

## Views of parents and carers on:

### Essential competencies for staff working with pupils on the autism spectrum

(Analysed and compiled by Damian Milton)

#### Note on the sample:

Parents and carers of young people and adults on the autism spectrum completed a brief online survey to name up to three competencies (knowledge, skills or personal qualities) they consider as being essential for staff to have or to acquire. They were also asked to comment on eight sample competencies. Their responses were used in the development of the Competency Framework.

A total of 48 parents and carers completed the survey and their replies are categorised below into the four categories which have been used to structure the Competency Framework: the individual pupil, building relationships, curriculum and learning, and enabling environments. An additional category of 'personal qualities' has been added here to reflect the large number of respondents who mentioned personal qualities as an essential competency.

Category	Suggested competency – number of respondents*
<b>Understanding the individual pupil</b>	Knowledge of autism – 15
	Understanding of the individual pupil – 7
	Understanding the individual pupil – 5
	General training – 4
	Knowledge of the complexity of autism and the range of abilities/difficulties that present / psychology – 3
	Ability to recognise and identify strengths – 3
	Recognising and understanding stress and anxiety – 3
	Specialist training / updated training – 3
	Experience of working with people on the spectrum – 2
	'When you meet a person with autism, you have met one person with autism' – 2
	Understanding sensory issues – 2
	Understanding of the triad of impairment
	Understanding of literal thinking
	A good understanding of child development in general
	Understanding of interaction and communication difficulties

Category	Suggested competency – number of respondents*
	'...work with the individual to identify what their needs are'
<b>Building relationships</b>	Clear communications / good communicator – 6
	Listening to what parents try and tell you about their child / communications with parents – 5
	Being person-centred / client centred – 2
	Listening to the pupil – 2
	Ability to advocate for the child and parents
	Sharing good practice
	'Nothing about us, without us'
	Parent the true expert on their child
	Convincing others to make the whole school autism friendly
	TA's to be given training from OT's to develop motor skills
<b>Curriculum and learning</b>	Understanding of a number of strategies and resources / communication methods – 3
	Finding resources – 2
	Ability to adapt teaching style – 2
	A tailored curriculum to the individual – 2
	Helping the pupil to meet their full potential
	Breaking down information into bite-size chunks
	Teaching skills practically
	Curriculum assessed in more autism-friendly format
	Knowledge of ABA
	Visual support
<b>Enabling environments</b>	Acknowledging the impact of external stimuli for people on the autism spectrum
	Providing quiet spaces
<b>Personal qualities</b>	Patience – 13
	Empathy – 6
	Calmness – 5
	Flexibility – 5
	Creativity – 3

Category	Suggested competency – number of respondents*
	GSOH – 2
	Resilience – 2
	Willingness to learn – 2
	Consistency – 2
	Positive attitude and not someone who regards our children as ‘problems’ – 2
	Reflective – 2
	Imagination
	Caring and respectful attitude toward child
	Kindness
	Being positive
	Non-judgemental
	Being pro-active
	Intellectual ability
	Motivating
	Ability to learn quickly
	Ability to see things from the point of view of the person on the autism spectrum
	Desire to work with people on the autism spectrum
	Caring and supportive
	Think ‘outside the box’

Of prime concern to parents and carers was a detailed understanding of autism, but in relation to the individual child and not one-size-fits-all models of practice. Many responses concentrated on personal qualities such as: patience (13) and a calm (5), and consistent (2) manner.