



**Norfolk** County Council



**Virtual School  
Sensory Support**  
News update



### **Informal Zoom coffee morning/afternoon**

As we prepare for the wider re-opening of schools, I am aware of the importance of good communication in ensuring we are doing everything we can to support sensory impaired children and young people within Norfolk as effectively as possible. I believe it is important to have contact with as wide a range of parents/carers as possible in order to ensure your views and opinions are heard.

I would therefore like to invite you to attend an informal Zoom coffee morning/afternoon tea with me where there will be no fixed agenda but the opportunity for you to talk to me and tell me anything you think I need to be aware of in relation to how we are currently working. I am proposing two times, one in the morning and one towards the end of the working day, in order to make it easy for as many of you as possible to join me.

The dates are Thursday 25th March from 09:30 onwards, and Tuesday 23rd March from 16:30 onwards. If you would like an invite to either (or both) of the sessions, please email me via [kate.stocks@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:kate.stocks@norfolk.gov.uk) .

I hope you will be able to join me. Kind regards, Kate



## Online transition workshops

The Deaf Children and Young People's Team are piloting a series of online Transition Workshops for a cohort of pupils in Year 11, along with their parents / carers. These twilight workshops will aim to build the confidence of young people making their post-16 choices. It will help them consider their strengths and skills and help them to explore the wide range of options available (along with the support available to them). All of the information given in these sessions has been provided by the NDCS.

For further information, please contact Tori Zielinski at [victoria.zielinski@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:victoria.zielinski@norfolk.gov.uk)



## Online art workshops

In collaboration with the Nest Project, VSSS hosted a series of online art workshops for both Primary and High School deaf students.

Each student created a lockdown self-portrait showing both the advantages and disadvantages of being in lockdown, we also had the opportunity for a good chat – Zoom style! We learnt some new techniques including collage and using contrasting colours via a colour wheel. The range of skills and ideas were amazing!

We are hosting another session on the 3rd March to share the finished work and then we hope the self-portraits will be displayed on the VSSS website so watch this space 😊! Nine young people and six children attended these sessions, the feedback was really positive and we are thinking about how to build on this enjoyable collaborative experience.



## Hab hacks

Hello everyone!

We are Georgina Rose, Rachel Britcher and Nicola Rowe and we make up the Habilitation Team supporting children and young people with vision impairments. We work with the children, families and schools by teaching skills and strategies that will enable the child to maximise their independence. We offer support with independent living skills (using cutlery, personal care, preparing snacks, meals and drinks using modified equipment) along with mobility and orientation skills (road safety, route familiarisation, use of mobility aids).

We have lots of useful Habilitation hacks, hints and tips that can make tasks much easier for our children and thought it would be useful to share them with you. So, please look out for our “Hab Hacks”, which will be in future newsletters.

### Hab Hacks

A parent has asked: “My child wants to make themselves their own drinks. Is there anything you would suggest?”

It's so exciting that your child wants to be more independent! Whilst we can expect a few spillages, there are things we can do to reduce and contain them. We would recommend the



following:

- Make space for a non-slip lipped tray, which your child can make their drinks on. This ensures they have enough space for their equipment and the lipped sides will contain any spillages for easy cleaning.
- Dycem matting is non-slip and available in yellow, red or blue. Cut a piece out to fit the tray. This will also offer good colour contrast against the equipment they are using.
- Use a straight cylindrical glass, mug or beaker. The tapered ones (which are smaller at the bottom than the top) are less stable and more easily knocked over.
- Clean and wash up 2 x pint milk bottles. These are the perfect size for children and have a small handle so are easy to pour. Fill one with water and another with a little squash.
- Using different coloured lids can help indicate which bottle contains water and which contains squash. Alternatively, you could simply put an elastic band around the bottle containing squash.
- If your child often overfills their cup, try using a Liquid Level Indicator (or “beeper” as we prefer to call them). These will beep to indicate that the liquid is at the correct level.
- If using a “beeper”, the metal prongs need to be inside the cup, pour the water until the first slow beeps are heard. Stop pouring. Then slowly add the squash until the fast beeps are heard. Stop pouring. We would always suggest practicing with water first and be warned – those beeps will make you jump!

We hope you have found this useful. The Dycem matting and Liquid Level Indicators can be purchased from the RNIB shop. If you would like any further information or if you have any questions, please send an email to: [georgina.rose@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:georgina.rose@norfolk.gov.uk) or [rachel.britcher2@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.britcher2@norfolk.gov.uk) or [nicola.rowe@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:nicola.rowe@norfolk.gov.uk)



### **Kim's Korner: Intensive Interaction - mirror and build on**

Does your child have a vision impairment, a hearing impairment or both of these with additional needs and perhaps some developmental delay? Do you sometimes feel at a loss for play activities or have you ever found yourself away from home, out for the day, with no toys to hand? Don't worry, you are the most interesting thing in the child's environment, just as you are.

An ideal approach for preverbal children, especially if their development is delayed, is called Intensive Interaction.

Intensive Interaction was described by Melanie Nind and Dave Hewett in the late eighties. It borrows aspects from the natural interaction between caregiver and baby or very small child. The main idea is to allow the child to lead the interaction, remaining very sensitive to what they're telling you through their movements, gestures, expressions etc

If you'd like to give this a try, it's very easy. Follow your intuition, take your time, observe the child doing their own thing on their level. So, if they are lying down, lie next to them. If they are kneeling, kneel nearby. If they are crawling around you crawl too. You might feel silly at first but try to let your inhibitions go. Take the child's lead, mirror their movement and sounds etc back to them.

Remember to take your child's sensory impairment into account and to mirror their actions in a way they will be able to perceive. So, if they have a hearing loss, you may want to make the most of the visual elements. If they have a vision impairment, you can make use of sound elements. Or if they have a multi-sensory impairment (a combination of visual impairment and hearing impairment together) then your mirroring may need to rely on touch and movement

Try to be aware of your child's mood and their ease with your interaction. Do the simple mirroring for a while and if you think they're comfortable with this, add in another small extra element. For example, if your child is banging with one hand on the table, mirror them and then bang with both hands alternately. Watch to see their reaction. Do they laugh, or frown, or look surprised? Mirror this back to them. Again, take your lead from the child's response. Either continue or return to the original action or try different new element. See how you get on. You might decide to try again another day if you feel your child is not enjoying it.

So, what is your child learning from this activity? Well, hopefully over time, he or she is learning that they can trust you to understand them and to respond to them. In this way, your child can learn that it is worth trying to communicate and will learn to become an effective communicator.

It's amazing how much children can communicate before they learn to speak and entering their world for a while can allow them to show this to us, with no toys needed and it can be great fun! Enjoy yourselves!

Read more about Dave Hewett and Melanie Nind's work in this book:

Nind, M and Hewett, D (2001), 'A Practical Guide to Intensive Interaction', BILD, Plymouth

Or find out more about Dave Hewett and Melanie Nind's work at this link:

<https://davehewett.com/about-intensive-interaction/>





## **Online safety at home - useful information for parents and carers**

Over recent months the majority of children have been learning from home and the likelihood is they will have spent more time online. Technology is hugely valuable for education, as well as a way to keep in touch with friends and family. However it's important we all consider how we can support children's online safety. Here's some information about what your child may enjoy online and what you can do to help keep them safer.

### **Sharing pictures**

Using devices like phones and tablets to share pictures and videos can be a great way for children to have fun and stay in touch with friends and family. It's really important your child knows what's ok to share online and what they should check with you first.

Read [younger children sharing pictures or videos online](#) for more information on the risks and how to support safer sharing.

### **Top Tip for parents**

**Supervise their online activity:** Keep the devices your child uses in communal areas of the house such as the living room or kitchen, where an adult is able to supervise. Primary-age children should not access the internet in private spaces alone, such as in a bedroom or bathroom.