We were expecting you!

Initial Teacher Education Autism Course Materials

Initial Teacher Education Autism Course Materials:

We were expecting you!

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INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION AUTISM COURSE MATERIAL

FOREWORD BY JOHN SWINNEY, MSP, DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER AND CABINET SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring excellence and equity for all pupils within our education system. All children and young people deserve the same opportunity to be included and to reach their full potential. I am, therefore, pleased to be able to endorse the Initial Teacher Education Autism Course Material.

This resource will go a long way to providing our next generation of teachers with the skills and knowledge to engage with pupils with autism and their families. The resource is both comprehensive and insightful and will enable student teachers, during their initial teacher education phase, to become aware of the challenges for autistic learners and the supporting role they can play as teachers in the classroom and school.

I was pleased to see the partnership approach taken in the development of this resource with input from stakeholders such as the National Autistic Society, Scottish Autism, and Children in Scotland and just as importantly autistic individuals. This has helped ensure that the materials provide the insights of those with first-hand experience of autism and working with children with autism.

I expect to see Initial Teacher Education providers make this resource an integral part of their programmes. A sound baseline will give teachers the confidence in the early part of their career to engage positively with pupils with autism and their families.

The General Teaching Council for Scotland's revised Teaching Standards now make specific reference to additional support needs, including autism. Their framework to accredit initial teacher education programmes will also consider how programmes support equality and diversity by raising awareness of a range of neuro-developmental differences, including autism. This resource will assist in meeting that requirement for programme accreditation and also provide an introduction to the Autism Toolbox, the resource that will help teachers, at all stages of their careers, to maintain and update their skills and knowledge in this area.

I am sure that this resource will help to ensure that autistic learners are supported effectively with their education to enable them to reach their full learning potential.

JOHN SWINNEY, MSP

DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER AND CABINET SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Introduction

This resource has been developed in recognition of the needs of autistic learners and those with related support needs that were highlighted in the publication of the report Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved (2019).

In response to the report Mr John Swinney, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, chaired a Roundtable open conversation with relevant stakeholders to discuss some of the issues raised and to identify solutions. The Roundtable included discussions on Initial Teacher Education, Continuous Professional Development and good practice within schools which supports autistic children.

A subgroup with the following representation met to plan and write this resource.

- Learning Directorate, Scottish Government

- National Autism Implementation Team (NAIT)

- Education Scotland

- General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)

- COSLA

- Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)

- AMASE

- Scottish Autism

- National Autistic Society Scotland

- Scottish Council of Deans of Education

Why are we focusing on autism in Initial Teacher Education?

Student teachers and new teachers are highly likely to meet autistic learners in every school they work in. Between 1 – 1.5% of children have autism [1] and 86% of autistic children and young people attend mainstream schools [2], however this group of learners disproportionately represent 4.6% of exclusions in Scotland [3] and 68% of tribunals (2017-18) [4].

All of the 30.9% of children and young people in mainstream Scottish schools who have an additional support need [5] will benefit from good inclusive practice.

Recent evidence highlights that there is a gap between the legislation and policy and the way that these are applied in practice. There is an ongoing need to reflect on how well we are supporting autistic learners through an inclusive mindset at all levels in education.

One step in addressing this gap is in providing materials to Initial Teacher Education providers that can be readily integrated in to all Initial Teacher Education courses so that teachers start their careers with an inclusive mindset and come into schools with a knowledge of good autism practice, expecting to teach learners with a range of additional support needs.

New teachers are not expected to be experts in everything. These materials can support teachers to be aware of issues for autistic learners and to understand their role in a staged intervention process.

Presenter information

How to use these materials

Individual establishments can decide how best to incorporate this content into their teaching programme. Establishments are moving towards a model that there is a 'golden thread' of inclusion that runs through all learning. It is suggested that content is woven through existing course materials rather than bolted on.

This resource comprises four progressive units with pre-prepared PowerPoint presentations, Key Messages, reflective questions, links to video clips and related reading references. A full script and set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are provided to support lecturers.

The materials are for use within Initial Teacher Education courses. They should not be altered or shared without permission and should not be replicated for other purposes.

Content overview	
Key Messages	• Environment first • Provide predictability • Make learning meaningful • Seek to understand distressed behaviour • Ensure adjustments are anticipatory • Difference not deficit • We were expecting you!
Unit 1: We were expecting you!	• Key Messages • Legislative context • Why autism? • Anticipatory support • Inclusive practice • Environment first • Staged intervention
Scottish Autism ITE Film https://youtu.be/4g6spWla9hE	• Values • Relationships • Language
Unit 2: The profile of autism	• Key Messages • The profile of autism • Cognitive theories • Teacher mindset • Inclusive classroom practice • Supporting peer interactions
Unit 3: Autism and anxiety	• Key Messages • Anxiety • The Losing it Line • The 24 hour child
Unit 4: The role of teachers	• Key Messages • Modelling inclusion • Parents • Homework • Pupil Support Assistants • Collaborative working • What about the other children? • Professional learning
The Autism Toolbox – Education Scotland	• Introduction to the resource • Overview
Reflective questions	
Frequently Asked Questions	
Reading and Resource List	
Policy and Legislative Context	
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Key Messages

Key Messages for Initial Teacher Education
Introduction
The following key messages have been agreed through consultation with the autism community including: autistic people, parents of autistic individuals, professionals from health, education and third sector. This set of key messages have been particularly tailored to meet the needs of students of Initial Teacher Education. They are designed to guide planning for autistic children and young people and those with related needs. 1. Environment first 2. Provide predictability 3. Make learning meaningful 4. Seek to understand distressed behaviour 5. Ensure adjustments are anticipatory 6. Difference not deficit 7. We were expecting you!
1. Environment first
The physical and social environment is appropriately adapted to meet the needs of all learners. The physical environment includes the way school looks and feels, and how learners use materials and move around. Noisy and busy parts of the school are often stressful environments for autistic learners. The social environment includes the relationships the learner has with peers and adults, social rules and expectations, and the ways these are communicated.
2. Provide predictability
Predictability helps to reduce anxiety. Disrupted expectations increase anxiety. Teachers seek to reduce anxiety and support participation by providing an environment that is predictable to learners. This includes: • Routines • Structures • Interactions • Learning supports (e.g. chunking or breaking down tasks; supporting with visual timetables)
3. Make learning meaningful
It is important to match activities and expectations to each learner's profile. The biggest reason for the distressed behaviours that we see is the mismatch between expectations and a learner's developmental stage. Consideration is given to each child's: • Developmental stage • Communication • Sensory profile • Motivation

4. Seek to understand distressed behaviour

The mindset with which we view distressed behaviour, affects how we respond to it.

In order to understand distressed behaviour school staff can:
• Seek to understand 'why?'
• Identify potential triggers or explanations for the distress
• Avoid 'post match analysis' with the child
• Make adaptations to avoid the same situation arising again

5. Ensure adjustments are anticipatory

The Equality Act (2010) requires 'reasonable adjustments' and states that these should be 'anticipatory' - Let's not just see how it goes!

Through the provision of anticipatory support, autistic learners are less likely to become dysregulated or to become anxious or distressed, reducing the likelihood of learners experiencing distress and/or engaging in distressed behaviours.

6. Difference not deficit

The human population is highly diverse. Neurodiversity is a term that describes this normal variation across all people. Within the autistic population there is also a great deal of diversity and autism manifests differently from person to person.

Autism affects the way a person communicates and interacts with others, how information is processed and how the person makes sense of the world. It is important that we do not see autistic people as presenting with series of deficits but rather that we live in a neurodiverse world where differences between people are expected and are viewed positively.

7. We were expecting you

30.9% of Scotland's school population have an Additional Support Need (ASN). Children and young people with a range of needs and presentations should be expected and welcomed!

Reflective questions

The following questions are designed to support student teachers to consider their own mindset and to identify areas of learning and development to enhance their knowledge, understanding and practice.

- Do I know the developmental and communication levels of the autistic learners that I teach and what I might need to do to find out?
- Am I tailoring activities and expectations to match with these?
- Am I making appropriate anticipatory 'reasonable adjustments' to meet the needs of autistic learners?
- Am I communicating effectively with the autistic learners in my class?
- If I implement the Key Messages from this guidance, what changes might I see in my practice and with my learners?
- Do I know how and where to seek further advice and support to guide my practice, both within and outwith my school?
- With regard to autistic learners, am I thinking about differences rather than having a deficit focused outlook?
- Do I model an inclusive mindset to my class and school community?
- How can I support my peers to think more inclusively?
- What reading/ other professional learning can I do to further inform me about the needs of autistic learners?

Frequently asked questions

When delivering this course content, it is anticipated that students will be invited to ask questions relating to the content and to some wider issues around the inclusion of autistic learners. The following 'frequently asked' questions and answers are included to support lecturers in responding to these.

What if I think the problem is really at home (the child is fine at school)?

It is not uncommon for autistic learners to 'hold it together' in one context and to show a reaction much later and/or in a different context. A discrepancy between behaviour described at home and school (or vice versa) can be a sign that it would be helpful to look at the 24 hour life of the child and ensure that their day is as predictable and desirable as possible across the board.

What if I am asked about interventions or supports I don't know about?

Rather than try to answer, it is always best to say that you don't know. There are a great many interventions and supports suggested for autistic learners with greatly varying degrees of evidence. Not all are recommended and some are recommended only for a particular profile of learner, and for particular targets or aims.

No teacher is expected to be an expert in all additional support needs and in all possible supports. Seek support and guidance from more experienced colleagues and, where appropriate, from Health colleagues involved in supporting the individual child or young person.

The Autism Toolbox is a reliable source of evidence based information about autism and NAIT have produced an Autism Evidence Based Tookit, matching evidence based approaches to the developmental stage of the child or young person.

What if the child spends most of their day with a 1:1 support person?

It is the responsibility of the class teacher to plan experiences and outcomes that take account of the strengths and needs of all learners in their class. Some classes might have an additional adult in a supporting role and occasionally an adult will be allocated to support the inclusion of one or more identified learners.

The role of a support assistant is to facilitate the participation of a learner with additional support needs and to enable the learner to be as independent as possible within the class and school environment. Support assistants may or may not have formal training and may or may not have knowledge of particular additional support needs.

Often the best support assistants stand back and observe rather than sit alongside a child doing things for them or prompting them through tasks. They continually look for ways to increase a child or young person's independence and reduce dependence.

As with any learner with an additional support need, it is important to have a clear plan that all the adults working with an autistic learner follow. A person can implement a plan and use strategies- but a person is not a strategy!

What if the child is working at a different level to others in the class?

30.9% of children in mainstream Scottish schools have one or more additional support needs. Every class will include children at a range of developmental stages and with a range of learning profiles. Children with a range of needs and presentations should be expected and welcomed!

It is important to remember that each learner is an individual who requires an individualised approach. Building positive, trusting relationships with both the learner and their parents or carers will be critical to getting this approach right.

What if the child doesn't follow the school rules (e.g. one way system, uniform, time-keeping, lunch, assembly)?

The Equality Act (2010) states that schools and local authorities must make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of individuals with a disability.

One of the ways that reasonable adjustments are provided in schools is by adapting how the rules are applied to individual learners, according to their level of understanding and ability to comply with them. Examples of reasonable adjustments might include allowing an autistic learner who has a sensory reaction to wearing a shirt and tie or school trousers to wear a polo top or jogging bottoms or a learner who finds the sensory environment of the lunch hall overwhelming to eat their lunch in a quiet area with one or two friends.

What about the other children?

It is likely that some students will query whether there is a negative impact on other children in the class because of:

1. Rules being applied differently for autistic learners, e.g. a child or young person might be allowed to eat crisps for snack when the others are expected to eat fruit
2. Access to resources that others do not have (or need), e.g. having their own fidget toy or Move 'n' Sit cushion
3. Risk to physical and mental wellbeing through being in a classroom with a distressed autistic peer

You could have discussion around good inclusive teaching and adherence to The Equality Act (2010) meaning that we apply the rules differently, according to the needs of the individual.

If one person in the class has hearing aids or glasses, we would not suggest that everyone else needs these. The supports required for autistic people are equivalent to ensuring that ramps are in place for people using wheelchairs.

Further advice is offered in the NAIT Equality Act Guidance.

What if the other children think I'm being unfair?

Experienced teachers tell us that, while this is a concern sometimes raised by adults, it is rare that children express this, in fact children are often quite accepting of differences. These occur between siblings at home and in many other circumstances; it is in many ways part of life.

It can be helpful to examine the difference between equality and equity, treating people equally or equitably and to look at legal responsibilities through the Equality Act (20210), with a particular focus on 'indirect discrimination' – "If a policy or procedure that treats all children the same and as a result actually put a child with a disability at a disadvantage compared with others who do not have a disability, and it cannot be justified, it is called indirect discrimination."

What about the behaviour?

Language is really important. There is a move away from talking about 'challenging behaviour' which suggests the problem is in the child, to using the term 'distressed behaviour' which helps us to see the need to understand and support the distress.

There are two important stages in this response. Firstly, understanding and providing anticipatory supports and secondly, advice on how to respond when the child shows signs of distress.

It is the responsibility of the adults in a school to make anticipatory adjustments and as far as possible take steps to support learners to be well regulated and avoid distressed behaviour happening.

This question represents a particular mindset and suggests that the student does not yet fully understand that all behaviour is communication that it is their role to seek to understand.

A useful chapter to suggest the student reads would be '**Why Why Why' Uniquely Human (2015).** Your group may also wish to watch and discuss Amy Laurent's Ted Talk, Compliance is Not the Goal: Letting Go of Control and Rethinking Support for Autistic Individuals

Once a child is at a point of displaying distressed behaviour, all they can really do is wait for them to recover and afterwards take the time to reflect with colleagues. New teachers should consider what can be changed to prevent the child feeling the need to respond that way in future. Following school risk assessment procedures may be a helpful way to approach this.

What should I do if a child is behaving aggressively or violently?

The Equality Act (2010) requires 'reasonable adjustments' and states that these should be 'anticipatory'.

Through the provision of appropriate anticipatory support, autistic learners are less likely to become dysregulated or to become anxious or distressed, reducing the likelihood of learners experiencing distress and/or engaging in distressed behaviours.

When a child or young person has reached the point of being so distressed that they are displaying physical behaviours, adults around the child should make the area safe by removing any sharp or hard objects and should step quietly away to watch from a safe distance and wait for the distress to pass.

After the event it is not generally helpful to engage the child or young person in 'post match analysis' rather the adults should reflect on what they need to change to prevent the same situation from arising again.

How do I access e.g. Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Educational Psychologists and other partner agencies?

Every authority will have its own service level agreement with partners and processes to be followed. Student teachers should initially speak to their in school mentor or a member of the school Senior Leadership Team. Opportunities to spend time with colleagues from partner agencies can be very worthwhile.

What if I am told a child has PDA (Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome)?

Autistic children commonly have difficulties with anxiety, initiating to express themselves or start a new activity and at times can have difficulty responding to demand, particularly when the environment and those around them are not as predictable and desirable as the individual needs them to be. However just because someone avoids demands in their current situation, this does not mean this is pathological. The NAIT Anxiety Related Absence Guide http://www.autismtoolbox.co.uk/sites/default/files/resources/NAIT%20Anxiety%20Related%20Absence%20Guidance%202020.pdf provides further information to help students understand these issues and practical strategies for universal and targeted approaches for home and school.

It is always important to listen to parents and focus on the strengths, concerns and a solution focussed plan, which is developed with an understanding of the range of demands across the whole day and week and the child's capacity to meet all of these. Where difficulties are observed at home more than in school, we should acknowledge this is not uncommon and that reducing demand at school can have an impact on anxiety at home.

The 'cycle of anxiety' highlights that we should be very wary of some of the strategies we might read about which can make the anxiety worse and reduce trust in the longer term. One such example of something we should not do is surprising learners to avoid them being anxious about something that is about to happen. This is not recommended. It might be more helpful to signpost students to resources about understanding anxiety in autism (www.autismtoolbox.co.uk/anxiety).

In general it is not the teacher's role to discuss diagnosis and they are advised to 'say what they see' and think about what we observe in the child together with the demands in the environment around them, rather than using labels. They should never suggest that a child or young person has PDA. This is a disputed term, coined originally in the 1980s when our understanding of autism and neurodevelopmental differences was very different. Due to a dearth of evidence it is not included in recognised diagnostic criteria. If parents wish to have discussion about diagnosis or PDA, school staff can clarify that this is the role of health professionals.

Reading and Resource List

Publications:

- Fletcher-Watson, S. & Happe, F. (2019) a new introduction to psychological theory and current debate
- Hull, L et al., (2017). "Putting on my best normal": social camouflaging in adults with autism spectrum conditions. Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 47(8), 2519-2534.
- Milner, V., McIntosh, H., Colvert, E., & Happé, F. (2019). A Qualitative Exploration of the Female Experience of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Journal of autism and developmental disorders, 1-14.
- Prizant, B. M., & Fields-Meyer, T. (2015). Uniquely Human: A different way of seeing autism. Simon and Schuster.
- Silberman, S. (2017). Neurotribes: The legacy of autism and how to think smarter about people who think differently. Atlantic Books.
- Vermeulen P. (2015) Context Blindness in Autism Spectrum Disorder: Not Using the Forest to See the Trees as Trees. Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities. 2015;30 (3):182-192.
- Wood, R. (2019) Inclusive Education for Autistic Children. Jessica Kingsley.

Personal accounts:

- Higashida, N. (2013). The Reason I Jump: one boy's voice from the silence of autism

Websites:

- Autism Toolbox www.autismtoolbox.org
- National Autism Implementation Team www.thirdspace.scot/NAIT
- Scottish Autism www.scottishautism.org
- National Autistic Society www.autism.org.uk

Web resources:

- National Autism Implementation Team (NAIT) www.thirdspace.scot/NAIT
  - NAIT Equality Act Guidance
  - Cognitive Theories Guide
  - NAIT Safe Space Guidance for Schools
  - NAIT Home-School Communication Guidance
  - NAIT Information for Schools when a Child Receives a Diagnosis of Autism
  - NAIT Anxiety Related Absence Guide

- General Teaching Council for Scotland, Professional Standards 2021 https://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-standards/professional-standards.aspx

- Education Scotland Online Modules. Inclusion in Practice: The CIRCLE Framework https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/inclusion-in-practice
- CIRCLE www.thirdspace.scot/CIRCLE
- Autism Education Trust (e.g. 'Tools for teachers: Practical Resources for Classroom Success) https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/
- Social Thinking www.socialthinking.com

Film clips:

- National Autistic Society 'Too Much Information' clips: https://youtu.be/WlxXbONMqNc https://youtu.be/aPknwW8mPAM
- TED Talk Amy Laurent 'Compliance is not the goal: Letting go of control and rethinking support for autistic individuals' https://youtu.be/fx3cfzlCG_Q

Legislative and Policy Context

Scottish Legislation:

- Equality Act 2010 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance

- Standards in Schools Act 2000

  https://www.gov.scot/publications/statutory-guidance-standards-scotlands-schools-etc-act-2000-9781786528759/

- Accessibility Strategy (Scotland) Act 2002

  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2002/12/contents

- Additional Support for Learning Act 2004 (as amended)

  http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/7/pdfs/asp_20090007_en.pdf

- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

  http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/8/pdfs/asp_20140008_en.pdf

- Education (Scotland) Act 2016

  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/8/contents/enacted

- Draft Education (Scotland) Bill 2018

  https://www.gov.scot/publications/draft-education-scotland-bill/

Scottish Policy:

- Curriculum for Excellence

  https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc15)/What%20is%20Curriculum%20for%20Excellence

- Getting it Right for Every Child https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec

- Included Engaged Involved (Pt1 and Pt2)

  https://www.gov.scot/publications/included-engaged-involved-part-1-attendance-scottish-schools/

  https://www.gov.scot/publications/included-engaged-involved-part-2-positive-approach-preventing-managing-school/

- Scottish Attainment Challenge

  https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/pupil-attainment/

- National Improvement Framework

- https://www.gov.scot/publications/2020-national-improvement-framework-improvement-plan/

- Delivering Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education: A Delivery Plan for Scotland

  https://www.gov.scot/publications/delivering-excellence-equity-scottish-education-delivery-plan-scotland/

Supported by:

- How Good is Our School 4

  https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/Frameworks_SelfEvaluation/FRWK2_NIHeditHGI OS/FRWK2_HGIOS4.pdf

- General Teaching Council for Scotland, Professional Standards 2021

  https://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-standards/professional-standards.aspx

References:

[1] SIGN 145 Assessment, diagnosis and interventions for autism spectrum disorders, 2016
https://www.sign.ac.uk/assets/sign145.pdf

[2] Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved, published online, 2018 https://www.notengaged.com/

[3] Scottish Government School Exclusions Statistics, published online, 2018-19
https://www.gov.scot/publications/school-exclusion-statistics/

[4] M Dunsmuir (Chamber President of the Additional Support Needs Tribunal for Scotland) Additional Support for Learning Summit, oral presentation, 2019

[5] Review of Additional Support for Learning Implementation, Crown Copyright, 2020
https://www.gov.scot/publications/review-additional-support-learning-implementation/

[6] Equality Act, 2010 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance

The Scottish Autism Pre-recorded lecture that accompanies this Unit can be found here: https://youtu.be/4g6spWla9hE

Authorship

This unit belongs to a suite of resources developed by a Scottish Government working group including representation from:

- Learning Directorate, Scottish Government
- National Autism Implementation Team
- Education Scotland
- University of Strathclyde
- General Teaching Council for Scotland
- COSLA
- ADES
- Autistic individuals
- Scottish Autism
- National Autistic Society
- Scottish Council of University Deans

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(Presenter note: No need to read out. Will be included as part of PPT if shared electronically.)

Plan

- Key Messages
- Legislative context
- Why autism?
- Anticipatory support
- Inclusive practice
- Environment first
- Staged intervention
- Key Messages

(Presenter note: Read only – do not expand at this point)

The plan for today is:
- Key Messages
- Legislative context
- Why autism?
- Anticipatory support
- Inclusive practice
- Environment first
- Staged intervention
- Key Messages

Key messages

- Environment first
- Provide predictability
- Make learning meaningful
- Seek to understand distressed behaviour
- **Ensure adjustments are anticipatory**
- **Difference, not deficit**
- **'We were expecting you!'**

All four units of the autism course content will be focussing on these seven **Key Messages.**

We introduce them today as we set the scene with **Autism Unit 1** and will explore them in greater detail as the course progresses.

This presentation will highlight each Key Message as we go through, with the symbol in the top right corner.

This Unit will place a particular focus on:
- Ensure adjustments are anticipatory
- Difference, not deficit

and
- 'We were expecting you!'

We hope that this is just the start of your autism learning - that you will become enthused to keep reading and learning.

Throughout this course we ask that everyone keep these 7 Key Messages in mind. If you only take seven messages from the autism course content, let it be these…

Legislative context

- Standards in Schools Act 2000
- Accessibility Strategy (Scotland) Act 2002
- Additional Support for Learning Act 2004 (as amended)
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- Education (Scotland) Act 2016
- Draft Education (Scotland) Bill 2018

Scotland has a wide range of legislation to support inclusion and equality in education. This is not an exhaustive list.

These promote a child centred approach to encourage every child to reach their 'fullest potential'. The legislation ensures rights and entitlements for children and young people to education, support and wellbeing.

Together with educational policies, they place duties and expectations on schools and local authorities to ensure that they:
- Deliver an inclusive education
- Support learners to achieve to the best of their ability
- Do not discriminate against those with protected characteristics
- Provide assessments when requested

Policy

- Curriculum for Excellence
- Getting it Right for Every Child
- Included Engaged Involved (Pt1 and Pt2)
- Scottish Attainment Challenge
- National Improvement Framework
- Delivering Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education:
  A Delivery Plan for Scotland

Supported by:
- How Good is Our School 4
- GTCS Framework for Professional Standards

Children's rights and entitlements are fundamental to Scotland's approach to inclusive education.

They are supported by policy drivers including, **Curriculum for Excellence, the Getting it right for every child approach and the Framework for Professional Standards** for teachers.

These are underpinned by a set of values aligned to social justice and commitment to inclusive education.

We are sure you will already be familiar with these.

The National Autism Implementation Team have created an autism specific guide to the Equality Act (2010). This can be found on the NAIT website.
Please take time to read this following the training and, ideally, to discuss with peers.

For now we would like to draw your attention to 4 elements:
Direct Discrimination – This refers to treating someone differently because of one of the 9 protected characteristics; in this case disability. (In most cases, autism would be considered to be a disability). We all tend to be conscious of Direct Discrimination and of the importance of not discriminating.

Indirect Discrimination – *(Trainer note: read quote from the handout)* "If a policy or procedure that treats all children the same and as a result actually put a child with a disability at a disadvantage compared with others who do not have a disability, and it cannot be justified, it is called *indirect discrimination*."
Sometimes, with best intentions, we might try to treat everyone the same and to insist that everyone in the class is expected to take part in something that, for reason of their disability, autistic children might not be able to do without significant adjustment.
For example:
Elements of Restorative Practice require children to have well developed Theory of

Mind and social imagination, both of which are recognised areas of difference in autism.
Collaborative Group work, Sports Day and School Camp/ Residential Visits may all need to have reasonable adjustments made to them in order for autistic children and young people to be able to participate meaningfully.

Discrimination by Association – This refers to the people around the child or young person, e.g. their parents and siblings.
We need to ensure that we do not have different expectations of parents of children with a disability.
Do we expect parents of autistic children to come on trips with their child when we do not expect this of other parents?
Do we expect parents of autistic children to come to the school and collect them in the middle of the school day?
Do we expect them to have their child at home for part of the week when we do not expect this of parents of a child without a disability?
Do we expect siblings to support their brother or sister in a more regular or intense way than we might expect of other siblings in school?

Finally, the Act is clear that we need to make 'Reasonable Adjustments' to meet the needs of children with a disability. It also states that these adjustments must be anticipatory – we can't just wait to see how things go!

Equalities in schools

https://youtu.be/5hR1KEYIbzc

(Presenter note: Link to Education Scotland YouTube site to a 6 minute film about Autism and the Equality Act in Scotland's schools
https://youtu.be/5hR1KEYIbzc)

Why autism?

- 1 – 1.5% of children have autism [1]
- 86% of autistic children attend mainstream schools [2]
- 4.6% of exclusions in Scotland [3]
- **68% of tribunals (2017-18) [4]**
- 30.9% of children have an additional support need [5]
- Good autism practice benefits all children

Just in case anyone here is still wondering….why is there a focus on autism?

All teachers will come across children with autism in their class and they account for more of the challenges reported than other ASNs

We know that …
- 1 – 1.5% of children have autism
- 86% of autistic children attend mainstream schools
- 4.6% of exclusions in Scotland are of autistic learners
- 68% of tribunals (2017-18) relate to autistic learners
- 30.9% of children have an additional support need – so we need to know that everybody from probationer teachers through to regional experts and authority lead expects that children with autism will be in a mainstream class.

We also know that:
Good autism practice benefits all children.

Additional support needs

- 192 115 mainstream primary and secondary pupils with reason for support recorded (2018)
- 14 810 mainstream primary and secondary pupils with autism recorded (2018)

Children with identified Additional Support Needs have wide and varied needs.

Here are the number of autistic children recorded in mainstream schools in Scotland, from 2018.

There is no expectation that staff will be experts in how to deal with every Additional Support Need, however….. **(click for next slide)**

We were expecting you

reasonable adjustments

genuine listening

open minds

anticipatory support

inclusive culture

…'We were expecting you' is a really important Key Message.

In Scotland the policy and legislation strongly support inclusion and it is our shared responsibility to implement this through an inclusive culture.

We've not got it right for everyone yet.

We won't always know what to do but we can come at a challenge with an open mind, willing to do things differently and genuinely listening to children and their families.

30.9% of the mainstream school population across Scotland have an additional support need of some kind.[5] We can all expect to see children with a range of needs in every class we teach.

We need to know that everybody from Probationer Teachers through to Authority Leads expects that children with autism will be in a mainstream class and we all need to take the position that, "We were expecting you!"

Inclusive practice: staged intervention

- specialist support
- individualised support
- inclusive practice

Good inclusive practice sits within a staged intervention model.

Staged intervention is the national approach to creating an inclusive school environment that seeks to meet the needs of everyone. For many autistic children, their needs will be well met in an inclusive mainstream environment.

For some learners who require a more tailored approach, the Getting it right Child Planning Process will support individualised planning via the 'team around the child'.

And for a smaller number of learners, specialists from Education and Health may be required to support planning (e.g. Outreach Teachers, Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists).

The highest level of support is often provided in special schools and classes.

For all children, staged intervention provides a foundation for good inclusive practice in supporting all children with additional support needs, including autistic children.

In Scotland support is led by need, not diagnosis.

Understanding of support needs can be enhanced by diagnosis but should not wait for diagnosis.

One way of approaching Inclusive Practice is provided by The CIRCLE Framework.

CIRCLE provides evidence based resources, developed through extensive qualitative research with teachers to define best universal practice for inclusion in schools and nurseries.

These free to download resources are available on the Autism Toolbox Website and on the National Autism Implementation Team website: www.thirdpace.scot/NAIT

Education Scotland have created a badged online module of the Secondary Module and a module for the Primary resource is planned.

Environment first

Environment → Structures and routines → Motivation → Skills

CIRCLE tells us that, when we recognise a need and are looking for ways to support, we should first consider:

- Adaptations to the **physical and social environment**
- Creating clear and predictable **structures and routines**
- Ensuring that **motivation** is intrinsic to the task or activity – that a child knows why they are expected to do something and that it is meaningful to them

Only when all of these things are in place should we look to develop the child's **skills**

E.g. If a child isn't regularly initiating or asking for help, just telling them the words to say and teaching them to say, "I need help" won't change this… unless:
The child's day is set up to provide opportunities (routine and structure), the child has a reason to ask (motivation) and the people around them are supportive of and responsive to request attempts (adapted social environment).

CIRCLE is a good first point of information and support for anyone in schools seeking to meet the needs of autistic learners.

Staged intervention

Early stages of support happen in the classroom and wider school and the CIRCLE resources are designed to support inclusive practice at these stages.

As a child's support needs move through the stages, CIRCLE is still relevant. Big problems don't always require big solutions. It's important to keep checking that the basics are in place.

Key messages

- Environment first
- Provide predictability
- Make learning meaningful
- Seek to understand distressed behaviour
- **Ensure adjustments are anticipatory**
- **Difference, not deficit**
- **'We were expecting you!'**

Throughout the rest of this course we ask everyone to keep these Key Messages in mind. We've looked closely at 3 of them today. We will build on this in the next 3 Autism Units.

References

[1] SIGN 145 Assessment, diagnosis and interventions for autism spectrum disorders, 2016 https://www.sign.ac.uk/assets/sign145.pdf

[2] Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved, published online, 2018 https://www.notengaged.com/

[3] Scottish Government School Exclusions Statistics, published online, 2018-19 https://www.gov.scot/publications/school-exclusion-statistics/

[4] M Dunsmuir (Chamber President of the Additional Support Needs Tribunal for Scotland) Additional Support for Learning Summit, oral presentation, 2019

[5] Review of Additional Support for Learning Implementation, Crown Copyright, 2020 https://www.gov.scot/publications/review-additional-support-learning-implementation/

Autism Unit 2:
The profile of autism

Initial Teacher Education Autism Course Content

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Authorship

This unit belongs to a suite of resources developed by a Scottish Government working group including representation from:

- Learning Directorate, Scottish Government
- National Autism Implementation Team
- Education Scotland
- University of Strathclyde
- General Teaching Council for Scotland
- COSLA
- ADES
- Autistic individuals
- Scottish Autism
- National Autistic Society
- Scottish Council of University Deans

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(Presenter note: No need to read out. Will be included as part of PPT if shared electronically.)

Plan

- Key Messages
- The profile of autism
- Cognitive theories
- Teacher mindset
- Inclusive classroom practice
- Supporting peer interactions
- Key Messages

(Presenter note: Read only – do not expand at this point)

The plan for today is:
- Key Messages
- The profile of autism
- Cognitive theories
- Teacher mindset
- Inclusive classroom practice
- Supporting peer interactions
- Key Messages

Key messages

- **Environment first**
- **Provide predictability**
- **Make learning meaningful**
- Seek to understand distressed behaviour
- Ensure adjustments are anticipatory
- Difference, not deficit
- 'We were expecting you!'

All four units of the autism course content will be focussing on these seven **Key Messages.**

We set the scene in **Autism Unit 1** by looking closely at:
- Ensure adjustments are anticipatory
- Difference, not deficit
and
- 'We were expecting you!'

Today we will give particular focus to:
- Environment first
- Provide predictability
and
- Make learning meaningful

We will continue to explore each of these in greater detail as the course progresses.

As before, this presentation will highlight each Key Message as we go through, with the symbol in the top right corner.

We hope that this is just the start of your autism learning - that you will become enthused to keep reading and learning.

Throughout this course we ask that everyone keep these seven Key Messages in mind. If you only take seven messages from the autism course content, let it be these…

Autism diagnosis in DSM 5

Social communication and interaction

Restricted, repetitive behaviour, interests, or activities and sensory behaviours
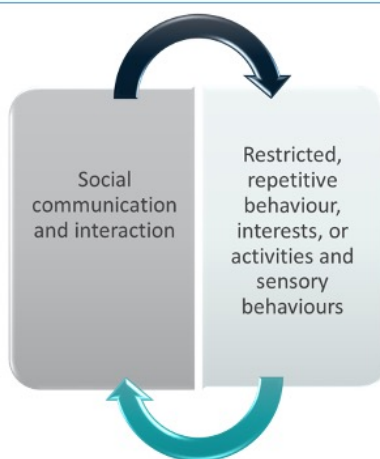
Autism is the commonest developmental difficulty in childhood, which is considered to be lifelong and present from birth.
Recent estimates suggest that 1/88 children have autism.

Autism Spectrum Disorder is diagnosed using international criteria called DSM 5.

The diagnostic term describes individuals who present with core differences in two key areas, which are having an effect on daily functioning.

Firstly differences in social communication and interaction.

And secondly differences regarding Restricted Repetitive Behaviours, interests or activities and sensory behaviours.

Children present very differently at different ages and stages – that's why it's called a spectrum.

Although the autism signs and symptoms are listed in the diagnostic criteria, there is no such thing as an autistic behaviour and these differences are reflected in the **neurodiversity in our society**.

Communication

We might see difficulties with understanding vocabulary, grammar and connected language or difficulties forming how and what to communicate to express a wide range of needs and social functions.

In particular autistic people use and understand social communication differently, this might include difficulty noticing and interpreting subtle messages shared through joint attention and non verbal communication.

Communication with peers can be particularly affected as peers may be less able to adapt than older children or adults.

Sensory

Most people would say they have 5 senses (vision, hearing, taste, smell and touch). There are at least a further 3 (one is body position, a second is movement, a third is our internal sensation). Any of these may be processed differently and we might see a child have a strong reaction or under-reacting to some sensations. This might change on different days or in different places.

Imagination

Differences in imagination affect individuals in different ways over time. Early on we might notice play is more concrete and imaginative play is less motivating. Some might go on to develop good fantasy play and there are very many creative autistic people. It's not the case that all autistic people don't have imagination. However we might notice differences in using social imagination to predict how people will behave or what will happen in a new situation. Imagination for social problem solving can be affected. We also might notice autistic people have a literal way of understanding language.

Sensory differences

https://youtu.be/PA7F8LBG4Iw

The clip we are about to watch is available on the Autism Toolbox. Mel, an Occupational Therapist, gives a helpful overview of Sensory Differences in autism. The clip is 5 minutes long.

(Presenter note: Mel's film clip from the Autism Toolbox - http://www.autismtoolbox.co.uk/autism-lense-policy-and-legislation

https://youtu.be/PA7F8LBG4Iw)

The most common reason for the behaviours that we see are the mismatch between expectations and the child's developmental stage.

It is important that we match activities and our expectations to the child's level, to make learning meaningful.

Would you expect a 2 year old to collaborate in a group on a task for 20 minutes?

So if you have a learner who is developmentally at that stage in their social development – what might you expect them to do? And how might you make learning meaningful for them?

These are the kinds of questions you need to ask yourself as a teacher.

Cognitive theories of autism

Theory
Theory of mind
Executive function
Weak central coherence
Context blindness
Double empathy problem
Monotropism

There are a range of cognitive theories seeking to explain what we see in autism. These are some of the well known ones.

There is a Cognitive Theories document on the NAIT website which gives more information about each.

We are going to look briefly at the first few, think about what we might notice, how you might think about what you see and consider what we might do that could be supportive.

(Presenter note: NAIT Cognitive Theories Resource: https://www.thirdspace.scot//wp-content/uploads/2019/11/NAIT-Cognitive-Theories-Summary-November-2019.pdf)
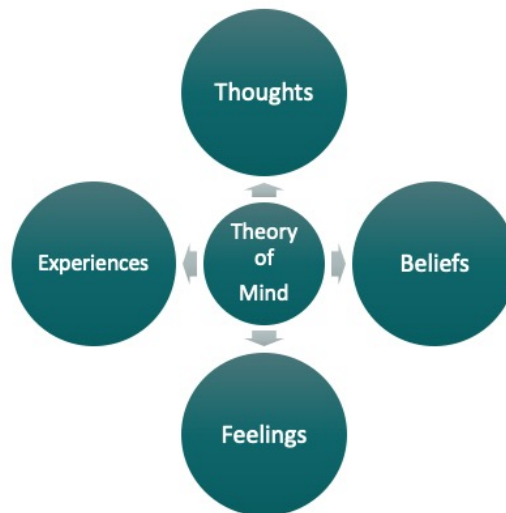
We develop Theory of Mind around the age of five years, when we understand other people's thoughts, feelings, beliefs and experiences – even when they don't tell us.

In autism this ability does not develop in the same way. It can help us to understand why some autistic children report difficulties or misunderstandings in social interaction.

What might we notice?

The child might:

- Tell others what to do
- Seem 'cheeky'
- Push to the front of the line
- Not follow instructions for 'everyone'
- Not seek approval
- Not notice when you are disappointed
- Appear selfish

These are some common things teachers notice.

Autistic learners might tell others what to do because they may not have a clear understanding of the difference between the role of a teacher and a child. For this reason they may also seem cheeky.

They might push to the front of the line because they want to be first and they don't understand that other people might also want to be first.

The meaning of 'everyone' changes with context. When I first arrived today, everyone was two of us in the room/ online setting up. Now everyone is (*however many people in lecture*) people. Throughout this presentation, 'everyone' will change several times as people arrive late, go to the loo, or pop out to take a phone call.

If the child is having difficulty interpreting other people's thoughts and feelings, they are unlikely to try to influence their thoughts and feelings or to seek their approval.

Some learners might seek approval but they might not seek it in a way you would expect.

Similarly they might not notice your feelings. You might be putting on your best 'disappointed' face and tone of voice to the class and the autistic learner may not pick this up.

Although an autistic learner might appear selfish, this is unlikely to be intentional. If you're focussed on different things in a situation, you might not pick up on what others would prefer or expect.

What mindset will help?

The adult might think:

- **Don't take it personally**
- **DIRM**
- **Why? Why? Why?**
- **Difference not deficit**
- How can I adapt my communication?
- Environment first
- Is the learning meaningful?

UNIQUELY
HUMAN
A DIFFERENT WAY
OF SEEING AUTISM

BARRY M. PRIZANT, PhD
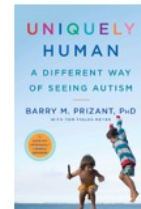
When we notice these things, the solutions lie largely with the people around the child (the social environment).

Our mindset is really important and can influence whether a child feels included and is able to participate in school, so what should that be?

The first thing to consider is that the child is unlikely to be doing this to be deliberately defiant. The child is likely to have their own reason for the behaviour, which might be motivated by what's uppermost in their own thoughts and desires.

They are not likely to be deliberately trying to have an effect on your thoughts and emotions, so we can remember not to take it personally.

The next thing we can think about is Chris Gillberg's advice –DIRM (Does it really matter?)….. Is this 'the hill you want to die on' or can you let it go?

If this is something that does need consideration, you need to work out the reason for what's happened. Barry Prizant's book 'Uniquely Human' has a great chapter entitled 'Why? Why? Why?' which explains this in more detail.

His book also reminds people that some people think differently and that's okay.

We might also think about whether we can adapt our own communication, the physical and social environment or the opportunities being provided to make learning meaningful.

What can we do?

- Cue the child in by name
- Explain 'everyone'
- Create a predictable environment
- Respond in predictable ways
- Use visuals to support words
- Exaggerate emotional responses
- Tell the child what you are thinking
- Find out what motivates them
- Share attention - join the child in their chosen activity

These are things you **could** do but what you **should** do will depend on the developmental stage of the particular child.

Ros Blackburn (an autistic adult) tells us that unless people use her name when they start to talk to her, she has no idea they are talking to her. We recommend 'Name pause verb' e.g. "Anna, [pause] give out these jotters."

Explain 'everyone' … 'everyone is all the people in the room'; 'everyone is Jo, Alan, Michael, Sara and Sam' 'Oh, Alan has left the room so now everyone is Jo, Michael, Sara and Sam.' Repeat ad nauseum!

Children are more likely to follow expected social rules, when the environment and routines are predictable and they can anticipate what is going to happen.

Visuals are permanent and help us to simplify our words to help children understand. These can be symbols, pictures or objects.

When children do not pick up on our nonverbal communication, we can highlight important information by telling them explicitly what we want them to know or exaggerating key information.

Children are more likely to engage positively if we consider their motivations and share attention on things that are important to them.

Executive function
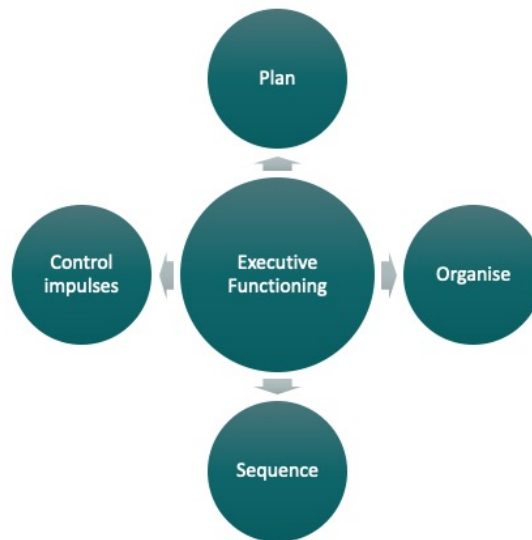
Our Executive Functioning is our ability to plan, organise and sequence thoughts and actions and to control impulses. It develops over time.
When we become anxious our ability to use these skills reduces.

What might we notice?

The child may:
- Seem inconsistent
- Have trouble getting started
- Need processing time
- Take time to plan movements
- Be anxious about finishing
- Avoid new tasks
- Have difficulty working through several tasks
- Have difficulty changing for gym
- Get into trouble for impulsive behaviours
- Regret their response

These are some common things teachers notice.

You might be starting to think that these theories and examples are not exclusive to autistic learners…and you would be right. These theories can be applied to children with a wide range of Additional Support Needs. As we mentioned earlier, there is no such thing as an autistic behaviour- these differences are reflected in the neurodiversity in society.

Some learners might appear to be able to do something one day and not the next, or can do it at school but not at home. As the context changes or the child's level of anxiety rises, their ability to function can be affected.

To begin a task, we need to know the first step and then the next steps in sequence. This requires us to plan, organise and sequence activities. For everyone, these skills are affected by context and levels of anxiety.

Before starting an activity, an autistic learner may need extra thinking time to process instructions and plan their movements.

Sometimes a child can be so anxious about finishing a task that they are unable to

get started. They may avoid new tasks altogether.

As teachers we frequently give a sequence or list of instructions to children. Each child needs to use working memory to retain all of the instructions and to switch between tasks. For children for whom working memory is affected, this can lead to feeling overwhelmed and even to 'switching off'.
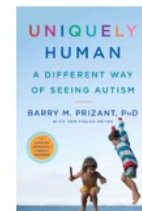
It is often during changing time for PE that Executive Functioning difficulties become most apparent. You might notice a child having one shoe off and trousers pulled down, whilst trying to pull their sweatshirt over their head.

Some learners display impulsive behaviours, leading them to get into trouble and often resulting in an immediate feeling of regret.

What mindset will help?

The adult might think:

- **Don't take it personally**
- **DIRM**
- **Why? Why? Why?**
- **Difference not deficit**
- How can I adapt my communication?
- Environment first
- Is the learning meaningful?

UNIQUELY
HUMAN
A DIFFERENT WAY
OF SEEING AUTISM

BARRY M. PRIZANT, PhD

Again we need to remember that it's not personal, each child thinks differently and has different needs and we need to think about whether we can adapt our own communication, the physical and social environment or the opportunities being provided to make learning meaningful.

- Does the child need more time?
- How can I break this task down?
- What visual and learning supports might be helpful?
- Is the task meaningful to the child?

What can we do?

- Break down tasks into clearly identifiable steps
- Chunk tasks
- Create routines
- Give thinking time
- Sequence events and routines
- Use timers
- Support understanding of time by using photos etc.
- Use line up feet/ rope/ numbers
- Give instructions in the order they are to happen
- Think DIRM

Again, there are many things you **could** do but what you **should** do will depend on the developmental stage of the particular child.

Chunking tasks down into easily manageable steps and giving instructions one a time is generally helpful. In the early stages of primary school, we often ask young children to, "Find the pictures beginning with T, colour them in and cut them out." This could easily be broken into three simple tasks:
- Choose the objects beginning with T
- Colour this picture
- Cut along this line

When a routine becomes familiar and predictable we don't need to process the verbal instructions each time. Being able to anticipate what is going to happen next is reassuring and can enable a child to relax and be ready to learn.

Allow thinking time, especially when transitioning between activities or subjects.

Using timers can help some children to anticipate a change or transition between tasks, but be aware that ones with bells/ noises can be distressing. A child can be so worried about a timer 'going off' that it can prevent them from engaging in the

activity.

Looking at photos of things that have happened or will happen can help to develop an understanding of the passing of time.

For children who struggle with standing in line, a number system or physical prompt such as a rope with a knot for each child to stand at or footprints marking the spot to stand on can help them to know what is expected.

One of the hardest things to remember to do is to give instructions in the order that they are to happen. Teachers often say things like, "It's nearly time for Assembly so finish up and put your books away." when it would be much more helpful to say, "Finish your sentence and put your books away. It's time for Assembly."

Finally, before thinking about any of this we need to be sure that we are asking the child to do something that is meaningful for them. Think DIRM – does it really matter?

Visual supports

Getting changed after PE

Step	
get clothes out of bag	
take off PE shoes	
take off shorts	
put on trousers	
put on school shoes	
take off PE t-shirt	
put on school top	
put on jumper	
hang up PE bag	

Routines can be supported by step by step visual supports.
This one can be used to support verbal children to change for PE

Visual supports
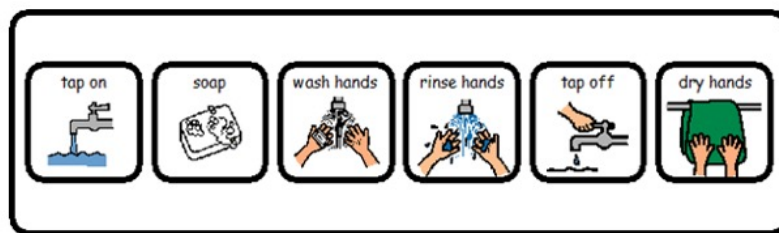
And here is a simple hand washing sequence.

Weak central coherence

"Oh look! Someone's throw away a perfectly good squirrel!"
(Griffin, 2009)

Our Central Coherence skills enable us to use context to draw meaning; to see the big picture. In autism, focus tends to be on the detail rather than the whole.

What might we notice?

The child might:

- Avoid making choices
- Seem to understand everything you say
- Seem to miss the point
- Seem to focus on irrelevant details
- Read fluently but…
- Rote learn maths but as it becomes more complicated…

Some learners may take a long time to make choices, or may even avoid choice making altogether. It's easier to make a choice when you can imagine the implications of your decision, choosing (even something as simple as where to sit or which activity to join) when the implications are not clear to you can cause anxiety.

A child or young person might nod, say 'Got it' or give other signs that they have understood what you have said, but subsequent actions may suggest that they haven't grasped the full meaning.

The information that an autistic learner may take from what you have said may be influenced by what is important to them at that point in time and may not be the information that you consider important.

Details, such as the colour of the aeroplane or the number of windows it has, may be more interesting to the learner than talking about the family boarding the plane, excited about their holiday.
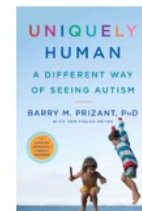
Young children may seem to be able to read relatively complex texts but comprehension skills may be at a lower level.

Similarly, some Early Level learners may be quick to learn numbers and facts but when complexity increases and an activity requires several steps to a processes or more abstract problem solving skills, the pace of learning can change.

What mindset will help?

The adult might think:

- **Don't take it personally**
- **DIRM**
- **Why? Why? Why?**
- **Difference not deficit**
- How can I adapt my communication?
- Environment first
- Is the learning meaningful?

Again we need to remember that it's not personal, each child thinks differently and has different needs and we need to think about whether we can adapt our own communication, the physical and social environment or the opportunities being provided to make learning meaningful.

There are a range of thinking styles and perspectives in my class.
Some learners will notice detail, others will see a bigger picture.
I need to explain things in a way that accommodates both.
Accept that some learners might pick you up on small details; they are probably correct!
Understand that some of the unexpected questions that may be asked are important to the learner.

If a learner is refusing to participate or engage in something, it's possible that it doesn't make sense to them and they don't know why they are being expected to do it. Rather than view this as non-compliance, focus on making it meaningful.

What can we do?

- Support choices
- Forced alternatives
- Visual prompts
- Identify the main idea in new information
- Identify key learning points
- Make links explicit
- Fore warn or changes and events
- Change one element at a time
- Rehearse
- Consider using Social Stories ™

Choosing "from all the things in the world ever" can be overwhelming. Having a clear and limited range of options helps.

If these can be represented visually, all the better. Holding two pieces of fruit, or paint brush options where they can be seen by the child or young person as you ask them to choose can help them to decide between them. Use clear language, rather than, "Which do you want?, say, "apple or banana?"

When sharing information, explicitly state what are the key pieces of information you wish the children to focus on. And summarise at the end of the conversation, e.g. "So, trip on **Friday**, To the **Zoo**, bring a **packed lunch**."

You might think you are making clear connections to prior learning or across subjects but it can be helpful to actually point these out. Yesterday we learned about Christianity, today we are learning about another religion, Buddhism.

The nature of life in schools is such that unexpected changes will occur. Staff will be absent, Assemblies will be postponed, rain will fall at break times and Dress Down Days will happen. Where possible, prepare the child or young person for changes, using visual supports to aid understanding.

Support learners by changing only one element at a time. In a new classroom, have familiar people and a familiar activity. Learn new skills first in a familiar and comfortable environment. Don't change your seating plan and wall display on the same day!

Rehearsal can be helpful. Going to visit an empty hall before your first assembly or practice being an audience at the theatre. Not being first in the line for a circuit activity in gym can provide time to watch others to model the activity and time to process and plan the movements required.

Social Stories™ can be a useful tool to help prepare learners with good language skills for a new activity or environment, e.g. a school trip or residential.

Supporting choices

For children and young people at an early developmental level, choices can be supported by object signifiers, "Do you want something to eat or something to drink?"

Context blindness

We use context to make sense of the world around us. If you have difficulty looking at the big picture you may struggle to make sense of information in context.

If you were stuck with a maths problem…is this how you would get help?

If you saw this in an airport would you press it?

On the NAIT website there is a guide to the Cognitive Theories that we have referred to today, together with some ideas for further reading.

Collaborative groupwork

Taking account of autistic cognition is important when we think about how we plan for some specific elements of the school day.

Groups can be more difficult than 1:1 interaction and therefore collaborative learning can present challenges.

When planning, you should be clear what your learning intention is for the child or young person in the lesson. An autistic learner may be able to focus on the learning or on the social interaction, but maybe not both at the same time.

When you decide it is appropriate to have a group learning context, reasonable adjustments may include:

- Grouping with familiar and supportive peers
- Allocation of clear roles
- A focus on concrete tasks
- a clear structure, sticking to familiar rather than new activities
and a
- a predictable timescale

A range of visual supports can assist.

Supporting peer interactions

Early Years | Primary | Secondary
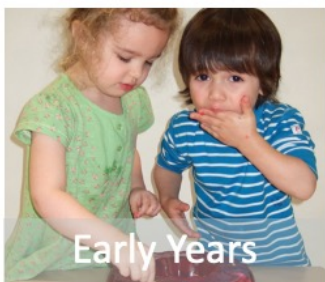
Peer interaction is often harder than interaction with those older and younger. Adults are likely to make adaptations and younger children's communication is likely to be less sophisticated and demanding.

Peer interactions change over time. It's helpful to understand each individual child or young person's current perspective on peer relationships.

Some children and young people may experience isolation or feel that they are not accepted, or even that they are rejected by their peers at times. Others may have strong social connections and a good friend or friends at school.

Some individuals are content in their own company and for them, peer relationships may not feel as important. They may not currently be seeking friends in school.

An autistic child or young person might not present what you might think of as typical peer interaction. It is important not to view this as a need to teach typical interaction skills.

Any support in this area should be tailored to the child or young person, acknowledging that individuals have different levels of motivation to have

friendships with peers and that there are many ways a friendship can operate.

Social interactions are best supported in naturally occurring environments, e.g. through thoughtful pairing or grouping for tasks and activities or by providing lunch or after school clubs around shared interests, e.g. Lego, Debating or Star Wars.

Key messages

- **Environment first**
- **Provide predictability**
- **Make learning meaningful**
- Seek to understand distressed behaviour
- Ensure adjustments are anticipatory
- Difference, not deficit
- 'We were expecting you!'

Throughout the rest of this course we ask everyone to keep these Key Messages in mind. We've looked closely at three of them today. We will build on this in the remaining two Autism Units.

(Presenter note: You will need an unopened coke can for this presentation. See notes on slide 9.)

Authorship

This unit belongs to a suite of resources developed by a Scottish Government working group including representation from:

- Learning Directorate, Scottish Government
- National Autism Implementation Team
- Education Scotland
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Plan

- Key Messages
- Anxiety
- The Losing it Line
- The 24 hour child
- Key Messages

(Presenter note: Read only – do not expand at this point)

The plan for today is:
- Key Messages
- Anxiety
- The Losing it Line
- The 24 hour child
- Key Messages

Key messages

- Environment first
- Provide predictability
- Make learning meaningful
- **Seek to understand distressed behaviour**
- **Ensure adjustments are anticipatory**
- Difference, not deficit
- 'We were expecting you!'

All four units of the Autism course content will be focussing on these seven **Key Messages.**

We introduced them as we set the scene with **Autism Unit 1** with**:**
- Ensure adjustments are anticipatory
- 'We were expecting you'
- Environment first

In **Unit 2** we looked at**:**
- Environment first
- Provide predictability
- Make learning meaningful

Today, in **Unit 3**, we will focus on:
- Seek to understand distressed behaviour
And
- Ensure adjustments are anticipatory

As before, this presentation will highlight each as we go through, with the symbol in

the top right corner.

We hope that this autism course content is just the start of your autism learning - that you will leave enthused to keep reading and learning.

Throughout this course we ask that everyone keep these **Key Messages** in mind. If you only take seven messages from the autism course content, let it be these…

Why might an autistic child be anxious?

- Working memory
- Concept of time
- Imagining what might happen next
- Understanding perspectives of others
- Comprehension
- Fear of sensory responses
- Focus on detail
- Feel they always get it wrong

Why would an autistic child be anxious?
Why wouldn't they be?

If you don't know how long something is going to last…
Are unsure about what is going to happen next…
Are unclear about the expectations of those around you…
Haven't fully understood what you are supposed to do…
Are fearing sensory reactions…
…and feel that you never seem to get it right!

Understand distressed behaviour
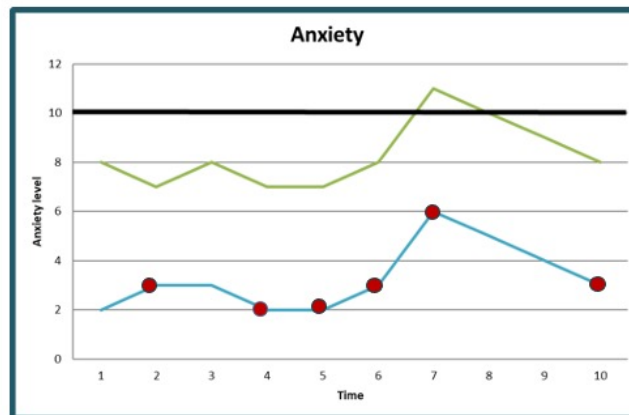
Often we are asked ideas for dealing with behaviours or meltdowns when young people have anxiety at a very high level. Whilst we would always advocate providing the right support to avoid getting to this point, we might not always get this right.

Within the resource we use 'The Losing it Line' as a tool to help people to understand that the reactions they see are unlikely to be explained by the last thing that happened. In actual fact, a wide range of factors in a young person's environment and routines are likely to have contributed.

We are going to talk you through a scenario using the tool.

We start with a graph. The Y axis up the side marks level of anxiety and the X axis along the bottom is the passage of time. Each point on the coloured lines represent a different event in the day.
The blue line along the lower part of the graph represents most neurotypical people on an average day, with nothing big or significant going on in their life to cause major distress.

• They might get up on the morning worried about the day ahead
click

- but calm themself down by thinking calmly about the day over a cup of tea.
click
- They set off for work and there is a diversion on the road. They start to get anxious about being late and take a detour
click
- Lots of others have taken the same route and now they are stuck in traffic and are very late.
click
- Suddenly the car behind bangs in to theirs!
click
- No one is hurt but it will take the rest of the day for them to return to the level they were at the beginning of the day.
click

Understand distressed behaviour
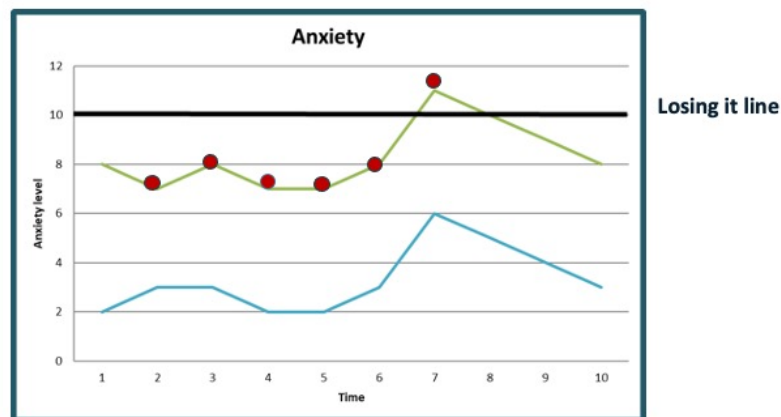
For a range of reasons, autistic children are likely to start their day at the higher level – the green line.

- They may waken up anxious but their parent calms them down by looking at their home visual timetable for the day.
click
- There is none of their favourite cereal left
click
- but they find an alternative they like.
click
- They set off to school later than usual so someone else got to the front of the line first.
click
- Someone else got the coat peg they had wanted.
click
- Someone brushed past them and brushed them softly on the arm.
click
- That's it, they've lost it, they are on the ground kicking and screaming. They are 'over the losing it line!'
- The adults are all saying, "There was no reason at all for that! It's come from

nowhere." But it hasn't.

We can't take away all the sources of anxiety for the child or young person but we can try to reduce them. The NAIT Key Messages are all designed to do this. One of the simplest ways to do this is to make the child or young person's day predictable.

When over the line

- use very little language, if any
- give time and space to recover
- think back to what might have caused the reaction
- think about what you can do to prevent it happening again in the future

When a child has gone over the losing it line:
- Walk away – observe from a safe distance
- Stop talking
- Wait – it may take longer than you imagine
- The adults should reflect later (we don't recommend 'post match analysis' with the child)
- Think about prevention – What could be done differently to avoid the same circumstances leading to a similar response in future?
- The book 'Uniquely Human' by Barry Prizant provides an interesting approach to thinking about behaviour
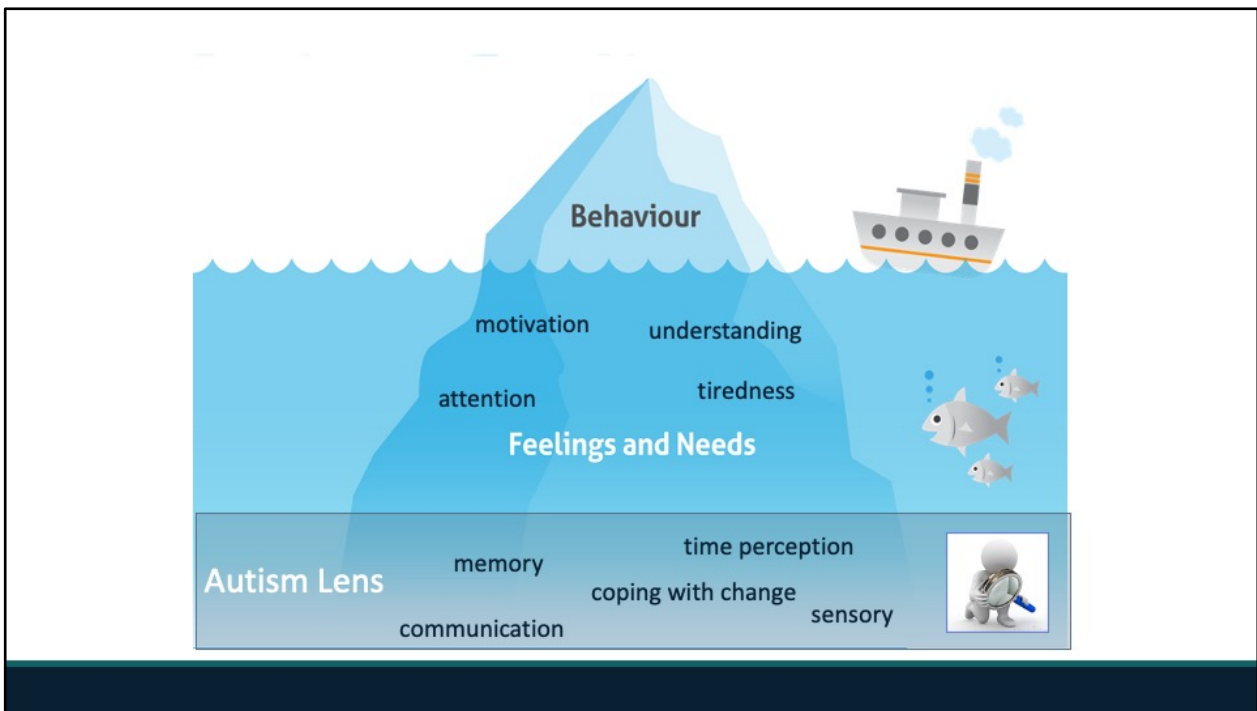
You may already be familiar with the iceberg analogy for behaviour – the tip is the part you see but the biggest part of the iceberg is what lies beneath the surface.

Generally we look below the surface to consider the possible underlying reasons for behaviours.

With autism you have to use an autism lens to look deeper…

Is the child struggling with working memory, having difficulty understanding how long something will last, finding the transition difficult, trying to cope with sensory responses, having difficulty understanding what is expected and how to ask for help?

It's important to think 'Why? Why? Why?'

The 24 hour child

School

Home
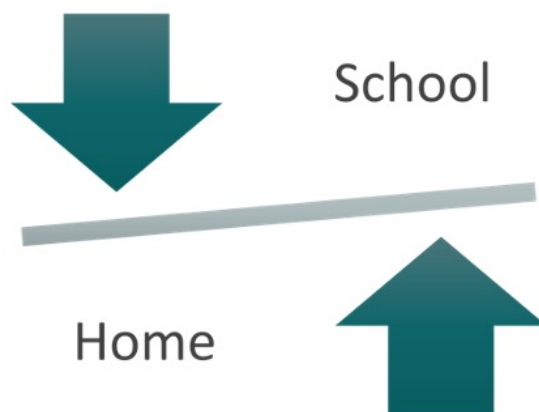
(Presenter note: Use a Coke can to demonstrate. Start by holding this up.)

For this next part you have to suspend your disbelief and imagine that this Coke can is an autistic child.
- Mum or dad take me to school in the morning *(shake can)*
- Someone else is first in the playground *(shake can)*
- Someone else is first in line *(shake can)*
- Someone is sitting on the bit of carpet that I had wanted to sit on *(shake can)*
- The day usually starts with Literacy but Mrs Bell says that this morning there's a special assembly *(shake can)*
- Mrs Bell seems a bit different today – I think she has a different smell *(shake can)*
- After break we usually have art, but we missed Literacy this morning so we have to do that now *(shake can)*
- I'm looking forward to pizza at lunch time but when I get there it's all finished and I have to have fish *(shake can)*

Mum comes to get the child at the end of the day and the child LOOKS EXACTLY THE SAME
Teacher says, "There's been lot's of change today, BUT "HE'S NOT BOTHERED BY CHANGE!"

The child goes home, takes their jacket off and… *(PRETEND to open the can over someone at the front of the audience)*

It's a familiar story, often reported in autism. Children 'hold it together' all day and the reaction can appear at a later time and at a different context.
If you hear of a stark difference between a child's presentation at home and at school, don't assume the problem is at home - "We're doing ok, they must be doing it wrong at home!"
It is likely that if you increase the predictability and desirability for the child at school, life at home may significantly improve. This can work both ways round.

But what about the behaviour?

Sometimes, at the end of a presentation on autism, we are asked, "But what about the behaviour? What do we do about that?"

Once a child is at a point of displaying distressed behaviour, all we can really do is wait for them to recover and then afterwards take the time to reflect as a staff team: What can we do or change to prevent the child feeling the need to repond that way in future?

Key messages

- Environment first
- Provide predictability
- Make learning meaningful
- **Seek to understand distressed behaviour**
- **Ensure adjustments are anticipatory**
- Difference, not deficit
- 'We were expecting you!'

Throughout the rest of this course we ask everyone to keep these Key Messages in mind. We've looked closely at **Seek to understand distressed behaviour and Ensure adjustments are anticipatory** today. We will build on this in the remaining Autism Unit.

Autism Unit 4
The role of teachers

Initial Teacher Education Autism Course Content

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Authorship

This unit belongs to a suite of resources developed by a Scottish Government working group including representation from:

- Learning Directorate, Scottish Government
- National Autism Implementation Team
- Education Scotland
- University of Strathclyde
- General Teaching Council for Scotland
- COSLA
- ADES
- Autistic individuals
- Scottish Autism
- National Autistic Society
- Scottish Council of University Deans

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(Presenter note: No need to read out. Will be included as part of PPT if shared electronically.)

Plan

- Key Messages
- Modelling inclusion
- Parents
- Homework
- Pupil Support Assistants
- Collaborative working
- What about the other children?
- Professional learning
- Key Messages

(Presenter note: Read only – do not expand at this point)

The plan for today is:
- Key Messages
- Modelling inclusion
- Parents
- Homework
- Pupil Support Assistants
- Collaborative working
- Professional learning
- Next steps
- Key Messages

Key messages

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- Ensure adjustments are anticipatory
- 'We were expecting you'
- Environment first

In **Unit 2** we looked at**:**
- Environment first
- Provide predictability
- Make learning meaningful

In **Unit 3**, we focused on:
- Seek to understand distressed behaviour

Now in the fourth and final **Unit** we seek to expand our understanding of:
- 'We were expecting you' and
- Environment first

As before, this presentation will highlight each as we go through, with the symbol in the top right corner.

We hope that this autism course content is just the start of your autism learning - that you will leave enthused to keep reading and learning.

Throughout this course we ask that everyone keep these **Key Messages** in mind. If you only take seven messages from the autism course content, let it be these…

Modelling inclusion

Reasonable adjustments → Inclusive culture
Genuine listening → Inclusive culture
Open minds → Inclusive culture
Anticipatory support → Inclusive culture

Your commitment to the professional values of integrity, trust and respect and social justice should be demonstrated in all aspects of your role as a teacher.

A core component of teachers' professional commitment is understanding the needs of learners with autism and other additional support needs. GTCS Professional Standards state that teachers should recognise, see and acknowledge the value in everyone and have a deep awareness of the need for culturally responsive pedagogies.

It is the role of teachers to promote equality and diversity, paying careful attention to the needs of learners from diverse groups and in upholding children's rights.

The Review of Additional Support for Learning Implementation (2020) highlights the importance of all teachers holding and enacting professional values of inclusion and inclusive practice and emphasises that this should be seen as a core part of your role.

All teachers have a duty to critically examine personal and professional attitudes and beliefs and to challenge assumptions and professional practice.

At this early stage of your teaching career, the best way that you can do this is through modelling an inclusive mindset and approach in your own practice.

Parents

- Good communication
- Avoid singling out
- Visual timetables
- Well supported transitions
- Solution focused

The need to have an inclusive mindset extends to the whole school community, and this includes parents. Families of autistic learners often report feeling judged, isolated and excluded.

When starting at a new school it will be important to find out what arrangements the school have in place for communicating with parents and what your role is within this. This is likely to vary by local authority and by establishment.

Parents and carers tell us that good communication is key and that this works best when it is planned and consistent – having a regular planned contact rather than school staff getting in touch when something has gone wrong.

Parents regularly ask that they are not approached in the playground in front of other parents – this can lead to them feeling judged or excluded by the other parents.

They tell us that they value consistent use of visual supports and well supported transitions.

Whilst on placement, you may be offered the opportunity to attend/observe

individual child planning meetings. This can be a good way to develop an understanding of the 24 hour life of the child.

Homework

Homework is a common area of concern for autistic learners, particularly at the secondary stage. Some express that 'work is for school and not for home' and many are so exhausted by the effort required to get through their school day that they are not able to focus on further work in the evenings and at weekends.

Reasonable adjustments can be made, such as communicating tasks directly to parents to enable them to understand expectations and support their child, reducing or time limiting tasks or chunking work down into manageable sized blocks.

It is important to review regularly and consider the impact of any difficulties arising on both the young person and their family. Ultimately it may be helpful to consider and weigh up the value of any work set against any negative impact experienced. Think DIRM...does it really matter?

Pupil Support Assistants

It is the responsibility of the class teacher to plan experiences and outcomes that take account of the strengths and needs of all learners in their class.

Some classes might have an additional adult in a supporting role and occasionally an adult will be allocated to support the inclusion of one or more identified learners.

The role of a support assistant is to facilitate the participation of a learner with additional support needs and to enable the learner to be as independent as possible within the school environment. Support assistants may or may not have formal training and may or may not have knowledge of particular additional support needs.

Often the best support assistants stand back and observe rather than sit alongside a child doing things for them or prompting them through tasks. They continually look for ways to increase a child or young person's independence and reduce dependence.

As with any learner with an additional support need, it is important to have a clear plan that all the adults working with an autistic learner follow. A person can implement a plan and use strategies- but a person is not a strategy!

Collaborative working

- specialist support
- individualised support
- inclusive practice

Each local area will have different structures and systems but all in Scotland should work to Getting it right protocols set out in the Additional Support for Learning Act.

Find out how school staff in your area work in partnership with others (e.g. Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists) at:

- Universal
- Targeted
and
- Specialist levels

Try to find out how the Child Planning process works in your area.

Look for opportunities to shadow, observe, liaise with other professionals working in and with the school and find out about how teams of professionals work together and with parents to support children with additional support needs.

We can all learn from each other. Teachers bring expertise in teaching – others bring different expertise to the team around the child.

It is widely recognised that having a single child's plan is desirable and beneficial – to get to that point we need to work together!

The inclusive classroom – what about the other children?

- Difference not deficit
- No blame culture
- Every day is a new day

You might remember from Unit 1 of the autism course content that 30.9% of the mainstream school population across Scotland have an additional support need. We can all expect to see children with a range of needs in every class we teach.

We all need to take the position that, "We were expecting you!"

When working in schools you might hear other staff members or even other parents ask, "What about the other children?"
- Why does the autistic learner get special resources/ equipment?
- Why do they get away with (distressed) behaviour?
- What about the other children having to experience their (distressed) behaviour?

Everything you say and do can influence how others view a child or young person and the experience that child or young person will have within the school community going forward. You can support the learner, and meet with your responsibilities under the ASL and Equalities Acts by:

- Valuing different minds
- Making anticipatory reasonable adjustments
- Modelling an empathetic response to distressed behaviour

- Being conscious of Indirect Discrimination and supporting individuals according to need, rather than treating all equally
- Maintaining the confidentiality of individual learners
- Modelling a 'no blame culture'
- Reflecting and planning with colleagues

and

- Treating every day as a fresh day!

Professional learning for Scottish teachers across their career is guided by the National Model of Professional Learning.

The model is used alongside self-evaluation activities related to the General Teaching Council for Scotland Professional Standards, to map out each teacher and school's professional learning.

Professional values detailed in the Professional Standards 2021 have been expanded to ensure greater emphasis on inclusion, equality and diversity.

(Presenter note: Image is Hyperlink to National Model of Professional Learning on Education Scotland website.
https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/a-national-model-of-professional-learning)

The Inclusive Practice Online Module , developed by Education Scotland and the CIRCLE Team at Queen Margaret University, follows the National Model of Professional Learning which underlines that professional learning should challenge and develop thinking, knowledge, skills and understanding and should be underpinned by developing skills of enquiry and criticality.

(Presenter note: Image is Hyperlink to Education Scotland Inclusion in Practice Online Module
https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/inclusion-in-practice#)

The Autism Toolbox is a key resource for Scottish teachers to find up to date, evidence based information, guidance, resources and professional learning opportunities. Content is closely linked to Curriculum for Excellence and the Scottish educational context.

The aim of the Toolbox is, "To help staff support autistic learners and their families within the framework of Curriculum for Excellence and the Getting it right for every child approach."

This resource is funded by the Scottish Government and managed by Education Scotland.

(Presenter note: Image is hyperlink to Autism Toolbox website http://www.autismtoolbox.co.uk/)

Key messages

- **Environment first**
- Provide predictability
- Make learning meaningful
- Seek to understand distressed behaviour
- Ensure adjustments are anticipatory
- Difference, not deficit
- **'We were expecting you!'**

We've looked closely at two of the autism Key Messages today but over the course of the year we have explored all seven. Throughout the rest of this course, and in into your teaching career, we ask everyone to keep these Key Messages in mind.

Developed by the Autism Toolbox Working Group, this toolkit is closely linked to Curriculum for Excellence and the Scottish educational context. The Autism Toolbox is funded by the Scottish Government and managed by Education Scotland. The Autism Working Group is led by Education Scotland Inclusion Wellbeing and Equality Team supported by the Scottish Government.

The Toolbox working group is a collaborative partnership which has representation from:
- Autism specialist practitioners
- Educational Psychologists
- Local Authority Education officers
- NAIT – National Autism Implementation Team
- NHS – Allied Health Professionals
- NHS – CAMHs
- NHS Education
- Parents of autistic children and young people
- Scottish Autism

- Teachers
- Universities

The working group value the contributions from autistic individuals to the development and ongoing work of the refreshed Autism Toolbox. Contact the working group at autismtoolbox@gov.scot

Funded by the Scottish Government through the Scottish Strategy for Autism
Managed by Education Scotland
Developed by the Autism Toolbox Working Group- including education, health and third sector representatives.
Designed for all educational practitioners
Redesigned, Refreshed and re-launched in November 2019

The Toolbox is Highlighting it to you know as part of your time in ITE, however anticipating that it will be resources you will return to frequently at various times throughout your career as a teacher.

The Autism Toolbox provides:

- Up to date information, set within the Scottish educational, health and social context of Autism and inclusive practice.

- Free information, guidance, resources and professional learning opportunities for educational practitioners, schools and local authorities on Autism and inclusive practice.

- An overview of the Autism identification and support pathway.

Key people identified to update the toolbox as required
Includes resources- this section is not complete with further resources to be added.
It is anticipated that resources will continue to be added so this section will continue to grow and develop over time.

Autism Toolbox Structure

Understanding Autism	Welcome	Scottish Context
Assessing and Monitoring	Supporting Learners and Families	Wellbeing
Transitions	Resources	Professional Development

**These are the 9 sections within the Toolbox**
Overview of sections

- Each tile and related menu heading link to the relevant section in the Toolbox. Within each section to the left-hand side of the screen there is also a range of additional sub pages to explore
- This presentation will take you briefly through each tile.
- Depending on what devise you use to access the Toolbox, the layout may appear slightly different, however the same information will be there
- To support further professional learning each section has a Professional Reflection and Planning Tool which is linked to the Professional Development section

Select the link to go to the live website and highlight some of the sections that may be of interest and use to you at this point in your training.
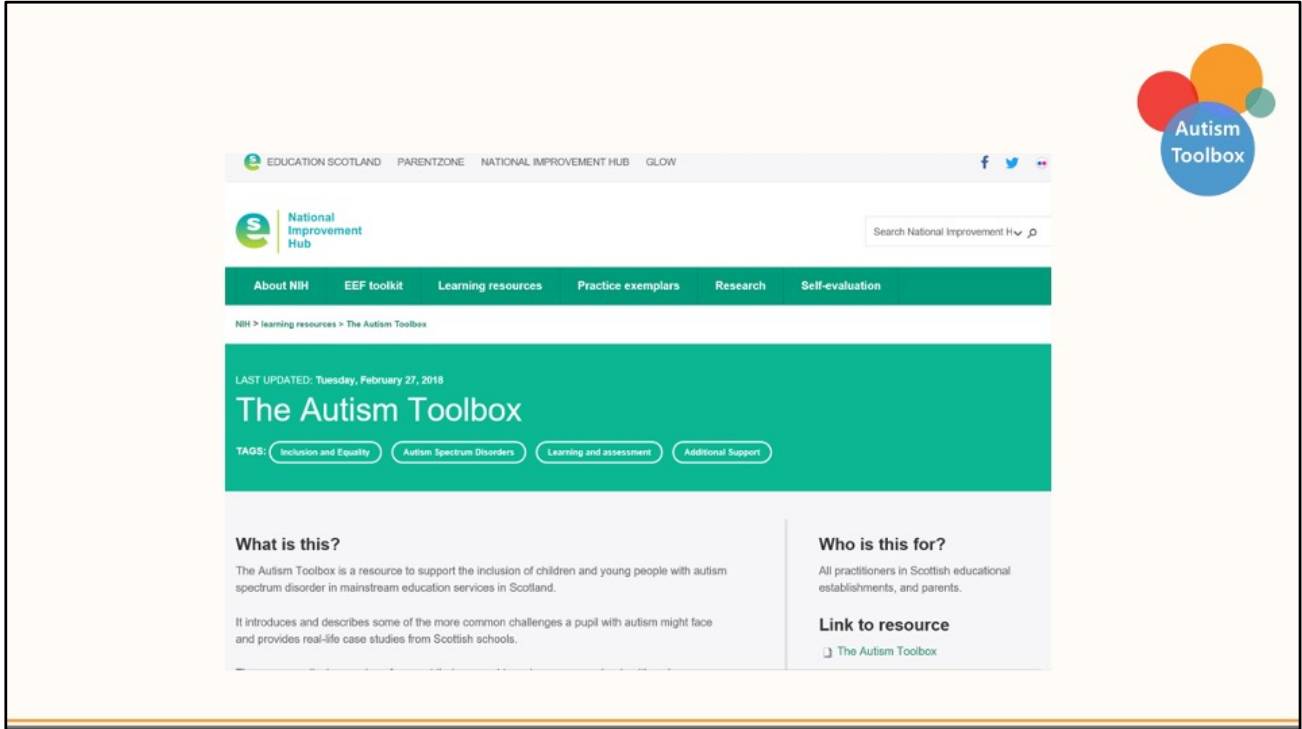
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Includes resources which continue to be added so this section. The Toolbox will
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