

## ABOUT THE RESOURCES

These resources are made up of a range of editable, visual materials created by staff and pupils in London schools to support primary aged children. Children with social communication difficulties frequently need to be explicitly taught what is happening and what they can choose to do in many situations. It is important that they are shown how to adapt what they do depending on how the situation could change, rather than encouraged to stick with a rigid thinking and behaviour. These resources facilitate this, taking into account what they need to learn: reduced language; visual support and images; structure and small steps; a positive focus; and, when appropriate, choice.

The resources all focus on a different topic within the areas below. These were chosen as they are areas that children with social and communication difficulties, such as those with autism, often need support with.

**1. Play and Friendships (Learning to Play)**

*Unstructured times in the school day, such as playtime, can be particularly challenging. Materials here were created to help pupils to initiate, continue, and repair play and to deal with friendship issues.*

**2. Language and Communication (Learning to Say)**

*Some children can find it difficult to communicate what they feel and need appropriately, especially in a social setting or busy classroom. These resources were created to support pupils in asking for help or to communicate in an expected way, such as when meeting and greeting.*

**3. Managing Change (Learning to Change)**

*Managing changes in your day, such as being late, alternating between activities or changing lessons, can cause pupils distress and anxiety. Materials in this section were created to help pupils deal with unexpected changes and other transitions.*

**4. Self Help Skills (Learning to Help Myself)**

*Many pupils struggle with skills of independence, such as eating at mealtimes or dressing quickly before school and for PE. This can be due to a number of reasons such as sensory issues, anxiety and fine motor difficulties. The resources within this section were created to support pupils with this.*

Many of the resources that have been created have links to more than one of the above sections. For example, resources on turn taking have been put in the *Learning to Change* section as they support pupils in dealing with transitions between themselves and a partner. However, a resource such as this could also fit within the *Play* and *Language* sections. Since it would be confusing to duplicate or even triplicate resources across the site, we have had to adopt a best fit policy.

### Q. Who have the resources been created by?

The resources have been created by groups of pupils and staff, including teachers, teaching assistants, therapists and advisors, from different London schools. These schools include specialist schools, mainstream schools and schools with unit or base provisions attached. The full list of schools involved can be found in the *Acknowledgements* section.

Each school has created different resources focussing on an area of need in their school and has used these alongside other strategies to support those needs. The pupils have often been involved in the process of planning, creating and/or editing these resources, to varying degrees, depending on the pupils and staff involved. Their involvement has helped increase the impact of their resources as the pupils have felt ownership of the information and strategies within it.

We would like to thank the staff and pupils in these schools for their hard work and commitment to making and using their excellent resources.

### **Q How is each resource structured?**

The template that the resources on this site most often follow was created following advice and suggestions given by specialist teachers and speech and language therapists involved in the project.

Each resource usually has two sections and loosely follows a template which can be found in more detail in *Using, Editing and Creating the Resources*:

#### **□ Part 1 - Introduction**

Every school has created an initial resource to help pupils understand and explore a particular situation or topic. This might involve text based descriptions, thought and speech bubbles and photographs. Some of these are Social Stories™, and many of these are similar to them. Some questions have been made available alongside each of these introductory resources which you can use and edit to suit your pupils should you choose to use the resource in an unedited or similar format.

#### **□ Part 2: LOOK THINK DO**

The next part of the resource shows the related skills being broken down into the steps LOOK THINK DO with photos to make the process visual. The structure LOOK THINK DO was created by staff involved in the project to help pupils break down and consider the process they might need to go through to work out how they might choose to act within a situation. Expected chosen behaviours are displayed, alongside questions and thinking points. This is presented not as what they should do or what might be the 'right' thing but as possible options that they are comfortable with, and what other people might expect. Some staff have chosen to also use an 'Unexpected' scenario but only if children are not likely to respond negatively to this and would find it helpful. We suggest that an 'Unexpected' scenario should only be used if staff members are sure that a particular group of pupils would find it beneficial. Sometimes pupils can benefit from looking at and role playing the wrong skill as it provides more information for them.

If staff choose to use the LOOK THINK DO resources on the site with their own pupils, they have also been provided with partially incomplete versions of LOOK THINK DO in every section too. These have been created so staff can work with their pupils to recognise that there are a number of different ways the situation might occur, different expected choices you might carry out and also to help show that what might happen after you have said or acted is also subject to change. This is to support flexibility when the context changes, and to help the child move away from the same script or way of behaving regardless.

A case study has been provided by the staff who produced each resource giving information on why they created the resource, how they made and used it and what the impact was.

The resources are often quite different as they have been tailored to suit the needs of different pupils and may even have been partially created by the pupils themselves. All resources contain photos of the appropriate context, often including the young people themselves, to provide visual reinforcement. Every section contains two resources created for pupils in the early years and/or those who might not be able to access the language and format of the above resources. These resources are also all visually based, much simpler and do not conform to the above template.

All sections conclude with some support on using the resources in that section and some further ideas.

### **Q. How do these resources relate to other strategies?**

When supporting a child with social and communication needs, different interventions can and should be used depending on the particular need, the situation and the child. These resources have been influenced by a number of strategies.

The introductory resources were created to help introduce the topic to the child/ren and to help them understand and explore it better. Some of them were created by the staff members and some by the pupils and staff members themselves. The majority of them are rather similar to Social Stories™, a strategy created by a renowned expert in autism support, Carol Gray. In summary, a Social Story™ is an accurate and meaningful description of a particular situation, skill or concept with the key goal of improving someone's understanding and what they might choose to do in an accurate, patient and non threatening way. We fully endorse Social Stories™ and Gray's Defining Criteria and Guidelines, known as Social Stories™ 10.0. However, the different introductory resources created by schools do not

always comply with all of these criteria, so cannot always be called Social Stories™. Despite this, many staff have kept Social Stories™ in mind when working on this particular introductory resource. We do recommend that colleagues become familiar with the Criteria and Guidelines of Social Stories™ as this is an essential intervention when working with people with social and communication needs and has many benefits. Further information can be found at <http://www.thegraycentre.org> or. One important facet of Social Stories™ is that Gray stipulates that at least half of Social Stories also celebrate something an individual has done well, rather than just focussing on areas they may need support on. When pupils with social and communications needs are regularly being told what they need to change or do better, this is an extremely important potential use of Social Stories™ and many other strategies.

We use the format LOOK THINK DO to show strategies a child could use in a particular situation and context. The LOOK THINK DO section is similar to some Social Skills teaching such as Cognitive Picture Rehearsal and Structured Learning, and techniques using photographs such as those in *The Social Skills Picture Book* by Jed Baker were particularly inspirational. However, the particular process LOOK THINK DO was specifically created by staff involved in the project to visually represent the sequence that a child might go through when trying to deal with a situation they did find problematic.

The additional resources created for early years pupils involve using photographs within common and effective strategies such as visual schedules and choice boards.

### **Q. Can I edit the resources?**

Yes! Each staff member or parent that has worked on these resources will have edited their materials to meet the unique situation, needs, abilities, attention span and learning style of the pupils involved. The pupils may also have been strongly involved in creating and editing the resource so they will feel ownership of it.

We recommend that the materials should be used as examples or templates that can be edited to suit your pupils' needs. They will have a more positive impact for children if they display a context and images that they recognise rather than trying to understand a situation another child might face and learning skills in the abstract. This is not to say that the unedited resources have no value for other schools. We have created some supporting materials to help you use the resources in their original form if you choose to do so. However, the resources are likely to have more impact if they are edited by the staff and children to suit their situation, perhaps after you have used them in their original form.

We have also made the resources editable so you can change the font and colour scheme to support your pupils' with Spld if necessary.

### **Q. Do these resources always work ?**

Many pupils involved in the project benefitted from being involved in the very visual and creative process of making and using these resources, as can be viewed in the case studies. In many cases, these resources were very effective, sometimes alongside other strategies, in supporting the students. However, like with all interventions and all strategies, this is not always going to be successful and the resources will need to be tweaked and how they are used, amended. The section 'Using, Creating and Editing Resources' includes very important guidance to support the process of creating the resources and to ensure that the resources themselves are as supportive and effective as possible. In many situations, you might choose to use a different strategy instead to support a pupil. For example, when a pupil is reacting to a situation because they have a particular sensory processing difficulty, other strategies, possibly designed by an occupational therapist, might be more appropriate. For example, if a child is struggling with lunchtime in a busy dining hall because they struggle with the noise, support taking into account their sensory difficulties is likely to be very effective. Having a good knowledge of the many different interventions available and selecting which might be appropriate for each child and situation is the key to effective support.