



Gwasanaethau Cymorth
Cyfathrebu a Synhwyrdd

Sensory & Communication
Support Service

Self-Advocacy and Wellbeing Programme



Sensory & Communication Support Service in partnership with:



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This course is not therapy and does not substitute for therapy if needed, and does not prevent, cure, or treat any mental disorder or medical disease. It does not involve the diagnosis or treatment of mental disorders and is not to be used as a substitute for counselling, psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, mental health care, substance abuse treatment, or other professional advice by legal, medical or other qualified professionals.

Confidentiality

All information (documented or verbal) that you share with the person delivering the course, is confidential and information will not be disclosed to anyone without your permission. However, please be aware that if a disclosure is made which the course deliverer reasonably believes there to be an imminent or likely risk of danger or harm to yourself or others or involves illegal activity will need to be raised with the relevant authority.

Introduction

We know that a time of transition can be daunting for children with a vision impairment and their families. During this course, we will talk about the challenges you may experience surrounding support and preparation during the transition process to high school.

We hope that this course will give you more confidence and independence with transitioning to high school. We aim to help you to prepare for the emotional, physical and social pressure from joining a new school and help you reach your full potential.

This course aims to provide a thought-provoking and creative process that is designed to inspire confidence and independence skills and to develop strategies to achieving these skills.

1. Getting to know you

Activity 1 (use record sheet)

My likes/dislikes

School – lessons you enjoy/dislike

Hobbies you enjoy

Name 4 things you really like

Name 4 things you really dislike

Name 6 things that make you feel good

Name 6 things that make you feel bad

Activity 2 (use record sheet)

This is me

Use a set of cards or a large dice which contain words that describe someone's character. Choose the cards/roll dice to talk about what makes you happy/sad.

Which words best describe your personality?

Ideally at least 6 characteristics.

My greatest achievement – in school and out of school

2. Friendships

Activity 1 – Circle of Care (in resources pack)

People who are important to me

Family – siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles/cousins etc.

Friends – neighbours, school friends, best friends

Activity 2 – Friendship diamond (in resources pack)

Which qualities do you value in a friend?

Being a good listener Good at sharing

Kind to others Good at reading

Well behaved Likes to talk to me

Hard working Polite

Always happy Helpful

Good at sports Tidy

Caring Funny

Activity 3 (use record sheet)

What are you looking forward to about your new school?

What are you a bit worried about?

Let's write down your worries and find some solutions.

Eg:

I'm worried about finding my friends to meet up with them at lunch and break times.

Arrange to meet them at a place which you can easily find at a set time.

I'm worried about making new friends.

Can I arrange to meet up with someone I know who is starting the same school, during the summer holidays.

What if I don't know anyone else at the new school?

Some schools have a Buddy bench. If someone sees you sitting on it another pupil will go to talk to you and will introduce you to other pupils in your class/year. Others operate a Buddy system – if you appear to be lost or on your own at lunch or break times, other pupils will offer to help you find where you should be or will talk to you.

Homework

Activity 1

Which qualities do your friends and family value in you?

Ask four people who know you well to say what they think is special about you – what you're like or what you're good at.

What was it like for your (older) friends and family when they moved up to Comprehensive school?

What did they take with them to school?

What did they do at lunchtime?

Tell me a funny memory of your time in secondary school?

How did you travel there?

What happened if you didn't do your homework?

Activity 2

My eyes and me (see resource pack)

With support of family/friends or trusted adult in school, complete the attached 'my eyes and me' worksheet to inform others regarding your vision impairment as it is not always easy to explain how your sight affects you and how you can best be helped.

3. Self Confidence and self-advocacy

Discuss areas of confidence and when they would self-advocate.

Activity 1 (use record sheet)

You are amazing!

Tell me about your achievements and skills.

What is your favourite subject? Why?

What is your least favourite subject? Why?

What is your best subject? Why?

What is your best quality?

What is your best skill?

What is the skill you would most like to learn next?

Activity 2 (use record sheet)

I can, if you...

Let's think of some problems that you might encounter in your new school. Instead of accepting them as barriers you should think of them as obstacles, which can be moved by positive thinking. So rather than saying I can't because... you say I can if...

Problem 1: You've been told you can't join in a game of football because you won't be able to see the ball.

I can if we use a ball with a bell.

Problem 2: You've been told you can't read out loud when everyone is taking a turn in class to do it, because the book hasn't got large enough print.

I can if I'm provided with a book in the right sized print or I can use tech to help me.

Problem 3: In a geography lesson you have to find small details on a 'busy' map.

I can if I use my dome magnifier to scan the map.

Problem 4: You've been given an enlarged worksheet in the correct print size, but you are still finding it difficult to read because it's very cluttered.

I can if I use strips of dark coloured paper or card to block off one paragraph or section of the worksheet at a time.

Think of yourself as a problem solver and try to think of ways around the problems yourself, however, there will be times that you'll need to ask others for help and asking for help is a positive thing to do, because you're still in control.

Activity 3 – circle of control (in resources pack)

Self-advocacy

This includes:

- a) Explaining your vision impairment to others
- b) Explaining your own support needs
- c) Knowing who to talk to for help

Know your needs, know your options, take control!

Imagine you are in a lift with an Alien and only have a few minutes to explain your eye condition and how it affects you, before the lift reaches the top floor.

1. Think about:

- the equipment you need to use
- the correct print size for your books, worksheets, computer screens etc.
- the correct seating position for you to be able to see the boards/ demonstrations

2. Think of someone who you can trust to help and support you with any issues that arise.

- A mentor
- The ALNCo/SENCo
- Your form tutor
- A favourite teacher or Teaching Assistant
- A 'Buddy'
- Your parent

It is important is that you always speak out where you are facing barriers and go to your trusted adult for support.

4. Mood Challenges

Activity 1 – emoji template (in resources pack)

Name 5 things that make you feel happy

Eg:

- Hanging out with friends
- Listening to music
- Playing games on my computer/console
- Going on holiday
- Lazing in the sun
- Hobbies

Name 5 things that excite you

E.g:

- It's your Birthday/Christmas
- Going on holiday/on a trip
- School holidays
- Joining a club/team
- Taking part in school productions

Name 5 things that make you upset

E.g:

- No one to hang out with
- Feeling unwell
-

Awful weather

- Someone is ill or dies
- Homework is difficult

Name 5 things that make you angry

E.g:

- People around you are arguing
- People aren't listening to you.
- Someone is being mean to you.
- Something has gone wrong.
- Being blamed for stuff you didn't do.

Name 5 things that worry you

E.g:

- Visiting the dentist
- Friends are unhappy
- Going to the hospital
- Finding your way around a new school
- Making new friends

Activity 2 – sad, angry and worried emoji templates

Let's talk about how negative feelings (sadness, anger and anxiety) can make you feel...

E.g:

You can't think straight
Your head is going to explode
Your head feels empty
You can't concentrate
You're finding it hard to put things into words
You're talking too much
You want to shout
Your cheeks are burning
You're sweaty
You want to cry
Your hands are fidgety
You want to punch something
Your knees are trembling
You want to run away and hide
Your heart is beating fast
You need to be on your own
You've got butterflies in your stomach
You feel sick
You need a hug

Activity 3 (use record sheet)

Who should I tell?

A trusted friend, relative or teacher (someone whose opinion matters to you, who gives you good advice).

What should I do?

a) Identify what you're feeling

Think about what happened to make you feel like this.

b) Accept your emotion

Don't try to suppress what you're feeling (this could lead to anxiety, depression, difficulty sleeping or muscle tension).

c) Deal with your feelings in a positive way

Take a deep breath (breathe in deep breaths to calm yourself, hold your breath for a count of 3 and slowly breathe out)

Give yourself some space (either leave the room physically, or give yourself some mental distance by distracting yourself with pleasant thoughts or watching a funny video)

Talk it out with someone (even if it's just your pet)

Go out for some exercise (walking can be very calming and can help you to think things through)

Write down in a Mood Journal how you're feeling and what triggered your feelings

d) Dealing with stress

Try to get plenty of sleep

Make time to talk (and laugh) with friends

Exercise

Give yourself time for your hobbies

Make time for relaxation

It is important to accept and deal with emotions. The worst thing that you can do is to repress your feelings.

5. Coping with change

Activity 1 (make list using cat and dog sheet in resources pack)

What are you most looking forward to about starting a new school? – Make a list

What are you a bit worried about? – Make a list

Think of a solution to stop your worries.

E.g. You're worried about finding friends at break times and lunch. Arrange a meeting time and place to meet them, which isn't too busy or hard to find.

Activity 2 (use record sheet)

What will stay the same when you move to secondary school? – Make a list

What will change? – Make a list

Eg. I will still get to see my friends in the street where I live.

I will need to make new friends.

Homework

Ask older siblings or friends/cousins the following questions?

What do you take with you to secondary school?

What do you do at lunchtime?

How do you travel to secondary school?

What happens when you don't do your homework?

Who is your favourite teacher – why?

What is your favourite subject?

Can you tell me a funny story about secondary school?

What is your new school uniform like, what colour is it (uniform colouring sheet if suitable).

6. Support with curriculum and specialist equipment.

Activity 1 (Lesson record sheet in resources pack)

Think about the following lessons that you have in Primary school and rate how well you think you are doing in them 😊 - Not too well 😊😊 - OK 😊😊😊 - Good 😊😊😊😊 - Really well

Languages, Literacy & Communication (English, Welsh, French, Spanish, German)

Reading

Spelling

Maths & Numeracy

Humanities (RE, History, Geography)

Expressive Arts (Art & Craft, drama, dance, music)

Health & Wellbeing (P.E. & Games)

Science & Technology (Science, IT, DT, Food technology)

Activity 2 (use record sheet)

Thinking about the lessons that you have rated as OK or not too well:

- Would more support from your teacher or a school teaching assistant have been helpful?
- Would more support from a VI specialist have been helpful? (e.g. touch typing lessons, more advice to your teacher) etc.
- Would more digital equipment have been helpful? (e.g. a laptop, iPad, magnifying systems) etc.
- Would more equipment and resources have been helpful? (e.g. magnifiers, large print books, sloping desks, modified exercise books) etc.

7. Personal goals – overcoming barriers and adapting in life

Activity 1 (use record sheet)

Discuss the types of barriers the CYPVI might experience.

Physical barriers

Public areas

Poor lighting in corridors and stairways

Poorly lit desks

Crowded corridors – impacting on being able to see ‘landmarks’

Small numbers on classroom doors

Directions and notices displayed in small unclear print

Using a lift (when unable to use the stairs)

In classrooms

Repositioning classroom resources

Rearranging seating plans

Rearranging furniture

Not tucking chairs under desks/tables

Leaving cupboard doors and drawers open

Leaving doors ajar

Lack of equipment

Needing more time to complete a task

Independence accessing lessons (DT, cookery etc – hab support)

Outdoors

Car side mirrors

Overhanging tree branches

Uneven ground

Obstacles that are not in eye line (up high or down low)/teaching of body protection for cane users

A frame signage

Vehicles parked in an inappropriate place (e.g. on pavements, over blister paving/or on dropped kerb)

Emotional barriers

Lack of knowledge/understanding from teachers and peers

Lack of preparation by school staff

Parental overprotection

Lack of support/over support

Lack of clear and concise directions (poor communication)

Ability to see and interpret subtle facial expressions

Ability to notice and understand body language

Social norms (eating, drinking etc)

Activity 2 (use record sheet)

Where do you see yourself in 5 years? – E.g. College/sixth form

What are your plans after school or college?

Have you a career planned?

Are there any hobbies/sports that you intend to pursue?

8. Parents and siblings

Parents – Supporting children with a vision impairment to find their voice

Nobody can understand how your child's vision impairment impacts them better than they can; they may however need support from you to gain the confidence, knowledge, and communication skills to express their needs to others – to self-advocate.

As a parent you have an important part to play in ensuring that your child is receiving the support that they need, but it is also important to recognise when to take a step back and encourage them to advocate for themselves.

Supporting siblings of children with a vision impairment (in resource pack)

It is very common for siblings of a child with a vision impairment to feel different emotions at different stages. They may feel upset, confused, guilty, or embarrassed. It is important, wherever possible, to ensure that your child feels able and happy to speak openly with a trusted adult about their feelings. This could involve speaking to the school in case any extra help is needed and to support their wellbeing in school. For example, if the child with vision impairment experiences a change in their condition, their siblings might have questions about the affect this will have. Our supporting siblings of children with a vision impairment self help guide helps to answer any questions that siblings of a visually impaired child may have and develop their confidence to advocate for their needs.