

# Supporting Early Years' children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

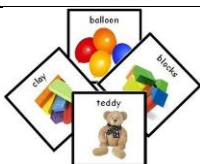


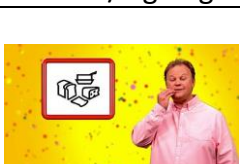

We are aware that there has been a lot of information and a wide range of resources that have been circulated and posted on-line in the last few weeks. It can be overwhelming and we wanted to bring together some key guidance that has particular relevance to supporting pre-school children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

This can be used to support children who continue to attend nursery and can also be shared with families for use at home.

## USE OF VISUALS

Using objects and pictures to support children is key to many successful strategies. They help children who are more visual learners and provide additional processing time. They also encourage children to express themselves, help to reduce anxiety and support routines and boundaries.

Visuals include:

Photo cards	Objects	Drawing	Gesture/Signing	Sequences
				

How we set up our environment is also very important to help children understand what is happening, for example having their plate and cup put out on the table ready for lunch and reducing distractions when you are interacting with them. Most important of all is our own modelling – showing children what we want them to do and how to do it, for example sitting and eating with them at the table.

## ROUTINE AND TRANSITIONS



Young children, particularly those with special needs, benefit from a regular routine. The consistency provides reassurance and helps them to understand and learn. A 'transition' from one activity or one environment to another can cause anxiety and upset, especially if they don't understand and it catches them by surprise. Using visuals and providing 'warnings' can really help with this. A regular routine doesn't mean that you have to stick to a rigid timetable, but doing activities in the same order very day will help.



## DEVELOPING MOTOR SKILLS

For some families, accessing a safe space to enable their children to stretch, run, balance and climb can be really challenging at the moment. There are lots of programmes running on TV and YouTube that children may be able to engage with as indoor exercise. There may also be secure outside spaces that families can access and they can contact their local children's centre for signposting and guidance.

Fine motor skills can be more easily supported at home with fun activities such as messy play (sand, shaving foam, gloop etc), threading, posting and cutting. You can also try 'Dough Disco', which combines the use of play dough with a series of hand and finger exercises designed to improve fine muscle control and hand-eye coordination; there are lots of videos on YouTube.



## COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

Supporting children to develop their communication skills – listening, understanding and expression – is at the root of both their learning and their emotional wellbeing. Using visuals will help with this, but thinking about the language that you use (or don't use!) and how you play and interact will also make a big difference.

- Join the child in what they are choosing to play with and follow their lead. Try to be down at the same height and opposite them. Watching, copying and responding will help develop key interaction skills.
- Use language to label and respond, modelling speech rather than asking lots of questions. Keep it simple and allow plenty of time for them to respond. Be animated and fun!
- Provide reasons to communicate whenever you can. Leave gaps for them to fill and provide choices for them to communicate. 'Ready, steady.....' games are great for this, and holding out and labelling a choice of two snacks is a good way to encourage communication.
- Lots of simple 'your turn, my turn' with games and toys will help develop sharing and interaction skills.



## HEALTH AND SELF-CARE

Many families may be using this time to focus on developing their child's independence with sleeping, dressing, toileting, feeding etc.

- Build up in small steps so that the child gradually completes more of the task without physical support or verbal prompts from the adults.
- Use using visual aids/prompts to support understanding and help the child to remember the sequence.
- Modelling as much as possible whilst thinking aloud to reinforce what you are doing.
- Keep the activity as distraction free as possible and have a consistent routine.

ERIC and Cerebra are great sources of guidance and information for supporting sleep routines and toileting for children that have special needs (and for children who don't!).

<https://www.eric.org.uk/guide-for-children-with-additional-needs>

<https://cerebra.org.uk/download/sleep-a-guide-for-parents/>

**If you would like more guidance or information about any of the strategies or activities referred to, please do contact a member of the Early Years Portage and Inclusion team:**

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