

Welcome back to previous readers and hello to anyone who has just joined us! Whilst it is far from the happiest of starts to a new year that we have seen, the sentiments for it to become a happier one remain truest.

We began with our first newsletter in April 2020 in response to the initial school closures and from then until July 2020 we produced a fortnightly publication that we shared as far and wide as we could with the grateful support of colleagues. We invite you to extend this invitation to the newsletter to anyone you think would benefit.

Each newsletter largely focussed upon an area or theme, the content and resources remain relevant, particularly as many families are home together once again.

To access all previous newsletters please do so [here](#)

The Autism Support Team continue to be available to support parents/carers and educational staff through these times and for now this is being undertaken virtually.

Helpline

We have a telephone support service available to for parents/carers and educational staff.

Monday – Friday, 9am-5pm

More information can be found: [here](#).

Training

We currently offer our training online. If you wish to register your interest, please email:

AutismSupportTeam@southwark.gov.uk

- **Cygnets** (parents with children over 5)
- **Next Steps** (parents with children under 5)

The Speech and Language Therapy service also has lots of courses available to parents and professionals, take a look at them [here](#)

To be added to our newsletter mailing list, to register for a training course, or to contact the team with any enquiry, you can do so via:

AutismSupportTeam@southwark.gov.uk



Games Corner

Visual supports for game playing can be found [here](#)

This week's game is **Yahtzee!** A game that involves 5 dice and some maths skills! Here is everything you need to play the game.

Dice template [here](#)

Rules [here](#)

How to score points [here](#)

Score sheets [here](#)



Super Seven



Here are some fun activities to try at home:

- Junk modelling ideas [here](#)
- Play a smelling game: Fill small containers with fragrant ingredients such as lavender, coffee or soap. Cover the top with a piece of fabric and a rubber band and then ask your child to identify the different smells.
- Make a shredded paper bouquet to cheer someone up [here](#)
- Go for a walk and make a sensory nature bracelet, wrist band [here](#)
- Friday Night Disco! Mocktails [here](#) and disco balls [here](#) and if you need help with selecting music, why not try Sophie Ellis Bextor Kitchen Disco [here](#)! Invite friends on zoom!
- Fork painting!? Intrigued? Take a look [here](#)
- Make a dream catcher -something to hang over your bed and keep those bad dreams away [here](#)

Home Schooling...part 2

Home schooling— this can present a range of challenges that often come in the form of limitations; limited time, limited energy, limited capacity, limited resources and for some limited space!

Routines

These are really important for children with autism and even if you don't have any set learning routines yet its never too late to start! Try to set up a daily timetable that resembles the school day this will help structure the day, communicate expectations and hopefully encourage some independence. Getting dressed, eating breakfast and lunch at a set time, and having distinct learning and play times will also support a smoother transition back to school when the time comes. In school there is often a 'bell' for play times and transitions, you could agree upon a sound signal at home for this - it could be a favourite song or a timer on an iPhone. Below are links to visuals that can support you with a video on how to use them.

Environment

There is no set perfect learning environment for everyone. The challenge at home can be that both 'learning' and 'playing' have to happen in the same environment and how best to juggle the space for different members of the family. If possible setting up a permanent 'learning area' can be helpful, if that's not possible, think about putting away or draping a sheet over toys and other distractions when it is time to learn. Timetabling different areas of the house for different family members can help too. Think about your child's sensory needs, do they get distracted or stressed by noisy, busy environments? Does sitting in the kitchen when the washing machine is on support or hinder focus and attention? Where in the home is quietest and can you adapt this space? Light - is main ceiling light in the lounge too bright, is the preference for a more muted lamp light that can be redirected? Is there bright light coming in through the window? Smell— are cooking or cleaning smells upsetting? Think about the timing of these activities. Consider how you use can use a hallway, landing or entrance area and set up a desk there . These places are often more free of distractions, plain walls, no playthings. If you are not working at a table, but on the floor, consider using a rug/blanket/sheet and putting this down when you make a shift from free play to focussed activities.

Completing Learning Tasks

The remote learning offer provided by schools varies, whilst teachers may be differentiating content for your child, we have considered some ways in which you can help to present work so that it is more manageable, supports attention and takes account of success and completion.

Those with older children you could discuss these options together, allow you child the opportunity to decide which ones they may wish to try this will also encourage them to develop responsibility for their own learning. The guide can be found [here](#)

University College London has provided links to support home-school for children with SEND, including Early Years, Developing Independence and Wellbeing and Learning it can be found [here](#)

Resources to support routines at home

Links to free visuals to use at home [here](#) see newsletter 2 more home visuals [here](#).

A video about how to use now and next boards and timetables at home is [here](#)

Setting up a structured teaching environment at home can help with developing independence and completion of work tasks—(TEACCH). Some children will already be using TEACCH at school, if so ask your child's teacher for some feedback on how your child uses this system. If you manage to set this up at home, when the time comes to go back to school do make sure you share this with the teacher so it can be used in the classroom. If you need support with setting this up do contact our helpline.

[Here](#) is some information from a parent about setting up TEACCH at home and using the resources she has to create learning tasks.

[Here](#) is a video about setting up and using TEACCH including using a folder system.