

ENFIELD ADVISORY SERVICE FOR AUTISM

Monthly Newsletter for Educational Settings

ISSUE NO: 7 – MAY & JUNE 2020

EASA's offer for May and June

Staff in the EASA Team are available to provide telephone or video-link support to staff in educational settings on a range of themes such as:

- Helping pupils understand safety advice and changes to routines during the pandemic
- Understanding Autism and the 4 Key Areas of Difference
- Individual pupil's learning needs
- Behaviour support
- Creating personalised or bespoke resources and strategies
- Our therapeutic interventions
- Help to evaluate your setting using the AET's Autism Standards
- Help to evaluate your own knowledge and practice using the AET's Competency Framework

Give us a call on 020 8353 4186 or email admin@enfieldasa.org.uk and we will arrange a call back.

EASA Advisory Teachers are working in partnership with colleagues at Russet House School to develop a range of Home-learning Activities. These are useful for pupils who may be at home because of the corona virus. They will also be valuable as homework ideas in the future.

We have been focussing on children at the earlier stages of learning at the moment as these pupils may find it harder to access online learning that peers may be using.

If you have a request for activities on a specific theme or for pupils/students of higher ability, please send in your request.

The EASA Team in Lockdown

Although all our face-to-face events and activities have been suspended for the time being, the EASA Team has been as busy as ever.

We have been creating some new resources and information to support educational settings and families, including:

- Home-learning Activities (more information overleaf)
- Resources to support children's routines and communication in the home
- Fact sheets on a range of autism-friendly teaching strategies
- Ideas to support autistic children and families with bereavement

We have also been answering questions from SENCOs and teacher colleagues across the borough and supporting with provision for pupils. Some of the common topics we've been helping with are:

- Safety of pupils and staff as children come back into school and protective measures
- Completing Risk Assessments
- Supporting children with new routines
- Mental health issues that autistic pupils may be facing

If you have a pupil aged 11-18 who would benefit from support with mental health issues, Kooth may be able to help:

www.kooth.com



The service is free to young people in Enfield and counsellors trained in a variety of special needs are available.

Home-learning for Autistic Pupils with Complex Needs: Why and How

Introduction

Lockdown or not, teachers at Russet House School and EASA have always deemed it important to work with families as equal partners in their children's education. The current situation has given us incentive to renew our home-learning resources and update our advice for school staff and families.

In this feature, we'll be outlining the guiding principles we employed in creating our home-learning offer. We draw on key themes from the Autism Education Trust training materials (<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/training-programme/>) as well as research into homework and the importance of transferring learning between school and home for autistic pupils.



What is Home-learning, and Why Does it Matter?

Parents have a vital role to play in the education and development of their children (SEND Code of Practice, 2015 & AET Complex Needs and Participation 2016). This is particularly so for autistic children who may struggle to transfer and generalise their learning from school to home and vice versa (Winner 2011). It is important for parents and teachers to work together to help children transfer the skills they have to home and community. 'Improving social communication skills is often a priority for families. It is also the foundation upon which many other crucial skills are built.' (AET Complex Needs and Participation, slide 40). In planning home-learning activities which help families to improve social communication with their children, teachers are able to increase the positive impact of their work, improving each child's development and life chances.

It can be difficult and distressing for parents of autistic children to work with them at home because they can be aloof and harder to engage than neurotypical siblings (Glazzard and Overall 2012). Helping families overcome the barriers and build in more opportunities for interaction can be life-changing, both practically and emotionally.

Parents are experts on their children and their children's interests; teachers know how to help children engage with learning. In providing well-matched activities and problem-solving together when necessary, parents and teachers can make a world of difference to the child's future.

How Home-learning can Support Development in the 4 Key Areas of Difference in Autism (AET) <https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/what-is-autism/>

Activities which support Information Processing are those which:	Activities which support Sensory Processing are those which:	Activities which support Communication are those which:	Activities which support Social Interaction are those which:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • require the child to understand instructions in different contexts with different people • enable access to, and engagement with, personal interests in new and different ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • utilise sensory preferences (e.g. sounds, textures, tastes, movements etc.) • distract from unwanted environmental stimulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involve use of simple, repetitive and predictable language, e.g. 'My turn; your turn'; 'Ready, steady go!' • encourage the child to request more, using their preferred mode of communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have clearly defined roles for the adult and child • involve turn-taking • enable the child to 'share' their special interest with someone else

How to Create Home-learning Activities: a Guide for Teachers

- Consider the developmental level of the pupil(s) you are planning an activity for and write something specific for that level (e.g. sensory learner or pre-NC equivalent). If your activity idea could be adapted for different levels of ability, write separate activity sheets for each. Parents may be daunted by activity ideas that are too broad, seem unrealistic or need a lot of adapting for their child.
- Plan activities that use household items the family may already have (toys, groceries, empty bottles etc.). This is especially important during lockdown, when it may not be easy to source new items, and many families may be facing financial hardship.
- Access to electronic equipment may be limited in many homes so try to avoid activities which need a screen or printer. For some children, screen time can hinder opportunities for social interaction with parents so this is another reason to plan other, more practical activities.
- Consider the pupils' special interests and create something that can be adapted to include a favoured theme, preferred materials, favourite colours or sounds etc. It will be easier for parents to engage and motivate their child if the task is appealing to them.
- Think about the roles the parent and child will have in the activity. There will be some parts the parent needs to prepare beforehand, or do in front of their child, and there will be other aspects the child can do with, or without, support. Make these roles clear in the written instructions.
- Have a 'you will need' list so that parents can get everything ready before attempting the activity with their child. Going to get something mid-activity can ruin the moment!
- Create clear, step-by-step instructions that explain how to set up the activity and what to do during it. You may want to include examples of phrases the parent should use (minimal language, for example). Some photos of the activity will be helpful so parents can see what's involved and children can be shown a picture of what they are going to do.

- Remind and reassure parents that they may need to repeat an activity many times in the same way for children to understand the expectations and engage with the activity. The child may need to see others (parents or siblings) doing an activity several times before they will join in. Participation may be limited depending upon the concentration span of the child. A few turns or a few minutes may be enough for one session.
- Be prepared to problem-solve with the family to adapt the activity if it is too easy, too hard or not motivating enough.

Take a Look...

More information on the ideas in this blog can be found in the Home-learning section of our website, along with some of our Home-learning Activities. See www.enfieldasa.org.uk/Home-Learning-Activities/

Dr Rachel Walker, RHS and EASA, May 2020

Glazzard, J. and K. Overall (2012). "Living with autistic spectrum disorder: parental experiences of raising a child with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)." British Journal of Learning Support 27(1): 37-45.

Winner, M. G. (2011). "Autism, Homework and Beyond." From the professionals. Retrieved 02/01/2013.

Social Stories...

We have a range of Social Stories on our website about the Coronavirus and Schooling during this difficult time.

Please visit our website:
<https://enfieldasa.org.uk/Coronavirus-COVID-19/>

For Parents...

Our Parent Support Team is working hard on resources and support for families.

Marsha and Jacky are happy to talk to parents over the phone while face-to-face appointments are suspended.

Please pass on our Parent Newsletter to any families you think may benefit.



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