



Social Stories: An Evidence-Based Intervention for Supporting Children with SEN

Introduction

Social Stories are short, structured narratives designed to help children understand and navigate social situations. Originally developed by Carol Gray in the early 1990s, they are widely used to support children with autism and other developmental needs.

Purpose of Intervention

The primary aim of Social Stories is to:

- Teach social norms and expectations.
- Reduce anxiety in unfamiliar or challenging situations.
- Promote positive behaviour and emotional regulation.
- Support transitions and changes in routine.

Target Audience

Social Stories are particularly effective for:

- Children with autism spectrum conditions.
- Pupils with communication difficulties.
- Learners with cognitive or emotional challenges.
- Any child with an EHC Plan who benefits from structured, visual, and predictable support.

Who Can Deliver the Intervention

Social Stories can be created and delivered by:

- SENCOs and learning support staff.
- Teachers and teaching assistants.
- Educational psychologists and therapists.
- Parents and carers (with guidance).

Session Structure

Each session should:

- Begin with a calm, focused introduction.
- Present the Social Story in a quiet, distraction-free environment.
- Allow time for discussion and questions.
- Reinforce key messages through repetition and visual aids.

Frequency and Duration

- Frequency: Ideally 3–5 times per week, depending on the child's needs.
- Duration: Sessions typically last 5–15 minutes.
- Stories should be revisited regularly, especially before relevant events (e.g., school trips, assemblies).

Key Principles

Effective Social Stories follow these principles:

- Use positive, reassuring language.
- Focus on one concept or situation per story.
- Include descriptive, perspective, and directive sentences.
- Match the child's developmental level and interests.



- Avoid judgmental or punitive tones.

Training and Implementation

To implement Social Stories effectively:

- Staff should receive basic training in the structure and purpose of Social Stories.
- Collaborate with SENCOs and educational psychologists for tailored support.
- Use templates and examples to guide story creation.
- Monitor and adapt stories based on pupil response.

Evidence and Outcomes

Research and practice show that Social Stories can:

- Improve social understanding and behaviour.
- Reduce anxiety and meltdowns.
- Enhance communication and peer interaction.
- Support inclusion and access to learning.

Feedback

Feedback should be gathered from:

- The child (where possible).
- Parents and carers.
- Class teachers and support staff.
- Observations of behaviour and engagement.

Further Information and Resources

- Carol Gray's Official Website: <https://carolgraysocialstories.com>
- National Autistic Society: <https://www.autism.org.uk>
- Twinkl and Widgit: Offer templates and visual resources.
- Local Authority SEN Services: May provide training and support.