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Activities for Making Sense of Autism in Schools

Introduction

The activities in this document will be used for the Making Sense of Autism in Schools module. This document provides information for trainers about when and how to use each of the activities.

All of this information is also within the Trainer Notes section of the training PowerPoint presentation.

Each activity has linked Tools that make up the Practical Support Pack which trainers will share electronically with delegates before the training takes place. Trainers may like to refer delegates to tools throughout the training.

Trainers are not expected to deliver all of the activities. They are to be used flexibly alongside the content within the module. Some activities have different options depending on prior knowledge of delegates and some will not be suitable if delivering virtually. Trainers are also welcome to use their own activities.

As an experienced trainer, your ability to draw on your own wealth of experience will bring this training to life and exemplify its messages.

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Activity 1 – warm up activity

Resources:
Plain paper and pen/ pencil

Instructions:
Ask delegates to describe in one positive sentence/word how they would describe an autistic child that they know?
If they don't know a child, ask them what positive word/short phrase comes to mind when they hear the word "autistic?"

Face to face – delegates to talk to one another about what they have written
Online – welcome to add their ideas to the chat box should they wish
Introduce the idea that delegates may wish to jot down "things that they are going to do" in their settings as they go through the training. These thoughts will be reflected on at the end of the training. **(See summary activity)**

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Activity 2 – What is Autism? The three areas of difference

Use the case study to identify the three areas of difference of autism and begin to think about how the strengths and differences associated with these may impact on the autistic pupils within their school.

Resources:
1 case study- Connor or trainer's/delegates own anonymous case study
Template of 3 areas of difference

Instructions:
- Divide the delegates into groups of 2 or 3 if training is delivered face to face. Otherwise, delegates work individually online.
- Give delegates a copy of the case study for Connor or the trainer's own case study, and a copy of the 3 areas of difference template.
- Ask delegates to discuss and record on the template how the 3 areas of difference can be identified in the case study. Encourage them to identify the strengths too.
- Ask them to record how these differences may affect Connor's experience in their school setting. (Possible differences between primary and secondary environments.)

Reflection:
- Do the case studies highlight any observations that the delegates have made of a child that they know well?
- What other differences have they noted? How have these differences impacted on the child?

Learning:
- Each child is an individual with their own profile of strengths and differences.
- There is overlap between the three areas of difference and it is important to reflect on all three areas when observing and interacting with a child.
- Identifying challenges and making small adjustments can have a big impact for the child.
- A child may be less impacted by the three areas of difference in different environments e.g. home environment versus the school setting.

TOOL 1: Three areas of difference template

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Activity 3 – Understanding the Individual – OPP

Think of an autistic pupil you currently work with.

What might be included on their OPP? What do you think the pupil/ pupil's parents would say in response to the headings?

Resources: One Page Profile template

Instructions:
- Divide the delegates into groups of 2 or 3 if training is delivered face to face. Otherwise, delegates work individually online.
- Give delegates a copy of the OPP template.
- Ask delegates to think of an autistic pupil they currently work with/ or have historically. Can they already think about what might be included on the OPP? What do they think the pupil/ pupil's parents would say in response to the headings?
- Discuss who/ how this information might best be sought.
- Think about how often these could be updated in their setting.

   Reflection:
   - Discuss where they are/ could be stored to ensure all staff have access to them.
   - Is there any changes to practice (specific to OPP's) that could be made following the training?

Learning:
- Reflect on the individual pupil's strengths and needs. One size does not fit all.
- Consider tools to gather information.
- Identify key adults (parents/carers/other professionals) who can support you to help the pupil learn and develop.

TOOL 2: One Page Profile template

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Activity 4 – Positive Relationships – Social Communication and Interaction

Find a partner. You are going to have a conversation with them – this can be about any topic you wish.

BUT when talking, you must both cover or close your eyes and use a monotone voice.

Resources: None needed

Instructions:
- If training is being delivered in person, ask the delegates to work in pairs.
- Ask the delegates to have a conversation with their partner about whatever they would like to discuss.
- Instruct the delegates to cover or close their eyes and use a monotone voice when holding the conversation.
- Ask them to be ready to give feedback on how they found the activity/ how it compares to typical conversations they might have.

Reflection:
- Did they find this easier or harder than typical conversations? Why?
- What did they notice was different (harder to predict when it was their turn/ noticed other sensory input more/ interpreting meaning and emotions etc...)

Learning:
- Autistic pupils might miss meaning if we only use spoken language
- Meaning is not always explicit if there are differences with interpretation of tone of voice/ facial expressions
- Visual strategies can support spoken communication

Online delivery adaptation – trainer and delegates could turn off cameras and use monotone voice to have a group conversation – much of the observations would be the same.

TOOL 3: Examples of Visual Strategies

TOOL 5: Top Tips for Working With Parents

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Working in pairs, go through the chunked instructions examples and complete the 'draw the house' activity. Using the principles discussed, work in pairs to create chunked instructions for how to draw the simple line drawing of the house. Consider their differences in relation to flexibility, information processing and understanding.

Resources: Chunking Instructions sheet (See Appendix)
Plain paper and pen/ pencil (if delegates wish)

Instructions:
- Give delegates the chunking instructions resource sheet.
- Ask them to work in pairs if delivering the training in person, or independently if accessing the training online.
- Go through the chunked instructions example as a group.
- Introduce the 'draw the house' activity. Using the principles discussed, the delegates work in pairs to create chunked instructions for how to draw the simple line drawing of the house. They can draw this out to follow the instructions if they wish.

Reflection:
- Did they find it easy to create the chunked instructions? If not, what did they find hard about it?
- How can they apply these principles within the classroom?
- On reflection, is this already part of their practice or is it something that can be developed?

Learning:
- Visual cues can be really helpful to support a pupil's understanding. Emphasise that quickly jotting key information on a whiteboard/ piece of paper can work really well. Visual cues do not have to be printed and laminated.
- Provide consistent visual cues throughout the setting to support the pupil's understanding.
- Provide visual cues for structuring daily routines and play activities.

TOOL 4: Making Communication Clear Checklist

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Activity 6 – Enabling Environments – sensory preferences and adjustments

Identify one sensory difference that you have observed in a pupil that you work with and identify a specific adjustment that could be made to support them.

Pre-activity
In small groups, discuss your own sensory preferences: food/smells/textures etc. Aim is to support delegates to recognise that we all have sensory preferences, although probably not as extreme as an autistic pupil may have at times. If training is delivered in person, there could be a range of objects/ fiddle toys displayed on each table. (Suggestions: bubbles, soft/furry item, executive fiddle toy, old clothes label, catalogue, paper clip, slinky, spinning item, squidgy ball, piece of satin, banana, toy drum, something with a strong smell (toothpaste) etc...) to generate discussion about personal sensory preferences they have.

Main activity
Identify one sensory difference that you have observed in a pupil that you work with and identify a specific adjustment that could be made to support the pupil.

Main activity: pen and paper.

Instructions:
• Divide the delegates into small groups.
• Ask delegates to identify one sensory difference that they have observed in a child that they work with.
• Discuss one specific adjustment that could be made in the setting to accommodate his differences and reduce anxiety and stress levels.

Reflection:
• What is the impact of this sensory difference on the pupil? How does it affect their anxiety level or ability to attend to teaching and learning?
• Are there any common sensory differences that they list? Are there any that are less common?
• What reasonable adjustments can be implemented to support the pupil's individual needs?

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Activity 6 – Enabling Environments – sensory preferences and adjustments

Learning:
- Sharing the range of sensory differences that they have observed in the children that they know.
- Sharing ideas between delegates of possible adjustments that could be made.
- Understanding that sensory differences can elevate stress and anxiety level of pupils.

TOOL 6: Environmental Checklist

TOOL 7: Sensory preferences and differences - examples and strategies

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Summary Activity

Reflect on your learning and identify 3 things that you are going to do as a result of attending this training.

Resources: None

Instructions:
- Delegates to go into groups of 2/3.
- Delegates to reflect on what they have learnt/ something they are taking away from the training.
- Delegates to identify 3 things that they are going to do as a result of attending the training.

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Appendix: Chunking Instructions

The following is an example of how a task can be broken down visually for a pupil. It helps them to know what to do and how to start a task. It also promotes independence as they can return to this as often as needed throughout completing the task.

This can be done by jotting steps on a whiteboard. The pupil can tick off each step when completed so they know when they have finished.

1.Write the date	
2. Write the Learning Intentions	
3. Turn to page 52 of the textbook	
4. Answer the additions (questions 1-8) in your exercise book	
5. Put your book on Mrs Smith's desk	
6. Get your iPad and play a game on Education City	

Communication is a two-way process. We need to make sure we communicate clearly to avoid misconceptions or confusion. Use simple language, say what you mean and mean what you say.

The drawing of the house above is fairly simple. With a partner, think about how you would break down the steps involved in drawing this. How might you explain this to a pupil with minimal language? Have a go – you can draw it out on a plain piece of paper if it helps to try to follow each step...

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- Use our free competency and standards frameworks to evaluate and improve your practice: www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/ framework-documents

Autism Education Trust
393 City Road
London
EC1V 1NG

autismeducationtrust.org.uk
info@autismeducationtrust.org.uk

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