

Thriving Together Inclusivity Toolkit

This toolkit is for any organisation that provides activities for children and young people outside of school.



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This toolkit is designed to support organisations that deliver activities for children and young people to be more inclusive of those with special education needs and disabilities.

To avoid repetition we have sometimes just used the term “children” but in all cases we are referring to “children and young people”.



Introduction and aims

This toolkit is designed to support groups, clubs and services, such as childcare providers, leisure centres and libraries, to become more inclusive of children and young people with additional needs and disabilities.



Why is inclusivity so important?

Inclusivity is crucial to ensure that all children have equal access to support groups, clubs and services, regardless of their circumstances, abilities or background. Inclusion in these groups supports the development of self-esteem for children with special educational needs and disabilities by helping them to feel valued and heard, fostering a joint sense of belonging, encouraging independence, empowering them to make choices and helping to reduce bias and discrimination for all.



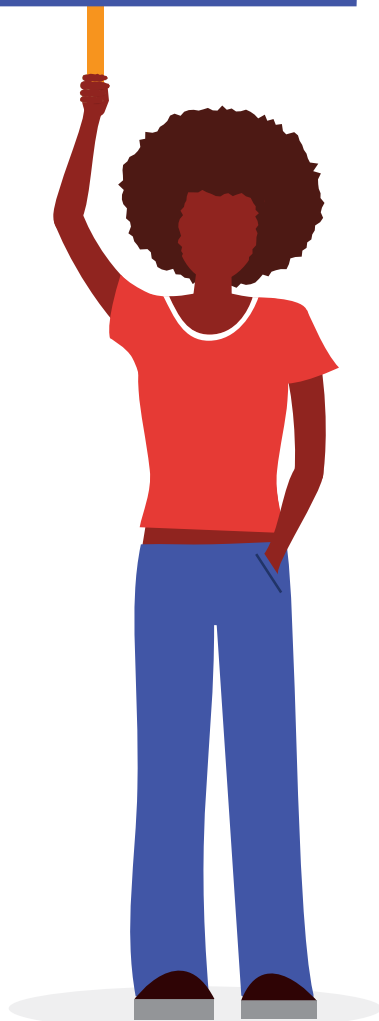
Frequently children with additional needs and disabilities face numerous barriers in society. This is often compounded by the effects of intersectionality. This is where different parts of a person's identity (like gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, etc.) come together to create unique experiences of discrimination and privilege. For example, a child or young person with additional needs or disabilities who is also from a minority ethnic background, or a seldom heard group such as the travelling community, refugees or asylum seekers, might face additional barriers in accessing appropriate support and services.

”

“Racial discrimination and unconscious bias are everyday experiences for disabled children and their families from ethnic and marginalised communities. Parents say they, and their children, are visibly less well-treated, and their needs and culture are disregarded by schools, where there is also a lack of representation of non-white staff and leaders.”

SNJ Report: The casual bias and daily discrimination faced by disabled children and their families from ethnic and marginalised communities — Special Needs Jungle

Staff activity



Harvard University offers a free Implicit Association Test to help people explore their unconscious biases. It's a great way to start a thought-provoking conversation
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

There is also a version specifically created for children and young people
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/youth.html>



Top tip: whilst inclusion is the responsibility of everyone, do you have one member of staff that can become a Disability and Inclusion Lead? They can attend training and support the rest of the team and young people with disability awareness.

Top tip:

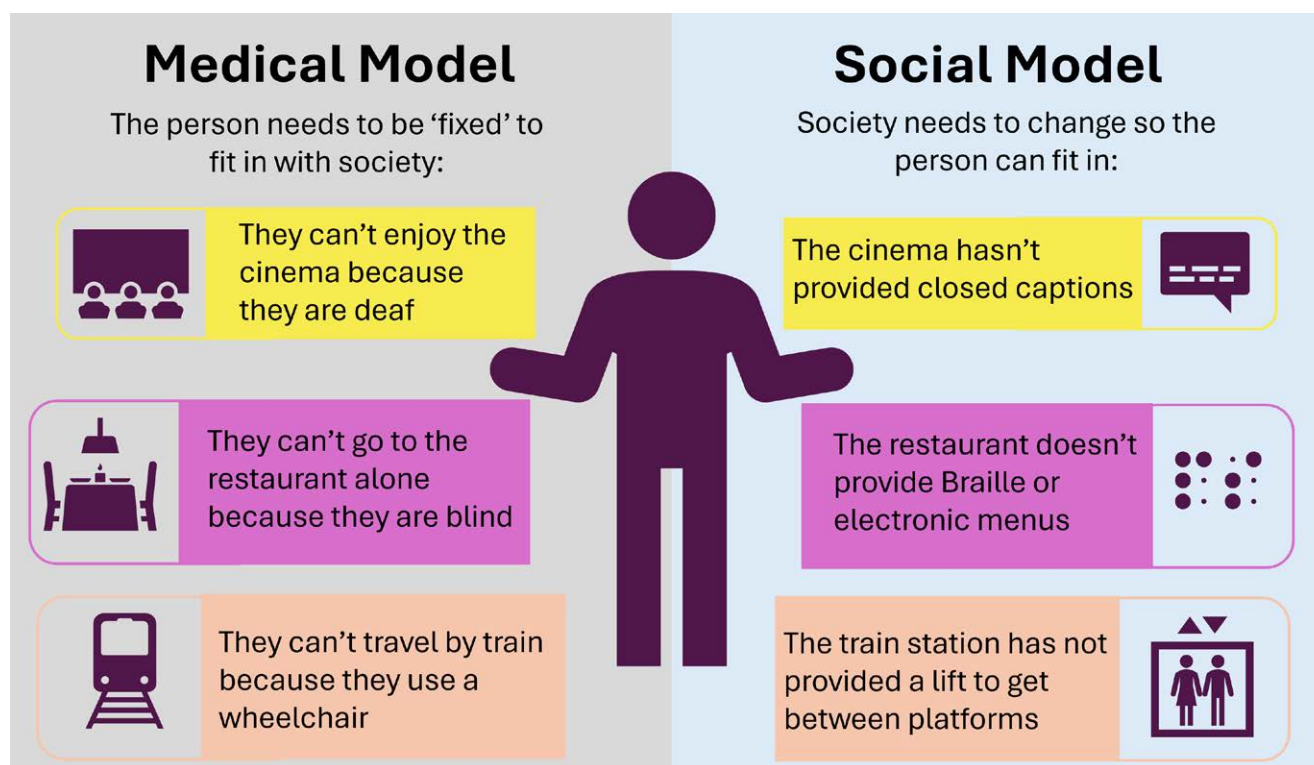
Making something, or somewhere, more accessible works to the benefit of all. You're not just making changes to benefit one child or young person.



Language and context

The language and context of how we think about disability can change how we see disability. The social model, which was developed by disabled people, says that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. Barriers can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets, or they can be created by the way people consider difference, for example people assuming that someone in a wheelchair cannot participate in sport.

Resource: Social model of disability | Disability charity Scope UK
www.scope.org.uk/social-model-of-disability



Infographic of medical model and social model of disability

Legislation

Inclusion is also a requirement in UK law. The Equality Act, 2010 says that you must avoid treating a disabled child less favourably than you treat others because of their disability. All groups and services therefore have a legal duty to put reasonable adjustments in place to remove and prevent barriers to participation for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities. An autistic child or young person, even if they do not have a formal autism diagnosis may come under the Equality Act as it is about how their daily life is impacted by a long term physical or mental impairment. This toolkit will show you some relatively simple adjustments which can help remove, or reduce, barriers to inclusion.

Resource: www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance

Top tip:

Think about the language you use around additional needs and disabilities. If you are not sure, ask the child or young person (or someone that knows them well).



| Avoid | Use |
|---|--|
| (the) handicapped, (the) disabled | disabled (people, children, young people) |
| afflicted by, suffers from, victim of | has [name of condition of impairment] |
| confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound | wheelchair user |
| mentally handicapped, mentally defective, retarded, subnormal | with a learning disability (singular) with learning disabilities (plural) |
| spastic | person with cerebral palsy |
| able-bodied | non-disabled |
| deaf and dumb, deaf mute | deaf, user of British Sign Language (BSL), person with a hearing impairment |
| the blind | people with visual impairments; blind people; blind and partially sighted people |
| fits, spells, attacks | seizures |

Resource: You can learn more about inclusive language here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/inclusive-language-words-to-use-and-avoid-when-writing-about-disability#language-guidelines>

How was this toolkit made?

Thrive-to-25 was an innovation programme, delivered in the London Borough of Southwark from April 2023 to March 2025, funded by the **Department for Education's Short Breaks Innovation Fund**.



The aim of the Thrive-to-25 programme was to transform the short breaks offer for children with additional needs and disabilities and their families. Short breaks provide meaningful activities for children whilst providing a break for their parents and carers. They can range from a couple of hours after school to overnight stays.

The Thrive-to-25 programme consisted of a number of projects, focusing on the development of different areas of provision. This included 'Thriving Together', a capacity building project delivered by voice and rights charity VoiceAbility to support childcare, leisure and play providers to develop inclusive policies and practices to better support children with additional needs and disabilities. This Inclusion Toolkit is a legacy from that project.

“I’ve faced many challenges getting the right care for my three daughters including having to change doctors surgery to get CAHMS services, and to fight for their basic medical and SEN needs. Despite this, I’ve also met amazing NHS and education staff who helped us overcome significant challenges.

”

Through this project and working with dedicated professionals, I’ve realised that the main issue is a lack of knowledge often caused by outdated textbooks and preconceived notions about autism. Advocacy organisations are crucial for driving change. It’s been enlightening for me to understand how the system can work better.”

Jon Bonner, VoiceAbility expert by experience and parent

VoiceAbility's team included parents, carers, and young people who have first-hand experience of services for children with additional needs and disabilities. During the project, VoiceAbility worked with more than 75 childcare, leisure and play providers, 48 of which benefited directly from funding towards adjustments to become more inclusive.

The team used a co-production method to focus on the themes that are important to children and those that support them.

Several co-design sessions were facilitated with staff that deliver activities, children with additional needs and disabilities, and parents and carers.

The toolkit was created with input from expert practitioners from:

- **Cherry Garden School** — an outstanding special school for pupils aged 2-11 years, who have severe and complex learning differences
- **Sense** — a leading disability charity supporting people with complex disabilities, including deafblindness
- **Evelina London Speech and Language Service** — a commissioned service that offers therapy services to children across Lambeth and Southwark, runs advice sessions for parents, trains staff to run groups and provides staff with advice to help them improve communication skills in children
- **All Age Disability Positive Behaviour Support Team** — a team within Southwark council who works with families to help reduce behaviours that challenge by collaborating with family support networks, conducting functional behaviour assessments, setting achievable goals, and designing personalised support plans

Using this toolkit

**This toolkit has been designed
to show you:**



Things to
consider when
planning your
services and
activities

Ideas for
supporting staff
and volunteer
training
sessions

Top tips
for easy
adjustments

Reflective
activities to do
with staff and
volunteers

A resource
section for
further learning

Links to
downloadable
templates

Tasks for
creating
practical
resources for
your setting

This toolkit has not been designed to read cover to cover. We would suggest you start by using Cherry Garden School's accessibility auditing tool.



Accessibility Auditing

| Feature | What is going well? | What challenges are there? | Actions, support needed, strengths you could draw on |
|--|---------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Environment/General Accessibility | | | |
| Wheelchair accessible | | | |
| Accessible toilets | | | |
| Changing places | | | |
| Support for hearing needs | | | |
| Support for visual needs | | | |
| Ability to support with medical needs | | | |

See above an example page from the Cherry Garden School's Accessibility Auditing Tool. The template can be found here:

<https://www.cherrygardenschool.co.uk/accessibility-auditing-and-resources/>

The school worked in collaboration with activity providers to develop this tool to identify strengths and areas for improvement in accessibility. It is as an excellent starting point for team discussions and identifying which improvements could have the most significant impact on your group of children and young people.

Top tip:

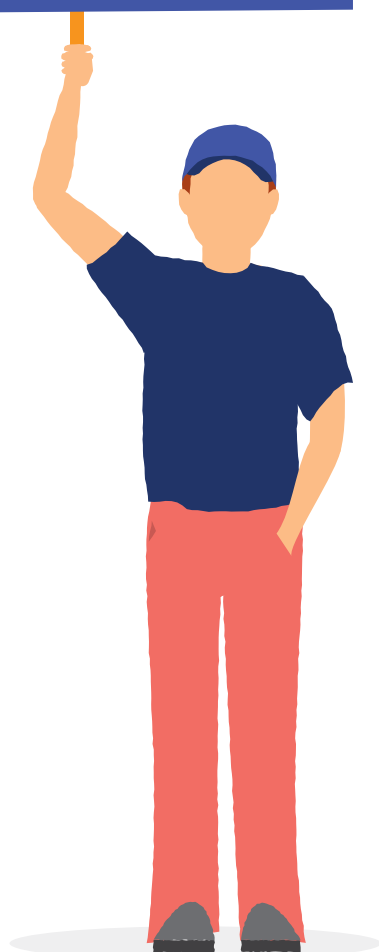
It is important to celebrate strengths as well as looking at next steps, so take time to share positives with your team and to look at the skills already within your group which you can draw on to develop things further.

Make sure that any actions you identify are achievable and can be sustained longer term, you want these improvements to become embedded parts of your practice. This may mean considering avenues of funding or looking at a rolling programme of training to keep up with staffing changes over time.



There is a lot to think about so it may be beneficial to begin with broader discussions to determine which sections require more attention for your setting. Maybe plan to spend about 30 minutes in your team meetings over the next few months to identify one section of the auditing tool to focus on at a time. Then, delve deeper into the questions in that section, recording your current strengths as well as areas for improvement. Gathering information from various sources can be helpful. For example, consider what parents and carers think works well about how you share information, or whether the children and young people you work with show clear preferences for certain sensory activities that can inform your planning of sensory routines.

Staff activity



Select an area from the audit to focus on, and write the titles 'Success,' 'Challenge,' and 'Possibility' on separate large pieces of paper. Use these headings to brainstorm ideas about your current provision and potential improvements. By highlighting current positives and identifying challenges at the outset, you can give your ideas the best chance of success.

If your numbers allow, consider splitting into three groups, with each group brainstorming ideas on one of the sheets. Rotate the sheets so every group has a chance to contribute their ideas. Alternatively, use post-it notes for everyone to add at least one or two ideas to each sheet.

Review all the ideas to identify patterns and common themes, and determine which next steps will have the most significant impact on your setting and groups.

You can use the corresponding section of this toolkit to see examples and ideas about good practice and to identify actions to improve accessibility in that area.

Reference and reflection:

Use the auditing tool and toolkit as a reference to implement and reflect on what changes and implementations have been made. Try an activity or task and then revisit it later to see your progress: What are we changing or implementing? How will we do it? When will we do it? Have we done it? What was the impact? What could we have done differently? What have we learnt?

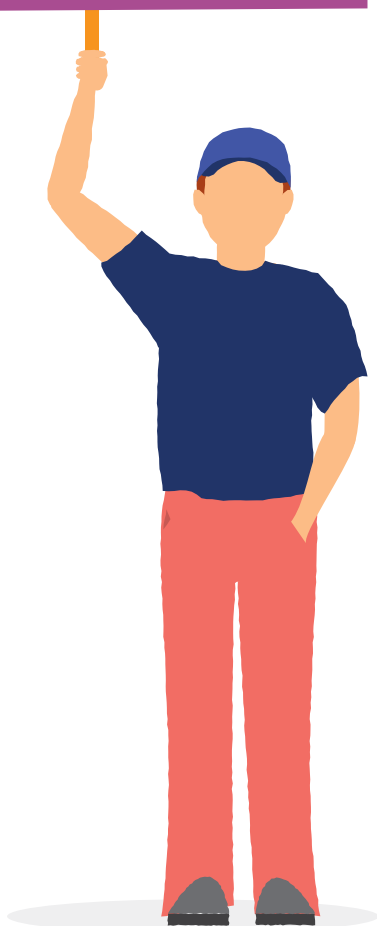
Communicating with children and young people

This section of the toolkit discusses why communication is important, and how to support different types of communication to create a more inclusive environment.



When communicating with children and young people with additional needs and disabilities, it's important to treat everyone as a unique individual. Tailoring your communication style according to their specific needs and preferences, and taking their lead is important. By working with them to understand how they prefer to communicate you will help them to express their wants and needs, support them to feel valued and foster trust in the relationship.

Staff activity



Choose one of these activities below to help staff better understand the perspectives of people who may communicate in different ways. The exercise encourages them to think about how a child with limited verbal communication will use visuals and gestures to express themselves.

- 1 Back-to-back drawing – download a template and instructions here:**
<https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheet/drawing-communication-exercise>
Back-to-Back Drawing Activity | Worksheet | Therapist Aid
- 2 Tell someone what you did at the weekend without words**

Post activity reflection:

- What strategies did you use to get your thoughts and ideas across?
- How did it make you feel communicating in this way?
- What helped you?

When communicating with children with additional needs and disabilities, it's important to focus on building a connection first. Follow the young person and take their lead. For example:

- Follow the child's interests. For instance, if you know that they like Lego, you can incorporate it into activities
- Do not force a child to communicate in a certain way, respect their preferred ways of communicating
- Mirroring a child's body language or gestures can help build a connection

Communication methods

Using different forms of communication in your setting, no matter who you are communicating with, creates a more inclusive environment.



Some children and young people may be very confident communicating in their own way. They may not use verbal communication (spoken words), or they may use verbal and non-verbal communication alongside one another.

By taking a **‘total communication approach’** of using visuals, objects, and signs where possible, alongside the spoken word, you will not be at risk of overestimating someone’s capabilities to process the spoken word. In our own daily lives, we use symbols, for example, as a quick way to identify speed limits, or to quickly find toilets. This shows how it’s helpful to everyone, not just those with additional needs.

There are a number of reasons why someone might have difficulties in **communicating a message to others**, this could include:

- Lack of words needed to send a message
- Difficulties in producing clear speech/signs
- Using the right words but in the wrong order or without matching body language

There are also a number of reasons why people may have difficulties **understanding what other people are saying to them**. The Challenging Behaviour Foundation suggest this could be related to:

- Hearing loss that has not been detected
- Being given too much language to process
- Abstract concepts (things that cannot be seen or touched), negatives (e.g. “not”, “don’t”) and time concepts (e.g. “yesterday”, “this afternoon”)
- Sarcasm and taking things literally e.g. “Oh, that’s great!” when you mean the opposite. To understand this, we need to read tone of voice, facial expression and body language. Other people may think the person can understand more than they can

It is important to remember that where English is not a person's first language, they may also use a variety of communication methods. All types of communication are equally valued but additional resources may be helpful to ensure everyone is able to communicate in a way that means their wants and needs are understood.

Some examples of communication methods include:

Makaton

Makaton is a type of signing support that uses signs, gestures and facial expressions. It is often used by people with learning disabilities. It is used widely in the UK, but also in many other countries. Makaton signs should always be used alongside spoken language.

More information: <https://www.makaton.org/>

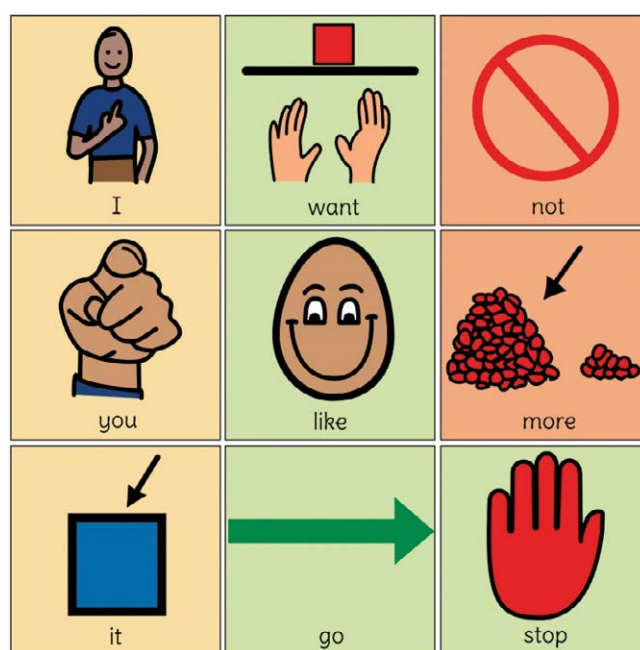
British Sign Language

British Sign Language uses signs, gesture, facial expressions and body language. It is its own language and is primarily used by people who are deaf or have hearing impairments.

More information: <https://www.british-sign.co.uk/what-is-british-sign-language/>

Visual communication cards and picture symbols

These are very varied and are usually used by people with a learning disability. You can create your own custom cards using photos or images from a picture bank, such as www.symbolsforall.org.uk (see image opposite) which has free downloadable content. There are many options available such as Widgit symbols www.widgit.com which is a paid for service often used by schools so may be familiar with children and young people.



Objects of reference

For children who cannot understand picture symbols, object cues can be helpful to support their understanding of their routine. An object of reference is something which can be held or touched, and is used to represent a certain activity. The object must be something which has meaning for the individual, and which they associate specifically with that activity. For example, showing a real cup before having a drink.

More information: www.sense.org.uk/information-and-advice/ways-of-communicating/objects-of-reference/

Easy read

Easy read is a writing style that uses simplified language and supporting images. It can be used to present letters and other information in an accessible format. Mencap provide free downloadable easy read documents on a number of subjects. There are more easy read and picture bank resources in our 'resources' section.

More information: www.mencap.org.uk/easy-read-library

Staff activity











Learn a few Makaton signs with staff and children at your group. Try to incorporate them in your sessions. Learning a song in Makaton can be a fun way to do this, there are lots of videos on YouTube which are suitable for all ages.
www.youtube.com/@SingingHandsUK

Makaton shares a 'sign of the week'. Each week, or session, encourage all children and staff to learn a new sign and encourage one another to use it as much as possible. Try to remind everyone about the signs they've learnt previously, perhaps making time for a short recap or have a place they can view previous signs, maybe in a book, folder or display.

Visual aids

A visual timetable can be very beneficial for many children and young people with additional needs and disabilities. It provides structure and predictability to a session by letting them know what is coming next.

There are multiple ways you can display your visual timetable depending on the resources you have available to you.

| Activity | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| When | | | |

Example visual timetable

Top tip:

Staff may find it helpful to wear some key symbols on a keyring, or lanyard, to use with the children and young people during the day. It can also be useful to have a 'now and next' board.



Task: now and next boards



This is another type of visual aid that uses pictures to show what activity is happening now, and what activity will be happening directly after. Print images of activities you do at your group for example, dance, crafts, free time, home time etc. Use Blu Tack or Velcro to stick these onto a board labelled with 'now' and 'next' sections. To get the full benefit, it's important the board is updated when transitioning to the next activity for it to be a reliable source for children to use, to understand what activities are coming next.



Example Now and Next

When using visual aids, you may want to include general activities rather than being too specific. This will allow you to be more flexible with your timetable. For example, rather than having separate images for drawing, painting and papier mâché you could have an image for 'art'. However, if there are changes to the activities entirely or to the order of the session, it is important to let your group know as soon as possible. Providing advance notice and time to prepare for changes can help reduce the stress or anxiety that children may feel when faced with last-minute adjustments.

Resource: see communicating with children and young people section for visual timetable and “now and next board” templates.

For some children, having a visual reminder of how long they have left on an activity can also be helpful and make the transition to the next activity smoother. This could be done using sand or egg timers, looking at the hands of a clock or letting everyone know when they have a set number of minutes left on an activity.

“In college I had gotten a lot of support put in place to help me to produce quality work. I had struggled with time management back in my first year. But I have now improved greatly by setting alarms as prompters on my phone. So now I’m aware of the time so that I know when to leave for break and lunch, and when to head back to lessons.”

Jeremiah, 19, VoiceAbility expert by experience



Task:

Print out picture symbols or photos and stick them around the room or setting to label key areas or objects. Consider adding the written word to label the image.

Resource: www.symbolsforall.org.uk Symbols for All





Plan:

Before you engage with the child, make a quick plan. What are you going to say? Do you need a visual aid, Makaton sign or object of reference?

Get attention:

Say the child's name, stand in front of them, and lower yourself to their level. Make it easy for them to know you are speaking to them.

Wait:

Stay quiet and avoid making strong eye contact. There is no pressure for the child to respond immediately. If you feel it is appropriate, you can also move away to give the child space.

Try once:

Give your prompt (instruction, offer) one time.

Model:

Show the child how they might respond. Help them to understand what the prompt means.

Try again:

Repeat the same prompt now or at a later time. More repetitions will help build the child's understanding.

“All about me” document

This section introduces the idea of an ‘**All about me**’ document. Some schools might call this a communication passport.



Having access to ‘**All about me**’ documents or communication passports about a young person makes it easier for everyone to support them well. This often includes the child or young person’s likes, dislikes, their preferred way of communicating and the goals they are working towards. It can help with settling into a new club/activity or meal times, building rapport with staff and helping to promote communication between peers through mutual interests. If not provided elsewhere, it should also cover things like medication, eating habits and allergies.

Lunch breaks may need some consideration depending on the needs of the children present. Consider where you seat children — for instance, make sure you know which children have allergies as children can sometimes share or even take each other’s food.

Hi, I'm [name]

Please read my communication passport.

It's really important to me.

Updated by _____

Date last updated _____

The template includes a large white box for the passport content, a small icon of a person, and a small circular logo in the bottom right corner.

Resource: ‘All about me’ example for more ideas.

Top tip:

The child attending your group may already have an ‘All about me’ document or something similar from school, other clubs or hospital. You may be able to use this document rather than making an entirely new one. Ask the parent or caregiver whether they already have one. You can always find out more information and add to it if you need to.



The information contained in an ‘**All about me**’ document needs to be proportionate to the group the child is joining. For example, more information will be needed for a child that is attending a week-long holiday club than one who is joining a one-off two-hour event.

Creating an “All about me” document

Creating a document for the child you are working with is a great tool to better understand how to communicate and support them. It can give staff more confidence when working with a young person they have not supported before. It also limits how much parents, carers and the child have to repeat themselves.

This should ideally be completed by someone who knows the young person well together with the young person, to ensure they have their say. Where appropriate it should contain photos and pictures so that everyone can understand it and the child will want to add to it. It can be a physical printed document, or in a digital format.

It is important that the information is kept up to date and reviewed at least once a year. Encourage parents and carers to regularly check the information you have is accurate. The ‘**All about me**’ document can be updated by staff once they get to know the child better, but they themselves must be included in this process as it is ‘their’ document.

Top tip:

Everyone, including the staff, should have an ‘All about me’ document. This approach fosters a more inclusive environment. Creating it can be a delightful way for children and staff to get to know each other.



Resource

You can find more information about creating an ‘**All about me**’ document or communication passport here:

www.communicationpassports.org.uk/Home/

Sense Communication Passport — Sense

Sense-Communication-passport.pdf

www.sense.org.uk

Children and young people's voices

This section explores the importance of giving young people a voice.



Children and young people with additional needs and disabilities face barriers that mean they often lack choice and freedom in their lives. Giving them agency and control is key to their development and inclusion. It will help them to feel valued and heard, empowering them to make their own choices and encouraging independence.

How to give children and young people a voice:

- Create opportunities for them to lead in a session, or introduce activities
- Let them choose their own activities — ‘choose what you do sessions’
- Involve them in creating group rules
- Give them ‘jobs’ or responsibilities e.g. visual timetable monitor, pencil sharpener monitors or let them help hand out the craft activities
- Ask them what they think of the activities on offer — use visual supports to help get their views

Top tip:

Having a suggestion or feedback box for everyone is a simple way to let the children, parents and staff know their views and opinions are valued. It is important that everyone can see that ideas are considered and implemented where possible.



Inclusive environment and activities



We know that children with additional needs and disabilities can face many barriers when it comes to social inclusion, but particularly when it comes to the inaccessibility of the physical, sensory and relational environment. These barriers can result in them being socially excluded and missing important developmental experiences, including opportunities to learn new skills, make new friends and being able to establish themselves as a valued member of their community.

It is important to remember that everyone is an individual and not all children will have the same wishes or support needs, even if they have the same diagnosis.

The information gathered in the '**All about me**' document on page 23 may give you an idea of how the environment might affect the children you are working with. This will help you create a space that supports their physical access needs as well as their emotional regulation, and therefore their ability to engage in activities and enjoy themselves.



Making adjustments

This section of the toolkit highlights some important factors to consider when creating a more inclusive environment.



Many simple, and often very affordable adjustments, can make a big difference to inclusion. This section offers ways to overcome some of the mobility, vision, and hearing challenges children and young people with additional needs and disabilities can face. It also includes ideas for planning activities that everyone can enjoy.

The '**All about me**' document mentioned on page 23 can be a great tool to aid you in knowing what you need to consider when reviewing a specific environment, particularly if used alongside Cherry Garden School's accessibility auditing tool. An example page is shown below, full size pages are in the Resources section, and the tool itself can be found here: <https://www.cherrygardenschool.co.uk/accessibility-auditing-and-resources/>



Accessibility Auditing

| Feature | What is going well? | What challenges are there? | Actions, support needed, strengths you could draw on |
|--|---------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Environment/General Accessibility | | | |
| Wheelchair accessible | | | |
| Accessible toilets | | | |
| Changing places | | | |
| Support for hearing needs | | | |
| Support for visual needs | | | |
| Ability to support with medical needs | | | |

Improvements will often benefit the wider group for instance:

- **A quieter area** will benefit a child or young person who can be sensitive to sound and light, as well as a child or young person who is deaf or has hearing loss
- **Clear signage, using images as well as words**, will help children and young people with a visual impairment, learning disability or language barriers to navigate the venue as independently as possible
- **Clear signage also improves safety** for all, including staff and volunteers, by giving quick, accurate evacuation information during an emergency
- **Step free access**, wide doorways and spaces that are clear of clutter will benefit children and young people with a visual impairment, but also anyone with a mobility issue including people who use walking aids and wheelchairs

Here are some resources for helping to make some of the adjustments above:

- This link from **www.symbolsforall.org.uk** gives access to lots of free downloadable symbols for different areas but also for activities and sequence prompts
- Door signs and communication boards can be downloaded from **www.widgit.com/products/signage/index.htm**
- Further resources and reading about mobility, sight, and hearing are available at the end of this toolkit

Bear in mind that some aspects may conflict. Whilst many groups like to provide a bright and cheerful environment, brightly-coloured display boards can cause overstimulation for some. As can factors such as light and smell.

Top tip:

- **Sunglasses might be useful in areas where the lights can't easily be dimmed**
- **Consider noise reduction headphones and ear defenders, as well as offering paper towels as an alternative to noisy hand dryers**
- **In larger spaces black out tents can be a welcome retreat, helping children and young people to regain control, decompress without external interruptions and regain focus**
- **Everyone will appreciate having access to a variety of fidget tools to help them focus, relax or regulate**



Staff activity



Whilst we are not comparing children's groups and clubs to a shopping centre, encourage staff and volunteers to watch the Too Much Information film from the National Autistic Society (www.autism.org.uk). It will give them an idea of how overwhelming noises and lights can be.

Encourage reflection on how your setting might feel to a child or young person visiting for the first time, and what you can do make it more accessible.

Personal care

Personal care is the more private elements of care and support a child or young person may require. For example; changing or dressing, washing, and toileting. Many young people with complex disabilities that require this care are excluded from social activities when their needs cannot be met. Providing personal care is an opportunity to include these young people in society.

To support someone with more complex disabilities it is important to understand the level of support a person needs and how this is delivered in other settings. This would then enable you to explore putting in place any necessary policies and risk assessments to support with these needs, alongside any equipment required.

You may find some equipment can be provided to you by the family, or larger equipment such as hoists may even be available at the venue you use (such as a school).

Where you have a young person who requires the use of a hoist, rather than training the entire team, ensure an appropriate number of staff are trained based on your own risk assessments depending on how many children with relevant needs you have. For your reference, school staff are sometimes available to support holiday clubs outside of term time. They are often already qualified to use the equipment, and known-faces for the children and young people attending.



Top tip:

When advertising your group or activity, remember to:

- **Be clear about what you can and cannot provide. For example, if you have level access but no accessible toilet, mention it**
- **Avoid using terms like 'fully accessible' or omitting information if access is limited**



Accessible activities for all

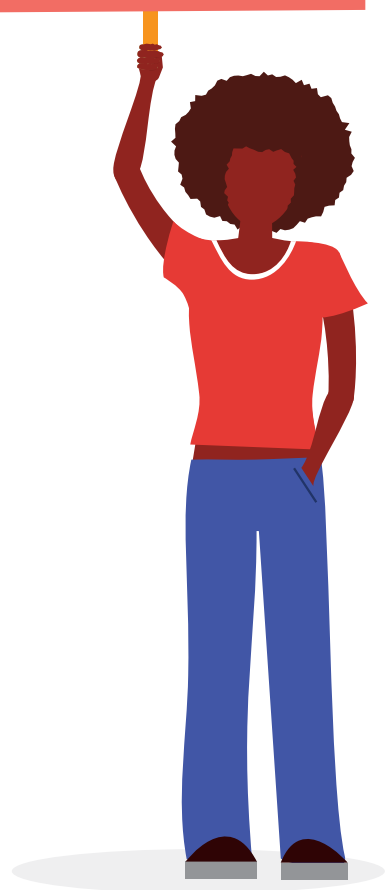
This section looks at a range of ideas and resources that can be enjoyed by all the children and young people in a setting including those with additional needs and disabilities.



When preparing activities and considering their accessibility, the '**All about me**' document mentioned on page 23 can be a great tool to aid you in your planning. It will help shape the activities the children and young people enjoy, support any of their goals and how you might try to avoid, or mitigate, any triggers that may arise.

Sensory messy play is a great way for children to practice their fine motor skills and learn how to use tools. You can also use this activity to work on lots of different learning skills.




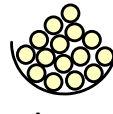


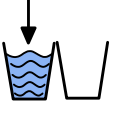


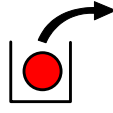
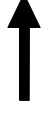





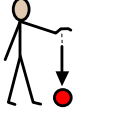




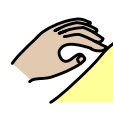


Staff activity



Bring one or more sensory messy play ideas listed below to a staff meeting or training session. Reflect on what you enjoyed, how it made you feel, and how you could extend this idea in your setting.

- Cornflour is versatile for messy play. Use it dry in a shallow tray or plate for mark-making. Add water to make it solid when squeezed and liquid when released. It's fun with whisks, colanders, and spoons
- Rice, pasta, dry cereal etc in a bowl or tray, with cups, spoons, scoops, sieves etc to use with the messy play
- Shredded paper is a nice sensory tactile experience. Great for hiding some favourite toys inside. Maybe try pairs of items hidden for them to find and match

Resource – with more details, ideas and recipes for play dough, and a downloadable messy play chatboard

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|--|---|
|  more |  finished |  one |  lots |  count |  round |
|  full |  empty |  in |  out |  up |  down |
|  scoop |  pour |  mix |  sprinkle |  drop |  squeeze |
|  same |  different |  look |  feel |  good |  don't like |

Sensory Messy Play At Home – Cherry Garden School

www.cherrygardenschool.co.uk/sensory-messy-play-at-home/



SENSE-inclusive-play-parents.pdf

<https://www.cherrygardenschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/SENSE-inclusive-play-parents.pdf>

Art activities

Try fun, simple art activities that focus on open-ended, process-led art to encourage creativity without specific outcomes. Transient art is easy to do and less messy than traditional painting. It helps children explore colour, shape, texture and position. It helps children develop creative confidence, expression of ideas and feelings visually, and to use their imagination. Remember, there are no ‘wrong’ ways to create.

Resource

Quick video explaining transient art and giving some ideas:

<https://www.cherrygardenschool.co.uk/art/> – Cherry Garden School

There are so many fun and simple art activities to consider. Focus on open-ended, process-led art to encourage creativity without pressure to create a specific design or object at the end.

- **Junk modelling** — use items from your recycling box to create anything you want. Practice using scissors and joining things with glue or tape
- **Dressing up** — create costumes using any clothes and accessories. Bright colours and patterns are fun to explore. Think about what a character or job role might wear

Musical activities

Music activities are very engaging for all. Singing and drama games help develop attention and listening skills. By joining in with familiar songs and actions, children learn to anticipate, wait, take turns, listen for familiar words, and follow action sequences.

Watch the video to see how to play some games, using props, singing the songs, and giving the children time to respond and join in at the right moments.

www.cherrygardenschool.co.uk Drama Games and Songs —
Cherry Garden School

Here are a few of Cherry Garden school’s favourite online and app-based musical learning activities.

Resource

- **www.ianbean.co.uk/senict-members-resource-portal** Ian Bean’s website has lots of free to download ICT activities covering a range of topics. The cause and effect games with music are a great way of engaging children who are just learning about how to control a touch screen or switches

- **musiclab.chromeexperiments.com** A range of fun and simple musical apps for cause and effect, creating beats and exploring a range of instrumental sounds online
- **bouncyballs.org** Make the balls bounce by making noise. They go still when you are quiet. Good for loud and quiet exploration or just practicing vocalising to make the balls move
- **Magic piano app** (find it in Google Play or Apple's App Store) Press the dots to play along with a piece of music. Good for basic cause and effect

Further resources and reading are available at the end of this toolkit

Games and physical activities

The below resource gives some examples from Sense, of games and activities that can be enjoyed by children of all ages including those with complex disabilities in any sized space. They require little or no equipment and all encourage engagement with the others in the group, improving communication, learning new skills and encouraging self-expression. There are many more ideas and downloadable resources on their website:

Resource: <https://www.sense.org.uk/our-services/arts-sports-for-disabled-people/sport/sport-and-physical-activity-resources/making-sense-of-mini-games/>
Inclusive games to play with people with complex disabilities - Sense STG

Top tip:

- Children are more likely to engage in games if those supporting them are taking part and engaged as well
- If helpful you can make things more sensory by adding noise, texture or smell
- Include time at the start of each session for individuals to feel the equipment
- Support children to actively take part in a way that is appropriate for them
- As with all sport and physical activity sessions, make sure you have completed a risk assessment of the equipment and space to make sure it is safe to use





Thinking about your group or service:

What skills do you already have in your team to deliver activities?

What activities are your children and young people interested in?

Are your activities flexible?

If a child and young person doesn't want to take part, are there other options for them?

Do sessions include both active and calming phases?

Do you have a visual timetable? And can you give a 5-minute warning before the end of an activity?

Can you check in at the start of the session? What next steps will you take depending on a child or young person's mood?

Do you have any sensory activities available? Are there any toys or equipment you could make or buy to facilitate this?

Accessible outside spaces

Opportunities for learning in the outdoor environment are plentiful, and the natural environment is always an engaging and motivating space for exploring and communicating.



Children and young people often gain a sense of calm outside and they are also able to build their confidence through a range of creative and imaginative play opportunities.

If you are lucky enough to have an outside space, you could consider creating a **mud kitchen or natural messy tray** which can be as simple or complex as you like. Children and young people can have hours of fun with just a few containers and kitchen tools, a big bucket of mud and a tap.

More ideas: <https://www.cherrygardenschool.co.uk/marvellous-mud-kitchens/>
Marvellous Mud Kitchens – Cherry Garden School



Source: <https://www.cherrygardenschool.co.uk/marvellous-mud-kitchens/>

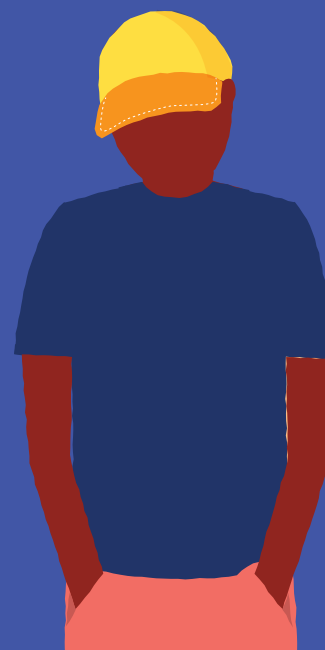
Even if your setting does not have its own outdoor space, **sensory walks** can help children and young people to engage with nature, using their senses to connect with their surroundings and enjoy meaningful experiences. The walks can be enjoyed by anyone, and don't need much, or any, equipment.

The walk doesn't have to be long or to a specific destination — it could just be walking to the shops or around your local park. Children or young people can walk at their own pace, or use a wheelchair or walker.

Resource: Sensory walks <https://www.sense.org.uk/our-services/arts-sports-for-disabled-people/sport/sport-and-physical-activity-resources/how-to-lead-an-accessible-sensory-walk/> - Sense STG

Sensory and emotional regulation

This section explores what sensory and emotional regulation is and ways you can support children and young people to feel safe, secure, confident and able to participate.



If a child or young person is not well regulated, this may be communicated through anxious and distressed behaviour and even behaviours which challenge.

Sensory regulation is someone's ability to manage and respond to sensory input in a way that is appropriate for the situation. This involves adjusting one's level of alertness or arousal to match the environment and activity. For example, being calm and focused in a classroom setting or being more active and energetic on a playground. It is crucial for maintaining a balanced state of mind and body. It helps individuals to stay calm, focused, and organised, which is especially important for those with sensory processing differences.

Understanding your own sensory behaviours and needs will help you better understand those of the children and young people you support.

Staff activity



Here are some questions for you and your colleagues to discuss:

- **What sensory experiences do you enjoy?**
- **Are there any that make you feel uncomfortable?**
- **Do you think you could focus on an important task when experiencing that uncomfortable feeling?**
- **What things do you do throughout your day to keep you focused and comfortable?**

In a supportive role, it is important to be able to identify your own emotions, understand and regulate them. This is called emotional literacy. This deeper understanding of emotions helps you to know how your own feelings might impact your behaviour. This goes beyond knowing what happy or sad means. This is something that children may still need to develop and need your support to do.

Learn more on the Zones of Regulation website:

<https://zonesofregulation.com/how-it-works>

Providing sensory experiences and regulating choices

We experience the world through our senses, and these sensory experiences can be positive or negative depending on our own preferences. Every child will have their own sensory needs. They may actively look for certain sensory input and avoid others. Having a range of sensory inputs readily available to meet a range of needs is key. This can be provided through the activities you do, or in a separate sensory space/box, whilst also making adaptations to support sensory avoidance.

Children may '**sensory seek**', actively looking for and craving a type of sensory input. For example, spinning around, stamping feet or chewing on clothing or other non-food items. Children experiencing 'pica' (persistent eating of non-nutritive substances) have been known to eat sand (from a sensory sandpit) or foam (from the underside of a bus seat). It is important that environments and activities are risk assessed accordingly.

Children may also '**avoid**' other types of sensory stimuli, for example by putting their hands over their ears to avoid loud noises or moving away from smells.

Most of us are familiar with the five senses; taste, smell, sight, hearing and touch. However, our brains also receive sensory information in other ways. We also receive information from our proprioceptive (body awareness) and vestibular (balance) senses.

Proprioception (body awareness) is the body's ability to sense its location, movements, and actions. Proprioceptive input can be provided through resistance activities, weightbearing activities, moving heavy items or the provision of deep pressure input. Our vestibular (balance) system is all about our balance and movement, it tells us if we are right side up or upside down, moving forwards or backwards, whether we are dizzy or not.



Here are some ideas to support a child or young person's sensory needs:

| Sense | Sensory seeking | Sensory avoiding |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Sight | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create a sensory bottle filled with things like beads, baby oil, glitter or small metallic objects ● Sensory walk https://www.sense.org.uk/our-services/arts-sports-for-disabled-people/sport/sport-and-physical-activity-resources/how-to-lead-an-accessible-sensory-walk/ ● Lava lamp, LED tubes, flashing sensory balls | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dim the lights or allow use of sunglasses ● Blackout tents ● Neutral colours in displays etc |
| Hearing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sensory stories https://www.sense.org.uk/activities/sensory-stories/ ● Make your own shaker | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ear defenders or noise cancelling ear plugs ● A quiet space or area |
| Smell | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scented playdough or putty ● Play in grass, flowers, soil, herbs ● Scented markers or stickers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Try to keep a neutral smelling environment e.g. don't wear perfume, use fragrance free cleaning products ● Seat child away from triggering or strong smells ● Open windows |
| Taste | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Edible slime https://www.sense.org.uk/activities/homemade-edible-slime/ ● Allow snacks from home | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be mindful that certain flavours/textures may be triggering ● Be mindful of allergies |
| Touch | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sensory bins filled with a filler material such as sand or rice, and various small items ● Fidget toys e.g. pop-its, tactile marble and mesh fidgets, stretch fidgets ● Stretchable putties (colourful, stretchy, and sometimes scented) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Avoid certain textures they don't like, offer alternative materials during an activity ● Offer dry textures Vs. wet textures as they are easier to remove/break contact with |
| Body awareness (proprioception) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Blow up a balloon ● Squeeze a stress ball ● Weightbearing activities e.g. crawling, push-ups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Avoid tight clothing ● Avoid physical contact particularly other children |
| Balance (vestibular) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Walk along a beam or straight line ● Foot fidgets which are a type of footrest that can help maintain focus ● Hopscotch ● Skipping | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do activities on the ground to provide a firm base of support ● If sitting down, ensure feet touch to floor, place a stool if they don't ● Offer activities that have gentle movements |

Please note that some of these activities may overlap into other senses.

Task: Sensory break menu



Create a sensory break 'menu' — a page of images that have a few sensory break options for a child or young person to choose from. This will be even better if there is an option for each sense (see example below).

This could be used if the child or young person feels they need a sensory break or if whoever is supporting them feels they could benefit from one.



Play an instrument



Puzzles



Sensory walk



Stretch



Skipping



Painting



Gardening



Deep breathing

Structured sensory routines

Many children and young people will benefit from engaging in a structured sensory routine to support their regulation.



To create a structured sensory routine that supports regulation, consider that these routines involve three stages:

1

Energising

(activates the brain and increases blood flow)

- Jumping on the spot/jumping jacks
- Step ups
- Running/skipping

2

Organising

(connects the brain and the body)

- Balancing
- Throwing to a target e.g. bean bags in a bucket
- Weaving in and out of cones

3

Calming

(regulates)

- Lying under weighted blankets
- Arm push-ups against the wall
- Blow bubbles

Each stage can last around 2-5 minutes. However, if you think the children and young people you're working with could benefit more from one section in particular, you can spend more time doing that. For example, if they are feeling tired and sluggish, adjust your timings, spend more time on the energising section and less on the other sections.

Task: Sensory routine



Plan a short sensory routine you could do at your setting. Consider how you could include this during each of your sessions.

Sensory area

You may also want to create a sensory area in your setting. This will be a designated area which can cater for a young person's sensory preferences and needs, supporting them to self-regulate.

How to create a sensory area:

- Create a **private area** e.g. a separate room, a pop-up tent, draped materials, out of view/not in the centre of the room
- Think about the **lighting** e.g. darken the space with a black out tent or sunglasses, add LED or sensory lights that can be turned off and on
- Think about the **noise** levels e.g. provide ear defenders, relaxing music
- Make it **comfortable** e.g. add cushions, beanbags, blankets, soft furnishings
- Add **sensory toys** e.g. fidget toys, putty, sensory bubble timers
- Add **regulating activities** e.g. breathing exercises, stories, balloons to blow up, puzzles

Staff activity

Design your own sensory area in your setting. Consider how you can do this out of items you already have. Can you spend a portion of your team meeting designing one together?

Behaviour

Behaviour is a form of communication and behaviour that challenges is just one way of communicating.



Behaviour is an individual's response to an environmental stimulus; it could be something that is present in the environment or something which is missing from the environment. Your actions or inactions are also part of the environment.

Every behaviour, even behaviour that challenges is communicating something.

There are four functions to behaviour:

1

Attention

Seeking social attention from another person such as stripping off clothing because a staff member will come and get them dressed again

2

Sensory

The need to self-stimulate to provide the sense with something interesting — e.g. climbing furniture as seeking balance (vestibular) stimuli

3

Escape

The need to get away from a difficult situation or sensory overload, or to reduce a demand — e.g. hitting out because the child doesn't understand an instruction which leads to overwhelm and frustration

4

Tangible

The need to gain access to a tangible item or activity which is enjoyable for the child — e.g. not having the skills to communicate verbally a child might hit themselves and scream until given an iPad

There are many reasons that a child with additional needs and disabilities may display behaviour that challenges. For example, trauma, adverse childhood experiences and mental health issues.

Changes in any child's behaviour or appearance can also be a sign of neglect or abuse. Those with additional needs and disabilities face an increased risk of being abused, compared with their non-disabled peers. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and is essential knowledge for anyone working with children. You may be able to access training via your local council.

Resource

thenestsouthwark.org.uk —

wellbeing support of young adults, children and families

Southwark CAMHS Service | Southwark Local Offer

<https://localoffer.southwark.gov.uk/wellbeing>

NSPCC offer online training in many aspects of safeguarding

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/training>

Keeping a record when behaviour that challenges occurs, will help you better understand the child's triggers and support you to understand why the behaviour occurred. You could use the STAR format of recording information.

| STAR record for behaviour that challenges | |
|---|--------------|
| Name: | Date: |
| Setting (where did this occur?) | |
| Trigger (or what was happening prior) | |
| Action (or behaviour), | |
| Result (outcome or function of the behaviour?) | |

Staff reflection activity

Using an anonymised example you've encountered where behaviour has challenged, ask staff to reflect on how they could have used the STAR format.

Often the best course of action is to be proactive before that behaviour escalates or arises. We should always look to work with the child to do this. **The Five SMART Principles** is a framework of things to consider when working with a child or young person who at times can become distressed.

The Five SMART Principles should not be confused with SMART targets set as part of a child or young person's education, health and care plan.

The Five SMART Principles:

1. Stay one step ahead:

- Familiarise yourself with their '**All about me**' document on page 23
- Identify any triggers and manage them, for example, if noise is a trigger, move to a quieter area
- Look for any changes to routine or environment
- Identify beforehand any coping strategies they use, or you may try (make a note of what works well so it can be used next time)
- Talk to parents and other carers about strategies and what has worked well and what hasn't

2. Move one step at a time:

- Move at the child's pace — don't rush
- Give one instruction or prompt at a time, try simplifying your speech and be direct with your words
- Take a moment to pause and assess how they are responding. Listen to their facial expressions, body language and behaviour
- Communicate using Makaton, picture symbols, gestures etc alongside words

3. Attend 100%:

- Approach each session as a new day, move on from any incidents which may have happened before
- Reinforce good/appropriate behaviour with praise and positive feedback
- Identify common interests which you both share
- Use active listening and mirror the child's language

4. Refocus the attention:

- Change the environment — is it too noisy, crowded, hot?
- Change the topic of conversation — talk about one of the child's strong interests e.g. their favourite cartoon

5. Together:

- Put the child at the centre of everything — use an empathetic approach
- Work in partnership with the parents and other carers — find out what works
- Do things with a child and not for a child, allow the child to teach you something they are good at
- Celebrate successes and achievements no matter how small

Top tip:

Check-in with how you are feeling when you're supporting a child or young person. Regulating your own emotions will aid the regulation of the child or young person you are supporting.



See our resources section for free behaviour training from Southwark Council

Relationships and collaboration



This section explains how to improve communication and collaboration among those involved in the child's care to ensure they receive the best support.

Working with families and parents

Working with families is an opportunity to learn more about the young person by sharing valuable information (for example, the information in '**All about me**' on page 23) and to gain wider context of what is going on in the young person's life.

It can also be an opportunity to support the young person and their family further. Your group or service will have knowledge of local SEND services and you may be able to signpost them to resources and tools. This could be from your own experiences and/or from knowledge gained in training.

It may also be the case that you are working with parents who are themselves in need of further support. For example, they might benefit from signposting to services to help manage stress and emotional challenges, support groups to connect with other parents facing similar situations or resources to better understand and advocate for their child's needs.

In order to foster effective communication between staff and parents or carers, we suggest you:

- **Provide contact info** — clearly communicate when and how to reach you and encourage them to share questions or concerns
- **Update regularly** — inform parents about their child's progress, events, and any concerns
- **Seek feedback** — use surveys to gather parents' opinions and show you value their input

- **Invite families to an open session or taster session** — parents could stay for part of the session which helps parents feel more connected and create a sense of community (try not to do this every session as it is also important to encourage the child or young person's independence)

Advocacy

You and your staff may frequently find that you are in a position of trust and people will come to you to seek support with difficulties they are experiencing. Advocacy is about social justice, upholding people's rights and supporting them to be heard. To advocate for someone means to stand alongside them and support them to speak out, or to speak on their behalf. A good advocate represents someone's thoughts and views, and does not allow their own, potentially differing, opinions to overshadow. A great advocate ensures that people have access to information that they can understand to help them make a fully informed decision. Community and voluntary organisations such as the Parent Forum in Southwark can provide informal support. Southwark's local offer website gives details of formal advocacy support for young people, parents and carers.

Resource: <https://localoffer.southwark.gov.uk/information-advice-and-support/advocacy-mediation-and-disagreement-resolution>

Networking and sharing in your community

Networking with other providers allows for the exchange of ideas, best practices, and possible solutions to some of your common challenges. By connecting in this way providers can gain insights into different approaches and strategies that have been successful in various settings.

Networking offers mutual assistance and encouragement and creates opportunities for mentorship and partnership, and sharing resources. It also offers parents and the community a more united offer.

Top tip:

Could you invite others to peer review you and you could do the same for them?



Promoting your club or service

For children, young people and their families to feel welcome and confident in your provision it's important to outline how you ensure it is inclusive when promoting e.g. outlining any training staff have undertaken, communication methods you use or accessible features in your setting. This also means proactively promoting your group to SEND families e.g. by advertising for free on Community Southwark's events page or the local offer website. The local offer shows what's available in the borough for children and young people (aged 0-25) who have special educational needs and disabilities.

Staff activity



- 1 Go to the local offer
localoffer.southwark.gov.uk/
- 2 Search for your own group/club
- 3 Is your group/club included?
If not, get it listed!
- 4 If you are included - are you easy to find?
Does it tell people what they need to know
about your service?

Working with your team

Staff and volunteers' knowledge, skills, communication and wellbeing are imperative in providing great support for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities. There are some simple ways to support and develop your team:

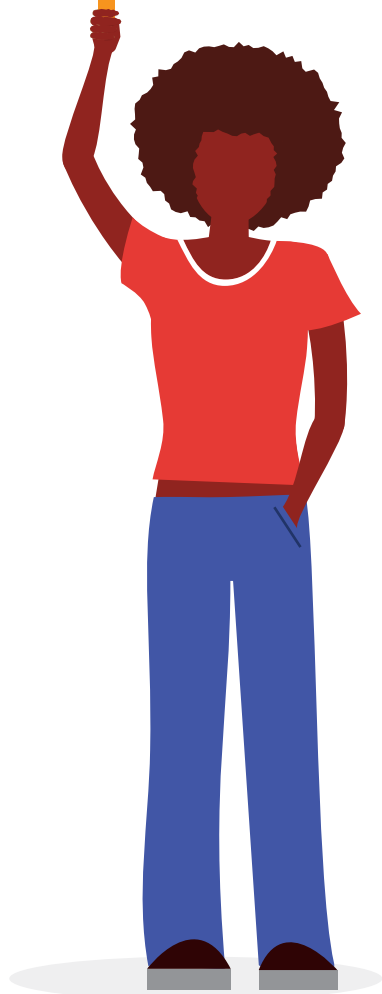
- **Debriefs** — hold pre- and post-session debriefs to discuss wellbeing, progress, successes, and challenges
- **Emotional support** — offer help after difficult sessions and share effective strategies
- **Encourage feedback** — provide opportunities for honest feedback to improve the service and environment
- **Training opportunities** — make time and facilitate access to training to boost confidence and skills. Value your team's knowledge and skillset — use the skills that staff already have. Provide space and time to share best practice
- **Prioritise wellbeing** — focus on staff wellbeing and teamwork through joint activities and support

Task: Create a calendar

Create a calendar which acknowledges multicultural holidays, as well as diverse celebrations such as Pride month or Learning Disability week. While an excellent opportunity for awareness, an extensive and diverse calendar also supports a diverse pool of staff to feel they belong, supporting wellbeing. The dates can also provide opportunity to put on celebrations that can be enjoyed by everyone.



Staff activity



Diversity bingo is a fun activity that encourages team members to learn more about each other's diverse backgrounds and helps to foster connections essential for building peer support. Each team member receives a bingo card with various characteristics.

For example 'speaks more than one language', 'plays a musical instrument', 'knits', 'attends dance classes', 'has lived in a different country', 'has a pet'. This requires some knowledge of team members to create.

The goal is for team members to interact and find colleagues who match the descriptions. Write their name in the square when found. The first person to call out 'Bingo!' when they complete a row or the entire card wins.

Reflection questions

How did this activity make you feel about your colleagues?

Was there anything you learned about someone that came as a surprise?

How will knowing these similarities and differences help you in building strong, supportive working relationships?

Resources

Welcome to our resources section, with lists of useful websites and resources available to support you.

Top tip:

Check your local council's children's social care website to ensure you can pass on information about how people can request an assessment for extra support if needed.

www.southwark.gov.uk/children-and-families/childrens-social-care/get-childrens-social-care-help



London Borough of Southwark resources

For parents:

The local offer shows what's available in the Borough for children, young people and adults (aged 0-25) who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

<https://localoffer.southwark.gov.uk>

Southwark Family Information service directory

<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/schools-and-education/family-information-service>

Southwark Autism Support <https://localoffer.southwark.gov.uk/education/specialist-services-offered-by-the-council/autism-support-team>

<https://services.southwark.gov.uk/childcare-and-parenting/advice-and-support-for-families/start-for-life-southwark>

The Achievement Coaching Program - empowering parents and equipping them with knowledge so they feel confident to make informed decisions to support their child/children's development

communitysouthwark.org/achievement-coaching-for-parents-carers/

Start for Life Southwark (help and advice for the early years of parenthood)

<https://services.southwark.gov.uk/childcare-and-parenting/advice-and-support-for-families/start-for-life-southwark>

Speech and language therapy training | Evelina London

www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/our-services/community/community-speech-and-language-therapy/training.aspx

Southwark Refugee Communities Forum:

www.southwarkrefugeecommunitiesforum.org/borough-of-sanctuary

Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC) — Maudsley Charity

<https://maudsleycharity.org/case-studies/empowering-parents-empowering-communities/>

Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities support programmes | Southwark Council

www.southwark.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/parenting/help-parenting/strengthening-families-strengthening

Southwark young carers

www.selmind.org.uk/directory/southwark-young-carers/

Southwark independent voice

www.southwarkiv.co.uk

Helping you secure the right SEN provision for your child

<https://sossen.org.uk/>

Support for organisations:

Community Southwark provides advice on organisational development including finding volunteers:

www.communitysouthwark.org/advertise-your-volunteer-role/

Communicating with children and young people

An exercise for thinking about how a child with limited verbal communication might use visuals and gestures to express themselves:

www.therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheet/drawing-communication-exercise

Templates for Visual Timetable and “now and next” boards

www.voiceability.org/about-advocacy/speak-out-and-self-advocacy/speak-out-southwark-thriving-together

Communication Passport Bumper Set — Amanda Mc Guinness Autism Specialist Ireland www.amandamcguinness.com

Example of a nursery welcome pack

littlestars@theoakfoundation.org.uk

Communicating with people with a learning disability | Mencap

www.mencap.org.uk

Total Communication Resource Pack

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/fogd3p3a/totalcommunicationresourcepackopt.pdf

www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/communication

communicationpassports.org.uk

Flare — the young people’s advisory group 13-25yrs — top tips for communication www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk

Find Makaton training

www.makaton.org

Person-centred support — Challenging Behaviour Foundation

www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk

Deafblind Manual — Sense

www.sense.org.uk/information-and-advice/ways-of-communicating/deafblind-manual/

Objects of reference — Sense

www.sense.org.uk/information-and-advice/ways-of-communicating/objects-of-reference/

Symbols for All

www.symbolsforall.org.uk

Environment

See differently — how you can help | RNIB | RNIB

www.rnib.org.uk

Sensory challenges for autistic pupils

www.autism.org.uk

Practical steps to create a truly inclusive playground for all

www.espplay.co.uk

Step Out — Supporting children and young people to thrive through outdoor based 1:1 mentoring

www.step-out.org.uk

Playground funding ideas

www.playdale.co.uk

Changing places toilets

www.changing-places.org

Activities

Learning Portal — Cherry Garden School

<https://www.cherrygardenschool.co.uk/learning-portal/>

Home Learning Resources — Cherry Garden School including art, music, maths, yoga and more

<https://www.cherrygardenschool.co.uk/home-learning-resources/>

Heuristic Play — Early Maths — Cherry Garden School

<https://www.cherrygardenschool.co.uk/heuristic-play-early-maths/>

www.cherrygardenschool.co.uk

Toolkit: Making play inclusive — Sense

<https://www.sense.org.uk/information-and-advice/for-professionals/resources-for-education-and-early-years-professionals/making-play-inclusive/>

Support with sport/active activities

<https://www.sense.org.uk/our-services/arts-sports-for-disabled-people/sport/sport-training-and-resources/>

Support with play activities

<https://www.sense.org.uk/information-and-advice/for-professionals/resources-for-education-and-early-years-professionals/>

Sense offers free workshops and resources including a ‘Complex Disabilities in Sport’ workshop that equips people to deliver activities for people with sensory or complex disabilities.

<https://www.sense.org.uk/our-services/arts-sports-for-disabled-people/sport/sport-training-and-resources/>

How to lead an accessible sensory walk — Sense

<https://www.sense.org.uk/our-services/arts-sports-for-disabled-people/sport/sport-and-physical-activity-resources/how-to-lead-an-accessible-sensory-walk/>

www.sense.org.uk

Activities/games from Leonard Cheshire to understand why inclusivity important

www.leonardcheshire.org

Resources for autism — training and consultancy

www.resourcesforautism.org.uk

Games and gaming for people with sight loss | RNIB

www.rnib.org.uk

Council for Disabled Children — developing a supportive environment

Council for Disabled Children — methods and levels of participation

Council for Disabled Children — making participation work factsheets

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/resources/all-resources/filter/inclusion-send/making-participation-work-factsheets>

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/>

BBC Teach Song and Dance movement activities

www.bbc.co.uk/teach/supermovers

The Access Sport Inclusive Club Network (national network of community sport clubs that are working to transform the lives of disadvantaged and disabled children and young people across the UK)

www.accesssport.org.uk

Sensory and emotional regulation

Catalogue of sensory products with good visuals

<https://www.sensorydirect.com/products>

Sensory Direct | Weighted Blankets, Sensory Toys & Equipment

www.sensorydirect.com

Catalogue of school resources especially sports equipment

www.tts-group.co.uk

Multi sensory resources

www.earlyyearsresources.co.uk/special-needs/

Sensory room suppliers

www.rhinouk.com

Supplier of black out tent and dark kit dens

www.rhinouk.com

Staffing - skills, knowledge and wellbeing

The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism is the government's preferred and recommended training for health and social care staff.

www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/the-oliver-mcgowan-mandatory-training-on-learning-disability-and-autism/

What you need to know about Disability Awareness | AbilityNet

www.Abilitynet.org.uk

Inclusive language: words to use and avoid when writing about disability

www.gov.uk

Access All Areas — training in learning disabilities and autism for arts and cultural organisations www.accessallareasproductions.org

Training & Events for Professionals from Southwark Council

www.localoffer.southwark.gov.uk/training-and-drop-ins

Mabadiliko CIC about creating workplaces and communities that are inclusive and provide equity for all racial groups

www.mabadiliko.org/

Lavendar — A South London resource for neurodiverse girls and their families

www.senadvice.com/lavender

Taking care of your staff's mental health | Mind — Mind

www.mind.org.uk

Support for parents

Requesting an education health and care plan www.sense.org.uk and www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs

Podcast for Special Educational Needs and online CPD training sessions for schools and parents

<https://thesendcast.com/>

The Parent SEN Advocacy Training Programme prepares parents with the SEN process, including SEN Tribunal appeals

<https://senaction.co.uk>

Improving experiences and outcomes for children and adults who are autistic or have a learning disability, their families and carers

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/learning-disabilities/about/ask-listen-do/>

Helping children with SEND access education, and opportunities, to which they have a legal right

www.supportsendkids.org/

Cherry Garden School's Accessibility Auditing tool

Please find below a copy of the Cherry Garden School's accessibility auditing tool as well as being able to download a copy here:

<https://www.cherrygardenschool.co.uk/accessibility-auditing-and-resources/>



Accessibility Auditing

| Feature | What is going well? | What challenges are there? | Actions |
|---|---------------------|----------------------------|---------|
| Environment/General Accessibility | | | |
| Wheelchair accessible | | | |
| Accessible toilets | | | |
| Changing places? | | | |
| Support for hearing needs | | | |
| Support for visual needs | | | |
| Ability to support with medical needs | | | |
| Communication | | | |
| Families can easily find out which needs are catered for and accurately assess the suitability of the service | | | |
| Key information is collected ahead of a young person using the service | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Information is gathered from other services if appropriate | | | | |
| There is a total communication approach and all staff know how to use these approaches – minimal language, Makaton, visuals, objects of reference/touch cues as needed | | | | |
| The timetable of the sessions is clear to participants and communicated in an accessible way | | | | |
| Participants know how to get their basic needs met in the space and there are visual cues to support this eg a clear drink station, accessible ways to ask to use the bathroom. | | | | |
| There are activities/systems in place to orient new people to the space. | | | | |
| Communication attempts in all forms are valued and acted on | | | | |
| Instructions are supported by visual cues | | | | |

Accessibility Auditing

| Feature | What is going well? | What challenges are there? | Actions |
|--|---------------------|----------------------------|---------|
| Sensory needs and behaviour support | | | |
| Staff understand the functions of behaviour and have a supportive and empathetic approach (staff have had basic training in behaviour support) | | | |
| The activities and environment provide a range of sensory experiences | | | |
| There are options available to increase or decrease various sensory inputs depending on needs eg lowering sound levels, providing more movement activities | | | |
| Sensory regulation activities are built in to the routines of the sessions | | | |
| Working in partnership | | | |
| There are partnerships in place to support training for staff around accessibility and additional needs | | | |
| The voices of families and young people are heard and feedback is used to improve services | | | |

Additional languages and other accessibility options

This toolkit can be downloaded from:

www.voiceability.org/about-advocacy/speak-out-and-self-advocacy/speak-out-southwark-thriving-together

It is available in other languages by selecting a language from the options on the top bar, then opening the toolkit, and it will be translated into that language.

Other accessibility options are also available from the website.

VoiceAbility

☎ 0300 303 1660

✉ helpline@voiceability.org

🌐 voiceability.org

✂ @VoiceAbility



About VoiceAbility

We make sure you're heard when it matters most. We've been supporting people to have their say in decisions about their health, care and wellbeing for over 40 years. We're an independent charity and one of the UK's largest providers of advocacy and involvement services.