



Introduction

Welcome to the next issue in our 'keyworker series', where each issue focuses on one of the eight domains of quality of life (QoL) and how you can support them through your weekly keyworker sessions. This issue focuses on **self-determination!**

Self-determination refers to the ability to make choices, express preferences, self-advocate, understand strengths and needs, and influence decisions that affect your life.

From page 2 onwards, you can read about some great keyworker practice from school staff across the trust.

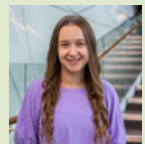
Research Summary - Martino et al (2025) & Cristescu et al (2025)

Martino et al's review found that self-advocacy and self-determination are strongly associated with positive outcomes for autistic adolescents and young adults. They emphasise that self-advocacy extends beyond speaking up when problems arise; it also involves understanding personal strengths and needs, recognising when support is helpful, and communicating preferences and goals.



Daniele Martino

Another systematic review identified 19 intervention approaches across 27 studies aimed at improving self-determination with autistic individuals. Findings suggest these skills develop through structured teaching and real world experiences, particularly when pupils can practice decision making, goal setting and problem solving in everyday contexts.



Dr Laura Cristescu

The Reality

1. Provide Opportunities for Real Choices

This might include choices about activities, learning approaches or future aspirations and reflection on different outcomes.

2. Self-Knowledge = Self-Advocacy

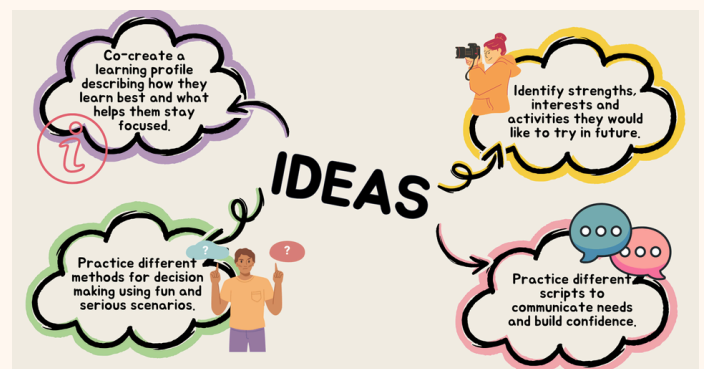
Explore their strengths, interests, what helps them learn, what support they find useful so they can explain their needs to others.

3. Link Skills to Future Independence

Connect everyday school experiences that involve planning, goal-setting and problem-solving with future independence and participation.

4. Environments Encourage Participation

Environments that encourage pupil voice, involve pupils in decisions about their support and create opportunities for contribution matter.



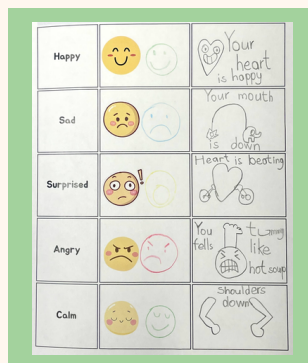
Further Reading & Links

[The role of self-advocacy and self-determination in positive adjustment for autistic adolescents and young adults: a mini-review](#)

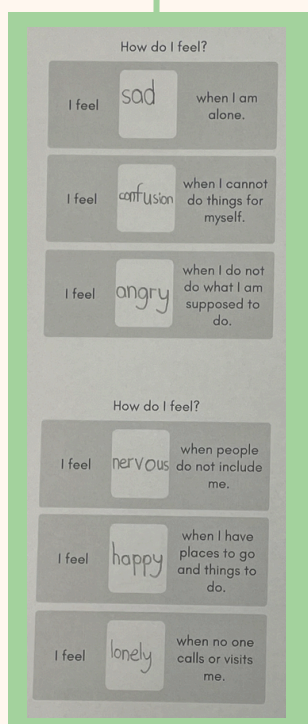
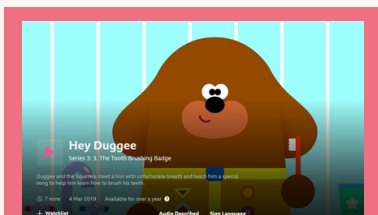
[A Systematic Review of Interventions on Self-Determination for Autistic Individuals and Those with a Learning Disability: an Ecological Approach](#)

[LAT Liberty Quality of Life Home](#)

Introduction: Inspired by the latest Research to Reality Newsletter on personal development, Pupil E (at TVS Hill Brow) has been supported in his keyworker sessions to develop his self-care and management of his energy levels to support his personal development.



Through learning about the Zones of Regulation, Pupil E is developing his emotional regulation skills to help understand, monitor and regulate his energy so he can engage successfully in learning.

Watch and talk about the Hey Duggee episode 'The Tooth Brushing Badge'

Plan: use Pupil E's interest of Hey Duggee

Read the Hey Duggee book on brushing teeth



Practise matching Hey Duggee characters to the Zones of Regulation and suggest what they can do to regulate



AIMS

1. Pupil E does not regularly engage in self-care activities. Therefore, aim 1 has been to introduce and familiarise him to self-care routines.
2. Pupil E can find it difficult to recognise and manage his energy levels, therefore aim 2 has been to help him identify how he feels within each of the zones and to understand the triggers that may move him between zones.

KEYWORKER REFLECTION

Pupil E has engaged positively with the material in his keyworker sessions

NEXT STEPS

- Incorporate Pupil's E interest of Hey Duggee.
- Focus on brushing teeth, so Pupil E can identify why it is important and how to effectively brush his teeth.
- Support Pupil E to be able to identify when he should ask for a regulation break and identify regulation strategies that help him.
- Gain feedback from parent to see if he's implementing the skills at home.

DESCRIPTION

This case study explores how keyworker sessions supported an autistic pupil to develop independence in their morning routine. The pupil initially experienced significant difficulty organising self-care tasks before school, which led to stress at home. The subsequent keyworker sessions were informed by research summarised in the Research to Reality newsletter, which highlights that daily living skills such as planning, organisation and self-care function as “access tools” that enable autistic people to participate in education, work and community life. Keyworker sessions therefore focused on developing practical independence skills that would support the pupil’s long-term participation.



GOALS

The keyworker sessions aimed to:

- Increase the pupil’s independence in completing a structured morning routine
- Reduce anxiety associated with preparing for school
- Support the pupil to understand why these skills help them access school and future independence
- Strengthen communication between school and home so routines were consistent



PROGRESS / EVIDENCE

Skills as Access Tools:

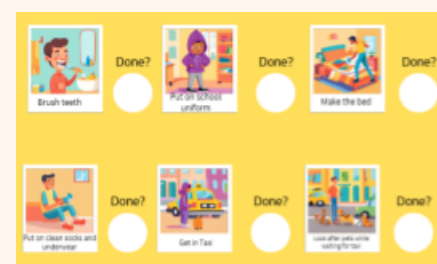
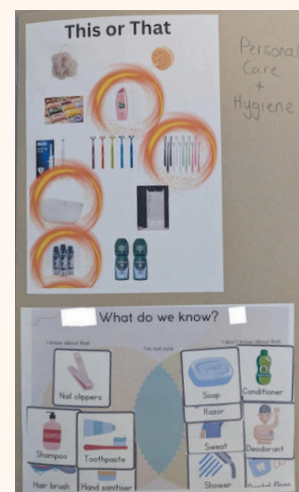
Initial sessions focused on identifying what the pupil knew and barriers in the pupil’s morning routine. The pupil found it difficult to sequence tasks such as showering, brushing teeth and packing their bag. The keyworker worked with the pupil to create a visual morning routine board, breaking the routine into manageable steps. The pupil practised using this during keyworker sessions before implementing it at home. The pupil also explored energy management, discussing which parts of the morning felt most difficult and identifying strategies to reduce stress (e.g. preparing clothes the night before).

Meaningful Contribution:

As confidence increased, sessions explored why independence skills were important. The pupil reflected on how being able to manage their morning routine helped them: feel calmer at the start of the day and participate more confidently in school. Later sessions also linked these skills to future independence, including living more independently and preparing for college.

Development is Ongoing:

The focus of sessions shifted from learning routines to maintaining independence and preparing for future transitions, including discussions about post-16 education.



PUPIL OUTCOMES

- The pupil developed greater awareness of how to manage their morning routine.
- The pupil follows their visual morning routine with prompts.
- The pupil’s confidence in discussing future independence skills grew.
- Regular communication with the pupil’s family was made to ensure the strategies used in school were also implemented at home, however, there were difficulties in consistency which continue to be worked with.

NEXT STEPS

Future keyworker sessions will focus on extending these independence skills into other areas, including:

- revision, planning homework and organisation
- travel training and community access
- exploring aspirations for post-16 education and the ‘access tools’ needed to make this a reality

Ensuring the pupil understands how these skills support their long-term independence remains a key priority.