

## **Making Play Inclusive**

### **Background information**

In 2015 a survey by SENSE found that children with multiple needs have significantly fewer opportunities to access play settings and activities than their peers

- Provide choice at every opportunity, allowing the child to develop communication skills, confidence and a sense of self. This can be as simple as “red or blue”; use real objects or pictures rather than words to begin with.
- Provide a mix of both open ended activities and also activities that will enable the child to develop new skills

### **Open ended activities**

- Provide lots of exploratory play opportunities, play helps to introduce new sensory stimuli in a safe and accessible way. Start with “easy” textures such as dry food or sand before moving onto more challenging texture such as wet sand (See “Sensory Issues” transition tips).
- Sensory stories are a great way to provide sensory stimulation and to make stories fully accessible. After the session, allow the child to explore the book and resources independently.
- Provide plain table mats to enable children with sensory processing or visual difficulties to be able to see activities clearly.
- Provide sensory and memory baskets. Items in the baskets should vary in weight, texture, size, temperature, smell, colour, taste and size. It’s good to include things that rattle, fit inside each other and can be built and demolished!

### **Activities to develop new skills**

- Use a hand over hand approach to introduce new activities; this is where the adult’s hand performs the activity and the child’s hand rests on top. This allows the child to learn how the activity works whilst enabling them to feel in control.
- Another way to model new skills is to use a “backward chaining” approach; this involves the child just completing the end of the task so that they achieve success. For example, when completing a puzzle they will just insert the last piece.
- Provide lots of opportunities for repetition to help children to consolidate new skills. Thought will also need to be given to help them to generalise their skills to slightly different activities,

for example, once they have learned to use a spade in sand can they then adapt to use the same tools to dig in rice or can they use a different tool to use in the sand?

- Dycem rubber mats are useful to prevent activities from moving around on surfaces.
- Place some activities in a shallow tray to define a clear play area and to keep pieces together.

#### **Useful websites & further reading**

- [www.thesensorytoolbox.com](http://www.thesensorytoolbox.com)
- [www.sense.org.uk/play](http://www.sense.org.uk/play)