



**Ambitious
about Autism**

The Ambitious Framework **Guidance for education settings**

A framework for delivering education that affords dignity, respect, and compassion for young people with autism.

Designed by Ambitious about Autism



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Introduction

The Ambitious Framework is an approach to education created by Ambitious about Autism to support children and young people with autism. It has been developed to enable education settings to provide high-quality education whilst affording dignity, respect, and compassion, in all aspects of their provision. Sometimes education settings unknowingly undermine or miss opportunities to support Quality of Life (QoL); the Ambitious Framework has been designed to prevent this from happening.

The Ambitious Framework is based upon a person's indisputable rights to be:

- treated with dignity and compassion
- valued
- listened to
- supported to have the best quality of life possible
- empowered to make choices and decide on how they want to live their life.

The Framework provides a core structure for facilitating and developing QoL. It provides the tools to encourage settings to utilise the interventions and approaches that are best suited to their specific contexts.

The Ambitious Framework is based on School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SW-PBS) and incorporates what is known about supportive practice for children and young people with autism. The Framework is designed to address all aspects of an education setting's offer, not just behaviours that challenge; embedding quality of life

across all aspects of a setting's functions is vital to the successful implementation of the Framework. This ranges from reviewing the curriculum to ensure it prepares students for quality of life, to auditing policy and practice to ensure it affords dignity, respect, and compassion.

The focus of the Framework is centred on creating and sustaining systems of support for all, across the whole education setting. In SW-PBS terms, this is called the universal, or Tier 1, offer. The focus of this guidance is the Tier 1 offer rather than the small group (Tier 2) offer and the individual, specialist (Tier 3) offer. This is because students can be very different from one another and effective interventions need to be tailored to meet the unique characteristics of each young person. Decisions about what intervention to use and the intensity of an intervention need to be linked to the assessed needs of the student. However, guidance is provided on selecting and implementing individual and group intervention to ensure that it aligns with the Framework.

This guide to adopting and implementing the Ambitious Framework is divided into two sections. Part One provides some key tools to help settings review their practice and track progress and impact. It includes:

- A self-review tool to help identify current strengths and areas for development.
- A competency framework that details the competencies staff need to deliver the Ambitious Framework.
- A screening tool to help you review policy, practice, and intervention to ensure all provision supports, and does not undermine, the aims of the Framework.
- A case study tool to help you review whether the implementation of the Framework is having the desired impact on the children and young people in your setting.

Part Two provides guidance information to help settings develop their practice and implement change. It includes:

- Implementation guidance, advising how settings can effectively implement change.
- Guidance to help you design projects to further develop your setting's practice.
- Curriculum design guidance about how you can revise or develop the curriculum within your setting in order to ensure that a systematic approach is adopted to support learning in relation to quality of life.
- Curriculum delivery guidance about the effective delivery of the quality of life curriculum and managing behaviours that challenge.
- Collaboration guidance for working collaboratively with young people, their families and with other professionals.

Further information

For more information about the Ambitious Framework please visit our website ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk or contact Jude Mortell, Head of Integrated Services at j.mortell@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk.

Part one

Self-review tool

The Ambitious Framework self-review tool enables you to explore how established the practice of your setting is in relation to providing an education that supports quality of life and affords dignity, respect, and compassion. It is structured around the Ambitious Framework's three focus areas:

Curriculum

A setting's universal curriculum is its plan and structure for delivering its programme of education. When quality of life and preparing for future quality of life is an important focus for a setting, this will be incorporated within the intent of its curriculum.

Curriculum delivery

High-quality teaching is fundamental to effective curriculum implementation and impact. Effective teachers have deep knowledge of the subjects they teach, specialist knowledge of how people learn and create environments that support and nurture physical and psychological needs.

Collaboration guidance

In order to afford dignity, respect and compassion, young people and their families need to be placed at the core of a setting.

Conducting the audit allows settings to familiarise themselves with the Framework whilst considering the unique and specific requirements of their own setting.

Getting started

The self-review tool comprises of 21 key characteristics. For each characteristic, an auditor or auditing team can evaluate the extent to which the characteristic is in place, using the following ratings:

- Not yet developed: There is work to be done to consider how to develop practice in this area.
- Developing: Work has started on this area of practice.
- Established: This is established in some areas and is now being spread across the whole setting.
- Enhanced: Work is impactful and well established across the whole setting.

In deciding the extent to which a characteristic is present, auditors should aim to collate:

- documentary evidence: policy documents, results, analysed data
- observation evidence: records of practice that is observable
- voice evidence: perceptions and experiences of staff, parents/carers and students.

It is highly unlikely that any setting will have all 21 characteristics that feature in the self-review well established.

The aim is that over time, a setting will increase the number of characteristics rated as established and enhanced.

Ideally, the self-review should be revisited on a regular basis to provide evidence that practice is developing and improving, and the evidence gathered through this analysis of provision can add to a school's existing self-evaluation processes and:

- determine staff training needs
- feed into the school improvement plan
- provide evidence to Ofsted and other external agencies they are a self-improving school.

The self-review tool can be found on the next page.

Next steps

Once the self-review has been completed, settings can set up an implementation team to focus on effecting change. Guidance for doing so is provided in Part Two, the chapter entitled, **Implementing change**.

Self-review tool

Curriculum design

Characteristic

Curriculum delivery

Collaboration

1 Preparing for quality of life is an intent of the setting's universal curriculum.

2 The quality of life model (QoLM) adopted is well suited to the cohort of young people attending the setting – it has been selected and/or adapted specifically with them in mind.

3 The universal curriculum addresses all strands of the setting's QoLM and is coherently planned and sequenced to deliver continuity and progression.

4 Frameworks are in place to allow the QoL curriculum to be adapted and developed in line with individual differences/preferences in relation to quality of life.

5 The governing body regularly review the curriculum and explore the intent, implementation, and impact of the QoL components.

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Curriculum design

Curriculum delivery

Characteristic

Collaboration

1 Teachers have a deep knowledge of all of the components of the QoLM and understand the ways students think about the content so they can evaluate the thinking behind students' understanding and misconceptions.

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2 The quality of instruction is high; teachers use assessment and evidence informed practices to maximise development.

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3 Teachers have enhanced pedagogical knowledge relating to autism and apply this to their teaching.

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4 Classrooms have a climate of high expectations whilst promoting self-worth.

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5 Behaviour is understood/made sense of in relation to physical and psychological needs.

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6 Approaches utilised for supporting learning and behaviour are data driven and research informed.

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Curriculum design

Curriculum delivery

Characteristic

Collaboration

7 Throughout the setting, the physical environment is organised to support physical and emotional needs.

8 Wherever possible, students are afforded autonomy and supported to make decisions guided by their interests, preferences and wants.

9 The typical student experience is that of feeling competent. Challenge level and skill level are well matched, leading to experiences of being effective and competent.

10 Students have secure, strong and supportive relationships with staff.

11 Restraint/ restrictive practice/ positive handling is rarely used / only used to prevent harm to self or others (risks of harm are limited through effective management of the environment).

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Curriculum design

Curriculum delivery

Collaboration
Characteristic

- 1 Students and their families feel listened to, respected, valued and cared for.
- 2 All stakeholders' (including students and their families) experience, knowledge and skills are utilised to design, produce and deliver services and resources.
- 3 Students are surrounded by adults who promote their independence and enable them to do things for themselves, wherever possible.
- 4 The setting focuses on individuals' strengths (personal strengths and social and community networks) and not on deficits.
- 5 When supporting individual needs, a tailored team of professionals work together to build a consistent and coherent intervention programme that draws on all available expertise within the setting.

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The Competency Framework

Some core competencies are required to deliver the Ambitious Framework. We have developed a competency framework that provides a structure against which staff can reflect upon, evaluate, and develop their practice. It also provides a structure that managers can use to audit skills, set professional development targets, and plan and deliver appropriate CPD. As mentioned in the implementation guidance, it is important to consider which CPD activities are best suited to each aspect of skill/knowledge development. Not all competencies are best suited to one-off training sessions.

The competencies are organised in line with the Framework's three focus areas – curriculum, curriculum delivery and collaboration. For each competency, the user can provide evidence that the competency is well established in everyday practice or whether there is a need to develop their practice in this area. Based on the responses, decisions can be made as to which competencies should take priority for further development and training.

The Framework details three levels of competencies:

- **Level 1 competencies:** These are for all those in the setting who have direct contact with the young people who attend it.

- **Level 2 competencies:** These are for class and subject teachers (those with QTS who are responsible for delivering the setting's curriculum to classes of young people). These are required in addition to Level 1 competencies.
- **Level 3 competencies:** These are for senior (and possibly middle) managers responsible for policy and practice and for embedding the Ambitious Framework across the setting. These are required in addition to Level 1 and Level 2 competencies.

Curriculum

Curriculum delivery

Collaboration

Level 1

- 1 I am familiar with the setting's quality of life model.
- 2 I am familiar with the setting's universal curriculum.
- 3 I understand my role in enacting the universal curriculum and how this complements others' roles.

Level 2

- 4 I have a secure grasp of the concepts, ideas, and principles in the setting's quality of life model.
- 5 I have secure knowledge of the quality of life curriculum and understand progression in relation to it.
- 6 I understand the common misconceptions young people with autism may have in relation to the curriculum.

Level 3

- 7 I can select/adapt a quality of life model that is suited to the setting.
- 8 I can develop and embed the selected/adapted quality of life model into the setting's universal curriculum.
- 9 I review and develop the efficacy of the quality of life curriculum alongside the efficacy of pedagogical approaches used to enact it.
- 10 I plan and coordinate CPD to ensure the competencies outlined in this framework are developed and maintained.

Curriculum

Curriculum delivery

Collaboration

Level 1

- 11 I afford everyone within the setting with dignity, respect and self-determinism.
- 12 I understand the full range of physical and psychological needs outlined in the iceberg model and the impact they have on behaviour.
- 13 I respond to distress with empathy and work with others to explore and address issues underlying distress.
- 14 I am committed to non-restrictive practice.
- 15 I prioritise the development of positive relationships with the young people I work with and quickly repair ruptures in relationships.

Level 2

- 16 I review and apply pedagogical approaches that are best suited to delivering the curriculum to the young people I teach.
- 17 I use the iceberg model to understand and support the needs of the young people I teach.
- 18 I employ a systematic approach to understanding and supporting behaviours that challenge, using data and hypothesis testing to identify supportive ways forward.

Level 3

- 19 I am knowledgeable about what constitutes high-quality instruction in relation to young people with autism, I disseminate this to staff and review whether this knowledge is being applied effectively.
- 20 I ensure systems, policy and practice promote a culture where mistakes and failures are regarded as an opportunity to grow and learn.
- 21 I organise the school/setting environment to maximise potential to support physical and psychological needs.
- 22 I ensure systems and practices are designed to promote non-restrictive practice and reduce restrictive practice.
- 23 I review all systems, policy and practice (including interventions employed by allied professionals) to ensure that they are compatible with the Ambitious Framework.

Curriculum

Curriculum delivery

Collaboration

Level 1

- 24 I listen to the young people I work with and always take their views and feelings into account.
- 25 I recognise that young people have their own expertise and strengths and support them to develop their own solutions.
- 26 I understand the difference between 'doing to', 'doing for' and 'doing with' and I 'do with'/work with young people, their parents and carers and colleagues.
- 27 I communicate openly and honestly with everyone within the setting's community.
- 28 I keep up to date with the skills and knowledge of my profession and share this readily and in an accessible manner in order to support all aspects of work within the setting.

Level 2

- 29 I take responsibility for supporting all adults who work with young people in my class with the application of the Ambitious Framework.
- 30 I manage curriculum planning and delivery for the young people in my class, ensuring that all interventions complement and support the curriculum.
- 31 I coordinate the sharing of knowledge, skills, experience and interests amongst the young people I teach, their families and other professionals.

Level 3

- 32 I devise and implement systems, policies and procedures that facilitate full participation of the young people in all aspects of setting life.
- 33 I facilitate procedures that allow for effective transdisciplinary working.
- 34 I understand the needs of the families within the setting's community and work with them to ensure, where possible, systems, policies and procedures support their needs.

Screening practice and intervention

The Ambitious Framework provides a core structure for facilitating and developing QoL whilst encouraging settings to utilise the interventions and approaches that are best suited to their specific contexts and the individual students within it.

We strongly recommend that all policy and practice should be reviewed screened to ensure that it:

- affords rights
- is data informed
- is research informed.

Affording rights

When adopting new, or when screening existing, policy and practice, the following questions should be addressed.

How does the policy/practice/intervention:

- support physical and psychological needs to be met?
- afford dignity, respect, and compassion?
- increase inclusion and participation, and support young people to have valued social roles?
- increase skills and opportunities and minimise, and ultimately eliminate, restrictive practices?
- include all stakeholders, and the students themselves?

If the policy/practice/intervention does not actively contribute to the above areas, it does not accord with the Ambitious Framework.

Could the policy/practice/intervention:

- undermine the meeting of physical and psychological needs?
- deny dignity, respect, or compassion?
- lead to exclusion?
- facilitate restrictive practices and denial of liberty?
- exclude the views and involvement of students, parents, or other professionals?

If the answer to any of the above questions is 'yes', the policy/practice/intervention does not accord with the Ambitious Framework.

Being data driven

The Ambitious Framework involves making data-driven decisions. When seeking to understand and meet the needs of students, data-informed decisions should be made using a systemic and systematic approach to data collection. This should involve:

- understanding students' needs and histories
- observing and identifying patterns in behaviour
- consulting with students, their families, teaching staff and support professionals.

Research informed practice

The term Evidence Based Practice (EBP) is widely used within the context of education. However, young people with autism are likely to have very different challenges from one another. Overviews of the research evidence indicate that there is no evidence to suggest that any particular intervention or approach is superior to any other for all students with autism, or that a single intervention will meet the needs of all. This highlights that a range of approaches are needed to suit and address individual needs and preferences.

As research findings cannot give us definitive answers about how to support students with autism, the Ambitious Framework advocates 'research informed' rather than 'research based' practice as this facilitates the use of both research and informed practice to form the evidence base.

Therefore, when developing policy and practice and selecting interventions, practitioners who employ the Ambitious Framework need to consider:

- the research evidence
- the needs and experiences of students
- parental views
- professional judgment across different disciplines
- the experience, capacity, and training requirements of teaching staff.

Case study tool: Exploring impact

Research outlines what are commonly found to be the key ingredients of quality of life, and a shared humanity, provides a good steer as to what constitutes the affordance of dignity, respect and, compassion. However, there is a significant degree of subjectivity involved in these concepts. Therefore, when exploring how impactful our work is in achieving the aims of the Ambitious Framework, we need to seek to do so from the perspective of the young people in the setting.

The case study tool (CST) has been designed to explore the lived experiences of the young people in a setting. It highlights the experiences that young people will have when the Framework is being effectively implemented. In order to demonstrate that a young person is accessing the desired experiences, the people conducting the case study should take care to collate valid and reliable evidence.

It is suggested that the experience, 'I am provided with all of the support needed to help me communicate and express myself', forms the starting point of the case study. If this is not the case, it will be difficult to get a valid and reliable understanding of the lived experience of the child or young person.

Once confident that a child or young person is helped to communicate and express themselves, and/or the people advocating for them are best placed to do so in relation to the case study, it is important that an open and curious stance is adopted and maintained. It can be difficult to set aside our own assumptions and preferences, but it is important to do so.

Individual case study

Curriculum Experience

Curriculum delivery

Collaboration

1 The learning objectives in my lessons, if met, will contribute to my quality of life and increase my capacity to live the life I want

2 My lessons are stimulating and provide the right amount of challenge

3 I make good progress

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Curriculum

Curriculum delivery
Experience

Collaboration

1 I feel physically and psychologically comfortable in school

2 I feel positive about myself as a learner

3 Staff know me well and I enjoy interacting with them

4 Things that motivate and interest me and make me feel happy are not withheld so they can be used for reinforcement

5 I am only restrained/ my liberty is only restricted to prevent harm to me or others

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Curriculum

Curriculum delivery

Collaboration
Experience

I have an up to date individual support programme (ISP) that...

1 is based on my personal quality of life, happiness and well being

2 has targets that reflect my strengths, interests and ambitions

3 all staff can understand and access

4 incorporates the expertise of my family and the professionals who work in the school/ college

5 is implemented by staff who are trained and/or supported to implement it effectively

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Curriculum

Curriculum delivery

Collaboration
Experience

6 I am provided with all of the support needed to help me communicate and express myself

7 My preferences, decisions and choices are actively explored and promoted in relation to all aspects of my school/college life

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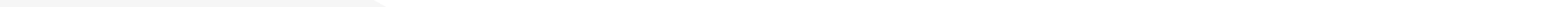
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Part two

Implementing change

Before getting started, it's recommended that you consider how you plan to manage the changes you wish to make. This section provides guidance about implementing the Framework.

Create a leadership environment that is conducive to supporting change

Implementing the Ambitious Framework may involve making a few tweaks to existing practice, embarking on whole scale change, or something in between. Whatever it means for your setting, implementing the Framework will involve implementing change.

It is common for even highly experienced leaders to feel uncomfortable when new approaches are introduced. Asking for new/ different practice and behaviours can require staff to set aside previous, much cherished, practice. This can create tension that, if left unaddressed, can derail the project. Even for those enthused about the Framework, learning a new way of doing things can be challenging. A key role for leaders at these times is to apply and model the Ambitious Framework to help manage these situations.

As the Framework is focused on quality of life, its application across all aspects of a setting's functioning should facilitate this. For example, CPD activities should be designed to help staff feel well supported and trusted to try new things and to learn through their mistakes.

Modelling the Framework during implementation

The implementation process provides an opportunity for members of the community to experience the application of the Framework and for leaders to apply the approach.

The following questions can be used as a guide for thinking about this:

- What knowledge and skills do staff, students and parents need to have or acquire? When do these need to be introduced and how will we monitor whether they have been successfully acquired?
- How can our plans maximise opportunities for autonomy? How might autonomy related issues impact differently on different members of the community? How can we support members with managing any unavoidable impacts?
- How might the changes impact on members of the community's competence? How can we ensure that we match demands with skill level and grow skill levels? How can we help members to temporarily surrender strong feelings of competence (doing it the old way)

and experience satisfaction through recognising growing competence in new ways of working?

- How can we build, protect, and strengthen relationships within the community whilst implementing the changes? What are the risks and opportunities? How are these best addressed?

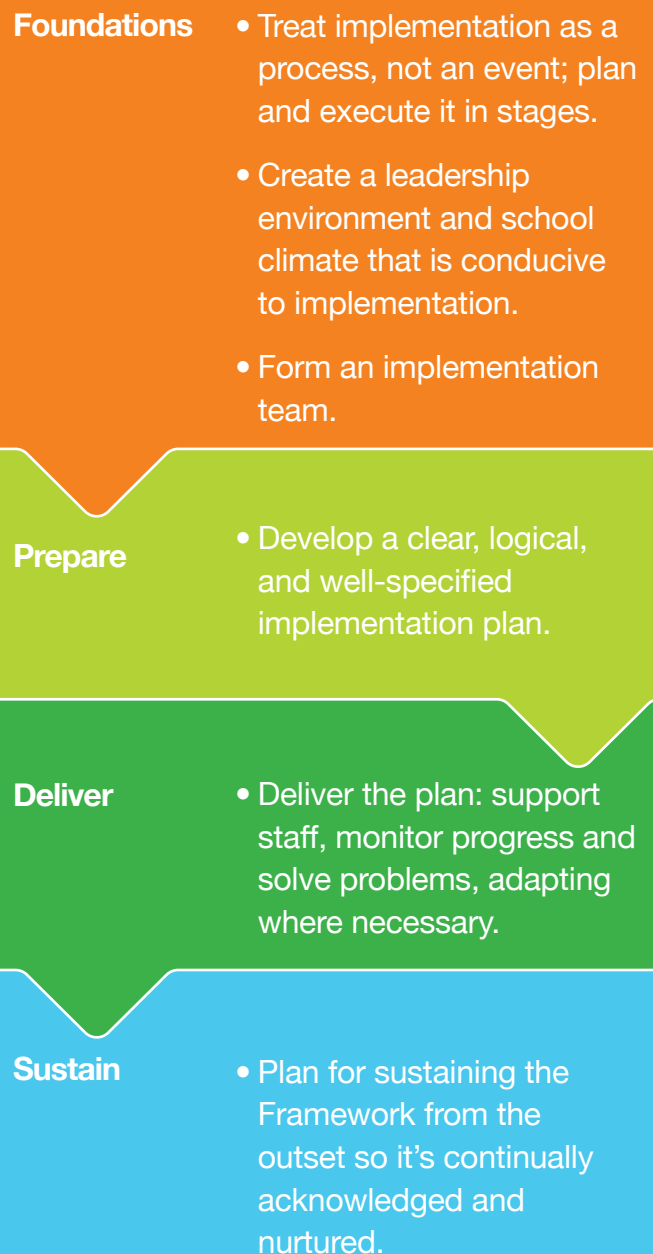
An implementation team

We recommend the very first thing you do is to set up an implementation team. Implementation teams consist of a core group of staff whose task is to 'make it happen'. They are accountable for guiding the overall implementation and should be allocated dedicated time for doing this.

We recommend that the core implementation team is made up of a minimum of three to five people. Other individuals can be invited to participate in implementation team activities from time to time, based on their expertise.

Evidence-led implementation strategy

We recommend the adoption of a four-step implementation plan:



Professional development

Whilst up-front training can play an important role in supporting the implementation of the Framework alone, it's unlikely to be enough to bring about changes in practice. Often, it is only when follow-on support is added to training, in the form of expert coaching or mentoring, that staff can apply their conceptual understanding to practical classroom behaviours. Up-front training is unlikely to be the best vehicle for some aspects of the Framework – for example, keeping a reflexive diary and work discussion groups are both effective methods for implementing an emotion coaching model.

Up-front training

Develop high-quality training to develop an understanding of the Framework and to introduce the necessary skills, knowledge, and strategies. The training should:

- provide opportunities for staff to reflect on their existing beliefs and practice and how these may be challenged by the new approach. Introduce challenge, conveyed in a non-threatening manner.
- make the learning experiences interactive; include learning through meaningful discussion and reflection, demonstration of skills, deliberate practice, and feedback.
- use of a range of media and delivery approaches.

Follow-on supporting activities

Up-front training should be supplemented with opportunities within the setting that build on and reflect the ideas introduced in the training.

Provide coaching that:

- offers support in a constructive, collaborative manner
- helps staff take control of their professional development, while at the same time providing appropriate challenge.

Coaches should be engaging in the following activities:

- encouraging coachees to deliberately practice specific skills and apply what they have learnt by experimenting in the classroom
- reflecting with coaches on the success of this experimentation and what can be improved next time
- observing classroom practice and providing actionable feedback on performance and implementation
- providing ongoing moral support and encouragement.

Next steps

Once settings have identified how they will create an environment that will support change, alongside who will be leading on change management, focused action plans can be developed.

Action planning

We recommended that you apply the Ambitious Framework principles of being data driven and research informed to your efforts to effect change. Undertaking action research projects to address areas for improvement, as identified through the self-review, is an effective way of doing this.

The Ambitious Framework action research cycle

Action research is an enquiry method that helps settings to interrogate, reflect and improve practice. It involves undertaking a cycle of enquiry, action and evaluation.



Step 1: Conduct the self-review

- An implementation team can be set up in advance of, or immediately following the self-review.

Step 2: Identify the focus

- Identify gaps in current practice.
- Develop a clear picture of where you want to be what success will look like.

Step 3: Plan and implement your intervention

- Define your outcome goals so that they are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time Bound).
- Write short term and long-term goals that are observable and therefore measurable.
- Identify which strategies will most efficiently and effectively get you to your desired goals.
- Write strategies into an action plan with aligned goals, steps resources, timeline and communication plans.

Step 4: Gather and analyse data

- Review implementation to ensure the plan is being implemented with fidelity and that it is having the desired impact on student outcomes.
- Determine whether goals have been met or adequate progress has been made.
- Respond by re-visiting previous steps or beginning the process again with revised targets.

Step 5: Evaluate results

- Determine whether the intervention has taken practice to where you want it to be.

Step 6: Take informed action

- Decide whether you need to further develop practice in this area or change focus to another area for development.

Curriculum design and assessment guidance

This section provides guidance about revising or developing the curriculum within your setting in order to ensure that you use a systematic approach to supporting learning in relation to quality of life.

A universal curriculum that focuses on enabling quality of life is a fundamental component of the Ambitious Framework. Settings adopting this framework will have (or develop) a very clear understanding of the knowledge and skills that facilitate quality of life and that every young person who attends

the setting should expect to be able to leave with. As a result of being clear about what you aim for all students to achieve, a core quality of life curriculum can be developed that provides a framework for supporting progress and attainment.

Developing the quality of life curriculum

Stage 1: Establish QoL model

- Adopt, adapt or create a quality of life model that is suited to the setting.
- From the model, identify strands (areas of skills/knowledge) from which learning can be planned.

Stage 2: Establish the universal offer

- Identify achievable, ambitious long term objectives for each strand that specify what is hoped every student will achieve by the time they leave the setting.
- Identify the skills and knowledge needed to achieve the long term objectives.

Stage 3: Plan for continuity and progression

- Review your existing curriculum to identify gaps (where the identified skills and knowledge are, or are not, already being taught).
- Map new content - what needs to be taught and when?
- Map what will be assessed and when.

Stage 4: Embed the QoL curriculum in the whole setting curriculum

- Embed new content into existing curriculum.
- Develop schemes of work and differentiated lesson plans.
- Deliver the new curriculum (see next set of guidance).

Step 1: Defining quality of life

The first step in developing your setting's quality of life curriculum involves identifying a quality of life model that is suited to your setting. Quality of life models differ in relation to the aspects they focus upon (see Appendices for examples). When selecting your model, it is important to consider:

- Who is the author? What is their expertise and experience?
- Are they qualified to comment on this issue?
- How does their theory fit the available evidence/other theories?
- Is this model well suited to the community we cater for?
- Is the model comprehensive enough to facilitate quality of life and simple enough to implement/work with?
- Can we benchmark our model against established models and measures of quality of life in order to address validity issues?
- Does the model provide a good fit with the vision for this setting?

Step 2: Establishing the universal offer and the end goals for each quality of life domain

Once the quality of life model has been identified, you will need to consider the aspirations of your setting for its students with regard to each of your quality of life strands. Once a list of long-term objectives is produced, destination knowledge and skills can be identified.

Step 3: Planning for continuity and progression

Once you are clear about the knowledge and skills needed to achieve the long-term objectives, you can review your existing curriculum to explore whether some, all, or none of your quality of life curriculum is already being provided. It is likely that content within existing subjects such as PSHE, science, enterprise, life skills etc. may already be providing curriculum coverage of some or all of your QoL curriculum.

If you identify aspects of your QoL curriculum that are not already being delivered, this content needs to be sequenced and mapped to facilitate continuity of progress across each year of learning. Simultaneously, what will be assessed and when, will also need to be mapped so that assessment can provide information about supporting progress and the effectiveness of teaching.

Step 4: Embed the quality of life curriculum within the whole setting curriculum

The new content needs to be embedded in the whole curriculum of the setting. Decisions need to be made about developing new, timetabled subjects or building your new topics in to existing subjects; the risks and benefits of both need to be assessed. Once you have done this, schemes of work and differentiated lesson plans can be developed.

Developing the quality of life curriculum: worked example for mainstream secondary

Step 1: Defining quality of life

We developed our own Quality of Life model (see fig 1). It was developed from combining Robert Schalock’s Quality of Life model with the Department for Education’s Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) model.

The reasoning underpinning this was to combine our existing work on PfA with a quality of life framework that has already been successfully applied in a range of educational settings.

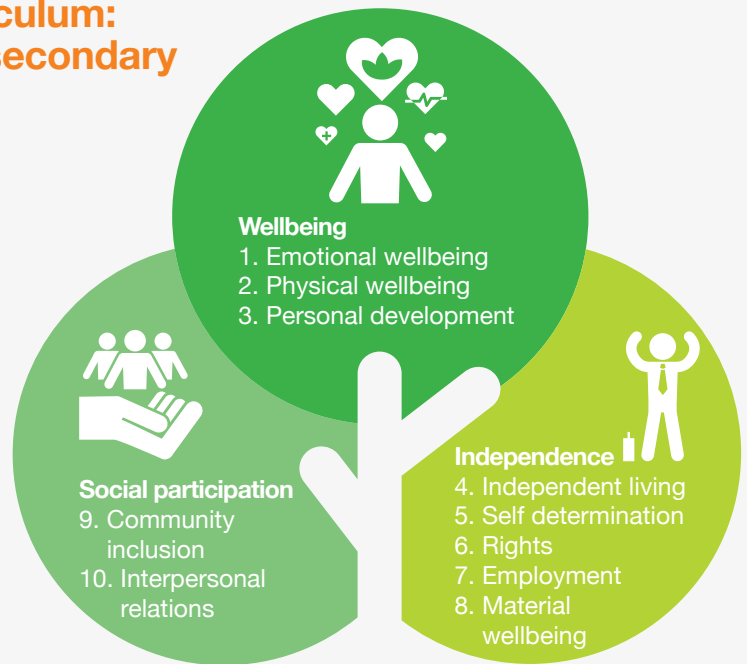


Figure 1: Our quality of life model

Step 2: Establishing the universal offer

The topics that needed to be focused on for each strand were identified. Destination goals for each topic were produced to describe what we aim for all of our students to achieve by the time they leave us in Year 11.

Strand	Topic	Long term objective:
1 Emotional wellbeing	Attending to emotions	Maximising positive emotions by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> actively planning to do what makes you happy. <hr/> Attending to negative emotions by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using a framework to address them (identifying whether your thinking, behaviour or environment needs to change) seeking help when it is needed.
	Wellbeing of others	Supporting the emotional wellbeing of others by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> considering differing perspective when interacting with others being thoughtful about the needs and interests of others.
	Healthy friendships	Setting friendship boundaries by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> taking responsibility for your own feelings and actions understanding influencing behaviours not taking responsibility for the feelings and actions of others.

Figure 2: Strand 1 end goals

The long-term objectives were used to identify the skills and knowledge that need to be acquired in order to achieve the objectives. Figure 3 shows the skills and knowledge required for successful completion of Strand 1.

Figure 3: Strand 1 knowledge (K) and skills (S)

Strand	Knowledge (6)	Skills (12)
1 Emotional wellbeing (EWB)	Being aware of the six universal emotions (EWB K1)	Being aware of own feelings/ being able to label own feelings (EWB S1)
		Being able to express own feelings (EWB S2)
	Being aware of physiological manifestations of emotions (EWC K2)	Being able to talk about own feelings (EWB S3)
	Happiness can be planned for (EWB K3)	Time management and action planning for happiness (EWB S4)
	Understanding the relationship between thought, emotions and environment and how they impact upon each other (EWB K4)	Separating thoughts and feelings (EWB S5)
		Identifying environmental factors influencing emotions (EWB S6)
		Using a CBT framework to change thoughts and feelings (EWB S7)
		Using a CBT framework to address problems in your environment (EWB S8)
	Understanding how to gain access to emotional support (EWB K5)	Identifying people who can support you (EWB S9)
		Identifying how and when to approach people for support (EWB S10)
	Understand the positive and negative impact that you can have on others and others can have on you. (EWB K6)	Taking different perspectives to consider how your actions and intentions can be interpreted differently by others (EWB S11)
		Considering the pros and cons of changing your own behaviour when appropriate and taking ownership and addressing own behaviour when it impacts negatively on others and their own feelings and emotions (EWB S12)

Step 3: Planning for continuity and progression

We explored where the identified knowledge and skills were already being taught in our existing curriculum. Whilst some aspects of other strands were already covered through our existing curriculum, Strand 1 had some existing coverage, we decided that it would be beneficial to our students to have a more comprehensive and strategic focus on this area. So, we decided to consider all of the required knowledge and skills ‘new content to be delivered’.

Curriculum and assessment maps were produced for each topic in order to support continuity and progression. Figure 4 provides an example of the curriculum map for Strand 1 and Figure 5 provides an example of the assessment map for Strand 1.

Topic 1	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11
Attending to emotions	Seven universal emotions and their expression	Physiological manifestations	Emotions diary keeping	Planning for happiness	Accessing help
			The iceberg model	Hot cross bun mapping	Formulating and addressing issues
Wellbeing of others	Seven universal emotions and their expression	Observing emotions in others	Making inferences – the dos and don'ts	Offering and seeking help	
Healthy friendships	Characteristics of positive friendships	Maintaining positive friendships	Influencing powers	Coercion and manipulation	Managing emotional boundaries

Figure 4: Curriculum map: Strand 1

	Attending to emotions	Wellbeing of others	Healthy friendships
Yr 11	Can map environmental factors on to formulations (S8) Uses formulations to address anger and anxiety (S7)	Understands healthy boundaries with regard informal support that can be offered and sought (S10)	Can separate own emotions and behaviours from others (reject responsibility for others emotions/ emotional reactions) (K6)
Yr 10	Can map feelings, behaviours and sensations in relation to a given emotional challenge (Hot Cross Bun Formulation) (S5) Plans weekly happiness inducing activities (S4, K3, K4)	Knows how to access support from personal networks and external services (K5, S9)	Understands ethical issues relating to influence and manipulation (S12)
Yr 9	Can produce a comprehensive iceberg model (S6) Can produce a feelings diary (S1, S2, S3)	Making inferences about the behaviour of others – the benefits and risks (K6)	Can differentiate between manipulative behaviors and influencing behaviours (S11)
Yr 8	Can list contrasting physiological manifestations of the seven emotions (K2)	Understands the iceberg model and how it relates to relationships (K6)	Can identify maintaining and fracturing behaviours (K6)
Yr 7	Can name seven universal emotions (K1)	Can match emotions to facial expressions (Eckman model) (K6)	Can name characteristics of positive friendships (K6)

Figure 5: Assessment map: Strand 1

Step 4: Embed the quality of life curriculum within the whole setting curriculum

We did not have enough ‘space’ in the timetable to include an additional subject, so we decided to embed the new content into existing subjects. We were aware of the risks of the topics being diluted or neglected due to locating them within existing subjects. We sought to manage this risk by providing training and coaching for the staff tasked with delivering the new content.

At the beginning of this project (adopting the Ambitious Framework), we formed an

implementation team. This team provided information, support and training for all staff. In order to support the staff who were involved in delivering the new curriculum content, they were given draft schemes of work and lesson plans. These were developed by the implementation team for them to use as starting points. Time to review these was incorporated in to the active learning activities within the training sessions, and further support with their development and execution was provided through the coaching.

Effective curriculum delivery guidance

This section provides guidance about the effective delivery of the quality of life curriculum and includes guidance relating to managing behaviours that challenge.

Impactful, high quality teaching is a key feature of the Ambitious Framework to facilitating quality of life. Empirical research tells us that quality of teaching is an important factor in determining progress in student achievement. This is true even after we take into consideration prior student learning and family background characteristics. Pedagogical content knowledge lies at the heart of impactful, high quality teaching. It refers to the specialised knowledge of teachers in creating and facilitating effective teaching and learning environments for all students. The most effective teachers have deep knowledge of the subjects they teach as well as specialist knowledge of how people learn.

Components of great teaching

The common components that improve student outcomes can be regarded as a 'starter kit' for thinking about effective teaching and learning. Good quality teaching will involve a combination of these attributes:

Content knowledge

The most effective teachers have deep knowledge of the subjects they teach, and when teachers' knowledge falls below a certain level it is a significant impediment to students' learning. As well as a strong

understanding of the material being taught, teachers must also understand the ways students think about the content, be able to evaluate the thinking behind students' own methods and identify students' common misconceptions.

Quality of instruction

The most effective teachers engage in high quality instruction. They use elements such as effective questioning and use of assessment and specific practices such as: reviewing previous learning, providing model responses for students, giving adequate time for practice to embed skills securely and progressively introducing new learning ('scaffolding').

Classroom climate

Effective teachers create a classroom climate that has high expectations whilst still recognising and promoting students' self-worth. This involves attributing student success to effort and strategy rather than ability, and valuing resilience as opposed to 'failure'.

Autism-specific curriculum delivery

The above components of great teaching apply to the teaching of all young people, including those with autism. However, young people with autism can have some atypical ways of thinking and some additional sensitivity to the world around them.

Therefore, the Ambitious Framework advocates that teachers who teach young people with autism develop enhanced pedagogical knowledge relating to autism.

How this can be achieved:

- Ensure qualified teachers plan and deliver the curriculum (see following chapter about working collaboratively and involving others in curriculum planning and delivery).
- Create a culture where staff actively seek feedback and opportunities to grow and learn (growth mindset).
- Provide ongoing, effective CPD for teachers.
- Monitor the impact of teaching and make changes where needed.

Managing behaviour that challenges

An appropriate curriculum, alongside effective curriculum delivery, goes a long way towards promoting behaviours that are conducive to learning. It is unusual for behaviours that challenge to arise when a person's needs are met. When people find themselves in environments that support and nurture their physical and psychological needs, this promotes:

- positive emotions
- optimal experience
- healthy development.

A needs-based model of understanding behaviour

Behaviour that challenges is visible, unlike the needs that underpin them. In seeking to improve quality of life, the Ambitious Framework involves attending to the feelings and needs that underlie behaviour, not just the behaviour itself. An iceberg provides a useful metaphor for this; the behaviour that challenges can be seen above the water, whilst the needs are invisible and lay beneath the surface.



Figure 6

Being able to identify young peoples' needs and to help them to manage their emotions is imperative for their wellbeing and progression. Doing so will enable them to learn how to identify their own needs and move on to regulating their emotions independently.

The importance of the environment

People's needs are either fulfilled or frustrated by their environment. The environment can serve to nurture and enrich individuals, and facilitate development, but can also disrupt and thwart, leading to less optimal development, disharmony, defiance, developmental regression or alienation. Therefore, when thinking about challenging behaviour, we need to explore underlying needs and causal environmental factors.

Physical needs

Unmet physical needs that often negatively influence a young person's behaviour in settings are:

- hunger
- tiredness
- feeling unsafe
- over stimulation
- under stimulation.

Hunger and tiredness

Physical needs can impact how we function, even when they are only moderately challenged. It's not uncommon for us to fail to recognise that a need isn't being met. Often, we do not link unwanted behaviour to unmet physical needs - the work done by our nervous systems to identify and respond to our physical needs happens outside of conscious awareness. Therefore, it is important to seek to ensure learners are rested, hydrated and well-fed and that they learn to recognise and attend to these physical needs.

Feeling unsafe

Our fight or flight response (acute stress response) can easily be triggered. Whilst designed to respond to life-threatening situations, our threat detection systems, that prepare the body with a flood of adrenaline, can be triggered by non-life-threatening events. Events that lead to feelings of humiliation, shame or anxiety can trigger a flood of stress hormones that cause:

- loss of ability to communicate effectively
- loss of judgment, critical thinking, and problem-solving ability
- impaired hearing.

Therefore, when learners become agitated it is important to consider whether they are displaying a stress response in response to feeling unsafe (physically or emotionally). If a stress response has been triggered, it is important to allow a period of time for the hormones to dissipate, up until this time it is unlikely that the young person will be able to think critically, or problem solve. Over time, young people can learn to self-regulate their emotions through learning to recognise when a stress response is occurring and by helping them to recognise their personal stress triggers and to manage their response to enable reasoned thinking to take place.

Sensory over and under stimulation

Whilst sights, sounds, food, touch, and movement can be pleasurable and life enhancing, over or under-stimulation can lead to behaviour that challenges. What equates to an 'optimal level' of sensory stimulation varies for different people, as does tolerance for sub-optimal levels of stimulation. As with other physical needs, we are often not consciously aware when distress is attributable to an intolerable level of stimulation. It is important that educational

settings attend to the environment in order to control, as far as possible, the levels of sensory stimulation provided at any one point in time and that ‘calming’ spaces can be provided when needed.

Psychological needs

Just as is the case with physical needs, unmet psychological needs often negatively influence a young person’s behaviour in a setting. The psychological needs that influence a young person’s behaviour at the setting are the need for:

- autonomy
- competence
- relatedness.

Autonomy

We have a psychological need to be able to decide whether to engage in activities and for these decisions to be guided by our interests, preferences and wants. Whilst early years settings usually expect young children to struggle with engaging in activities that are not of their choosing, as a society, we expect children to learn to cope with a lack of autonomy in many different contexts. In order to work effectively, our society requires everybody, at times, to engage in activities that do not reflect our interests, preferences and wants. As a result, the need for autonomy (and the cumulative impact that denial can have), is often ignored or overlooked.

In order to make educational settings safe and effective, many situations do not allow for all members of the community to take autonomous action at any one point in time. Different young people will have differing capacity to manage situations where they do not have autonomy. And those who do

struggle often do so when their need for autonomy is compromised in other settings too. The Ambitious Framework involves creating as many opportunities to exercise the need for autonomy during the day at their educational setting and to, as far as possible, limit practices that undermine autonomy. It also involves building capacity and tolerance to manage situations where autonomy is limited.

Competence

We have a psychological need to be effective in our interactions with the environment. It is interrelated with the need for autonomy because we experience feelings of competence when we can successfully engage in activities of our choosing. Providing an appropriate (and relevant) curriculum and delivering it effectively (matching skill level and challenge level), enables learners to be effective and competent. When skill level and challenge level are not matched, the need for competence is not met and a range of unwanted feelings and associated unwanted behaviour can arise as illustrated below in Figure 7.

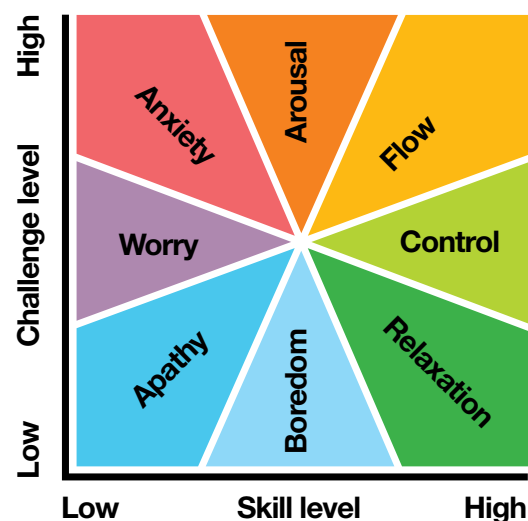


Figure 7

The Ambitious Framework guidance about curriculum design and assessment is relevant to ensuing skill level and challenge is appropriately matched.

Relatedness

We have a psychological need to connect to those around us and to establish close emotional bonds and attachments with other people. Strong emotional bonds and attachments are not essential in every context, so long as we do experience them.

However, in a regular place of work or education, in order function successfully, we need to feel ‘seen, safe, secure and soothed’. This means that young people need:

- to feel safe with staff: protected from physical and emotional harm
- to feel ‘seen’ by staff: staff notice and acknowledge them as an individual – their likes and dislikes, their fears and their hopes
- to feel soothed by staff: staff help them manage difficulties and challenges, so they are not overwhelmed
- to feel secure: ruptures in relationships with staff are temporary and quickly get repaired.

How this can be achieved

From reading the above, hopefully it is clear that the Ambitious Framework to addressing behaviour that challenges, focuses on meeting unmet need. There is a strong proactive element that involves trying to ensure needs are met and that young people develop a level of resilience that will assist them when encountering unmet needs. There is also a reactive element, which involves addressing issues relating to unmet needs as and when this occurs.

The Ambitious Framework focuses on

enabling young people to support and manage their own behaviour. Initially, this may involve the adult managing and modelling how the young person should navigate their way through behaviours that challenge (or behaviours that communicate unmet needs). But this process should lead to better self-regulation and management.

Proactive action

Creating a nurturing and enriching environment:

- Review the physical environment to explore issues relating to physical needs (e.g. acoustics, lighting, space).
- Explore travel times to the education setting, instigating a breakfast club if appropriate, and review the timetable to ensure appropriate nourishment is provided when needed.
- Work in partnership with parents to help ensure young people are well nourished and hydrated at home and that positive sleep hygiene practices are utilised.
- Review policy and practice to actively seek to provide as many opportunities for autonomy as possible.
- Review teaching and assessment processes so plan for a good balance between levels of challenge and skill level.
- Actively seek to develop a culture that values and places a significant emphasis on relationships between students and staff. Even education settings that implement strict behaviour codes can ensure that they appoint and retain staff who implement it with warmth and sensitivity.

Developing knowledge and skills:

- Review the curriculum to ensure that the young people in your setting are taught:
 1. about physical and psychological needs
 2. to 'listen' to their needs and recognise when their needs are not met
 3. productive ways of managing their needs
 4. appropriate ways of managing difficult feelings and emotions.
- The above knowledge and skills can be built in to your PSHE or QoL curriculum.

Adapting the environment to meet individual need:

- The section above addresses a universal approach to meeting needs. Some young people will require additional and different intervention to ensure their needs are met. Listening to the young people concerned and working closely with their parents/carers and other staff/professionals, is important for ensuring that their needs are met.
- It's also important to note that for some young people with attachment-related difficulties, mental health needs and/or past traumatic experiences, behaviours that challenge can relate to past experiences of unmet needs being re-lived, as opposed to an unmet need in a given moment. When the recollection (that can happen without conscious awareness) triggers a stress response, it's important for the young person and those around them to attend to this.
- The section about collaborative working provides guidance about working

effectively with young people, their parents and carers and the internal and external professionals involved in offering support.

Reactive action

The Ambitious Framework involves adopting an emotion-coaching model for supporting young people who experience distress when their needs are not met:

Acknowledge:

- Both to yourself, to the young person and to those around you, that the behaviour that challenges is occurring because the young person is distressed and has unmet needs.

Empathise:

- Connect with the young person by trying to identify how they are feeling and by labelling the emotion. Do not make assumptions (e.g. "I can see you're upset" – this might alienate the young person as they may consider themselves to be angry not upset). Instead comment on what you see and wonder aloud or ask questions (e.g. "I can see you're kicking the wall and shouting, which makes me think you are feeling very angry. Is this because you are being made to do something you don't want to do? I would be feeling that way too if I was made to do something I really didn't want to do.").
- If there is conflict, actively seek to stay connected with the young person in some way. It's important to not seek to correct the young person until they feel as though there is empathy for them, and their feelings have been understood (N.B. this does not mean condoning the behaviour or expressing that the behaviour was understandable, justified or not justified).

Set limits:

- While you are validating the emotion, let the child know that certain behaviours cannot be accepted. It's important to separate the emotion and the behaviour (e.g. "I understand that you're angry about what happened, but we can't let you do that even though you are feeling angry because it's not safe/upsets others/stops others from learning").
- If a significant stress response has occurred, it may be sensible to give the young person a quiet and calming space to retreat to. Until the stress hormones dissipate, an incident that would not normally upset the young person could easily trigger another significant stress response.

Exploration and problem solving:

- Work with the child or young person to reflect on what they did and what they can do differently in the future. Discuss the situation that elicited the emotions in a non-judgemental manner.
- Use the iceberg model to consider what the unmet needs were.
- Discuss how the overwhelming feelings were expressed and how else they could be expressed.
- Agree a plan of action.
- Always offer reparation activities as soon as possible – regardless of how shocking the behaviour may have been, ruptures in relationships will act as a barrier to moving forward.
- Where appropriate, make adaptations to the environment (see 'Adapting the environment to meet individual need' above).

Non-verbal and complex learning needs

Although the above approach features the use of verbal strategies such as labelling and discussing, this framework is not the preserve of the verbal or cognitively able. Non-verbal and cognitively impaired young people experience the same needs as everybody else and their needs should be centred in the same way as those of the verbal and cognitively able. Behaviours that challenge provide clear communication that needs are not being met and the above steps should still be taken, however, more hypothesising and collaboration with others will need to be undertaken in order to make sense of the young person's experiences.

Restrictive practice

The content of this guidance makes it clear that a needs-led approach to managing behaviours that challenge conflicts with approaches that involve restricting the options of young people (e.g. segregation and restraint). However, when behaviours that challenge place a young person and/or others in danger, and where less intrusive (i.e. non-physical) reactive strategies have been unsuccessful in redirecting the behaviour, staff may need to use physical interventions in order to keep a young person or others safe. This requires trained staff to use interventions that are clearly described in a setting's Positive Handling Plan. Physical intervention strategies should only be used as a last resort and when all non-physical strategies have been demonstrated to be unsuccessful. All staff who work with young people who may need positive handling must complete training prior to working with the young people.

Staff

For an approach such as emotion-coaching to work, all staff need to be practising it all the time. School leaders need to consider how this can become ingrained through the whole setting. Training, staff meetings, induction of new colleagues, the involvement of parents/carers and the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of pedagogical approaches all help to embed this.

However, when working in an emotional environment, such as an educational setting, remaining calm, strategic and professional can be challenging. Therefore, as a member

of staff, it's important to practice the emotion-coaching approach alone and with colleagues. Many teachers are familiar with the powerful, embodied feelings of stress or panic that can arise on occasion, despite our best efforts to resist them - traumatised young people often have a way of making those around them feel the same state of hyper-arousal. This is known as “secondary trauma” or “toxic stress”. These feelings can be detrimental to a person’s health if not managed properly. Staff need to be able to recognise and manage when their feelings become difficult to manage. To do so they need ongoing training and support to help them to manage these challenges.

Proactive ideas for supporting autonomy

	Do	Don't
Explanatory rationales	<p>Communicate the value, worth, meaning, utility or importance of engaging.</p> <hr/> <p>Explain why the request is truly worth the other’s time and effort.</p>	<p>Fail to explain why engaging is worthwhile e.g. stating “just get it done” or “do it because I told you to do it”.</p>
Listen empathically	<p>Seek to understand why the young person is struggling.</p> <hr/> <p>Use flexible, non-controlling and informational language.</p>	<p>Use pressuring language or try to motivate by inducing feelings of guilt, shame and anxiety (e.g. “you should try harder” or “everyone else has managed to...”).</p> <hr/> <p>Expect the person to have insight in to what is underpinning their behaviour (e.g. “you must know why”, “if you don’t tell me why you did it, I can’t help you”).</p>
Display patience	<p>Give time and space to explore better ways of behaving.</p> <hr/> <p>Do a lot of listening, perspective taking and postpone giving advice.</p>	<p>Impatiently rush in, take over and show the other person what to do or how to solve the problem.</p>
Acknowledge and accept expressions of negative affect	<p>Listen carefully to the expression of unmet need and accept them as reactions to unmet needs.</p> <hr/> <p>Work collaboratively with the young person to solve the underlying cause of the negative affect and resistance.</p>	<p>Assert power to by focusing on the unacceptability of the expression of unmet need and make controlling statements (e.g. “you have to do as I say or...” Or, “If you don’t stop that right now I will...”).</p>

Proactive ideas for supporting competence

	Do	Don't
Challenge level	Match the level of the challenge with the skill level of the young person.	Seek to alleviate anxiety by providing tasks well within the skill level.
Structure	Ensure that the task is structured and sequenced in a way that enables the young person to move through the required stages.	Break the task down in to sections without contextualising how the sections relate to the end goal.
Feedback	Ensure the task is designed to provide effective feedback or ensure someone can provide developmental and motivational feedback when it is needed.	Provide person-focused feedback (e.g. "you are clever" or "you must try harder"). Instead, give feedback about the specific actions taken (e.g. "by noticing the two images were different you were able to").
Failure	Welcome errors and mistakes, pointing out how analysing them help us learn.	Unwittingly give messages that failure is bad/problematic by avoiding it or minimising it.

Proactive ideas for supporting relatedness

	Do	Don't
Safe	Create a positive classroom environment and respond calmly at all times.	Allow behaviours that instill feelings of shame, guilt, or anxiety.
Seen	Explore the interests and preferences of the young people you teach.	Make assumptions and inferences about young people's motivations (e.g. "I know you are trying to wind me/X up").
Soothed	Empathise - acknowledge when a young person is struggling. Help them label the feelings and communicate that you understand the struggle.	Brush over difficulties or pretend they are not happening. Do not 'trump' the young person's feelings by emphasising your own.
Secure	Keep communication clear, direct, and warm. Address 'ill feelings' as soon as possible after a relationship rupture (a fracture in a normally stable/positive way of relating).	Say "I'm still angry with you" or "don't think you can simply do X and that will put it right, I'm not going to forgive you that easily".

Collaboration guidance

This section provides guidance about working collaboratively with young people, their families and with other professionals.

Most education settings recognise the value and importance of working collaboratively with the young people who attend their settings, as well as with their parents/ carers, colleagues, and other professionals. The word ‘partnership’ tends to conjure up images of sharing, mutuality, and reciprocity. However, in practice ‘partnerships’ can be unequal due to power imbalances. In order to partner, young people and their families need to be placed at the core of a setting; this may require a culture shift and significant attention needing to be given to existing policy and practice.

Within the Ambitious Framework, collaboration and partnership involves being person-centred and ‘doing with’. This means putting young people and their families at the heart of the setting and enabling them to feel able to speak about what is important to them and, crucially, acting upon this.

Collaboration with young people

A person-centred approach (PCA) focuses on demonstrating to young people that they belong in a setting; that they are listened to, respected, valued and cared for. Achieving this involves helping young people to learn how to express their views, to make choices and to listen and tailor support to the needs of each individual.

Effective delivery of the quality of life curriculum and implementation of an emotion coaching approach can go a long way towards achieving this. In addition, attention needs to be given to ensuring systems and practices in the setting facilitate full participation in all aspects of educational life.

Engagement activity

Type of ‘partnership’

Consultation: seeking responses to pre-set questions, strategies, or services.

Doing to

Participation: seeking involvement in meetings to share views and experiences and contribute to the debate.

Doing for

Co-production: seeking to jointly produce agree plans, actions, and materials as a collective.

Doing with

To achieve this, ongoing effort needs to be given to ensuring that all the young people in the setting:

- are listened to and whose views and feelings are taken into account
- participate actively and equally in education-setting life as valued partners who play an important role in making things better
- are surrounded by adults who promote their independence and enable them to do things for themselves, wherever possible.

Enabling young people to fully participate requires staff values to be anchored in the belief that young people have their own expertise and strengths, are resourceful, and have the capacity to develop their own solutions with the appropriate support. It requires a willingness from staff to share their power and trust in the young people they teach.

The Framework requires staff to:

- Go beyond listening to really hear what young people have to say. In order to share potentially difficult things, children and young people need to feel trusted, valued and accepted – that they will not be blamed for saying something difficult. In order to hear these potentially difficult things, adults must be genuinely curious about what the young person has to say.
- Identify young people's strengths, abilities and good qualities and encourage them to share their interests, preferences, hopes and ambitions. At the same time there is a need to be honest and realistic about the difficulties and barriers they face.

- Be reflective and open to 'getting things wrong', learning new things and the potential for them to overlook their position of power.

Collaboration with parents

Effective communication and engagement with parents and carers are vital to ensuring that the young person is placed at the centre of provision to meet their needs. Therefore, settings need to identify strategies that are effective in supporting parental engagement, particularly for those parents and carers who are not significantly involved in their children's education.

Communication is at the heart of effective parental participation. Regular, honest and open communication is essential to support the development of trust. Working together effectively requires all parties to listen to each other and to consider and respect each other's views.

The Framework requires staff to:

- employ listening skills that match talking skills when interacting with parents. It's just as important to effectively communicate with parents, as it is with young people.
- understand the barriers to effective parental engagement and how they can be broken down
- have regular meetings with parents and carers where communication is honest and open
- recognise the realities of life for parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) when setting meetings and communication times

- use plain language as far as possible
 - cutting out jargon and bureaucratic language.

Despite the application of the above skills/ actions, it may be difficult to engage some parents due to a range of specific barriers. The table below highlights some common barriers and provides suggestions as to efforts that can be undertaken to address them.

It is important for a member of staff to take the role of parental engagement champion; someone whom parents trust and who will set the tone of the relationship between the setting and parents. Parent champions need to meet parents and carers regularly to discuss relevant issues and represent the parental viewpoint in situations where parents and carers are not present.

Barriers

Suggestions

Parental belief that, once in school, the setting takes over responsibility of their child's education.

Providing clear evidence of the positive impact partnership has on young people.

Parental doubts about their ability to help their children.

Share stories/case studies of how parents 'like them' have made significant differences.

Parental belief that ability is fixed, and that ability will determine outcomes regardless of parental engagement.

Provide information about the impact of fixed and growth mindsets.

Family circumstances e.g. single parents with younger children, caring responsibilities, working full time.

Be flexible about timings of meetings. Offer home visits where possible/desirable.

Psychological resources of parents.

Recognising the vulnerability and arranging for an ally to participate with the parent. The parent champion has a strong role to play here.

Differences in perceptions about abilities, needs and/or placement.

Invite open discussion and explore different perceptions. Acknowledge the differences/ concerns and anxieties and the difficulties this presents. Create a climate where this can be talked about.

Collaboration with other professionals/disciplines

When working with young people with complex needs, assessment and intervention is rarely best delivered within a single professional field. However, involving a range of professionals can also result in overlapping, contradictory or confusing opinions and uncoordinated services to families. As a result, when a young person requires support from a range of professionals, the Ambitious Framework recommends trans-disciplinary working is used.

Trans-disciplinary working involves putting together a team of professionals relevant to a young person and their family's specific needs. A primary practitioner is selected for each family, who relies on the support and consultation provided by professional colleagues.

The purpose of the team is to:

- provide a holistic service that works with a young person and their family as a cohesive whole
- build a consistent and coherent intervention program
- provide a service that can be adapted to the needs and priorities of the family
- reduce the burden on the family – they do not need to approach each professional separately
- reduced confusion - different, and contradictory opinions from the different professionals are addressed within the team.

The Framework requires:

- intensive dialogue, regular communication, and a high level of partnership among team members.
- transparency and exposure.
- spending time together in order to develop appropriate working relations based on trust and respect.
- encouraging the expression of ideas, welcoming questions, and discussing dilemmas together.
- systematic communication in face-to-face conversations, written and electronic communication. Good communication skills are required for listening, interviewing, clarifying, and training.
- expertise with up-to-date know-how and skills in the field.
- recognising and knowing the unique features of each profession.
- a willingness and desire to share knowledge and learn the skills of the different professions in the team from each other.
- letting go of roles (not adhering to the accepted professional role), and flexibility of roles and responsibilities. The ability to accept that others can do what skilled professionals do, under professional guidance and supervision.
- team members identifying conflicts and viewing them as opportunities for new ideas and creativity. Team members should not waste time on power struggles and safeguarding their “territory”.
- recognition of the parents' expertise and decision-making authority when it comes to their child.

- addressing ethical issues - working in a transdisciplinary team raises issues such as who is qualified to perform which interventions, ie. how a professional from one discipline supervises the implementation of an intervention they have designed, that is then delivered by a professional from another discipline.
- an investment of time and money to allow for the above. A budgetary allocation to pay for the hours needed – this way of working takes time.

Appendices

(Quality of life models)

Alborz, 2017

		Contextual aspect
Autonomy: self-actualisation	<p>Aspiration/personal development</p> <p>Self-actualisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employing personal talents Following interests <p>Self-realisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> having self-awareness/self-knowledge <p>Self determination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pursuing own choices/goals/aspirations <p>Self-regulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintaining efforts to reach goals <p>Environmental ease</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> gaining pleasure/ comfort from one's surroundings 	<p>Empowerment</p> <p>Education and learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> freedom to investigate/research access to education <p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> access to education <p>Personal services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> support to pursue aspirations
	<p>Self esteem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> stable positive evaluation of self/competence perceived high reputation/prestige <p>Self-respect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> perceived personal adequacy/competence self-worth/perceived usefulness in the world <p>Community status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accepted community member Valued community member/prestige 	<p>Rights/norms</p> <p>Freedom to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> speak/act/defend oneself <p>Access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> justice/fairness/honesty <p>Social</p> <p>Community facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided for public good <p>Social groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on common pursuits <p>Action groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on common cause/mutual support
Status: Esteem	<p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roots/cultural/ethnic/social group Shared identity <p>Companionship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared life experience <p>Intimacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attachment (to caregiver-child) Partnership Sexual relationship Procreation 	<p>Interpersonal relationships</p> <p>Community facilities/opportunities/freedoms for social interaction</p> <p>Positive supportive interactions with/in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personally defined nuclear family Extended family Friends/acquaintances Neighbourhood Nation/state (recognised member v outcast)
Psychological well-being: love and belonging	<p>Physiological well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nutrition Rest Hygiene Activity <p>Safety well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection (From harm) Predictability/dependability Reserves (insure against unknown) Familiar environments Guidance/moral code (e.g. religious/spiritual/ philosophy) 	<p>Material well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shelter Food, water, essential consumables Facilities: cooking/hygiene/rest/travel Financial: access to sufficient funds and opportunity to earn <p>Personal safety and wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home: stable and secure Community: Law and order Environment: Benign
Foundational well-being: safety and survival		

Cummins, 1996

Material well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing • Income • Standard of living
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal health • Intellectual performance
Productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work • Achieve success • School
Emotional wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation • Leisure activities and spare time • Comfort from religion
Intimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family life and family/partner relations • Number of friends • children
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social relations • Social life • Helping others
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial security • Secure from crime • Security of belongings

Felce and Perry, 1995

Physical wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal safety • Mobility • Health
Emotional wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive emotions • Status/respect • Self-esteem
Development and activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution • Leisure • Competence/independence: choice/control
Social wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal relationships • Friends and social life: acceptance and support
Material wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport • Possessions

Schalock et al, 2005

Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional wellbeing • Physical wellbeing • Personal development
Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent living • Self determination • Rights • Employment • Material wellbeing
Social participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community inclusion • Interpersonal relations

Renwick and Brown, 1996

Physical wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal safety Health Fitness Mobility
Material wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance Housing Transport Security and tenure
Social wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships: family and friends Community
Development and activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competence: independence, choice and control Productivity: job, education, home life, leisure
Emotional wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health Self esteem Faith Sexuality Fulfilment

World Health Organisation, 1999

Physical wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pain and discomfort Energy and fatigue Sleep and rest Mobility Activities in daily living Dependence of medicinal substances Work capacity
Psychological wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive feelings Negative feelings Learning, memory, concentration Self-esteem Bodily image and appearance Religion/personal beliefs
Social relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal relationships Social support Sexual activity
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical safety and security Home environment Financial resources Health and social care Opportunities for acquiring new information and skills Recreation/leisure activities Physical environment Transport

We are Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity for children and young people with autism.

We provide services, raise awareness and understanding, and campaign for social and policy change. Through TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College, we offer specialist education and support.

Our ambition is to make the ordinary possible for more children and young people with autism.

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