



With all of us in mind

South West Yorkshire Partnership **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Checklist for Autism-Friendly Environments



Introduction

Some people with Autism can experience severe difficulties with the world around them including 'unfriendly' environments. The effect could be anything from a person having mild discomfort to symptoms of acute pain and deterioration in functioning. If the environment is distressing for the person this may stop them from accessing it. Social, Health, Education and Leisure opportunities can therefore become reduced.

Everyone with Autism is unique and affects them in different ways and they have their own specific needs to be considered.

An environment can be described as anything from a space or room to a whole building. This document seeks to identify some of the ways that environments can be changed to be friendlier.

The checklist is divided into TWO parts. All services need to complete Part A whilst Part B is for more specialist providers.

Part A – Core Requirements

These are essential and are minimum requirements to create a more Autism Friendly Environment.

1. Sensory

- Sight/visual
- Smell/olfactory
- Hearing/auditory
- Body awareness/proprioception

2. Communication Systems

3. Escape

4. Awareness – Core

Part B - Enhanced (if applicable) requirements

1. Sensory
 - Touch/tactile
 - Taste/gustatory
 - Balance/vestibular
2. Awareness - Enhanced
3. Theory of Mind /Flexibility of Thought

Each area has a number of questions that will have a response yes or no.

Decide and tick in the relevant column to whether you believe the environment **fully** addresses the question raised. If not score 'no'.

Totalling up 'yes' scores will give an overall friendly rating. It will be the analysis of each category rather than the deficits of the environment which maybe of most benefit.

After each question there is a section named solutions/discussion. This is to be completed to indicate how you aim to change the current environment if needed to address that particular question you have ticked 'no'.

If you have ticked yes however please write down how you have done so.

Solutions will always be specific to each area rather than for particular individuals therefore you will need to give generic solutions rather than individual.

To begin the process starts with the smallest space then expand to large areas.

Note - In this document 'autism' refers to 'autism spectrum disorders' encompassing autism, Asperger's syndrome and atypical autism (or pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified) in addition different individuals and groups prefer a variety of terms for autism including autistic spectrum condition, autistic spectrum difference and neurodiversity.

Author information

Stephen Simpson works as a Specialist Nurse Practitioner in Autism Spectrum Conditions for South West Yorkshire Partnership Foundation NHS Trust. He has worked in the field of Autism for over 15 years and qualified with a B.Phil degree from the University of Birmingham. Stephen currently works in the specialist ASD/ADHD service in Wakefield. His recent work has included consultation on NICE guidance and Quality Standards in Autism. He has collaborated with Kirklees borough council in producing this assessment tool.

Thanks to Dr Marios Adamou, Gary Wainwright and design team....

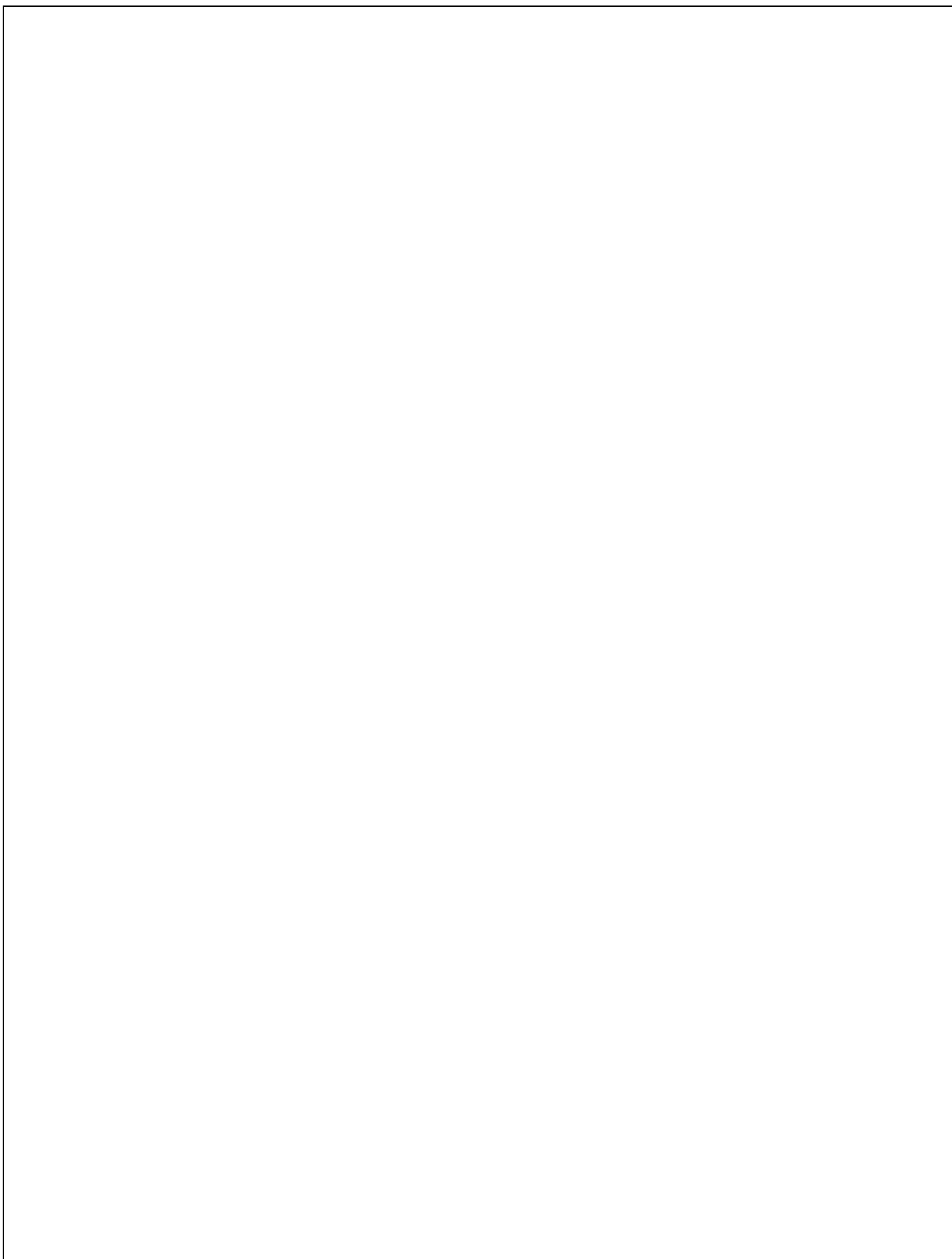
Part A

Date:

Environment:

Assessor:

Sight / Visual questions			
1	<p>Are the colours in the environment low arousal such as cream and pastel shades and not red or vibrant? AND</p> <p>Do any rooms /spaces need a change of paint or wallpaper?</p>	Yes	No
2	<p>Have you considered if the environment is cluttered with furniture?</p> <p><i>"It has been suggested that people with Autism find it helpful if furniture is kept to the sides of a room and the central space is kept clear."</i></p> <p><i>(Nguyen, 2006)</i></p>		
3	<p>Does the environment have many patterns, shapes and surfaces that may be sensitive to the eye? AND</p> <p>Have you considered curtains, blinds and pictures etc? AND</p> <p>Have you considered whether staff clothing or jewellery could be sensitive?</p>		
4	<p>Does the environment have fluorescent or harsh lighting, rather than more subtle lighting alternatives?</p>		
5	<p>Have you considered the effect of sunlight from windows or skylights? AND</p> <p>where the light is at different times of the day? AND</p> <p>reflective surfaces?</p>		



Smell / Olfactory questions			
1	Have you considered the toxicity/acute smells of paint or wallpaper pastes used to decorate the environment?	Yes	No
2	Have you considered the smells of cleaning materials used? E.g. polish, air fresheners, bleach		
3	Have you considered the smells of individuals (including pets) using the environment? (e.g. deodorants, perfumes and aftershaves)		
4	Do smells drift around the building from room to room? AND Have you considered how you might isolate them?		

Solutions/ Discussion Smell / Olfactory questions

Hearing / Auditory questions			
		Yes	No
1	Have you considered the general noise level in the environment?		
2	Have you considered hypersensitive hearing and looked at specific noises that may irritate such as clocks ticking, humming from lights, road noises or building/gardening work in the distance?		
3	Is there noise from flooring and can this be deadened if needed?		
4	Have you considered noise levels at different times of the day? When people are in the environment at the same, mix of sensory needs?		
5	Have you any specific quiet and louder areas that people can choose from?		
6	Have you considered the pitch of noises as well as the level?		

Solutions/ Discussion Hearing / Auditory questions

Body Awareness / Proprioception questions			
1	Is the environment free of unnecessary obstructions?	Yes	No
2	Have rooms been made easier to navigate? e.g. using colours to distinguish floors, walls and furniture, as well as from room to room)		
3	Have you considered differing Heights that individuals may need to navigate such as steps, stairs and kerbs?		
4	Have you considered adjustments for those people who have fine motor difficulties? (e.g. locks, cutlery, door handles)		

Solutions/Discussion Body Awareness / Proprioception questions

Communication questions			
1	Does the environment have clear signs to indicate the use of each room?	Yes	No
2	Are there directional signs to each area? Discuss whether it would be appropriate.		
3	Have you considered to what extent are communication systems supported by the use of symbols, pictures, photos or objects?		
4	Are rooms given one purpose only? AND If not, can you indicate when it is used for different functions?		
5	Are there photographs used to aid recognition of people (staff/unfamiliar) if needed?		
6	Do you plan for changes to routines, staff leaving and building work?		
7	Have you considered 'literal' meanings when designing your environment?		

Solutions/Discussion Communication questions

Escape questions			
1	Is there a system to know when a person with autism needs to escape from an environment?	Yes	No
2	Is there a space / room to escape to?		
3	Is this room /space used solely for this purpose? If not why not-discuss?		
4	Have you considered to what extent is this room / space low stimuli and safe?		
5	Is there an alternative to the escape room / space (e.g. the garden)		

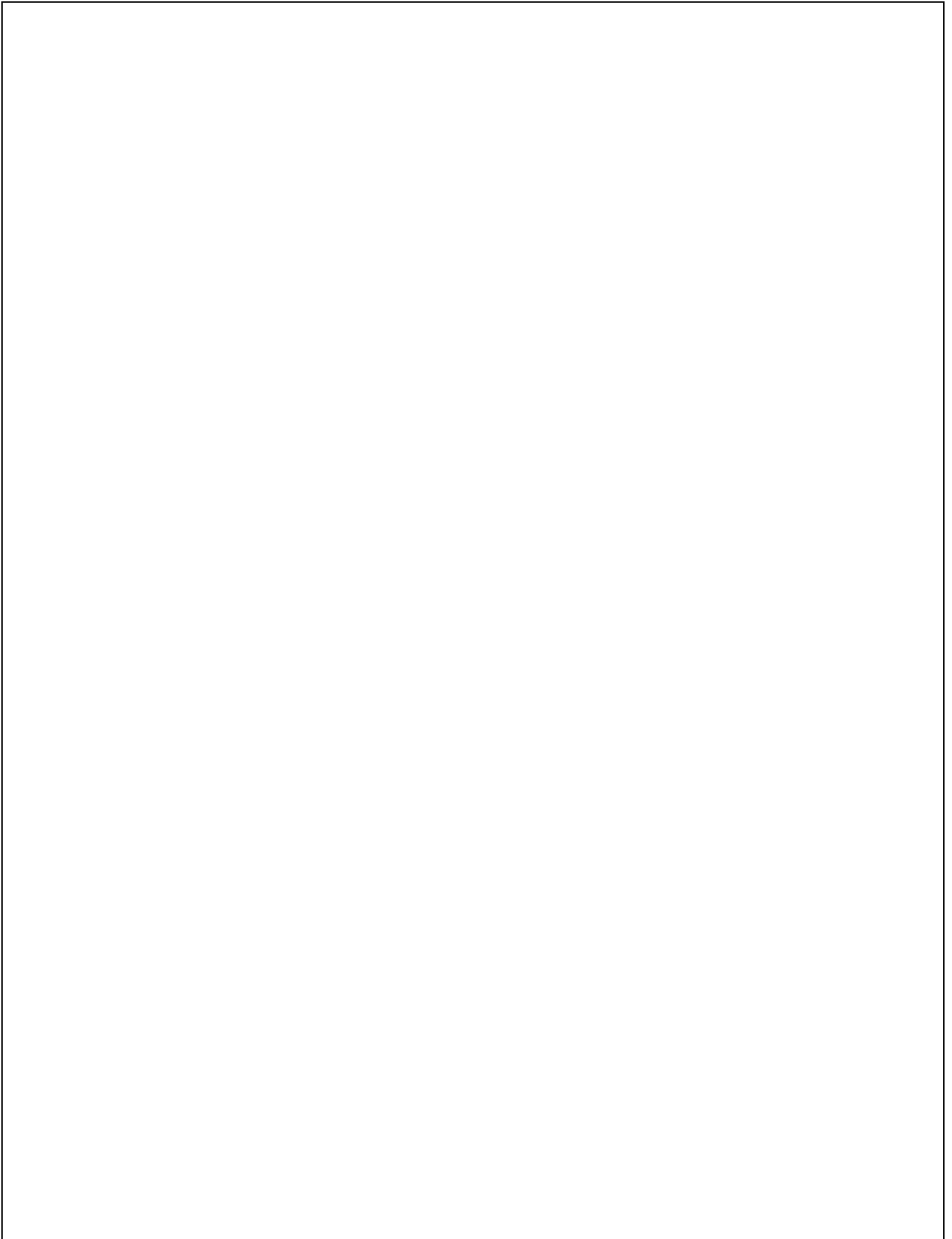
Solutions/Discussion Escape questions

Awareness questions - Core			
		Yes	No
1	Are you able to make changes to the Core sensory environment? (e.g. are there practical or financial restraints.) Discuss.		
2	Have you considered to what extent is the environment primarily 'safe' for people with autism?		
3	Are you up to date with Autism Awareness training to support this checklist?		

Solutions/Discussion Awareness questions-Core

Part B

Sensory-Touch/tactile questions			
		Yes	No
1	Are there sensory materials available for individuals to explore touch in the environment? e.g. sand, water play, textiles AND Do you have a variety of materials and enough needed for each individual seeks sensory stimulation?		
2	Are there opportunities for soft play/rough and tumble for individuals to access if needed? AND Are the opportunities appropriate?		
3	Is there massage available to Individuals, if needed? (Consider how often, by whom)		
4	Is there a body map available where individuals can indicate places they like/dislike to be touched? AND If no body map can you determine where someone likes/dislikes to be touched?		
5	Are there small spaces where individuals can squeeze into, if they wish? AND Could you position furniture to facilitate this if needed.		
6	Are there indicators to point out where hot surfaces are? AND Have you considered safety for people who are hypo sensitive to touch and how to manage this?		



Taste / Gustatory questions			
1	Do you have a wide range of foods available of different textures and temperatures?	Yes	No
2	Are there options to intensify the flavour of foods by adding seasoning or spices?		
3	Is there clear guidance on what to do when someone is mouthing or eating inedible food?		
4	Have you considered whether people prefer foodstuffs not to touch?		
5	Have you considered whether people prefer certain coloured foods or acute tastes?		

Solutions/ Discussion Taste / Gustatory questions

Balance / Vestibular questions			
1	Is the environment geared for people who seek movement? (e.g. lots of space, soft play, swings, trampoline)	Yes	No
2	Are there opportunities to move indoors and out? AND Have you considered how restrictions on movement effect Individuals?		
3	Is the environment geared for people who are oversensitive to movement? e.g. support equipment when moving to help with balance.		
4	Are routines flexible to those who struggle with movement disorders? For example enough time given for movement in the day		

Solutions/Discussion Balance / Vestibular questions

Awareness questions- Enhanced			
1	Have you considered to what extent are you fully aware of each individuals sensory difficulties? (see the sensory profile devised by Bogdashina, 2003)	Yes	No
2	Are you able to make changes to the sensory environment? (e.g. are there practical or financial restraints.) Discuss.		
3	Have you considered to what extent is the environment 'safe' for people with autism?		
4	Are you up to date with Autism training to support this checklist?		

Solutions/Discussion Awareness questions- Enhanced

Flexibility of Thought / Theory of Mind questions			
1	Are you aware of the absorbing interests of people in the environment and how to facilitate and manage differences?	Yes	No
2	Are you/staff aware of the concept of Flexibility of Thought? AND Have you considered that because there has been a good/bad response in one environment this cannot be generalised to a similar environment?		
3	Have you considered that people with Autism may have difficult understanding or interpreting others by not being able to empathise and put themselves in to someone else's consciousness? And How will this affect your approaches in the environments they live?		
4	Are you aware of the coping mechanisms for individuals in the environment?		

Solutions/Discussion Flexibility of Thought / Theory of Mind questions

Your Score- Core =

Core +Enhanced =

Date to review and repeat the checklist-

Further Comments/Discussion

References / Further reading

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