

Therapy Policy

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Introduction

Learners within BeyondAutism settings have a diagnosis of autism. Some learners have learning difficulties associated with this diagnosis. This impacts on their language, learning, sensory need and functional performance. BeyondAutism is underpinned by the principles of Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA), using Skinner's Analysis of Behaviour (VB).

Therapies are headed up by the Head of Therapies and the team is comprised of Speech and Language Therapists (SaLT) and Occupational Therapists (OT) only. Other therapies, as determined by Provision outlined in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), that extend beyond the Scope of Practice of BeyondAutism's Therapies team are not provided. BeyondAutism will refer the Provision of any additional therapies required for a student on role at BeyondAutism to the student's residing Local Authority. Examples of other therapies includes Music and Art Therapy, Physiotherapy as well as specialist input from Visual Impairment and Dysphagia, Feeding and Swallowing Specialists which fall outside the expected clinical expertise of the Therapies team. This should not be considered an exhaustive list of other therapies or specialist input which may be determined under Section F, G or H of the EHCP.

The Head of Therapies is part of the Senior Leadership Team within the organisation. The Therapies Team sits in the multi-disciplinary team working alongside teaching and ABA colleagues to promote learners' skills and abilities by providing opportunities and strategies for optimal learning and participation. The Therapists at BeyondAutism fulfil the assessment and therapy needs for each pupil as specified in their Educational, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The goal of Therapies at BeyondAutism is to provide person-centred and individualised intervention for skill acquisition, maintenance and generalisation. This is done in liaison with staff, parents and other professionals working with each learner, to address challenges in communication, social interaction, engagement, play, occupational performance and sensory processing.

Interventions used are evidence-based and are formulated from assessment results. Targets are prioritised based on need and this guides IEP target setting. Therapists devise a therapeutic programme of activities or recommend strategies which are personalised to each learner so that they can maximise their potential as well as have the best educational experience. Therapy programmes consist of activities that the learner completes with the Therapist directly or indirectly as appropriate. These programmes are integrated into the learner's IEP and are integral to their day-to-day learning opportunities.

Learners are assigned a named Therapist, who work across multiple settings within BeyondAutism, to complete their assessment, intervention and evaluation. Targets are updated on a termly basis in line with the BeyondAutism review cycle and the Therapists formally report on the learner's progress annually through Annual Reviews.

Speech and Language Therapy

The role of the Speech and Language Therapist at BeyondAutism Schools is to assess, support and develop the learners' communication, speech and language skills alongside their functional play and social interaction skills. A Total Communication approach is used in order to maximise learners' opportunities to communicate in the way that best suits them. This may be verbally or through Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) systems as determined in conjunction with SaLT, such as Makaton Sign, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), or using high tech AAC such as Proloquo2Go. Learners may also use a mixture of these communication methods.

We do not hold responsibility for the management of dysphagia, feeding and swallowing in our students. We may work towards supporting our students to manage their tolerance to foods through individual or group sessions, such as Fun With Food Groups.

Occupational Therapy

Occupational Therapists work with learners on a 1:1 basis and/or in groups to help them promote and develop functional skills, such as handwriting and cutting; play and positive engagement through understanding sensory preferences and needs. OTs use a holistic approach in planning programmes, this means they take into account learners' preferences, social, emotional, sensory as well as physical and cognitive abilities. OTs regularly liaise with staff to find out about learners' occupational performance with the aim to remove barriers to learning and participation.

BeyondAutism does not practice Sensory Integration – please refer to the BeyondAutism Sensory Policy for further detail.

Professional Standards

Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists are Allied Health Professionals regulated by their own professional bodies – the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy (RCSLT) and the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) respectively, and both by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). This means that they adhere to professional and ethical standards, one of which is to remain informed of recent evidence and research relating to their clinical practice. A requirement of these Professional Standards is to maintain confidential clinical notes. Case notes at BeyondAutism are stored securely in line with professional standards and are only accessible by the Therapists.

Assessment

Assessment is completed through a range of formal and informal methods to identify the specific needs of each learner. These findings are used to design a functional and individualised therapy programme. Assessment will be reviewed regularly, and at a minimum on an annual basis in line with the Annual Review.

Due to the needs of our students, formal assessment results will often not be appropriate to report as they are not standardised for our cohort of students. Standardised assessments will be used to provide a qualitative assessment of need and to inform target setting. Where appropriate, standardised quantitative results will be reported.

Delivery of Therapy Input

Distinction is made between the provision of direct and indirect therapy, as recommended within learners' EHCPs. Each learner will receive a minimum of 15 minutes SaLT and OT input per fortnight as the core therapy offer where therapy provision is not specified in the EHCP. Each learner receives 12 hours indirect therapy provision per year inclusive of what is specified on the EHCP. This is time allocated as follows:

Time	Action
1 hour per term (Total 3 hours per year)	Programme Writing and Joint Review
1 hour per term (Total 3 hours per year)	Staff training to support delivery specialist intervention
1 hour per term (Total 3 hours per year)	Liaison with staff to plan and implement strategies in the classroom
3 hours per year	Reporting: including case note and report writing.

Therapy sessions occur in a range of settings including individual, group and class-based as appropriate. Sessions take place in class and across other settings ranging from soft play and sensory rooms, to playground or therapy room. We also support learners' access to community activities, through direct and indirect means. Sessions are frequently run jointly by the SaLTs and OTs to ensure integrated working. Targets are generalised throughout the learners' day with targets and recommendations incorporated into all parts of the curriculum and learning.

Therapy staff work closely with school staff to ensure an integrated approach to the learners' needs. This includes regular discussions with, and training of, all staff accountable for working with the learner. The staff accountable for the learners are expected to carry over, monitor and review these targets when working with the learner. It is expected that staff will consult with the Therapist as and when support is required or targets are achieved. Each class has a dedicated Therapies Tutor who liaises directly with the SaLT or OT to ensure that therapies targets and resources are maintained.

Therapists will make environmental recommendations and use approaches that are designed to support the learners' participation and engagement. All staff are accountable for embedding these approaches into every aspect of the learner's day.

Whilst every attempt is made to ensure that pupils receive their allocated therapy sessions it is not possible for catch up sessions to be completed if the Therapist or the pupil misses a session due to illness or due to required attendance at another event. In the event that there is a vacancy in service, every attempt will be made to recruit in a safe and timely manner to avoid any gaps in provision.

Reports, EHCPs and Annual Reviews

Therapy targets will be reviewed annually and formally reported upon as part of the Annual Review. This will include a review of formal or informal assessments. Reporting will ensure therapy goals are updated and will be made available to parents and local authorities prior to the Annual Review meetings. Upon request and determined by the Therapist's capacity, the Therapist will attend the Annual Review meeting as appropriate. If attendance is not possible the Therapist will liaise closely with those chairing the meeting to ensure that the key messages can be conveyed. Due to time constraints any additional reports will have to be completed during the learners' direct contact time.

Communication with Families

The Therapists aim to facilitate a close relationship with the home setting to ensure that goals are relevant to both home and school and to allow families to communicate with the relevant Therapist. Therapists may attend Parent Evenings and other relevant meetings in order to discuss IEP targets and current progress as well as the families' priorities or learners' challenges when they are at home. Families are offered regular opportunities to attend training and Therapists welcome emails from parents regarding queries or questions about targets.

This policy should be read in conjunction with BeyondAutism's other policies including, but not limited to:

- AAC Policy
- Total Communication Policy
- Sensory Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy

Last review: May 2021

Next review: May 2024

Review group: Executive Head