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Views of people identifying as being on the autism spectrum:

Essential competencies for staff working with pupils on the autism spectrum

(Analysed and compiled by Damian Milton)

Note on the sample:

Eight people who identified as being on the autism spectrum completed a brief online survey to name up to three competencies (knowledge, skills or personal qualities) they consider as being essential for staff to have or to acquire. They were also asked to comment on eight sample competencies. Their responses were used in the development of the Competency Framework.

Their replies are categorised below into the four categories which have been used to structure the Competency Framework: the individual pupil, building relationships, curriculum and learning, and enabling environments. An additional category of 'personal qualities' has been added here to reflect the large number of respondents who mentioned personal qualities as an essential competency.

Category	Suggested competency – number of respondents*
Understanding the individual pupil	Understanding of individual pupil
	Knowledge of autism – and the variety of needs and difficulties
	Experience of working with people on the autism spectrum
	Every person on the spectrum is different and has differing needs
Building relationships	The parent often knows the child best – 2
	Seeing issues from the viewpoint of the person on the autism spectrum
	Being quiet and non-confrontational
Enabling environments	Clarity in communications
	Adapting the academic, physical and sensory environment to accommodate interests
	Personal qualities
	Patience – 2
	Well organised
	Consistency
	Compassion
	Punctuality and reliability
	Wisdom
	Good observer
Non-judgemental	
Enjoyment of working with people on the autism spectrum	



According to these respondents, it is essential for practitioners to build relationships with people on the autism spectrum by listening and gaining a better understanding of the viewpoint of the pupil. It is important to note the support shown here also for the specific knowledge that parents have about their own children.

Although people not on the autism spectrum often view the pursuit of interests as potentially leading to 'unhealthy obsessions', this is not generally the view of those who experience such interests from the 'inside'.

Being calm and non-confrontational is also an essential personal quality for practitioners to aspire to when working with people on the autism spectrum. It is interesting to note that the respondents mentioned some differing personal qualities to all of the other stakeholder groups, such as being 'well organised', being 'punctual and reliable', and having 'wisdom'.