



Introduction

This month's issue of our research insights newsletter will be launching our 'keyworker series'. Each month will focus on one of the eight domains of QoL

Across our schools, staff often have a timetabled, weekly slot to spend 1:1 with their key pupil. The next 8 issues will all be about making keyworker time more meaningful; using those precious minutes in practical, evidence-informed ways that centre the needs, interests, and voices of autistic children.

In this issue, we are exploring what is important to consider when setting up the sessions.

Research Summary - Merrington et al (2024)

This study provides insights into what actually supports a good life for autistic people. Drawing on lived experiences, the study found that feeling safe, having autonomy, being heard, and having access to meaningful relationships and enjoyable activities were central to quality of life.

Researchers highlighted that autistic people often felt disempowered when their daily environments didn't accommodate their sensory needs, communication preferences, or personal interests.

Keyworkers are therefore uniquely positioned to support positive outcomes, using the below principles, through regular, interest-based, relational and targeted sessions that are responsive to individual needs.



Heidi Merrington

The Reality

1. Sense of Safety

Prebook, be consistent & have a predictable structure so the pupil knows what's happening & when.



2. Pupil Autonomy & Voice

Offer choices & decide upon the activity together. What are you working on with them? How are you helping them progress?



3. Personal Interests

What do they like? Use it to spark conversation, or embed it in the activity if possible.



4. Meaningful Connection

Be present, show you're interested and that you care.



5. Reflection

What did they enjoy during the session? Shape future sessions around what worked.



Further Reading & Links

[What Matters Most? An Exploration of Quality of Life Through the Everyday Experiences of Autistic Young People and Adults](#)

[LAT Liberty Quality of Life Home](#)