

# Online MDT sensory stories for students with PMLD during Covid lockdown

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## Introduction

The MDT Team designed a series of sensory stories for students with PMLD and supporting carers and/or parents at home, using a remote platform. The rationale was to address students' sense of social isolation by engaging in meaningful social activities, develop their communication skills through modelling good practice, and encourage skill sharing with parents/carers.

## Methods

MT used a mix of improvised and structured live music to complement and underscore the content of the social stories.

PT/OT modelled best practice to demonstrate stretches and active assisted movements to parents/carers as well as teaching ADL skills eg. brushing teeth, preparing for a car journey.

SaLT liaised with parents/carers over appropriate use of low-tech communication aids for students.

## Results

The positive outcomes of the MDT sensory stories included:

- Exploration of sensory environment eg. the changes of seasons, through a multi-sensory approach with live music
- Modelling good practice with parents/carers, eg use of Makaton and communication aids
- The online video platform allowed direct expert skill-sharing with parents/carers, especially ideas around creative, tactile play
- Empowering students to communicate choices, likes and dislikes, as well as verbal and non-verbal feedback about activities chosen for the session
- Inclusion of ADL (Activities of Daily Living) eg brushing teeth, putting on a coat, going on a car journey, within a musical 'sing-song' context, introduced a 'fun' rhythmic element to a routine activity, which can be easily used in the home environment
- Improvised and structured live music-making created a dynamic and rhythmic framework for physical activities, which enhanced the experience for students
- Familiar pre-composed, repetitive songs during each session were used to develop the socio-musical cohesion of the group
- Students began to self-advocate for favourite songs, exercises, and social activities

## Conclusions

A collaborative MDT approach, modelling best practice when supporting students, encouraged more creative and playful relationships between the student and his/her carer/parent.

Families became more confident and thus more pro-actively involved in the range of activities through the process of the sessions.

Strong partnerships and skill-sharing with teaching teams enabled activities to be transferred easily to the classroom environment.

Students demonstrated increased self-advocacy by choosing activities they enjoyed, either through NVC, use of low-tech communication aids or through verbal reflection.

