



## **AET Schools Autism Progression Framework Evaluation Project**

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## Final summary and recommendations

The AET Schools Autism Progression Framework was made available as a free download via the AET website in March 2016 and a training module in its use added to the AET schools training programme. A review of the AET Schools Autism Progression Framework was carried out by Autism Associates during 2017/18. The aims of the review were to:

### 1. Evaluate the use of the Framework in schools to inform its future development

### 2. Provide recommendations for its application to Early Years settings

The findings of the review process and key points for consideration are described in detail in the project reports accompanying this summary.

The review team met with the AET Director in January 2018 in order to discuss the findings and agree proposals for future development of the Progression Framework.

## Methodology

Information for the review was gathered via consultation with representatives from schools and services and other stakeholders using an online survey, focus group discussions and individual interviews (telephone and face-to face). Details of the consultation process and findings are described in the project reports. In summary:

**Online survey – 194 responses** were received with representation from a range of settings and age phases across England

**Focus groups** - feedback from practitioners from **4 specialist autism teams** and from the AET Leadership groups (Schools and Early Years)

**Interviews** – Interviews with **25 professionals/teams** representing a range of schools and services with experience of using the Progression Framework. Interviews were based on key themes emerging from the online survey.

**Young People's Panel** – Feedback was received from the AET Young People's Panel (YPP) (discussion at YPP meeting)

## Summary of Findings

### Phase 1: Progression Framework review

There was significant positive feedback about the Framework's content, its flexibility and its focus on the individual pupil. As well as its function as a tool for measuring progress in 'non-academic' areas, practitioners highlighted its usefulness in supporting:

- The identification of areas where pupils may require support due to autism differences
- Goal setting in partnership with other practitioners (eg teaching assistants) by providing a common language and shared evidence base
- Implementation of the graduated approach as advocated in the Code of Practice 2015 (Assess-Plan-Do-Review)
- The writing of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and related documents
- Working in partnership with parents

- Transitions eg pre-school to school; school to college
- The creation of bespoke systems which meet the requirements of individual services

*“What is noticeable now is that two of the children who have been using it for nearly two years are really showing the benefits. It is supporting them to meet and manage their own needs. They are developing independence and progress is being accelerated. It has been a very structured tool supporting some of our TAs who feel that as it is evidence based that they are, in their words, “doing the right thing to support these pupils”. This and the AET tier training is making them feel a lot more confident in meeting the needs of these pupils”*  
(Primary School teacher, Birmingham)

Feedback from the Young People’s Panel emphasised the need to involve young people in setting and reviewing their own targets:

*“(It) MUST involve the young person and include reviews of progress and agreement of targets”*

Overall, there was a very good response to the content of the Framework. A few respondents felt that an increased facility to personalise learning intentions and make them ‘SMART-er’ would be useful. Some respondents requested the inclusion of links to teaching strategies and resources in order to assist staff in supporting their pupils effectively.

Although many users were using the Framework effectively there was evidence that some services had found the volume of content difficult to access when first introduced. In some instances this was due to its being used as a checklist rather than to support individual goal setting and progress tracking as intended. Implementation appeared to have been most effective where users had received support via AET training or from support services or individuals already familiar with its use. It was felt that improved guidance and support in identifying priorities or ‘profiling’ an individual pupil so as to provide a ‘way in’ to the document would result in the tool being used more effectively. Ways in which the Framework could be ‘tailored’ to settings working with particular age phases or profiles of young people by having a smaller number of learning intentions to choose from at the outset had been explored by some services.

Some respondents made suggestions for development in order to meet services’ specific needs in relation to assessment, recording and reporting processes. These included the facility to view progress over time (more than one academic year); links with evidence collection tools; use with iPad; extension of Progress Scale. Some services were using commercial tools which allowed them to access some of these features whilst using the content of the Progression Framework eg the ‘Show Progress’ tool developed with Linden Bridge school.

## **Phase 2: Application to Early Years settings**

Consultation specific to Early Years (EY) settings took place with 10 practitioners/services working with this age range. The AET Early Years Leadership Group was also consulted.

Feedback indicated that a progression tool specific to autism would be beneficial and a number of functions of such a resource were identified (see Early Years report). Although existing EYFS materials were felt to be of high quality it was felt that there was a need to provide additional (but linked) support for practitioners in identifying priorities for learning in order to take into account autism areas of difference.

A number of services were using the existing Framework and felt that it was meeting their needs. Reasons were cited for having one Progression Framework that could be used across all age phases. These included:

- Evidence of effective use of existing Framework within EY provision
- Many EY settings form part of a wider provision (eg schools with EY provision)
- Provides consistency of use across settings and supports transitions
- The emphasis on using the Framework to identify individual needs allows for a focus on areas specific to the child
- Learning intentions in the Progression Framework are not age-related

However, there was some concern that the scope of the document might impede accessibility for EY settings whose experience of autism may be limited (eg the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector). Ways in which settings could be supported to use the tool effectively alongside statutory EYFS systems would need to be explored.

The importance of involving parents in the process of identifying learning priorities and reviewing progress was expressed and the need to ensure accessibility. Systems for sharing information about a child's progress and development such as Learning Journals or evidence collection apps were used by some services to good effect.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

Feedback received for the review was useful in highlighting both positive aspects of experience of using the Progression Framework and in identifying areas for development. Detailed comments and action points are included within the attached reports on each phase of the project which were used as a basis for discussion with the AET. It was agreed that proposals for further work on the Progression Framework should focus on the following main areas:

### **1. Review and refine content of Progression Framework to ensure it supports planning and assessment across age phases (including Early Years and post 16):**

- Develop overall content / wording / facility to 'tailor' learning intentions to individual pupils
- Ensure compatibility with related documents eg other AET materials, EYFS documents
- Ensure accessibility for non-specialist practitioners, parents and pupils
- Consider inclusion of resource links (eg other AET materials)

### **2. Develop technical specification of the Progression Framework to ensure ease of access and inclusion of additional features:**

- Explore potential of 'app' development
- Further consultation with settings (eg assessment leads) to ensure compatibility with existing systems
- Improve access to previous years' progress information
- Extend evidence collection facility
- Review progress scale

### **3. Develop guidance and support for using the Progression Framework:**

- Develop systems/ support for profiling pupil as a 'way in' to using the Framework
- Develop existing guidance documents / training eg video / online

***Suzanne Farrell, Autism Associates, February 2018***

## **Contract specifications**

### **A. Project Title**

Review of AET Progression Framework and proposal for application in Early Years settings.

### **B. Aims of the Project**

Evaluate use of the AET progression framework to inform future development and provide recommendations for application in early years settings

### **C. Objectives and deliverables of the Project**

Following the development of the AET Progression Framework in 2015/16 and its implementation in school settings during 2016/17, AET wishes to review its use and understand how it should be developed to meet the needs of those in early years settings.

This contract exists in the context of the AET's wider contract with DfE and, in the context of which, the key deliverable at the end of the contract period is described as: Report provided on model to inform application in early years sector to include feedback from current delivery partners and 10 schools as to both positive and negative attributes.

#### **Key objectives are:**

1. Consult with schools and services about positive aspects of Progression Framework and areas for development. Key areas of focus to include:
  - Content
  - format (including IT element)
  - type of school/service using/not using (whether it is more suitable for more able/less able pupils etc)
  - ways of using
  - needs of schools/services
  - compatibility with other systems
2. Collate feedback and make proposals for future development of Progression Framework
3. Consult with settings/services about effectiveness of existing Progression Framework for use with children on the autism spectrum in the Early Years phases
4. Collate feedback and make proposals for development of Progression Framework model for Early Years settings

### **D. Methodology**

The methodology and project plan is outlined in document Evaluation of AET Schools' Autism Progression Framework: Project Specification submitted to AET April 2017.

## Report to AET - Phase 1 - November 2017

### Project focus and outcomes to date

Consultation has taken place with schools and services using the Framework via online survey, group discussion and interviews (telephone and face-to-face).

### 1. FEEDBACK FROM ONLINE SURVEY

Work in the first phase focused on the online survey supported by initial engagement with autism outreach teams using the Framework within their schools. A good response was received from the survey with 194 returned in total.

There was very good representation from a range of settings and age phases across England including mainstream primary (including EYFS), mainstream secondary, college, nursery, autism resource bases, special schools, alternative provision/PRUs, autism outreach services, consultant/advisory professionals (see Fig 1 and Fig 2).

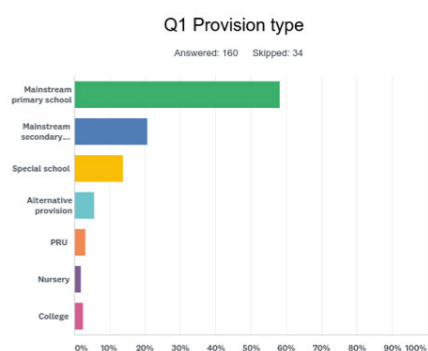


Fig.1

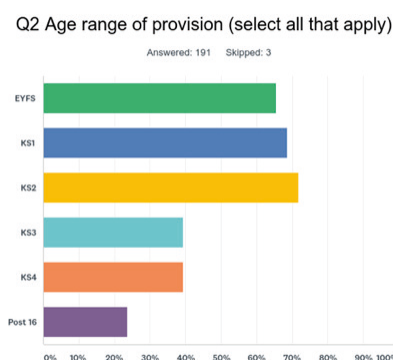


Fig.2

The profile of pupils for whom the Progression Framework was being used was varied and encompassed those with additional diagnosed conditions. Examples of comments were:  
*"From above average cognitive skills to significant learning difficulties, including pupils with co-occurring conditions, e.g. deafness, visual impairment, dyspraxia, dyslexia, attachment disorder"*

*"Mainstream ability in academic terms but suffering from extreme social anxiety that previously led to being school refusers hence the need for a provision that meets their social, emotional and mental health needs as a priority"*

*"Children with and without a diagnosis currently in a mainstream school. The Progression Framework is used to ascertain a clearer understanding about the child's social skills and to inform small step target setting"*

*"Mainly the children who have a very different provision and EHCP and are not yet working at expected levels, especially in communication and interaction"*

*"Starting to use it with girls with ASC diagnosis"*

The majority of respondents had begun using the Framework within the last academic year



(2016-2017) with 35% 'just started using' and a number at the point of introducing it. Many users commented that it was valuable in providing evidence of learning in areas outside the National Curriculum.

*"I think the framework is a really good way to show parents how their children are making progress in school. It's very visual, easy to understand and allows us to pinpoint areas which we feel the child needs to develop particular skills".*

Respondents were asked to comment on the content, structure/layout and specific features (priority rating, progress scale, comments box, overview page) of the Framework. Key themes identified are summarised below (Emerging themes).

In addition, overall user-friendliness was rated highly as outlined in Fig 3

Q10 As an interactive EXCEL document please rate the overall user-friendliness of the Progression Framework once you were familiar with it

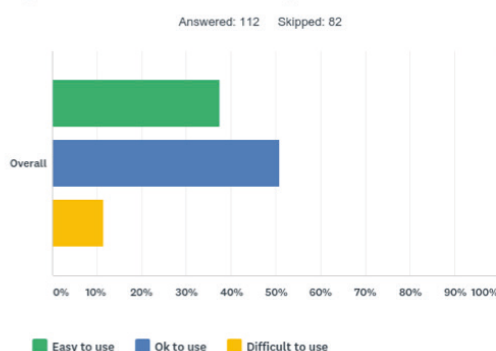


Fig.3

A variety of support and guidance (Fig 4) in using the Framework had been received by users with many commenting that attending training had been the best way of 'getting the most out of it'. Support from specialist support team colleagues was also cited as beneficial.

Q11 Please indicate any ways in which you have been supported in your use of the Progression Framework

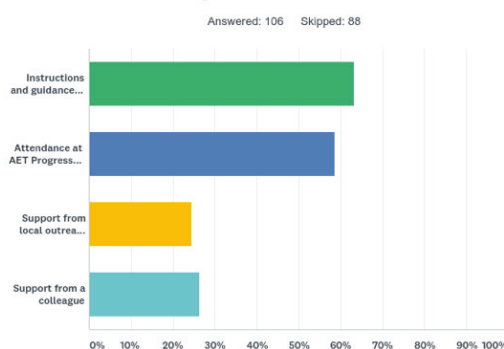


Fig.4

Ways in which the Framework was being used is charted in Fig 5 with use 'as a reference document for planning/setting priorities' being the principal use followed by 'as an EXCEL document to measure progress'. Use 'as a reference document for use with other assessment tools' was also significant with examples of use with Evidence for Learning (evidence

collection app) and alongside commercial assessment tools such as PIVATs and B Squared and assessment accompanying the SCERTS model.

Q12 In which of the following ways are you currently using the Progression Framework?  
(select all that apply)

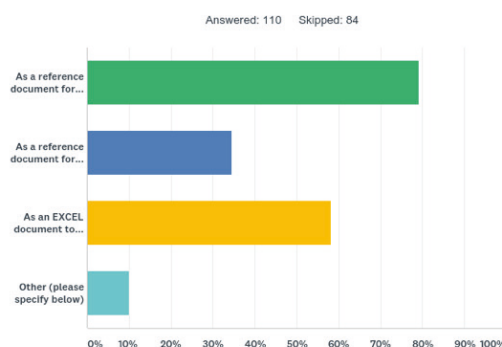


Fig.5

### Emerging themes from survey

In addition to the above, survey respondents were asked to provide feedback and/or suggestions for development in relation to specific aspects of the Framework (content, structure and layout, specific features). Responses were analysed and emerging themes identified. Work carried out concurrently with practitioners from autism outreach teams via face-to-face discussion/'post it' exercises resulted in similar themes which are summarised below.

### Positive aspects

Many respondents provided very positive feedback on their experience of using the Progression Framework and asked for it to remain unchanged. Comments which reflected its aims and can be summarised as follows:

- Provides valuable, focused support for target setting in relation to EHCPs, IEPs, SEN funding applications etc. Has helped in 'sharpening up' targets
- Fits well with the 'graduated approach' advocated by the Code of Practice
- Provides a focus for work with / reporting to parents
- Provides a consistent focus for advisory teams working with schools
- Helps professionals who may not be experienced in autism in identifying areas that may require support
- Helps to highlight the importance (and evidence) of progress made in non-academic areas
- Helps identify 'barriers' to learning which, once addressed, can then lead to progress in other areas
- Flexibility – practitioners can 'dip in and out', adapt and tailor to own needs
- Can be used with pupils both with and without diagnosis (and other SEN)
- Being used across a range of settings/age phases with pupils with a wide range of autism profiles and additional needs
- Many practitioners asked for it to remain unchanged

### Suggested areas for development

Areas for potential development drawn from survey responses included:

- Size/access – can be initially daunting. Support as to ‘where to begin’ eg profiling needs as a starting point before accessing more detail; having a less detailed ‘top layer’; having versions specific to particular age phases
- Facility to show progress over a longer period of time (more than 3 terms or ‘cycles’) - so that information is held within the same document
- Ways in which learning intentions can be made more specific to individuals / SMARTer (eg allowing practitioners to ‘tailor’ targets to individuals and/or include more information on criteria for achievement etc)
- Links to strategies and resources that will support pupils to make progress in areas identified (eg links to resources in AET Tools 4 Teachers or other AET materials)
- Ways of linking to evidence to support progress reporting
- Ways of recording progress for more than one pupil within the same document (eg for nurture groups)
- Easier printing from EXCEL
- Paper version
- IPad /app version
- Pupil-friendly (‘I can’ version)
- Slimmed down guidance document (or alternative eg video instructions) and improved support for using (eg some kind of cascaded training to avoid issues with using it ‘blind’)

Survey responses were also used to identify users willing to engage in more detailed follow up interviews in order to elicit more detailed discussion about the Framework and to explore ways in which it was being used, including adaptations and extensions developed by practitioners within schools /services in order to meet their own needs.

## **2. FEEDBACK FROM INTERVIEWS**

Work in the second phase focused on acquiring more detailed feedback from 23 schools and services about their use of the Progression Framework to date and ideas for future development, including its application for use within Early Years settings.

A list of interviewees is included as Appendix 1. There was representation from a range of settings and roles across England including mainstream primary (including EYFS), mainstream secondary, autism resource bases, special schools, autism outreach services, consultant/advisory professionals. The focus within this phase was on identifying potential areas for development within the existing Progression Framework with some initial gathering of views on its application to Early Years settings.

Discussions were focused around key questions drawn from the emerging themes identified above (see Appendix 2 for interview questions). In addition to practitioner views on development, also of interest were ways in which settings had adapted or used the Progression Framework within or alongside existing systems.

The findings are summarised below accompanied by action points which will inform recommendations for development.

## Summary of findings

Many positive aspects of the Framework were reported by interviewees with many comments mirroring those from the survey. Key feedback included:

- Positive feedback on content (“The content is fundamentally excellent”).
- Useful to support writing of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and SEN funding bids
- Not just used with pupils with autism but with broader SEN population
- Its flexibility is a strength: “It gives control back to professionals”
- Useful to have a common language / to share common themes
- Looks at what the pupil ‘can do’ rather than what they ‘can’t’
- A tool for supporting work with Teaching Assistants and Learning Support Assistants. It provides an evidence base which “empowers” them to be more confident in their input to the target setting processes
- Supports work in partnership with parents eg to identify goals
- Supports transitions eg pre-school to school; school to college

Summary of response to key questions

### 2.1 Size/Level of detail/Content

Feedback in relation to content was largely positive with only a small number of suggestions for adding to or refining content. These included ensuring that areas considered a priority for children in the Early Years phase were covered in sufficient detail (this will be discussed further as part of the EYFS report and recommendations). Also of interest was discussion with a speech and language therapist about ensuring ways in which pupils could be supported to develop their awareness of other people’s thoughts and feelings as a pre-requisite skill to effective social interaction and developing peer relationships (cf the Hanen model’s ‘Talkability’ resources).

Ways in which the content might be restructured were also suggested eg to make links to ‘Engagement’ areas cited in the Rochford Review more explicit; cross referencing to Code of Practice areas.

Some survey respondents (particularly those in non-specialist settings) had highlighted concerns about the level of detail within the Framework leading to it becoming ‘overwhelming’ and time consuming (\*see Note below).

(\*Note: although not explicit in their responses there was some evidence to suggest that some users were using the Progression Framework as an assessment ‘checklist’ whereby a pupil’s ability against all the learning intentions was assessed. This would indeed be time consuming and was not its intended function and this is made clear within the training session. Ways in which its intended use can be made more explicit for those not attending training are included within action points below)

Interviewees were asked to give views on possible solutions to concerns about size ie slimming down the content; having a less detailed ‘top layer’ as a starting point; including a ‘profiling’ stage to allow people to identify priorities.

Opinion was mixed with some interviewees reporting that “it gets easier over time” and that the level of detail was valuable and allowed for flexibility and the “ability to tailor to individual profiles”. One respondent expressed concerns about a ‘top layer’ as it might result in areas of relevance being missed:

*“I have found that a student might not appear to match a category but then you find there are just 2 or 3 learning intentions that are relevant”.*

Some practitioners and services felt that the tool would be more user-friendly if they could target (or extract) areas specific to a particular age phase, area of difference or learning profile and examples were shared where bespoke tools had been created using the content of the Framework. One service had created their own EXCEL documents relevant to different age groups. Another had extracted learning intentions specific to the profile of a small number of young people in an alternative provision placement and used them to create their own target tracker (Fig 6):

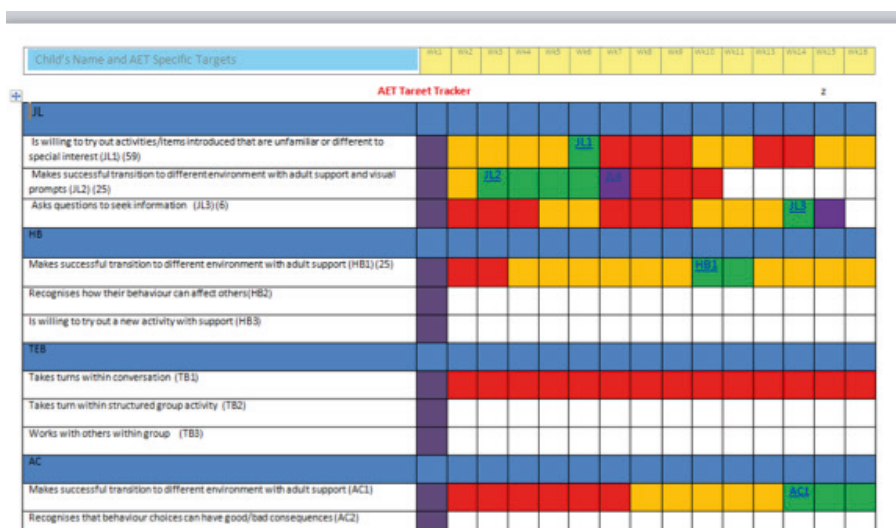


Fig.6

Ref: Glenn Lewis, Leicestershire Autism Outreach Service

One school, whose Multi-Academy Trust were looking into ways of addressing recommendations from the Rochford Review, had matched learning intentions from the Progression Framework to headings within the Engagement Profile areas cited in the Rochford Review report (Fig 7):

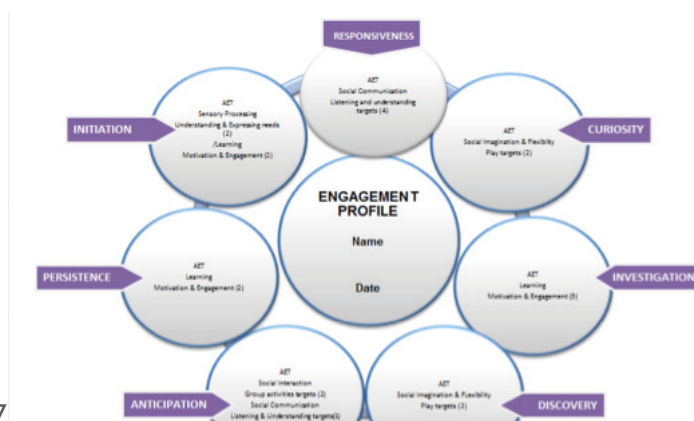


Fig.7

Ref: Sue Pawluk-Eddale Rise primary school, Nottingham

Some interviewees felt that an initial 'profiling baseline' would be useful in identifying starting points and direction as to which areas within the Framework to focus on. This is the focus of a tool developed by the Birmingham Communication and Autism Team (CAT) which is used alongside the Progression Framework.

This is a profiling tool designed to capture the voice of the child or young person and their parents and involve them in identifying priorities and next steps in the areas of social communication, social interaction, social imagination, sensory processing and personal skills. There are separate versions for different age ranges:

Fig 8a

The young person is involved in rating their ability against some key statements using a 5 point scale:

Fig 8b

The results of this process are charted in order to create a profile of areas in which the young person feels more or less confident and to identify potential areas for support and development. The process can be repeated at points throughout a young person's learning

journey in order to view progress:

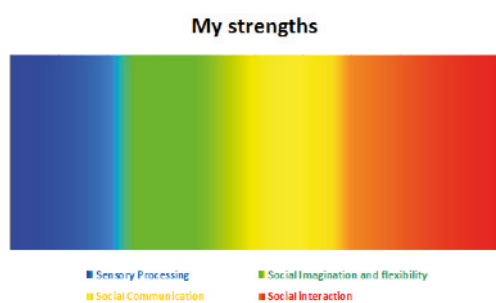


Fig 8c

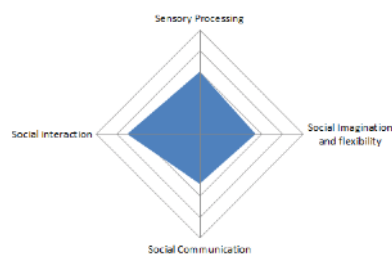


Fig 8d

Once areas to work on have been agreed the CAT team recommend using the Progression Framework to support target setting and progress tracking in more detail. Parents and teachers can also input their views into this process which can be compared with the views of the young person.

### Action

- Identify ways of supporting users to efficiently and effectively identify priorities for pupils

## 2.2 Progress over time

A few services felt that the Framework would better serve their needs in relation to progress tracking if there was facility to show progress within the same document year on year. The existing version is designed for use over one year\* and users are advised to save or archive the previous years' information. Some respondents were happy with the existing set up which allows the creation of an 'overview' page which for many users was a particular strength of the tool (eg as a summary of priorities and progress over the year to share with parents and other professionals) and there was caution about making the spreadsheet more complex. Others, however, felt that it would be useful to be able to automatically 'carry over' learning intentions either to use as a starting point for the following year or to continue working on them.

Again, some users had used the content of the Framework as a basis for creating their own bespoke assessment systems which served their own needs and brought a variety of different assessment data together. For example Linden Bridge school have used learning intentions from the Framework in their 'Show Progress' tool (see below) and Robert Ogden school have drawn from the Framework to create a bespoke assessment framework to support their developing AIM curriculum.

\*Although previous information can remain in the document in the current format it is only the 'active' learning intentions (being worked on at the time) that can be seen in the Overview if the same document is used.

### Action

- Consider ways of developing the Framework so that:
  - previous progress information is retained and easily accessible



- learning intentions from previous year are available as a starting point for following year

### **2.3 Recording for groups**

A small number of survey respondents requested the facility to record information for groups of students within the Framework eg to record progress against the same objectives for a nurture group. The consensus amongst interviewees, however, was that the ethos of the Framework was a focus on individual needs and group recording might distract from this.

*"I think the real selling feature of the PF is its focus on the individual rather than the group and it really enables individualised target setting.*

*I think that recording the progress of groups is secondary and would fear that this would take away from its strength in focusing on the individual. The setting of group targets for me is not the difficulty I face in schools but meeting individual needs is."*

### **2.4 SMARTer / Individualised learning intentions**

Some feedback was received about the possibility of editing existing learning intentions in order to make them 'SMARTer', more personalised or to break down into smaller steps. Although some interviewees felt that this could be useful others felt that the 'additional learning intentions' facility covered this aspect and that an element of caution in relation to allowing users to edit the document needed to be exercised. Some practitioners also requested the facility to add information to the document (eg criteria for assessment; teaching strategies; evidence of learning) other than through the 'Comments' boxes. In relation to evidence the existing hyperlink facility was felt to be useful. A number of schools also shared ways in which they were reviewing their systems in relation to evidence in line with increasing OFSTED focus on work scrutiny / evidence of learning. Examples of commercial tools being used to good effect were described (eg Evidence for Learning; Tapestry; SOLAR for Schools). Some tools link evidence to targets /learning intentions and also allow schools to input their own assessment systems and it is proposed that possibilities for using the Progression Framework in this way be further investigated:

*"We have recently attended training and have now shared in school. We use an IEP system for setting targets and measuring progress and the framework sits under the IEP. We have the framework on all iPads in an App called Evidence for learning"*

The 'Show Progress' progress tracking tool (now commercially available to schools) also provides this facility. Staff at Linden Bridge school (where the tool was developed) draw on Progression Framework content when setting learning intentions to include within the software.

### **Action**

- Review and refine wording of existing learning intentions within document
- Increase space for number of additional learning intentions
- Consider feasibility of developing an option to add further information
- Investigate possible links with existing evidence collection tools



## 2.5 Resource links

It was agreed that the inclusion of links to resources to support practitioners in areas identified within the Framework would be a useful additional feature but acknowledged that this could be a labour-intensive task. The use of existing AET links to resources (eg those referenced in the Standards and Competency Framework or Tools for Teachers) was suggested. It was noted that, as with resources referenced elsewhere, regular updating would be necessary to ensure links remained operational.

### Action

- Discuss feasibility of including resource links from other AET materials
- Consider where to place links included within the Framework

## 2.6 Format

Feedback was received in relation to the following areas:

### • Progress Scale

There was concern that pupils can remain within the 'developing' section for some time and scope for breaking this down further was queried. One school who had used learning intentions from the Framework within their own assessment system used the term 'Emerging' instead of 'Not Yet Developed' to indicate areas where the young person was showing 'readiness' to make progress.

Some schools felt that guidance on identifying and evidencing progress might be useful eg provision of a number of pieces of evidence to support judgements as to what constitutes 'achievement' of a learning intention at a particular point on the Progress Scale.

### • Printing

Printing was felt to be important to some services whereas others were working towards becoming 'paperless'. Some pages were reported to be more difficult to print than others and appeared to relate to overall knowledge of EXCEL.

### • Comments box

Some technical issues were reported in relation to inputting comments.

### • iPad

The ability to use the Framework interactively on an iPad would be welcome but it was acknowledged that this was not currently possible within an EXCEL document and that app development had implications for cost.

### Action

- Consult with IT specialist on improvements to printing and comments box input
- Consider inclusion of additional descriptor to Progress Scale eg add 'Emerging' between 'NYD' and 'Developing' or ways of showing degrees of progress within 'Developing' section (eg support provided)
- Research options for use with iPad
- Provide guidance on supporting progress judgement

## 2.7 Guidance/support

As mentioned above training in the use of the Framework was felt to be very useful and

although the guidance document was effective it was felt that a shorter 'getting started' version would be useful. Suggested formats included video demonstration, flow diagram, worked examples and instructions within the pages of the Framework itself.

## **Action**

- Review training and revise as necessary
- Review guidance formats and revise as needed

## **3. Summary and Recommendations**

The information described above is useful both in highlighting positive feedback about the Progression Framework and in identifying potential areas for review and development. It was also very pleasing to hear about creative and flexible ways in which the Framework content is being used to support the development of bespoke systems which meet the requirements of individual services. Many users were new to the Framework and requested more time to embed its use within settings but were enthusiastic about its potential. A small number of respondents reported delays in implementation due to staff changes or the requirement for approval from senior leadership.

Overall, there was a very good response to the content of the Framework with suggestions for development pertaining mainly to its application to younger children (Early Years) which will be considered in the second part of the project. A few respondents felt that an increased facility to personalise learning intentions and make them 'SMARTer' would be useful but many felt that the 'Additional Learning Intentions' facility was sufficient in achieving this. A number of respondents requested the inclusion of links to teaching strategies and resources in order to assist staff in supporting their pupils effectively.

Where users found the Framework difficult to use there was some evidence that it was being used as a checklist rather than to support individual goal setting and progress tracking. There is evidence to suggest that its implementation has been most straightforward where users had received support via AET training or from support services or individuals already familiar with its use. A number of interviewees agreed that improved guidance and support in identifying priorities so as to use the tool more efficiently would be welcome. Ways in which the Framework could be 'tailored' to settings working with particular age phases or profiles of young people by having a smaller number of learning intentions to choose from at the outset had been explored by some services.

A few technical 'glitches' in relation to inputting information into the 'Comments box' and printing parts of the Framework were identified, some of which relate to limitations of EXCEL but which can in the main be remedied.

Some respondents made suggestions for development in order to meet services' specific needs in relation to assessment, recording and reporting processes. These included the facility to view progress over time (more than one academic year); links with evidence collection tools; use with iPad; extension of Progress Scale. Of interest when considering some of these issues was the work carried out at Linden Bridge school to develop a cloud-based progress tracking tool for pupils with SEN whereby individual learning journals are created

online. Features of the 'Show Progress' tool, which is now commercially available, include:

- Individual target setting (avoiding a 'tick box' approach)
- Facility to set up own assessment framework chosen or created by the school
- Can be shared with parents and other approved users
- Gathers evidence to support progress towards targets set
- Configurable progress scale
- Operates on a range of devices (eg tablets and PCs/laptops)
- Previous progress information is easily accessible
- Printable reports with images

The tool is currently 'content-free' and schools are encouraged to input their own choice of assessment frameworks for users to draw on when setting targets for pupils. Linden Bridge have drawn extensively on the Progression Framework when identifying learning intentions for pupils and the developer of 'Show Progress' feels that the tool would be enhanced if Progression Framework content were added as a permanent feature of the tool. This possibility is of interest to the review team since it would allow schools the option of having access to a number of additional features that have been requested.

Finally, in addition to the consultation carried out with schools and services, feedback was sought from a representation of young people on the autism spectrum via the AET's Young People's Panel (YPP). An evaluation of the Framework was carried out as part of a YPP meeting using a discussion sheet (included as Appendix 3 with summary of answers). Some key areas for consideration for development of the Framework suggested by the young people consulted were:

- Ensure young people are involved in setting and reviewing targets and in planning support
- Need for consistency across schools
- The document should 'follow' the young person as they transition from school to college
- Accessible online so that all relevant people can view progress
- Include opportunities to individualise learning intentions so that the young person's personal goals are integrated into the Framework
- Ensure that achievement and progress in these areas is celebrated

## **Recommendations**

1. Improve guidance/support for users (in addition to existing 'manual') eg video instructions; flowchart
2. Consider development of profiling tool or additional guidance eg using sub-headings within Progression Framework to assist users in identifying priorities / learning intentions (or signpost tools already developed for this purpose eg Birmingham materials)
3. Ensure that, where possible, involvement of the young person is a priority within the pro-

cess of both identifying priorities and reviewing progress

4. Consider ways in which information from previous years is retained and easily accessible / can carry over to following year

5. Revisit content / wording of learning intentions to ensure consistency and compatibility with other AET materials, EYFS documents and 'Engagement' areas

6. Address issues related to technical aspects as far as possible within EXCEL eg 'Comments' box; printing; add space for more 'Additional Learning Intentions'

7. Review Progress Scale ie consider need to provide evidence of smaller steps or levels of support provided within 'Developing' section

8. Consider collaboration with 'Show Progress' developers as an option for users to use alongside the Progression Framework in order to extend functions available within existing Framework (eg evidence gathering; use with iPad; access to previous progress records; increased personalisation of learning intentions; customisation of available content)

9. Consider feasibility of inclusion of resource links (strategies and approaches) eg to those already available within other AET materials

10. Review and revise training session (in line with revisions to other AET training modules). Include examples of creative use of Framework (eg examples of case studies / applications and adaptations)

## **Report to AET - Phase 2: Early Years - January 2018**

### **Key points for consideration from consultation to date and comments**

The following points for consideration were drawn from feedback from the first phase of the review and from interviews with individuals and teams working with children on the autism spectrum in the early years sector (see list of contributors on p27).

#### **1. Purpose of a PF specific to EY settings**

It was felt to be important to clarify the purpose of developing a Progression Framework for use with children on the autism spectrum at the Early Years phase and the following reasons were given by contributors to the consultation:

To assist practitioners in:

- Understanding autism
- Observing the child confidently
- Validating their thoughts
- Flagging up areas of need for individual pupils
- Identifying next steps/targets (2 or 3 priorities)
- Writing plans eg IEPs

- Showing progress
- Supporting transitions
- Sharing information with parents
- Providing a common reference / language for practitioners

### **Comment**

All of the above are also consistent with using the existing Progression Framework and further discussion is required in order to ascertain whether a separate EY Framework is needed – see below.

## **2. Use of existing AET Progression Framework in EY settings**

Feedback from the AET EY Leadership Group and from some individual services interviewed (eg Essex Specialist Teaching and Pre-School Service) reported that they were using the existing PF successfully and did not anticipate the need for a separate tool. Revisions to the current AET EY training materials will make reference to the PF. The survey conducted for the review of the existing PF also showed that many services using the Framework had EYFS provision (although information collected did not provide details as to the age of children with whom the PF was being used). It was felt that the facility to select appropriate learning intentions according to individual needs allowed practitioners to focus in on areas of relevance and for sections that might not be relevant to be ignored. Also, the fact that the PF is not designed to be age-related allows for use across phases. Some suggestions were made for ways in which areas of particular relevance to this age phase might be extended eg social understanding; play development; attention. Benefits of using the same tool across age phases identified were:

- Consistency across (or within) settings
- Supports transitions
- Familiarity with the tool means that it is more likely to be used productively to see what has 'gone before' and how this might feed into 'what next?'

Examples of services using the PF as a basis for designing their own tools are described in the report of the overall review of the PF. An example of this being done within an EY service is described below (see Paragraph 7 – Resources).

### **Comment**

It is pleasing that many services are making good use of the existing Framework and that it is meeting their needs.

## **3. Issues with existing EYFS materials**

Although felt to be of overall high quality it was felt that the existing EYFS materials (ie the EYFS Profile and guidance) related to the statutory framework (DfE 2017) presented the following issues when used to support learning and development for children with autism:

- Developmental differences result in assessments remaining at "Emerging" level for long periods for some children, even though progress is being made

- Would like some areas to be 'broken down' further and focus in on areas of particular relevance to children with autism eg social communication, play
- Spiky profiles of some children can mean inaccuracies when recording and reporting progress eg some aspects of a developmental/age-related 'stage' may be achieved but not others and progress can be difficult to align with age bands
- Progress may slow down as children get older and there is a need for an alternative means of demonstrating progress that is being made in areas related to autism differences
- Age related indicators can make discussions with parents difficult

**Reference was made to the Early Support materials (Early Years Developmental Journal - 2012) – see Resources section below.**

The aim of these materials is to help families and practitioners in understanding, recording, supporting and celebrating early development for children with additional needs. They are referenced to the EYFS Framework but provide greater detail in the form of developmental 'steps'. These are extensive materials and it would be useful to find out more about their application to children with autism. One service felt that materials that were more autism-specific would be welcome.

Some specialist services were using autism-specific programmes such as SCERTS to good effect and felt that they would not need an additional framework within their setting.

**Comment**

There is a need to extend the scope of existing EY materials so as to focus in on areas of difference in autism. Social communication was the area felt to be of particular importance when looking at ways in which the development of children with autism is supported. Practitioners need to understand the differences experienced in this area by children with autism and ways in which learning and development can be supported.

**4. Alignment of existing EYFS materials and PF**

Given the statutory status of EYFS materials it was felt to be important that any development of materials specific to this age phase used the existing materials as its starting point with any additional materials for use with children with autism 'sitting behind' existing materials.

**Comment**

There may be overlap between the EYFS materials and the existing PF since the latter intends to highlight areas where children and young people on the autism spectrum may continue to require support once they move beyond the EYFS age phase\*. It would not make sense to use the PF to duplicate areas that fall within EYFS statutory materials during the EY phase. Rather, the existing PF (or one specific to EY) should be used to provide greater depth or fill in the gaps of what may be missing within the mainstream materials. If developing a separate tool, or extending or adapting the existing PF, ways in which this additional 'layer' can be aligned with the existing materials (and signposted from them for easy access) will need to be explored. It will also need to be ensured that materials do not duplicate Early Support materials. These materials use the same 'prime areas' of Personal, Social and Emotional Development; Physical Development and Communication and Language but

have also added in 'Thinking' as an area to reflect differences related to Cognitive Development. Linked to this is the need to ensure that work also considers differences that children with autism may have in developing their skills relating to 'The Characteristics of Effective Learning' as well as in relation to the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) ie Playing and Exploring (engagement), Active Learning (motivation) and Creating and Thinking Critically (thinking).

\*Some special schools continue to use the EYFS model for older pupils for this reason

## **5. Ease of access for non-specialist settings**

Some respondents highlighted a need to ensure that materials were accessible to as wide a range of settings as possible, including mainstream settings who may have only a small number of children on the autism spectrum. Specific mention was made of Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers whose practitioners may have a different skillset to those in schools and who may require more support in relation to their understanding of autism and ways in which they can provide support for children. Materials would need to be simple and manageable and include a paper version. It was also suggested that clear accompanying examples are included. A 'start small' approach was suggested with the facility to move to more detail as needed. In line with the overall PF review, development should take into account ways in which practitioners might be supported to find a "way in" to the document by identifying priorities for individual children.

### **Comment**

It is unlikely that 'one size will fit all' and it is acknowledged that practitioners may have different needs. Accessibility at all levels needs to be considered as well as the purpose of the tool (ie to support understanding of autism as well as providing evidence of progress). This is in line with feedback from the overall PF review whereby some services welcomed the level of detail within the PF whereas others felt that this made it more difficult to access.

## **6. Working with Parents and Pupils**

The value of the PF as a focus for sharing information with parents was mentioned by some respondents and one service was planning to link it to content of parent workshops. The need to ensure that format and language was 'parent-friendly' was stressed. It was also felt that it supported the process of Person Centred Planning. Ways in which the views or 'voice' of the child can be included meaningfully within this process is challenging with this age group and one service was investigating the most effective way of doing this.

### **Comment**

Ways in which the child's 'voice' can be captured (eg through observation and working closely with parents) needs to be built in to the process of identifying priorities. The 'Learning Journal' or 'Developmental Journey' format whereby all parties contribute to gathering evidence and contributing to a record of what the child has achieved provides a good model for this.

## **7. Relevant Resources (including tools developed by services)**



- EYFS Profile / Development Matters

Existing EYFS Framework (2012)

\*Be aware that these are due for revision. Aim is to:

- Reduce number of ELGs that are assessed and reported on
- Make some of the descriptors that sit underneath the early learning goals clearer and bring more in line with the Key Stage 1 curriculum
- Keep the existing three categories within the early years foundation stage profile, emerging, expected and exceeding- possibility of some differentiation within 'emerging' category as currently very broad

### **Reception baseline (From 2020):**

- There will be a short assessment that as far as possible will complement schools' on-entry assessments, teacher mediated, primarily focused on literacy and numeracy to try to establish the closest correlation with performance at the end of Key Stage 2
- Noting evidence around self-regulation and that it can be an indicator of academic performance in the assessment

- Early Support: Early Years Development Journal (revised version based on current EYFS – 2012)

Aimed at supporting families and practitioners working with children with additional needs.

- Social Communication Growth Charts  
Recommended by Alex Stanyer (The Puzzle Centre)

- Autism in the Early Years

Cumine, V., Dunlop, J. and Stevenson, G. (2009)

This checklist is available via the AET:

<http://www.aetraininghubs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/autism-observation-profile1.pdf>

- Tapestry – evidence collection tool specific to EYFS

### **Bespoke tools**

Some services had developed their own ways of recording progression for children with autism and included an example of using the PF alongside the service's own materials as a basis for this. These tools are of interest when looking at the development of a simplified tool specific to EY since they highlight priority areas and the type of format that may be accessible to services.

- Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) Early Years and KS1 Team, Schools and Families Specialist Services: Early Communication Progression Tool

Based on a previous document developed by the service (Early Years Communication Checklist- also NCC) this tool aims to link to the PF and uses a similar recording system to



ensure consistency. Links are included to the learning intentions within the AET document, allowing you to move easily between the two as appropriate. The tool is a paper-based document that covers the areas of Social Communication; Social Interaction; Social Imagination and Flexibility, each of which are sub-divided. It also includes some suggested strategies and equipment to support each sub-area. The Schools Team that supports children with Communication and Interaction Needs uses the PF so there is consistency as children move to the older age phase.

- Liverpool City Council: Social Communication and Play Journal

This document was compiled to work alongside the Early Support Early Years Development Journal and was a collaborative piece of work by Liverpool City Council staff including a Portage service lead and practitioner, an educational psychologist and a specialist advisory teacher. It is being piloted in Liverpool as it was found that a tool similar to the Early Years Development Journal was needed with a stronger focus on social interaction, communication and play skills. It is based on the checklist provided in Cumine et al's (2009) 'Autism in the Early Years' book. This is also a paper-based tool and involves practitioners and parents in identifying skills in the areas of social communication and play which have been sub-divided into a number of areas. Statements are written from the perspective of the child (eg I know my own name and will look around when my name is called) and are recorded as either Emerging, Developing or Achieved.

## **8. Summary**

- A resource aimed at supporting the identification of learning priorities and tracking progress in areas beyond the EYFSP that reflect the differences of children on the autism spectrum is welcome
- The existing PF is being used to good effect across the age range by a number of EY services and is meeting their needs
- If a specific resource is developed it needs to be aligned with existing statutory materials
- There is a need for materials that are accessible to PVI settings
- Materials need to be accessible to parents and aim to capture 'voice' of the child

## **Contributors to Early Years consultation**

Alex Stanyer and team – The Puzzle Centre, Bucks

Susi Stephenson and team, Specialist teaching and Pre-School team, Essex

Lisa Brown, Alison Patterson –EY and KS1 team, Notts

Rachel Read –SENISS team, Liverpool

Ann Wiseman, Communication and Interaction Associate, Babcock Education, Devon

Sue Goldman – Autism consultant and teacher, Surrey

Viv Walters–CAT team, Birmingham

Kathryn Rowan and team –Specialist Children’s SALT, Notts

Richard Curtis –Autism team, Nottingham City

Lorraine Robinson – Redgate School, Notts

AET Early Years Leadership Group

## Appendix 1

### Contributors to overall Progression Framework review

**Thanks to the following professionals / services who contributed feedback at the interview stage of the review:**

Beth Barnsley – Devonshire primary, West Midlands  
Lisa Blake – Fairfield primary, Nottingham  
Louise Chance, Worcester Autism Bases  
Elaine Charleston-Autism team, St Helens, Merseyside  
Richard Curtis-Autism team, Nottingham  
Annie Dax – CAIRB (resource base), Tavistock primary school, Devon  
Siobhan Farrelly, St Chad's primary school, Birmingham  
Sue Goldman – Autism consultant and teacher, Papillon House special school, Surrey  
Kath Houlahan / Deborah Horton, CAT team, Birmingham  
Alex Kelly – Pathfield special school, Devon  
Glenn Lewis – Autism Outreach Service (AOS), Leicestershire  
Kevin McHenry- SEN advisor, Northants  
Sue Pawluk - Edale Rise primary school, Nottingham  
Mandy Pitts and Andrew Weston, Linden Bridge special school, Surrey  
Rachel Read, SENISS, Liverpool  
Lorraine Robinson, Redgate special school, Nottinghamshire  
Kathryn Rowan, Autism Specialist Speech and Language therapist (SaLT), Nottinghamshire  
Children's SaLT Team  
Rachel Shaw – Pilton community college, Exeter  
Susi Stephenson and team, Specialist teaching and pre-school service, Basildon, Essex  
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Dawn Wigley, Ashlea special School, Nottinghamshire  
Ann Wiseman, Communication and Interaction Associate, Babcock Education, Devon  
Thanks to the following teams for contributing to focus group feedback:  
Leicestershire Autism Outreach Service  
Lincolnshire Working Together Team  
Nottingham City Autism Team  
Nottinghamshire Communication and Interaction team (Specialist Schools and Families Service)

## Appendix 2

### Questions for interviewees based on themes emerging from survey

#### AET Autism Progression Framework Evaluation

Thank you for agreeing to engage in further discussion about your experience of working with the Progression Framework. The following points have been identified through the survey as possible areas for development and it would be helpful to hear your views/ideas on some or all of them based on your experience in your setting. Please also feel free to add any further comments or ideas.

#### Areas for discussion

##### 1. Size / Level of detail

“The number of learning intentions can be daunting at first”. Is this an issue? If so how can we support practitioners to know “where to begin”. For example, do we need to:

- slim down?
- have a less detailed ‘top layer’ as a starting point?
- include a ‘profiling’ stage to allow people to identify priorities?

##### 2. Progress over time

The current set up allows you to record progress over 3 terms (or specified time periods). A new document is then started for the following year.\* A number of services have requested the facility to show progress within the same document year on year.

##### 3. Recording for groups

Some services have requested a way of recording progress for a group within the same document eg to record progress of nurture groups

##### 4. SMARTer / Individualised learning intentions

Would it be useful if learning intentions could be ‘edited’ to make them more specific to individuals / SMARTer? Some practitioners have also requested the facility to add information to the document (eg criteria for assessment; teaching strategies; evidence of learning) other than through the ‘Comments’ boxes

##### 5. Resource links

Include links to strategies and resources for teaching (eg links to Tools for Teachers or other AET resources)

##### 6. Format

Requests for:

- easier printing
- iPad version/app
- paper version

##### 7. Guidance / Support

Ways in which users can be supported to use the Framework are also being considered eg

- slimmed down guidance document
- video instructions

- links to 'how to' on each page
- training requirements
- revisions to training
- FAQ

## **8. Early years / Post 16**

This project is also looking at application to EY settings. Views and experience on this and its relevance to the post 16 age group would be appreciated.

## **9. Additional comments / ideas**

## Appendix 3

### Discussion Sheet for AET Young People's Panel Worksheet Three

#### Discussion: AET Schools Progression Framework

The AET Schools Progression Framework is a resource to help staff in schools track the progress of pupils on the autism spectrum. It focuses on areas that autistic pupils may need support with rather than being linked to specific school 'subjects'. The main areas it covers are:

- Communication
- Social Interaction
- Flexibility and Problem solving
- Understanding and managing emotions
- Understanding and managing sensory needs
- Learning Skills
- Community Participation and Independence ('Life skills')

#### Your response:

##### 1. Was your progress in the areas above tracked whilst you were at school?

- Social interaction was tracked but this wasn't helpful because it was faked – they made other girls talk to me and 'taught' them how to talk to me. No one asked if I wanted this.
- I had a mentor who helped me with learning about sarcasm and other things – it was brilliant support

##### 1a) If your answer was yes, did you find it helpful to be tracked in these areas?

- Helpful to track – it can help with holidays and preparation for other events.
- Empowered me to present to other students who were younger.
- SALT helped me at school but not at college
- GE – we review these areas every 6-12 weeks but this isn't consistent across all schools
- Had to have a meltdown before they realised I needed emotional support – I hid behind good grades.

##### 1b) If your answer was no, do you think it would have been beneficial to have been tracked in these areas?

##### 1c) How could the Schools Progression Framework be improved?

- Should be consistent across schools
- MUST involve the young person and include reviews of progress and agreement of targets
- Should follow the young person from school to college
- Be available online so all relevant people can see progress
- Include opportunities to individualise the learning intentions
- Celebrate achievements and reward progress
- Question – who will be doing this monitoring, a TA, teacher or SENCO?
- Question – what is the young person going to see as a result of the tracking?

## Appendix 4

### Reference to SEN within EYFSP handbook

#### Section 3. Inclusion and the EYFS profile

##### 3.1 Overview

The EYFS profile is an inclusive assessment, capable of capturing a wide range of children's learning and development outcomes. It may be challenging for practitioners to observe and assess some children. This challenge applies both to:

- understanding how some children might demonstrate attainment at the level expected at the end of the EYFS
- how to capture the attainment of children whose development is judged to be at the 'emerging' level

Practitioners must address this challenge in order for children's attainment to be accurately judged and recorded.

##### 3.2 Taking account of the needs of individual children

Reaching accurate assessments using the EYFS profile requires practitioners to enable all children to reach their full potential. Consequently, practitioners must be alert to the general diversity of children's interests, needs and inclinations.

For instance, there may be children who are at an earlier stage of development than others in the cohort; some may have summer birthdays. These children may be highly active and more likely to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do in situations which are sympathetic to this inclination. This will often be outdoors.

Practitioners should reflect on their observations and ensure that the provision enables all children to demonstrate attainment in ways that are motivating to them. This should be regardless of their stage of development or interests, needs and inclinations.

##### 3.3 Children with special educational needs and disability

Special educational needs and disability (SEND) includes physical, emotional, sensory and learning needs.

Settings will develop additional relationships with other professionals when working with children with SEND. It is vital that communication between all professionals and the child's parent (see section 12) is strong so that practitioners can get a clear picture of the child's learning and development.

Observational assessment (see section 2) is the most effective way of making judgements about all children's learning and development. P scales shouldn't be used for assessing children in the EYFS; they are an assessment tool designed for use at KS1.

Depending on their special educational need, children will demonstrate learning and development in different ways. Practitioners observing a child involved in day-to-day activities must be alert to their demonstrating attainment in a variety of ways, including eye pointing,

use of symbols or signs. With the exception of ELG03 Speaking, where the EYFS profile contains the word 'talks' or 'speaks', children can use their established or preferred mode of communication.

Children should use the adaptations they normally use to carry out their activities so that practitioners come to know all children at their most capable. Adaptations include:

- mobility aids
- magnification
- adapted ICT and equipment

If a child's learning and development doesn't yet meet the description of the level expected at the end of the EYFS for an individual ELG, practitioners should record the outcome as 'emerging'. They should also record details of any specific assessment and provision in place for the child.

This will be used in discussions with parents so that they have a clear understanding of their child's development and any additional support which will be offered. Settings should also use the details to support planning for future learning.

### **3.6 Transition conversations for children with an outcome at the 'emerging' level**

Where children have an outcome of 'emerging' for an ELG, it is likely that this will not provide full information about their learning and development at the end of the EYFS. Additional information should be considered alongside EYFS profile outcomes. This will ensure conversations between EYFS and year 1 staff are meaningful so that the child makes a successful transition.

An outcome of 'emerging' may mask a wide range of levels of learning and development. The detail behind this outcome is built up over a period of time through observation, interaction with the child and ongoing assessment. There are many sources of information about how children learn and develop, how this may be demonstrated, and how further learning and development might be supported. Practitioners don't need to use any specific source of information in this context.

Specialist professional guidance is available for many specific special educational needs and disabilities. Children with SEND may have records from professionals within and outside of the setting. These records should inform assessment and transition processes. Wherever possible, other professionals working with the child should be invited to contribute to transition conversations.

Settings should consider providing information in addition to the child's EYFS profile, to support their successful transition and ensure a smooth learning journey. Practitioners should think about what information could be useful for the child's new year 1 teacher before the summer term. This will allow processes to be built on a shared understanding and planned and implemented in good time. Decisions about what guidance might be used and what information might be shared should be made at a setting level. They should reflect local needs and circumstances.