

The Ambitious Approach Q&A

What is Ambitious about Autism's approach to autism education?

Our education services aim to prepare autistic children and young people for a happy and fulfilling life and, whilst doing so, give them dignity, respect and compassion. We know that every autistic child and young person is different and so need a person-centred and flexible approach.

The Ambitious Approach is the framework used in our education services. It enables a flexible and person-centred approach whilst providing a structure for our vision and values to be realised.

What are the key features of the Ambitious Approach?

At its core our Ambitious Approach aims to improve the quality of life for the children and young people we support. It enables our children, young people, staff, parents and carers to work together to put the personal interests and ambitions of each child and young person at the heart.

Through the Ambitious Approach, we are committed to offering:

- a curriculum that supports autistic children and young people to develop the knowledge and skills that support quality of life;
- a focus on meeting physical and emotional needs when delivering this curriculum to autistic children and young people;
- a proactive focus on collaboration; where the needs and interests of each and every child and young person are our focus and any interventions are co-produced with them and their parents and carers.

How was the Ambitious Approach created?

Our Ambitious Approach has evolved over time based on feedback from autistic children, young people, adults and their families and evidence of what works in our settings, across our sector and academic research.

What is meant by quality of life (QoL) and what is our QoL model?

Quality of life relates to a person's experience of how happy or content they are with their life. It relates to goals, expectations and standards and research suggests that it is affected by physical, mental, economic and social well-being. QoL is subjective, meaning it is influenced by personal feelings, tastes, or opinions.

While researchers have found lots of common factors that influence quality of life, there are several different models of QoL.

Ambitious about Autism uses Shalock's (2004) model of QoL, as explained in the paper entitled 'The concept of quality of life: What we know and do not know' (*Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 48(3), 203–216), because we feel it is well suited for use in education settings.

Do we have a way of measuring improvement in the quality of life?

Because quality of life is subjective and dependent on individual and personal feelings, tastes, and opinions it can be difficult to measure using standardised measures or the same measures for everyone.

We have a number of tools to measure the impact of our Ambitious Approach on children and young people's progress and quality of life, as well as improvements in practice.

The Ambitious Approach involves using a 'plan-do-review' cycle in relation to developing practice. For example, we report on whether children and young people consider their targets to reflect their interests and ambitions.

What approaches are adopted as part of the Ambitious Approach?

The Ambitious Approach is our framework that enables flexibility whilst providing a structure for our vision and values to be realised in our education services.

A transdisciplinary team of teachers, speech therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists and behaviour specialists work to deliver a personalised education to each child and young person based on the Ambitious Approach framework.

The starting point for all our programmes of intervention is that we embrace difference and value young people as they are. We only utilise interventions that give dignity and respect and do not use approaches that seek to manipulate or coerce individuals to engage in behaviours and learning activities they would not otherwise choose to engage in.