



## Hydrocephalus Educational Observations For Teachers



### What the Young Person Might be Experiencing

Some children and teenagers with Hydrocephalus may have 'off days' and 'on days'. For example, they could be experiencing:

#### **Physical discomfort:**

- A shunt blockage or infection;
- Migraine;
- Low energy levels (may get tired very easily).

#### **Problems in understanding:**

- How to explain the difficulties they are experiencing and how to ask for help when they really need it (leading to frustration that can 'boil over' when they get home);
- How to 'stand back' for a minute and think about what they are doing, or are about to do;
- How to scan an 'environment' (e.g. a corridor; a computer screen) for 'cues' that will give them information about what is where;
- How to 'read' a task and explain what it means in terms of what they need to do;
- How to reflect on their work and compare it to the standards required.

#### **Feelings of under-achievement, due to:**

- Problems with balance and poor spatial awareness;
- Difficulties with co-ordination and fine motor control;
- Difficulties in remembering instructions and following discussions (poor short-term memory for speech);
- Difficulty in concentrating on, and organising their work (not 'getting on with it' without reminders; losing things, or forgetting 'where they are' in their work);
- A lack of total independence in self-care management skills (over-reliance on others);
- 'Shyness' about giving their own ideas and opinions (not often saying 'I think', followed by something no one else has said);
- Too few 'social' experiences;
- Not being able to 'keep up' with the job, or with work, at the same level as others.



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### What the Teacher or SNA might be 'seeing'

It is very easy to jump to conclusions about 'behaviour'. In the list below, each 'difficulty' is followed by a possible misinterpretation.

#### A difficulty in:

- Concentrating (can be misinterpreted as 'laziness', i.e. needs to be 'stood over')
- Following instructions (*deliberate 'awkwardness'*);
- 'Getting on' with others (*'selfishness' or 'self-centredness'*);
- Doing neat work and organising it properly (*carelessness*);
- 'Thinking it through' before giving an answer (*not taking work seriously*);
- 'Keeping to the point' (*'waffling'; 'not taking work seriously'*).

Each of the above 'difficulties' represents a skill that needs to be worked on.

### Working Together

The last point in section 1 only holds true for 'competitive', 'I win, you lose' environments. If the 'ethos' of the work-place/college celebrates individual differences and achievements, no matter how small; and 'people looking out for each other', this will be less of a problem. If these young people do get the idea that there is nothing they are good at, they will begin to have a poor image of themselves, and may become very withdrawn and unhappy. They may need help, and a great deal of positive feed-back to learn how to:

- Speak about the skills they need (what they are expected to be able to do), and the skills they have (i.e. what they can do; what they have difficulty with);
- Describe a specific task, and what that means in terms of what they need to do;
- Describe the help they need;
- Repeat (whisper) instructions to themselves – so that they can remember what to do – and write them down, so that they can refer to them;
- Review the work and explain how it compares with the goals that were set.