



# **A South Lanarkshire Framework for the Education of Pupils who have Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Inclusive Education Service

December 2017





# 1

## Introduction

The Scottish Strategy for Autism sets out National Priorities and objectives for best practice in the provision of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) services. These priorities are:

**A healthy life:** People with autism enjoy the highest attainable standard of living, health and family life and have timely access to diagnostic assessment and integrated support services.

**Choice and control:** People with autism are treated with dignity and respect and services are able to identify their needs and are responsive to meet those needs.

**Independence:** People with autism are able to live independently in the community with equal access to all aspects of society. Services have the capacity and awareness to ensure that people are met with recognition and understanding.

**Active citizenship:** People with autism are able to participate in all aspects of community and society by successfully transitioning from school into meaningful educational or employment opportunities.

The South Lanarkshire Education Autism Framework sets out how we will achieve the aims of the National Strategy at a local level and support establishments, teachers and support assistants of children and young people with ASD. In order to ensure the provision of an appropriate education for children and young people who have ASD the Framework will be reviewed regularly.

South Lanarkshire Council acknowledges the entitlement of school aged children and young people with ASD to the broad and general learning opportunities provided by Curriculum for Excellence. Pupils with ASD have differences in the areas of social interaction, social communication and in their thinking style.

The skills our pupils need to develop require to be carefully planned and systematically taught. Understanding of these differences

ensures that emphasis is placed upon providing appropriate supports, reliable assessment and providing relevant and personalised learning experiences, all within the context of Curriculum for Excellence. This document provides guidance based on relevant literature and research on the learning and teaching of pupils with ASD.

Partnership working between families and all professionals supporting pupils with ASD informs this framework throughout and will underpin our practice when supporting pupils within education.

ASD will be used throughout this document to refer to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. It is recognised some people prefer the term Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) however, we take our guidance from health professionals and the current terminology continues to be Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Understanding differences ensures that emphasis is placed upon providing appropriate supports, reliable assessment and providing relevant and personalised learning experiences, all within the context of Curriculum for Excellence.

## 2

## The aims of the working group

In 2014 a multi-agency working group comprising Teachers, Educational Psychologists and Allied Health Professionals was established to draft a coherent and up to date Autism Strategy for Education Resources. The group reviewed the most recent research and guidance from Government, Universities and National bodies. It provided a wider perspective on national developments on ASD including how best to achieve the aspirations of the National Strategy within South Lanarkshire.

### **The remit of the working group was to:**

- Recognise and promote existing good practice within establishments
- To build on the prior work of the South Lanarkshire Council Autism Outreach Team
- To provide practice guidance to all practitioners within educational establishments
- Promote the implementation of the Scottish and South Lanarkshire strategies within Education Resources

### **Action will continue to take place in order to achieve:**

- A Framework for continuous professional learning and development providing progression in expertise for education staff
- Awareness raising of ASD for all staff
- Peer awareness raising of ASD for children and young people
- High quality partnership working with all stakeholders
- Locality based networks of support
- Home school partnership.

The working group provided a wider perspective on national developments on ASD including how best to achieve the aspirations of the National Strategy within South Lanarkshire.

# 3

## Legislative and Policy Framework

### National

The Scottish Autism Strategy is supported by a number of pieces of legislation and national policies. This legislation and policy framework puts into practice the core values of the Education (Additional Support for Learning Scotland) Act 2004, revised 2009, the GIRFEC policy framework, Curriculum for Excellence and the Children and Young People (Scotland) 2014 Act.

These key pieces of legislation, and overarching policy framework, promote inclusion and support, provide examples of learning experiences and ensure quality of provision to promote the wellbeing of every child.

### Local

The local policy context supports the delivery of the National Autism Strategy and this is reflected through the key policy statements of:

- Quality Management
- Leading Learning
- Maximising the use of Resources
- Wellbeing and Care
- Communication and Consultation
- Inclusion and Equality

### Additional Good Practice Guidelines:

Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network; Guideline 98; Assessment, diagnosis and clinical interventions for children and young people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (July 2007)

Public Health Institute of Scotland Needs Assessment Report: Autistic Spectrum Disorders (December 2001)

What is Good Practice in Autism Education? : Autism Education Trust (2012)

Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network: Guideline145; Assessment, Diagnosis and Interventions for Autism Spectrum Disorders (June 2016)



# 4

## Definitions of ASD

ASD is a life-long developmental condition. Children and young people typically have differences in 3 key areas of behaviour:

**Differences with social interaction:** this includes recognising and understanding other people's feelings and managing their own. Difficulty in interpersonal interactions can make it hard to form friendships, achieve academic success and obtain and maintain employment.

**Differences with social communication:** this includes using and understanding verbal and non-verbal language, such as gestures, facial expression and tone of voice.

**Differences in thinking styles:** this includes the ability to understand and predict other people's intentions and behaviour and to imagine situations outside their own familiar routines. This can be accompanied by a reliance on a narrow repetitive range of activities and interests.

These differences are referred to as 'the triad of impairment'. ASD is also on a spectrum, moving from least severe to most severe. This means that whilst all people with ASD share these three main areas of difference, the degree to which they will experience the challenges arising from their ASD will vary.

ASD affects every area of a child's development including their perception of the world and how they manage and process information.

Prevalence studies of autism in children suggest that 1 child in every 100 will be affected by ASD and it is estimated that 20% of these children will also have a learning disability. (NHS Lanarkshire Strategy Group Report, NHS Lanarkshire 2013)

Some children with ASD may benefit from the learning and teaching approaches set out in South Lanarkshire's Framework for Severe and Profound Learning Difficulties (April 2015).



# 5

## Principles of a curriculum for children and young people with ASD

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) sets out every child and young person's entitlement to a broad and general education. This includes all experiences and outcomes across the eight curricular areas of CfE.

**The principles underpinning the delivery of an effective curriculum for children and young people with an autistic spectrum disorder are that the curriculum:**

- Considers the complex interaction of the processing differences which an individual child or young person with ASD experiences.
- Recognises the perceptual and sensory processing differences a child or young person, with ASD, will experience.
- Is based on a personalised approach to addressing children and young people's learning needs.
- Has a developmental basis, where appropriate, and takes into consideration the differences in the way this group of learners access learning and teaching (South Lanarkshire's Framework for Severe and Profound Learning Difficulties (April 2015).
- Supports the creation of meaningful learning and teaching experiences and contexts for the pupil.
- Takes into account the difficulties that learners may have in generalising new skills to different environments.
- Enables parents to work alongside staff in identifying the child or young person's learning needs.
- Ensures that the formulation of learning intentions follows a period of assessment involving school staff, parents and other professionals as appropriate.
- Acknowledges that this group of learners may require specific teaching approaches that may include direct social skills coaching, as well as, a structured teaching approach to meet sensory and communication needs.
- Focuses on the development of a young person's language and communication; this involves the assessment of a pupil's communicative attempts and the use of appropriate methods of communication including Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC).
- Ensures that all staff members have an understanding of a pupil's learning needs and are committed to enabling children and young people to develop their skills and fulfil their potential.
- Creates an appropriate learning environment in the classroom and in the wider school to best meet pupil needs.
- Makes use of positive organisational and visual strategies within the establishment and the learning environment.
- Places significant emphasis on planning a pupil's transition and preparing them for the next stage of education and/or for a post-school destination.

## 6

## How might autism affect learning and behaviour in the classroom?

The ways in which children and young people with ASD learn is different and an over reliance on one to one learning and teaching strategies can lead to excessive dependence, 'that means without adult cues, the students do not have the confidence to initiate or carry out familiar tasks and may thus appear passive or lazy'. ("Autism and Learning: A Guide to Good Practice", Powell and Jordan, 1997)

It is essential to consider elements of the thinking styles of pupils with ASD as assets which can highlight the talents, strengths and competencies of individuals. Elements of this thinking style may bring challenges for those around the person with ASD. Individuals working with this group of learners are encouraged to adopt an open problem solving approach to 'see the world through an ASD lens'.

There are considerations for the teacher in terms of managing the learning. Time needs to be built in for reflection on what the child has experienced and how they approached the learning task. The teacher should draw the child's attention to the salient features of a task and provide the appropriate supports to aid understanding and progress the learning.

To further support effective learning, children need to be aware of how they are feeling about what they are doing when they are engaged in learning situations: teachers need to use 'emotionally salient experiences as contexts for learning' (Powell and Jordan, 1997), i.e. experiences that take account of and use what the child relates to in their world.

Teachers should capitalise on the natural interests of pupils rather than expecting the child or young person to 'tune into' adult interests. It is important to include an evaluative appraisal of new learning and this appraisal should be made explicit to the staff supporting pupils and become the focus of all planned learning experiences. South Lanarkshire Educational Psychological Service offers training in this area and an example of support materials is included at Appendix 1.





**Children and young people with ASD will experience the classroom in different ways arising from:**

- Anxiety which may result in a range of repetitive behaviours: running off, withdrawal, aggressive behaviour or other challenging behaviours. Staff should be aware that everyday activities other children take in their stride may trigger anxiety and stress for pupils with ASD.
- Differences in social communication, which may appear awkward or challenging. Teachers should be aware that although it may appear that the child or young person has heard what is being said the child's understanding of the spoken word may be different.
- Sensory issues: our senses help us to understand and respond to the world around us. Some children may be over (hyper) sensitive or under (hypo) sensitive. For the hypo or hypersensitive child or young person, the experience of sound, light and movement of others may be very distracting and planned withdrawal from or adaptation of the environment should be considered.
- Children and young people with ASD encounter many challenges in interpreting the world in which they live. They require support to manage social and educational settings to ensure that their experiences are positive. Through positive recognition of the attributes of individual pupils, skilled professionals are able to meet the highly individual needs of this group of learners. Examples of audit tools which can support staff in identifying and analysing what the child is experiencing are included at Appendix 1.

It is essential to consider elements of the thinking styles of pupils with ASD as assets which can highlight the talents, strengths and competencies of individuals.

## The effects of ASD on learning and behaviour

Issues arising from ASD	Effect on learning and behaviour
<b>Qualitative difficulties in social interaction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited use of non-verbal behaviours such as eye gaze and body posture to regulate social interaction</li> <li>Problems developing peer relationships</li> <li>Limited spontaneous and sharing of activities</li> <li>Limited social reciprocity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulties in forming reciprocal peer relationships and friendships</li> <li>Difficulties in picking up non verbal or emotional cues</li> <li>Taking what is said to them literally</li> <li>Difficulties in picking up on social cues, particularly in group activities</li> <li>Unpredictable emotional responses (e.g. anxiety, outbursts) for no apparent reason</li> </ul>
<b>Qualitative difficulties in social communication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delayed language development without non-verbal compensation</li> <li>Problems starting/ sustaining conversations</li> <li>Repetitive and stereotyped language</li> <li>Limited imaginative and imitative play</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Problems understanding spoken language /verbal instructions</li> <li>Not responding when spoken to</li> <li>Poor comprehension of written text even if reading decoding is good</li> <li>Solo or parallel play in place of group play</li> </ul>
<b>Restricted repertoire of interests, behaviours and activities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over focus on particular topics</li> <li>Rigid adherence to routines/ rituals</li> <li>Repetitive, stereo typed motor mannerisms</li> <li>Preoccupation with object parts rather than whole</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preferences for only one or a few activities</li> <li>Difficulties with transitions, changes in routines and unexpected events</li> <li>Difficulties maintaining attention without external support/structure</li> <li>Difficulties moving from one activity to another</li> <li>Less likely to pick up on the gist of a situation or activity</li> </ul>
<b>Hyper or hypo reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aversive responses to particular environmental stimuli, (e.g. Lights, colours, sounds, patterns, smells, touch)</li> <li>Sensory seeking behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shuts eyes or blocks ears</li> <li>Removes self from the source by leaving a room or people</li> <li>Needs one person/thing at a time</li> <li>Fascination with (looking, smelling, licking) objects or people</li> </ul>

# 7

## Learning and teaching approaches

While there is no one clear approach to the provision of education for children with ASD, evidence has consistently highlighted that the key to a high quality educational experience lies in the quality of the learning and teaching within individual establishments. Good practice in ASD indicates that an eclectic range of approaches is required to help best promote children's learning (vis SIGN Guideline 145, 2016).

Teaching activities should incorporate personalised motivators for each individual and provide opportunities for them to work as an integral part of their peer group. Children should also be provided with opportunities to make choices and to build skills for independence.

Importantly, staff require to have an in-depth knowledge of the children and young people with whom they are working and an understanding of the development and progression of the individual child.

The South Lanarkshire 'Framework for Supporting Pupils with Severe and Profound Learning Needs' provides a structure for pupils who have significant additional support needs in addition to ASD.

### In order to meet good practice in learning and teaching staff will:

- Ensure effective individualised educational planning which takes account of the specific learning, social and communication needs of children. Where required, planning should be multi agency and co-ordinated through the appropriate plan(s) for the child or young person. (refer to Operating Procedure A28).
- Deliver a broad and relevant range of educational experiences for children with ASD across all educational contexts and in line with Curriculum for Excellence.
- Plan opportunities for social and educational inclusion with peers across all establishments.

### The skills and capacity of all staff will be further developed through:

- the provision of a range of training for all staff. This includes a staged approach to training in ASD and is varied in relation to age, stage and sector.
- locality based staff support networks to facilitate the sharing of good practice and build capacity across provisions.

the provision of training in coaching and mentoring skills and in solution oriented practice, as an element of the professional development provision of the Educational Psychological Service.



**Other adjustments may include changes to classroom structure. Some examples are listed below.**

## TEACCH

The TEACCH approach is designed to address the learning characteristics of individuals with ASD through a focus on classroom organisation and specific approaches to learning and teaching.

The approach includes organisational supports such as work systems and individual work spaces to address challenges with attention and executive functioning. The use of visual supports, timetables and work schedules are designed to aid understanding, show clear progression and supplement verbal communication. In addition, TEACCH provides structured support for social communication.

## Makaton

Makaton is a system used to augment spoken language and communication through using the spoken word and speech signs. In some cases, graphic symbols may also be used in conjunction with gesture although this is mainly when learning something new or based on an individual need. Makaton consists of a core vocabulary of roughly 450 concepts. There are eight developmental stages ranging from signs addressing immediate needs such as 'eat' and 'drink', to more complex and abstract vocabulary dealing with, for example, time and emotion. The teaching of signs is through relevant and meaningful contexts and in most cases does not follow any particular order but based on the needs and learning contexts of the individual or group.

## Social Stories

The use of social stories and comic strip conversations can support people with autism to develop greater social understanding. Social stories are short descriptions of a particular situation, event or activity, which include specific information about what to expect in that situation and why. Social stories can be produced through a range of formats based on individual need. Comic strip conversations are simple visual representations of the different levels of communication in a conversation. For example, they show the expressions that are actually said in a conversation, how people might be feeling and what people's intentions might be. Comic strip conversations use symbols, stick figure drawings and colour. By seeing the different elements of a conversation presented visually, some of the more abstract aspects of social communication (such as recognising the feelings of others) are made more 'concrete' and are therefore easier to understand.

## Communication Passports

For some children with ASD it is useful to produce an overview of their strengths and challenges, with social communication and learning, to share with all who are working with them, people in the community and/or at points of transition. This is known as a communication passport and promotes continuity of the learning environment and teaching approaches and can be of particular support at times of transition. Passports should be created in partnership with individual pupils and may be a card, single sheet of information or a more comprehensive booklet depending on the situation. It is important to remember ownership of a communication passport belongs to the pupil.

## Enhanced Visual Environments

When standardised symbols and visual timetables are available within establishments they facilitate the promotion of inclusive practice, as pupils experience uniformity of visual experiences throughout the establishment. The successful implementation of this approach requires the active involvement of all staff and pupils. A consistent approach to visual information and labelling, across the authority, will promote continuity at transition between stages and establishments.

# 8

## The assessment process

Approaches to assessment must take account of the learning differences for children and young people with ASD.

For understanding to be maximised pupils need to be involved in both the product and the process of learning and Jordan and Powell ("Understanding and Teaching Children with Autism", 2003) note that 'children with ASD are more

likely to have a more complete understanding of a particular task subsequent to completing it if they have been involved in some way in the process of assessing it'.

It is important to build an assessment profile over time, identifying and taking cognisance of individual needs and strengths through the delivery of the curriculum.

## 9

## Assessing and Addressing Challenging Behaviour

South Lanarkshire Council's policy on Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviour (SLC, November 2014) identifies best practice in the management of challenging behaviour.

The policy highlights helpful approaches and strategies for preventing, reducing challenging behaviour and promoting positive behaviour.

## 10

## Provision for Education

Provision for pupils with an Autism Spectrum Disorder is based on the presumption of mainstream. The 'whole school' approach to support for learning is set within a staged intervention framework which facilitates the identification of additional support needs and supports the assessment, planning and reporting systems to meet those individual needs.

This strategic approach seeks to create 'autism friendly' environments in every school and classroom.

It is proposed that an ASD Consultation tool devised by South Lanarkshire Educational Psychological services be used following training, to enhance staff knowledge of the impact of ASD on all aspects of an individual pupil's life.

This tool may also be helpful prior to requests for assistance to other services and will ensure that an informed staged intervention approach for planning to meet needs has taken place.

It is acknowledged, the autistic spectrum spans a broad range of social presentations, behaviours, abilities and educational needs and in recognition of this, South Lanarkshire Council maintains and develops a broad and flexible range of educational provision.



# 11

## Early Intervention

### Partnership working

#### Partnership with children and young people:

Children and young people with ASD may struggle to express their views on a range of issues affecting them. While the 'What I think tool' is often used, it is acknowledged that this does not suit everyone. Consequently, schools use a range of communication methods and tools that are appropriate to the pupil's communication needs, chronological age and developmental stage.

#### Partnership with parents:

Schools work closely with parents gathering views from parental consultation, through the monitoring and review processes relating to children's learning plans and through interactions with class teachers including regular feedback on learning and teaching.

#### Partnership with professionals and members of the multi-disciplinary team:

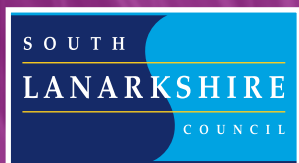
Good communication between parents, children and the professionals providing support is an essential element of learning and teaching for pupils with ASD. South Lanarkshire Council recognises that 'if there is no good communication between the class teacher and the professionals who may have some input into the education of the child (such as educational psychologists and Allied Health Professionals) then no connection can be made in terms of follow up or reinforcement between what can become discrete areas of learning'. (Jordan and Powell, 2003)

It is often the case that therapeutic services, particularly those offered by Allied Health Professionals such as the speech and language therapist, physiotherapist and occupational therapist, are delivered within the classroom setting. Joint planning takes place between the class teacher and therapist and learning experiences are contextualised and relevant to the child or young person.

The ARCH (Autism Resource Coordination Hub) is a new resource for parents run by South Lanarkshire Council and is located at Reid Street, Burnbank, Hamilton, ML3 0RQ. Parents are able to seek advice and support from the ARCH team and other parents. A range of parenting programmes and events are hosted within ARCH, including Early Bird and Healthy Minds delivered by trained professionals. ARCH also host events by sail autism (Supporting Autism in Lanarkshire) and information can be found on [www.sailautism.org.uk](http://www.sailautism.org.uk)

ARCH offer users and carers a supportive and nurturing environment where issues relating to autism can be addressed meaningfully and sensitively. They emphasize a collaborative approach, working with and for people affected by Autism and their parent/carers. The centre contact number is 0344 225 1111.

(Appendix 1: South Lanarkshire Council Psychological Services ASD Consultation toolkit and leaflet)



If you need this information in another format or language,  
please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs.  
Phone: 0303 123 1015 Email: [equalities@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)

**[www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk](http://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk)**