



## Virtual School Sensory Support News update



### **VSSS contact and feedback**

As a consequence of the change to our ways of working resulting from the pandemic, VSSS has made much greater use of electronic media to have contact with parents/carers. Many of you now receive reports or Records of Intervention by email. We have offered the option of sending these documents out either encrypted or unencrypted, depending on parent/carer preference. We are aware that some people have not always received a report when it has been sent and this appears to be when the document has been encrypted. Please could we ask two things:

1. If you are happy to receive information about your child/young person from VSSS via unencrypted email and you don't currently, please click on the following link so that we can contact you this way in future.

[VSSS Permission Form](#)

2. If you have expected an email from us, but have not received it, please could you check your junk folder in case your email filter has automatically moved it? It should be possible to then change your account settings to allow future emails to be received.

In addition, we are seeking feedback from parents/carers about the support they have received from VSSS during the last year. This link will take you to a brief questionnaire to provide the opportunity to let you tell us your experience of contact with VSSS. Please take this opportunity to contact us.

[VSSS Feedback Form](#)

As always, if you would like to contact me directly, please email me on [kate.stocks@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:kate.stocks@norfolk.gov.uk).

Kind regards,

Kate



### **Info from Guide Dogs**

The Guide Dogs Tech for All initiative is our commitment to make sure children with a vision impairment in the UK have access to an Apple iPad to use outside of school. We know how important these devices are to a child's development - both to support learning at home or just to have fun and explore the activities and interests they enjoy. That's why we're providing free iPads to children and young people with a vision impairment, aged 3-18.

While technology in schools remains the responsibility of local authorities, it's important for children with sight loss to also have their own device at home. With excellent assistive technology built-in as standard, such as screen magnification, voiceover and audio descriptions, an iPad can break down barriers and make many activities easier, like reading in larger fonts, magnifying photos and keeping in touch with friends.

With the help of these devices children can independently play their favourite games, read and watch stories and shows, and connect with family and friends in the format that works best for them. These simple things can provide a sense of normality and independence that makes a huge difference to a child's confidence and wellbeing.

And we also provide digital learning resources on our website, to make sure children can get the most out of their device. This includes guidance on setting up your iPad and its

accessibility features, as well as advice on additional apps to help with vision impairments.

The resources also include help on how to use iMovie, Garageband, Clips, and more, so that your child can make the most of everything on offer. These digital learning resources can be accessed, by anyone, not just recipients of our iPads.

We have 2,500 iPads available in 2022 and the devices we provide are completely free of charge. The only requirement is proof of vision impairment for your child (please see our terms and conditions for a list of suggested documents).

To find out more or to apply today please visit [www.guidedogs.org.uk/techforall](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/techforall)

This link is to a video offering an overview of the accessibility options on the latest iPad. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0Aavut6BDM>

If you do apply, please contact [Barbara Dunn VI](#) at Vision Norfolk as she is coordinating work across Norfolk and can also assist with your application.



**Mental Health Corner**

The school summer holiday will undoubtedly fill all parents with a mixture of feelings from joy to despair! For many it can be a difficult time to manage and for everyone there will be good days and bad. Janine Halloran offers some really simple advice which can help to focus on the positives in her Calm and Collected Podcast. This one looks at Resting and Resetting:

[Ideas for Resting and Resetting This Summer - Calm & Connected Podcast with Janine Halloran, LMHC - YouTube](#)

For the younger child making a 'happiness box' at the beginning of the holiday can give them something to turn to at times when they're feeling a bit sad, anxious or bored. As adults we know what things improve our mood, it may be to go for a run, walk the dog, cook or simply listen to a favourite piece of music. Children aren't able to do this and need prompting to find some inner calm, which is where the a happiness box can really help. Beverley Cockbill (Mental Health in Education) gives some simple instructions as to how to make one and it can be done at any age – you may want to make your own whilst working with your child to build theirs.

### Happiness Box

Step 1 Shoeboxes are good because they have a lid. The lid makes it special because you cannot see what is inside, until the need to open it. It is also private, unless you want to share. The objects inside instantly remind you of 'happy' times, which help calm.

Step 2 Ownership of the box is pivotal. The undecorated box is fine, but decorating it is a positive start of the relationship with the box. Decoration: painted/covered with paper/drawings/stickers.

Step 3 Let the choice of objects be theirs. What makes you happy does not mean it will make them happy. Objects can range from: toy/material/family scarf/putty/photos - pet/favourite person/home /themselves/holiday/mirror/Hairbrush/sensory object/mindfulness activities - colouring/postcards to colour & send/bubbles/card game/reminder notes - who or where to go to when feeling wobbly /book/ notes on how well they are doing.

Step 4 The box is ready to use. Introduce the box when you think it is a positive time to be received. Teach when to use the box, talk about times when feeling wobbly or wanting to screech/scream/run! Ensure the box is always accessible.



Step 5 'Happiness' is a lovely term for a child/young person or student to understand, however, there is a deeper message you want them to learn. It is a box, which helps calm, helps to self-regulate and build their emotional resilience.



### **Tactile clues we use in coin recognition**

It's easy to identify coins when you are fully sighted but what if you had to get them out of your purse without looking; could you tell your 2p from your 10p? Children or young people with a vision impairment use the following tactile clues to help them identify money:

- 1p = small, round, smooth edges
- 2p = large, round, smooth edges
- 5p = small, round, milled edges (which is tiny grooves)
- 10p = large, round, milled edges
- 20p = small heptagon (7 sided shape), rounded vertices (corners)
- 50p = large heptagon with more pointed vertices

The £1 and £2 are generally easier to recognise because they are the thickest and heaviest coins. But, did you know that a £1 coin is not actually round? It is in fact a dodecagon (12 sided shape) with every side alternating from milled to smooth. The £2 coin is the largest and heaviest of all the coins. It is round and has an inscription engraved around the edge, which can sometimes catch our children and young people out because they can confuse it for a milled edge.

So, the next time you reach into your purse, place a coin between your thumb and middle

finger so you can feel the edge of the coin with your index (pointy) finger and see if you can identify it without looking!



## **Summer Ready**

Summer is here and it's important to ensure that individuals are fully prepared.

### **Sun Hats**

- Sun hats (with brims) can help reduce glare and visual discomfort both indoors and outdoors, especially if an individual is sensitive to light.

### **Glasses**

- Transition lenses automatically adapt to changes in light levels, block out UV rays and helps protect against blue light both indoors and outdoors. It is important to note that individuals will need time for their eyes to adjust when entering a different environment.
- Lenses should have protection from both UVA and UVB light as evidence suggests these can be risk factors for cataracts.
- Sunglasses may or may not be helpful for individuals as they cut the amount of light entering the eye which reduces vision even more, however, some may find this beneficial.
- Having extra glasses with different filters for certain situations may benefit individuals. For example, a pair for sunny days and a pair for less bright days.

- Glasses should be well fitted to offer the best protection.
- An eye clinic will be able to make suggestions and give advice.

If you require any further information on the above or for any habilitation needs, then please do not hesitate to contact our habilitation team.



### **Save the date - VSSS at Gressenhall**

Like last year VSSS is excited to announce that we will be at Gressenhall again this year. Staff are in the process of organising two fun-filled days for VSSS children and their families. Please save the following dates in your diaries:

- Friday September 2nd (for KS2 children)
- Monday 5th September (for pre-school and KS1 children)

For more information please email Cathy Rodd [cathy.rodde@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:cathy.rodde@norfolk.gov.uk) or Debbie Sheils [debbie.sheils.yot@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:debbie.sheils.yot@norfolk.gov.uk)





## **Reminder - Norfolk Deaf Festival**

The Norfolk Deaf Festival is so excited to announce that they will be back this year. We will be heading to the Forum, Norwich on the 8th and 9th July 2022, 10am to 4pm, ready to inspire, celebrate and educate both deaf and hearing people of all ages.

Come along and learn something new, meet awesome deaf role models and take in the amazing atmosphere that you can only find at our festival; all of which is completely accessible with captioning, good quality sound systems and BSL interpreters. You don't want to miss out!

We look forward to seeing you there!

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