NAIL CARE

Due to their sensory processing patterns, many Autistic children find it difficult to tolerate everyday self-care activities such as nail cutting. This may be due to tactile hypersensitivity and/or a fear of the nail clippers. Here are a few things to try with your child which may ease their discomfort.

Sensory Strategies:

- Before nail cutting, desensitise hands/feet: offer massage with lotion, vibrating massager, therapy brush. Use long, firm strokes with deep pressure.
- Provide other calming sensory input-quiet music, low lights, and soft cushions.
- Hold the finger of the nail you are cutting gently but firmly. This pressure will help to reduce the hypersensitive response.
- If your child is unable to tolerate nail cutting or clipping, nails can be kept short by regularly using a nail file. Vibrating nail files are available which some young people may prefer. Vibration provides a calming deep pressure touch sensation.

Other Strategies:

- Prepare the child beforehand by telling them what you are going to do.
- Use visuals or social stories to support your child's understanding of what will happen and when the activity will end. Use of visuals such as a 'First… then…' board using a motivating activity may help your child to participate in nail care.
- Follow a set routine for nail cutting– stick to this wherever possible (e.g. same room, same chair to sit in/calming music playing/reward when tolerated nail cutting/a set number of snips).
- Give a preferred toy/book to look at during nail cutting.
- Cut nails after bathing or soaking feet/hands so nails are soft.
- Try not to rush. Set aside time so there is less of a hurry and the activity can be more relaxed.
- Use hand over hand support to offer them more control.
- Offer a range of different types of cutting tools (emery board, scissors, clippers).
- Consider using specialist nail scissors, available for purchase online.

If you have any concerns about your child's nail care, discuss with their Occupational Therapist or teacher.