Pupil voice – gaining the views and feelings of children with autism

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Specialist Teachers, Autism & Social Communication needs
AET Standards and Competency Frameworks

• **Competency 1 - Building Relationships**
  You understand the importance of listening to the voice of the pupil on the autistic spectrum and identify strategies to ensure that communication systems are not just used to inform and instruct pupils, but also to offer the opportunity for pupils to express their views.

• **Standard 1**
  Your setting obtains information directly from the pupil on their strengths, interests, needs and emotional well-being, to add to information given by parents/carers and staff so that it can motivate, engage and encourage pupils with autism in a meaningful way. Most pupils with autism will have a personalised pupil passport.

• **Standard 10**
  Your setting ensures that pupils with autism are effectively and regularly consulted on all aspects of their education and experience at school.
Session content

• Why is it important to listen to what children and young people with autism have to say?

• How can I support them in communicating their views and feelings?

• Are there specific strategies and resources to help them identify and communicate their views and feelings?
The impact of asking pupils’ views

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Why listen to pupils views?

- To ensure that pupils are safe and feel safe in school
- To help them recognise that it is worth expressing their views
- To find out how they experience what is provided and improve provision for them
- To build self esteem and confidence
- To recognise strengths and build resilience
- To build trusting relationships.
“Staff can do a great deal to minimise the difficulties that pupils with autism face in school. One of the key ways of knowing how to support pupils is to ask them what would help.”
Gaining pupils’ views

- Discussion:
  Share your ideas / experiences of collecting pupil views

Which pupil views are we seeking?
How often?
## Pupil views about …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental and Social Needs</th>
<th>Important ‘to’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Important ‘to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating / working preferences</td>
<td>Dreams / aspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>Interests / motivators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons</td>
<td>Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions about the task</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sensory needs</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Support styles</td>
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<td>Ways of recording</td>
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<td>Safety</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Emotional well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playtimes</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships</td>
<td>Anxieties</td>
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</tbody>
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What is the child’s communication level?
Ideas for collecting pupils’ views

• Observe the pupil
• Ask the pupil
• Scaling
• Video diary / IT presentation
• Daily reflection time
• Emotion faces
• Talking mats
• Draw their ideal school
Sources of resources:

http://www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/ - under One Planning and EHCPs

http://www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk/ - under person-centred practices

https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk - under person centred planning
Pre-verbal children

- For preverbal children who are not able to verbalise their views and needs, the views of parents and all the staff who know them well are crucial.

- We can also learn to read their body language and observe them across a range of activities and environments:
  - What do they enjoy?
  - What do they avoid?

- Use of photo evidence to support observations/findings.
Talking Mats
Scaling
 Scaling
Pupils rate aspects of school __/10

0/10 - I don’t like doing homework at home
0/10 – I don’t like being nagged to do things over and over again
1/10 – Maths – it’s boring – I hate numbers
1/10 – Teachers who shout
2/10 – Detentions – they are boring but it’s quiet
3/10 – Mondays
4/10 – English (the writing bit)
5/10 – I feel a 5 today – I feel a bit ill
Scaling
Pupils rate aspects of school __/10

6/10 – Science – I love the practicals
6.5/10 ICT
7/10 – I feel this safe in school (there are sharp sticks on the playground)
8/10 – I am excited about going into year 8
9/10 – LSA help in class
10/10 – Having friends – lunchtimes
Discussion with pupil

*What helps* is explaining and showing me the first one (in a ‘discreet’ way).
Writing down what to do.

I don’t always have my timetable – I follow my friends around.
I am not sure of the times of the school day.
I don’t wear a watch.
I can’t work my locker key.
Prompts and questions

• Things that make it difficult for me to work …
• When I am stressed I …
• If I am stressed it helps me if I can …
• How you can help me …
• I worry about …
• Good day / lesson when …
• Bad day / lesson when …
“Significant emotional regulatory difficulties associated with children with autism are well documented ... and a hallmark feature of autism.”

(Barry Prizant, 2006)
“If we are able to recognize when we are becoming less regulated, we are able to do something about it to feel better and get ourselves to a better place. This comes naturally for some, but for others it is a skill that needs to be taught and practised.”

(Leah Kuypers, 2015)
Discuss

What resources have you used, to successfully help children with autism to understand, express and regulate their feelings / emotions?
Help pupils with autism to understand and express how they are feeling

**Visual resources**
- Feeling thermometers
- Scales
- Emotions fans / word mats / symbols
- Emotions faces / pebbles

**Programmes**
- The Incredible 5 point scale
- Exploring feelings
- The Zones of regulation
- Think Good-Feel Good
### 5 point scale

**Name:** David  
**My Scared/Afraid/Trembling Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Looks/Sounds like</th>
<th>Feels like</th>
<th>Safe people can help/ I can try to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wide-eyed, maybe screaming, and running, biting.</td>
<td>I am going to explode if I don't do something.</td>
<td>I will need an adult to help me leave, help!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Threaten others or bump them.</td>
<td>People are talking about me. I feel irritated, mad.</td>
<td>Close my mouth and hum. Squeeze my hands. Leave the room for a walk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>You can't tell I'm scared. Jaw clenched.</td>
<td>I shiver inside.</td>
<td>Write or draw about it. Close my eyes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I still look normal.</td>
<td>My stomach gets a little queasy.</td>
<td>Slow my breathing. Tell somebody safe how I feel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Normal - You can't tell by looking at me.</td>
<td>I don't know, really.</td>
<td>Enjoy it!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.asperger.net

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The **ZONES** of Regulation®

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BLUE ZONE</th>
<th>GREEN ZONE</th>
<th>YELLOW ZONE</th>
<th>RED ZONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>Mad/Angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick</td>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tired</td>
<td>Feeling Okay</td>
<td>Silly/Wiggly</td>
<td>Terrified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>Focused</td>
<td>Excited</td>
<td>Yelling/Hitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving Slowly</td>
<td>Ready to Learn</td>
<td>Loss of Some Control</td>
<td>Out of Control</td>
</tr>
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• Which of the resources we have looked at would be appropriate for the child you are working with?

• What will you try when you get back to school?

• Who will you share what you have learnt with?