**User Analysis**

It is important to understand your chosen user group and the challenges they face when playing with other people. This report should investigate and identify the key barriers your chosen users face because of their impairment, and what approaches are currently used to overcome these challenges. You may discuss some more general issues related to the person’s impairment, but there should also be a focus on the challenges faced during play. In the report there should be four main sections.

1. Types of impairment experienced by your chosen user group.
2. Challenges this presents to the users.
3. Challenges this presents during play.
4. Current approaches to addressing these challenges.

Our chosen user group is children and young teenagers with autism. We will be targeting those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) level 1, commonly known as Asperger’s, in particular. ASD level 1 is the most common form of autism with 44% of the autistic population being within this band.

Children with autism have difficulties understanding and participating in social interactions, this makes it difficult to meet people, make friends and develop relationships. Another common trait of autism is repetitive behaviour, routines and activities, such as daily routines and repetitive body movements.

Autism can result in children having challenges with spoken language and communication such as delayed speech development, tendency to repeat words and phrases, monotonous or flat speech and communicating use single words.

A common challenge faced by children with autism is interacting with other children. Autistic children find it difficult to understand personal space and boundaries or may be sensitive to others entering their own personal space. Many autistic children prefer to play alone rather than with others and have limited interest in interacting with others.

There are many approaches that are used to provide support for people with autism. The National Autistic Society provides a framework known as SPELL, which stands for Structure, Positive approaches and expectations, Empathy, Low arousal and Links.

Structure creates a more predictable, accessible and safer place for people with autism. Providing environments and processes which are structured can reduce a person’s dependency on others and reduce anxiety.

Positive approaches and expectations help to establish and build self-confidence and self-esteem, by allowing people to build upon their natural strengths and interests. A structured process involving positive rehearsal can reduce the level on anxiety experience when undertaking new challenges and experiences.

Another approach is the use of social stories. Social stories are used to present information in a more literal way, helping an autistic person to improve their understanding of a previously difficult or ambiguous activity. They can also be used to create structure by providing information about a situation and guidelines for behaviour.

Visual aids provide a consistent and physical form of communication, which is advantageous to inconsistent and sometimes ambiguous spoken language. The use of visual supports can provide structure and routines, encourage independence and improve a person’s understanding.