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In The News: SEND Funding

Response to various articles September/October 2018 - The Guardian and TES

“Petition against special needs funding cuts...” “Families take Surrey Council to court over special needs funding.” “Special needs pupils being failed by system ‘on verge of crisis’.” “Heads warn of ‘bleak’ picture on SEND funding.”

SEND funding is very much ‘in the news’ at the moment. There is clearly a grave concern amongst schools and parents about the lack of money available to meet the needs of a growing number of children with increasingly complex needs.

Schools have been forced to reduce the number of teaching assistants in classrooms, meaning that often a choice has to be made between in-class support for a vulnerable child or group interventions. In my recent experience, many planned interventions have not taken place because the teaching assistant has been called to support an individual child showing increasingly challenging behaviours which are a result of being unable to manage successfully in the mainstream environment unsupported.

Accessing support from external professionals comes at a cost in most cases. LAs are no longer able to provide core services free of charge so, again, schools are forced to make difficult decisions about which pupils to refer from the growing list of concerns they have. For SENCOs the battle over budgets continues. Many do not have an allocated budget which makes it hard to plan what services can be used and when.

So far, there doesn’t seem to be a solution. Many LAs are increasing their “high needs” budgets but when an EHCP no longer guarantees additional funding it is hard to see how much difference this will make to individual children. Mr Hammond has announced a ‘bonus’ for schools equating to approximately £10 000 per primary school and £50 000 per secondary, a mere drop in the ocean! What is clear is that more and more are taking to political and legal means to make their point. Parents are suing local authorities

for reducing their SEND budgets, headteachers are protesting and sending petitions to government to highlight their growing concern. Perhaps if we all add our voice to this, we may convince those who really hold the purse strings to listen.

Meanwhile, day-to-day, what can we do? Firstly, set out an action plan for each term and be creative in how we use the resources we have. Use other providers of services, such as Forest School, counsellors, music and art therapy and even the growing number of independent Educational Psychologists and SEN specialists. Some schools are considering setting up their own "alternative provision" within the school to provide a more suitable environment for those children who need something different. Whilst the SEND C of P has not led to better funding for schools, it has clearly given us licence to think outside the box and provide a more tailored, child-centred approach to provision that we might be able to take advantage of.

by Tracey Foster

Related Training: [Meeting SEN Requirements for OfSTED](#) Bodmin 14/11/18



Resource Review: Sensory Timers

These come in a variety of shapes, sizes and colours and are a fantastic sensory aid for some children who need calming for short periods throughout the day. These timers provide a short, time-limited sensory break in the classroom to help a pupil to calm themselves when anxious or agitated. They simply turn the timer, watch the bubbles float up to the top and when it has finished, should be calm enough to continue with their work. For a few pounds per set, these quiet, discreet but attractive timers can reduce anxiety levels and increase the time that a pupil with sensory needs can spend in the classroom.

Various types available online e.g. Pack of 3 for £10.59 + p&p

www.amazon.co.uk

Related Training: [Supporting Children with Sensory Integration Needs](#)
Truro and Okehampton 29/11/18 Bodmin 7/12/18

Recent Research: Behaviour

It has been reported in the TES that 'the proportion of teachers struggling to manage pupil behaviour has jumped to 43% in 2018 from 34% in 2017.'

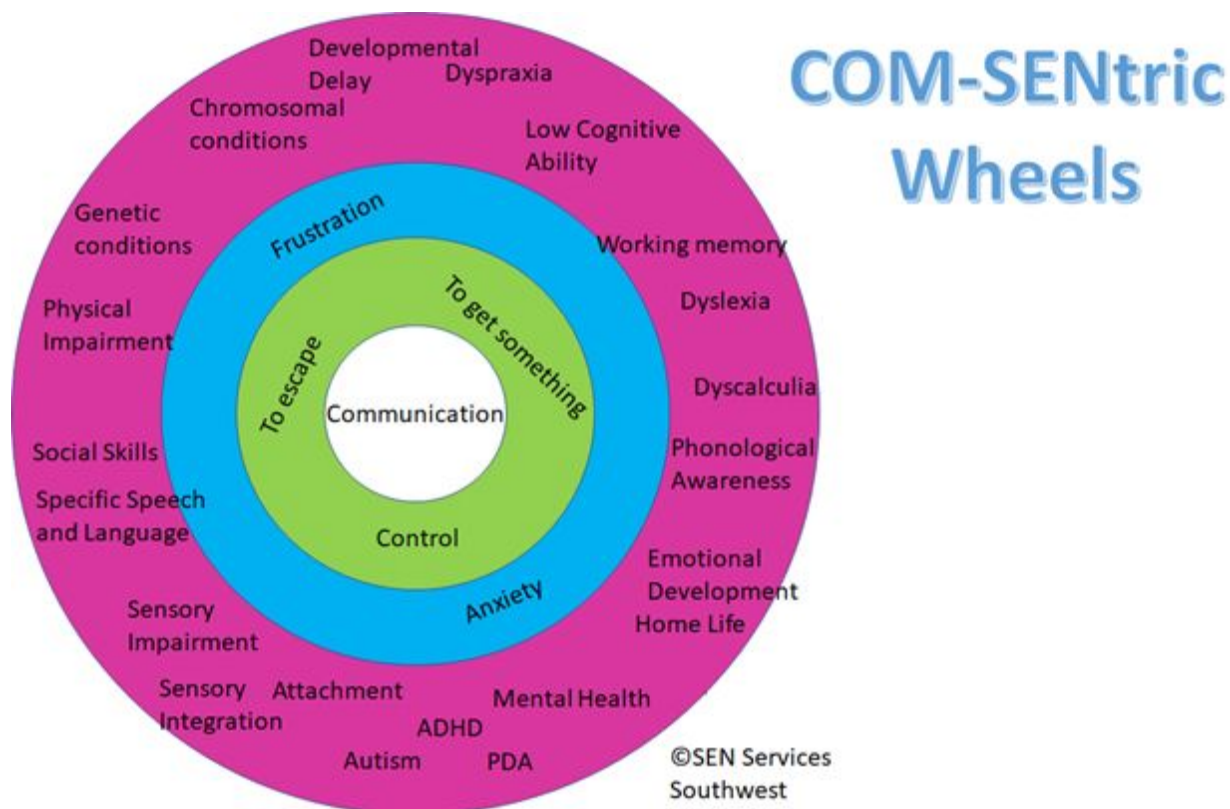
Recent research by the Communication Trust found that 67% of 7 - 14 yr olds with serious behaviour problems have language impairment and at least 60% of young people in Youth Offending Units have communication difficulties.

Thought provoking statistics but not necessarily unsurprising as hopefully we are all well aware that *all behaviour is a communication and has a purpose*. It indicates a need, or is an attempt, to solve a problem. So when a child or young person's behaviour presents as challenging, this indicates that the child is communicating or problem solving in an inappropriate, and often ineffective way.

In order to understand challenging behaviour we need to try to understand the need or problems that they are trying to communicate. However, often the child/young person will be unaware of the underlying communicative function of their behaviour themselves and therein lies our own problem!

There are a whole range of things we need to consider when trying to address challenging behaviours. What function does the behaviour have consciously or subconsciously for the child/yp? Does the behaviour come about through anxiety, frustration or underlying mental health issues? Is there an underlying specific special need? We need to give consideration to all these interlinked questions before we can hope to understand the child/young person's communication to us and start to address it.

Using our COM-SENtric wheels © below may help you to start to focus your thoughts and enable you to consider the best ways forward with support.



Start from the middle and work out...

1. Look at the behaviour/communication
2. (Green wheel) What do you think the function of it is?
3. (Blue wheel) What do you think the child/young person is feeling?
4. (Pink wheel) Have you considered all these specific special needs?

By Sue Plechowicz

Related Training: [Managing Challenging Behaviour - Truro and Okehampton 29/11/18](#) [Bodmin 7/12/18](#)