

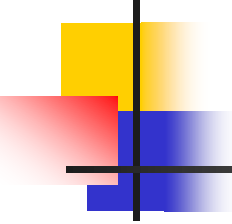
Improving educational outcomes for children on the autism spectrum: priorities and strategies

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Which outcomes do we work towards – and from whose perspective?

- Department for Education?
- Parents/carers?
- Teaching staff or health professionals?
- The children?
- Cultural factors



What are the priorities for a typical child and those for a child with autism?

- Typical baby
- Baby with autism



Priority areas in autism

- Social and emotional understanding
- Understanding and using speech and non-verbal language to communicate
- Flexibility of thinking and behaviour
- Sensory processing and responses



Autism Education Trust Report

- Outcomes report 2011 led by Dr. Kerstin Wittemeyer, ACER, University of Birmingham
- Can be downloaded from
- www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk
- Also available are
- Tools for teachers



We need to adjust to their needs

- Square peg (the pupil)
- Round hole (the school environment)
- School/home needs to become square to meet their needs
- Changes to staff style; classroom environment; demands and expectations



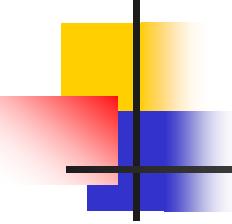
Invisibility of autism

- If the child was blind or deaf – we would automatically adjust what we did and the classroom environment
- BUT – in autism – its not obvious and so we often expect them to cope with what is expected of typical peers – which often leads to CB, failure and low self esteem



Autism = High stress levels

- When WE are stressed we:
- Are less tolerant of others and sensory overload
- Perform less well
- Lose the ability to communicate effectively
- Develop physical and emotional problems



Protective factors when stressed: what helps us? ...and which of these are available to a child with autism?

- Knowing it will pass – a treat in store
- Thinking of positive aspects of your life
- Having a calm and sympathetic friend
- Sitting down, doing things to relax
- Perceived control – so that you are in charge of what happens next
- Good physical and emotional health



Important priorities for all children

- Good attainments increase employment opportunities
- Having a friend
- Time to pursue their interests
- Being valued and successful
- Knowing how to relax and de-stress
- Opportunities to make choices
-



Challenges for children and young people on the autism spectrum

- School is one of the **most challenging** environments they face
- Taught by staff who **may not know** about autism and **may misinterpret** behaviours
- Response of the **peer group** (issues of friendship; bullying; isolation; reduced knowledge of what's OK/not OK)
- Is **their perspective** taken into account when planning and making decisions?



Areas which affect well-being

- **Sleep deprivation** common leading to irritability, lowered performance
- **Food and drink** – may be limited, intermittent, not fully digested– so may be hungry, in pain, dehydrated, constipated
- **Toileting** may be difficult or signals not noticed – if absorbed in activity



Challenges for parents/carers

- Finding an ally who understands their child and is keen to address their needs
- Gaining access to staff within schools to share ideas and concerns
- Educating the rest of the family (often child's father, grandparents and siblings)
- Living with their child 24/7 – and coping with and managing their range of emotional states



Challenges for practitioners

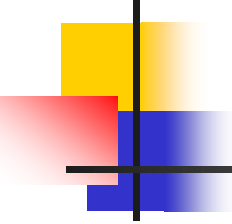
- Lack of knowledge on the autism spectrum
- Many competing demands on their time
- Ethos and support provided within the school from colleagues
- Opportunities to visit other schools and share ideas and strategies often limited
- Finding time to engage effectively with individual pupils and with parents/carers



SCERTS approach

www.scerts.com

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- Let the child go to an activity/area without touching or pulling the child – make the activity irresistible
- Do not be a human crane!
- Have smaller goals – do not expect child to enter the bowling alley and play bowls on the first visit – he may only approach the front door – and then you go home – with positive memories



SCERTS approach

www.amy-laurent.com

- Social
- Communication
- Emotional
- Regulation
- Transactional
- Support



Plan for the future from the start

- Focus on social and emotional understanding at school, as well as the academic
- Give more time alone at school – take off timetable for some subjects
- Help to make good choices in terms of courses, college, university, employment
- Librarianship; accounting; computing; engineering; architecture; work with animals; theatre and circus



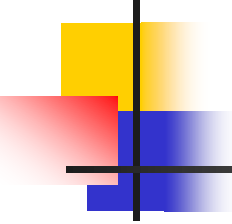
Gain their perspective

- What are their lives like – now – in the past – and hopes for the future
- My ideal school/teachers?
- What I would like to be as an adult?
- Do not change me – but understand and accommodate to me
- Video diaries



Scottish Autism Toolbox

- [www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2009
L](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2009/L)
- Personal Hygiene and Sex Education materials
- www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.org.uk



Resource for health care professionals

- The NHS in Scotland has developed a website on the autism spectrum for all those who work in health (eg GPs, nurses, dentists, hospital staff). This can be accessed free at:
- www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/asd



Hopes for the future

- More support for families
- Ways to include fathers
- Improved access for hard to reach families
- Staff in all schools have knowledge and skills
- More supported employment for adults
- Placements after the age of 16 known early and planned for
- More options for the diagnosis of adults

ASK WHAT WOULD HELP them to blossom:

'time alone' (Wendy Lawson)

'my work is my life' (Temple Grandin)

'to have a friend....' (Nita Jackson)

