The ENGAGEMENT FOR LEARNING FRAMEWORK Guide

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The Engagement for Learning Framework

The Engagement for Learning Framework is a resource for educators, including teachers, teaching assistants and therapists. It enables them to explore and identify effective teaching and learning strategies for pupils with complex learning difficulties and disabilities (CLDD), as well as to record, measure and demonstrate learning outcomes for these pupils in a meaningful way. This guide introduces the Engagement Profile and Scale – the two core tools of the Engagement for Learning Framework – as well as to the Engagement Ladder and the ‘Progress graph’. The other tools, described in Engaging Learners with Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (Carpenter et al., 2015), are the CLDD Briefing Packs and the Inquiry Framework for Learning.

The impetus for this project emerged from teachers. The UK Government’s Department for Education (DfE) and its predecessor, the Department for Children, Families and Schools, listened to teachers’ repeatedly voiced concerns about a new generation of children with learning difficulties whose complex learning needs they felt poorly equipped to manage. In response, they funded the CLDD research project (Carpenter et al., 2011).

Children with CLDD are not only those who are traditionally considered to have the most complex needs such as children in special schools at the profound end of the learning disability spectrum, but also a new population of children in mainstream schools, found across all key stages, whose difficulties were not being recognized.

Engagement

Sustainable learning can only occur when there is meaningful engagement. The process of engagement is a journey which connects a child and their environment (including people, ideas, materials and concepts) to enable learning and achievement.
What are the Engagement Profile & Scale?

Engagement is the single best predictor of successful learning for children with learning disabilities (Iovannone et al., 2003). Without engagement, there is no deep learning (Hargreaves, 2006), effective teaching, meaningful outcome, real attainment or quality progress (Carpenter, 2010).

The Engagement Profile and Scale are classroom tools developed through SSAT’s research into effective teaching and learning for children with complex learning difficulties and disabilities. They allow educators to focus on a child’s engagement as a learner and create personalised learning pathways. They prompt student-centred reflection on how to increase the learner’s engagement, leading to deep learning.

Engagement is multi-dimensional, and encompasses responsiveness, curiosity, investigation, discovery, anticipation, persistence and initiation. By focusing on these seven indicators of engagement, educators can ask themselves questions such as: ‘How can I change the learning activity to stimulate Robert’s curiosity?’ ‘What can I change about this experience to encourage Shannon to persist?’

The adaptations made and the effect on the pupil’s level of engagement for learning can be recorded, together with a score on the Engagement Scale. Over time, it is possible to chart the success of interventions and adjustments, and the effect this has had on the pupil’s levels of engagement for learning.

In situations where the pupil does not currently engage with any learning activity, the Engagement Profile can be used to structure an informal assessment of the kinds of activities the student does engage with constructively. The findings can be used to indicate starting points from which to engage the pupil in learning.
How to complete the Engagement Profile

The process of engagement should be personalised to the learner profile of need. Once completed, the Profile will describe for you and others who teach the pupil, how the pupil demonstrates their highest levels of engagement. This is important so staff can have high expectations of a pupil’s learning behaviours and understand what motivates him/her to be highly engaged and open to learning.

Make your observations when the pupil is in ‘learning mode’ during a high engagement activity – this can be leisure- or school-based. An activity in which a pupil engages highly is one s/he prefers to almost every other activity or distraction. You may need to talk with colleagues, the pupil themselves or their family about suitable favourite activities’ for the Profile.

- Choose one or more activities with which the pupil engages most highly; these do not need to be classroom based.
- Use the definitions provided in the engagement definition diagram overleaf to consider how the pupil demonstrates each of the indicators within the activity/activities – think broadly.
- Record your observation of the learner’s indicator-related behaviours in each oval.

Responsiveness The ‘noticing’ phase. How does the learner demonstrate awareness/recognition of the activity?

Curiosity A prelude to further exploration or retreat. ‘How does the learner display curiosity about the activity (e.g. questing behaviours’ such as peering, fleeting touch, verbal questioning, etc.)? Can you see the desire to explore further?

Investigation The ‘hands on’ phase. What exploratory behaviours does the learner use when investigating the activity?

Discovery How does the learner demonstrate discovery skills within an activity? Is there realisation and surprise?

Anticipation How does the learner demonstrate anticipation? Are they showing prediction because of previous knowledge?

Persistence How does the learner demonstrate continued effort within the activity (e.g. overcoming difficulties or conditions that usually make them disengage from learning)?

Initiation How does the learner express their initiation (e.g. requesting the activity or doing something new in the activity)?

Important points

- It does not matter in which order the engagement indicators are completed; the indicators are not hierarchical.
- This is not a static document and should be updated as and when you feel necessary.
- When completing the indicators, you will find adding the text (P) for prompts or (I) for independent useful.
- The Engagement Profile also allows educators to know levels of engagement that the pupil can achieve; therefore, refer to the Engagement Profile when completing the Engagement Scale.

NB: Obsessive activities are unlikely to encourage ‘engagement for learning’.
ENGAGEMENT INDICATOR DEFINITIONS

RESPONSIVENESS
- Shows awareness, acknowledgement or recognition

CURIOSITY
- The need, thirst or desire to explore, know about, learn or make a connection with

INVESTIGATION
- Actively trying to find out more within or about an activity or experience

DISCOVERY
- "Light bulb moment" demonstrates realisation, surprise or excitement, etc., at new knowledge or skill or new application of previous learning

ANTICIPATION
- Shows expectancy or prediction as a result of previous knowledge, experience or skill

PERSISTENCE
- "Sticking with it" continued effort (may be in short bursts), perseverance, determination, refusal to give up or let go

INITIATION
- A self-directed request or indication which expresses an intention, want or need

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NOTE: Simply click on each circle and start typing to edit each field.
ENGAGEMENT PROFILE

Name: RP
Date: 2.5.10

RESPONSIVENESS
- Usually Robert will come in and sit down. He knows the normal routine of the class.

CURIOSITY
- Robert asks about the topic and activity. He can show real enthusiasm.

INVESTIGATION
- Robert will go onto the internet and find out. He will ask his peers questions. He is happy to work with a partner. Uses appropriate material as a reference e.g. book to complete sheets.

PERSISTENCE
- If Robert is confident on task, he may work independently after staff direction.
- Will finish an activity before moving onto another one.
- Staying in class for the whole lesson.
- Not getting frustrated.

INITIATION
- Robert will independently request or complete work without instruction to do so. Put his hand up for support.

ANTICIPATION
- Robert knows the routine of the class. He asks questions when he sees an activity, often guessing what he has to do. He listens.

DISCOVERY
- Robert is very keen to learn and will ask questions. If Robert gets an answer right he is very pleased.

NOTE: Simply click on each circle and start typing to edit each field.
**RESPONSIVENESS**

Louis will still his body and tilt his head slightly to the side to listen. If the stimulus is something he likes he will smile, vocalise and keep his eyes on the object.

**INITIATION**

Louis will reach out to touch something if he likes it. Louis vocalises to start the action again.

**CURiosity**

Louis will show curiosity by looking briefly at an object. He will sustain his attention by tracking the object or stimulus. Head is still tilted. Lights and sounds arouse his curiosity within the learning activity.

**PERSISTENCE**

Louis will continue to vocalise and his vocalisations sound quite cross. The pitch changes and the vocalisations become louder. Louis will move his arms and legs as well as moving his upper body from side to side. He persistently waited for the water activity.

**INVESTIGATION**

Louis will lean over to look at an object and may reach out with either hand to touch it. He looked to see where the water was coming from.

**ANTICIPATION**

Louis will become quite vocal, move his upper body and head and look for an object or motivating sound. He may vocalise and move his mouth into an open mouthed shape. Shows anticipation when water is moved away.

**DISCOVERY**

Louis will still and listen. He will smile and become excited by moving his arms and legs and by vocalising. He may touch the object with his mouth. He discovers the water is coming out of the bucket goes into the tin.

**ENGAGEMENT PROFILE**

Name: LP

Date: March 2011

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How to complete the Engagement Scale

The purpose of using the Engagement Scale is not for a pupil to reach the highest possible engagement and stay there. The adaptations you make to support the pupil’s engagement must be sustainable (e.g. not temporarily increasing their support levels just to gain a high score). Once a pupil is highly engaged in an activity, it can be altered to increase the challenge, which will lower the pupil’s engagement again. If you want to increase the challenge for the pupil, you can involve another adult or pupil, transfer the skill to a different situation, redesign the activity so the pupil becomes more independent, etc. Any of these may initially lower the pupil’s engagement until they have adapted to the change or further interventions have been made to support their engagement.

Completing the first page of the Engagement Scale

- Complete all headings to enable professionals to understand or use the information to support the pupil’s learning pathway.
- The date is especially important. If the information is not dated, it becomes invalid.
- Time should be noted, as a pattern may occur during the day regarding engagement levels.
- Make sure you don’t confuse the ‘Target’ with other headings. The example below shows the difference:
  - The lesson:  *numeracy,
  - The activity:  *numeral activity
  - Target:  *pupil joins in rote counting to 10.

Target:
- Don’t make extra work, use a target already set. Once a target has been chosen in an area where the pupil is least engaged, it should be kept consistent for the intervention period (e.g. a few weeks, a term). If you want to change the target, you need to end the first intervention period and analyse that data, before you set another target.

Lesson/activity:
- The subject/activity/lesson does not have to be worktop based; it can be in any learning environment (e.g. swimming pool, sensory room, cookery room).
- Other than the intervention, keep as much of the activity as consistent as you can (e.g. time, support, etc.). If there is a significant difference that may affect the pupil’s engagement (e.g. a favourite teacher is out) write a comment in the left-hand box on the front page.
- If you wish to carry out observations in more than one type of lesson or lesson time through the week, make sure you collect and analyse the evidence for different lesson types/times separately.

‘Intervention’ box:
- Observe and baseline 3 times before implementing any interventions.
- When completing the baseline scales, you will not have an ‘Intervention’ to write in the box, so write ‘Baseline only’ instead.
- Once the baseline scales are completed you are ready to begin interventions. Choose the priority ‘next intervention’ from any of the baseline scales and write your chosen intervention in the intervention box.

You are now ready to observe the pupil in a target-related activity:
- Choose a subject area where the pupil is least engaged in learning.
• Look for all indicators during the observation, in no particular order (e.g. you can focus on initiation before curiosity, or anticipation before responsiveness). For some pupils, during some activities, behaviours for different indicators might seem the same (e.g. responsiveness and curiosity may overlap). Use video clips and conversations with colleagues to resolve this issue. If the two indicators cannot be differentiated, write the same comments and scores for both indicators.
• The observation should be no longer than 15 minutes, and in most cases less. It needs to be do-able for you.
• Leave the scoring until last.
• VIDEO VIDEO VIDEO – it will amaze you how much you miss. Some teaching staff have found difficulties in seeing a ‘discovery moment’. The video will at times highlight this as it captures the slightest facial/body movements which the eye might miss.

Completing the second page of the Engagement Scale

‘What happened?’ column:
• Become a critical observer – what happened? what didn’t happen? why do you think it should have happened? has the intervention been successful or unsuccessful? Keep successful interventions in place, and adapt or discard those that have no effect or reduce the pupil’s engagement. Remember sometimes all it takes is a small change to an approach to create success.
• Literally write down what you see next to each indicator. Don’t forget to write your comments like a conversation you are having with a team/therapist or with yourself.
• Video clarifies and confirms what you think you have seen. By videoing the observation, you can reflect on the video as a team or with a professional colleague. Video is also great for demonstrating progress to families and colleagues. However, watching video is time-consuming. You may find you need to limit its use to resolving scoring dilemmas, collaborating with colleagues/families if you’re stuck on interventions, and sharing ‘eureka!’ moments with families.

Intervention column:
• Think of this column as ‘strategies that may improve the pupil’s engagement in learning’.
• Prioritise your next intervention; make it a team decision.
• Implement only one intervention each time, as it will be difficult to see which change to your intervention has affected the pupil’s engagement if you put into action more than one. It is a slow process.
• Transfer the intervention that makes a difference to the pupil’s other low engagement activities. It is important to share these findings with colleagues for the sake of the pupil.
• If you find a change improves the pupil’s engagement, continue using it when introducing a new intervention.
• If the change doesn’t affect, or reduces, the pupil’s engagement, then discard it.
• Remember that obsessive activities are unlikely to encourage ‘engagement for learning’.

Score column:
• The ‘Key for scoring’ supports colleagues in how to score.
• If a pupil has a top score of 4, they will be showing the same behaviours as they did in their highest engagement activity for the engagement profile. If a pupil shows no focus at all, they will score 0.
• Discuss the indicator comments before scoring, and how they relate to scoring on the 0-4 scale. Agree this as a team, to ensure a consistent approach to the scoring.
• Write the score next to the Engagement Indicator.
• Total the score at the bottom of the page, then circle this number on front page. This enables staff to check on the overall engagement scores quickly without having to read both pages.
Each pupil’s level of engagement is unique, therefore not all will reach a score of 28.

If you have a 0 score for one or more Engagement Indicators, you need to ask ‘What changes can I make to the activity?’ For example, if a pupil shows no initiation – ‘What changes can I make to encourage my pupil to show initiation?’ The solution, for instance, might be to leave more time before offering support, or to involve one of the pupil’s high engagement interests in the activity.

**Important Points**

- Ideally the ES should be completed twice weekly to give you a measurable amount of data. However, if for various reasons this cannot be done, try at least once a week.
- If the pupil does not appear ready to engage in learning at the time allocated for the Engagement Scale re-schedule your observation.
- If anxieties are high for both pupil and staff, the Engagement Scale becomes a problematic task (*like most tasks*). Ensure both parties are ready to engage.

NB. Depending on the pupil’s ability, it may take several sessions for them to respond to a change. However this is an ideal time to reflect whether teaching staff are personalising the pupil’s learning pathway in a way that is meaningful for them?
**Engagement Scale**

**Pupil name:**

**Age:**

**Lesson:**

**Year:**

**Target:**

**Activity:**

**Date:**

**Time:**

**Date for next observation:**

**Completed by:**

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**Overview of relevant issues**

e.g. Environment / pupil mood / medical OR medication?

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**What ‘Intervention’ are you using from the last scale you completed?**

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**Engagement Scale**

Mark TOTAL engagement score from sheet overleaf:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Focus</th>
<th>Emerging / fleeting</th>
<th>Partly sustained</th>
<th>Mostly sustained</th>
<th>Fully sustained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Engagement Indicators | Score (0–4) | What happened?  
What happened / what didn't happen and why? | Possible future interventions  
What will I do next time and why? How will I make the activity more appealing? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total score**  
NB NOW CIRCLE TOTAL SCORE ON SCALE (previous page)

**Key for scoring levels of engagement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No focus/Disengaged</td>
<td>Low and minimal levels – emerging / fleeting</td>
<td>Partly sustained</td>
<td>Mostly sustained</td>
<td>Fully sustained</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Engagement Scale

**Pupil name:** Robert P  
**Age:** 11  
**Year:** 7  
**Lesson:** English language and literature  
**Target:** To increase Robert’s participation in English  
**Activity:** To explore descriptive words for specific situations and content  
**Date:** dd/mm/yy  
**Time:** 11.00 am  
**Completed by:** A.N. Other (teacher)

## Overview of relevant issues
**e.g. Environment / Pupil mood / medical OR medication**

Robert arrived at the lesson in a positive mood.  
5 pupils, 1 teacher, 2 support assistants.  
The other pupils were calm.

## What ‘Intervention’ are you using from the last scale you completed?

Mentor met with Robert before lesson to make sure he had the right equipment with him, and to remind him of class rules.

## ENGAGEMENT SCALE

Mark TOTAL engagement score from sheet overleaf:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Focus</th>
<th>Emerging / fleeting</th>
<th>Partly sustained</th>
<th>Mostly sustained</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement Indicators</td>
<td>Score (0–4)</td>
<td>What happened? What happened / what didn’t happen and why?</td>
<td>Possible future interventions What will I do next time and why? How will I make the activity more appealing (see Inquiry Framework)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Robert seemed aware of lesson and what was required of him. Clear rules and boundaries in class that he responded to well. Came in and sat down, moved to his desk at the right time with correct equipment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Seemed slightly interested in the class.</td>
<td>Could the lesson be made more interesting? Change to a more exciting topic, or addition of resources.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No real investigation, no questions asked.</td>
<td>This could be done more with tactile objects, and using smells, colours to get him to engage with the words at a different level.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Listened to the answers of what words meant and wrote them down but not sure if these have been retained.</td>
<td>Go over meaning of words at the end of the lesson to assess retention of meaning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Anticipation of delivered material through good listening, guessing at meaning, calling out answers out loud. Seemed keen.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not much opportunity for initiation in lesson, but he did volunteer answers.</td>
<td>Perhaps allow the students to attempt some words on their own to see if they can guess what they might mean.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Robert started to disengage when sat in a circle at beginning of the lesson when he got a bit frustrated, but this came back. Listened to the whole of lesson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total score** 15  
NB NOW CIRCLE TOTAL SCORE ON SCALE (previous page)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key for scoring levels of engagement</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tr>
<td>No focus/disengagement</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Low and minimal levels – emerging/fleeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Engagement Scale

Pupil name: LP
Lesson: Food Technology
Activity: Choosing a filling for a sandwich
Date: 8th March 2011
Date for next observation: 15th March

Overview of relevant issues
E.g. Environment / pupil mood / medical OR medication?
Louis was awake before joining the group
Mum had written in the home school diary that Louis had slept well and there were no issues

What 'Intervention' are you using from the last scale you completed?
Baseline observation so no intervention carried forward

ENGAGEMENT SCALE
Mark TOTAL engagement score from sheet overleaf:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>No Focus</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Indicators</th>
<th>Score (0–4)</th>
<th>What happened? / what didn’t happen and why?</th>
<th>Possible future interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aware of chair being moved (reason?), of table being wiped, of someone behind him. Lots of verbal input from staff to Louis and his peers. (More processing time needed? How much?). No awareness of food in front of him.</td>
<td>Use motivating food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Curious of table being wiped, and staff at the side of him, chopping board placed in front of him.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Asleep</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Asleep</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Asleep</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total score</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>NB NOW CIRCLE TOTAL SCORE ON SCALE</strong> (previous page)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key for scoring levels of engagement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
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How to Complete the Engagement Ladder

Once you have completed the Engagement Ladders, these will indicate which pupil(s) you will need to focus on when using the Engagement Profile (EP) and Engagement Scale (ES)

Ladder 1 - Whole class ladder: deciding as a team, which pupil(s) to work with first

- Look at the various levels of engagement down the left-hand side of the ladder, and reflect where each pupil in your class is on the ladder in terms of their Engagement for Learning within a learning environment. (This can be inside or outside the classroom.)
- Write the pupils’ names in the ‘Pupil names’ column at the level you feel is appropriate.

Ladder 2: Individual pupil ladder: deciding where to focus interventions with an individual student

- From ladder 1, select a pupil from the lower levels, preferably a pupil who is ‘partly engaged’, has ‘emerging/fleeting’ engagement or is demonstrating ‘No focus’ in learning.
- Write the pupil’s name and the date at the top of the page.

On Ladder 2: Complete an overview of the pupil’s engagement across their learning areas (e.g. lessons, activities, subjects, or tasks) by writing the name of the areas at the appropriate engagement level.

- For example, if the pupil is almost fully engaged in numeracy, you would place him/her towards the top of the ladder between ‘mostly engaged’ ‘and’ fully engaged’, writing ‘numeralcy’ in the ‘Subject/Area’ column.
- Activities the pupil is ‘mostly engaged’ or ‘fully engaged’ in can be used to help complete their ‘engagement profile’, as the pupil is clearly demonstrating in this subject how they can engage for learning.
- If the pupil demonstrates ‘emerging/fleeting’ engagement levels in literacy, you would write ‘literacy’ next to the ‘emerging/fleeting’ section, and so on. This level demonstrates where the pupil is least engaged, and indicates areas that you will want to focus on using the ‘engagement scale’ to raise their engagement levels.
Templates of the resources illustrated in this guide can be found at www.engagement4learning.com.

Up-to-date information and thinking on *Engaging Learners with Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities: A resource guide for teachers and teaching assistants* (2015) is available from: