SEND Conference

BARNET EARLY YEARS SEND ADVISORY TEAM

Contact:
admin@eysend.barnetmail.net
020 8361 2456 (Ext 1)

Anna Freud: Early Years & Neurodiversity

- Focus on understanding young children through a developmental lens
- Strong emphasis on emotional wellbeing, relationships, and context
- Neurodiversity viewed as difference, not deficit





Core Principles

- Every child develops at their own pace
- Behaviour is communication
- Emotional development is inseparable from learning

Understanding Neurodiversity

- Neurodiversity offers us an opportunity to expand our thinking about development and to embrace the fact that we are all different, and in different ways. Once we begin to do this, only then can we change the landscape of inclusion in the early years.

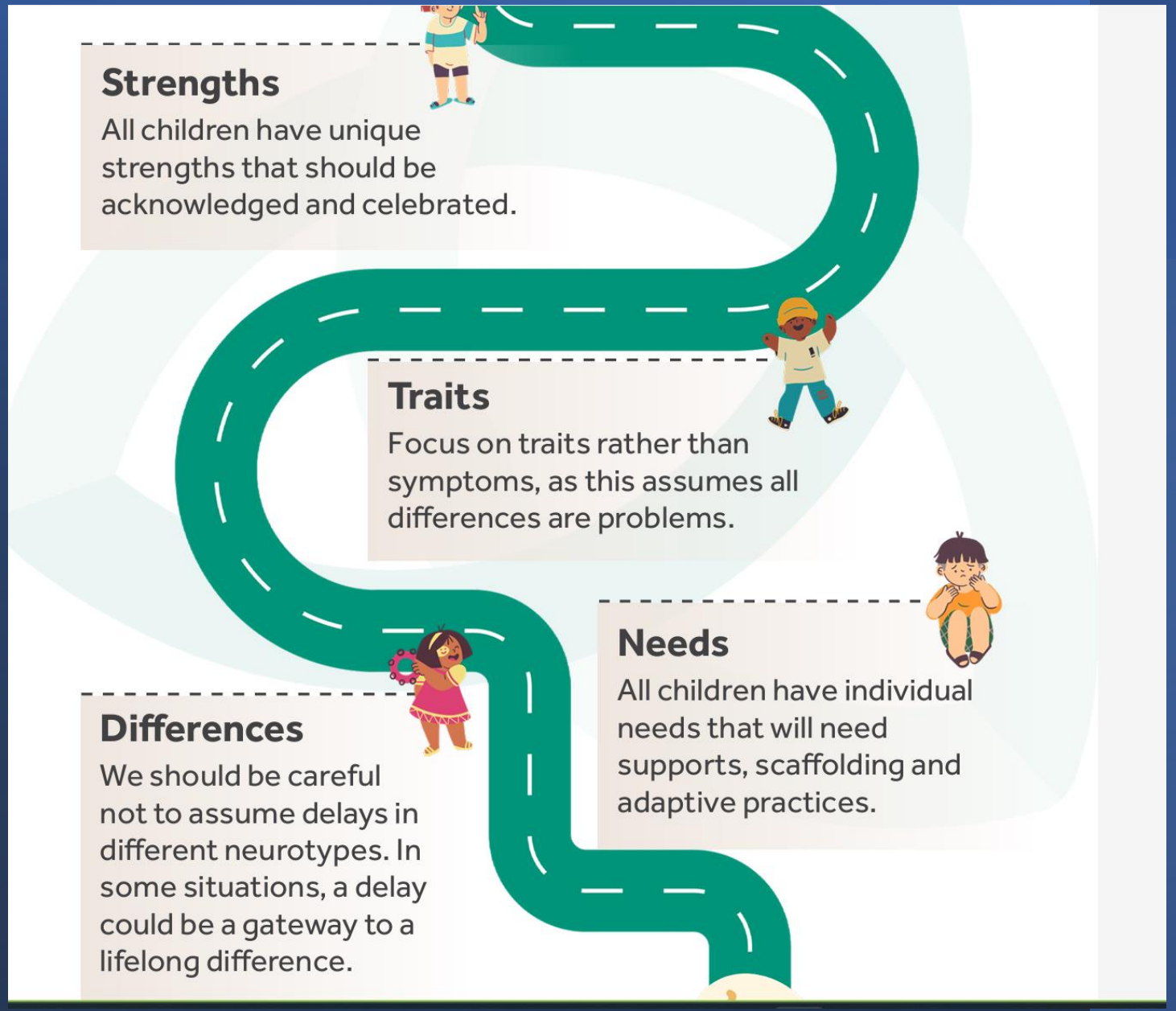
- Recognises autism, ADHD, and other differences as natural variations
- Focuses on strengths as well as needs



Celebrationary Framework

- An important starting point for any educator who wants to develop neurodiversity-informed practices is to begin to embrace that not all children are travelling along the same developmental pathways.
- We also need to zoom-out to see the bigger holistic picture of development. We should always use a celebratory framework to describe children.
- Follow the interests




Strengths
All children have unique strengths that should be acknowledged and celebrated.
Traits
Focus on traits rather than symptoms, as this assumes all differences are problems.
Needs
All children have individual needs that will need supports, scaffolding and adaptive practices.
Differences
We should be careful not to assume delays in different neurotypes. In some situations, a delay could be a gateway to a lifelong difference.

The Importance of Relationships

Secure, attuned relationships underpin development

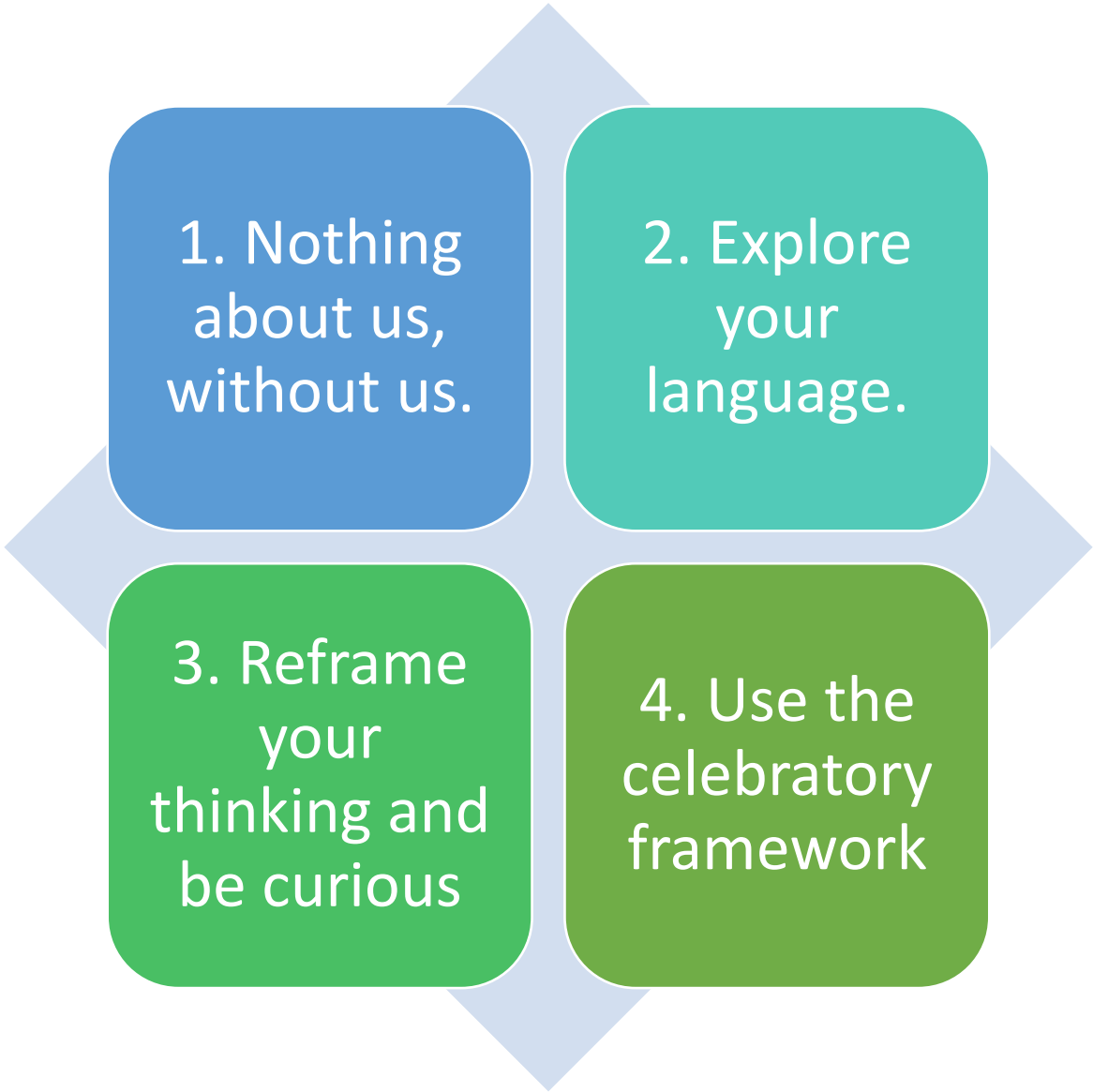
Adults act as emotional regulators

Consistent caregiving builds safety and trust

The Role of Environment

- Environment can support or hinder regulation
- Predictability and routine reduce anxiety
- Sensory-informed environments are essential

Key things to reflect on to influence inclusion



Key Takeaway Messages

- Neurodiversity is a natural part of human development
- Relationships and regulation come before learning
- Inclusive practice benefits all children



Sensory stories

- Sensory stories are exceptionally beneficial for children with additional needs because they translate abstract narratives into tangible, multi-sensory experiences using touch, smell, sound, and sight. These stories foster engagement, improve communication, aid cognitive development, and provide a safe, low-anxiety environment for learning and emotional regulation.
- Here is why sensory stories are beneficial for children with additional needs:
- **Accessible Learning:** By utilizing senses rather than relying solely on verbal processing, sensory stories allow children with cognitive, language, or sensory processing disorders to access, engage with, and comprehend stories.
- **Safe Exploration of Stimuli:** They offer a controlled, safe environment for children with sensory sensitivities to experience new sights, sounds, or textures, helping them manage and reduce anxiety.
- **Enhanced Communication and Expression:** For children with limited verbal communication, these stories provide non-verbal avenues for expression through gestures, body movements, and tactile engagement.

- **Improved Cognitive and Memory Skills:** The multi-sensory input aids in brain development, helping to anchor information, which assists with memory retention and cognitive development.
- **Emotional Regulation and Calmness:** Sensory stories can create a calming atmosphere, allowing children to move from a state of overwhelm to a state of engaged, active participation.
- **Development of Social and Emotional Skills:** Sharing sensory experiences builds emotional connections, trust, and a sense of community among peers and with caregivers.
- These stories are particularly valuable for children with PMLD (Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties) or those who are not otherwise engaged by traditional storytelling methods.

Barnet Parent Carer Forum

info@barnetpcf.org.uk

https://barnetpcf.org.uk/

