



A Sunfield Fact Sheet

Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH)

What is TEACCH?

The TEACCH® Autism Programme (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children) was established in 1966 as part of the Department of Psychiatry of the School of Medicine, at the University of North Carolina in the USA. The TEACCH approach has been used worldwide to support young people and adults with autism to help the world make more sense to them and enable them to find their place in that world. The pioneers of TEACCH, very like the pioneers of Sunfield, believed strongly that with the right support and intervention, every young person with autism could make a positive contribution to their community.

It identified the concept of the “Culture of Autism” as a way of thinking about the characteristic patterns of thinking and behaviour seen in individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). It developed an intervention approach based on understanding the learning characteristics of these individuals, and the use of visual supports to promote meaning and maximise independence.

Implementing the TEACCH approach begins with understanding the culture of autism, and how it presents in a particular person. An individualised person-centred plan can then be developed for each student, including structuring their physical environment accordingly. This plan will incorporate the use of visual supports to sequence predictable daily activities, and to make individual tasks more understandable and achievable for the student.

How does Sunfield implement the TEACCH approach?

Sunfield has a growing team of accredited TEACCH trainers, who work alongside colleagues from North Carolina to deliver a 5 day TEACCH training course to participants from across Europe. This means that a high proportion of our own staff have benefited from this level of training, and that we have experts on-site all year round who can help us to problem-solve and adapt programmes to support students’ changing needs. We proactively work with our children and young people, and their families, as well as the teams here at Sunfield, to regularly identify and build on their skills.

We provide a structured environment to enable children with autism to feel secure, understood and better able to focus on learning and developing new skills. For every new task taught, we place a strong emphasis on helping the young person to achieve it with increasing levels of independence. The adult will take a less directive and more appreciative and praising role over time, helping to build the young person’s sense of achievement and pride. The structured teaching approach applies to their entire waking day curriculum, with staff using the TEACCH approach in living, learning and therapeutic environments, to help students to develop daily living skills and simple vocational skills.

Further reading

Teach Autism Program Website – <http://teacch.com/about-us/what-is-teacch>.

The National Autistic Society Website – <http://www.autism.org.uk/teacch>.