

Supporting Children with Special needs

Family involvement The family know the child best. Ask them about the child find out about likes and dislikes, things which may help them to be included and how best to support them. Ask about any particular needs or areas that they may have difficulty with.

Choice Encourage the child to make choices for themselves. However, it is often useful to limit the number of choices given to 2 or 3, as too many choices can be overwhelming

Regular routine It is often helpful to children generally to follow a regular pattern throughout the session, but it can be particularly important for some children with special needs. Changes can be difficult and stressful for some children. Knowing what to expect helps to alleviate this stress and any associated problems.

Prompt cards Cards or symbols can be used as communication aids. Cards can also be used as a pictorial timetable or planner. Where possible it is better to use photographs of the items.

Using the photographs or pictures, make a book. Attach a photograph of the child to a piece of ribbon and stick inside of the front cover. The photograph of the child can then be moved to any of the pictures inside the book, this can make it easier to explain what they will be doing, and they can see themselves with the action.

Writing the child into a story about something which happens regularly could be helpful. For example, snack time or break time, write about what usually happens, what the child will be doing and how to behave so they are reminded about sharing, playing together and what to do at the end. It is more meaningful for them to be in the story and they will often relate to it better.

Consistency A consistent approach is needed. Although a child has special needs he or she should not be treated differently from other children. All the adults or supervisors need to have the same values and approaches so the children know the boundaries and their limitations. Follow things through! As well as consistency – mean what you say. One task or instruction at a time It can often be too much for any child to be given a list of tasks to do. Where possible give one instruction at a time. Small or brief tasks are also better as concentration can be an issue, don't make things too long

Everyone **can** be included often an activity just needs to be adapted slightly to enable everyone to be included, if not find something which will include everyone.

Don't over stimulate Think about the environment and how much is going on. Sometimes it can be too much for a child if there is a lot of noise generally, and then you play music. Things to consider are; noise, lights, visual stimulation, requests or demands, smells or scents and colours. Try to minimise the different stimuli, a quiet area is really useful.

Quiet space It is a good idea to have a quiet area in the room. Use beanbags and soft toys to create a 'time out' space. You could also put some books around for children to look at. Keep it as a 'safe' area where the children are free from requests and demands and can go to at anytime when they feel the need – without asking.

Use a variety of multi sensory activities When planning activities include things that use different senses, remember that some things may be uncomfortable to some children. Use a variety of different techniques to incorporate different learning styles.

Positive reinforcement and encouragement Think about the language you use. Give encouragement and praise wherever possible sometimes even for the smallest of things. Always look for something good rather than the negative.

One to one support, distance supervision Think about the support that might be needed. Does the child need supervision, physical assistance or adaptations, reassurance or just someone to be aware of them? It might be useful before each session to identify who will give support or be the responsible person for the appropriate children. Ensure they, and everyone else know who they are. It might also be a good idea to have an outline or agree a list of duties or responsibilities so each person is clear. Decide on the sort of supervision needed, it might be different for different activities or depending upon the child's needs. Remember close supervision can still be given from a distance.

This resource was written by Ellie Wilson Children's Diocesan Adviser Wakefield Diocese for Under 5s.