

Early Years Ordinarily Available Provision Supporting children with SEND in Early Years

A guide for Early Years providers in Westmorland and Furness



Introduction

In Westmorland and Furness we strive to ensure that all children and young people with SEND and their families have positive experiences in their early years settings and feel well supported, whether the child is with a childminder, in a preschool, nursery or school. To achieve this, access to the right support, in the right place and at the right time is essential. Wherever children and young people live in the county, we want them to have their additional learning needs met. For most children attending their local setting, with other children from their community, is the best way to ensure this happens. To achieve this for the children and young people in our county, all settings must have a core offer that meets the needs of all children, including those with SEND. This core offer is referred to as the ordinarily available provision. It is the range of activities, opportunities and strategies that are offered as good basic practice to meet a range of additional needs **without the need for a formal diagnosis or specialist support**.

Supporting young children – High quality teaching and provision

In Westmorland and Furness we expect our early years settings to comply with legislation, including the SEN Code of Practice 2015, the Equality Act 2010 and the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage framework. These require settings to use their best endeavours to provide and secure an inclusive education for all children and young people with SEN, to anticipate the reasonable adjustments needed to enable all children and young people to access an appropriate curriculum and to continue to make these reasonable adjustments so that all children are included and able to access an appropriate curriculum. The strategies and provision suggested in this document will support settings to make these reasonable adjustments and provide high quality learning for all. The ideas in the document will be beneficial for ALL children in the setting, not just those with SEND.

It is also expected that settings will:

- Have an observation and assessment system that enables prompt identification of any developing needs of a child and will act on this information
- Actively work with parents and carers to understand and support the child's needs
- Let the child have a voice. Listen and observe the child to see what they are trying to tell you. Behaviour is a form of communication.
- Support all staff to develop their skills and knowledge around supporting children with SEND. Group based settings and schools should have an identified SENCO (Special educational needs coordinator)
- Will work with other agencies to support the child and family



The graduated approach

All children develop at different rates. Their learning is not linear and many may experience short term difficulties along the way. Learning can also be affected by external factors, such as the arrival of a new baby or moving settings. With the right support at the right time, many of these difficulties can be short-lived and the child will continue to make progress. For children with emerging needs the setting should ensure it follows the graduated approach of assess, plan, do, review:

- Assess the needs, by careful observation, discussion with parents/carers, use of developmental guidance as appropriate, e.g. Development Matters, Birth to 5 matters, Early Years Developmental Journal, Speech and Language screening tool, What to Expect when
- Plan to support those needs, including using the guidance in this document. Consider developing an Early Years SEN Support Plan with parents.
- Do (implement) the support. Give it sufficient time to see if it works.
- Review the impact of the support and alter if necessary. Continue using the plan, do, review cycle.

This may be all the child needs in many cases. Once the child's needs are being met, they may begin to make good progress. However, if despite this support the child is still experiencing difficulties, further action may be needed to access specialist advice (see below).

Using this document

This document was developed and reviewed by a variety of early years and SEND professionals from both Cumberland and Westmoreland and Furness, including representatives from settings, schools and parent groups, Area SENCOs, specialist advisory teachers, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and educational psychologists.

It is intended that the strategies included are clear, simple and effective and can be followed by all practitioners and parents, without prior specialist training. They can be used as soon as a child's needs are identified, before specialist support is requested or whilst waiting for a visit from a specialist. None of the strategies will do any harm and can be used for all children, whether they have an identified need or not.

For ease of reference the sections are arranged according to the Prime Areas of the EYFS – Communication and Language, Personal, social and emotional development and Physical development. Many children will have needs that fall into more than one area and you may need to refer to more than one section. Each section also includes links to further information and advice. You should record the measures you are taking to meet the child's needs in their Early Years Support plan **early_years_support_plan.docx (live.com)** or another format of individual education plan.





Accessing further support and advice

If, after trying the strategies suggested in this document, you feel you need further advice and support you should complete an Early Help assessment form, found on the Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership website (link below), plus the consent statement (Appendix 1) and Local Authority Specialist Support Request (Appendix 2) ticking for Early Years Area SENCO/Specialist advisory teacher.

**Early Help Assessment - Signs of Well-being and Success Documents and Delivery :
Cumbria County Council (cumbriasafeguardingchildren.co.uk)**

In addition, so that the right person can contact you, please send assessment information that shows the level of the child's needs. Our preferred format would be the Early Years Developmental Journal **[send_early_years_development_journal_2021.pdf \(openobjects.com\)](#)** This document is also useful to record the child's progress in small steps and to help you consider appropriate next steps for the child. All these documents should be sent securely via EGRESS to **LIS.Earlyyearsbusinesssupport@cumbria.gov.uk** or via the school portal.

Other useful resources

Many useful resources can be found on the your local authority's Local Offer website - **Families Information | Supporting Children from Birth to Reception (cumberland.gov.uk) or Families Information | Supporting Children from Birth to Reception (westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk)**

Early Years SENCO toolkit - **[25127_early_years_senco_toolkit.pdf \(openobjects.com\)](#)**

Support for with SEND in the Early Years - **[support_for_children_with_send_in_early_years_-_oct_22.pdf \(openobjects.com\)](#)**

What to expect, when? This is a useful guide for parents and practitioners to children's learning and development. - **What to expect, when? - Foundation Years**





Communication and language development

Supporting speech, language and communication is a whole setting approach, understanding and collaborating with parents and other professionals as appropriate. Young children need to be listened to and valued by adults and children need to explore their worlds through a language rich environment. Language is more than words.

Communication and language development is a golden thread that runs through physical, social and emotional development. It lays a foundation for learning and development, guiding and supporting children's thinking and underpinning their emerging literacy.

The way adults talk to children has a huge impact on both what a child understands and what they say. Adults need to be responsive to young children and interact and engage children in conversations from the earliest point – the back and forth turn taking of a conversation is key.

Early intervention to support a child's developing speech, language and communication is vital to prevent long term consequences which may impact on a child's overall learning and development and affect their social, emotional and mental health.

I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Listening and attention – being able to listen and focus on specific tasks or sounds		
Notice important sounds in my environment	• Creating a good listening environment, e.g., quiet, distraction free areas such as dens, reducing background noise and using music as a focused activity. • Talking about the sounds that we hear around us. Developing my listening skills by taking me on listening walks, using Chat, Play, Share rhyme sheets, playing listening games. • Noticing when I cannot hear sounds and providing appropriate support.	• I will be able to hear sounds. • I will be able to distinguish between and respond to certain sounds. • This will prepare me for future learning in phonics, reading, music and writing. • Concerns about my hearing will be picked up.
Focus more on things I enjoy	• Talking to my family about what I enjoy at home and observing my play in the setting. Planning activities and experiences that interest me. Follow my lead in talking about these and introduce new vocabulary. • Ensuring the setting resources are interesting, motivating, exciting and developmentally appropriate. Making sure they are good quality, open-ended and stimulate all my senses.	• It will help me to develop my listening and attention skills. • It will develop my confidence and independence. • I will know adults are interested in me. • I will learn new vocabulary linked to my interests.



I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Stay longer at things that have my attention	Planning activities and experiences that are interesting to me. Play alongside or interactively with me to extend my focus. Provide me with new challenge such as new resources, other children, new activities to extend my focus time.	- I will gradually increase my attention span. - I will learn more through increased focus and engagement.
Notice when information is directed at me	Using an auditory/visual cue to gain my attention, e.g., a tambourine. Call my name to gain my attention. Prompt me to look and listen and use 'good looking' and 'good listening' cue cards to reinforce this.	I will learn to recognise and respond to my name.
Move my attention from what I am doing to something else	- Using my name to gain my attention. - Interacting at my height level. - Keeping instructions short and simple. - Using what I enjoy to engage my attention. - Using visual prompts such as pictures, photographs, puppets to move my attention. - Supporting me with a countdown if I need it. This could be counting or a timer. Continuing to support me in the new activity.	- Transitions across the day will be less stressful. - I will be able to follow routines. - I will be able to access a wider range of opportunities.
Engage in a shared experience with a person who is important to me	- Showing me that you enjoy playing with me, joining me in my learning and routines. - Keeping listening times short and interactive. - Giving me chances to practise attention and listening skills by playing looking and listening games, e.g., Kim's game, What's that noise? in a small group. - Providing one to one and small group story, action song and rhyme times	- I will develop curiosity and interest in the world around me. - I will develop independence in self-care around daily routines. - I will have increased levels of well being and happiness. - I will learn from the adults who are engaging with me, for example, at mealtimes, story times and during play. - I will develop positive relationships with people who are important to me.



I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Understanding		
Know what messages people are giving me when they use non-verbal communication e.g., body language, gesture, looking and pointing.	- Using lots of non-verbal communication with me - Get down to my eye-level to gain my attention and interest - Use facial expressions and intonation of voice when you interact with me - Make sure all adults in the setting are consistent in their approach which should also be shared with parents - Allow me additional time to process and understand what is being communicated to me - Help me learn and enjoy new songs, rhymes and stories with actions	- It will help me build relationships with adults and other children - I will understand routines and what to do next - I will be able to make my needs known and understood by others - I will use my verbal communication more - I will become more confident to engage with and explore the environment - I will be able to join in activities with my friends
Understand different types of words (nouns – naming words, verbs – doing/action words, adjectives - describing words)	- Starting by using nouns in the environment when identifying objects and through simple stories - Using a multi-sensory approach - When I say a noun, copy back that noun and add a descriptive word (adjective) e.g. if I say 'bus', you say 'big bus' - Playing lots of listening games with actions with me - Using simple language at my level of understanding	- I will develop my understanding and use of vocabulary - I will Increase the number of words I use at one time - It will improve my ability to access all areas of learning - I will be able to play with others and understand what the play is about - I will develop my understanding of familiar stories - It will support my understanding of all verbal interactions
Understanding sentences, instructions and questions.	- Using questions which I understand. Adults need to understand the developmentally appropriate sequence of questioning (Blanks word levels – see link below) - Giving me time to process a question and formulate a response – wait and watch. Ten seconds is a good guide. - Using gesture or visuals such as objects of reference, pictures, first and then boards, visual timetables, social stories. - Giving only one instruction at a time	



I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
	Limiting the number of questions used – try commenting or repeating back what I have said and perhaps adding a word instead of only using questions. I don't want to feel every conversation is a test!	
Communicating and talking		
Communicate my needs, preferences and ideas	- Following my lead and interests - Actively listening - Giving me additional time to respond - Not presuming what I am going to say or am interested in. Not jumping in and speaking for me or finishing my sentences	- I will feel more valued - I will have my voice, thoughts and opinions respected - I will be able to make my own choices - It will help develop my characteristics of learning - It will support my wellbeing - I will learn to self-regulate, express my feelings, become independent, problem solve and resolve conflict
Have my way of communicating understood by others	- Tuning into what I am saying and trying to communicate - Having a good understanding of the different ways of communicating - Taking onboard information received from my parents/carers e.g. using the same signs and words for things	- This will encourage me to communicate more. - I will develop my social interaction skills with adults and children - I will be able to express my ideas and feelings - It will help reduce my frustrations
Have my communication messages met with a positive response	- Being responsive, understanding and interested in me. Being ready to listen to me and show me you are listening. - Respecting my opinion. - Taking time to get to know me and my interests - Understanding my behaviour may be a form of my communication and possible frustration	- This will help me feel safe and secure with familiar adults - I may increasingly engage more in my environment through communication - This will improve and support my well being - I will know that others value what I have to communicate - This will help me develop resilience and be confident to try new things



I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Develop my language skills (spoken, signed etc) Develop my awareness of sounds in words	• Asking me questions to extend my conversations • Scaffolding and modelling language skills • Prioritising talking within the setting • Using interesting objects or events as motivators/ provocations to stimulate conversation • Teaching specific and new vocabulary • Using correct words, pronunciation and grammar when talking with me • Joining words together into phrases and sentences • Introducing me to early phonological games, such as I spy, sound treasure hunts, odd one out etc • Identifying sounds I can hear	• This will support me to interact appropriately • I will increasingly communicate effectively • I will be supported in my learning in all areas • You will help me improve my well being • This will help me to prepare for future learning in my reading, phonics and writing • I will develop phonological discrimination (hearing different sounds within words) and • develop oral blending and segmenting which are skills I will need to be able to read and spell. • I will enjoy partaking in fun, multi-sensory phonological games and activities with my friends
Social communication and interacting – the way I behave when I meet and spend time with others. It involves verbal and non-verbal communication		
Notice others	• Helping me take notice by changing your tone of voice, body language, facial expressions. • Meeting and greeting me. • Using my name and maybe also a toy to gain my attention. • Rewarding me when I look at you, maybe with a motivating toy such as bubbles, spinning tops, puppets. • Providing a quiet, distraction free environment • Playing alongside me with a parallel set of resources then copying my actions.	• If I develop an awareness of others, I might be able to join in and lead play. • Joint attention will help me to learn and socialise



I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Enjoy playing with others	• Sitting alongside me and copying what I am doing. Turn it into a turn taking, interactive game. When I show interest in continuing the game, invite another child to join in. • Instigating early games e.g. ready steady go, peek a boo.	• I may gain satisfaction and enjoyment from my play and start to build relationships. This will help me to learn and take turns with others. Enjoying playing may motivate me to develop my play.
Explore more play opportunities	• Playing with me in play of my choosing, following my interests. Gradually introduce me to new areas of play by ensuring the resources and play opportunities are interesting and motivating for me.	• It might help me to explore more and broaden my interactions. It might motivate me to widen my interests and engage with more learning opportunities.
Express no	• Offering me choices to develop my sense of preference. • Offering me objects, pictures, photographs and symbols to support expressing no without using words. • Giving me time to formulate a response and indicate no and being accepting of that response • Being flexible with routines and experiences	• I might learn that adults respond to my wants and needs. • I might feel confident to express my wants and needs accurately. • I might build a relationship with adults built on trust that they will help me.
Make choices about who I connect with	• Paying attention to my choice and being flexible in your responses. • Supporting me to interact with the children I choose and accepting when I don't want to play. • Taking my preferences into account when allocating keyworkers.	• It will support my wellbeing and help me to develop positive relationships.
Feel safe in my environment	• Being respectful and tuning in to me. • Modelling and promoting positive relationships that are trusting and caring. • Being reliable and consistent • Thinking carefully about transitions so that my needs are considered and well supported. • Assessing and adjusting the physical environment to ensure I am physically and emotionally safe.	• I will know what to expect each day. • I will be settled and calm in the environment. • My transitions will be positive and help me to learn.



I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Understand what will happen next	- Supporting me and using resources such as objects of reference, pictures, gesture, first and then boards, visual timetables, social stories. - Having a well-planned regular routine.	- I will develop an understanding of the daily routine. - I may feel happier and calmer.
Take turns in interaction	- Modelling turn taking in conversation (send and receive communication) - Supporting me with early interaction by gaining my attention, being at my level, giving me time to respond, following the my lead, repeating back and expanding what I say - Using your voice expressively, playing games such as peek- a boo, finger rhymes, singing songs. - Playing alongside me, then copying my play. After a while change your play. When I respond with joint attention you can introduce simple turn taking. This could be taking turns to place a brick to build a tower, passing a car back and forward or rolling a ball. It is important to choose something I find motivating. - Introducing the language of turn taking, "my turn, your turn, X's turn". This will help me to learn to wait during conversations.	- I will increase my interactions with others. - I will learn to interact appropriately with others. - I will develop shared attention. - I will engage for longer periods of time. - I will understand turn taking. - I will learn to wait and regulate my impulses. - I will take account of others.

Supporting documents / websites

Speech and Language UK: Changing young lives

Families Information | Children's Speech and Language Therapy Services (cumberland.gov.uk)

Tips for talking to your baby and young child | National Literacy Trust

<https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/baby/learning-to-talk/3-to-5-years/>

<https://www.famly.co/blog/10-simple-communication-and-language-activities>

Supporting Children's Speech, Language and Communication Development in Early Years Settings and Schools (cumbria.gov.uk)

<https://legacy.cumberland.gov.uk/childrensservices/childrenandfamilies/cfis/earlyyearsandchildcare/supportforearlyyearsandchildcareprovision.asp#>



Personal, social and emotional development

Personal, social and emotional development connects the whole curriculum. Through positive relationships with adults, children learn what their emotions are, how to regulate them and develop positive relationships with their peers. Children's early PSED has a huge impact on their later well-being, learning achievement and economic success. When a child is finding this area of learning and development challenging the adults who work with them need to approach this in a positive way, understanding that all behaviour is a form of communication and considering what it means. Non-judgmental conversations with parents and carers are essential to fully understand a child's situation and ensure consistent approaches are used at home and in the setting. The adult's emotional state and well-being when supporting young children is very important to enable co-regulation to take place.

I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Follow routines	• Making sure your expectations of me are appropriate and match my developmental stage. • Not expecting me to sit and maintain attention for too long • Keeping my routines consistent and predictable • Discussing routines with my family and trying to be consistent • Giving me a verbal or visual warning before I need to do something different • Making sure all staff use the same language around routines. • When giving instructions use visual prompts to support me such as gestures or picture prompts. • Introducing the language 'now' and 'next' • Making me a visual timetable and using it throughout the day to support me. • Using visual timers such as a large egg timer to help me understand when I need to change what I am doing	• You aren't asking me to do something I am not developmentally ready to do so I have more chance of achieving it • I can predict my world and anticipate changes which makes me less worried and more able to cope • I will experience consistency between home and setting which makes it easier for me to understand what I need to do • I can understand what is expected of me



I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Follow an adult instruction (when I don't really want to do what you want me to do!)	• Considering how important is it that I comply and 'picking your battles' • Telling me what to do rather than asking me. e.g. 'Put the cars in the box thank you' rather than 'can you put the cars in the box please' • Telling me individually and specifically what you want me to do e.g. 'Sarah put the dolls in the bed' not 'it's tidy up time' • Using simple language with me with not too many parts to the instruction. • Checking if I have understood what you want. • Giving me a choice e.g. pick up the bricks or the books • Modelling what you would like me to do • Giving specific praise when I do what you have asked me	• This will reduce the amount of attention I get for negative behaviour • I will understand what you want me to do • My efforts are recognised and I develop intrinsic motivation
Play with other children	• Having age-appropriate expectations of me. • Providing enough resources for me and my friends • Ensuring I have sufficient space to play alongside others, some areas may need to be made bigger • Playing alongside me with your own set of resources, then sensitively join my play • Supporting my joint play e.g. working with another child to fill a bucket • Supporting me to take turns with an adult and then one other child, modelling the language such as 'my turn' 'your turn'. • Using a visual prompt such as a disc, one side green (your turn), one side red (wait) • Using visual timers to help me to understand when my turn is ending. • Playing games such as 'ready, steady go' • Planning activities for turn taking that motivate me by using my interests (not my passions) • Keeping turn taking sessions short and finishing with success.	• I am more likely to succeed • Having sufficient resources avoids too much conflict around sharing when I am just learning this skill • I will learn to tolerate others in my space and gradually involve them in my play • It is clear what I need to do • This will develop my impulse control • I am less likely to succeed in sharing and turn taking if it is with something I really love • I will begin to learn that sharing is part of everyday life and it can be nice to share



I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
	• Gradually withdrawing adult support in turn taking games and including more children in the group • Using everyday opportunities for promoting sharing e.g at snack time cutting up fruit or sharing out a lump of playdough.	
Separate from my parent/ carer	• Ensuring that my transition into the setting is individualised for my needs and life experiences e.g. I have never been away from my mum and so it would be good if we could visit and spend time together in the setting • Giving me time to get to know my Key Person • Using information from home to support me e.g. my favourite toy or book. • Allowing me to bring my comforter from home to support my wellbeing and having a special place in the setting where it is safe • Being ready for my arrival and greeting me warmly, keeping the arrival routine consistent. • Having activities ready for me that I will enjoy. • Having pictures of my family to look at. • Developing a setting book for me to take home with photos of practitioners and the setting.	• I will feel safe when I am not with my parent/carer • I will form an attachment to another care giver • I will be more able to manage my emotions around separation • I will feel welcome and valued • I will feel that my family are 'part' of the setting • This will prepare me to come into the setting



I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Managing my feelings	• Finding out what calms me e.g. rocking, cuddling or singing. • Making sure I am not hungry, tired, hot, or cold. • Considering your own emotional response before attempting to calm me, take a breath. • Using the word 'stop' and a hand gesture rather than using the word 'no!' • Acknowledging, validating and labelling my feelings e.g. 'you feel very cross your tower was broken.' • Supporting me to recognise my emotions and then others through the use of picture prompts e.g. facial expressions • Using stories and everyday opportunities to discuss my feelings • Not expecting me to be able to explain why I have done something inappropriate but supporting me to find a better way to express myself. • Supporting me to calm before talking about what has happened • Helping me to 'put it right' rather than insisting on saying sorry • Time in not time out. Helping me to be included. • Keeping an ABC chart or STAR chart to record my behaviour • Telling me what to do not what not to do • Having a calm space where I can go to when I need to. • Introducing strategies to calm as part of the everyday routine e.g. mindfulness, breathing exercises, calm down bottles or a regulation station • Giving me regular movement breaks and access to the outdoors • Allowing me objects to fiddle with if you want me to sit still. • Developing consistency in practitioner responses by developing a support plan. Developing and sharing this with parents. If necessary, this should include a positive handling plan.	• This will make it easier for my key person to co-regulate my feelings • My basic needs are being met • I will find it easier to understand • I will begin to recognise that I have feelings and emotions and what they are called • I will begin to understand that everyone has feelings • I will learn that all feelings are ok but not all responses are • I will accept an adult helping me to calm down • This will help you to identify triggers that can be avoided • I am clear what is expected of me • I will begin to understand and manage my emotions and find things that calm me • All adults will support me in a similar way



I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Develop a positive sense of self	- Finding out about me and finding some time to talk to me individually every day. - Showing me that you care e.g. 'I thought about you when I saw a tractor because I know you like them' - Giving me special 'jobs' to build my self-esteem and so I see myself as capable. - Allowing me the opportunity to be independent and show you what I can do - If I don't like to be centre of attention, finding other ways to include me - Ensuring I can see myself reflected in the setting, e.g. through books, photos, my achievements, or resources. - Valuing my efforts not just my achievements - If you need to talk to my parents in my hearing, keeping it positive - Catching me when I'm getting it right and letting me know. Rewarding me with what I value, e.g. a high five, a hug or specific praise	- I will feel valued, special and included - I will feel known - someone 'gets me' - I will have a positive self-image - I will feel that I am respected - I'm noticed for what I do well - This means I get attention for positive behaviours

Supporting documents / websites

Publications

Supporting young children's emotional wellbeing (Support for Childminders, Early Years and Childcare Provision | Cumbria County Council)

Supporting an anxious child <https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/537/1459/7037/17962/44326152250.pdf>

Developing Emotional Literacy (A briefing paper) Developing Emotional Literacy (cumbria.gov.uk)

Supporting children with behaviour <https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/537/1459/7037/17934/4397910377.pdf>

PSED: Fun Activities (A guide for parents) <https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/537/1459/7037/17934/4397910377.pdf>

Rethinking child behaviour in early years (Free Guide: Rethinking Child Behaviour In The Early Years | Family)

Helping children with their behaviour (Helping children with their behaviour - Early Education (early-education.org.uk))

PSED in the early years (Personal, social and emotional development | Early Years in Mind | Anna Freud Centre)

Resilience Development Pack (Resilience Development Pack: 7 days, Many Ways | Nasen)

Whole Class Happy (www.innerworldwork.co.uk)



Websites

The Anna Freud Centre (www.annafreud.org/early-years/)

This website includes links to Early Years in Mind which is a free online network for early years practitioners. The network provides easy to read and easy to use guidance on supporting the mental health of babies, young children and their families. Further advice and guidance is also available on a range of topics including aggression, anxiety, sharing, tantrums etc.

Keep your cool toolbox (Keep Your Cool Toolbox - Home | Keep Your Cool Toolbox)

An app to help parents, Early Years practitioners and teachers access free, quick and effective ways to support young children in managing their emotions.

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation (www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk)

Information, including videos and behaviour guides, for practitioners and carers on what challenging behaviour is and how to support children.



Physical and sensory development

In order to be able to play, learn and carry out everyday activities, children need to develop their sensory and physical skills. These skills are developed through natural play and exploration and through the provision of lots of opportunities to practice skills at the child's developmental level (which may differ from their peers). The Early Years Developmental Journal shows this progression of skills development.

For children to be able to move their bodies in a planned way they need to have developed their vestibular system. This tells the brain about our position and how we are moving. It helps control our movement and balance. They also need to develop their proprioceptive system. This system lets us know where our body is in relation to the immediate space around us. It also lets us know how to move our body and how much force we need to carry out a task. To support the development of both these systems, babies and young children need lots of opportunities to move around, crawl, climb, jump, lift and run. Outdoor play is ideal for this. These systems help children to be able to control their bodies enough to be able to move around safely but also to sit still and concentrate better. Outdoor play will also help children develop strength and coordination, which is vital to support their fine motor development. Both gross and fine motor skills are needed for children to be independent in self-care tasks, such as dressing and feeding themselves.

For more information and strategies please see Cumbria Children's Occupational Therapy website which is full of useful ideas: <https://bit.ly/OTSupportCumbria>

I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Gross motor skills		
Support myself in a range of different positions for play such as, lying on my tummy, side, high kneeling, standing	Not always making me sit on a chair to carry out table top activities. Placing activities at a range of heights encourages me to use different positions to access them. You could use easels, low tables and up turned boxes. Monitor how long I can stay in this position for and gradually increase this time, ensuring I am engaged and interested in the activity.	Being in a range of different position helps to develop my muscle strength and proprioception which are the building blocks for more complex skills such as running and climbing.
Sit up, on the floor or on a chair	- Supporting me to sit in a range of positions on the floor such as cross legged, long leg sitting and side sitting (not 'W' sitting). Monitor how long I can sit in this position for and gradually increase this time, ensuring I am engaged and interested in the activity. Provide me with something to lean against if needed, such as a piece furniture. - When I'm sitting in a chair, making sure that my feet are flat on the floor and I am well supported to allow me to access table top activities.	Being in a range of different position helps to develop my muscle strength and proprioception which support me to move between positions and maintain an upright posture allowing me to take part in daily self care and play activities.



I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Move safely around my environment in different way such as rolling, crawling and walking	Offering a range of activities that encourage me to move around in these ways, such as obstacle courses using everyday items or floor-based play activities such as a car mat.	Allowing me lots of opportunities to move will support the development of my vestibular and proprioceptive systems. This will help me to be more aware of my environment so I can be safe and negotiate obstacles. It will also help me to concentrate and focus on activities so that I can practice and learn.
Get on and off a chair, to manage steps, to enjoy climbing on and off play equipment	Providing me with plenty of activities to develop and practice my balance and proprioception. Large climbing equipment and creating obstacle courses using everyday items in your setting are great for this.	Offering opportunities for a range of positions for play (as above) will support the development of my muscle strength and proprioception. This will also support my planning and problem solving.
Move safely on a range of surfaces, stopping and starting, avoiding obstacles	Taking me to places with a range of surfaces, such as grass, bark and tarmac and with some slopes and uneven surfaces.	This will support the development of my vestibular and proprioceptive systems so that I can safely move around outside.
Use the ride-on toys	Providing a range of ride on toys so I have plenty of opportunities to practice. Consider the type of ride on toy provided based on my needs. For example a kiddie coupe style car could be used if I still need support in sitting whilst a balance bike will challenge my balance more.	Using ride on toys also involves balance and proprioception as above. For example, a balance bike will help develop my balance and steering without me having to concentrate on my foot movements on pedals.
Join in with large ball games	Letting me use big, slow-moving items such as balloons and bubbles. Provide large balls and bats and reduce the sizes as my skills improve.	This gives me the opportunity to practice my hand eye coordination and develop my spatial awareness and planning.



I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Fine motor skills		
Reach for, grasp and release objects	• Providing me with objects or toys that I like and placing them within my reach (indoors and out). • Providing me with containers that I can drop objects into. • Providing collections of interesting objects for me to explore (treasure baskets/bags, loose parts collections) • As my skills develop, providing me with opportunities to pick up and manipulate smaller objects. Activities like playdough, peg boards, threading big beads or cotton reels or picking up objects with tongs and large tweezers would all help.	• This will encourage me to reach for and grasp objects. It will help me develop hand-eye coordination. Providing interesting objects will make me want to reach for, hold and manipulate them. • Providing smaller objects to pick up and move around will help me to develop more controlled finger movements and different grasps. This will allow me to carry out daily activities such as doing buttons and zips and support my pencil control.
Manipulate and operate simple toys – turning, pressing and pulling them	• Providing me with a range of simple cause and effect toys – toys that light up or make noises are great but so are things like shape sorters, large inset puzzles or car/ball ramps. Model how to use these. You might have to guide my hand to the objects to start with. Allow me plenty of time to enjoy and repeat these types of activities.	• These movements will strengthen my hands, wrists and fingers, which I will need to be able to feed myself, turn taps, fasten clothing and later be able to write. These activities will also support my planning and problem solving skills.
Use tools such as large paint brushes, chunky crayons, rollers, sponges etc. As my skills develop, I want to be able to use smaller tools such as scissors, pens, pencils, fine paint brushes.	• Providing opportunities to use these tools. I need to learn through doing. I need to explore the resources – it doesn't matter what I make. Adapt and simplify activities and provide alternative equipment, such as chunky chinks or big brushes. Allow me to use these in a range of positions – standing at an easel, lying on the floor etc. Drawing in the air with ribbons or scarves is great too.	• Mark making with large tools helps me practice moving my arms across my body (crossing the mid-line) which I will need to be able to do when I start writing across a page. • As the tools get smaller I will develop more control in the marks I make, which will help when I start to learn to write.



I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Build models with construction equipment	Offering me increasingly challenging building materials. I need to start with objects that I put on top of each other, such as stacking toys, wooden blocks or washing up sponges. I could then move on to bigger interlocking equipment, like Duplo. You will need to show me how to use them. Don't forget to let me try building with crates and boxes outside.	Using large construction materials help strengthen my arms and shoulders and let me practice crossing my midline. Smaller materials help me practice manipulating small objects and strengthen my fingers, especially if I have to use pressure to connect things together. This will also support the development of my planning and problem solving.
Self care skills		
Feed myself	- Making sure I am sitting at a table with my feet supported and the table at comfortable height, so my shoulders are relaxed and I'm not bent over. - Introducing a variety of appropriate finger foods first. Expect it to get messy and don't rush me - Making sure the bowl/plate is not slipping around – a mat or damp cloth underneath might help. - If possible sitting and eating with me so that I can copy you. - Introducing cutlery – chunky child-size cutlery is easier for me. If you are still feeding me, let me hold a spoon too and have a go. At first help guide the loaded spoon to my mouth, hand over hand, until I get better at it. - Introducing a fork next. At first load the food on to it for me, then let me try stabbing soft foods like cooked vegetables - Asking my parents/carers to let me practice this at home mealtimes too, without distractions such as the TV. - Letting me practice manipulating a fork and knife by putting some cutlery in the playdough area.	- I need to develop my independence skills. As I get older there will be fewer staff at my nursery or school who will be able to help me, so it is important that I can do things for myself, such as feeding, dressing and going to the toilet. - I will want to be able to join in mealtimes with my friends. Putting up with a little mess at first and not rushing me will soon help me to become better at feeding myself.



I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Drink from a cup	- Letting me start by using a cup with two handles to help me hold the cup steady. After this I can progress to a one handled cup and then on to holding a beaker using both hands. - Only filling my cup halfway to allow me to control the cup when bringing this up to my mouth. - Offering less and less help and gradually allowing me to hold and bring the cup to my mouth and then tip it to drink from it. - Encouraging me to sit in a well-supported position so that I have better control of my arms and body to slowly tip the cup to drink from it.	- Spouted cups and sports bottles may reduce the chance of spillages but using these all the time stops me from learning to use a proper cup. 'Doidy' style cups can help as they are angled making it easier to tip.
Wash my hands	- Making sure I can reach the sink, soap and towels. Do I need a step? Is the soap dispenser fixed or does it move around when I try to use it? Are the paper towels easy to pull out of the holder, or would some in a basket be easier? (I might prefer this to a noisy hand-dryer) - Checking if I find it difficult to twist the taps. I might need more practice at the fine motor skills above to strengthen my wrists and fingers. Hand exercises like dough gym will help. Check the taps aren't too stiff either. - Demonstrating what to do lots of times. - Providing simple visual instructions above the sink to remind me of the order I need to do things.	Good habits such as washing my hands properly after using the toilet, before eating or after wiping my nose can help protect me and my friends from illness and infections.
Use the toilet by myself	- Making the bathroom a pleasant place to be. Is it too smelly/crowded/dark/noisy? Is there a scary hand-dryer/noisy flush? - Considering if I am ready to use the toilet or potty. Do I have dry nappies for long periods of time? Do I poo at regular times? Can I tell when I need to go? To use the toilet or potty I need to be able to sit on a chair first (see information above)	



I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Put my own coat and shoes on	- I need to be able to sit on the toilet with my feet on a stable base, if I can't reach the floor can I have a sturdy step? If I need to use an adult toilet, a seat insert might make me feel safer. - Letting tell you when I need to go (using words or a sign) or enabling me to access the toilet whenever I want? All my grown-ups should use the same words to describe going to the toilet, so that I don't get confused. - Asking my parent/carer to dress me in clothes that are easy to pull up/down – no belts or buttons. - Breaking the task down into single steps, such as pulling trousers down, using toilet paper, flushing, washing hands and teaching them to me one at a time, starting with the last step so that I can successfully finish the task. This is called backward chaining (see the link in useful resources below*) - Making sure I know where my shoes and coat are. Do I have a special peg or box with a picture on, where my things are always kept? Show me how to put them back there. - Asking my parent/carer to dress me in loose fitting clothes with minimum fastenings - tops with easy openings, elasticated waists, shoes with Velcro fastenings. - Encouraging me to help in the process of undressing / dressing, for example by pushing my arm through a sleeve. Ask my parent/carer to let me practice at home too. - Making sure I am well supported and balanced so that my hands are free to use. It may help if I can sit on a chair, floor or lean on a wall to put my shoes on. Allow plenty of time. - Learning to take my shoes and coat off is easier than putting them on, so encourage me to do that first.	- At nursery/school there will be fewer adults to help me than at home, so I need to learn to do this myself. Allow extra time when going out to let me try this independently. As tempting as it is, don't take over. - Once I can put on my own shoes and coat, I can start to try dressing/undressing (see backward chaining*) so that I will be able to get changed for P.E. when the time comes.

I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
	- Putting a sticker or mark inside my shoes so I know which way round they go - If doing my coat zip is hard, teaching me to connect the zip whilst the coat is on my lap/the floor and stepping into it, before pulling it up. Chunky zips are easier. A piece of ribbon or a key ring attached to the zip tab might help me pull it up. - Breaking the task up into smaller steps and teaching them one at a time, starting with the last step so that I can successfully finish the task. This is called backward chaining (see the link in useful resources below*)	
Sensory processing needs		
I want to be happy at nursery and not be overwhelmed by my surroundings	- Carefully watching me to see if there is anything in particular that overwhelms me – how do I react to noise, smell, touch, light, colour, tastes? Which areas of the environment do I avoid or feel comfortable in? Read the leaflet about sensory processing needs (below) for ideas about how to support each of these. - Creating a calming space for me so that I can take myself away from the noise and bustle of the room. A quiet corner with a few cushions, a blanket and a fabric drape to make it cosy is ideal. A pop-up tent or a table with a cover over it to create a den also works. - Taking my needs into account when deciding what to put in the calm den – put in some sensory resources, but not lots of toys. The sensory processing leaflet has lots of ideas.	- I am sensitive to the information I am getting from one or more of my senses. The information I receive is too much (hypersensitivity) or not enough (hyposensitivity) for me. Adults need to try to identify what is distressing me and try to lessen or increase the stimulation. - If I am oversensitive to noise a quiet space will help me calm myself until I am ready and happy to join the group again. Parents could try this at home too. It might help to turn off background noise such as the TV or radio or try playing quiet, calming music instead. For some children ear defenders might help. - Many children go through a phase of biting. We usually grow out of it.
I want to be able to play with my friends without biting them (or myself)	I may bite because I am frustrated or cross or want attention. I may not be able to use speech to tell you how I feel. (See also the information in the PSED section of this document) You can help me by making make a note of when I bite and seeing if there is a pattern	I may bite or mouth objects because I have an underactive sense of smell or taste.

I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
I want to be safe and not put objects in my mouth I want to be able to sit still for a short time to concentrate	• If I bite for no apparent reason or put non-food items in my mouth I may just like the sensation. Try giving me safe objects to bite instead, such as a piece of raw carrot, a teether or 'Chewelry'. • Letting me move around and experience equipment I can push, rock, roll on, and spin may help me sit still later. • I may like to be hugged, lean on you, wrap myself in a blanket or have a weighted toy, cushion or blanket on my lap. • Providing me with a selection of fidget toys to hold whilst I am sitting listening. A ball of blu-tack sometimes works well.	• All children's sensory needs are different. You might have to try a few different things before you find the right solution for me.
Visual impairment		
See things as well as I can Move around my nursery/classroom on my own, without bumping into things Join in the same activities as my friends	• If I need glasses, encouraging me to keep them on. Making sure they are clean. • Keeping the floor uncluttered. Training the adults and other children to tidy up as they go along – 'pick it, play with it, put it away' • Trying to keep the resources and furniture in the same place as much as possible, so that I know where they are. Show me where they are if you have moved them. • Following the advice of the Specialist advisory teacher, if they are involved. If they are not, and there is clinical evidence of vision difficulties that cannot be corrected by glasses (e.g., a letter from an ophthalmologist), request support from them. • Checking if the lighting levels are OK for me and see if you can adjust them if necessary. Outdoors, providing shade for me and placing some of my favourite activities there. Encouraging my friends to join me. Wearing a sun cap or sunglasses outdoors may help me cope with bright sun.	• I need to learn and play alongside my friends. If you make some adjustments I can join in the learning and social opportunities at nursery/school

I want to be able to...	You could support me by...	This might help me because...
Hearing impairment (including glue ear)		
Hear as well as I can	- Turning off background music. Considering where the noisiest parts of the room are and avoid talking to me or reading stories there (don't talk to me next to a fan heater or a noisy kitchen for instance). - Referring me to the audiologist or asking my parents to take me to my GP, if you think I am having trouble hearing. - Following the advice of the specialist advisory teacher if they are involved. They may want you to follow a special programme with me. - If I have hearing aids my parent/carer will tell you how to check these are working twice a day, how to change the batteries if necessary and help me to keep my moulds and tubes clean.	I need to learn and play alongside my friends. If you make some adjustments I can join in the learning opportunities at nursery/school
Understand what is happening	- Asking other people to keep quiet when I need to listen (Don't move chairs about or make snack when it's storytime for instance) - Coming close to me when you talk to me and getting face to face. Make sure I know you are talking to me – you might need to tap me on the shoulder. - Not assuming I have heard instructions you have given to the whole group. Tell me separately if needed. - Using facial expressions, signs, gestures and real life objects to support my understanding of communication. - Using visual aids to help me understand what you are saying. You could use simple actions or pictures to demonstrate what you want me to do. A visual timetable or showing me an object (such as a plate for snack time) will help me understand what is going to happen next and what I need to do. Having regular routines will help this.	



Useful further information:

*Backward chaining - Dressing Myself | NHS GGC

For useful advice on dressing, using a knife and fork, using my senses, fine motor control activities (Using my hands sheet) -

Children's Occupational Therapy pages on the Local Offer website

<https://bit.ly/OTSupportCumbria>

For useful advice on toilet training, dressing and eating skills -

Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS website

Self Care | NHS GGC

For information on the development of fine and gross motor skills -

Interactive Child Development Timeline | NHS GGC

Get a grip – developing ideas for early writing

<https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/537/1459/7037/17951/44033145356.docx>

Top tips for developing Fine Motor Skills

<https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/537/1459/7037/17927/4400693056.pdf>

Top tips for developing gross motor skills

<https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/537/1459/7037/17927/4400693230.pdf>

Supporting children with sensory processing needs

Supporting children with sensory processing needs (cumbria.gov.uk)

