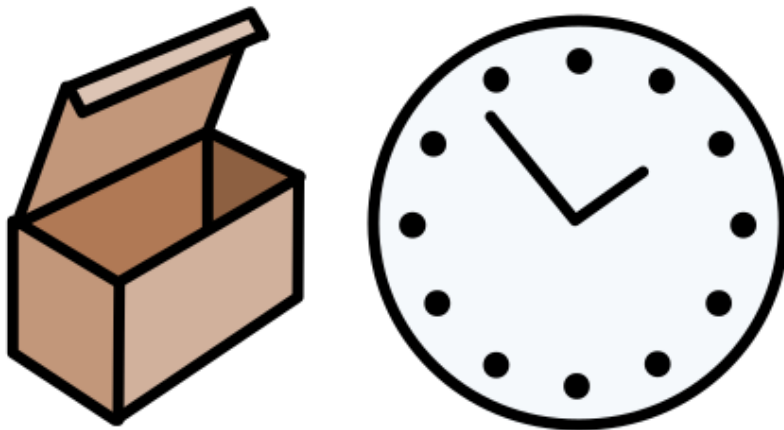


Teaching Approaches in the Engagement Pathway

Attention Autism: Key Information



What is Attention Autism?

Attention Autism is an intervention program created by speech and language therapist Gina Davies. It is designed to help autistic children develop attention, communication, and social interaction skills through highly engaging, visually stimulating activities. The approach is widely used in early years settings, specialist provisions, and home environments.

The program is built around the idea that **shared attention** is the foundation for communication and learning. By offering irresistible, exciting activities, adults can draw children into a shared experience and gradually extend their ability to focus, participate, and communicate.

Objectives to consider when delivering Attention Autism –

To sustain engagement

To develop shared attention

To develop turn taking skills

To support non – verbal communication

The Four Stages of Attention Autism -

Stage 1: The Bucket (Focus Attention)

A bucket filled with exciting, visually stimulating objects is introduced. The adult reveals each item one at a time, creating anticipation and capturing attention. The goal is for children to look, enjoy, and share the moment.

Stage 2: Attention Builder (Sustained Attention)

The adult performs a simple but highly engaging activity, such as foam explosions, paint splats, or spinning objects. Children watch without joining in. This stage aims to lengthen attention and build shared enjoyment.

Stage 3: Turn Taking (Shifting Attention)

Children are invited to take a turn in a structured, predictable way. Activities might include posting objects, rolling balls, or adding items to a model. The focus is on waiting, watching others, and participating.

Stage 4: Independent Working (Focus + Shift + Return)

Children complete a simple task independently after watching a demonstration. This could be a craft, sorting activity, or construction task. The aim is to build independence and the ability to follow a sequence.

Who Can Benefit?

Attention Autism is suitable for:

- Autistic children
- Children with communication delays
- Children with attention or sensory processing differences
- Early years and primary-aged learners

It can be adapted for a wide range of developmental levels.

Tips for Successful Sessions

- Keep activities **short, exciting, and visually rich**.
- Use **minimal language** — let the activity speak for itself.
- Maintain a **predictable routine** each session.
- Celebrate every moment of shared attention.
- Avoid correcting or directing — model instead.

Choose activities that **you** find fun; enthusiasm is contagious.

Examples of Stage Activities

- **Stage 1:** Light-up toys, wind-up animals, sensory bottles.
- **Stage 2:** Shaving foam splat, confetti cannon, bubble snake.
- **Stage 3:** Posting balls, adding stickers, rolling cars down a ramp.
- **Stage 4:** Simple crafts, matching tasks, building a small model.

Clown Connections: Key Information



What is Clown Connections?

Clown Connections (Just for Joy) is a playful, child-centred approach that uses **clowning, humour, and exaggerated interaction** to build communication, engagement, and connection for children with SEN. It is inspired by therapeutic play and sensory engagement, where adults take on a **playful, exaggerated persona** (e.g., a clowning role) to capture attention, reduce anxiety, and create shared moments of enjoyment.

The focus is not on performance, but on **relationship-building, emotional connection, and spontaneous interaction**.

Benefits of Delivering Clown Connection sessions:

- Increases **engagement and attention**

- Supports **joint attention and shared experiences**
- Encourages **spontaneous communication** (verbal or non-verbal)
- Develops **social interaction skills**
- Reduces **anxiety and pressure to perform**
- Promotes **emotional expression and regulation**
- Builds **confidence and trust with adults**
- Supports **sensory processing** through playful, predictable experiences

Key Objectives

When delivering sessions, practitioners may focus on:

- Developing **joint attention and shared enjoyment**
- Encouraging **cause-and-effect understanding**
- Supporting **turn-taking and interaction**
- Promoting **initiating or responding to communication**
- Increasing **tolerance of others in shared space**
- Encouraging **emotional expression (e.g., laughter, anticipation)**
- Building **flexibility and engagement in play**

Rationale Behind the Approach

Many children, particularly those with autism or communication needs, may find structured tasks or direct demands challenging.

The **rationale** of Clown Connections is that:

- Children learn best when they feel **safe, relaxed, and motivated**
- **Humour and play** lower anxiety and increase willingness to engage
- Strong **relationships and shared experiences** are the foundation for communication
- Adults “enter the child’s world” first, rather than expecting the child to adapt

What a typical Clown Connections session might look like

A session is usually **unstructured but purposeful**, following the child’s lead:

1. Warm-up / Invitation

- a. Adult enters playfully (e.g., exaggerated walk, funny face, clown nose)

- b. No pressure placed on the child—space is given for observation
- 2. Engagement Phase**
 - a. Adult mirrors the child's actions or sounds
 - b. Uses exaggerated reactions (e.g., "Oops!", surprised faces, gentle silliness)
 - c. Introduces simple playful routines (e.g., dropping objects, peekaboo, silly mistakes)
- 3. Interaction & Development**
 - a. Builds **turn-taking moments** naturally
 - b. Pauses to allow the child to respond or initiate
 - c. Follows the child's interests, extending play slightly
- 4. Shared Joy**
 - a. Moments of laughter, anticipation, or connection are emphasised
 - b. Adult celebrates any engagement (eye contact, gestures, vocalisations)
- 5. Closure**
 - a. Calm ending (e.g., waving goodbye, predictable finish routine)

Cooking:

Key Information



What does Cooking look like on the Engagement pathway?

Cooking sessions for engagement pupils are **hands-on, multi-sensory learning experiences** where learners actively take part in preparing simple food. The focus is not on the final product, but on **engagement, exploration, and skill development**.

These sessions are adapted to meet individual needs and may include:

- Sensory exploration (touching, smelling, tasting ingredients)
- Simple actions (mixing, pouring, spreading)
- Supported participation with adult guidance

Cooking provides a **real-life, meaningful context** for learning that is motivating and accessible for pupils with a wide range of abilities.

Objectives to consider when delivering Cooking on the Engagement Pathway:

To encourage curiosity and active participation.

To sustain attention through stimulating activities.

To promote communication through exploration and interaction.

To support problem solving and investigative skills.

To increase tolerance on unfamiliar foods for the learner.

Why is Cooking important on the Engagement Pathway?

Cooking is a valuable activity for engagement pupils because it connects learning to **real-life experiences** in a practical and enjoyable way.

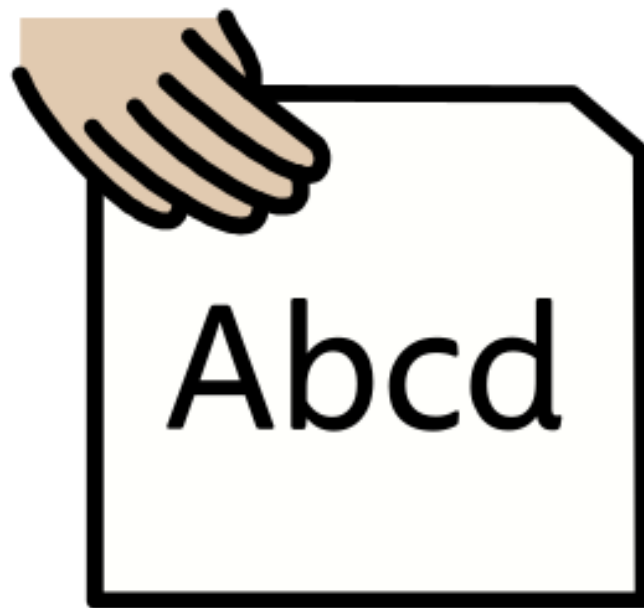
- Promotes **independence and life skills**
- Provides meaningful, functional learning opportunities
- Encourages engagement through sensory experiences
- Supports communication and interaction
- Helps learners understand everyday routines

For many pupils, cooking is a highly motivating activity that supports **holistic development**.

Key benefits:

- **Increase Engagement:** hands on, practical activities to capture the interest, multi – sensory experiences to maintain attention.
- **Develops Communication:** encourages requests, choices and preferences, supports the use of speech, signs and symbols.
- **Supports Sensory Exploration:** opportunities to explore textures, smells, tastes and helps learners build tolerance.
- **Builds independence and Life Skills:** develops basic cooking and self-care skills and encourages participation in everyday activities.
- **Enhances Motor Skills:** fine motor skills, gross motor skills and improves coordination.
- **Social Interactions:** promotes shared experience in a group, encourages turn taking and collaboration.

Core Word
Programme:
Key Information



What is the Core Word Programme?

The **Core Word Programme** is a communication approach designed to support children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), particularly those with limited or emerging communication skills. It focuses on teaching **core words**—a small set of high-frequency, functional words (e.g., *more, stop, go, help, want, finished*) that can be used across a wide range of contexts.

The aim is to help pupils develop **functional communication** that can be generalised across environments and activities.

Objectives to consider when delivering the Core Word Programme:

When delivering the programme, key objectives include:

- Developing **functional communication** for real-life situations
- Encouraging **independent communication** using a child's preferred method (e.g., symbols, speech, Makaton)
- Supporting **generalisation** of vocabulary across different environments and people
- Promoting **engagement and interaction** with others
- Building understanding of **meaning and context**, not just word recognition
- Increasing **confidence and motivation** to communicate

Who Can Benefit?

The Core Word Programme can support a wide range of learners, including:

- Children with **Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)**
- Pupils with **speech, language, and communication needs**
- Non-verbal or verbal learners
- Children using **AAC systems** (e.g., PECS, communication boards)
- Pupils with **learning difficulties or developmental delays**

Ideas for Teaching Core Words

Here are practical ways to embed core word teaching across the school day:

1. During Attention Autism Sessions

- Model a focus core word (e.g., *go, look, stop*) repeatedly
- Use exaggerated expression and actions to reinforce meaning
- Pair spoken words with **symbols and Makaton signs**
- Pause strategically to encourage anticipation and response

2. Through Sensory Stories

- Select a **core word linked to repeated story actions** (e.g., *turn, open, more*)
- Use symbol boards so pupils can **join in at key moments**
- Reinforce the word using **props, sensory cues, and sign**

3. Using Core and Fringe Boards

- Always provide core boards accessible
- Combine with **fringe vocabulary** to expand meaning

- Encourage pupils to **recognise, point to, or exchange symbols**
- Adults should **model use consistently**, not just prompt

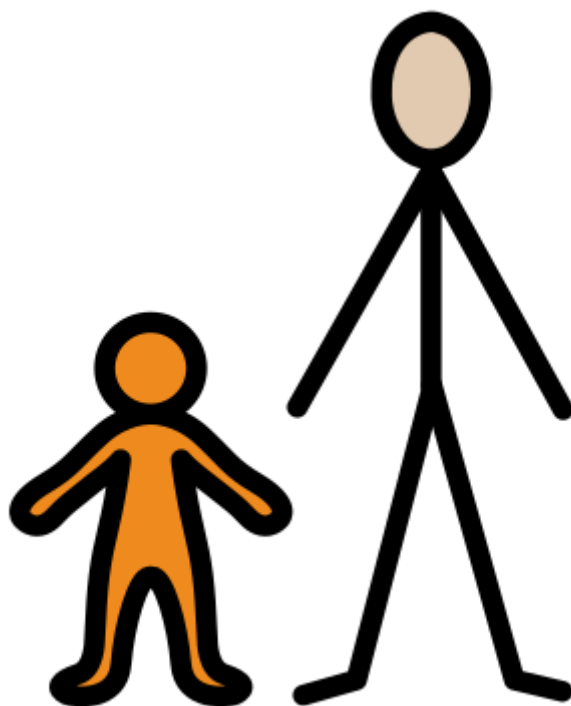
4. Introducing Makaton

- Pair each core word with its **Makaton sign**
- Use sign alongside **speech and visual symbols**
- Repeat frequently across routines to build familiarity

Key Teaching Principle

The most important aspect is **consistent modelling**—adults should demonstrate how to use core words naturally throughout the day, rather than expecting children to use them independently straight away.

Intensive
Interaction:
Key Information
and Practical
Guidance



What is Intensive Interaction?

Intensive Interaction is a communication approach developed by Dave Hewett and Melanie Nind. It is designed to help people who are at early stages of communication development—often autistic individuals or those with profound and multiple learning disabilities—build the foundations of meaningful social connection.

The approach focuses on creating enjoyable, reciprocal interactions that develop fundamental communication skills such as eye contact, shared attention, turn-taking, and emotional connection.

It is not a programme with fixed steps; instead, it is a responsive, relationship-based approach that follows the learner's lead.

Core Principles:

- Follow the learner's lead — The adult joins the learner's activity rather than directing it.
- Build connection through imitation — Copying sounds, movements, or rhythms helps establish shared communication.
- Enjoyment is essential — Sessions should feel relaxed, playful, and pressure-free.
- Reciprocity over instruction — The goal is shared interaction, not task completion.
- Go at the learner's pace — Communication develops naturally when the learner feels safe and understood.

Who Is Intensive Interaction For?

Intensive Interaction is particularly effective for individuals who:

- Are at early stages of communication development
- Have limited or no spoken language
- Find social interaction challenging
- Have sensory processing differences
- Benefit from low-demand, relationship-based approaches

It is widely used in early years, specialist schools, adult services, and home environments.

What Skills Does It Develop?

Intensive Interaction supports the development of Fundamentals of Communication, including:

- Shared attention
- Eye contact and gaze shifting
- Turn-taking
- Understanding and using facial expressions
- Vocalisations and early language
- Emotional regulation
- Social engagement and enjoyment

These skills are the fundamentals of communication.

How Intensive Interaction Works

Intensive Interaction sessions are typically:

- One-to-one
- Unstructured and flexible
- Led by the learner's interests
- Short but frequent

Key Techniques

- Imitation — Copying the learner's sounds, movements, or rhythms.
- Joining in — Participating in the learner's chosen activity.
- Pausing — Creating space for the learner to respond.
- Mirroring — Reflecting facial expressions or body language.
- Turn-taking — Building a natural back-and-forth flow.

The adult's role is to be observant, responsive, and emotionally available.

Benefits of Intensive Interaction:

- Builds trust and emotional connection
- Reduces anxiety and social pressure
- Encourages spontaneous communication
- Supports sensory regulation
- Strengthens relationships between learners and adults
- Helps learners understand the basics of social interaction

Many practitioners report improvements in engagement, wellbeing, and communication confidence.

Examples of Intensive Interaction Activities

- Copying a learner's hand movements or tapping rhythm
- Echoing vocalisations or sounds
- Joining in with spinning, rocking, or sensory play
- Taking turns making funny faces
- Mirroring body movements during play
- Pausing to allow the learner to initiate the next step

These activities are simple but powerful because they build connection.



JABADAO: Key **Information**

What is JABADAO?

JABADAO is an approach to movement-based learning that focuses on **body awareness, physical development, and communication through movement**. It is commonly used with children and individuals with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), particularly those with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD).

The approach encourages **free, supported movement exploration**, rather than structured exercise, allowing individuals to develop confidence, coordination, and interaction skills at their own pace.

Objectives to consider when delivering a JABADAO session:

- To develop body awareness and movement skills
- To encourage a range of movements (stretching, rolling, reaching, etc.)
- To provide varied sensory movement experiences
- To support sensory regulation and tolerance
- To encourage interaction through shared movement
- To enable each learner to participate at their own level and pace

Why is JABADAO important?

JABADAO plays a vital role in supporting individuals who may have limited opportunities for independent movement or physical exploration.

- Promotes **physical development in a safe and inclusive way**
- Helps individuals connect with their bodies and environment
- Supports **holistic development** (physical, social, emotional, and sensory)
- Encourages **non-verbal communication and interaction**
- Provides opportunities for **inclusive participation regardless of ability**

For many learners, especially those with complex needs, movement is a keyway of understanding the world.

Key benefits:

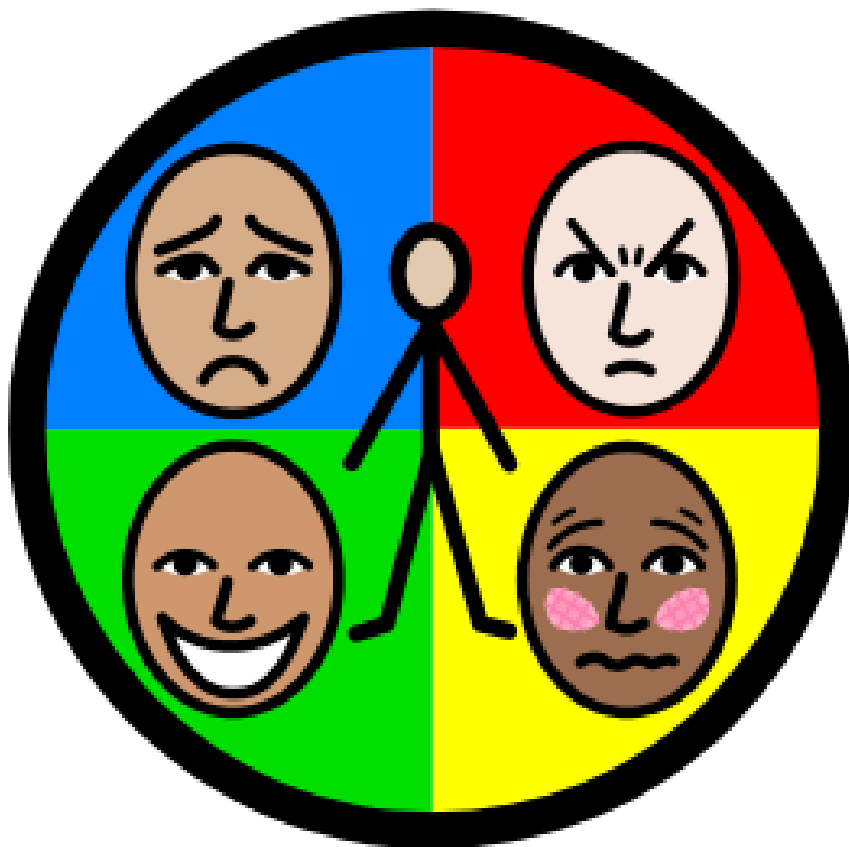
- **Physical development:** improves strength, flexibility and encourages body awareness.
- **Sensory Integration:** provides a range of movement experiences, helps individuals respond and process sensory input.
- **Communication and Interaction** encourage non – verbal communication through movements, promote shared experiences.
- **Emotional Wellbeing:** builds confidence, provides enjoyment and motivation and offers a safe space.

- **Cognitive Development:** supports cause and effect understanding, encourages exploration and curiosity.

Examples of how to deliver JABADAO:

- **Floor based exploration:** lying on mats, soft music and a range of scents to create a calming atmosphere.
 - **Supported movement activities:** rocking back and forth, gentle bouncing on a ball.
 - **Use of a range of equipment:** mats, cushion, colourful scarves, climbing equipment (supervised)
 - Follow the learners lead, focus on movement rather than giving the learners instructions, provide undirect support, create a safe and calming environment.
-

Regulation Strategies: Key Information



What does Regulation look like on the Engagement pathway?

Regulation strategies are **planned approaches and activities** that support pupils in managing their **emotions, behaviour, and sensory needs**. For engagement pupils, these strategies focus on helping them feel **calm, alert, and ready to learn**.

Rather than expecting pupils to regulate independently, adults provide **structured support**, helping learners to:

- Recognise and respond to their needs
- Feel safe and secure
- Maintain an appropriate level of alertness

Regulation may include **sensory input, predictable routines, movement, and calming techniques**.

Objectives to consider for Regulation Strategies on the Engagement Pathway:

To provide appropriate sensory input based on individual needs

To support processing and tolerance of sensory experiences

To encourage pupils to express needs and preferences

To promote safe and calm responses

To help pupils begin to recognise and respond to their own needs

To introduce strategies that support self – regulation

Why is Regulation Strategies important on the Engagement Pathway?

Many engagement pupils experience difficulties with **self-regulation**, often due to sensory processing differences, communication needs, or anxiety.

Effective regulation strategies are essential because they:

- Enable pupils to **access learning**
- Reduce distress, anxiety, and dysregulation
- Improve **engagement and participation**
- Support **emotional wellbeing and safety**
- Help pupils build **trusting relationships with adults**

Without regulation, meaningful engagement is often difficult to achieve.

Key benefits:

- Improves Engagement
- Supports Emotional Wellbeing
- Develops Self – Regulation Skills
- Enhances Communication

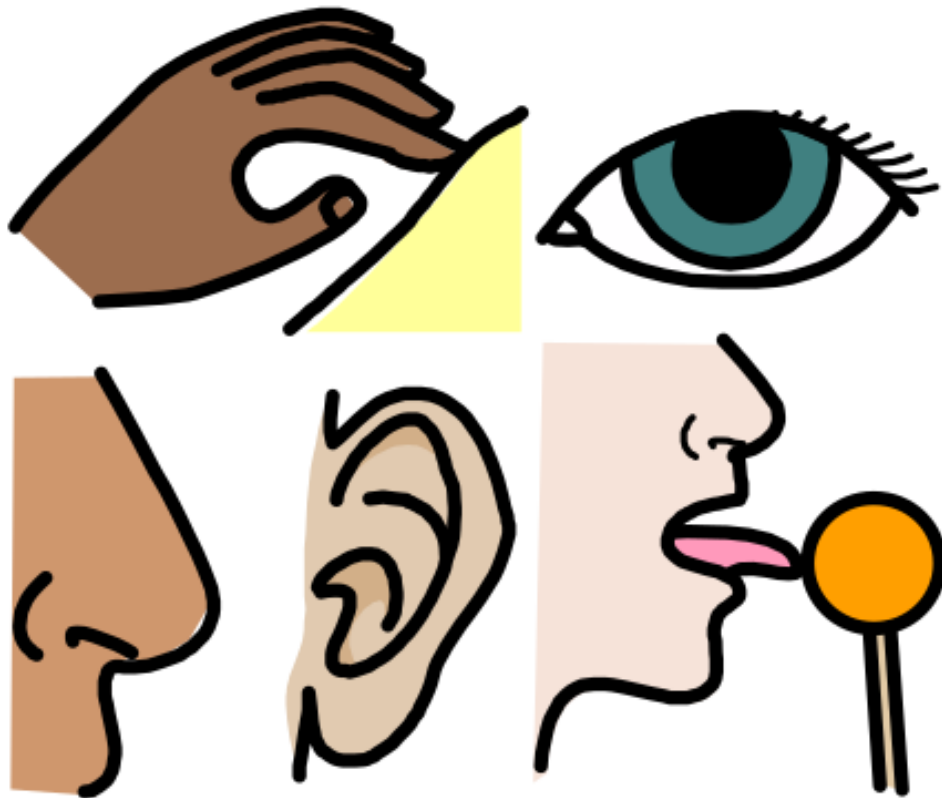
- Supports Sensory Processing
 - Promotes Positive Behaviours
-

Examples of Regulation Strategies:

- **Sensory Circuits** – activities such as running, jumping, pushing and balancing
- **Calm down Sessions** – quiet spaces, low lighting, weighted blankets, Thera brushing, Sensory objects
- **Movement Breaks** – stretching, rocking, walking, bouncing
- **Deep Pressure Activities** – weighted blanket, lap pads, squeezing, hugging cushions and massage
- **Breathing and Relaxation** – simple breathing techniques, visual supports
- **Sensory Exploration Stations** – tactile trays, fidget toys or textured objects
- **Routine Based Regulation** – predictable daily structure, visual timetables and transitions

Before introducing new techniques always consult school OT as consent may need to be granted by parents.

Sensology: Key Information



What is Sensology?

Sensology is a structured, sensory-based programme designed to support individuals with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), particularly those with autism and sensory processing needs. It focuses on **exploring and developing the seven senses**:

- Sight (visual)
- Hearing (auditory)

- Touch (tactile)
- Smell (olfactory)
- Taste (gustatory)
- Balance (vestibular)
- Body awareness (proprioception)

Sessions are typically **short, repetitive, and predictable**, using a consistent structure and a range of sensory activities to help individuals engage, regulate, and develop their sensory processing skills.

Objectives to consider when delivering a Sensology session:

- To develop awareness of the seven senses
- To explore and respond to a range of sensory stimuli
- To increase tolerance of different sensory experiences
- To encourage responses to sensory activities (e.g. reactions, choices)
- To increase attention and active participation
- To follow a predictable routine
- To build anticipation of activities

Why is Sensology important?

Many individuals with SEND experience difficulties processing sensory information. Sensology provides **structured exposure to sensory experiences** in a safe, controlled, and supportive way.

- Helps individuals **understand and manage sensory input**
- Supports participation in daily activities and learning
- Builds tolerance to sensory experiences that may otherwise feel overwhelming
- Promotes **independence and wellbeing**
- Encourages engagement for learners who may struggle with traditional teaching approaches

Key benefits:

- **Supports Sensory Processing:** helps learners respond more effectively, builds tolerance to different stimuli, reduces sensory overload.
- **Improves attention and engagement:** structured and repetitive format help learners stay focused, encourages active participation.
- **Enhances communication skills:** encourages responses (verbal and non – verbal), supports interactions through shared experiences.

- **Promotes emotional regulation:** provides alerting sensory input, reduces anxiety through predictable routines.
- **Develops social interactions:** promotes group participation, encourages turn taking and shared attention and builds relationships through shared activities.

Examples of how to deliver Sensology:

Sensology sessions typically follow a consistent structure, often repeating the same activities each week to build familiarity.

- **Introduction:** familiar song
 - **Sensory activities covering all 5 senses:** see, hear, smell, taste and touch.
 - **Turn taking:** passing the items around the group
 - **Ending of a session** bubbles and a predictable ending.
-

Shopping: Key Information



What does Shopping look like on the Engagement pathway?

Shopping sessions for engagement pupils are **structured, supported experiences** where learners take part in visiting shops or simulated environments to develop **life skills, independence, and community awareness**.

These sessions focus on:

- Real-life experiences (e.g. visiting a supermarket or local shop)
- Practical participation (choosing, handling, paying for items)
- Developing confidence in community settings

For engagement pupils, the emphasis is on **participation, exploration, and interaction**, rather than completing tasks independently.

Objectives to consider when going Shopping on the Engagement Pathway:

To actively engage with a real life community activity

To sustain engagement in a practical environment

To encourage interaction with others

To express choices and preferences

To understand a simple sequence of steps e.g. coat – walk – shop – pay

To support regulation strategies in busy environments

Why is Shopping important on the Engagement Pathway?

Shopping is a key life skill that helps pupils prepare for **life beyond school**. For learners with SEND, accessing the community can be challenging, so supported shopping sessions provide essential opportunities to practice in a safe and structured way.

- Supports **transition into adulthood and community life**
- Builds confidence in unfamiliar environments
- Promotes independence in everyday situations
- Helps learners understand real-world routines
- Encourages inclusion in society

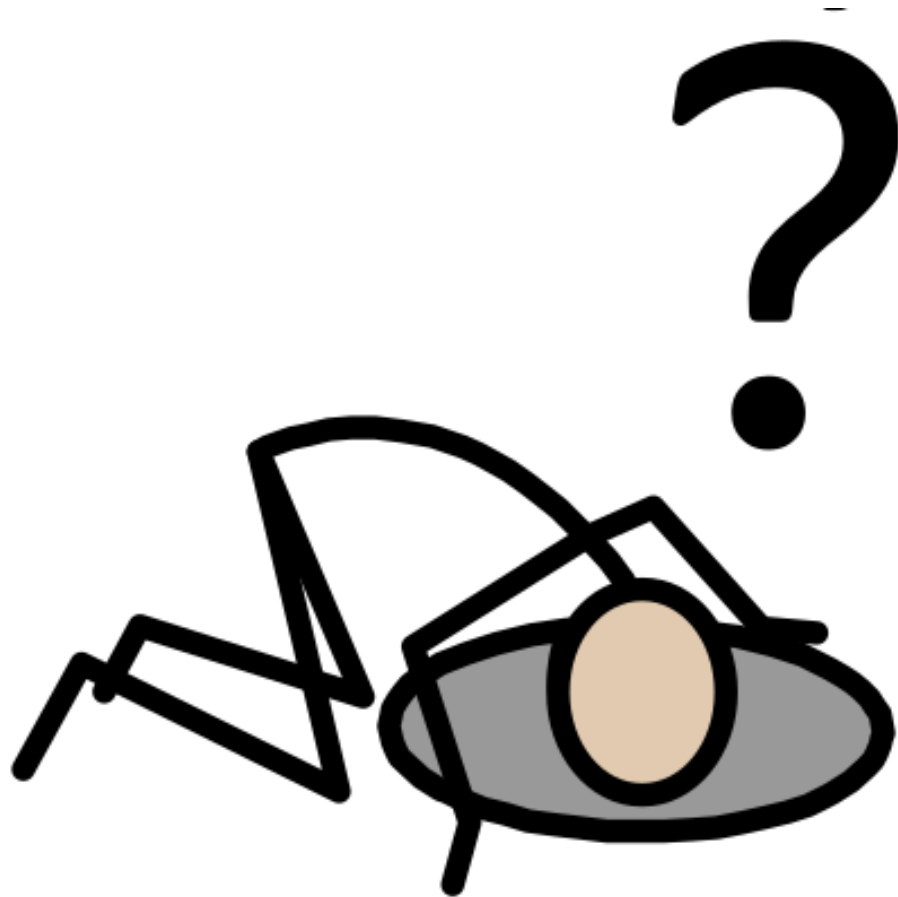
Shopping sessions are crucial in helping pupils become **active participants in their community**.

Key benefits:

- **Develops Independence:** encourages decision making (choosing items), supports functional life skills.

- **Promotes Community Awareness:** helps learners become familiar with local environments, builds understanding on social expectations.
 - **Enhances Communication Skills:** encourages learners to explore meaningful context with the support from visual/ communication aids.
 - **Supports Social Interaction:** encourages shared experiences in real life situations, builds confidence interacting with others.
 - **Develops Cognitive Skills:** supports understanding of choices, introduces early maths concepts and builds problem solving skills.
 - **Encourages Sensory Regulation:** provides exposure to real world sensory environments, helps learners build tolerance to sensory stimuli.
-

The Curiosity Programme: Key Information



What is The Curiosity Programme?

The Curiosity Programme is a **multi-sensory, child-centred approach to learning** that encourages exploration, discovery, and engagement through carefully planned, immersive experiences. It is often used with children and young people with Special

Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), particularly those who benefit from **hands-on, experiential learning**.

The approach focuses on **developing curiosity and motivation to learn**, using themed activities that stimulate the senses, promote interaction, and support cognitive development.

Objectives to consider when delivering The Curiosity Programme:

To encourage curiosity and active participation.

To sustain attention through stimulating activities.

To promote communication through exploration and interaction.

To support problem solving and investigative skills.

To support sensory processing and tolerance.

To provide opportunities for multi- sensory exploration.

To enable learners to explore and make choices independently.

Why is The Curiosity Programme important?

For many learners, especially those with additional needs, traditional teaching approaches can be difficult to access. The Curiosity Programme provides an **inclusive and engaging way to learn**, rooted in exploration and real-life experiences.

- Encourages a **love of learning through discovery**
- Supports learners who struggle with abstract concepts
- Promotes **engagement, interaction, and independence**
- Helps develop key skills in a meaningful and motivating way
- Builds confidence by allowing learners to explore at their own pace

Key benefits:

- **Promotes Engagement and Motivation:** uses exciting, themed activities to capture interest.
- **Supports Communication Development:** encourages both verbal and non-verbal communication and provides meaningful contexts for language development.
- **Enhances Sensory Learning:** incorporates multi – sensory experiences, helps learners make connections.
- **Develop Cognitive Skills:** encourages problem solving and exploration, supports understanding of cause and effect.
- **Encourages Independence:** allow learners to make choices and explore freely, builds confidence through self – directed learning.
- **Supports Social Interaction:** encourages shared experiences and group participation, develops turn taking and collaborative play.

- **Supports Emotional Development:** creates a safe and stimulating environment, encourages expression of emotions.

Examples of how to deliver The Curiosity Programme:

- **Element 1 (Getting Connected): Intensive Interaction** – mirror the child's actions/ vocalisations. Be alongside the child, when doing this and not in front. This should be done for around 3 minutes per day, 3 times per day.
 - **Element 2 (Signature Songs)** – starting off with the sounds and rhythms to replicate a certain action e.g. brushing teeth or putting on deodorant. This will then link into a song from a familiar Nursery Rhyme.
 - **Element 3 (Creating Curiosity)** – bringing an item to the child with the possibility of them exploring the item. Your role is to play alongside the child not show them how to play.
 - **Element 4 (Playing together)** – bring games to the child as they will not bring a game to you e.g. the odd one out game.
-