ICT to support pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs

Learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties may appear withdrawn and can be isolated from social interaction. Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties may take a number of forms, for example:

- low self-esteem or depression
- social withdrawal, isolation or underachievement
- school phobia
- hyperactivity and lack of concentration
- disruptive, anti-social and uncooperative behaviour
- frustration, anger and threat of or actual violence
- emotional damage resulting from abuse, neglect or psychological trauma.

A learner may demonstrate one or more of these support needs, all of which can get in the way of their learning and access to the curriculum.

How can pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties benefit from ICT?

Although it certainly isn't appropriate for all pupils, some do find ICT less threatening, allowing them to control the pace of their work. For some who find it difficult to establish relationships, a computer can take the pressure off and be a way to join in with others. Pupils who may benefit include those who find group work, turn-taking and generally being part of a class group more stressful. ICT can help make teacher-pupil contact less confrontational, and allow the teacher to emphasise discussion and problem-solving rather than more traditional pupil-teacher roles.

Does the pupil need support in spoken or written communication?

Word processors allow learners to experiment knowing that, once they are happy with what has been written, they can print it out in an attractive layout and type style. For less confident spellers, the spellchecker or word bank gives confidence, enabling users to concentrate on the content of their work rather than the mechanics of the writing process. Students with poor handwriting can be reassured that the final product will look as good as their classmates' contributions. All these features combine to help students gain in self-esteem and confidence in their learning.

Refer to ICT Advice Sheet *A guide to identifying ICT provision to help pupils with communication and interaction difficulties*.

Does the pupil need support in reading and writing?

Additional difficulties such as a specific spelling or other literacy difficulty or poor co-ordination can reduce an already low self-esteem. In such cases, ICT can reduce the barriers to writing accurately and affect their attitude to learning as a whole. However, it isn't a case of providing a laptop as a panacea; extra support or training will probably be needed before the equipment can be used with confidence.

Refer to ICT Advice Sheet *A guide to identifying what additional ICT provision may help pupils with cognitive and learning difficulties*.

What ICT might engage the pupil and build attention through a focus on the pupil's interests?

Interactive talking books

Talking books can engage learners with short attention span and encourage interaction. Interactive talking books range from picture-book series for younger learners to mainly text-based classics and books on sports activity for older learners. The stories can either be read aloud from the computer or have hot spots to activate animations or sound effects, or take the pupil to other screens. Examples include **Grandma and Me** for younger learners, **Sheila Rae the Brave** for older learners, and Dorling Kindersley's **Castle Explorer** and **Stowaway**. Instead of off-the-shelf software, **MS PowerPoint**, **Clicker 4 or 5** and **Writing with Symbol**s, **Communicate in Print** can all be used as framework software to design different styles of talking books to suit individual pupils.

Music technology

Students who find it difficult, or may just prefer not to, learn how to play a musical instrument may benefit from using ICT to record sounds. The sounds can then be re-used in different ways, for example to record some of their own performances and then collecting the best bits together. For some pupils being able to listen to and judge their own work can lead to improvements that might not otherwise be achieved through teacher feedback. Examples such as **Music Factory Dance Ejay** and **Music Maker** give pupils the chance to explore sounds and compose quite sophisticated pieces. Pupils can use MIDI and sequencing equipment to edit sounds and create new compositions with different tempos and instruments. Not only that but music technology is likely to have high street-cred with peer groups.

Multimedia including digital images and video

Pupils with communication and interaction difficulties may benefit from using technology that is not text-based. Sounds, symbols, photos and other non text-based materials present ways of recording work, keeping a record of achievement and can be used to give a voice to the child at review meetings. Pupils can produce their own images with an inexpensive digital stills camera. Using a stills or even cheap digital movie camera pupils can produce excellent personalised work.

Problem-solving software and adventure games

Adventure games allow pupils to develop their problem-solving skills, test out ideas and think logically. They can be highly motivating for young people and are intended to be fun and encourage concentration, memory, recall and hypothesis. Adventure games can also help pupils to develop language skills and problem-solving strategies.

Where can I find out more?

A number of centres and services provide advice and information, assessment, and loans of communication and writing equipment for trial:

National centres UK-wide

British Dyslexia Association

ICT and Practising Literacy Skills
http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk/main/information/c04literacy_skills.aspp

Supporting Writing with ICT
http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk/main/information/c04support_writing.aspp

Study Skills and Technology
http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk/main/information/c05study_skills.aspp

Small and Portable Devices
http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk/main/information/c02portable_devices.aspp

ebd-forum mailing list

E-mail other practitioners to share and discuss ideas on the education of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties at: http://www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/

Inclusion web sites

Search the on-line catalogue for resources, software, books and practice examples that can support the education of these learners. http://inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk or http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/inclusiveeducation

National Autistic Society (NAS)

This is a UK charity concerned with the education of pupils with autism; there are a number of branches and projects in Scotland, and Daldorch House School, a 52-week autism-specific residential school in Ayrshire. Tel: 0141 221 8090 http://www.nas.org.uk/
http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=134

Pyramid Educational Consultants UK Ltd.

This organisation provides training in PECS (the Picture Exchange Communication System) used mainly with pupils with autism. http://www.pecs.org.uk

SEBDA (Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties Association)

Formerly the Association of Workers for Children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, SEBDA hosts discussion forums, useful links, provides a range of resources and curricular materials http://www.awcebd.co.uk/index1.htmm

Xplanatory

Information about approaches to teaching learners with emotional and behavioural difficulties can be found at: http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/xplanatory/approach/approach.htmm

National contacts in Scotland

Afasic

UK charity representing children and young adults with speech and language impairments and providing information and advice. For a list of publications, see
http://www.afasic.org.uk/m_publications.htmm
93 Denoon Terrace, DUNDEE, DD2 2DG. Tel: 01382 666560;
Email: afasicscot@aol.com

Augmentative Communication in Practice: Scotland

This Scottish group runs an annual study day on aspects of augmentative and alternative communication, and publishes papers from these study days. See the CALL Centre website (below) which gives information about events and publications, specifically Augmentative communication in practice: An introduction
http://callcentre.education.ed.ac.uk/SCN/Intro_SCA/intro_sca.html

Communication Aids for Language and Learning (CALL) Centre

This centre has a Scotland-wide remit to provide information and advice, assessments, loans and technical services, and undertakes research and development.
http://callcentrescotland.org.uk (Resources Section]

Learning and Teaching Scotland

74 Victoria Crescent Road, Glasgow G12 9JN. Tel. 0141 337 5000, Fax 0141 337 5050.
http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/inclusiveeducation In the Search box type "Success for All" in quotes, or "Social emotional behavioural difficulties".

Scottish Schools Ethos network

The Scottish Schools Ethos Network promotes developing a positive school ethos which has been identified in many school improvement studies as fundamental to raising achievement. The ethos network is linked to resources on anti-bullying, peer support and other whole school strategies.
http://www.ethosnet.co.uk

Scottish Society for Autism

This is the leading provider of services for people with autism in Scotland. The Society also facilitates the **Autism Alliance for Scotland**, which includes the leading regional autism support groups across Scotland. http://www.autism-in-scotland.org.uk

Local services

There is a person with responsibility for ICT and Additional Support Needs in most local authorities, and they are all part of a national network known as **ICT for Support for Learning in Scotland (ICTSLS)**. To see the full list and contact numbers, email addresses etc.:
callcentre.education.ed.ac.uk/Useful_Links/Useful_Geo_Links/Scotland_ULA/ICTSLS_ULB/ictsls_ulb.html