

Child Profiles

Child profiles or 'one-page profiles' have been developed as a useful tool particularly for SENCOs to use in schools in order to share information about the needs and capabilities of a range of pupils with additional needs across the staff. This can help staff to ensure their practice is in line with consistent approaches for the child in a setting. Children interact with numerous adults during the course of a day and there needs to be a shared understanding across the staff.

Child profiles are best when based on person-centred planning approaches. This is a way of capturing a child holistically. How can we begin to understand what helps a child if we only ever know what things they can't do? So a child profile will cover what we appreciate about the child, what they can do, what they find difficult, what works, what doesn't work, how we can help and what outcomes we are working for. These profiles are best when the child, the parent and the school (this could be more than one member of staff) have all contributed ideas so we are all working together to ensure vital information can be shared about effective strategies.

I have included an example of this kind of profile. There is nothing to stop a parent writing one and using it to share with various agencies. I shared my son's profile with his school, his swim teacher and groups leaders from other extra-curricular clubs. It is reassuring to know they have a fuller understanding of him and it helps them to look past the behaviours and see a role for themselves in helping him.

** The attached example profile needs to be personalised for the child in question. The general idea is to give enough information to enable any adult working with your child to be able to support them for the time they are with them. Things may still go wrong but at least it prepares everyone to some extent. Also bear in mind that the way they approach behaviour in their setting and the strategies they use will also depend on the individual policies in place within their setting.

Difficulties/needs....

[insert child's name] has ASD and PDA which affects his ability to interact successfully with others and he often experiences extreme anxiety when he does not feel familiar with or in control within a given situation. These are the difficulties [insert child's name] experiences;

- **Anxiety:** I may show resistance, claiming to be frozen or legs not working, silliness, avoidance, running away, hiding or panic;
- **Rigid thinking:** I tend to get stuck thinking and find it difficult to accept when the idea or plan I have in my head cannot take place. I need help to agree an alternative if my plan cannot happen;
- **Difficulties with friends:** I like being with friends but I can be controlling or reactive. I need help so that situations with friends run smoothly;
- **Transitions:** If I am enjoying something I will find it hard to stop and move onto to another activity. Negotiation and ensuring I know and understand what the next activity will be can help;
- **Sensory needs:** I can find certain sensory experiences intolerant or my behaviour might change in crowded/busy situations;
- **Waiting for things:** Waiting in queues or waiting for my turn can be stressful and increase my anxiety;
- **Sharing:** Sharing equipment but also sharing my physical space if I have asked someone to play with me can cause me to feel anxious. I may find it hard to share friends and adult attention also;

What are we working for...

For [insert child's name] to be included in [name of group or class] so he can learn to [insert skills] and be a part of his community. These outcomes would be more specific for a school setting..

[Child's name and picture always go in the middle – the child is as the centre of everything!]

Things I like and am good at...

- Being honest
- I like the number 10
- I like LEGO and Star Wars
- Science is interesting to me
- I like holding equipment being given special jobs
- I am good at diving underwater
- I can remember interesting facts
- I love playing with water
- I like Ipads and TV

What works/how you can help...

- Give processing time;
- Negotiation;
- Help other children understand me;
- Never try to force me into anything I do not feel ready or comfortable doing;
- Giving me some control by offering choices;
- Show you like me, smile and say that you understand how I feel before trying to change my mind;
- Let me be amongst the first few children to take a turn or line up;
- Help me explain what happened after an incident by asking non-judgemental open ended questions like 'what happened just before that?' or 'How did you feel at the point that happened?'

What to do if I panic....

- Try to work out what has led to panic/meltdown and ensure a need is met as soon as possible – it can be resolved later if I have made mistakes;
- Make the area safe and move others away;
- Someone I feel safe with should stay;
- Offer a quiet space;
- Offer sympathy, acknowledge the fear/anxiety and why you think I have it. Tell me we can find a different way;
- Wait and give me time;
- Talk about it later when I am calm;

Other important points:

- Depending on the age and understanding of the child, it can be very helpful for the child to contribute their ideas and also know what is one this profile;
- Positive language and focusing on the underlying skill which is under-developed is better than focusing on the behaviours children exhibit i.e. say 'Difficulty with sharing space' rather than 'hits other children who try to get involved in his games' for instance;
- Be prepared to discuss incidents that occur with professionals in an open way. Try not to view this as a negative, it can be a useful way of demonstrating how you can get to the bottom of an incident and then use the profile to explain why this may have happened. You are not saying that the behaviour was acceptable but you are highlighting why it occurred in light of your child needs and difficulties;