

Neuro-affirming Approach

It is important that we adopt a neuro-affirming mindset and when supporting learners who present with a neurodiverse profile. This includes:

- Using language of difference not deficit
- Having expectations matched to individual neurotype
- Affirming neurodivergent identity
- Seeking to understand distress
- Being mindful of autistic masking
- Learning from neuro-divergent individuals
- Focus on what we should do rather than what we could do while remembering the principle of compliance is not the goal

Physical Environment

- Offer an uncluttered work area — possibly in a small group/pair
- Consider sitting the learner near the main teaching area and facing them towards where you will be teaching (for older learners, ask where they would prefer to sit to ensure they have the optimum learning experience)
- Offer ear defenders to reduce the effect of noise on the learner's concentration
- Where possible, keep other distractions in the classroom to a minimum, e.g. a member of staff tidying up art materials, or the Interactive Whiteboard having information on it that is not relevant to the lesson you are teaching

- Learner may benefit from time sitting on their own, in a low-arousal area, to complete certain tasks

Timetable

- Provide predictability through routines, structures, interactions and supports
- Provide a visual timetable (whole class and/or individual) ensuring it is close to the learner, up-to-date and referred to throughout the day
- Consider the use of a 'Now and next' board — this can help to break down the day
- Explain any changes to the timetable clearly and concisely to the learner as soon as possible — providing the learner with a visual reminder of this can help them process the information in their own time

Communication

- Provide a visual reminder to verbal instructions e.g. write tasks on a whiteboard
- Say the learner's name first when you are speaking to them, this will gain their attention and make it clear to them that they are being spoken to
- Use short, concise instructions — consider speaking directly to the learner after giving instructions to the rest of the class/group
- Give additional processing time after the learner has been given an instruction or asked a question
- Use literal language — straight and to the point

- Consider reducing your language

Class work

- Make learning meaningful, taking consideration of learner's developmental stage, motivation and communication preferences
- Adjust expectations — the learner may use different strategies to complete task, and may lay work out differently to other children
- Consider splitting class work into smaller, more manageable 'chunks' — avoid providing too many tasks at one time
- Provide a viewer/piece of paper that limits the words that a child is able to see on a page — particularly useful during reading tasks or using textbooks with lots of questions/information

Other useful tips

- Where possible, ensure adjustments are anticipatory
- Use a countdown/timer as a visual to help the learner transition from one activity to another
- Use social stories to explain different situations or to get important information across — e.g. a school trip, the need to share with others
- Provide a quiet space for the learner to go to if they are feeling anxious/overwhelmed/upset
- Creating a fidget box — include materials that are small, safe, quiet and interesting for the learner to fidget with

These are all examples of supports that may be useful in your classroom. Not all supports will be beneficial for all children.

Autism "ASD" is a different way of perceiving, thinking, learning and relating."

Professor Tony Attwood

"Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how people communicate and interact with the world."

National Autistic Society

EAST deliver CLPL training sessions and Professional Learning Community training opportunities for supporting learner's with social communication difficulties. Further details of these training sessions can be found on East Ayrshire Gateway.

<http://eastayrshire.cpdservice.net/default.aspx>

Useful websites/links

www.thirdspace.scot/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/NAIT-Key-Messages-for-Primary-Schools.pdf

www.autismtoolbox.co.uk

www.thirdspace.scot/NAIT

[Inclusive Education– free online modules](#)

(Open Learn Create)

www.autismnetworkscotland.org.uk

www.scottishautism.org

The Communication Outreach team are happy to deliver CLPL training for staff teams. This can be in the form raising awareness of Autism and the strategies that can be put in place, and/or focusing on the needs of a particular child/children.

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EAST AYRSHIRE SUPPORT TEAM

Information Leaflet

How you can help to support a child with autism or social communication difficulties

The suggestions contained in this booklet are general and, as with any learner, barriers will differ depending on the individual. Therefore you may find that some strategies will be more relevant and/or effective for some learners than others. It is important that you utilise your knowledge about your learner's strengths and needs when considering what strategies to try.

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