

Bullet Point

From

Familiesandsen.com

Incorporating

The Home Educator

Hello and Welcome

Bullet Point has been running now for over a year. We would value your feedback. Using the box top right of the web site's front page please spent a few minutes answer the following questions and help us deliver a magazine that supports everyone.

- **In what ways do you think Bullet Point is useful?**
- **What topics in the magazine are most useful to you?**
- **Did the approach of Bullet Point help you address issues in a practical (as opposed to theoretical) way? Please give examples?**

And, above all,

- **Have you suggestions for future editions?**

Rgds

Clive

Education: The Great Equaliser!

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Development During Pre-School Years

This time we will consider,

- How a play group can help
- Issues concerning a play group run for those with a visual impairment

How Can Play Groups Help?

Fundamentally the same tremendous urge to grow, learn and progress is possessed by disabled and non disabled children alike.

Therefore, a play group can help a disabled child by seeing that s/he is given the same opportunities to develop as non disabled children.

Benefits to Parents

Listed below are a few experiences felt by parents, often the child's mother when beginning a play group. S/he

- Makes social contact
- Feels less isolated and becomes part of a community

Then, once her child has settled,

- Time becomes available to do things once taken for granted

Also, a group can help those who find,

- Being separated from the child difficult

And, through seeing others in a similar situation,

- More readily accepting the child's disability
- Have a better understanding of suitable and available support

A playgroup can act as preparation for attendance at school and in a smaller group your child can gain confidence ready to become part of a larger and more active group later.

A playgroup therefore acts as a channel outwards and onwards into the future.

Integration or Specialist Provision?

Assuming that a group specialising in visual impairment doesn't exist locally a choice may need making between one taking children with a variety of disabilities or integration within one supporting children disabled and non disabled together.

One argument for integration being your child will be expected to live within a wider community therefore the sooner s/he becomes integrated the easier it will be later for her or him and your family to be part of society more generally; that is, not be seen as something apart.

Whichever type of group is joined, parents have an environment where they can talk in private and share concerns.

Access to Specialists

Specialists can be invited. Parents can then ask for example an educational psychologist, speech and language therapist or occupational therapist about a child's needs. Discussions can take place after their children have been taken off by the placement's play specialists.

A Playgroup for Those Visually Impaired

Differences in behaviour between a visually impaired child and one fully sighted can be noted; for example, with relatively good vision a child may respond in a similar way to someone fully sighted. S/he can ask, turn, point or move towards an object of interest. If unable to adequately see and unable to ask however, your child may freeze.

This stillness may be interpreted as lack of interest. In fact a child may be listening intently to make sense of what s/he is,

- Hearing
- Feeling

The Experience

Sessions may be delivered in a variety of ways. Bullet Point will describe one. It happens on a Friday morning in a hospital based Child Development Centre for those with a variety of disabilities to include a few visually impaired.

After settling children sit in a circle with parents sat behind. Everyone sings the 'Hello Song.' When striking up all children still and begin listening.

Whilst many are too young to join in or their needs prevent it everyone appears to recognise the song.

With repetition and routine each child begins smiling when her or his name is highlighted during the song. For those a little more developed when hearing their name tap their chest indicating 'here I am.'

Parents with a visually impaired child are able to see during these sessions that a child 'stilling' indicates concentration rather than boredom. More generally parents can begin interpreting different behaviour when compared to a non-visually impaired child as a positive response and development.

Within this setting there is an observation window from where the group next door can be seen but observers cannot. This allows parents to observe and consider aspects which could not be done if in close proximity to a child.

Equipment

It may be necessary to introduce an expanded range of equipment; for example, if the child has very little sight s/he may not find equipment very stimulating. S/he may,

- Be unable to see the bright colours common to early year's toys
- Loose interest in toys made of ubiquitous plastic

Your child may therefore require a range of,

- Toys made of materials other than plastic
- Tactile experiences
- Equipment that makes a variety of sounds to include subtle ones. Sudden and possibly frightening loud sounds should be avoided
- Musical instrument
- Toys to encourage physical development
- Tactile books

Toys/equipment will need changing regularly.

Developing Social Skills

Many severely sight impaired (blind) children will find it difficult developing social links. Intervention is therefore necessary from informed care givers. If unaddressed, isolation may ensue with the child not reaching her or his potential.

Within a group isolation can be addressed too with ongoing advice provided by informed professionals.

Children can also be given the opportunity to respond and interact with peers; then, based on this, independence developed alongside social skills. How might this be achieved?

Relating to Others

To begin, a child severely sight impaired may require body awareness input. Understanding can begin via one of the many songs naming body parts. Parents can then hold the child's hand and touch the body part as it is named.

Don't forget to introduce yourself if you are unknown to the child.

You should not expect your child, especially if s/he is very young, to initiate contact. It may be necessary to devise an activity where s/he can begin interacting by sound and/or touch. A few suggestions include,

- Sit your child next to another with you and another adult sat on the outside. Encourage the children to interact with each other
- Sit your child opposite another with legs apart and feet touching. Then, encourage them to role a sound producing ball back and forth to each other
- Encourage your child to partner another during activities. Try this when exploring and using big pieces of equipment; for example,
 - a. Slide
 - b. Tunnel
 - c. Climbing frame

Be aware that a see-saw will not necessarily encourage social interaction given that those possessing very low vision may be unaware of someone else sitting opposite.

Then, Step Back

You and those running the group can often step back when your child is familiar with,

- The environment
- Routine

And,

- When playing with other children

Your aim now being to encourage confidence so your child joins in. Begin by encouraging others to interact with her or him. Ways of doing this include,

- Get another child to describe the activity; for example, Wendy (other child) tell Ruth (your child) what you are doing
- Ask another child to join yours in an activity
- Talk to both children involved and encourage interaction

Being confident enough to join in may occur when your child starts without support or prompting playing with others in the group.

Next Time

Next time Bullet Point will discuss important aspects relating to,

- **Play and Learning**
- **Practical Suggestions Relating to Play and Equipment - Much of it Homemade**

Books you will find useful from www.familiesandsen.co.uk include,

AND SENIORS GROW TOMORROW

Independent Living Skills

Visual Impairment and

Other Disabilities

It costs

£20

Checkout the following too,

DO IT YOURSELF EDUCATION ADVOCACY

Putting Your Case

Visual Impairment and Other Disabilities

It is available from this site for,

£40

And,

WHAT IS RED!

A POPPY'S RED

Accessing the Curriculum

Visual Impairment and

Other Disabilities

This valuable resource costs,

£30

Together, they will help put you more in control of the situation. And,

INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE

Development, Visual Impairment and other Disabilities

During Pre-School Years

This book will be available soon from www.familiesandsen.co.uk. It will cover in considerably more detail topics introduced under the heading:

Development During Pre-School Years

*Visual Impairment: An Eye Condition in
Everyday Life*

This time we will consider the act of seeing and thereby enable you to assess your child's functional vision. This will be followed by a brief look at what constitutes a squint.

The Act of Seeing

Two people with the same level of sight may function in different ways. One learner may be keen to use her or his vision and display for example mobility skills whereas another may not. Factors affecting how well someone sees and recognises objects include:

- Whether its familiar or strange
- Distance away from the learner
- Size
- Detail or simplicity
- Amount of light
- Contrast against a background
- Colour
- Whether still or moving
- How easy it is to find
- Position
- Time available for looking

Visual functioning is primarily developmental. The more visual experience a learner has the more pathways to the brain are stimulated and the greater the accumulation and variety of visual images remembered. Vision can therefore be improved with visual training when a greater number of images are placed in the memory.

Things considered when assessing a learner's functional vision include,

- Preferred lighting
- Preferred position in a learning environment; for example, in relation to watching TV, teacher demonstrations and/or using a computer
- Access to black/white board information
- Mobility in familiar and unfamiliar places
- Ability to adapt to changing lighting conditions
- Preferred print size and contrast acuity
- Ability to cope in practical activities; for example science
- Ability to cope in other areas of the curriculum; for example, games and PE and whether a child or young person takes a full and active part in all team and individual events
- Speed of working; the amount of unfinished work is a useful indicator

- Ability and willingness to use any prescribed low vision aids

Other observed considerations may include,

- Level of independence
- Social integration in and out of a learning environment

In addition the child or young person should be observed and assessed in a range of visual perception skills which may include,

- Locating and fixating on an object long enough to recognise when,
 - a. Tracking a moving object
 - b. Scanning an object
 - c. Moving the gaze from one object to another
- Discriminating objects; for example, recognising an object from its outline shape
- Identifying patterns; for example,
 - a. Recognising symmetrical and non-symmetrical patterns
 - b. Matching identical features in relation to numbers and letters
- Hand-eye coordination; for example, completing a tracing activity such as the diagram of a maze
- Identifying facial expressions and body gestures

The observations and resulting profile should take account of the learner's

- Social development
- Cognitive development
- Intellectual development

It should also contain information about,

- Working environment suitability
- Recommendations regarding adaptations needed
- Training required in special curricula areas such as mobility and orientation or keyboard skills which will facilitate access to the mainstream curriculum

The report will also suggest specific activities which will help to improve any visual perceptual skills found to be underdeveloped.

Squint

The term squint is synonymous with,

- Strabismus
- Lazy eye
- Cast
- Wall eye

While there are different types of squint the most common type to be found in children is a manifest squint; that is, an obvious deviation of the eye,

- Inwards
- Outwards
- Upwards
- Downwards
- A combination of the above

A squint may be present all the time or intermittently; for example,

- Only when a learner is without glasses
- At a certain distance
- When the child is tired

Manifest squints can occur at any time or age, but many are congenital and treatment usually takes place before the child starts school. The peak age for an onset of a squint is between 1 – 4 years.

An uncorrected squint will impair and prevent binocular vision, reducing the field and depth of vision and if a squint occurs with another visual condition for example cataracts then a careful assessment of the child's visual functioning should be made. A squint adds a serious difficulty to an existing problem.

Any child with a monocular vision will be at a disadvantage in games or other activities which rely on rapid hand eye coordination. Close supervision is needed in practical lessons for example during,

- Chemistry
- Food technology

Educational Implications of a Squint

The educational implication of a squint include,

- For young children the unaffected eye may be patched resulting in severely reduced visual acuity and possible teasing
- Double vision may occur when the eye is not patched
- Attention should be paid to seating in the classroom to maximise use of the good eye

Next Time

Next time Bullet Point will look at,

- **Nystagmus**

And,

- **Aniridia**

Importantly, and in keeping with a desire to present practical information, we will offer ways to meet the access requirements for someone with these conditions.

Other Disabilities, Syndromes and Conditions

Following on from last time and considering autism/visual impairment we will now turn to interpreting the characteristics of several disabilities.

Interpreting Characteristics

Not everyone displaying the characteristics listed below will have the disability in question. The defining factors are often,

- The severity of traits
- How clearly traits are observed
- The length of time traits have been present

And/or,

- If there is, in some instances, a family history of the disability

To secure specific and quantifiable special educational support it will be necessary to collect evidence highlighting the traits in functional everyday terms.

Multi-Disabled

During observation, it can be very difficult separating one disability from another; for example, if someone is visually impaired and has difficulties reading this might result from a visual impairment, dyslexia or a learning difficulty based on a below average IQ. Alternatively, it could be a mixture of all three or even something else.

Downs Syndrome

Learning difficulties are often a part of Downs Syndrome. It is caused by additional chromosomes which alter the usual patterns of development in both the brain and body. The effects of the condition are very individual and can impact causing,

- Visual Impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Multi-sensory impairment
- Speech delay and ongoing difficulties in this area
- Motor development when for example, sitting, crawling and walking

Assessments

To provide accurate guidance for everyone working with a child or young person it is recommended that an assessment is carried out by someone experienced in assessing a child or young person with limited communication skills and learning difficulties.

Next Time

Next time Bullet Point will address some of the issues surrounding,

- **Physical Disabilities**

And,

- **Cerebral Palsy**

More Than One Disability

In earlier issues we covered,

- **A concrete and functional approach to developing skills for someone multi disabled and potentially visually impaired**
- **Assessment**
- **Producing a plan**

This time we will consider how to make learning a natural experience for your child.

Make Learning Happen

To make learning a natural part of doing an activity together,

- Always do activities with your child in a way that is usual for family life
- Use opportunities as they occur to help your child learn and participate in activities
- Always use language typical to the family
- Only give information necessary for your child to understand what needs to be done
- Help your child pay attention to the natural reminders in the environment that will help her or him remember how to do the activity; for example, draw your child's attention to water boiling when cooking eggs
- Tell your child what s/he is doing and whether s/he is doing it well
- Help your child notice the positive results of an activity; for example, ask if her or his teeth feel clean after brushing

How Does Your Child Learn an Activity?

The way a child learns is by doing it with significant others. Your child will learn more quickly by doing the activity,

- In the same place
- In the same way
- With the same materials

It will also help you child learn if you,

- Get her or his attention before beginning the activity
- Keep your child's attention during the activity
- Clearly communicate,
 - a. What your child has to do
 - b. How to do it
- Motivate your child especially if the activity is,
 - a. Difficult

- b. Uncomfortable
- c. Uninteresting

- Help avoid your child becoming,

- a. Frustrated
- b. Angry

- Comfort your child if s/he becomes frustrated or upset, without doing the activity for her or him. If you do it s/he may come to believe that inappropriate behaviour is a way of avoiding the activity

Motivating Your Child

Children with multiple impairments may need a great deal of encouragement and extra motivation to do an activity which is,

- New
- Different

And/or,

- Difficult

Generally, ensure learning is relaxed.

To ascertain how to motivate your child,

- Search for things your child likes by observation
- Try as many different things as necessary

Types of Rewards

Use natural rewards such as,

- Pointing out the good things that came from doing the activity
- Hugs or pats

And,

- Do an activity your child likes after doing a more demanding one

Try also rewarding when s/he does,

- An activity as part of a group
- A new activity

Then,

- Gradually expect your child to do more before rewarding
- Combine rewards such as a favourite activity or something your child wants with praise

Next,

- Give extra motivation less often and move towards rewarding with praise alone

Choosing a Reward

Change rewards frequently to avoid your child becoming tired of a particular one.

When choosing a reward,

- If possible only use rewards that are common to the situation rather than rewards that are unusual; for example, after a bath tell your child how clean s/he smells along with giving her or him a hug
- Try to avoid using food as a reward. It may not only be unhealthy but also spoil her or his appetite

Sometimes a special reward is necessary. Motivating your child may require allowing her or him to take part in a favourite activity, by given a special toy, star or certificate. However, as soon as possible begin replacing special rewards with everyday ones; for example, gradually replace a special reward with verbal praise, hug or pat. The aim being to replace a reward with the satisfaction your child feels by completing a task and especially when it's done well.

Importantly, avoid over doing verbal praise or hugs. Over doing it can devalue them to the point of becoming meaningless and losing their motivational value.

Making Learning Easier

Following are a number of ways to help your child learn. You can,

- Help her or him use abilities
- Break the activity into steps. Activities can be very complex to someone finding learning difficulty; for example, to eat from a bowl using a spoon. S/he,
 - a. Must know when to begin eating
 - b. Pick up a spoon
 - c. Scoop food onto the spoon
 - d. Bring food to the mouth without spilling it
 - e. Eat the food
 - f. Return the spoon to the bowl for more food
 - g. Know when s/he has finished

You can also,

- Help your child notice the steps involved in an activity so they help her or him know the next step; for example,
 - a. Hearing and/or seeing that water is beginning to boil is a reminder to turn down the heat
 - b. Hearing someone say it is time to eat is a reminder to wash your hands
 - c. Pulling a pair of shorts over the feet is a reminder to pull them up
 - d. Feeling thirsty lets us know it is time to get something to drink
- Provide reminders and help your child learn what to do. These can be small but nevertheless remind her or him about what to do next; for example,

- a. Touching your child's mouth will let her or him know to open it and put a spoon in to take the food
- b. Placing a small chair next to the door can help remind your child to take off her or his shoes having been outside
- Provide instructions that match your child's ability to communicate. These can represent you showing, telling or physically helping her or him; for example,
 - a. Showing your child how to place a toothbrush in her or his mouth
 - b. Telling her or him it is time to wash
 - c. Placing your child's hands on the bottle and help her or him bring it to the mouth
- Include things that attract your child's attention during your instructions or reminders; for example, something with a particular,
 - a. Colour
 - b. Sound
 - c. Shape

Next Time

Next time we will continue this theme and suggest ways to,

- Provide instructions during an activity
- Sequencing an activity

Before moving onto,

- Developing independence

Disability Living Allowance

Over the last four editions of Bullet Point we have covered in general terms points to consider when filling out a DLA form. Now we will home in on one age group 12-16 years and apply the information more specifically to this group. Of course, many if not most of the points raised, will apply to other age groups too.

A Cautionary Note

Be aware when filling out a form that many people find it emotionally challenging. Answering the questions highlights your child's needs and how they impact on her or him, you and your family, in the present and potentially the future too.

Disclaimer

It should be noted that throughout this issue and forth coming ones too the process over time may have changed along with legislation. Fundamentally though, the same issues will apply although the questions asked may be slightly different.

Information is offered in good faith for general guidance.

About Illnesses or Disabilities

What are the child or young person's illnesses and/or disabilities?

- Name your child or young person's visual impairment
- State if s/he is blind/severely sight impaired or sight impaired/partially sighted
- Explain a little about the condition; for example, is it a condition that will never improve

Also,

- Does s/he require a degree of constant care; that is, significantly more than teenagers of a similar age?
- If medicines and/or medical treatments are prescribed explain briefly what these are

Does Your Child or Young Person Need Someone with Her or Him When Outdoors?

Describe here the difficulties s/he has when walking along and any equipment used.

- Due to her or his visual impairment does s/he require constant care and attention when walking outdoors to be protected from danger and/or harm?
- Do loud unexpected noises or sounds disturb her or him thereby requiring a need for reassurance?
- Does s/he require someone to explain the environment generally and specifically when walking outdoors?
- Is your child or young person vulnerable to the intentions of strangers by missing non-verbal cues owing to her or his low vision
- Does s/he require a carer to alert her or him to obstacles when walking along; for example,
 - a. Bollards?
 - b. A frames?
 - c. Parked bicycles?
 - d. Over hanging branches?
 - e. Lamp posts?
 - f. Cars parked on the pavement?
 - g. Etc?
- Does s/he,
 - a. Need the help of another person to access community facilities; for example, shops, stairs and/or escalators etc?
 - b. Judge the speed of moving objects; for example, traffic?
 - c. Need help to cross the road?
 - d. Need support to access steps?
- Does s/he require a sighted guide at,
 - a. All times?
 - b. Night?

During,

- c. Fluctuating light levels?
- d. Poor and/or bright light?

And in,

- e. Unfamiliar areas?
 - Does s/he require someone to read,
 - a. Timetables?
 - b. Destination boards?
 - c. Bus numbers?
 - d. Street signs?
 - Does s/he require support to manage money – bank notes and coins?

Is Someone Required To Constantly Monitor Your Child or Young Person?

During the day, due to her or his visual impairment,

- Does s/he require support or locate objects which have been dropped or misplaced?
- Does s/he need help to identify the whereabouts of everyday items?
- Is s/he aware of dangers?
- Is it necessary for you to ensure that hazards are not missed within the home and thereby ensuring the environment is free of dangers; for example, ensuring stairs are free of clutter?
- Is it necessary for you to guide her or him in an unfamiliar environment?
- As a result of her or his visual impairment is s/he able to identify changes within the environment; for example, address confusion and/or stress created when furniture is moved?
- Does s/he collide with or bump into objects; for example, doors or cupboard doors left ajar and/or the corners of furniture. This requires you to intervene and ensure no harm comes to her or him. Doing this prevents you from undertaking more general household chores. List any incidents which have occurred
- Does s/he require support to identify spillages and breakages; for example, cleaning up broken glass

During the night due to her visual impairment,

- Does s/he wake at night disorientated due to her or his low vision and then require your support or reassurance?
- Does s/he need help, guidance and support if needing the toilet?
- If attempting to get out of bed independently is s/he likely to fall and injure her or himself?
- Does s/he need you to resettle her or him back into bed and then to sleep?
- Do you have to provide extra care when compared to a child or young person of a similar age who isn't visually impaired? Extra care could amount to assisting her or him at night to get a drink and use a cup independently

Next Time

Next time we will cover points relating to your,

- **Child or young person's development**

Do-It-Yourself Education Advocacy

Briefly described below are a number of significant factors underpinning being assertive and appropriate behaviour.

Being Assertive

Over all, the image you are attempting to portray is one of, confidence and forcefulness.

Eye Contact

Without staring, look at the person you are communicating with most of the time and in the eye. If you find eye-contact difficult look just above the person's eye which will give a similar affect.

Body Posture

Try and face the person you are communicating with, stand or sit up straight but avoid being stiff as a board. This will help you transmit an image which is,

- Decisive
- Bold
- Assured

Dress and Image

Dress and image can help you be assertive. It can help relay an air which is,

- Authoritative
- Insistent
- Determined

Generally speaking, your dress code should reflect the arena in which you are expressing yourself. Getting it wrong can undermine what you are saying and your attempt at being assertive.

Distance

Keep a comfortable and acceptable body space. You can appear aggressive and not assertive if standing too close when putting your case.

Gestures

Many of us use our hands to help reinforce and assertively express what we are saying. Doing so is acceptable but avoid looking as though you are conducting an orchestra.

Facial Expressions

How you present yourself facially should match your emotional position and what you are saying; for example, don't laugh when you are upset or frown when you are happy. To be assertive you are often best adopting a serious but relaxed face.

Tone of Voice, Inflection and Volume

Expressing yourself assertively and effectively can depend on,

- Your tone of voice: for example, whether you sound upset, whining or happy
- The inflection of your voice: that is, the emphasis on syllables
- The volume of your voice: for example, whether you whisper or shout and all points between

Getting this wrong can even encourage a response.

Content

What you are saying and what you are trying to accomplish will inform your level of assertiveness.

Is what you are saying credible? Generally speaking,

- Say what you mean
- Mean what you say

Fluency

Fluency is a significant factor when being assertive. Ideally you will think about and plan what you are going to say and especially if needing to be assertive. You should get your words out in an efficient, firm and commanding way and avoid stammering or rambling. A lack of fluency will make what you are saying less effective, less forceful and even potentially encourage the listener to switch off.

Timing

Timing when making a request or expressing a negative feeling can be very important. Choosing the right moment to be appropriately assertive can enhance or decrease your effectiveness; for example, being assertive towards an individual who is with others, or leaving it for several days and thereby too long after the event can hinder a satisfactory resolution to an issue.

Listening

If you are making a statement assertively and expressing your feelings, you should allow the other party to respond. Doing so will require you to listen carefully in order to respond again if necessary.

Next Time

Next time we will show you how to request/argue for an,

- **Education Health and Care Plan**

How to address this and much more is set out extensively within,

DO IT YOURSELF EDUCATION ADVOCACY Putting Your Case Visual Impairment and Other Disabilities

The book can be bought via this web site for,

£40

Explore its content via www.familiesandsen.co.uk and whilst doing so keep in mind an SEN paralegal may charge around £120 per hour and an SEN lawyer £230 an hour.

A Close-Up on Curriculum

The Learning Environment

Following is a list of things which may need consideration so a learning environment meets the needs of someone with low vision.

Considerations

Here are a few fundamental considerations

- General layout of the building
- Working space required by individual learners
- Specific adaptations for individual subjects
- Provision of facilities for the production and storage of materials and equipment
- Adaptation of lighting

General Layout

- A low vision learner in primary school will understand the general layout if it's logical; for example, the progression of classrooms down a corridor according to the age of learners. Whereas, a learner in senior school will find it more logical if classes are arranged according to subject area; for example, science, humanities, arts
- A tactile map at the schools' entrance will aid navigation from a set starting point. This will help learners develop a mental map which can be reinforced during mobility lessons

- For safety key features should be highlighted either using colour contrast or task lighting; for example, internal support columns painted in a light contrasting colour

And,

- There should be no overhanging protrusions on stair cases, corridors or class rooms that could cause injury – especially at head height
- Doors left open or ajar or windows opened onto walk ways can also be dangerous
- In walkways radiators should be recessed. If this is not possible they should be highlighted in different colours

Also,

- Floor surfaces should be mat to avoid glare. Changes in floor level should be indicated in advance by changes for example in floor textures or colour. Lines painted on corridor floors can help as route guides. Contrast may be used to highlight parts of the environment
- Acoustics should also be considered for learners who are blind. Reflected sound can be used to judge distance, direction and obstructions. In classrooms ambient noise should be kept to a minimum so learners can benefit fully from auditory information
- The front of a building should avoid hazards like traffic, bollards, trees or shrubs. Ideally steps or columns should be avoided too. Raised floor tiles can provide useful orientation clues

Working Spaces

- Ghetoisation should be avoided; that is, cutting the learner off from the general classroom through being surrounded by specialist equipment
- Often the learner will need more space to work and accommodate for example Braille materials or large print texts, a brailier, tape recorder and/or desktop computer. A learner may also need a raised desktop or reading stand, task lighting and room for a magnifier or CCTV
- Some learners may need room for a wheel chair or walking frame

Also,

- Room will be needed for a teaching assistant to support whilst the learner carries out a task; for example, next to a cooker
- The safe storage of specialist equipment is also needed along with a small room for Braille tuition. A 'withdraw' room is useful for all forms of therapy and also during examinations when an amanuensis can work uninterrupted with the learner

Adaptations

Subjects with a strong practical element like science, design technology, art and PE may need further adaptations.

Science and food technology often requires,

- Raised edges to work surfaces to contain spillages
- Continuous fitted work surfaces and fitted appliances

- Variations in floor surfaces which can inform learners that they are entering a new area
- Floor surfaces should be non slip

Also,

- Cooker and washing machines should have tactile markings. Equipment, for example microwave, might be beneficial if it has a speech facility
- Electric plugs should have safety handles
- Cooking and eating resources should maximise contrast
- Non-glare strip lighting can be used above work surfaces, under cupboards and shelves

And,

- In music rooms a back screen projector can project notation. This avoids learners blocking the light when trying to get close in order to see
- In all teaching areas a mobile black or white board is useful providing it is placed in appropriate lighting to avoid glare. They should always be kept clean to maximise contrast
- PE areas should be well lit, without glare and with non-slip surfaces
- Issues regarding swimming include,
 - a. Lighting that prevent the scattering glare from the water
 - b. Acoustics that masks verbal instructions – a learner who usually wears glasses will be significantly disabled in a pool if not wearing them
 - c. Non-slip flooring
 - d. Striped tiles to highlight when near the water
- Library areas need to accommodate independent research and the access of Braille, large print resources and personal ICT equipment
- A sound proof area may be necessary so the learner can dictate or receive audible information without disturbing others – alternatively head phones may be useful to avoid disturbing others
- The learning environment needs,
 - a. Access to someone who can repair equipment
 - b. An area where resources can be photocopied, enlarged, thermoformed along with audio or video taped
 - c. Somewhere to store brailled, and large print resources and other adapted or modified learning resources
 - d. A secure area to store expensive resources

Lighting, Colour and Contrast

Two main considerations apply here,

1. The overall level of ambient lighting in classrooms, corridors and halls
2. The task lighting required by individuals to maximise their use of near vision while studying

A rule of thumb being,

- Low vision learners require more light when undertaking a given task for example reading or when moving around

And,

- All areas should be illuminated by glare free lighting
- Harsh lighting can cause shadows which can be visually confusing
- Both artificial and natural lighting needs controlling to ensure that an appropriate level of light can be delivered.

Also,

- Some learners may require reduced lighting for example those with photophobia whilst others may require more light in order to increase contrast
- Natural light can be controlled by using,
 - a. Louvers
 - b. Blinds
 - c. Tinted glass
- Ambient artificial lighting can be controlled by using,
 - a. Dimmer switches fitted to ceiling cluster lights
 - b. Glare free lighting
 - c. Adjustable lighting in the ceiling to illuminate particular areas
- Consideration should also be given to décor and particularly contrasting surfaces; for example, doors with door handles, ceiling with walls and architrave with walls. Similarly switches and plug sockets should contrast with their back ground
- Wall surfaces should be plain along with curtains to avoid visual confusion. Gloss paint should be avoided to minimise glare
- Windows and light shades should be kept clean in order to maximise the penetration of light
- Task lighting is a good way of getting high levels of light close to a task – again this maximises contrast
- By reducing visual fatigue task lighting can dramatically increase a student's ability to sustain close work

Signs

- Signs should be simple and consistent and also be an integral part of the planning process for a building or environment. Signage should be well lit, ideally white on a darker background and at head height
- Tactile signs or symbols should be set at a consistent height and position on doors and cupboards etc.

Next Time

Next time Bullet Point will cover,

- **Specialist Educational Support for Low Vision Learners**

Please let us know if you have any practical suggestions so we can share them with others in forth coming issues of Bullet Point.

Important aspects around curriculum access are covered comprehensively within,

WHAT IS RED!
A POPPY'S RED
Accessing the Curriculum
Visual Impairment and
Other Disabilities

The book is available via this web site for,

£30

Explore its content via www.familiesandsen.co.uk and take control of unmet need. Together with **DO IT YOURSELF EDUCATION ADVOCACY** they help put you in control.

Independent Travel Techniques

You may not be surprised to learn that Bullet Point suggests that you identify the key mobility and independence skills required by your child or young person. However, an apparent lack of clarity about what mobility and independence skills encompass is problematic.

Regarding mobility you might like to consider if your child has age and ability skills in relation to,

- Body and special awareness; for example, early sensory-motor development, spatial language, mobility and orientation in different settings
- Social and emotional development; for example, asking for assistance, social conventions, manners, confidence and motivation
- Travel skills; for example, routes and technical aspects of travel, mobility and orientation, road safety and cane techniques

Contents

This edition of Bullet Point will continue helping you take control of your child's mobility and orientation training. We will cover,

- A few more assessment points
- Additional techniques before moving onto road crossings
- A quiz to help consolidate your child's skills and understanding
- Under the heading of 'Recommendations' Bullet Point will consider 'Assessment and Programme Design'

Assessment

Previously Bullet Point recommended during pre-school and infant school years that you consider how well your child,

- Walks up stairs/steps/kerbs holding onto your (adult's) hand or rail, safely and with confidence?

- Walks down stairs/steps/kerbs holding onto your (adult's) hand or rail, safely and with confidence?
- Avoids obstacles in the learning environment
- Locates and retrieves a dropped toy or object?
- Turns towards a noise or voice accurately?
- Walks without exhibiting an unusual gait/posture?
- Participates in physical activities in and out of school?
- Runs without stumbling?

This time we suggest you also consider how well s/he,

- Walks on rough ground or rough surfaces generally after the age of 5 years?
- Detects changes in floor surfaces after the age of 5 years?

Comment here:

Previously we recommended during junior school years to consider how well your child,

- Walks up down stairs/steps/kerbs independently, safely and with confidence?
- Walks down stairs/steps/kerbs independently, safely and with confidence?
- Avoids obstacles in the learning environment; for example, school?
- Walks without exhibiting an unusual gait/posture?
- Participates in physical activities at home and/or physical education at school?
- Runs without stumbling?
- Walks on rough ground or surfaces generally?
- Detects changes in floor surfaces or levels or gradients generally?
- Copes with fluctuating conditions generally indoors; for example, a quiet environment that suddenly becomes busy?
- Copes with fluctuating light condition outdoors?

This time we recommend you also consider how well your child,

- Goes independently to selected destinations in a familiar room when requested; for example, goes to her or his seat?
- Goes independently to other rooms in the building as necessary?
- Follows instructions to a destination in a known area?
- Moves independently around the outdoor play area?

Comment here:

During secondary school years consider how well your child or young person,

- Walking up down stairs/steps/kerbs independently, safely and with confidence?
- Walking down stairs/steps/kerbs independently, safely and with confidence?
- Copes with fluctuating lighting conditions indoors?
- Copes with fluctuating lighting condition outdoors?
- Finds her or his way across a large open space
- Manages distress during M and O; that is, displays distress when lost or disorientated
- Moves independently and not show dependency on others in,

a. A crowded environment?

- b. A know environment?
 - c. An unknown environment?
- Socialises with peers when moving around?
 - Identifies adults and peers when moving about?

This time consider how well s/he,

- Participates fully in activities involving movement; for example, PE, drama and games etc?
- Familiarises her or himself with a new environment?
- Motivates her or himself to use routes independently?

Comment here:

Include as part of your response any mobility and orientation training already received.

Additional Techniques – Shoreline and/or Central Position

Ideally your child should keep to the centre of a pavement to avoid all the stuff found in an inner or outer shoreline. There will however be instances where s/he needs an inner shoreline to locate landmarks.

The outer shoreline should be avoided where possible unless it represents a grass verge rather than a kerb.

Veering Off

Veering off is a common problem especially in the early stages of training. Generally the problem diminishes as confidence and competence develop.

Three tips to help avoid veering off,

- When starting off ensure that your child or young person's feet are together and then take a good positive step rather than a resistant one
- Encourage her or him to stop and think when s/he has veered off rather than turn around and around
- Encourage your child or young person to use landmarks and other environmental clues to help recover orientation and a sense of direction

Quiz

To further help your child consolidate independent travel techniques here are a few questions to use by way of a quiz. Perhaps a prize for a given number correctly answered may be a useful incentive too.

Returning to a previous edition of Bullet Point here are a few questions associated with canes and cane techniques.

- What are the 3 main elements of a Touch Tap Technique? Answer: the arc should cover the body on both sides; tap in time with the opposite foot touching the ground; the cane is held in front of the navel

- How might you help someone understand the correct arc width? Answer: walk down a corridor an appropriate distance from the wall; turn around and return on the same side again an appropriate distance from the wall
- How might you help someone keep in step? Answer: count one, two; hold the cane with your child
- How might your child or young person correct them self when out of step? Answer: double tap the cane on one side
- What is the main difference when using a straight tip or roller tip? Answer: a roller tip is kept constantly in contact with the ground
- What must be done before allocating a long cane? Answer: training
- Why might someone be reluctant to use a white cane? Answer: sets the young person apart; stigma; doesn't feel it necessary
- What is the difference between a landmark and hazard? Answer: a hazard is to be avoided where as a landmark is a helpful aid
- What sort of landmarks are useful when learning a route? Answer: something permanent and easily identified
- What part can traffic play when learning a route? Answer: the sound of traffic can represent something to be avoided, a landmark and a direction indicator
- When following an inner shoreline what should you do with the cane? Answer: ensure that you are still covering both sides and not just one
- What points do you need to consider when beginning teaching a route? Answer: the child or young person should be physically and psychologically ready; avoid information overload; the route should be relevant and ideally mean something to the child or young person; breaking a route down

Recommendations

This time Bullet Point will consider,

- **Assessment and programme design**

A programme should be carried out and,

- Involve locations both familiar and unfamiliar in which a child and young person operates; for example,
 - a. Home
 - b. School/college
- Include observation, discussion with the child, young person, parents along with records and reports
- Holistically cover a broad mobility and independence programme
- Use formal record keeping to include check lists
- Result in clear action points and future responsibilities with copies circulated to all key people to include parents
- Result in programmes that promote inclusion whilst being directly relevant to the child or young person and beyond the school or college gate

An environmental assessment should include,

- The home to provide parents with advice on how to foster independence and safety
- Take place before school entry and at times of transition

- Specify adaptations to not only the environment but also equipment in order to facilitate independence and inclusion

All of the above to include more comprehensive answers to questions raised in the 'Quiz' are available within,

THEY WANT HIM TO GO OUT;
IF ONLY SHE COULD
Mobility and Orientation
A Teaching Manual
Visual Impairment and
Other Disabilities

This comprehensive manual is available from
www.familiesandsen.co.uk and cost,

£30

Its content can help underpin provision. It offers an invaluable accompaniment to the development of independence more generally whilst also improving employability.

Next Time

Next time Bullet Point will cover,

- **More suggestions to help you assess your child or young person's M and O skills**
- **Crossing a road safely before moving onto accessing public transport**

And,

- **Bullet Point's 'Recommendations.'** This time we will consider independence and review in relation to a local authority policy
- **A quiz to consolidate learning**

Independent Living Skills

In this edition of Bullet Point we cover,

- **Two More Teaching Tips**
- **Using a Hob**
- **Draining Boiling Liquids**

And,

- **Decorating Clay Pots**
- **Lighting a Stove and Cooking Rice**

Two More Teaching Tips

Where possible maximise colour contrast. This could mean juxtaposing foods on a plate; for example, peas separating mashed potato and another similarly coloured food or, a dark plate helping differentiate food against the plate or, a dark chopping board against a light work surface.

Analyse any activity your child is finding difficult and identify which element is problematical. Then, solve the element before moving on.

Using a Hob

- When boiling vegetables your child could use a 'milk saver' at the bottom of a pan. This will help her or him detect when water is bubbling. Ask about a 'milk saver' at your local society for the blind
- To prevent fingers moving too far down a spoon when stirring or serving hot food position a rubber band in an appropriate position from the top of the handle
- Frying should only be attempted if your child is very confident (not over confident and/or blasé) and safety conscious. Promote the use of a splatter screen or pan lid to catch fat spitting

If you are going to buy a hob select one designed with knobs on the front rather than back panel. This will avoid a need for your child or young person to lean over the hob to address heat settings.

Ovens and knobs more generally should ideally be the 'clicking' variety. If your cooker has non-clicking knobs label settings with 'Hi-mark' or 'Bump-ons' available from your local society for the blind.

Draining Boiling Liquids

- Encourage your child or young person to place a colander in the sink over the plug hole; lift the pan to be drained into the colander to position it; then, tip. This way the food will not end up in the sink
- A need to drain foods such as vegetables to include rice can be achieved by washing and cooking them in a chip basket

Decorating Clay Pots

With employment in mind Bullet Point will include something in this chapter and not leave it all up to a later 'Employment and Employability' section.

The following strategy is designed to support a child or young person should you decide to decorate clay pots at home. The same system of deconstruction however could be used elsewhere for other activities designed to develop employability skills.

The activity involves stamping a design onto clay pots and then placing them on the shelf upside down to dry.

Steps

1. If you are going this as part of a group activity begin by teaching your child or young person to greet others when entering the working space; for example, say good morning

2. Take 5 pots from a box or shelf and line them up on a work surface
3. Collect and line up empty paint tins
4. Collect containers of paint and fill the paint tins with paint. Close the containers and return to the storage area
5. Collect the box of stamps and place on the work surface
6. Dip the stamp into the paint and stamp the pot around the base
7. Repeat with different stamps and different colours until the pot is completed
8. When all 5 pots are completed place the pots on the shelf to dry
9. Fetch more pots and paint if needed and repeat the task until the end of the working time
10. Clean stamps and paint
11. Clean the painting area
12. Wash and dry hands
13. Count and record the pots stamped
14. Say goodbye and exit the working area for a break or depart

Teaching Suggestions

- Provide completed pots as models if your child is unsure how to decorate the pots
- Organise storage so that materials are in the order in which they are required
- When your child is first learning a task, complete all the steps with her or him but concentrate on teaching the most rewarding steps first; for example, stamping pots with a colour. As these steps are learned, work backwards to teach each new step
- At each step give her or him time to do the step before helping by providing instruction. Many will learn parts of a task but have difficulty mastering other bits. Provide only as much instruction and assistance as needed. Also, provide frequent feedback
- If part of a group, direct your child's attention to others who are doing the same task so s/he can learn to follow them if necessary

Limited Vision

- Maximise a high contrast background to help highlight and outline the activity; for example, fix paper or a cloth to the background so it contrasts with the materials used in the activity. Similarly, cover the work surface so it has the same effect
- Teach your child to do the task tactually using the edge of pots as a point of reference
- Highlight the stamp using a tactile symbol or particular colour which matches the appropriate paint tin

Attention Difficulties

- Have your child select and arrange one pot, stamp(s) for the pot and tins of colour before stamping the pot then, repeat for the next pot and so on. Start with one then gradually increase the number of pots stamped in one go
- Getting up to fetch another pot and then arrange materials ready for stamping will represent a break and a chance to move around without completely leaving the job

Unsure Where to Sit

- Sit your child in the same place each day
- Use a visual or tactile cue to highlight the appropriate chair

Difficulty Remembering All the Materials

- Make an instruction board using visual or tactile references listing all the steps in order

Difficulty Carrying More Than One Item

- Use a tray with sides to carry more than one item
- If unable to travel and carry items use a trolley or arrange a signal for your child to use when requiring more items

Easily Distracted by Others

- Build a cubicle on your child's work area. This could simply be a cardboard box containing all necessary materials within
- Place a table in the corner of the room for her or him to work

Difficulty Stabilising Materials

- To stabilise a pot make a form into which a pot can sit
- Make a stamp handle bigger by rapping tape around the handle so it's easier to grasp
- Use a ladle or large spoon to fill the paint tins rather than poring directly from the main, perhaps large, paint container
- Use a form to stabilise paint tins when filling with paint or dipping with a stamp

Difficulty Communicating

- Teach your child objects of reference and gestures for verbal prompts to request for example more materials and/or greeting others

Lighting a Stove and Cooking Rice

This exercise is designed to increase your child or young person's independence and role in the family and, develop tactual, auditory and cognitive skills.

Steps

1. Place near the cooker,
 - Container with water
 - Cooking pot and lid
 - Cup
 - Bag of rice
 - Damp cloth to wipe hands and clean up any spillage
2. Take the cup and fill it with rice
3. Empty the rice into the pot
4. Poor water into the pot

5. Swirl the rice and water around using a hand
6. Drain the water
7. Repeat 4 and 5 until the rice and water is clean
8. Fill the bowl and rice with clean water to about 2 inch above the rice and fit its lid
9. Ignite the stove. Ideally it will be self igniting via a button if gas. Any other means of igniting should be monitored
10. Place the pot on the stove and wait for it to boil
11. When boiling turn down the heat and simmer
12. Wash up and put away the cup and bowl whilst the rice cooks
13. Check once or twice to see if the rice has cooked and that there is still enough water for cooking
14. When cooked remove from the cooker and drain through a colander into a bowl.
15. When in the bowl stir to avoid it sticking

Teaching Suggestions

- The activity requires many decisions. When your child is learning ensure s/he can technically manage the cooker; that is, turn things on and off along with safety considerations around managing hot equipment and ingredients
- One strategy for telling how much hot water is in the pot is to swirl a spoon around and feel for the weight of water against the spoon when holding it still against the swirling water
- Point out what boiling water sounds like
- To check if the rice is cooked have your child,
 - a. Take some onto a spoon, blow on it and then taste
 - b. Stir the rice at the start of the process and then do the same later when it should be cooked and noting the difference
 - c. Allow your child to try a step on her or his own before helping. This can be difficult of course given the inevitable dangers within the process
- At any stage adopt a hand over hand technique to help her or him develop a skill

Low Vision

- Mark the cooker's dials using 'bump-ons' or 'high-mark'. There is much more on safety in the books mentioned below

Managing a Heavy Pot

- Place a table or trolley close to the cooker
- Ensure a work surface is clear before transferring the pot to the surface

Managing Hot Equipment

- Your child may feel more confident if wearing oven gloves when managing hot pans etc

The general aim of this exercise is to show a deconstructed technique for cooking along with a few teaching strategies. How to cook rice safely and in different ways is covered in much more detail within,

THE WOLVERHAMPTON COOKBOOK

Cooking Skills and Recipes Visual Impairment and Other Disabilities

Information is in large print and clearly laid-out. It is designed to enable everyone to roam through and then cook, although perhaps with a little help in the beginning.

It costs,

£15

Also via www.familiesandsen.co.uk check out,

AND SENIORS GROW TOMORROW

Independent Living Skills Visual Impairment and Other Disabilities

It costs,

£20

Please note we have moved into considering employment. This began in the last issue of Bullet Point under the heading of ILS when encouraging your child to complete a task. A book available from www.familiesandsen.co.uk will help further. It represents a comprehensive guide to finding and securing employment for someone visual impaired - specifically.

DISABILITY: NO BARRIER TO EMPLOYMENT? **Finding, Securing and Maintaining Employment** **Visual Impairment and** **Other Disabilities**

It costs,

£30

Next Time

Next time we will cover,

- **Two more Teaching Techniques**
- **Using a Kettle and Oven**
- **Meeting Friends at a Local Eatery**

Please let us know if you have any practical suggestions so we can share them with others in forthcoming issues of Bullet Point.

Recipes for Beginners and Experts

The selection of recipes chosen for Bullet Point has drawn inspiration from all over the world. They were chosen to not only develop techniques and encourage independent living but to also help culturally develop your pallet.

Food and drink reflects our culture and social status. Our diet says something about us whilst potentially encouraging a sense of community too.

This time we will explore,

- **A Jamaican Chicken Curry**

And,

- **Rice and Peas**

My thanks go to my neighbour Pearl who showed me how to prepare both of these.

Jamaican Chicken Curry

Serves 4 – 6

Ingredients

4 – 6 pieces of skinned breast of chicken
Juice of 1 lemon
1 teaspoon of sea salt
1 tablespoon of all-purpose seasoning
1 teaspoon of chicken seasoning
½ teaspoon of course freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoon of mild Madras curry powder
1 large onion
3 spring onions
1 Scotch bonnet chilli
1 red pepper
2 sprigs of thyme
50ml of vegetable oil
300ml of water

Method

- a) Peel and chop the onions
- b) Cut the tops and bottoms off the spring onions and discard
- c) Chop the spring onions
- d) Chop and deseed the chilli (its seeds will significantly increase the curry's heat)
- e) Deseed and finely chop the red pepper
- f) Rinse the chicken in cold water
- g) Sprinkle the chicken with lemon juice and drain off the excess liquid

- h) Put the chicken in a non-metallic dish and sprinkle with thyme, salt, all-purpose seasoning, chicken seasoning, black pepper, curry powder, onion, spring onions, chilli and pepper
 - i) Using your hands rub all the ingredients into the pieces of chicken
 - j) Cover with cling film and place in a refrigerator for 4 hours or overnight
 - k) Heat the oil in a large saucepan (duchy) until hot
 - l) Add the chicken and cook for 3 – 4 minutes to seal the meat
- m) Add 300ml of cold water and the remaining ingredients used for marinating
 - n) Bring back to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer for 30 minutes or until the chicken is tender

Comments

- This Caribbean recipe shows us food derived from a great many cultural influences. It arrived in the Caribbean with indentured servants and slaves
- The flavour will be better if you marinate ingredients overnight
- Serve with Rice and Peas
- If you are using commercially blended all-purpose seasoning or chicken seasoning taste before using as you might find them salty. In which case, do not add any more salt to the recipe

Rice and Peas

Ingredients

240g of cooked red kidney beans (1 tin)
 200g block of creamed coconut
 1 – 2 teaspoons of salt (to taste)
 Knob of butter
 1 Scotch bonnet chilli
 1 spring onion (green end only)
 1 fresh sprig of thyme
 1 clove of garlic
 1 teaspoon of all-purpose seasoning
 500g basmati rice
 2 litres of water

Method

- a) Drain and rinse the kidney beans and put into a large pan
- b) Crumble or grate the coconut
- c) Mix the coconut with 2 litres of hot water and add to the pan
- d) Chop and use the green end of the spring onion only
- e) Peel and finely chop the clove of garlic
- f) Rice the rice several times under cold running water and drain
- g) Add to the pan the rice, garlic, salt, butter, chilli, spring onion, thyme, all-purpose seasoning and stir
- h) Bring ingredients to the boil and simmer for 15 – 20 minutes

Comments

- Once the rice is in the pan never add water because the rice will clog
- Generally speaking, you need just over twice the amount of liquid to rice

- Importantly, do not lift the lid during cooking because you'll release the moisture
- When the rice is cooked cover with tin foil to seal
- Scotch bonnet chilli peppers come in yellow, green or red. They can be extremely hot. The heat comes from the seeds so remove if you want a milder dish
- Creamed coconut is compressed coconut flesh with the water removed and sold in blocks. It should be crumbled or grated into liquids to add flavour
- All-purpose seasoning is a commercially prepared blend of spices. Depending on the brand it includes salt, paprika, chilli powder, celery powder, ground coriander and onion powder. It may also contain allspice, garlic, thyme and pepper
- Note therefore, that all-purpose seasoning contains salt and possibly pepper. This should be born in mind when seasoning and potentially adding more salt and pepper

Next Time

Next time we will offer more tips along with two recipes one involving the much maligned sprout. The recipes are,

- **Garlic Roasted Salmon and Brussels Sprouts**

And,

- **Defo Dado Bread – an Ethiopian recipe**

Yum! Yum!

Please let us know about any practical suggestions so we can share them with others in forth coming issues of Bullet Point. Also, tell us about any favourite recipes too.

Offered via this web site is,

THE WOLVERHAMPTON COOKBOOK
Cooking Skills and Recipes
Visual Impairment and
Other Disabilities

Information is in large print and clearly laid out. It is designed to enable everyone to roam through and then cook, although perhaps with a little help in the beginning.

It costs,

£15

Employment and Employability

Under this heading we are considering skills needed to find, sustain and succeed in employment. Last time we covered,

- **Being Responsible**
- **Using Numbers**

Now it's the turn of,

- **Working Safely**

And,

- **Working With Others**

Once again these are skills we all need and not just those with low vision. Developing them will help overcome the difficulty many have in the area of employment. Information is designed for those approaching employment or having difficulties finding a job. Pass it on and share.

Working Safely

How aware is the learner of,

- Personal and group health and safety practices and procedures and then act in accordance with them?

Working with Others

How well does the learner,

- Understand and work within the dynamics of a group and work with other team members to identify, distribute and undertake tasks necessary to complete a project or task?
- Ensure that a team's purpose and objectives are clear?
- Identify and work with the strengths and weaknesses of individual team members?
- Communicate effectively with other team members to ensure effective working of a team?
- Contribute to a team by sharing information and expertise?
- Deal sensitively with dissent and disagreement?
- Manage and resolve conflict when appropriate?

Now, assess in each of these important areas 1 – 5, where 5 is high. Then, consider if any of them needs development.

Ask someone else to assess too. Then, compare the results and ask the other person why s/he graded this way.

Having obtained this valuable information, work on one or two areas at a time. Remember, these are the skills we all need to find, sustain and succeed in the workplace.

Next Time

Next time Bullet Point with cover,

- Learning Continuously
- Communicating Effectively

Shortly we will offer a number of projects where these skills can be developed. This and much, much more is available now within,

DISABILITY: NO BARRIER TO EMPLOYMENT Finding, Securing and Maintaining Employment Visual Impairment and Other Disabilities

Job hunting is time consuming and a stressful exercise. It is also one of the most important tasks we undertake.

This comprehensive guide offers everything you need to help create a winning job application.

Information is designed for those with a visual impairment and covers diverse areas such as presenting yourself in a dynamic and positive way, disclosing a disability and managing intrusive questions in the work place. It is designed to sit alongside two other books available from www.familiesandsen.co.uk Independent Living Skills and Mobility and Orientation.

It costs,

£30

Something for Teaching Assistants *(Home Tuition)*

A Visual Impairment Impacting On Support

Following is a list of aspects you might expect when accompanying a visually impaired learner. Each may have an impact when accessing learning and therefore support required.

- Eyes crossed or turned
- Red, inflamed, itchy or watery eyes
- Eyes in constant motion
- Short attention span
- Poor hand-eye coordination
- Difficulty throwing, catching and kicking

Also,

- Unusual head posture or holds work at an unusual angle
- Trips or bumps into things
- Sensitivity to light
- Squints, frowns or peers at work
- Rubs eyes
- Closes or covers one eye when looking at work

And,

- Blinks excessively, dizziness or headaches
- Holds work very close or bends over to access work
- Turns head to follow a line across the page when reading
- Unable to copy accurately
- Confuses letters of similar appearance; for example c, e, a, o
- Writes in large letters and not on the line
- Uses a finger to keep a place on the page
- Misses out words and lines when reading

Also,

- Unusual amount of fatigue after a visual task
- Complains that work sheets are too small or too faint
- Complains that s/he can't see the board
- Has difficulty setting out sums
- Works slowly
- Disinclination to play games
- General reading difficulties; for example, reverses letters, omits words, loses her or his place

Next Time

Next time Bullet Point will address,

- **How to Support Visually Impaired Learners**

Please let us know if you have any practical suggestions so we can share them with others in forthcoming issues of Bullet Point.

Underpinning Issues

Last time we discussed the setting up of an independent parents support group and covered,

- **Building a Membership**
- **Conducting Meetings**
- **A Programme and Communication**

This time we will consider,

- **Fundraising**
- **Maintaining Momentum**
- **The Next Step**

- **Campaigning**

And,

- **Falling Attendance**

Fundraising

Ask for a small membership fee as this will also help with developing a sense of commitment.

Engage with local businesses, particularly if they are major employers. They could become financial backers.

Tell for example your local Women's Institute and Round Table that you are running and, when the group was established. They may prove a useful funding stream.

Maintaining Momentum

To avoid becoming down hearted, especially when setting up, put in place as soon as possible a calendar of events. Arrange for example,

- Barbecues
- Day trips
- Fun runs
- Parties to celebrate festivals; for example, Christmas and Diwali
- Parties for members' children

Start a magazine, book and/or toy library. This will help both parents and children get to know each other and become happier and more confident about the situation.

The Next Step

You have established,

- Who you are
- Where you meet
- The best time to meet
- How often you meet
- What you stand for

Now you are ready to share personal knowledge about your children's needs and your own in relation to managing the situation.

Suggestions

- Parental insight is vital and can often best emerge in a relaxed atmosphere
- Discuss the specialist provision available in your area and how this compares with provision elsewhere
- Engage with local and national disability groups and collect information and possibly even materials; for example, large print or Braille books

Campaigning

Campaigning can be useful; for example, you may have become concerned about the level of provision available for your children. However, be aware that addressing things aggressively can label your group confrontational and cause potential allies to distance themselves.

Take advice about the best way forward. Contacting your MP, local paper or councilor about shortcomings in provision may not be the best and most productive way forward. Doing so might 'raise the temperature' and create ill feeling.

Falling Attendance

If attendance is falling consider the following,

- Are you holding meetings at unsuitable times? You should avoid school holidays, bank holiday weekends and religious holidays
- Is the arranging of childcare facilities difficult?
- Is enough time being allowed at the beginning or end of meetings for members to meet, get to know each other and generally socialise?
- Are the needs of members being met?
- Are you devoting enough time for attracting new members?
- Are your original aims still valid?
- Could you develop links with other local groups?
- Are there national groups who can put you in touch with other parent groups?
- Could you link with other groups whose membership addresses a different disability; for example, a group for parents with visually impaired children and young people joining with a group for those who have a physical disability?

For more information about setting up a group contact Bullet Point via the communication box top right of our web site www.familiesandsen.com

If you wish to run a campaign through Bullet Point contact us via the communication box top right of the web site's front page.

News and Events

If there is an event coming up that you'd like to inform our readers about drop Bullet Point a line via the contact box top right of the web site's front page

Also, if you'd like to write about what took place at the event drop tell us about that too.

Letters

James' Train Set

The following letter is from James' mother. She wanted to share this letter with Bullet Point readers to highlight some joy when all around can seem so negative.

My name is James and I am 12 years old. For my birthday I had a super G Gauge train set which is really good fun. It is a lot bigger than a normal sized train set and

my dad and me have been working very hard in the garden so that the train can run around it. So far we have built a wall and we went out on my sister's boy friends' tractor and got loads of soil which we put behind the brick wall and mum is going to plant some bulbs to brighten it up and the train will run along behind them. I am really looking forward to having it going round the garden and I am also saving my pocket money to buy bits for it. SL London.

Spoon Carousel

Here's an idea about how to make a homemade Spoon Carousel. Many find making stuff to stimulate their children offers something positive and constructive to do when all around can seem so negative and unpredictable.

CT from Milton Keynes says: to make our sound mobile I took an old cheese board and drilled a series of holes around the edge. Using a metal drill bit I then drilled a hole through the handle of a few spoons and then using elastic hung them from the board. To help with the sound effect I hung a whisk from the centre. The whole thing was suspended by a cup hook. CT Milton Keynes

Your Experiences

Tell us about your experiences. We are not looking for perfect grammar or punctuation but instead your views. Should you decide to contribute please leave your email address in order to discuss where necessary your piece. You will be identified only by your first name or initials – which ever you prefer.

Also, feel free to say what you would like covered in forthcoming editions.

Next Time

The next edition of Bullet Point will hit the internet on 20th March.

*Don't forget,
Many of these subjects have been expanded in the books available via my web site. They contain much more about accessing learning and the development of valuable skills.*

*Rgds
Clive.*

PS,

*To coincide with National Optimism Celebrations
in March have you considered buying any of the
books available from my web site?*

An aspiring cook might like,

THE WOLVERHAMPTON COOKBOOK
Cooking Skills and Recipes
Visual Impairment and
Other Disabilities

Information is in large print and clearly laid-out. It is designed to enable everyone to roam through and then cook, although perhaps with a little help in the beginning.

It costs

£15

*And, someone thinking about employment might
value,*

DISABILITY: NO BARRIER TO EMPLOYMENT?
Finding, Securing and Maintaining Employment
Visual Impairment and
Other Disabilities

Job hunting is time consuming and a stressful exercise. It is also one of the most important tasks we undertake.

This comprehensive guide offers everything you need to help create a winning job application.

Information is designed for those with a visual impairment and covers diverse areas such as presenting yourself in a dynamic and positive way, disclosing a disability and managing intrusive questions in the work place.

It costs

£30

And finally, to herald books due to hit the internet next year a nursery rhyme. They will be full of information for parents with a visually impaired baby.

Higglety, Pigglety, Pop

**Higglety, pigglety, pop!
The dog has eaten the mop;
The pig's in a hurry,
The cat's in a flurry,
Higglety, pigglety, pop!**

If You Don't Do It Who Will?