.co.uk/resources/aet-schools-competency-framework



33 Discussion Point:

Do you already create and use one-page profiles in your setting, and if so, how do you use them?

What is the key information to include if you were developing a one-page profile and why?

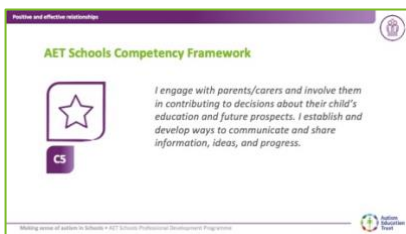


34 Part 3



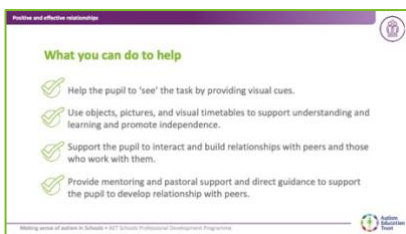
38 Video: Differences in Social Understanding - Young people talking about their experiences.

<https://youtu.be/MtjIbHisKdk>

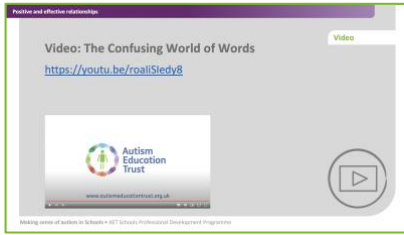


42 Link to Competency 5 in the Schools Framework.

www.autismeducationtrust.co.uk/resources/aet-schools-competency-framework

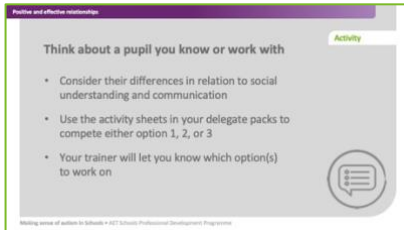


43 Link to AET Visual Timetables Template – Trainers will share this template with delegates who have attended the Schools MSA training.



44 Video: The Confusing World of Words.

<https://youtu.be/roaliSledy8>



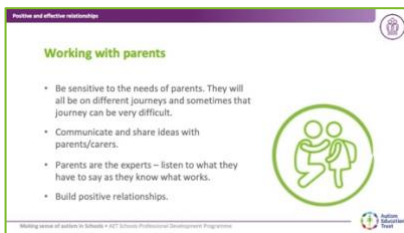
46 ACTIVITY: 5 Minutes – Use the activity sheets provided and fill out the section for Social Understanding and Communication.

Option One: Trainer to share templates of different types of one-page profiles. Have a look at the templates to get an idea of some of the information that can be included in a OPP. Also think back to the discussion around OPPs you had earlier.

Think about a child you know or support and write down some key words on their strengths and differences in the area of social understanding and communication focusing on their play. Then write down one adjustment that you can make to your practice to support this area of difference.

Option Two: Reflect on an autistic child you know or work with. Think about a situation that occurred when you were with the child and you observed distressed behaviour as a result of their differences in social understanding and communication. What happened, how did you react and name one thing that you would do differently next time.

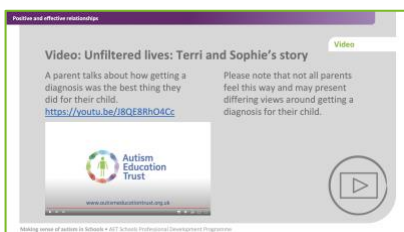
Option Three: Reflect on a child you support and indicate their differences in social understanding and communication, what support is required and how you have changed your practice / the environment to support the child.



47 Link to AET Template - Top tips for working with parents.

Link to AET template - My hopes, dreams and aspirations.

Trainers will share these templates with delegates who have attended the Schools MSA training.



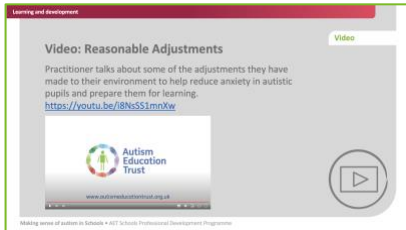
48 Video: Unfiltered lives: Terri and Sophie's story. A parent talks about how getting a diagnosis was the best thing they did for their child.

<https://youtu.be/J8QE8RhO4Cc>

Please note that not all parents feel this way and may present differing views around getting a diagnosis for their child.

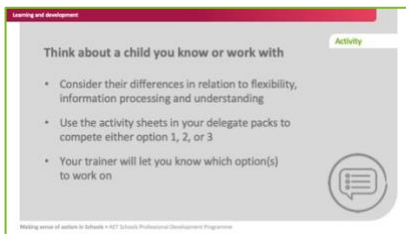


49 Part 4



55 Video: Reasonable Adjustments – Practitioner talks about some of the adjustments they have made to their environment to help reduce anxiety in autistic pupils and prepare them for learning.

<https://youtu.be/i8NsSS1mnXw>



56 ACTIVITY – 5 Minutes: Use the activity sheets provided and fill out the section for Flexibility, Information Processing and Understanding.

Option One: In your pack, you will find templates of different types of one-page profiles. Have a look at the templates to get an idea of some of the information that can be included in a OPP. Also think back to the discussion around OPPs you had earlier.

Think about a child you know or support and write down some key words on their strengths and differences in the area of flexibility, information processing and understanding. Then write down one adjustment that you can make to your practice to support this area of difference.

Option Two: Reflect on an autistic child you know or work with. Think about a situation that occurred when you were with the child and you observed distressed behaviour as a result of their differences in flexibility, information processing and understanding. What happened, how did you react and name one thing that you would do differently next time.

Option Three: Reflect on a child you support and indicate their differences in flexibility, information processing and understanding. What support is required and how you have changed your practice / the environment to support the child.



Part 5
Enabling Environments


- Sensory processing and integration
- The senses
- High levels of anxiety
- Distressed behaviour



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57 Part 5

Sensory processing and integration



It is estimated that up to 95% of autistic pupils experience sensory processing differences. The theory of sensory processing proposes that it is an automatic process of the brain that organises input from our senses and attributes meaning to what is experienced (Ayres, 1972).

Our sensory processing and integration forms the foundations for our learning and development and how we understand and respond to the world.

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59 Link to Newcastle NHS website – placeholder.

Video: The Sensational Thinking Project

Link to further Professional Development – The Good Autism Practice module provides you with materials to collect information on sensory preferences and differences and carrying out environmental audits.
<https://youtu.be/1BGB4vJP5c8>




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60 Video: The Sensational Thinking Project.
<https://youtu.be/1BGB4vJP5c8>

Link to further Professional Development – The Good Autism Practice module provides you with materials to collect information on sensory preferences and differences and carrying out environmental audits.

Video: Sensory Differences

Autistic young people talking about their differences in sensory processing and integration and some reasonable adjustments that can help.
<https://youtu.be/32XwoeRgMUM>



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68 Video: Sensory Differences. Autistic young people talking about their differences in sensory processing and integration and some reasonable adjustments that can help.
<https://youtu.be/32XwoeRgMUM>

Think of a child you know or work with

Consider their differences in relation to sensory processing and integration.

Use the activity sheets in your delegate packs to complete either option 1, 2, or 3.

Your trainer will let you know which option(s) to work on.



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75 ACTIVITY – 5 Minutes: Use the activity sheets provided and fill out the section for Sensory Processing and Integration.

Option One: In your pack, you will find templates of different types of one-page profiles. Have a look at the templates to get an idea of some of the information that can be included in a OPP. Also think back to the discussion around OPPs you had earlier.

Think about a child you know or support and write down some key words on their strengths and differences in the area of sensory processing and integration. Then write down one adjustment that you can make to your practice to support this area of difference.

Option Two: Reflect on an autistic child you know or work with. Think about a situation that occurred when you were with the child and you observed distressed behaviour as a result of their differences in sensory processing and integration. What happened, how did you react and name one thing that you would do differently next time.

Option Three: Reflect on a child you support and indicate their differences in sensory processing and integration. What support is required and how you have changed your practice / the environment to support the child.



76 Link to further Professional Development: The AET topic-based module on autism and anxiety provides further information about anxiety in autistic children. This includes information on causes of anxiety, how to identify if a child is experiencing anxiety, triggers for anxiety, the impact of anxiety, and what practitioners can do to reduce anxiety.

High levels of anxiety

Autistic pupils are likely to experience high levels of anxiety and stress and this can impact on wellbeing and mental health, on learning, and on levels of interaction and communication.

When a person is anxious, it is more difficult to learn. It is also more difficult to handle sensory information. This can lead to becoming overstimulated and experiencing sensory overload.



83 Video: Unfiltered Lives – Shardia and Patrick.

Video: Unfiltered Lives – Shardia and Patrick.

<https://youtu.be/I7kCMKIsEuY>



84 Video: Happy Book – A practical strategy that can support teaching emotions in autistic children.

Video: Happy Book

A practical strategy that can support teaching emotions in autistic children.

<https://youtu.be/N3YKlJRYKko>



86 Part 6


Part six
Creating the One-page profile



91 ACTIVITY – 5 Minutes. What has been learnt this session and how will this inform understanding and awareness of supporting autistic children when delegates return to their settings?

Reflect on your own practice

Get together in groups of four (or go into breakout rooms for virtual delivery) and discuss the child you have already identified in the previous activities. Tell us about three changes you will make as a result of having completed this module when you go back to your setting.



90 The trainer will provide an overview of what has been covered in this module.

Summary of the module

- Autistic people have differences in social understanding and communication; flexibility, information processing, and understanding; sensory processing; and integration.
- Autistic children often have co-occurring conditions, such as mental health issues, epilepsy, or visual and hearing difficulties. They can also have co-occurring differences with eating, drinking, and toileting.
- These differences can lead to feelings of frustration, anger, and anxiety, which in turn can lead to distress behaviours.
- Take note of any co-occurring conditions and differences, and seek information about how this can inform practice and planning.
- Get to know the autistic child or young person as an individual, as this will allow you to understand their individual strengths and areas for development, and how you can meet these needs.

93 The trainer will provide an overview of what has been covered in this module.

Summary of the module

- Focus on the reasonable adjustments that you can make: small changes often make a big difference. Reasonable adjustments need to be based on what the individual child needs.
- Reasonable adjustments need to be based on what the individual pupil needs.
- Make changes to the environment to reduce levels of stress and anxiety to the pupil and recognise that adjustments can be good for all the pupils in that setting. Think about activities that the pupil is doing throughout the day and what demands these might place on the pupil that they might find challenging. How can they be adapted and done differently to better suit the pupil?
- A one-page profile can help ensure that all staff in the setting know something about the pupil's strengths and needs, as well as the reasonable adjustments that are most important to make.



Acknowledgements

Authors and co-authors: The MSA and GAF modules have been co-produced with a number of people, although Karen Galloway has been lead author, the programme is a result of input from a number of people representing a range of perspectives. We are grateful to a number of people who have been involved in creating the programme. Co-authors include the members of the AET's Autistic Young Experts panel who have provided input on key concepts, ideas and terminology. Further co-authors include The Bridge London Trust and University's Special Educational Needs Inclusion Support Service have provided invaluable input into the development of content and advice on drafts, as has Emma Chamber, AET Content Manager.


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Video: Curious Dig Media, Designers: J K Harvey and Annee Adams, Copy Editor: Abigail Ward.

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94 Acknowledgements and thanks to everyone who has been involved in creating the module.



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AET Schools Professional Development Programme 2021



Please include last slide with the following wording: Extend your knowledge with our free resources. Learn more about autism and discover practical strategies to support autistic children and young people in the classroom or remotely. All our resources have been developed by leading autism education specialists including autistic people, parents of autistic children, researchers, trainers and practitioners. Visit www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources





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Education
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Schools

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