**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC**

**General Introduction**

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay John, so if we just start of generally, can you tell me a bit about your teaching experience and your class at the moment.

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** Okay, so I’ve now been teaching for 4 years and before that I was a teaching assistant for 4 years as well and there was a year of training between those two um in a special needs school so I’ve only had one term’s experience in a mainstream school er, so as a result class sizes are quite small. There are 12 pupils, they’ve all got a statement of special needs and um [1.5 secs] there’s a class I’ve had this last academic year, there have been 12 pupils with a variety of different needs, mostly autism but with one with diagnosed ADHD and a couple of others who may have certain parts of their diagnosis that include ADHD type symptoms. Um, the school is um… probably a middle sized special school in that it’s got over a 100 pupils and um I’ll be working in key stage 3 this year er which is 3 classes so again I’ll be teaching another 24 pupils.

**INTERVIEWER:** Hmm

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** On and off for different subjects and um some of them as well have had ADHD or bits and bobs of it but because everyone has a statement some of the pupils have got a statement that says autism but they also have another couple of things that aren’t worth writing down really because their main learning issue is there first diagnosis.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** So yeah

**INTERVIEWER:** And there was a term that you did in a mainstream school. Obviously that was quite different… was that part of your training or was that

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** Yeah that was part of my training year… um as part of having a wider view on how teaching worked and it was good and um I don’t think there was anyone in.. it was a year two class so again by that traditionally unless you’ve got quite severe... anything, won’t be diagnosed in year two um until later so there wasn’t anyone with a diagnosis of ADHD. There was a couple of pupils that you could quite easily say were similar to that but I think there’s.. my personal opinion of ADHD is that there are certain elements of it that could pretty much be seen in any child er in certain years of development um and its whether they get out of that stage as to whether you decide if they’ve got ADHD or not

## ADHD as a disorder and its symptoms

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay so what kind of characteristics would you say?

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** The ability to not settle, the ability to not focus on a task for very long um and an increased amount of fidgetiness... Um a lot of primary teaching now in the early years doesn’t involve moving about or getting up, jumping off trees and climbing things now if you believe that that is actually a primary part of learning in child development which I do um then you can kind of understand a fair number of small boys who don’t get an opportunity to jump around and climb on and play in a very kinaesthetic way suddenly being told to sit down what are they going to do but fidget er so similarly for focusing its something that some children find easier than others I guess its dependant on their home environment as to whether they are encouraged to focus on everything or they are allowed to just whirlwind around erm so yeah it was interesting to see um characteristics of kids in a mainstream class… and whether that is just the way that you are at the minute or is that something that has a diagnosis behind it

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah so, I guess you’ve mentioned the hyperactive side of things in term of fidgety and unable to settle and maybe inattention and focusing... sometimes the term impulsive is used with ADHD children so not thinking before they act so would you say that’s true in your experience or not so much

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** I’d say that’s in most people until they are past 21 maybe…Um I think... I think an impulsivity is definitely something I have seen in my xxx school in terms of the mainstream experience there wasn’t so much of that you could see um maybe that was due to the fact that I didn’t see them for very long comparatively it was only 1 term and again they were year twos so socially a set of year twos they’re all pretty impulsive but at the same time eager to please an adult so if you have good control all over the class and a fairly good grip on them then saying we are going to do this then we are going to do this and keep things moving you don’t need to be impulsive because the teacher is exciting enough to be impulsive enough for you all.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah and have you seen many girls with ADHD? Has it all been boys? Or even in terms of children that weren’t diagnosed that you saw potentially could?

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC**: It’s been all boys but again the demographic of xxx means that there are more boys than there are girls

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** Cause again following any kind of special needs mostly boys less so girls. So yeah

**INTERVIEWER:** And do you know much about the causes of ADHD?

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** Not really

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you have any thoughts on it, what you think it might be

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** Um… so… the inability to focus I can only assume that it has something to do with brain chemistry and the way that it’s link up and either um certain areas of the brain not being able to link or certain areas of the brain linking too much.. That’s my kind of… did psychology as my degree… assumption of what ADHD is really. Um... I think… I think there’s also a strong argument that there’s quite a social construction of ADHD and its prevalence so I do have revelations on how they are or if they really do have ADHD. It’s completely something that some people have and I completely see like a good reason for it. For example if you were a caveman and you were completely absorbed in the stories around the fire you kind of need to not care too much about that story and to be really highly alert to a snapping twig or a rustling so you’re tribe don’t die so I could kind of see that yeah this could be something hereditary and could follow along in families this could be involved with your brain chemistry being different, your physiology being different how many people have it, I don’t necessarily agree with..

**INTERVIEWER:** So when you say social construct, what do you think like… what does that create? Where does it come from?

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** I think we label what we think is…normal now differently as opposed to 50 years ago…100 years ago. 100 of years ago. Um then so if you’re not within that bell curve then there has to be a label on it like tis asking you to explain why you don’t fit in that bell curve whether you are a genius because you are at one end of it or now it’s not acceptable to say you’re the village idiot deal with it so we’ve got to find someone a label.. Um I think also the way… the way in which we teach children... Um the function of teaching is to make them useful... Isn’t it… largely… er from a government point of view and a social point of view is to make people do stuff, what they do, the useful stuff now days is sit, listen, take commands, do it as quickly as possible without out making as many mistakes as possible and a child with ADHD or a child with Autism or a child with down syndrome aren’t built to do those things properly so they go to a SEN school or get ignored.

**INTERVIEWER:** So you kind of think that there’s biological reasons but maybe social reasons as well?

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** Yeah and I think the social reasons don’t make it any more or less of a problem what it does is highlights it to everyone else to what you’re dealing with, fixing, solving or accepting and we’d do better as a society to accept difference. Um in lots of ways um there’s a very medical view of it, it’s a disorder and these are ways to fix the disorder not this person is wired like this if I put these opportunities in front of them they’ll flourish um at that’s why I love working for SEN cause that’s much more their philosophy, it doesn’t matter if they’re not going to get GCSEs or do SATS or anytime of phonic screening it’s that this child is wired like this, they struggle with that they are really good at this, what opportunities can you give to him to get better at things they don’t like and do really well at the things they do like so yeah..

**INTERVIEWER:** Oh wow.

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** That’s a weird set of theory somewhere ... kind of link them all together

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. And… when you think… or maybe you can compare them… when you think of your classroom now… The one you just had this year... um and thinking back to the mainstream one you had what impact to children with ADHD have in a classroom? What difference does it make?

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC**: So in an SEN setting everyone is a potential disturbance so there’s a high ratio of adults, I worked with 5 other adults which is like a staffing ratio’s dream if you’re a regular teacher… I mean 5 other people to help that’s great! But that kind of means you end up teaching 12 and managing 5 adults which is a different challenge but the child with ADHD can be really draining on who I have assigned to work with so… so the impact on the others is normally if they do have ADHD they are learning that why they are in school um they are a one to one child if you want to get anything meaningful out of them as a response in terms of a learning stimulus or any work.

So they are a hard drainer on staff and focus. Normally their impulsivity and all that kind of stuff can be very… very moderate to minor that again in a SEN setting… in er main stream setting you could just ignore it if you know if its pen clicking or tapping or foot tapping or occasionally having to go in the corner and jump for a bit and get it all out and go back… whereas in a SEN setting you’ve got equally autistic children that finds clicking or noises or whatever really really really sensory overwhelming and so there’s been… I’ve had classes where er if one child clicks their pen too many times another child flips the table and another child because of the flipped table screams and then another child who’s in a wheelchair then cries for an hour. So there’s… there’s different issues in both cause in a mainstream class you can either create a culture in which… um a culture in which it accepts that this individual needs to do certain things that you don’t need to do… um again this depends on the age of the kids that you are teaching in your class but if you try and create an acceptance of it… equally a child with ADHD can be incredibly disturbing for the other 28 kids or 29 kids that are working quite quietly when this kid just cannot drop it um whether it be a worry they’ve got or an issue they’ve got or the fact that they need help or the fact that they don’t want to do it um so it can have an impact I think… um and in terms of the difference I think that it’s the extremity of it… so in a SEN thing the reactions are going to be extreme because they can’t regulate themselves.. that’s part of why they have SEN or been put in SEN because they can’t regulate themselves whereas in a mainstream setting you’re impacting more people and you potentially have less resources to deal with it and don’t necessarily have a number of one to one staff, you don’t necessarily have the time within your timetable to say ‘you know what we’ll do this in half an hours’ time’ when it’s not a bother and right now you can go and do that. That’s another thing, in a SEN setting the timetable is the timetable which is often very rigid cause that helps autistic learners and it helps kids with ADHD but it’s equally flexible so if they just refuse to do their work then you just wait around as you would a toddler you just say ‘alright then we’ll just do it when everyone’s playing’ and that’s fine. Um so in way that takes the pressure off whereas in a mainstream setting there’s a lot… there’s a lots of more time pressure, it that we’ve got to fit this in then we’ve got to fit this in and then at some point you’ve got to eat or have some fresh air and then you’ve got to do even more learning and cram it in your break um… which is um… in a large part was overwhelming for the kids [laughing] whereas if you just said if you get one of the five things I have planned for done today I’ll be happy and then maybe move on from there and again I have a I try and have a realistic view of the year explaining to my staff in September if we get all the staff sat down and listening and then doing any task I don’t mind because if they trust us to do that they won’t mind in the summer when we are doing 3 bits of work and for 10 minutes longer and it’s actually a very long term process whereas my observations in mainstream is first of all you expect that compliance straight away which we probably shouldn’t give them um and the pace of work to get you from here to here while I don’t make any progress with you and that’s how I’m measured as a professional um is a really hard tension to hold and it’s not far for the teacher to pass that onto a child but equally it isn’t fair for the teacher to have it. Equally that’s a massive kind of political issue… anything could be solved either by school governments really um… but that impact on a child with ADHD. So it takes a very strong teacher and a very experienced teacher to say you know what I’m not going to let your academic progress this year be a big factor on how I push you… what I want you to do is trust me and when you trust me you will listen to me and if you listen to me then you will do as I ask. And maybe you won’t do it the first time or even the third time but at least we’ll have that report um… and that’s a massive thing for me I might… when I’ve worked with kids with ADHD one of the massive factors is trust and their relationship with you cause if you don’t have it you’re not going to, you’re to the losers from the start.

**INTERVIEWER:** So I guess you know you talk a lot about time pressure when you’re in mainstream as opposed to SCN having a bit more flexibility… I mean in your experience how does that effect how you plan for a day that’s coming up…you know what difference does it make that you’re thinking I can’t do all 5 tasks I’m supposed to do so you know how do you how are you ready for any eventuality.

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** Well… [3 secs] Most assessment that you get again I’m making generalisations cause I don’t know too much about mainstream… my assumptions of it having lived through it and then seeing it a bit is that a lot of work is assessed by outcome whereas in SCN a lot of work is not assessed by the outcome of the child its assessed by the progress and progress so a lot of what we are doing and this is part because their ability is so low that its preschool level in a lot of SCN kids so it’s not can the child write this then you look at who they write and mark it its cant they construct an argument can they have a conversation with you and then it go back and forth at least twice. Can they build a block up to 5 things? Do they expect it to have been knocked down to play a game? So actually the tasks are can you do this? Can you do this? And the observation is have they managed it or you didn’t. Equally there is still writing, handwriting and all those tasks but by large if you mix your timetable enough in a day so that not all tasks have to have a written hard outcome, you kind of fine cause you can say let’s ditch that one and do this one. Equally id give them all the opportunity to do the things I have planned it’s just that I’m less worried if they don’t manage it. Um there has literally been some targets for pupils of just entering the room now on my lesson plan what I want them to achieve is to come in pick an instrument put it in front of them and not play it straight away and then play it when the conductor points at them I mean that would be dream and some days that happens and other days it doesn’t you just have to say you know what if you come in that’s great. That’s a start and have that slightly longer overarching plan. Another feature of SCN is that a lot of lessons are repeated. Actually what you do is that you set up a thing and you say you are gonna run this for 4 weeks and there’s room to develop and get harder for pupils who are engaging but equally it’s a repetitive safe things that going to happen if you are good at explaining and teaching how its repetitive and how its similar.. a child that has issues focusing on it at least join in when they see the bit that they know to join In on so for our most complex learners a lot of things are done to music so different tracks mean different things so we have morning music we have end of the day music and music in relation to where we are in the day we’ve got music for certain tasks such as tidy away music so all that kind of stuff gives them a non-threatening… it’s not a command from an adult it’s just music that happens to be music that was picked by the adult and an activity as scribed to the music but they don’t need to know that they just need to go ah I can hear that and oh everyone around me is doing that oh maybe I’ll join in…[3secs] so yeah. That’s kind of it doesn’t really if they don’t get everything done cause you’re just going to try again next week or the following day and you’re also not necessarily looking for an outcome.. when you will be looking for an outcome soon but maybe you’re actually looking for engagement or for them to change their level and engage with it and could develop it further week on week rather than on paragraph paragraph,paragraph and paragraph that level of work outward pressure isn’t something that SCN needs. It always has been and again this is speaking from one type of special school there are schools that have got different levels and needs…mine under autism and mine under ADHD are expected to write cause they’ve got those pre-learning skills what…what we want them to create the expectation increases um so yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** So do you think for a child that has quite severe ADHD being in a special school would help them because of the ways that the timetables are set up and the sort of freedom?

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** I think it can do I think um… [2 secs] it always has the… I think part if they have particularly severe ADHD but are otherwise quite cognitively able a special school can actually be quite a tricky place to be because if you are aware of how different you are it becomes a hard place to be in. Um if you’ve got really severe ADHD and you are just bouncing off the walls and can’t focus it could be a lovely place to be if you feel safe there. Um equally there are times when the special schools don’t necessarily feel like particularly safe spaces for kids with ADHD because autistic kids are shouting flicking kicking and causing all sorts of ruckus and other kids are doing equally as weird and as wonderful things and there’s a kid in the corner being suctioned in a wheelchair um so there are also times when you think actually if everyone was sat down quietly working maybe this child would sit down and quietly work

**INTERVIEWER:** Ah okay

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** Um so I think it very much depends on the child and the level of input they need cause again in my experiences of children with ADHD have other things that need addressing. So one of the children I worked with was adopted and had quite bad attachment issues so actually if you looked beyond the ADHD at what he needed was a load of stuff do with feeling safe and feeling secure and loved and accepted and feeling like if I do this I’m not going to get told off. Um I was dealing with a home situation that was very loving but also very it needs to be like this and it needs to be like that but intermittently because there were other… so the complexity of someone’s family life can sometimes make ADHD the main issue when actually it’s not the main issue anymore so putting you into a SCN structure where you’d be.. Just because the inherent flow of the place gives you that bit of security can help. But if you are cognitively quite able it’s probably not the place for you.

## The diagnosis and treatment of ADHD

**INTERVIEWER:** And do you as a teacher… do you get asked to supply information so if a child is going for a diagnosis or a check-up or some treatment needed that needs to be implemented into the classroom do they come to you for that information?

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** Um yes there was one child who had to do his like screening test around 4 times in one year I’m not sure if they were just terrible with paperwork and kept losing it or he kept getting referred because it wasn’t the answer that they wanted um yeah so I’ve had to do those sort of things like it’s not often like this and I personally find them quite hard to do... having done psychology and knowing how these questionnaires are built I kind of what do play the game and then I’m like no no I’ve got to do this seriously and not answer all you’re negative questions in one go.. but also because they are dealing with such extremes it’s very hard sometimes as a teacher to say looking at this child on a good day or a bad day and what will most benefit them cause if I answer when they are on a good day there is a chance that they don’t get the additional help or very extremely on a bad day I’m not actually doing the child a service cause they are better than that [laughs] so you almost have a moral question of how do I answer this set so that they get the assistance that they need without making out that they are a particularly tricky child. Cause if you have done all you can as a teacher to mitigate what they need then really you are kind of filling in this paperwork its helping the parents get extra support at home and so they’ll always send one to parents and one to us and patch them up and it feels like it’s not an equal equation it’s not equal on both sides. School is very different to home and whenever I have spoken to parents about their child I am completely aware that they will be different and whether they are better here or better at home I don’t really mind I feel sorry for you if they are better at school that at home but if there is anything that we can do we will help you but they are two very very different places and many children with any form of a severe special need see those two places as being very distinct places and are therefore quite shocked if a teacher was to go home or a parent is seen in school that’s like whoa these two worlds are colliding um… so yeah I’ve had to fill in those… nothing much for than that really… nothing very anecdotal I haven’t had any do you think they might? Um partly because they normally definitely have if they are in a special school and also sometimes it’s not the question of if they have ADHD it’s how are we managing what they do have stated and if they’ve got that as well are they coping with it and the answer is normally yes because autism issue or their sensory needs or medical needs are more of the issue.

## Training and support for teaching children with ADHD

**INTERVIEWER:** yeah yeah and so if we turn to think more about training have you had any specific training on ADHD?

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** No

**INTERVIEWER:** Have you sort of been aware that there is training available but it so happens that you never needed to go on it or had the opportunity?

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** Erm I think… I’ve never considered going on any or asking for any um there’s never been any offered um a lot of what we are kind of offered are more sensory or about even more complex pupils that are working at the much lower age range ability because our pupils ADHD seem to be doing okay in terms of their ability to regulate themselves or they’ve got such a complex mixture of fun stuff that the training that we may have done on attachment disorder or the training that we did on complex autism also applies to them. Um and also as I have kind of said the active element of learning in a SCN setting is that you are up and moving about and stuff rather than just sitting and trying to put it down um will mitigate that there isn’t much of an issue with the pupils that have ADHD and a larger school will train if they feel that they have an issue (laughing) that’s the school political view for a teacher they are not going to spend any amount of money unless they feel that they have issue… which again is something quite tricky for the support in mainstream schools so we’ve sent staff to mainstream schools to you know observe and assist and support their SCAs teaching and part of my job as a teaching school is to do that even more formally now than we are used to so again whenever I have chatted with staff that do that kind of thing inclusion work and assistance work they just said you know what if they just had a visual timetable and half their kids would be happy with it and so um I think from that from that kind of knowledge I assume we’ve already got quite a high level of training that is often labelled good for kids with autism would actually be good for kids with ADHD and that’s sometimes my answer for parents when they say we actually need another diagnosis I say if we’ve dealt with this child with this kind of diagnosis in terms of this that’s already helped with this this and this what more do you need… well sometimes it’s just their emotionally need for them where they need their child explained to me and expect it so yeah that’s tricky

**INTERVIEWER:** So would you say there’s a need for specific ADHD training or do you see a need generally for you or your staff for more generic training that covers not necessarily the diagnosis but the behaviours or situations?

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:**Yeah [3 secs] I don’t think I don’t know how biased I am but I like knowing why something is the way it is so I think any kind of training whether its covering autism or complex developmental needs or specific conditions of ADHD um knowing that the brain chemistry works like this or the physical thing that the child has affects the child like this is normally the best best way to train cause it allows the teacher to look at their surroundings, their tools their equipment and then think how would I then change that for that child so for example when I found out that autistic children develop mentally in terms of music are normally backed to a stage of their age and that the process of learning music um and a language as they are very closely interlinked through so you’ve got prenatal sounds that you’re parents in utero your parents may have listened to where suddenly you get those flashbacks of oh I know this piece of music and you haven’t listened to it in your life that kind of situation and then babble plays which are really important for brain formation and once we have been trained on that then the trainer then talked about lullabies and songs in non-sense talk and how that was actually useful in linking up synapses in the brain and helping the child develop and then sing song being an important stage and how you hear similar music things that happen in nursery rhymes or rap songs or R and B and that’s why is soothing to some people and not to others and they are like wow old mac Donald suddenly impacted Stormzy or something like that you would put them together but they say it’s the octaves and the way it sounds and is constructed is the same as that and that’s why it feels the same to us. Now if you then said lets apply this to a ASD kid or to a kid that has issues means that with some staff in some school every single request was said in a singsong way and if you said that in Sainsbury’s you would sound like a nutter and the reason that it is said like that is actually it is easier for an autistic child to hear it because developmentally they are lower down so if you say a child with ASD cannot help but receive all this stimulus you would look at your walls in a main stream school and go flipping heck I’ve been horrible to that child and maybe you wouldn’t put up all of those displays and maybe you would string your classroom with washing lines and hang everything off it cause you are making the environment too visually stimulating and you’d say right we are gonna dedicate this corner of the room to be less visually stimulating cause that will help XXXX and XXXX who both have ADHD. So for me and the way I think teachers… [2 secs] might be better equipped is if you say this is what the child experiences and why they experience it and give them the benefit of their knowledge and intuition to say actually this is how their brain is working as it’s got too much of this and this is what the drug does that but by the way the drug also does this as you’ve got a mum going off about their child that doesn’t eat and is one so much stuff for his ADHD that why would you expect him to eat? Because the drug is making him not want to eat and they say because his weight is an issue and I’m like what do you want a kid with ADHD showing all the symptoms of ADHD and bouncing off the walls and eating everything or do you want a kid that doesn’t eat very often. Because… there has to be a medical balance there and that child and that parent have gone through a couple of cycles of changing the meds to find a balance they are trying to explain to that parent well you kinda can’t have both at the moment. Maybe when he’s older you can

**INTERVIEWER:** So it would be quite hard for that teacher to have that knowledge because parents do often ask teachers for advice or?

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** I don’t, I don’t… I mean I we don’t often get parents asking for advice because a lot of how the schools here in XXXX work where kids are brought in by county transport so you never see the parent and in this particular case this year the child in my class with ADHD lived too close so the parents brought them in so I actually had a face to face chat most mornings me and one of the staff do um which was good it was a nice feeling and actually it made me think this is what a mainstream teacher has times 30 take a couple of percentages off for the parents that don’t want to have a chat and that’s fine but… I… I think if you as teacher understand that this is how the child might be feeling if you are able to have that level of empathy with that child also you are at least partially knowledgeable on how whatever drug they are receiving might help them and how it might not help them I think it gives you the best chance to approach them in the best way. I don’t… I think a lot of interventions where they say if you do this this this and this you will have fixed these issues are often defined as magic bullets are very good and very often are devised by sales people and they actually just don’t work and if have learnt anything if any training doesn’t work it’s probably because you promised too much and you want you really should have done is show them the process and allow them as the professional to go ah so I could apply this bit of knowledge and this bit of knowledge here um and that’s partly down to be being in training but also to me having to train others in different areas on things like how to teach music, how to teach this how to teach another but if you say this will fix then then you’ll lose in terms of getting it applied properly. Whereas, if you said this is how the child experiences the world and then get them to think about right how does your teacher impact him fit with that or not suddenly you’ll get those lightbulb teachers in different ways for different teachers cause different teachers do it differently. If you go oh yeah I’ve been talking to them for 20 minutes that’s not okay that’s really struggling for that kid and then if they change their practice and say you know what I’m going to give that child a starter activity to get them moving and doing while I do the 20 minute explanation to the other kids which they probably don’t need 20 minutes anyway... do you know what I mean? It means... another teacher might teach in a completely different way and need to apply it differently and may be overexciting this child that has ADHD by giving them too options or too many choices with a box full of motivators that they can have when they have finished their work and I’m actually promising too much and not giving them enough structure, I’m not giving her enough warning of when something is about to and that’s how I’ve found training helpful to me because I can see a problem, understand it better and then apply it everywhere as you might help a whole batch of kids and another class where actually this training three years ago helped me see that in that person is there any similarities there so I can now move that over whereas if you say this works for this kid it’s like… well it doesn’t work for anyone else and if you don’t know why it worked then you are not going to use it and I think that’s the same for teaching if you don’t know why then you are not going to apply it um… so yeah I have not had any training in ADHD but I’ve had it in other things. The most useful training I’ve had is why this works or why this doesn’t work it’s a normally trajectory and this is why most struggle cause at that point that happened which means this happens.

**INTERVIEWER:** So more having a range of options that you can think well for that child with that problem I’ll try this option as that might work and if it doesn’t I could try something else and being a bit freer to try things and?

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:**Yep it the freedom to try things but also to understand oh actually this is what the issue is so it’s not saying that if we do X we get Y because you are probably not you might but if ifs a dead certain scientific fact that you will then fair enough but in a lot of school and a lot of settings there’s massive differences in terms of your range of ability to implement things and when you’re allowed to take things off the walls or have to stick it all up and keep it but if you say… all children with ADHD experience the world in this way and then you ask teachers a question like ‘how does your classroom impact on this’ and then immediately a third of the way into the training after I’ve already explained what ADHD is and defined it and ask ‘how has your classroom impacted these children based on what you now though’ which is now this this this and this and visually they are like this and auditory they can’t deal with that and then they go ‘aaah’ and give headphones that blanket some of the noise down. Cause I mean I… it was a kid with Autism that I had when I was doing an observation in a mainstream class and this kid with a one to one came in 5 minutes late to the class and was told to be given something by the T.A and do it while the rest of the class… and he takes it to his special area and you assume he must have some sort of special need to have a special area and is then hassled by an adult to get it done whereas all the other kids are getting on with it and chatting and he’s getting hassled to get it done and then does it wrong and is told to he’s [inaudible]. The actually its figuring out if the teachers was doing it not just the C.S.A and saying this is what I expect of you and this is the quality we would like dot,dot,dot,dot,dot then this would be enough structure for an autistic child to get on with it without any adult supervision because without all these dot,dot,dot,dot,dots they keep you on task you get one of two things. You get very angry kids or you get the kids that learn just to give it to the adult and then the adult does it. The amount of times we have had kids that are coming from mainstream and have managed and then they come to a special school and they expect adults to do everything for them and are completely shocked and spent 5 hours of class doing absolutely nothing but making sure that they are capable of doing the work rather than having the work done for them. But I think it’s a similar thing as when you are training a teacher and you have to ask the teacher ‘how does this fit in my setting’ because most teachers have training that has been put on by management and teachers think ‘that’s fine that will work for me’ or ‘that’s fine I don’t have a kid with ADHD this year’ or just forget but if you actually had learnt about what ADHD was that would be always applicable whether you are in the shops or in the classroom.

**INTERVIEWER:** And on a very practical level, and this might be your experience of other training, do you think that this kind of training that you are talking about in terms of strategies that you can apply and understanding what ADHD is for example, is that better off as being a one off, beginning of the year inset day for staff or is it better as a series of twilight sessions where you can try stuff in between, is it an online set of resources that you can go on and think ‘what can I do with this child’? I mean or is it a range of things?

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:**I think it has to be a mixture of things if you want it to be the most effective thing that it can be and again that is kind of dependent of what the teacher is feeling is. If a teacher feels that they have one tricky child what they probably need is an intervention. What they need is for them to be observed teaching this particularly tricky child and an expert to say ‘oh I noticed you did this and that seemed to affect the child in this way’ and they may not have the vision to say that when I said that the child flipped out. When you have 12 kids with you then it’s quite easy to see why that child flipped out. However when you have 30 kids with you it’s a lot harder. Um I think it depends of the type of school and what they feel they need. Now I’ve benefitted from one off start of the year training that have been quite in depth and then within that work reflected with how we are going to work with so and so this year and plan that out and then have dialogue from someone who is regarded as an expert and ask ‘if I did this what do you think would happen’ has been really helpful. Um and then in certain situations It’s not how to do I teach this person it’s how do I teach history or something and a set of online resources really helps. Um particularly knowing again that a mainstream school doesn’t have access to some of the resources that a SEN school does and in a SEN school there is a piece of computer software where as you type, little pictures and icons come up above it and there are standardized sets across.. so every school that buys this software has a standardised set of symbols and you can also buy other sets of symbols like Macaton sign, diagrams and you plug into the software and as you type these signs appear and you show this to any teacher is mainstream and they go ‘whoa I wish I had that, it would be so much easier’. So there are elements of resourcing that where there is a disparity as there are different levels of need and stuff.

**INTERVIEWER:** What is that programme called out of interest?

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** It’s called Communicate and Print and that’s by a company called Widget. They make talkers and other kinds of assistive technology. Then they make that… it’s really fantastic it’s like using publisher in word it is really easy and as you type in these pictures you can change the colours and there’s a variety you can download. There is also topic packs as well so it’s got some proper scientific pictures rather than just some cartoons. But having that is really helpful in making a visual timetable cause when you write swimming you also get a little man swimming and I think sometimes; I say sometimes cause I don’t know for sure; but in a mainstream school if they are in year 3 we assume they are fine with year 2 and 1 as there is no system in this country of holding anyone back which is fine but it means you can’t necessarily assume a child with ADHD finds reading easy and if for emotional reasons attached to their ADHD, and their background and their understanding of their own success or lack thereof they don’t find reading easy, to give them… to give them a visual timetable with a list of words you have essentially given them a list they are crossing out and don’t understand or they are suddenly going to pick the one that they understand like ‘dim’ or ‘may’ and then just be focused on that and not understand all these ones above it so to have those pictures it’s easier to not even say anything to them just say ‘ we do know that one and that one’. Equally with a whiteboard you could just do that but that’s a little thing that I would do because I’ve been in an SEN setting and that’s potentially advice that could even be on a website, be on a video link if we are continuing like this and watch in real time.

**INTERVIEWER:** And actually for a teacher even if they have one child we ADHD that’s not particularly severe but to understand the strategies that you use at a special school with more severe problems would still be useful and probably help other children in the class that don’t have a diagnosis of something but similarly struggle to follow written instructions or explanations.

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** Definitely and I think… and I mean so… we have been teaching for 4 years and I don’t think there has been a stretch of 4 weeks or longer that hasn’t involved me having to volunteer in a classroom where there is trainee doctors or trainee teachers um or some other professional. Our school has even had police come in to just observe that this is what SEN looks like and this is what they scribble like and yes this is them shouting and being completely obnoxious and anti-social because of their sensory needs. The clock was ticking who knew? Um and although sometimes that’s a bit ‘uh we have another visitor’ I think that is very valuable and that keeps you on top of your game and also people seeing actually this is how we do this and that is good cause we are classed as a SEN school so we must be doing okay. Um I think that sometimes there is a bit of reticence from probably some more established teachers who think that if I have seen it in a special school then it does not apply to me and that’s almost the same when you start talking about our mental brain chemistry and child development. If you have got a teacher that’s been in year 5 for all their years then they will think yeah they have passed all this and sometimes there isn’t the appreciation that sometimes kids are not passed this. We are not allowing our kids to do certain things like messy play or physical play as we talked about earlier. Because you are depriving them of these now they are going to struggle with hand writing, they are going to struggle with motor they are going to struggle with fine motor, they are going to struggle with focus. I mean if you tell a kid to watch a snail, any two year old child could watch the snail for half a go on its little journey. But then say that to a year 4 and then watch is the actual job. There is also elements of our teaching day and what we are expecting the children to do at whatever speed you expect them to do it and it makes it hard to realise that you should cut them some slack in that area. I think especially with children with ADHD, a large part could be understanding that that is the way their brain is working so I’m going to cut you a little bit of slack. If you then do that they then trust you because of it and you get some much more out of them and you really need them to come out. So um yeah I think being able to observe it happen is really helpful and also to show that this really does effect this child whether they are cognitively able with ADHD or they have development problems, ADHD, ASD, downs or anything else because sometimes I think we go well that’s just them and that’s not. Equally it works the other way. I have autistic kids who are fantastic at maths and as an SEN teacher I can’t teach further maths but does it really matter? They are not going to do any GCSEs. If I just make some of their sums harder that is kind of alright. Actually if I had gone in and really focused on it and realised it was this child’s passion and we knew that’s how their brain worked, we could have pushed them even further. But because they are there they are able to coast. So it does work both ways.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah and its hard as a teacher as you say when you are trying to manage lots of children with lots of needs and reach some objectives and it’s the school day with the building and the weather and…

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:**And I think that is why often when you say to a group of staff that this is the intervention that the school is going to adopt, you get a lot of kick off because teachers say ‘I’ve got this and I’ve got this and I’ve got this’ and you say ‘don’t worry it is easy’ and they say ‘no its not it is still an extra thing’ and that happens as much in SEN schools as it happens in mainstream. I think if you say… if you treated all children like this it will benefit those with dyslexia, those with dyspraxia, and those with ADHD. I think there is also some general practices that are lacking in some schools anyway and if they were adopted you would see fantastic levels of progress in a larger range of children that struggle with a range of things. So I think that’s another thing that is worth… Having a broader understanding of how this works. For instance, a visual timetable. If you had a visual timetable in a room does it have any disservice to a cognitively able child in that room that is gifted and talented because either they won’t use it or they might actually see it at a glance and not have to ask that annoying question of ‘what are we doing next sir?’ But for the child with dyslexia they look for the pictures and see the plane and aim for that and think they only have 2 things to do before… or the kid with ADHD that really can’t focus and then the teacher just finally points at it so they know the next thing is going to happen. What they have done there is implemented a tool that may help some more than others and doesn’t do anyone a disservice. While if you say I’m going to go and get everyone a coloured bean bag and teachers going to think that they really don’t want a big beanbag fight even if it does help children with ADHD. It’s about finding wide ranging, very simple, broadly kind of deliverable things that are universal and therefore don’t effect anyone negatively or re- help those that need it without being a distraction. I think that those are the very best resources and then for those in more tricky situations where it is harder to deal with… what do I do if? How do I deal with? Then online resources are always helpful with contacts for someone who is either doing it or is an expert um is helpful. The problem is developing a resource and I can say because I have written one. A group of teachers wrote a scheme for other teachers to teach music at SEN and the longest and most frustrating meeting was the first one of who are we making it for? It is very very hard to understand who you are writing it for and you can please everyone all the time so it is about having a variety of different strands to it. In my opinion if you go for a universal where this is the problem, this is the effect; this is the way they are affected by certain things. If you shout this is how it will affect them. If you have a really busy class room then this will… and then have these are some things that are good across the board and then what are the specific issues…kind of this in the issue, this is why they do it, oh this is why they do what they do. That is really helpful I think that would be really helpful.

**INTERVIEWER:** So kind of like a flow chat as in if this happens then I could try that but I need to remember this.

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** Yeah. So they had this thing that… again I was working with… what are they called? Mesh guards. So they use it in the medical profession. They have this diagnosis thing where you just click and you do a search for a symptom and it will give you a drop down decision tree of does this effect it and then you get a diagnosis and then you can get to some treatments. But now they’ve obviously done that is connection with researchers and professionals and it is forever growing and becoming more complicated and then the university would try to create an educational based one because a lot of educational [inaudible] skills are techniques are completely driven by on what is currently running and what we care about so often they will do 4 years of research and the governments come in and scratched it all and you think we’ve got all this stuff that is actually teaching you stuff to teach kids really well so they wanted to put it on a mesh guard so I was consulted for music levels of SEND and then we had other teachers talking about secondary level and so you think I want to teach rhythm so I’m going to click with them or I’m want to teach 4 to 6 years old and you say here you go here are different ways of teaching rhythm.

**INTERVIEWER:** Oh cause I guess that another thing is age because you think at primary you might have a 5 year old but you also might have a 11 year old so even taking into account that they might be behind those two are probably going to be different still.

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** Yeah and the way that you deal with them has to be different cause there is always the question of is it age appropriate. You can’t just whack them in front of resource that is made for key stage 1. It’s not fair on that one young person. Um equally if you think that you have a 4 year old and a 11 year old who are physiologically experiencing the same thing there are some things that both teachers could do and to be aware of what they both could do is really important. It equips them to deal with it quickly and knuckle down but also think that we need to start thinking for this 11 year old and their own physical awareness of what they have and therefore how they as an individual are going to deal with it because with the 4 year old you can forgive them for their behaviour in a way as they are not aware that they are different while with the 11 year of you need to take them on a journey of do you know you have ADHD?. Do you know this is how it affects you? Do you know what you are going to do about that? When you are 80 you might go to a bar with fewer things behind the bar and less choices. Or whatever you say like you are particularly impulsive maybe we shouldn’t walk past the bungee jumping event and drive the other way. Um so I definitely think there is an issue with age and at what point to you start training the child to be an angel in their own care you know with self-awareness of their issues.

**INTERVIEWER:** So finally from my point of view while you might think of other things that you want to chip in afterwards. I was just thinking about the senior staff or the leadership team in your school and what kind of support is helpful for you or what kind of support you don’t get but you would like or support that you do get that is invaluable.

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** From them? [Laughs]. Um I think that every management is different and are structured differently. I’m quite lucky in that I work in a school where the head teacher was the deputy head before I was a teacher and the deputy before that was a department head, a teacher and also an autism outreach advisor. So they were both very knowledgeable in SEN and have both worked in it and they therefore have the respect for everyone else because they worked in it. They are not some kind of academy controlled, someone who has never taught a day in their life situation which for me is a very lucky place to work in really. The majority of… the way that I’ve felt best is when I actually don’t go to my management to help with a particular behaviour. For me it’s my job to go to my department head and if they need to then to pass it on to the next person but from my perspective I am the professional so if I need help then I need to research the help rather than going to them and saying you need to fix little XXXX for me because they’ve got this. And when there has been times when actually I have needed some training on something they know that I am free to go to them and ask them to send me on this course or that I need help with this so could you think about next September putting this and on a couple of times I’ve said that this person would be really good to do a whole school training as I’ve been to them for one thing and I know they train really well on another thing so you really want this person and they’ve believed me and they’ve brought them in so that helped the whole school. So I think that is quite a personal motive for me as a teacher to work out ways to do things better and you hope you have to support of the management team to do it. I was very aware that I was in a very blessed position to have that freedom and that backing because lots of teachers in schools say that they never let them out and can’t go on a training course. Also when I first started as a teacher in the support system I didn’t know where the courses were and where to look to go on a course and I still wouldn’t if I wanted to go on a course for ADHD because I haven’t felt in needed training on it so… It’s quite important [laughs] and maybe this is why management don’t do this. I think it’s important for management to say these are the resources that are available to you and if they are honest and say we are probably only going to send you on one a year if you are lucky then that is fine if they say that. But equally they need to know themselves and then share on how you would find them because I wasn’t approached by a university to help them. I went to an educators programme and then I met them there and I wouldn’t have been doing stuff for music at an SEN scheme if I hadn’t of met them at the conference. So if management had said you are allowed to go to that one thing I would be happy to find other opportunities next time. A lot of schools don’t want to get rid of their staff because they want the staff to teach their kids and that is understandable but there is… you’ve got to play the longer game. If you train your staff they will teach better and you need to give them that. Um that is harder for some schools to deal with than others and even more now a financial burden as well as time and as well as cover and as well as their whole philosophy on training and if it’s their job to train their staff or to keep the staff there to teach their kids. That is really hard because again in these days in your local schools it is the council’s job to do that and some counties were better than others at putting on training and saying what is available and that is even less the case because we now have academies which is then the academies choice which is either to keep running or to make money neither of which unless they fully understand the education and want to improve to get better, with those two motivators will lead you to finding training. Which then almost makes a rebellious situation where universities are trying to contact teachers directly and say have you seen this resource it is free. Have you seen this online? And a lot… in XXXX we have network meetings where all coordinators for I.C.T. all meet once a year to discuss issues with I.C.T. There is a SENCO and that is where you would often find it because you wouldn’t go through a head teacher. You would get it from other interested parties who either express interest or do it through other agencies. I would draw on music for an example as I was a music coordinator for XXXX School’s music service and the entire service is from the council. The deal for music advisors is they need to find all the music teachers in the area and see that they want a music teacher for that area so here are 4. Then you’d help towards the network meetings to see what they could afford. They are also attending there so you know what they can offer. And it worked because it costed just less than if you tried to find it yourself. Then the school would buy into it through their business co. To have avenues to portray them down are really helpful for management too because they can access a network meeting which is an easy let out as it is half a day rather than I will send you on this really fancy training course. Um and also schools want it to be able to spread so they think if I send one teacher how is that going to affect the rest of the school. I guess the large question is what is the impact? So to have something to sign up to means they can just email but it probably doesn’t have a large impact as teacher probably don’t even read it. So you need someone to be there to start it and management to say yeah we will have it. But also that background support really helps a week to week kind of teacher that says ‘why is it not working this week?’ Which is a tricky thing and is one of the reasons I got involved with the XXXX thing as they had developed a resource that completed flopped and collapsed and then they questioned it and thought about how they could make the resource better and not flop and they realised that they had given a resource at an initial point and then they gave no support beyond that so when it broke once the teacher then just abandoned it. So that is another element in training is that if you are ever doing anything that doesn’t work the first time, the teachers will abandon it unless you say if you do X this will happen and I think you need to say that. I think you need to say that this is how the child works and this is how what you do might impact them because you have then thought of a different way of thinking oh well this didn’t work but its’ probably because of… their family situation or whatever.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah and like you said that children with ADHD are quite individual so if a teacher understands that child and the way that maybe they cope with visual stimuli then they can sort of adapt to that child rather than thinking I need to do all my visual stuff this way for children with ADHD.

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:**Yeah and that is in a mainstream setting why you don’t put everything on the teenage mutant ninja turtle in the corner and that’s fine but just gets some stickers and stick it. So again it’s about trying to promote that you are maybe trying to make it individual to them or trying to change it for them, that one child in your group of 30. But it’s worth it because… [laughs]. Also it’s not hard to adjust some things while there are ways of making it very hard for you to maintain it but there is other ways that are easy so it’s down to that teacher to do that level of thinking for themselves and not for the trainer to say it’s easy and trust me because actually it’s the trainers job to say this is how we are going to cope with it so let’s focus on these issues. Some teachers would love to say I’ll have you pack of stickers but yeah.

## Conclusion

**INTERVIEWER:** Aw that is so helpful John. You have covered everything I wanted to cover. I don’t know if there is anything else you want to say as a final…

**INV-014-T-U-M-STA-M-SPEC:** As a final taadaa! No not really.

**INTERVIEWER:** Aw well thank you so much. I will now stop the tape.

[End of interview]