The Importance of Needs Assessments

[00:00:00] **Chris:** Hello and welcome to needs assessments: why are they important? They are important because needs assessments are person centered and holistic. This means. that the person being assessed has as much of a part to play in the process as the person doing the assessment. This is important because it enables

information to be gathered from a holistic perspective, looking at priorities, issues, concerns, challenges, and opportunities, and through dialogue, questions and answers and sharing of lived experience the person making the assessment can pool this information together and draw out patterns, useful patterns in order to help

to make decisions about the technology that might be useful for those various situations. This approach differs from the conventional diagnostic and assessment processes that professionals tend to be highly trained and use in others walks of life in the medical field or in the educational psychology field.

For instance, the needs assessment process is different and it works with any professional who has a level of knowledge of their field and some experience and if you apply the principles of inclusion and being inquisitive and being a good detective, pooling the information, including the person being assessed throughout all stages of the assessments and checking your assumptions, checking your alignment, to see if your perceptions and their perceptions are different.

If they're very different, then you need to follow up with more questions and supplement your knowledge to try and align your perceptions with their perceptions. If that is not possible, then you might need a different approach to find out what the challenge may be. However, in perhaps 90% of situations, if you're open and inclusive, And the importance of being open and inclusive means that the person being assessed is unguarded and will tell you things that they might not tell conventional assessors in a clinical setting or in an, almost a laboratory setting,

where the person is a subject rather than treated as being person centered. So you tend to get lots of useful information, honest information that you can make sense of in terms of, it looks as though in the classroom, this solution might work for you. Whereas if you're on the go, if you're doing homework or home study, you might need another device such as a mobile phone device or tablet device with some open source technology on,

and you might be able to combine and utilise both pieces of equipment. So maybe using a laptop if it's available or a desktop computer, if that's available in formal settings and then coming up with strategies to link the techniques together. So file sharing, whether that be through a, a connection, a wireless connection or through a cabled connection.

So that data and information and use of that technology can be harnessed in the most efficient and useful way. The impact of this is quite profound. A good needs assessment will ensure that the person being assessed has the opportunity to be assessed early in their discovery journey in their educational experience,

and the earlier the assessment can be done the better. Because people get onto the right track for study and for exploration within their field. This is empowering and liberating for them as students. Compare this to people waiting for this perfect analytical assessment by a professional that may need to be brought in and they may take months and years to

be at the right part of the waiting list to have that assessment that can be quite detrimental to a person if they don't get support, as soon as they perhaps need it, this can lead to isolation, loneliness, and difficulties with study and productivity. So I'm really in favor of needs assessments in terms of delivering those for, for clients.

And I've also been on the receiving and of some useful needs assessment. Uh, many of them weren't so useful. So I'm trying to share some of the distilled knowledge that I've acquired as somebody who's been assessed and is doing assessments. So. Listen, use your senses and gather as much information as you can from participants and really involve them, especially if they think that they shouldn't be involved.

Because, the journey for using assistive technology will require people to be proactive, make decisions, get things wrong, and learn from them and grow and you can incorporate this mindset into an assessment process. This prepares people for the journey, the inclusive journey that they will be embarking upon. It might not always be easy, but in the end, quite often, it is more empowering and liberating for people to have a safe environment where they can be assessed, where they can learn and where they can grow.

I hope you found this useful.

[00:07:08] **Rox:** Hi there. Some of you may remember me from the previous course on assistive technology for those who don't, hi, my name is Roxanne stone and I work for D&A as an inclusion specialist. I am genuinely so happy to be able to talk to you right now about needs assessment and the importance of being able to access support.

For me as a disabled person, who lives with cerebral palsy and other mental health challenges. I've not only found that these needs assessments enabling for myself, but I have seen a change and an enablement with the people in positions who helped me such as teachers like yourself and managers as well.

Needs assessments have created a space for me to be able to talk about not only what I want to achieve, but quite open, honest and frankly about the barriers I feel that are stopping me. It's a really good space for a teacher to also talk about what they expect from the student, how they can help that person meet the expectations and indeed how they can help each other.

It's important to remember that needs assessments are separate from medical diagnosis. Unlike medical diagnosis, we should not be looking at problems, but potential on both sides.

And also it's not only about accessing support for the individual, but accessing the support and resources you may need as a teacher to feel enabled, to support them also. I believe you will learn from each needs assessment, and be able to help future children too. Needs assessments are a great place to use what you have learned from the previous courses as well.

It may even help you identify common patterns, to help make changes to your own teaching styles, to compliment a student or group of students needs and in some cases you may be out see these changes or enable these changes across the whole school environment. Needs assessments are part of a journeyto grow both yours and an individual's confidence,

and I honestly believe if done right, that will last a lifetime, not only for yourself, but the individual as well. And with D&A , I am genuinely looking forward to learning from you too and thank you for helping me grow my confidence, good luck.

[00:10:06] **Hannah:** Hi, I'm Hannah a needs assessor and over the last 20 years, I've worked in schools, colleges, and universities. I'm passionate about inspiring and supporting and motivating students to successfully navigate their way through the student journey.

So,why are needs assessments important. Well, number one, um, needs assessments are important because they identify the gaps between what strategies students have already and help them to develop further study skills and learning strategies, which I think is key as it can provide an opportunity to demonstrate a student's existing toolkit

um, and build resilience, um, which is something that often the students don't actually see themselves because they often lack confidence, um, and academically experience academic anxiety. Secondly, it helps students engagement, retention, the student experience, uh, and make, basically makes the experience much more positive.

Thirdly, it raises awareness amongst departments and your colleagues about what resources are out there and just as ports, inclusive practice across the board, really, um, in the classroom, in any training environment. So actually, um, study needs assessments or written needs, assessments are really, really important process within education.

So I'm going to outline an example of how access to support, um, can be an incredibly positive experience.

I was working with a profoundly deaf student who is a British,who was a British sign language user, um, who was studying for a teaching degree. Um, and the program team at the time had some concerns about how this young student would teach phonetics and how they would meet the core competence on the course.

So after holding a meeting with the student, the head teacher, the placement tutor, and myself to address these perceived barriers, it was agreed that the student could use screen reading software to pronounce the word rather than relying on a teaching assistant or a British Sign Language interpreter to voice the word.

Now this had a real positive impact and helped empower the student, but also in terms of educating the pupils in the classroom about the use of assistive software software, and it also maintained the students' independence, which is key and that's what we're trying to achieve here. Um, so like I said, it was a really empowering experience for the student.

That's about it for me and all that's left to say is happy needs assessing.