0-25 Specialist Teaching & Support Service

Social, Communication, Interaction & Learning (SCIL) Team

Communication & Interaction

**Writing social stories**

*Note : Carol Gray originated this approach and it would be worth referring to her source material before using a social story. This help sheet is formulated as a quick reference guide.*

Social stories describe what people do and why they do it. They describe what common responses are expected in a given certain situation.

Social stories are often used to develop an appropriate behaviour. The goal is to teach understanding not rote compliance. It is intended to describe rather than to direct

Social stories can’t teach a child a new skill. They can remind a child where to apply an existing skill.

The purposes of the social story are to

* Provide positive feedback to a child so that they can recognise their own appropriate skills and behaviour.
* To help prepare for a new experience
* To help a child accustom themselves to a situation and to respond appropriately
* To help prevent extreme reactions which may stem from a lack of social understanding.
* To provide a prompt for socially appropriate behaviour.

Basic rules

1. set the scene
2. give some detail which is relevant to the child
3. describe a rule
4. introduce the perspective of other people
5. describe the strategy. Remember that **I will try to…**does not set the child up for failure – it provides the opportunity to try again.

The jargon explained

**Descriptive sentences :** Describe what happens when the situation occurs and why. Use terms such as ‘often’, ‘usually’, or ‘often’ rather than always.

**Perspective sentences :** Describe the reactions and understanding of other people in this particular situation and help to explain the reason why they respond as they do. It may be that perspective sentences describe the feelings of other people and that you may have to use a visual ‘theory of mind’ strategy in order to explain this more fully.

**Directive sentences :** These sentences describe the desired response made by the child in this situation and tell them in positive terms what they can do.