



**Cheshire and Wirral  
Partnership**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# **Sensory Integration in Learning Disabilities**

**Information for family, friends and carers**

## What is sensory integration ?

Sensory integration is the process by which the brain takes in and interprets information about the body and its surroundings.

This information is then used to control and organise the body.

We all receive information in a number of ways and through different senses. This enables us to respond to produce an action or behaviour.

Information can be gathered from the seven following areas:

- Sight
- Hearing
- Taste
- Touch
- Smell
- Movement
- Pressure

## What are sensory integration difficulties ?

- A sensory integrative difficulty occurs when a person has problems with organising sensory information.
- Individuals can be **over** or **under sensitive** or both.
- Difficulties can affect any of the **seven senses**.
- Sensory messages are not flowing effectively in the brain. This is often displayed through behaviour.

## When are sensory integration difficulties a problem ?

- A person with sensory integration difficulties may get **too much or not enough** stimulation from their environment.
- Many people will develop their own ways of coping with this by behaving in a certain way.

These behaviours can range from:

- Rocking back and forth
  - Spinning self or objects
  - Mouthing objects
  - Picking at skin
  - Pinching
  - Head banging
  - Avoiding touch/hitting out when touched
- 
- Too much stimulation may result in **sensory avoiding** behaviours.
  - Not enough stimuli may result in **sensory seeking** behaviours.
  - These behaviours become a problem when they interfere with daily life.

## Everyday activities can be affected

- Food and drink: fussy or messy eater; unable to tolerate some tastes/textures of foods.
- Self care: avoids grooming/heavy handed with self care activities.
- Dressing: cannot wear some textures, removes clothes, wearing layers of clothing, refuses to undress.
- Social: avoids crowds/becomes agitated
- Travel: difficulty walking on different surfaces/stairs, becomes agitated when a vehicle stops.
- Concentration: easily distractible/unable to complete tasks, concentrates well to the exclusion of other tasks.
- Other: rocking, self injury, making constant sounds.

## How occupational therapists can help

- Occupational therapists help by integrating the senses through a controlled use of sensory activities.
- The aim is to enable the individual to feel 'just right' by having access to techniques that calm or alert them.
- Occupational therapy intervention attempts to recreate an individual's own self-modulating behaviour in a more effective manner.
- Occupational therapists can also advise on changing the person's environment.

## What occupational therapists can do

An Occupational Therapist can carry out an assessment to identify if a person's difficulties are linked to their sensory processing needs.

This will be done by gathering information from people who know the person well and through observing the person in their usual environments and how they engage in activities.

If a person is assessed as having sensory integration difficulties, further work can be carried out, which may include the following:

- Identifying activities that provide the right sensory input
- Providing advice on developing routines to support the person's sensory needs throughout the day (a sensory diet)
- Providing training and information to those who support the person

Sometimes a combination of things, including a sensory integration problem, may be contributing to a person's difficulties.

In these cases, joint work can be carried out with relevant professionals, for example, psychology, physiotherapy or speech and language therapy.

## Contact details

The contact details for our community team bases are listed below.

If you have a query or any questions about the information in this leaflet please contact the occupational therapist at the community team base nearest to you.

### **Wirral Millennium Centre**

**Address:** Twickenham Drive, Leasowe, Wirral CH46 1PQ

**Tel:** 0300 303 3157

### **Cheshire West Eastway**

**Address:** Countess of Chester Health Park, Liverpool Road, Chester CH2 1BQ

**Tel:** 01244 397 222

### **Cheshire West (Vale Royal) Wyvern House**

**Address:** Wyvern House, The Drumber, Winsford, Cheshire, CW7 1AH

**Tel:** 01606 288850

### **Cheshire East (South Cheshire) Stalbridge Road Clinic**

**Address:** 54 Stalbridge Road, Crewe, Cheshire CW2 7LP

**Tel:** 01270 656 335

### **Cheshire East Rosemount Lodge**

**Address:** Chester Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 8QA

**Tel:** 01625 509 013

<p>If you require translation services or a copy of this document in other languages, audio tape, Braille or larger print, please speak to a member of CWP staff, e-mail <a href="mailto:info@cwps.nhs.uk">info@cwps.nhs.uk</a> or write to: Communications, Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Upton Lea, Countess of Chester Health Park, Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1BQ.</p>
<p>যদি আপনার ট্রান্সলেশন সার্ভিসের বা এই দলিলের কপি অন্য ভাষায়, অডিও টেইপে, ব্রেইল বা বড় ছাপায় দরকার হয় তবে অনুগ্রহ করে সিডব্লিউপি এর স্টাফদের সাথে কথা বলুন, ইমেইল করার ঠিকানা <a href="mailto:info@cwps.nhs.uk">info@cwps.nhs.uk</a> বা কমিউনিকেশন, চেশায়ার ও উইরাল পার্টনারশীপ এনএইচএস ফাউন্ডেশন ট্রাস্ট, আপটন লী, কাউন্টেস অফ চেস্টার হেলথ পার্ক, লিভারপুল রোড, চেস্টার, সিএইচ২ ১ বিকিউ ঠিকানায় লিখুন।</p>
<p>如果您需要翻譯服務或想索取這份文件的其他語文、錄音帶、凸字或大字體版本，請向我們的職員查詢。您亦可以寄電郵至 <a href="mailto:info@cwps.nhs.uk">info@cwps.nhs.uk</a> 或寄信到 Communication, Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Upton Lea, Countess of Chester Health Park, Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1BQ.</p>
<p>જો તમારે ભાષાંતર સેવાઓ અથવા આ દસ્તાવેજની બીજી ભાષાઓમાં નકલ, ઓડિયો ટેપ, બ્રેઇલ અથવા વિશાળ કદની છપાઈની જરૂર હોય, તો કૃપા કરીને સીડબ્લ્યુપી (CWP) ના કર્મચારીઓ સાથે વાત કરો, ઈમેલ કરો: <a href="mailto:info@cwps.nhs.uk">info@cwps.nhs.uk</a> અથવા આ સરનામે લખો: Communication, Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Upton Lea, Countess of Chester Health Park, Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1BQ.</p>
<p>यदि आपको अनुवाद सेवाएं या इस दस्तावेज की अन्य भाषाओं में नकल, ऑडियो टेप, ब्रेइल लीपि या विशाल आकार में छपाई की आवश्यकता हो, तब कृपया सीडब्ल्युपी (CWP) कर्मचारियों के साथ बात किजिये, या ईमेल किजिये: <a href="mailto:info@cwps.nhs.uk">info@cwps.nhs.uk</a> या इस पते पर लिखिये: Communication, Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Upton Lea, Countess of Chester Health Park, Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1BQ.</p>
<p>Jeśli wymagane jest tłumaczenie lub kopia niniejszego dokumentu w innych językach, na taśmie magnetofonowej, w języku Braille'a lub dużym drukiem, prosimy o skontaktowanie się z członkiem personelu CWP (Organizacja partnerska krajowego systemu zdrowia regionów Cheshire i Wirral) lub przez pocztę elektroniczną: <a href="mailto:info@cwps.nhs.uk">info@cwps.nhs.uk</a> lub na adres: Communications, Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Upton Lea, Countess of Chester Health Park, Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1BQ.</p>
<p>Os oes arnoch angen gwasanaeth cyfiethu neu gopi o'r ddogfen hon mewn ieithoedd eraill, tîp sain, Braille neu brint mawr, siaradwch ag aelod o staff CWP, e-bost <a href="mailto:info@cwps.nhs.uk">info@cwps.nhs.uk</a> neu ysgrifennwch i: Communications, Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Upton Lea, Countess of Chester Health Park, Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1BQ.</p>

**For more information see [www.cwp.nhs.uk](http://www.cwp.nhs.uk).**

© CWP NHS Foundation Trust

The information in this leaflet was valid at the date of production **December 2019** and is due for review in **December 2021**

Leaflet code: E-SILD-09-301