

In a previous edition of WS News we summarised the findings from Jo Camp's PhD, looking at problem-solving abilities in everyday life as well as in a lab setting. Twenty individuals with WS (aged 12-24 years) completed problem solving and executive functioning tasks (measuring planning, shifting, avoiding impulsive responding, and short-term memory) and parents (including some parents of this group of 20) completed questionnaires about everyday problem solving and executive functioning. We would like to use the findings to make some suggestions for supporting your son/daughter with WS with their everyday problem solving. Please note that while the suggestions below have arisen from the findings of our research project, their effectiveness as strategies in their own right has not been measured. These are just some suggestions that you may want to try and see how they work for you.

- In general, verbal skills in WS were better than their problem-solving skills on a problem-solving task. This suggests that someone with WS might struggle with problem solving more than might be expected from listening to them speak. Therefore, a strategy for helping people with WS with solving problems might be to base your expectations on what they are actually able to achieve on the problem and not by their verbalisations about it.
- For the WS group, verbal skills (vocabulary score) was related to the ability to solve everyday problems when they were routine (like getting dressed or brushing teeth), but not when they were more novel (like finding a lost possession). This suggests to us that talking through the steps in routine, well-practiced problems might be beneficial, but that more and different types of support might be required for less predictable problems (see below).
- When individuals with WS found planning ahead difficult, this was strongly related to their ability to solve puzzles in the lab. There was also a small suggestion of a link between being impulsive and problem-solving ability. So, support with planning one or two steps ahead (which could also help reduce impulsive responding) might be a useful way to help individuals with WS with solving problems.
- For the WS group, being able to keep emotions under control was related to being more likely to be able to solve everyday problems. This seems to suggest that any strategies which can help your son or daughter with WS to stay calm about a situation could be helpful during problem solving.