

Disability Access Fund (DAF) Case Study 5

A Setting in the South of England

A has Autism, physical difficulties, very poor listening and attention as well as limited vocabulary and communication skills

Term 1: Challenges

Physical Development - A seems to be very stiff in parts of his body especially his arms. This makes it very difficult for him to control his movements. He can find it difficult to sit up and generally control his body in space. He has difficulty in balancing and coordinating his body when moving around the Nursery. He can easily fall over, often bumping into his peers and equipment. He has a lack of awareness of his own and others personal space. A can sometimes grip the other children's clothes tightly in order to steady himself so that he does not fall over. If walking whilst carrying a large object like a large wooden block the weight of it in the front of his body will cause him to over-balance and topple over. He finds it difficult to co-ordinate his limbs – it can be challenging to co-ordinate them in response to what he wants them to do, perhaps they might mirror each other when he is only wanting one to move or his arms can become rigid and it can appear that the muscles are going into spasm.

Language development - A has a very limited everyday vocabulary and struggles to make himself understood by his peers. He needs to be supported in play every day enabling him to hear new vocabulary and help him build on from one word to two word phrases and communicate with other children.

Involvement level - He moves very quickly through play experiences and needs adult support and direction to become involved and sustain his interest for longer than 5 minutes. He responds well to having an adult with him to engage him, motivate and encourage him to stay focussed and be purposeful with his play.

Listening and Attention - A has very limited listening and attention skills. During focussed adult times A has some difficulty in focussing and concentrating for even a few minutes. During these short sessions he becomes very easily distracted by any visual or auditory stimulus and will seek sensory input, touching his friends, making noise, exploring different textures around him.

DAF spending:

What	Cost	Why
Attention and Listening resources	£100	To provide resources for Bucket time a Listen and Attention intervention session as part of adult led small group for A
Outdoor clothing - (All-in one)	£16	To support the accessibility for outdoors so that it protects child A and they are more confident about falling over within the environment

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Woodland Experiences	£100	To provide access to a natural environment to enable A to have a range of surfaces, textures and environment to climb on and in and through
Physical equipment to challenge and support a child with physical disabilities (Portion)	£281	Providing physical equipment within the setting to enable A to challenge themselves and develop their co-ordination and physical strength in proprioception skills and vestibular systems
Autism trainer for 1 day for all staff (Portion)	£162	To provide increased knowledge about Autism for the staff to support A
Books to increase staff knowledge such as – Creating an Autism Champion – training resource – and 'Identifying and Supporting Children with Sensory Processing Difficulties' (Portion)	£16	To provide books and literature to support staff knowledge on Autism
Total	£675	

Through creative use of DAF staff have been able to alleviate some of the challenges presented by child A in the following ways:

- Listening and Attention resources to run Bucket time group have enabled A to learn attention skills in a small and focussed group with motivational resources (Resources to engage attention such as toys and simple equipment with lights, sounds, and movement)
- Woodland experiences every week have provided A with physical climbing, balancing and exploring textures in the natural world (Travel, outdoor clothing)
- Physical equipment to challenge has provided A with appropriate apparatus outside to build strength every day for at least 2 hours. They have also provided him with an opportunity to regulate himself. (Small swing and fixed poles and balancing ropes)
- Staff training and books on Autism have supported staff to increase knowledge of autism and they are therefore able to provide support more appropriately

Term 3: Progress and impact:

A has improved his physical strength. He can now access low level climbing equipment. He is able to pull himself along a low level bench. A can now climb up the ladder on the large climbing frame but needs support to get down. In the woods he now is able to access the rope swings with support. He has greater control over his body when climbing up the hills and is now able to run down a steep slope holding on to an adult's hand. His core strength is stronger and he can now carry a heavy object easily and with greater control. He is able to sit up and is more coordinated in his movements.

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A has a good bank of vocabulary and now speaks using 3-4 word phrases. He shows curiosity about the world around him and he will question what his peers or adults are doing. He is able to get his needs and wants across to an adult when he is calm. He is beginning to ask an adult to help him. He uses pronouns appropriately. A is developing a wide vocabulary and seemed to pick up words quickly 'making a dark tunnel' for the train to go through and describing the potato as 'juicy' as he peeled it. A now will use spoken language to comment, to request, to ask and answer question, to instruct and to ask for help.

A can now attend during group time for an increasing length of time. He listens and responds to questions.

Conclusion:

Outdoor experiences have really benefited A. The opportunities for A to engage in the wider local outdoor environment have meant that he has developed and increased his vocabulary and supported him to communicate more effectively with his peers and family. A thrives on having enough space around him. His body is continually moving.

Having regular time in the outdoor environment, especially if it can be a natural environment, has supported his vestibular and proprioceptive skills. He has used the swing and simple rope balancing equipment between poles to calm himself which has provided him with an opportunity to gain stimulation which is more safe and constructive in the setting.

The DAF has enabled us to purchase resources and run a Listening and Attention adult led session (15 minutes) on a daily basis which has benefited A. He is more focussed in his play, staying on task with limited adult need to re-engage him.

Creative use of funding to support A has also benefited other children with SEND. As we have 4 children with DAF we have been able to use some of the funding to support staff training in growing knowledge of Autism and a use portion to purchase resources from which all of these SEND children have benefitted. A has gone into a main stream school.

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