

## Developing a shared interest in peer groups through hobbies and experience, giving pupil voice to their future

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### Executive summary

A perceived barrier for the pupils at Tram House School is their skill set required to forge 'friendships', peer groups or peer to peer interaction. This case study aims to look at the current research; using this to create an initial assessment and plan to group pupils based on their interests, as well as reducing staff needed to supervise sessions.

The case study will look at initial research, the development of data recording and individual pupil session assessments. There will also be a proposal for next steps.

### Introduction

This case study will focus on a Group of pupils in Key Stage 3, ranging from 12 to 14 years old (Group A). The pupils in Group A all communicate in their own individual way, communication methods include, AAC, verbal, sign and total communication. According to Tram House's pupil mapping pathways, there are pupils in Group A that would be following all curriculum pathways - 'early learner' 'intermediate learner' and 'advanced learner.' This evidences a variety of learners; skills sets and current programmes. That said, all of Group A have peer interaction targets and programmes to develop Independence and skills that are functional for their future. The pupils in Group A have differing effective reinforcers.

Such a variety of communication methods, current repertoires, and reinforcers creates an even larger barrier for Group A to develop a peer group. This study hopes to look at reducing those barriers and begin to deliver pupil voice into generating peer to peer interaction.

### Method

The method began by looking at the current research available on social interaction of participants with similar profiles to those of Group A. The research was sparse. The search criteria then changed to - developing hobbies and interests, task analysis of skills required for social interaction and reducing prompts. Another important research was to look at quantitative versus qualitative research.

The first areas of developing skills and hobbies, guided in the direction of 2 main categories of hobby and interest: sedentary and active. These would typically be the 2 classes of activities that participants would be drawn to in similar groups, therefore representing a group of participants with similar interests. This area led onto choice; choice of activity, the skills required to make an effective choice and the effectiveness of the choice made.

For choice to be successful, Group A would need to be able to identify the activities presented as a choice and have a learner history around the reinforcement they received from them. This means the choice element will need to be introduced once, at minimum Group A have experienced all activities that will be available.

A task analysis of the skills required, came mainly from the school's assessment tools which looked at a breakdown of skills to access social interaction, including a range of skills from tracking other pupils, peer manding and parallel play. It was not necessarily crucial that the pupils in Group A had already acquired these skills, but more it was needed to plan for teaching and fading of these skills during the sessions.

Finally prompt fading, the staffing levels would need to be reduced to move the sessions from directed activities to leisure time, which is more representative of a 'friendship' or peer group. This would also allow for the interactions to occur between pupils of Group A rather than the staff supervising. The use of most-to-least prompt fading procedures were evidenced to be the most effective.

For the sessions to be successful, behaviourally they needed to be broken down into, target behaviours and what would be acting as reinforcers and effective teaching procedures.

## Results

Using this information, a session data sheet was created to track an initial 'experiential' phase of the study (Figure 1). This would be used through observational data collection. Due to the plan to reduced staffing, a qualitative observational data collection method was introduced via, a rating scale with definitions of the scale ratings to encourage a technological approach.

The behaviours defined to be measured were: Physical activity level, Engagement in activity, Peer interaction, Support needed to stay on task, Support needed to stay safe, Tolerating safety clothing and any additional observations made.

A schedule was created to implement the sessions (Figure 2). This included alternating weeks of sedentary versus active activities. The specific 'Active' activities were: Walking (Baseline activity) and Gardening. The specific 'Sedentary' activities were: computers/iPad and Painting/arts and crafts. One activity was defined as both 'Active' and 'Sedentary' which was: construction / Lego. The resources needed for each individual activity, the ideal staffing level, the location, and the data collection method that would be used were also planned for.

Lastly plans for each session (Figure 3) were created looking at the pair-ups of pupils based on communication method, ensuring they had perquisite skills to respond to each other's communication, the target behaviours for being on task and peer interaction, what would be reinforcing the target behaviours and the effective teaching method to be employed.

We were then able to run two sessions. One baseline session of a known walk around the block, as this was an activity all pupils were familiar with, had experienced before and would stay needing their current staffing ratios. The only change was adding in group reinforcement, all pupils had the MO to continue walking but when safe spots were reached, they were told to wait until the other pupils had caught up, introducing the reinforcement being delivered by other pupils and not the staff members.

The next session completed was the computer/iPad session. Staffing was reduced to 1:2 from 1:1. The plans were followed successfully. Staff used the most effective least intrusive prompts to only deliver prompts to stay on task or peer to peer interaction. All reinforcement was delivered by peers.

It is worth noting there were 2 out of 8 pupils missing due to the COVID –19 Pandemic during the baseline session and 1 additional missing during the computer iPad session.

The lead researcher took the initial baseline data of the walking session to ensure validity of the baseline and effectiveness of the data collection method, the staff then completed the second sessions data based on the pupils they were assigned to supervise.

## Discussion

We were able to successfully role out all 3 of the documents created, for 2 sessions. We will continue to do so and amend anything using the current research to guide our decisions.

This is an ongoing project that will begin again during the summer term. A plan has been made for next steps after this 'phase'. These include looking at the hobbies being organised to work towards the work experience skills tracker developed by the sixth form, benefits on pupils physical and mental health, self-directed v leisure sessions and a plan to generalise.

The benefits of this study could be highly beneficial to the pupils in developing a peer group with shared interests of sorts. If successful it will also encourage the growth of hobbies that can lead to careers in the future with the pupil's voice being at the centre of the choice making.

## References

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# BEYONDAUTISM IMPACT STORIES SERIES

Figure 1

## Session Questionnaire

Pupil name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tutor name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

### Physical activity level (please circle 1-10)

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

123	456	789	10
Seated / little physical activity	Standing / physical activity	Physical activity	Out of breath and sweating

### Engagement in activity scale (please circle 1- 10)

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

123	456	789	10
Little or no interest	Interested but easily distracted / little within activity motivation	Interested	Highly motivated and engaged the whole time

### Engagement with peers (please circle 1- 10)

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

123	456	789	10
Little or no interest	Visually tracking, smiling, or making eye contact	Imitating, approaching or parallel play	Requesting and interacting with peers

### Level of support to stay on task (please circle all that apply)

Support:                    1:1 whole time    1:1 partial time    1:2 partial time    1:2 whole time  
 Prompting:                Majority PP    Majority FP    Majority G/Imitative    Majority V    Majority Ind  
 Reinforcement:            Additional reinforcement needed    Within activity reinforcement

### Level of support to stay safe (Please circle all that apply)

Support:                    1:1 whole time    1:1 partial time    1:2 partial time    1:2 whole time  
 Prompting:                Majority PP    Majority FP    Majority G/Imitative    Majority V    Majority Ind  
 Reinforcement:            Additional reinforcement needed    Within activity reinforcement

### Did they wear/ tolerate safety clothing?

Yes                    Partially                    No

Any additional notes:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# BEYONDAUTISM IMPACT STORIES SERIES

Figure 2

Week no.	Activity level	Activity	Date	Resources needed	Ideal staffing level	Location	Data collection
1	Active	Walking		ID badges, map of walk	1:1 + spares according to RA	Off site	Session questionnaire
2	Sedentary	computers/iPad		Computers and iPad per pupil Activity plan	2:1 + lead	LIBRARY	Session questionnaire
3	Active	Gardening		Soil Pots Plants (fake?) Spades – plastic Weeds Gloves Visual guide Activity plan	2:1 plus extras + lead	Playground / life skills	Session questionnaire
4	Sedentary	Painting / arts and crafts		Canvases Paint Stickers Aprons Activity plan	2:1 plus extras + lead	Playground / life skills	Session questionnaire
5	Active + Sedentary	Construction / <u>lego</u>		Cardboard boxes Tape Lego Bricks Toy hammers and nails sets Visual guide Activity plan	2:1 plus extras + lead	Playground / life skills	Session questionnaire

Figure 3

**Plans for computer session**

Resources needed:  
Computers - Library

Pupil pair ups	staffing	Release second tutor to	Target behaviours	Reinforcement for target behaviours	Peer interaction	Reinforcement delivered by peers	How to prompt	Notes
█ █	CAG	Displays	Sitting watching/tracking computer screen	Computer / specific videos requested	Requests for commands of video	Videos requested	Least intrusive most effective from behind (teaching stim chains)	
█ █	EJ	Displays						
█	MCT	NA / Observe	Independent play	Intermittent Verbal reinforcement	Tolerating in the room on computers	NA	observing ready to prompt requests for escape or help	