

[Please use this link to access the accessible screen reader version of the toolkit](#)

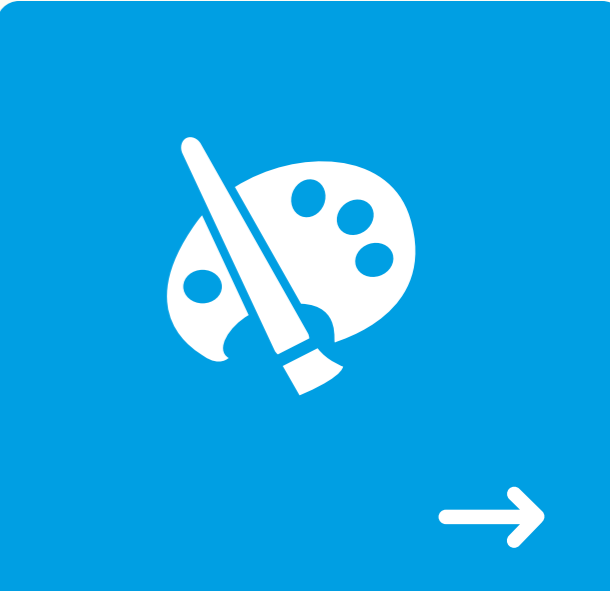
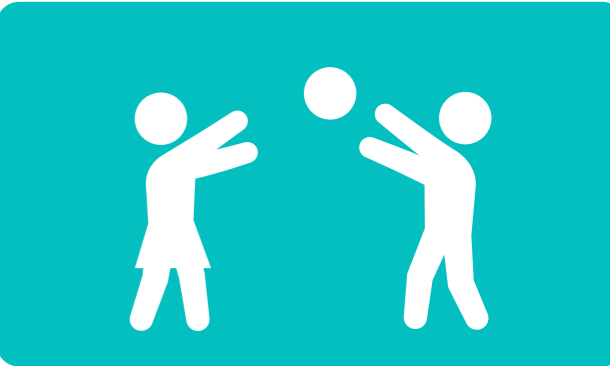
Creating Inclusive Provision

A toolkit for providers of wraparound childcare, breakfast clubs and holiday activities and food programmes

An interactive digital toolkit developed to support schools, private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers, childminders, and local authorities in creating inclusive wraparound provision that is accessible to families of primary aged children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

This includes breakfast clubs, afterschool childcare and holiday provision.

April 2025





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About the toolkit

This interactive digital toolkit has been developed to support schools, private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers, childminders and local authorities in creating inclusive childcare provision that is accessible to families of primary aged children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The term ‘wraparound provision’ is used throughout the toolkit to refer to services that are delivered out of school hours such as breakfast clubs, wraparound childcare, and the holiday activities and food (HAF) programme.

- **Breakfast clubs:** Before school care that ensures children begin their day with a nutritious meal and a supportive start to the school day. Often starting around 7:30 AM, they operate before school hours and are often hosted at schools, though they can also be provided by childcare services. From April 2025, ‘early adopter’ primary schools will start to roll out new free and universal breakfast clubs for 30 minutes before the start of the school day: this is a new programme with details of national rollout to follow.
- **Wraparound childcare:** Primary aged childcare provision that children can access before and after school during termtime. PVI providers and childminders are able to offer wraparound care. This is often run on a school site or at another setting in the local area.
- **HAF:** Provides healthy meals, enriching activities and free childcare places to eligible children (generally those who receive benefits-related free school meals) during the school holidays.

The guidance contained in this toolkit is aimed at increasing inclusivity for children with SEND across all settings providing primary school-aged childcare provision. Providers can use this toolkit to reflect on current practice within their setting, and consider manageable actions they can take to improve the experience of all children, particularly those with additional needs.

It is important to note that real inclusion goes far beyond solely considering SEND. True inclusivity ensures that every individual, regardless of their background, identity, or

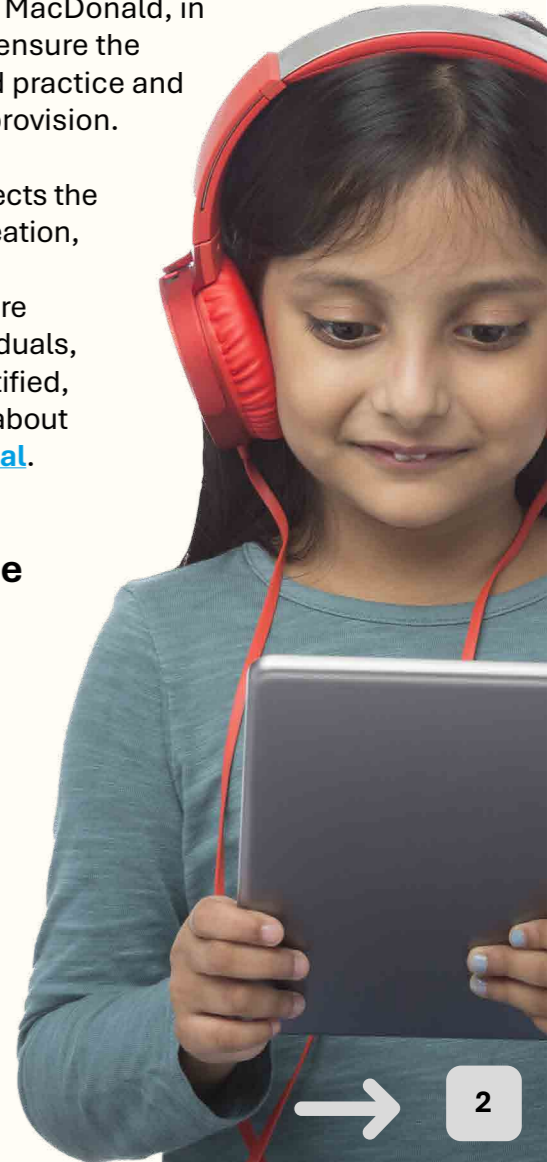
circumstance, feels valued, respected and able to participate fully. This toolkit however, focuses specifically on supporting children with SEND, providing strategies and resources to empower practitioners to help children with additional needs thrive.

Commissioned by the Department for Education, Mott MacDonald, in partnership with nasen, has worked with the sector to ensure the contents of this toolkit build on existing knowledge and practice and is designed to best support those delivering inclusive provision.

Please note that the terminology used in this toolkit reflects the recommended language around SEND at the time of creation, and this may evolve over time. We encourage the use of person-centred inclusive language at all times, and where appropriate, we would recommend checking with individuals, and their parents/carers, how they would like to be identified, respecting their preferences. If you have any questions about the toolkit, please contact the [DfE Customer Help Portal](#).

Accessibility is a foundation. When we design with everyone in mind, we create a world where everyone can thrive.

Please note that some of the resources in this toolkit have been created by external organisations and shared with Mott MacDonald. These resources are up to date at point of publication, and whilst we strive to provide accurate and up-to-date information, materials may occasionally contain minor inaccuracies, outdated details, or be local authority specific. Users are encouraged to verify documents that are not created by Mott MacDonald with official government sources where necessary.





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Navigating the Toolkit

Listed below are descriptions of icons found throughout that will help you navigate the interactivity of the toolkit.



The **interactivity icon** indicates sections of the toolkit that include interactive elements, such as clickable links, external resources, or embedded videos.



The **home icon** takes users back to this page, enabling them to understand how best to access the toolkit.



The **themes icon** opens the link page to the different sections of the toolkit. Users can then click on section titles to jump directly to the desired part of the resource.



The **signposting icon** directs users to external organisations that can provide additional support, resources, or information.



The **acronyms icon** provides users with definitions and explanations of terms and concepts.



The **video icon** directs users to video case studies highlighting effective practice from providers of breakfast clubs, wraparound provision or HAF.



The **reflections icon** points to reflective questions or prompts, helping readers to think critically about the content and how it applies to their own experiences.



The **top tips icon** provides access to a collection of practical advice and best practices related to the topic.



The **further information icon** leads to additional resources, such as organisations, resources, or further guidance that will allow the users to explore the topic in more depth and find more detailed information.



The **case study file icon** denotes real world examples of live case studies and experiences.



The **arrow icon** is interactive and allows users to navigate forwards and backwards throughout the toolkit.



The **print version icon** enables users to access a print-friendly copy of the toolkit with reduced imagery.





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Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our thanks to everyone who has contributed to the development of the Creating Inclusive Provision toolkit.

To the participants of the focus groups, your insights and experiences have been crucial in shaping the SEND toolkit. Sharing your stories and perspectives has provided a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the sector.

To those who completed the stakeholder survey, your feedback and suggestions on the toolkit content have helped ensure it meets the sector's needs. Your contributions will aid in promoting inclusive education and the adoption of best practices.

Our thanks go to the below listed schools, for sharing their experience and local practice through the case studies included in this toolkit.

- Boxgrove Primary School
- Brackenfield SEND School
- Buckinghamshire Council
- Daisy Chain Day Centre
- Elburton Primary School
- Whitefield Primary School

We acknowledge the University of Birmingham's FEAST project team, your research on children's diets and access to safe and healthy food in special schools and alternative provision settings has been informative, and we appreciate your collaboration. And Family Action, for their input into the toolkit content. Your support has helped ensure the content is comprehensive and user-friendly.





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An introduction to SEND

Definitions

A child or young person has special educational needs (SEN) if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

Special educational provision is defined as provision that is **additional to** or **different from** that which is generally made for other children of the same age.

While the terms SEN and SEND are often used somewhat interchangeably, it is important to note that a special educational need and a disability are not necessarily the same thing. An individual may have a special educational need (or needs), they may have a disability, or they may have both. The term **additional needs** is also often used.

As a wraparound provider, whether in a mainstream or specialist setting, you are likely to work with children who have a range of additional needs. These may have already been identified or just be emerging.

Understanding these needs, and how to support children positively and holistically, will promote development of inclusive practice and provision, and improve experiences for all – children, families and staff alike. As a key principle of inclusive ethos and provision, good practice for children with SEND is good practice for all children. Developing inclusive provision does not need to be about spending lots of money or resource. It is about creating a supportive, person-centred setting, where staff are reflective and empathetic, and feel well equipped and confident to support those they are working with through strong relationships and collaborative approaches.





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Main areas of need

The SEND Code of Practice separates areas of need into 4 broad categories.

Communication and Interaction

Including (but not limited to) speech, language, and communication needs, social interaction needs and autism.

Cognition and Learning

Including (but not limited to) moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and specific learning difficulties (SPLD), which encompasses needs such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, and developmental coordination disorder (DCD).

Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)

Including (but not limited to) emotional difficulties such as anxiety and depression. Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) also falls into this category.

Physical and Sensory

Including (but not limited to) visual or hearing impairment, physical disabilities, and other sensory processing needs.





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The importance of a child-centred approach

The SEND Code of Practice is clear that:

“ The purpose of identification is to work out what action <the setting> needs to take, not to fit a child into a category.”

These categories of need are useful, therefore, to support settings and practitioners to build confidence, skills, and knowledge to provide children with what they need to thrive.

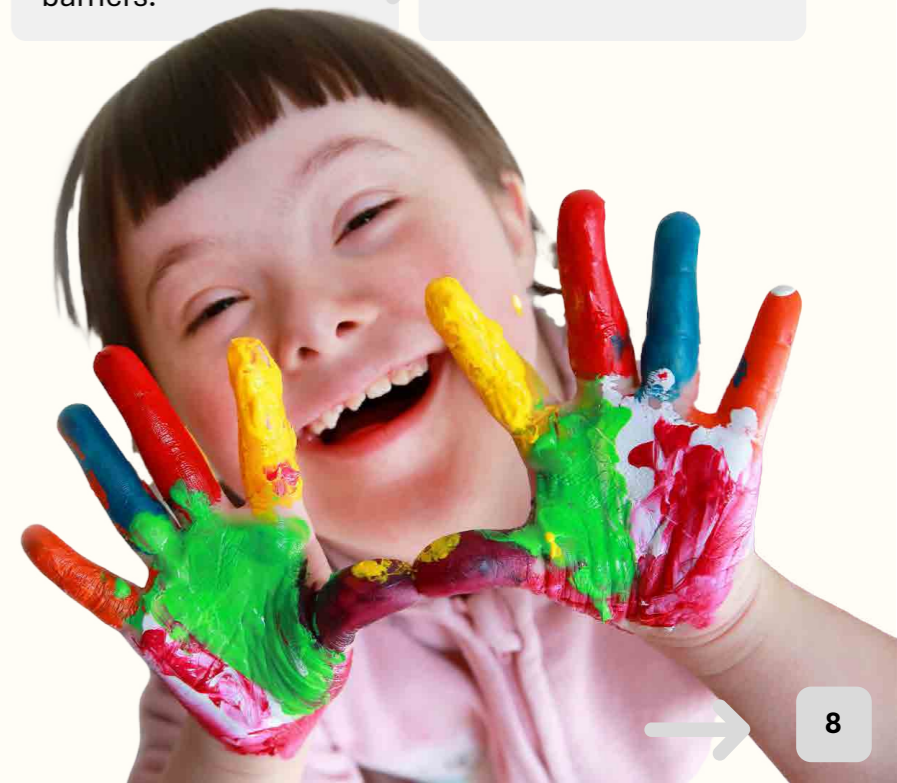
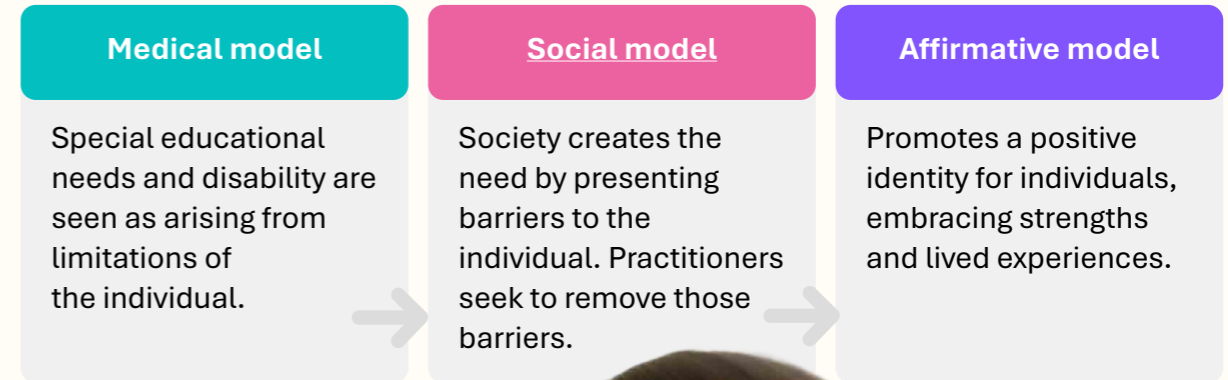
However, this can only be useful if practitioners take a child-centred approach, appreciating each young person as a unique individual. Key to this is the development of positive relationships and a holistic, rounded understanding of each child. Practitioners should get to know children well: their strengths, their motivations, their passions, their preferences, and their dislikes, as well as any barriers to development, learning, and participation.



Reflection: Reflect on your own understanding of SEND. Where are there potential barriers to inclusion in your setting? Are you seeking to provide access through adaptation or to truly empower individuals through the provision you create?

Models of disability

There are different models of approach towards SEND, briefly summarised by the diagram below. Increasingly, research and understanding are moving towards the social and affirmative models.



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Types of support

Many children will have their needs met through universal inclusive practice, with a focus on communication and sensory friendly approaches, supportive environments, and positive relationships. This also includes making [reasonable adjustments](#), where needed.

Settings should build an inclusive approach that meets the needs of as many children as possible.

SEN Support

Some children may need a little extra support – commonly known as SEN Support. This may involve some adaptations to resources or equipment, or some additional staff input.

Education, health and care (EHC) plan

An EHC plan is a statutory document for children with the most complex needs. Some children will have one early on in life, for example, if they are born with a disability that means they require considerable additional support. Other children's needs may become more apparent over time, and so the assessment process for an EHC plan may be started later.

Every child with an EHC plan has an 'annual review' to formally review their plan. If you work closely with a child, you may be asked to feed into or contribute to this review.

A child-centred approach is key.





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Top Tips

If you work in a school setting, liaise with the school special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) or other appropriate member of staff for advice about how best to support children with SEND who are attending the wraparound provision. Some children may have an individual education plan (IEP) or pupil profile that can be shared with you (with parent/carer permission), to provide valuable information.

While focused on the special educational provision required, these documents generally include a holistic overview of the child and details of their targets, along with strategies and support required. There is no set format for IEPs, and they may go by a different name in different settings. They are not legally binding documents but are a useful tool to help practitioners provide consistency and relevant support.

If a child you work with has an EHC plan, ask parents/carers whether they can share relevant information from the plan with you. This will provide information around what extra support and provision the child needs in their educational setting, which is likely to be useful information for wraparound providers too.



Where we identify that a child has additional needs we will make a plan with the parent to ensure they are happy with the choices and decision we're making for their child." **Boxgrove Primary School**



Further information

Resources

- A series of 10 training videos produced by nasen, on behalf of Childcare Works, to support inclusive practice in wraparound provision: [Inclusive Practice in Wraparound Provision](#)
- An overview and example of an IEP: [Individual Education Plans | Health and social care | Hampshire County Council](#)
- Factsheet explaining the different models of disability: [Models of Disability](#)
- The Department for Education statutory guidance for organisations working with and supporting children with SEND: [SEND Code of Practice 2015](#)
- An overview of what SEN Support is: [SEN Support - Special Educational Needs at School | Mencap](#)
- Overview of the social model of disability: [Social model of disability | Disability charity Scope UK](#)
- A quick guide to the SEND Code of Practice: [The SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years | Nasen](#)
- An overview of what an EHC Plan is: [What is an Education Health and Care Plan?](#)
- A video from Scope explaining the social model of disability: [What is the social model of disability?](#)



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Legal duties and statutory requirements

There are legal duties that organisations and settings should adhere to, to ensure that all children, including those with SEND, receive full access to services and provision.

The legal obligations surrounding SEND in wraparound settings are shaped by a range of legislation and regulations. Some key documents to be aware of:

Local SEND Policies and Procedures

Local authorities typically have specific SEND strategies and policies for supporting children with additional needs in various settings, including wraparound provision.

Providers should follow local authorities' guidance on how to deliver inclusive care, make reasonable adjustments, and meet the needs of children with SEND in line with regional priorities and resources.

These policies also often include guidance on referral procedures, accessing funding, and specialist services.



Reflection: How confident are you with the local policies and procedures in your area? Are there any policies that you need to review?



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Key legal duties

In line with all these pieces of legislation, providers in England need to carefully consider ways to best meet the needs of the children they are working with. This will include:

Inclusion and accessibility

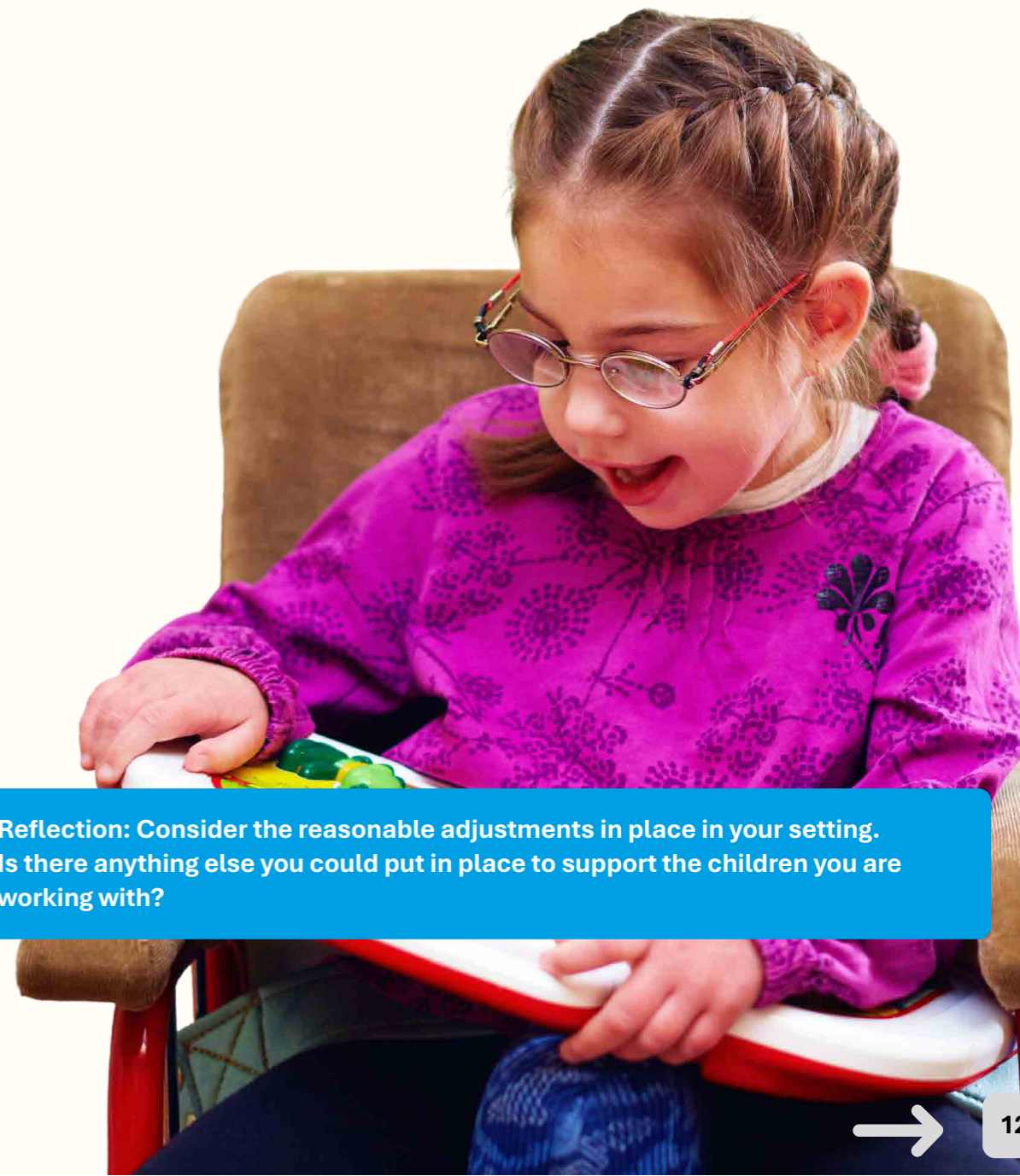
Providers should ensure services are accessible to all children, including those with SEND, by:

- ✓ Ensuring physical and social environments are inclusive
- ✓ Providing accessible equipment, spaces and activities
- ✓ Training staff to support diverse needs

Reasonable adjustments

Providers should adapt environments, activities, and support to enable all children with SEND to participate fully. These adaptations are anticipatory, meaning that they should be put in place in advance. Some examples of reasonable adjustments include:

- Different types of crockery or cutlery.
- Different or specific food choices provided.
- Adjustable equipment or furniture, such as tables that change height.
- A range of resources for activities such as mark making and cutting – different types of pens, pencils, scissors, etc.
- Equipment to support sensory sensitivities. This might include ear defenders, fiddle toys, weighted blankets and/or chew toys, for example.
- Sensory spaces where children can go to regulate their sensory needs, including calm, quiet spaces.
- Adaptations to routines (for example, arriving earlier or later or through a quieter entrance).



Reflection: Consider the reasonable adjustments in place in your setting. Is there anything else you could put in place to support the children you are working with?



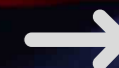
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Summary

Wraparound providers, whatever their context, have both a legal and moral duty to ensure that settings are inclusive, supportive, and accessible for all children, including those with SEND.

Settings must meet legal duties for inclusive practice, reasonable adjustments, individualised support, and collaboration with children, families, and other professionals.

By fulfilling these responsibilities, providers promote a nurturing, supportive environment where all children can flourish.



Top tips

Speak to parents/carers and the school SENCO (if relevant in your context) to find out what reasonable adjustments a child may have in school. Replicate or adapt these for wraparound provision where possible.

Ensure that **you, and all staff**, are aware of your setting's legal duties in regard to inclusion and safeguarding.

Make contact with your local authority to ensure you are aware of specific policy and guidance for your area. The local authorities' school or SEN team is likely to be a good starting point to find out who is responsible for supporting wraparound providers. You should also review your local authorities 'local offer' online. What the local offer looks like differs across local authorities. Try an internet search for '<your local area> local offer' or search here: [SEND Local Offers in the UK | WellChild](#) or by postcode here: [SEND Support - Young People's Hub from KIDS](#)





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My Perfect Club Toolkit

DfE commissioned Policy Lab to develop a print and play activity where children use icons to design their perfect club. You can use this tool to help you move towards partnership working and co-production with children, parents and carers in your area. This activity supports inclusivity in designing wraparound care, by inviting children and their families to actively participate in decisions about their care. It was designed for children with SEND, but it can be used with all children. Using this toolkit periodically as children grow, and acting on their input, will support you to offer wraparound care that responds to the needs of local children and provide an environment where they can thrive.

[Click here to access the my perfect club toolkit](#)





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Further information

Information

- Statutory guidance for schools and colleges: [Keeping children safe in education](#)
- The Children and Families Act 2014: [The Children and Families Act 2014](#)
- The standards that schools and childcare providers must meet for the learning, development and care of children in the early years: [The Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) Framework 2024](#)
- The Education Act 1996: [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Government information and guidance on the Equality Act 2010: [The Equality Act 2010](#)
- The Health and Social Care Act 2012: [The Health and Social Care Act 2012](#)
- Statutory guidance for organisations that work with children with SEND: [The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice \(2015\)](#)

Guidance

- Department for Education safeguarding guidance for providers of after school clubs and other out-of-schools settings: [After-school clubs, community activities and tuition: safeguarding guidance for providers - GOV.UK](#)
- Government guidance on disability in the Equality Act: [Disability: Equality Act 2010 - Guidance on matters to be taken into account in determining questions relating to the definition of disability \(HTML\) - GOV.UK](#)
- Government guidance on disability for service providers: [Disability: quick start guide for service providers \(HTML\) - GOV.UK](#)

- A guide and webinar to help teachers understand the Equality Act: [Disabled Children and the Equality Act 2010: What teachers need to know and what schools need to do](#)
- A series of 10 training videos produced by nasen, on behalf of Childcare Works, to support inclusive practice in wraparound provision: [Inclusive Practice in Wraparound Provision](#)
- Government guidance on the legal duties to make reasonable adjustments: [Reasonable adjustments: a legal duty - GOV.UK](#)
- Guidance on the safeguarding of children with SEND: [Safeguarding Network, 2024: Specific risks for children with SEND](#)
- Quick reference guide which highlights the key message for SEND in the context of early years: [SEND Code of Practice & EYFS Framework – what they say | Nasen](#)
- Links to every local offer by local authority: [SEND Local Offers in the UK | WellChild](#)
- Links to every local authority local offer by postcode: [SEND Support - Young People's Hub from KIDS](#)
- Department for Education blog on making reasonable adjustments: [What are reasonable adjustments and how do they help disabled pupils at school? – The Education Hub](#)
- Guidance explaining the role of schools and academy trusts in supporting parents to access wraparound childcare: [Wraparound childcare guidance for schools - GOV.UK](#)
- Guidance explaining the role of local authorities in relation to wraparound care: [Wraparound childcare: guidance for local authorities - GOV.UK](#)



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Developing inclusive environments

Creating an inclusive environment is crucial to ensuring that all children, including those with SEND, feel welcomed, respected and engaged. Inclusion goes beyond simply providing a physical space for children; it's about fostering a culture where every child can access, and take full part in, the opportunities provided. By focusing on the physical, social and emotional elements of the setting, providers can ensure that practice benefits not just children, but their families and staff too. An inclusive environment can foster a sense of belonging and help settings to build a community of care, support, understanding and fun!

An inclusive environment does not require extravagant resources. Rather, it requires thoughtful planning and active involvement from families, staff and children themselves. Where applicable, providers should also [work with linked schools](#) to provide consistency of approach and support.



For many children with additional needs transitions can cause anxiety. Therefore, it's critical that the environment we create makes them feel safe, secure and in control." **Deputy Headteacher, Brackenfield SEND School**

Physical environments: Accessibility and flexibility

Creating an inclusive physical environment is key to making sure that children with SEND can fully engage with their surroundings. Providers should regularly review their physical spaces – both indoor and outdoor – ensuring that they are safe, adaptable, accessible and welcoming to all.

Ensure that all spaces are physically accessible and safe. Consider: Are entrances, hallways, all rooms and exits sufficiently spacious? Are they wheelchair and mobility-aid friendly? Are there clear markings on any trip hazards or steps to support people with a visual impairment? Are there handrails and ramps where needed?

Furniture and equipment: Is there adjustable furniture, designed for comfort? This will include chairs and tables that can accommodate children of different sizes and levels of mobility. Is there a choice for children who would prefer to stand, pace, lie or sit on the floor or use a beanbag?

Toilets and changing facilities: Are these areas accessible, safe and adapted to meet the needs of all children?

Is any specialist equipment needed for individual children in place, and is it in good working order? Are staff adequately trained to use and maintain it?

Are there options and a variety of 'everyday' equipment available? This might include pens and pencils of different sizes, pencil grips, different types of scissors, different types of cutlery and crockery to support children with fine-motor skill difficulties.



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Communication- friendly environments

Clear communication is fundamental to any inclusive environment, especially for children with SEND who may find verbal or written communication challenging. Providers should ensure that communication is accessible and effective for all children, including those who are pre-verbal, non-speaking or have challenges with communication or cognition.

Use clear and simple language: Using clear, considered language that matches a child's developmental stage, will support them to engage in activities and to understand instructions and expectations. Avoiding jargon, sarcasm or over-complicated phrasing will help children process information more easily.

Visual supports: Visual supports such as objects, symbols, pictures (including photographs) and signing can help children better understand routines, expectations and activities. They help children more easily navigate the environment, providing structure, stability and independence. They also support children to communicate with adults in the setting more effectively to avoid potential frustration.

Some examples include:

- ✓ **Visual timetables or schedules:** To provide structure and predictability, children can refer to a visual timetable that outlines the session's activities and routines.
- ✓ **Communication books and mats:** These tools can support children in expressing themselves and understanding communication from adults.
- ✓ **Colour-coded or symbol-coded zones:** Labels to differentiate areas for specific activities (for example, quiet zones, play areas, reading areas) are a useful organisational tool to have in any setting.
- ✓ **Signing, such as [Makaton](#):** Signing is a valuable communication strategy for all children, particularly those who find verbal communication challenging. Learning and using Makaton signs week by week, especially as a group including staff and children, can be a rewarding activity for both staff and children, and provides an excellent opportunity for team building.





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Assistive technology (AT) and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)

AT can support children in a wide range of areas, empowering them to increase their independence and communicate their needs, preferences and ideas. Some examples include:

- Apps to support communication are available in most app stores and are used in similar ways to analogue communication books and boards.
- Text to speech functionality: Tools, such as Microsoft's Immersive Reader, are freely available on most web browsers, and can assist children who find communication and reading challenging.
- For some children, specific communication or speech generating devices might be essential and available as part of their individual plans or as part of provision in specialist settings.

Sensory-friendly environments

Children with SEND may have **sensory processing differences**, meaning that they may be hypersensitive (more-responsive) or hyposensitive (less-responsive) to stimuli such as visual input, sound, touch, taste or smell. A sensory-friendly environment is one that is aware of, and responsive to, these differences. This also includes the proprioceptive sense (recognising where the body is in space including control of force and pressure), the vestibular sense (the sense of balance and coordination) and interoceptive sense (an awareness of what is happening inside the body).

Sensory spaces: A **sensory space** provides a controlled, quiet environment that children can access whenever they become overwhelmed by sensory stimuli or need a break. These spaces often include calming sensory toys, soft lighting, noise reducing materials and soothing sounds to help children self-regulate and relax. Some settings are lucky enough to have a separate space for this, others create a den or use a small indoor tent within their existing space. Conversely, it is useful, where possible, to have spaces where children can go to be loud and move around freely.



Reflection: Consider where you could develop a sensory space in your setting. Is there an area where you can set up a sensory safe space that children can easily access? This might be a corner of your room or in an adjoining room that can be appropriately monitored and supervised.

Adjustments to the environment: Small environmental changes can make a significant impact on children's ability to access and engage in activities. For example:

- Dimming bright lights and ensuring external windows have blinds for use as needed.
- Reducing background noise. This might include replacing loudly ticking clocks, fixing buzzing florescent lights, oiling any squeaky furniture or adding a rug to soften acoustics from a hard floor. Many children find the sound of loud electric hand driers overwhelming. Can paper towels also be provided in handwashing areas?
- Providing a supply of sensory tools (such as fidget toys, weighted blankets and ear defenders) for children to use as needed.
- Ensuring spaces are tidy and uncluttered, including considering the sensory input from any visual displays.
- Providing **choices of food, drink and equipment** at meal and snack times.
- Considering ways to **reduce food odours** where possible.



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Representation

Children need to see themselves, as well as those different from them, represented in the resources and spaces around them. Consider:

- **Inclusive books, toys, games and materials:** Choose resources that represent a diverse range of backgrounds, experiences, and neuro and physical diversities. These should reflect both children's identities and the broader world.
- **Open-ended resources:** Provide materials that allow children to build independence, agency and creativity, enabling them to engage in self-directed play and activities in a way that suits them. This could include modelling dough, blocks, containers of various sizes, pieces of cloth as well as natural materials such as pinecones, sticks, stones and leaves. Open-ended resources provide countless opportunities for engagement, imagination and fun.

Outdoor environments

Outdoor spaces provide numerous benefits, including supporting physical health, mental wellbeing and the development of social skills. For children with additional needs, outdoor play and activities can be particularly valuable, providing opportunities for sensory regulation, motor skill development, independence and risk-management.

Providers should make sure that outdoor environments are just as inclusive as indoor spaces by considering the following:





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The social and emotional environment

The physical environment is only one part of creating an inclusive setting. Physical environments can be limited in impact if strong, positive relationships aren't in place to ensure that all children feel a sense of belonging.

Positive, supportive relationships

All practitioners should constantly and consistently work to build and nurture strong, positive relationships with all children. This means:

- Engaging in meaningful interactions that are supportive, respectful and responsive to each child's needs.
- Encouraging peer relationships and fostering a sense of community between children sharing the wraparound experience.
- Valuing and celebrating diversity within the setting community, to encourage respect and inclusive attitudes.
- Modelling strong, positive social interactions between staff, with families and with children. This doesn't mean always agreeing, but it does mean modelling examples of constructive, positive, respectful conversations to find resolution when disagreements occur.
- Building relationships with families as well as children. Parents/carers and wider family are key partners in supporting children's development, and regular communication will help practitioners ensure that children's needs are met during their time in setting.



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Reflection: How inclusive is your setting's environment?

Consider this with regard to:

- The physical environment: Are **all** spaces accessible to all children?
- The social environment: Do **all** children feel a sense of belonging and that they are an important member of the community?
- The emotional environment: Are staff providing emotional support that helps **all** children to feel safe, valued and heard?

Summary

Creating an inclusive environment involves thoughtful planning to ensure that all children, including those with SEND, feel welcomed, respected and engaged. This includes making indoor and outdoor physical spaces safe and accessible, using clear communication methods including visual support and assistive technology, and considering sensory needs with calming spaces and sensory activities. Diverse resources ensure representation and ensure that everyone feels a sense of belonging.

Emotional environments are equally, or perhaps even more, important. Positive relationships foster a sense of community and emotional support, and help children and families feel valued and heard. Regular, collaborative reflection about the environment will help ensure the continued development of an inclusive setting.

All of these areas are informed by the setting's overall ethos and values, which then feed into practice.





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Top Tips

Inclusive environments are NOT about

- Spending lots of money on new or expensive resources.
- Trying to make everything look 'perfect'.

Inclusive environments ARE about

- Developing a respectful, person-centred ethos.
- Being innovative and adaptable in meeting children's diverse needs.
- Fostering strong relationships with children and families, and between staff.

Providing as much [consistency as possible between different settings](#).

Think creatively about sourcing resources:

- Local charity shops often have some interesting bargains.
- Local businesses are sometimes willing to donate end of line stock or things they are not using. You could try asking a local clothes repairer for any spare scraps of material, for example.
- Lots of open-ended resources are free of charge and a good way to recycle. For example, packaging boxes.
- Be sure to clean and check everything carefully before use to ensure it is safe.

Work with children, staff and families to 'audit' your spaces (indoor and outdoor).

There are various resources available to support with this including:

- [Physical accessibility](#)
- [Sensory audit](#)
- [Communication-friendly guidance and checklist](#)

[Watch this video](#) with colleagues to help you to consider the experiences of children in your setting.



Further information

Information and guidance

- Animated video outlining the sensory journey of a child making a hospital visit: [A Sensory Journey Through Alder Hey - Alex's Story](#)
- Guidance for creating a communication supportive environment: [Creating a communication supportive environment: Primary - Speech and Language UK: Changing young lives](#)
- A series of 10 training videos produced by nasen, on behalf of Childcare Works, to support inclusive practice in wraparound provision: [Inclusive Practice in Wraparound Provision](#)
- Example of an accessibility audit tool used by a local authority: [Designing inclusive schools - Norfolk Schools and Learning Providers - Norfolk County Council](#)
- Animated video produced by Newcastle Hospitals Charity explaining sensory differences: [The Sensational Thinking Project: a day in the life of living with sensory differences](#)

Tools

- A guide providing practical strategies, insights and real-life examples of using AT: [Assistive Technology Miniguide | Nasen](#)
- Communication programme that uses symbols, signs and speech to enable people to communicate: [Makaton: Website Home](#)
- Video guidance to use Microsoft Immersive Reader, a free reading tool to help increase reading speed and comprehension: [Your guide to Immersive Reader](#)



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Case Study: Brackenfield SEND School

About the setting

Brackenfield SEND school is an area specialist school serving the South of Derbyshire. They offer a full range of opportunities for children aged 3 to 19 with complex, severe and profound learning needs, including those with complex medical and physical needs. The school currently has 210 pupils on roll, which is expected to grow to 270 next year, and 180 staff.

Creating an inclusive environment

Sensory-friendly environment

Key to ensuring the children feel safe, secure and supported is making sure the breakfast space is a sensory-friendly environment. The school use the [Derbyshire Sensory Tool Kit](#) which can be used with any group of children in any setting. It enables the practitioner to assess the needs of the individual children and use the results to inform the classroom environment. Some of the systems that Brackenfield School have in place include:

- Ensuring that rooms are well-ventilated to minimise strong smells by using air extracting, air conditioning, or by opening windows. If strong smells are expected, the staff will provide advance warning to pupils, giving the children time to prepare, or to move to a different area or activity away from the smell.
- Where possible, the school will avoid foods with strong smells or offer alternatives. For example, offering sandwiches instead of toast. The school will also consider what type of cleaning products to use, choosing scentless or scent free products where possible.
- Too much visual stimulation can heighten or cause anxiety for children with developmental delays, so the school has minimal wall displays in classrooms and uses autism-friendly a colour schemes.
- Ensuring a mix of indoor and outdoor equipment that caters to different vestibular needs.

Supporting regulation

The school places huge emphasis on the importance of building relationships with the children to support them to regulate throughout the day. Some of the systems the school has in place include:

- Staff members greeting the children on arrival in the same way every day. Parents are encouraged to stick to a regular drop off time to help establish a routine.
- Children with additional needs can be hypervigilant and will feel dysregulated by changes. The school ensures the layout of the room is kept consistent, and activities are routine so that the same activity takes place at the same time and day of the week.
- Transitions between activities are communicated using visual aids so the child knows what the next activity looks like, and what might be expected of them. This might be an image of the location or a photo of the member of staff they will be working with. Children are always given advance warning of a change of activity to give them time to prepare.
- Staff work with parents to develop support plans that set out the needs, triggers and support requirements of each child. This enables the staff to plan and prepare transitions that best support the child.



Get to know your pupils. Assess them, talk to parents, work out their preferences and then create your spaces. This is how you will make them feel safe enough to develop their independence and regulate as independently as possible. Think of the spaces as belonging to the children and it will change your perspective on what a classroom space should look like and needs to have in it.”

Deputy Headteacher, Brackenfield SEND School



Case Study: Brackenfield SEND School, continued

Supporting children with a food aversion

The school has several pupils with food aversions, which can make it challenging to attend planned mealtime activities. Food aversions often come from a place of anxiety and/ or sensory processing, so the school prioritises building a positive, trusting relationship with the child, and creating an environment where they feel safe. They do this in various ways including:

- Establishing a strong relationship with the child with an emphasis on empathy, consistency and patience. Some children may choose to eat breakfast one day and not the next but should be supported so that they feel safe and in control.
- Working with the parents to understand the needs of the child, what might act as a trigger, and how to best support them. The school uses a communication and learning platform called BOOP to work holistically with the child and their parent. It allows the parent to provide information to the teacher about the child's likes, dislikes, needs and requirements. It includes a food diary function to capture information about the child's dietary requirements.



“It's vital to have an effective relationship with parents to best support the child. You need to have empathy and consistency, patience and time for that child.” **Deputy Headteacher, Brackenfield SEND School**





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Creating high-quality provision

The importance of ethos

An inclusive ethos is at the heart of any supportive setting, whether mainstream or specialist. This ethos shapes how children interact with provision, how they engage with others, and how they experience the activities on offer.

An inclusive ethos is built on some key principles:

- **Respect for diversity:** Acknowledging and celebrating differences and using inclusive, respectful language.
- **Universal inclusive practice:** Meeting the needs of as many children as possible through well-planned ‘ordinarily available’ provision.
- **Proactive adaptation:** Anticipating potential barriers and adapting the environment and practice to meet diverse needs.
- **Building community:** Fostering an environment where every child, regardless of any barriers to development, feels valued and part of the group.



By adapting our activities and offering additional resources, we’ve ensured that children with additional needs can participate fully and meaningfully in our wraparound care.” **Provider, Buckinghamshire Council’s Early Years Service**

Wraparound settings that embody these principles build an inclusive culture that supports not only children with SEND, but their wider community too.

High-quality interactions: High-quality interactions are at the heart of effective practice for children and young people with SEND. They go beyond basic communication, and should build trust, understanding and respect. For children with SEND, meaningful and consistent interactions are crucial to their development and sense of security.

Positive relationships: Building positive relationships is the first step towards meaningful interaction. This involves actively taking on board what children are communicating, in whatever way they may do so, and showing empathy towards their feelings and needs. It is important to see each child holistically, to highlight strengths, qualities, and skills, ensuring that there is not solely a focus on need or ‘limitation’.

Empathy and patience: Children with SEND may have difficulty expressing themselves verbally or communicating effectively, for a range of reasons. High-quality interactions require empathy and patience from all staff.



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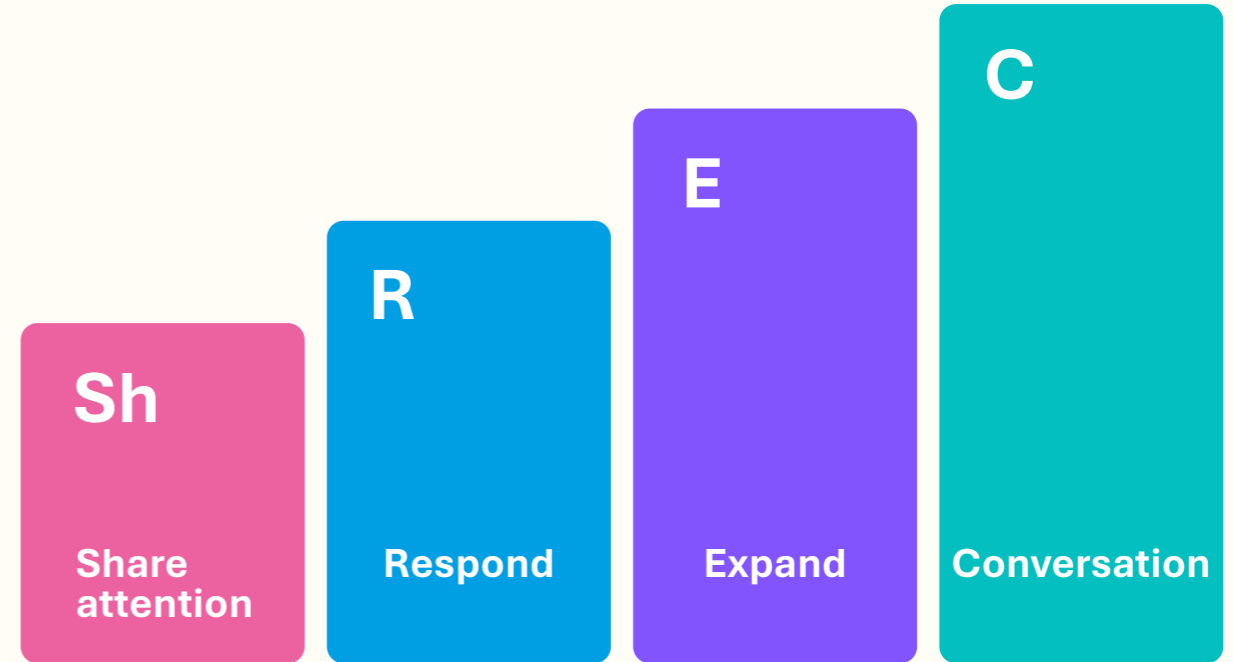


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The ShREC approach

The ShREC approach (EEF, 2022) provides a set of strategies to support high-quality interactions. Although specifically focused on interactions with children in Early Years settings, it is a useful tool for practitioners to consider for all children, particularly those with more complex needs. This approach is grounded in research and focuses on creating positive, responsive communication. The acronym ShREC stands for:

- ✓ **Share attention:** Engage with children by showing a genuine interest in what they are focused on. Getting down to their level, joining in with their chosen activities, and paying attention to their verbal and non-verbal cues, fosters engagement. For some children who are not yet ready to engage directly, this may involve side-by-side shared attention to begin with.
- ✓ **Respond:** Tailor responses based on knowledge of the child's unique development. Responses should be sensitive, supportive, and attuned to the child's communication style. This could involve eye contact, nodding, or narrating their activity, thereby reinforcing what they are experiencing.
- ✓ **Expand:** Build on the child's language by expanding on their vocalisations, including some new vocabulary and providing scaffolding. This promotes vocabulary and language development.
- ✓ **Conversation:** Ultimately, sustained back-and-forth communication is the eventual goal, encouraging elaboration about increasingly abstract concepts.



Top Tips

Comment more, question less. Rather than asking lots of questions about what the child is doing, comment on or narrate their activity to encourage meaningful conversation about it, using the child's preferred communication style.





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Activities and resources

Providing a range of activities will help to support children's holistic development and independence. For example:

- ✓ Creative activities such as arts and crafts allow children to express themselves in their own way and gives opportunities for exploring a range of materials and textures.
- ✓ Sensory-based activities, such as using modelling dough, different textiles, or sound games, can improve focus and develop fine motor skills.
- ✓ Movement activities or adapted sports can improve coordination and gross and fine motor skills, as well as promoting independence and self-confidence.
- ✓ Picture games, memory games, and puzzles, can support the development of cognitive skills, focus and resilience.
- ✓ Group activities such as cooperative games, role playing, or team building exercises, provide valuable opportunities for the development of social and communication skills, as well as fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion.

The principles of [Universal Design for Learning](#) (UDL) encourage designing and providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression. This aims to remove barriers and enable children to interact with activities in their own way, developing independence, self-awareness, and a sense of agency. These principles can be applied in all types of wraparound provision.





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Behaviour as communication

An integral part of inclusive practice is an understanding of behaviour as a form of communication. By developing professional curiosity and considering what a child is communicating through their actions, practitioners can begin to unpick any barriers and challenges that a child may be experiencing.

For example, by presenting with behaviours that adults may consider ‘challenging’, a child could be communicating:

- Difficulties communicating their concerns or emotions
- Cognitive overload
- Physical discomfort, pain, or impairment
- Sensory overwhelm or the need for increased sensory input
- Concern about their ability to engage with an activity
- Difficulties with self-image or self-esteem
- Anxiety around any number of things, including outside of the setting
- Lack of understanding of a task, activity or instruction
- Concerns about peer or adult relationships
- Any number of other factors.

This understanding of behaviour as communication is particularly important for wraparound providers, who may be working with a child after a challenging day of meeting expectations at school, or in the tricky transition time between home and school in the morning. Some children may ‘mask’ some of their needs during a school day, and this may become overwhelming when they enter the, often more relaxed, wraparound setting.

Wraparound providers are uniquely placed to support children during those potentially difficult transitions and can play a role in supporting children struggling to access school.



Reflection: Get curious! Reflect on the individual children you work with, and any behaviours they may display that you find challenging to deal with. What might they be communicating, and how could you support them further?





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Emotion regulation

Emotion regulation is often an area of concern for practitioners who may feel uncertain or lack confidence in effectively supporting children when they become dysregulated. Emotion regulation is an essential life skill, and providers can play a key role in supporting children to learn to manage their responses to stress, frustration and overwhelm. Emotion regulation is a skill that can be taught and nurtured over time.

Strategies to support development of emotion regulation

The below strategies are most effective when they form part of a setting's universal practice to support **all** children. For some children, these approaches will be vital to meet their needs. For all children, they will be useful to support their development.





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Despite the best efforts of everyone involved, children will sometimes become overwhelmed, leading to what may be considered emotional 'crisis'. This can result in a 'fight, flight or freeze' response, which can cause alarm or distress to the child in question, and also to their peers and staff. It is important to recognise that emotional distress is often the result of a build-up of multiple smaller stresses, anxieties, or frustrations.

In these moments, a key component of supporting children is to have a set of de-escalation strategies in place. These can help manage the situation in a calm and supportive manner, reducing the potential for escalation and ensuring that the child feels safe and understood. The goal of de-escalation is not to 'fix' a child's emotions, but to create a space where they can regain control over their feelings and actions.

Some strategies include:



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Afterwards

Once a child has calmed, it is important to support their emotional recovery and reflect on what happened to support them in future. Supportive strategies include:

- ✓ **Leaving an appropriate amount of time for the child to calm and process**
This may often be longer than expected, due to the chemical changes that take place in the body during times of stress. Access to a calm, quiet space can help them to relax and reflect at their own pace.
- ✓ **Asking open ended questions**
Once the child is ready, using opened ended statements, and questions such as, “Tell me what happened” will give them a chance to express themselves and reflect on the situation without feeling judged. [Comic strip conversations](#) can be a useful tool to employ for this.
- ✓ **Creating an action plan with the child and their parents/carers**
Collaboratively working with the child and their family to create a plan for managing similar situations in the future empowers children and provides everyone with clear strategies to handle emotional challenges moving forward.
- ✓ **Reflecting with colleagues**
Discussing the situation with colleagues will help practitioners identify what works and areas for improvement. Use of respectful, non-judgemental language will ensure that the focus remains on understanding and supporting the child.
- ✓ **Offering reassurance**
Reassuring the child that they are still liked and valued, despite the crisis, lets them know that their dysregulated actions do not define their worth and reinforces positive relationships moving forwards.
- ✓ **Practising self-care**
Working with a child in emotional distress can be challenging, and self-care is important. Practitioners should remember to be kind to themselves, debrief and reflect with a trusted colleague or friend (being mindful of GDPR) and allow themselves some time and space to decompress and regulate their own feelings and emotions.

Physical intervention

Physical intervention should only ever be used as a last resort, when all other strategies have been exhausted and there is a risk of harm to the child or others. The DfE provides guidance around this in [Use of Reasonable Force In Schools](#), and all setting staff should be clear on the setting’s policies around physical intervention and be appropriately trained where needed.



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Summary

Developing high-quality provision for all children, including those with additional needs, requires settings to embrace a fully inclusive ethos, prioritising meaningful interactions and developing positive relationships. High quality interactions rooted in empathy, patience and trust, build confidence in communication and support children to develop cognitive, physical, social and emotional skills.

Recognising all behaviour as communication enables practitioners to more confidently understand and respond to children's diverse needs, particularly during times of anxiety or distress. Emotional regulation strategies, including structured routines, adult modelling and explicit activities can equip children with lifelong coping strategies. In inevitable moments of crisis, having a range of de-escalation techniques can help practitioners to deal with situations calmly to ensure physical and emotional safety.





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Further information

Guidance

- An overview, examples and tips for using comic strip conversations: [Comic strip conversations - Resource Library - Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- Toolkit developed by Learn Together Cambridgeshire to help identify and support children experiencing emotionally based school avoidance: [Emotionally Based School Avoidance Toolkit](#)
- Guidance for engaging and supporting children with SEND in the HAF programme: [Holiday Activities and Food Programme Toolkit](#)
- Information and guidance on using the zones of regulation to support a child to self-regulate: [How it Works | The Zones of Regulation](#)
- A series of 10 training videos produced by nasen, on behalf of Childcare Works, to support inclusive practice in wraparound provision: [Inclusive Practice in Wraparound Provision](#)
- Blog from National Autistic Society on interoception and mental wellbeing in autistic people: [Interoception and mental wellbeing in autistic people](#)
- An overview, examples and tips for using Social Stories: [Social stories - Resource Library - Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- Information about the ShREC approach to engage children in high quality interactions, developed by EEF: [The ShREC approach](#)

- The Universal Design for Learning guidelines: [The UDL Guidelines](#)
- Government guidance on use of reasonable force in schools: [Use of reasonable force in schools - GOV.UK](#)

Tools

- Yoga and mindfulness YouTube channel for children: [Cosmic Kids Yoga - YouTube](#)
- Self-care plan guidance and template for primary aged school children: [My self-care plan: primary | Anna Freud](#)
- Speech and Language UK resource library for educators and professionals: [Resource library for educators - Speech and Language UK: Changing young lives](#)
- Well-being resources and practical tips for supporting children to manage their emotional wellbeing and mental health: [Well-being resources | RISE | The Children's Society](#)
- Toolkit for wraparound providers collating useful resources to support them to start, grow and sustain wraparound childcare: [Wraparound toolkit from Childcare works](#)



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Video case study: Daisy Chain Day Centre

Daisy Chain Day Centre is a charity based in Stockton-on-Tees that supports autistic and neurodivergent children, young people and their families. They offer a range of social clubs and after school provision aimed at helping them develop confidence, social skills and friendships through various activities.

In this video case study Daisy Chain Day Centre explain how they work with parents to understand the individual needs of each child using their care plan and sensory profile. They talk about the types of communication tools they use such as emotion cards, social stories and choice boards. These visual tools support the child to understand what their day will look like, help them prepare for a change in activity, thereby allowing them to feel less anxious and more confident. You can also hear how they create a sensory-friendly environment that supports the children to regulate and thrive.



It's incredible to see that just by making a small change, the massive impact it can have on these children's lives and their whole families." **Daisy Chain Day Centre**





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Case study: Whitefield Primary School

About the setting

Whitefield Primary School is a 1.5-form entry school in the North of Liverpool. The school has a high proportion of children on the SEND register, including those with education, health and care (EHC) plans. Many of the children have faced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and there is a high level of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) need. In response to these challenges, the school has made significant strides in improving inclusivity within its breakfast club.

Building an inclusive environment

The breakfast club is a valuable community service, however many children, especially those with significant needs, were struggling to manage in such a busy environment. This affected their ability to engage in school activities after breakfast. Recognising the need for development, the leadership team decided to reassess the breakfast club's structure to ensure that it provided an environment where all children could thrive.

Transforming the provision

A staff member with experience in supporting social and emotional well-being was appointed to lead the breakfast club. The aim was to create a calm, structured, and nurturing environment where children could enjoy quality time with their peers, engage in activities, and receive emotional support before starting the school day. The school base their approach on Brene Brown's "Be here, be you, belong" focusing on building belonging and mattering. Alongside this, the provision is carefully constructed to include quality time, words of affirmation, acts of service, and physical expression which has positively transformed the breakfast club.

- A key component of the provision includes fostering relationships between children. The breakfast club supports pupils from nursery through Year 6 to mix, creating opportunities for them to interact, build friendships, and learn from each other.

- Sensory elements have been carefully considered. Soft music plays in the background and children engage in indoor games and outdoor activities, including mindfulness walks and yoga. These activities promote calm, relaxation, and a sense of community before transitioning into the school day.
- The breakfast club has clear expectations, which are communicated through visual timetables and structured routines. Children are taught to understand the importance of positive actions such as tidying up and sharing. These expectations help create a sense of predictability and security. Transitions are signalled consistently, using visual and audible cues to help children move from one activity to the next.
- The food offered at the breakfast club is varied, changing each week with new menus created collaboratively with the children. This provides a sense of ownership and involvement in the breakfast club experience, making it more personal and enjoyable.
- Each session concludes with a structured tidy-up time, where the children take responsibility for maintaining an organised space. This promotes a sense of responsibility and community.
- Staff model positive behaviours such as kindness, teamwork, and resilience, which reinforces these values throughout the setting.





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Case study: Whitefield Primary School, continued

Making a difference

Feedback from parents, carers, and staff is overwhelmingly positive. Children are coming to school more settled and ready to learn, with the calm and nurturing environment helping them to regulate their emotions. Parents and carers report that their children are eager to attend breakfast club.



“Everybody at breakfast club loves being part of the team. And it sets us all off to a great start. Not just the children, but the staff, the caretaker, everybody!” **Whitefield Primary School**





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Working in partnership

Supporting children with SEND in any setting, including wraparound, requires a collaborative, coordinated approach to ensure that their needs are fully met and that they have every opportunity to thrive. The success of the support offered by providers is dependent on effective partnerships between all the relevant stakeholders, including the children, their families, other professionals, settings and external agencies, and local authorities.

Partnerships with children

Throughout this toolkit, the importance of relationships and child voice has been highlighted. The child's perspective is at the heart of all effective partnership working. Understanding and respecting children's needs, preferences, strengths and experiences is fundamental to designing, planning and implementing provision, ensuring that they feel heard and have ownership of their own experience.

Active participation and a child-centred approach

Children with SEND should be empowered to participate actively in decisions about their care. Practitioners can support this by:

- ✓ **Encouraging self-expression and open communication**
✓ **Providers should create environments** where children feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, feelings and choices. This will involve communication-enabling approaches such as appropriate and positive language, visual scaffolds and communication tools.
- ✓ **Support for decision making**
With appropriate support, children can participate in setting goals, and determining how they want to be supported. This not only enhances their sense of agency and control, but also contributes to their holistic progress, independence and resilience.

Put simply, providers should gather children's opinions, thoughts and preferences, in whatever way these are communicated. These should then be taken on board and acted upon.





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Partnerships with parents, carers and families

Parents and carers are the most knowledgeable advocates for their children. They have critical insights into their child’s strengths, preferences and challenges, and their involvement is crucial to effective support. This can be facilitated by:

- ✓ **Building trusting relationships**
Building trusting relationships with parents and carers involves open, honest, and supportive communication, even when there are differences of opinion. Providers should ensure that they communicate regularly and effectively with parents, providing clear information and updates. There are various methods undertaken for this, often using a combination of in-person discussion, analogue approaches such as communication books and/or digital tools.
- ✓ **Listening and valuing parent/carer input**
Taking parental suggestions and concerns seriously, acting on them and discussing them openly and supportively helps to create a more effective, child-centred plan of support.
- ✓ **Involving parents/carers in decision-making**
Parents and carers should be actively involved in the planning and review of their child’s provision. This can include:
 - Collaborating on setting goals for their child’s next steps.
 - Encouraging parental input into the creation of a child’s individual support or care plans, and involving them in regular reviews of progress.

✓ Providing support

Parents and carers of children with SEND often report experiencing stress, frustration and feelings of isolation. Providers can offer emotional and practical support by:

- Showing empathy and understanding.
- Using respectful, positive, supportive language at all times.
- Supporting and talking about the needs a child is presenting with, regardless of formal identification or diagnosis. Reflecting on the models [shown here](#) can support with this.
- Showing unconditional positive regard for children and their families.
- Signposting to national and local support networks, such as parent support groups or local SEND services. [See top tips](#)

Organisations focusing on parent/carer support

- Charity for families with disabled children: [Contact](#)
- Parenting and family support: [Family lives](#)





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Partnerships with external agencies and professionals

Sometimes, children will be accessing support from external agencies. Coordination between groups of professionals is important to deliver holistic, integrated provision, for children and their families. This should encourage a team approach, to make sure that everyone is working together with the aim of supporting the individual.

Whilst not solely the responsibility of wraparound providers, developing professional relationships with external and specialist agencies can provide invaluable knowledge, support and guidance. Other professionals may also be able to help to make links with other groups or organisations who can support providers in their practice.

It can be helpful to make sure that you understand roles and remits of external agencies in your area. Some of the key external agencies you may encounter are likely to include:

Speech and language therapy (SALT) services: Supporting children with speech, language and communication difficulties, as well as eating, drinking and swallowing.

Helpful links on SALT

[The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists](#)
[Speech and Language UK](#)

Occupational therapy (OT) service: ‘Occupations’ are activities which are encountered every day. Occupational therapists will often help in areas such as physical movement, fine and gross motor skills, eating and drinking, personal care, sensory processing, dressing, toilet training, as well as many others.

Helpful links on OT

[The Royal College of Occupational Therapists](#)
[Oxford Health OT](#)

Educational psychology (EP) services: Educational Psychologists support children and their families using psychological theory and techniques, promoting positive mental health and developing an understanding of how children work best. They work with children and young people, settings and families.

Helpful links on EP

[About educational psychology](#)
[The Association of Educational Psychologists](#)

Child and adolescent mental health (CAMHS) services: A national health service (NHS) that assesses and treats young people with emotional or mental health difficulties.

Helpful links on mental health support

[Young Minds Guide to CAMHS](#)
[NHS Mental Health Support](#)



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Partnership with schools

If your wraparound provision is part of a school setting, it is important to work closely with the school's SENCO. The SENCO is responsible for coordinating and overseeing provision and support for students with additional needs within the school, and so their work with you as a wraparound provider can ensure that these children receive the right support outside the school day too.

The school SENCO's role is to oversee and coordinate SEN provision. Their role involves offering support and guidance to staff to support children with SEND, not taking responsibility for all children with SEND themselves. It is important that all members of staff are aware of this, and of the fact that inclusive provision for children with SEND is a whole staff responsibility.

If your provision is not hosted in a school setting, it would also be useful to make links with local schools to help to develop a collaborative approach to support. Parent/carer permission should always be sought before any information is shared about specific children. Reaching out to local school SENCOs will be a useful starting point to build relationships and ensure collaborative working to support children.





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Working with local authorities

Local authorities play a central role in providing services and support for children and families, from funding and education to transport arrangements. Developing partnerships with your local authority can be extremely helpful in ensuring that children have access to provision, support and resources.

Through these relationships, wraparound providers can:

- ✓ **Contribute to the creation and review of EHC plans**
Practitioners can work closely with parents, other settings and local authorities to ensure that children’s needs are accurately reflected in their [EHC plan](#) and that required resources and provision are incorporated.
- ✓ **Monitor progress**
Providers can track the child’s progress in relation to their EHC plan targets and communicate this information to parents/carers and other professionals, both informally and as part of the annual review process.
- ✓ **Navigate funding and resources**
Local authorities are responsible for allocating funding for SEND services, including wraparound care. It is useful if wraparound providers understand local funding processes and ensure that they are receiving the necessary resources to support children effectively.



Review transport arrangements and advocate for children as needed

- For many children with SEND, transport arrangements are important for accessing provision. Local authorities’ statutory duty requires them to arrange free travel to enable an eligible child to travel to school for the beginning of the school day, and to return home at the end of the school day. They are not required to arrange travel to enable children to attend before and/or after-school clubs. Further guidance can be found here: [Home-to-school travel - GOV.UK](#). Local authorities’ statutory duty requires them to arrange free travel to enable an eligible child to travel to school for the beginning of the school day, and to return home at the end of the school day. They are not required to arrange travel to enable children to attend before and/or after-school clubs. Further guidance can be found here: [Home-to-school travel - GOV.UK](#).
- While local authorities are not required to make travel arrangements to enable eligible children to attend breakfast clubs - Department for Education guidance states that ‘It is the responsibility of parents and carers to drop off children to breakfast clubs or make alternative travel arrangements’, we encourage them to work with schools to find solutions wherever it is possible to do so. For example, if 6 children travel to school together in a minibus and the parents of all 6 children wish them to attend the breakfast club, it may be relatively straightforward to arrange for the minibus to arrive at school 30 minutes earlier each day.
- Providers can offer support to families by:
 - Liaising with local authorities for support and guidance where children require transport assistance in order to attend provision.
 - Advocating for the needs of children and working with local authorities to resolve any concerns.
 - Being as flexible as is possible in providing children with what they need when they do arrive in setting. In a school setting, some children may arrive at different times each day due to transport issues and may have had long journeys. Work with schools to creatively consider ways that children can be provided with food, drink and some time to decompress on arrival at the setting.





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Top Tips

- Contact the person in your local authority responsible for overseeing wraparound provision. This will be structured differently in every area, but getting in touch with your local schools team or SEND team can be a good place to start.
- Find out whether your local authority has an ‘Ordinarily Available Provision’ document of what is expected in schools. This can be helpful to inform inclusive practice in wraparound provision too.
- When a child starts in your provision, ensure that you find out how they will be arriving and leaving (where appropriate). Will they be bought by a parent or carer, or will they be accessing transport from the local authority? Make sure you know who to contact if any issues arise.



Where we identify that a child has additional needs, we will make a plan with the parent to ensure they are happy with the choices and decision we’re making for their child.” **Boxgrove Primary School**

Co-production

Co-production is a key principle in supporting children with SEND. It is based on the idea that families, professionals and children themselves should work together as equal partners in the creation and delivery of provision. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of shared responsibility and ensures that the child’s experience and voice is central.

Principles of co-production

Shared decision making

Children, families and professionals work together to develop, review and adjust provision.

Equal partnerships

Children, families and professionals are equal contributors to the process, each providing unique insights and expertise.

Respect

The knowledge and experience of children and their families, as well as the professional expertise of providers and external agencies are valued equally.

Benefits of co-production

True co-production leads to more effective and tailored support. It ensures that children’s needs are met in ways that are meaningful to them. It supports children, parents and carers to feel empowered and supported to advocate for themselves, and it enables service providers to deliver more effective, coordinated and relevant support.



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Practical steps for implementing co-production

Engage children, parents and carers, and professionals from the outset. Ensure that their contributions are sought, valued, heard and incorporated into decision making, both for their individual child and towards building a setting’s provision more generally.

Create clear, accessible processes for gathering views and feedback including for those children and families who may be less vocal and forthcoming with their views. Consider ways to engage with harder to reach communities, children who are pre-verbal or non-speaking, and families who may not be using English as their first language. Ensure that all parties are kept informed and that their input is genuinely reflected in planning and development of provision.

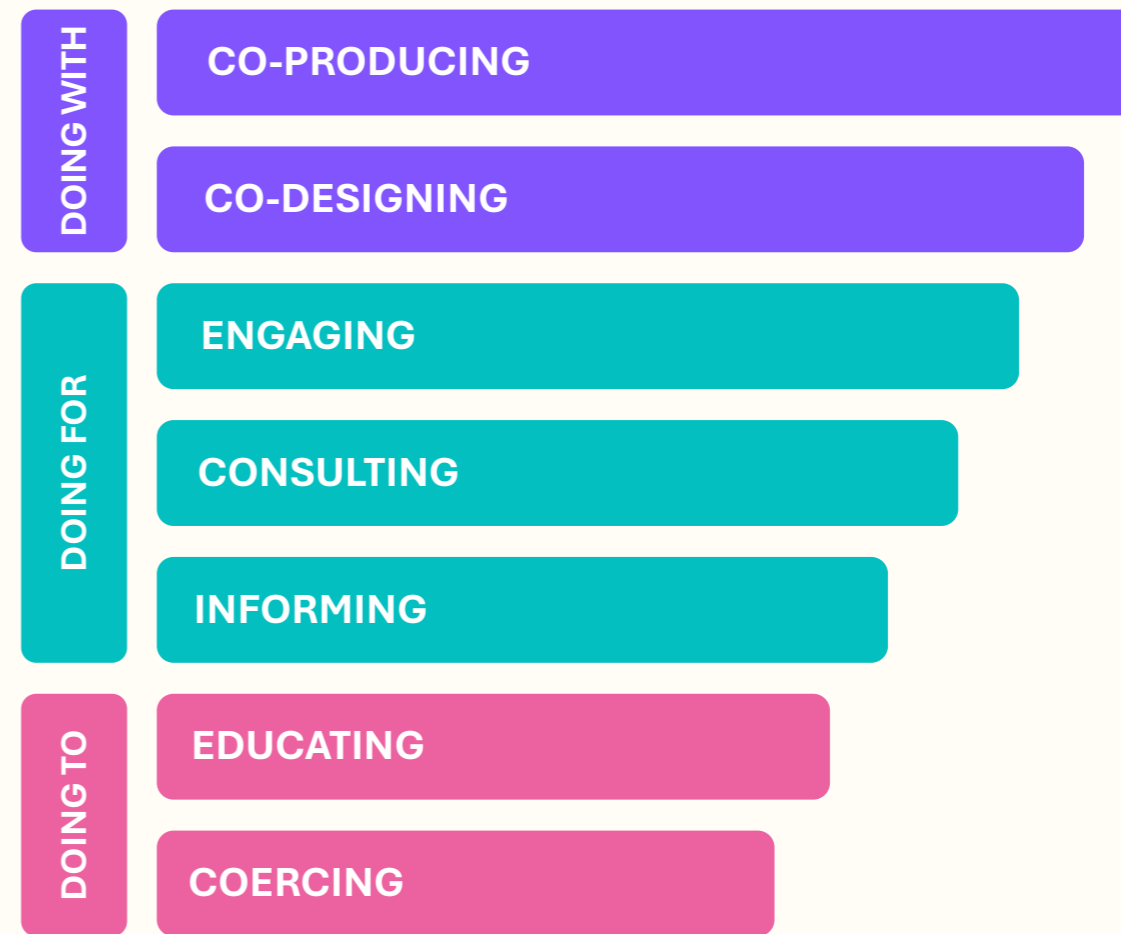
The aim is to move towards a model of doing with, not doing to.

Summary

Working in partnership with children, families and other professionals, is key to delivering high-quality support for children with SEND. By embracing principles of co-production, and maintaining clear, open communication, providers can create a more cohesive, coordinated and responsive provision.

Ladder of Involvement

The Ladder of Involvement illustrates the progressive levels of engagement and commitment individuals can have within a community or organisation.



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Top Tips

There are lots of services and agencies that exist to support children with SEND and their families. Knowing where to look to find the right support can sometimes be overwhelming, for families and professionals alike. A good starting point is **‘the local offer’**. This is the ‘one stop shop’, an online space where people can go to find out about local services, community groups and provision for children with SEND and their families. The local offer is described in the SEND Code of Practice Chapter 4, and it is a statutory requirement that local authorities publish and maintain it.

What the local offer looks like differs across local authorities. Try an internet search for ‘<your local area> Local Offer’ or search here: [SEND Local Offers in the UK | WellChild](#) or by postcode here: [SEND Support - Young People’s Hub from KIDS](#). Familiarise yourself with services available in your area. You can signpost the local offer to parents too.

You may also be in a **family hub** area. Family hubs bring together local services to support young people and their families, sometimes in a physical space. You can find out whether this applies to your area here: [Family Hubs Network - Helping local authorities and VCS help families](#).

You might also like to contact some of the services listed to make connections.



Reflection: How well do you feel your setting works in partnership with children, parents and carers, external services and agencies, and your local authority? Consider ways that you could move further towards co-production and partnership working. Perhaps you could start by gathering some child and family voice about your provision.



Further information

- Information about the role of an Educational Psychologist: [About Educational Psychology - edpsy.org.uk](#)
- The trade union and professional association for Education Psychologists in the UK: [Association of Educational Psychologists](#)
- Information about children and young people’s mental health services: [Children and young people’s mental health services - NHS](#)
- Charity providing information, support and advice to families with disabled children: [Contact: for families with disabled children](#)
- Charity providing speech and language information, tools and resources for schools and nurseries: [Speech and Language UK](#)
- Charity providing information, advice and targeted early intervention and crisis support to families: [Family lives](#)
- Information about CAMHS and guidance on how to access it: [Guide to CAMHS | Mental Health Services | YoungMinds](#)
- Statutory guidance on local authorities responsibilities when making home-to-school travel arrangements for children: [Home-to-school travel - GOV.UK](#)
- Training videos produced by nasen, on behalf of Childcare Works, to support inclusive practice in wraparound provision: [Inclusive Practice in Wraparound](#)
- Information about the role of an Occupational Therapist: [Oxford Health OT](#)
- The Royal College of Occupational Therapists: [The Royal College of Occupational Therapists](#)
- The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists: [The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists](#)
- Guidance explaining the role of schools and academy trusts in supporting parents to access wraparound childcare: [Wraparound childcare guidance](#)
- Wraparound childcare: [Guidance for local authorities - GOV.UK](#)



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Case study: Elburton Primary School

About the setting

Elburton Primary School in Plymouth is a two-form entry school with around 465 pupils, offering a mix of indoor and outdoor learning spaces. The school has been a cornerstone of the local community for over 50 years and in 2023 they joined the Learning Academies Trust as one of their 18 school collaborative.

The school are proud to offer breakfast and after-school provision in The Den - a secure environment within the school grounds - providing a safe, nurturing and accessible space for children before and after school. At the heart of their provision is the belief that effective wraparound provision relies on:

- strong relationships between children and adults
- effective staff training and development to ensure understanding of needs
- inclusive practice and a supportive environment

Empowering staff

For Elburton Primary School, staff continuity and emotional security are crucial. Some staff work solely in The Den, while others also serve as teaching assistants, fostering strong, trusting relationships with the children. All staff receive the same training and access to regular professional development, including safeguarding, inclusive practice, and specific SEND needs. In addition, all staff receive updates on any changes to children's needs from the school's SENCO ensuring that all staff feel valued as part of the school's overall provision.

The school recognises the importance of effective communication between staff and wraparound practitioners in fostering an inclusive environment. They use an internal logging system (CPOMS) to track incidents and concerns, ensuring seamless information sharing. This is particularly crucial for children with high needs, such as those on the pathway to receiving an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

Partnerships with Parents

The school is an advocate of fostering effective relationships between wraparound staff and parents and carers. They work with parents and carers to capture information about their child's needs, and through regular communication, ensure any changes are promptly addressed. Wraparound staff often have more direct contact with parents and carers, holding valuable knowledge that will enable them to support the children more effectively. The school team ethos and emphasis on open communication between all parties is therefore crucial to support the children effectively.



If you are prioritising making relationships with children, if you have a really good awareness of a broad range of needs and you consider your environment carefully, other bits will fit into place.” **Elburton Primary School**



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Case study: Elburton Primary School, continued

Creating an inclusive environment

Elburton have taken huge steps to embed inclusivity in the physical environment of the clubs but recognise there is always more that can be done. To support regulation, resources are organised for easy access, and the space mimics a classroom environment, thereby promoting continuity. The club offers a range of activities to cater to different needs and preferences of the children including games, arts and crafts, outdoor activities, and discos. They have created sensory-friendly spaces with quieter areas for children with sensory needs who might need help regulating. The school is still developing its sensory-specific provision, but the flexible zoning of spaces means they are able to support a more diverse range of needs.

“

Breakfast and after-school clubs are part of many children's days, and always will be. We've spent so long in schools trying to make sure that all of our transitions and provision works well, and that our environments are right. That should be considered in breakfast and after school wraparound provisions too. It's always important to reflect and think 'what else can we do?' **Elburton Primary School**





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Food handling and preparation

Food as part of wraparound provision

Whether it's a breakfast club, after-school, or holiday provision, food is likely to be a part of your setting's offerings. This could range from occasional snacks to full meals.

As with all areas of provision, it is crucial to provide an environment that is not only safe and inclusive, but also supportive of children's diverse needs. Food planning, preparation and handling play a significant role in this, ensuring the well-being, safety, and enjoyment of all children. This section aims to guide providers on best practices in food preparation, handling, and serving, within the context of supporting children with SEND.

Understanding the needs of children with SEND

Within your setting, children are likely to have varying needs that influence how they engage with food. These needs can range from dietary preferences to medical conditions, allergies, physical disabilities, sensory sensitivities, or difficulties with motor skills or social interaction. Wraparound providers need to understand these needs thoroughly to create a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment.

Some common areas of need that affect how children engage with food include:

Physical needs

Some children, particularly those with complex physical disabilities, may require physical support with feeding, or require specific feeding equipment.

Food allergies

Food allergies can range from mild to severe or potentially fatal reactions.

Sensory processing

Some children may be sensitive to the temperature, texture, taste, or smell of foods or may avoid certain foods due to sensory factors.

Diabetes

Diabetes affects how your body processes blood sugar (glucose). It can lead to high blood sugar levels, causing symptoms such as increased thirst, frequent urination, fatigue, and blurred vision.

Avoidance/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID)

ARFID is an eating disorder characterised by a persistent avoidance or restriction of food intake. Individuals with ARFID may avoid certain foods due to sensory sensitivities, fear of choking, or lack of interest in eating, leading to nutritional deficiencies and significant weight loss.

Dyspraxia or fine motor skills

Dyspraxia, sometimes known as developmental co-ordination disorder, can affect motor skills, including hand-eye coordination, making tasks like spreading butter or pouring cereal challenging.

Gastrointestinal issues

Certain conditions may require specialised diets to avoid discomfort or pain.



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Managing special diets

Managing special diets is an important consideration for any setting offering food, whether this incorporates full meals or smaller snacks. Some children may have medical conditions that require a specific diet, while others may have personal or cultural food considerations. Understanding and accommodating these needs is all part of creating an inclusive setting.

Allergy management



Clear protocols

All staff should be able to recognise and manage signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction and anaphylaxis. Clear protocols should be in place for dealing with allergies, including gathering this information, following emergency procedures, and having accessible contact information for parents and carers. If a child has an EpiPen or allergy medication, this must also be easily accessible to staff.



Food labelling

Any staff members handling food need to be aware of the allergen rules. [The Food Information Regulations 2014](#) require all food businesses, including schools, to show allergen ingredients information for the food they serve. The Food Information Regulations also include requirements for the labelling of allergens on pre-packed for direct sale (PPDS) foods. These are foods that are packaged on the premises before the consumer orders them. The Food Standard Agency's [advice for schools, colleges and nurseries](#) has further guidance.

Accurately labelling food items helps to avoid confusion for staff and children. Using clear, simple labelling with visual images and highlighting any allergens, will support children who may have difficulty reading or processing information.



Separation of foods

Cross-contamination must be avoided by keeping allergen-free foods separate from those that contain allergens. Dedicated utensils, serving trays, and preparation areas should be used to prevent accidental exposure.

Further information

- [Allergen checklist for food businesses | Food Standards Agency](#)
- [Allergy guidance for schools - GOV.UK](#)
- [Allergy training for food businesses | Food Standards Agency](#)

Specific dietary needs



Dietary restrictions

Aside from allergies, some children may have specific dietary needs related to medical conditions such as diabetes, swallowing difficulties, gluten intolerance, or lactose sensitivity. Providers should maintain regular contact with families to ensure that these needs are met effectively.



Diabetes

For children with a medical condition such as type 1 diabetes, an individual health care plan (IHP) should be available, and staff should be appropriately trained around the individual child's needs. This training is usually delivered by a diabetes nurse. Diabetes UK can provide further guidance on [Looking after a child with diabetes in school](#).



Flexible meal planning

A flexible approach will allow providers to adapt meals, snacks, and foods based on the unique requirements of children. For example, offering gluten-free cereals, lactose-free milk and a selection of choices can make food more accessible at breakfast clubs.





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Sensory considerations

Helpful resources

[Strategies to Support Feeding for Children with Sensory Processing Needs](#)
[Supporting Children with SEN In The School Holidays - Witherslack Group](#)

Adult support and accessible equipment

Adult support

Some children, for example, those with particular physical disabilities, may require adult support with feeding as part of their care plan. Staff undertaking this should be well-trained and maintain regular communication with parents/carers, and external professionals, to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the individual child. Having the same person to support with this will provide consistency, but it's important that a range of staff are trained and able to support, in case of absence.

Adaptive equipment

For children with fine-motor difficulties, providing a choice of adaptive tools such as easy-to-grip utensils, cutlery of different materials (stainless steel, plastic), different shaped plates, bowls and cups, non-slip mats and plate dividers can be extremely helpful. This supports independence and builds confidence.

Portioning and presentation

Providing food in attractive, easily accessible portions, with clear labelling supported by pictures, will help children to recognise what's on offer. Pre-portioning food into child-friendly serving sizes can also help to avoid waste.

Supporting independence

Settings that provide food have a wonderful opportunity to promote social skills and independence. By encouraging children to take part in meal preparation and serving, practitioners can foster a sense of community and responsibility.

Independent choices

Allowing children to choose their food items, within the constraints of their dietary needs, will give them a sense of control and support their decision-making skills.

Peer interaction

Wraparound provision offers an excellent opportunity for children to interact with peers, often across different age groups and outside of their usual social circle. Encouraging children to serve and help one another, and participate in group activities related to food, can help to develop social skills and build relationships.

Supportive supervision

Staff should offer guidance and encouragement, while respecting each child's autonomy. They should also monitor and be close by in case of any safety concerns. Staff should be well trained to deal with safety incidents such as choking. There are many first aid trainers available. Speak to your manager, local authority, or school setting for further information.

[How to stop a child from choking - NHS](#)



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Best practices for food preparation

Food preparation in an inclusive wraparound setting requires careful planning and attention to detail.

Planning and menu considerations

Allergy awareness

All staff need to understand any allergies or sensitivities children may have. Regular training updates, and [communication with parents and carers](#), is essential to make sure that all dietary restrictions are documented and adhered to by all staff.

Providing options

Careful planning is needed to ensure that menus include a variety of options to cater to all children's preferences and dietary needs. This might include vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, dairy-free, and religious observance options. Children with SEND may have more rigid food preferences, so providing a range of choices helps to ensure there is something that works for everyone.

Providing comfort and security

For some children, the act of eating in a new or different environment may be overwhelming. Providing familiar, simple, favourite foods, can help to ease any anxiety and encourage participation.

Safe and hygienic food handling

Hand hygiene

Ensuring that all children and staff wash their hands thoroughly before eating is an important health measure. This can be turned into a game using songs or rhymes. [How to wash your hands NHS song | NHS](#)

Training for staff

All staff involved in food preparation should undergo training on food safety, including knowledge of allergies and allergens, surface hygiene, cross-contamination, and proper food storage. This is crucial to ensure that children are not exposed to allergens or other hazards. There are lots of training providers available. Speak to your local authority or school setting for further information.

Food storage

Ensure that food is stored at the correct temperature, with appropriate ventilation, in the right location to prevent spoiling and cross-contamination. All food items should be clearly labelled, including details of any potential allergens.





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Summary

Safe and inclusive food preparation and handling are essential aspects of running effective wraparound provision. By prioritising inclusivity, hygiene, safety, and sensory needs, providers can ensure a positive, supportive environment that meets the diverse needs of children. Just like all other aspects of provision, the serving of food requires thoughtful planning, clear **communication** with children, families, and other professionals, and a commitment to creating an accessible and welcoming experience for all.



Reflection: Consider the food provision in your setting. How well does it meet the principles outlined? Speak to children and parents/carers. How do they feel about it? What could you do to develop inclusive practices further? Consider planning, food preparation and handling, and serving. Ensure that children who are pre-verbal or non-speaking are able to share their choices using their preferred communication methods too.



Some children have specific food groups that they can only eat, so we always ensure we have that range of food available.”
Daisy Chain Day Centre



Top Tips

- Ensure that all members of staff are confident around the specific food needs of children in your setting, and in food hygiene practices.
- Provide choices of food and utensils.
- Provide clear labelling with visual supports.





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Further information

Further useful resources

- School Food Matters blog about a project that promotes healthy eating in special schools: [Adapt-Ed: learning about experiences with school food from children and young people with SEND | School Food Matters](#)
- Advice on providing allergen information and avoiding cross-contamination in a food business: [Allergen checklist for food businesses | Food Standards Agency](#)
- Department for Education allergy guidance for schools: [Allergy guidance for schools - GOV.UK](#)
- Free allergy food training and allergen checklist: [Allergy training for food businesses | Food Standards Agency](#)
- Information about Breakfast Clubs taking place across England: [Breakfast clubs](#)
- Breakfast clubs early adopters guidance for schools and trusts in England: [Breakfast clubs early adopter guidance for schools and trusts in England - GOV.UK](#)
- Resources and case studies for schools on how to make good food accessible: [Changing food for good | Food for Life](#)
- Training and courses on food and health and safety: [Food & Health Safety Courses & Training | Safer Food Group](#)
- Information, food facts, and recipes to support better health and healthier families: [Healthier Families - Home - NHS24/03.](#)

- Toolkit on engaging and supporting children with SEND for providers of the HAF programme: [Holiday Activities and Food Programme Toolkit](#)
- Food Standards Agency: [Homepage | Food Standards Agency](#)
- Professional body representing providers of services to the education catering sector: [Home | lead association for catering in education \(LACA\), the school food people](#)
- NHS guidance on how to stop a child from choking: [How to stop a child from choking - NHS](#)
- NHS video of “how to wash your hands” song: [How to wash your hands NHS song | NHS](#)
- Information for school staff on how to look after a child with diabetes: [Looking after a child with diabetes in school | Diabetes UK](#)
- Free online food safety training: [Online food safety training | Food Standards Agency](#)
- Food management pack for registered childminders or child carers who usually provide meals and drinks for children in their care: [Safer food, better business for childminders | Food Standards Agency](#)
- A practical guide for schools their cooks and caterers: [School-Food-Standards-Guidance-FINAL-V3.pdf](#)
- Strategies to [Support Feeding for Children with Sensory Processing Needs](#)
- Sustainable procurement: [the Government Buying Standards for food and catering services - GOV.UK](#)
- Advice for supporting children with SEND to explore new foods: [Supporting Children with SEN - Wither Slack Group](#)
- Regulations to ensure consumers receive clear and accurate information about food products: [The Food Information Regulations 2014](#)



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Video case study: Boxgrove Primary School

Boxgrove Primary School is a three-form entry school in Guildford that offers before and after school wraparound care. Their breakfast club runs from 7.30 to 8.30 am, catering to up to 88 children each day.

In this video case study, you can hear how the school have developed their provision to be inclusive of the differing needs of their children. They talk about their breakfast service set up and some of the systems they have put in place to support children who have allergies or food intolerances.

You can also hear about their approach to creating a sensory-friendly environment using calm areas, zoned activities and the Zones of Regulation to help children recognise and communicate how they are feeling.



“The children have a range of activities whether that’s choosing to read a book or play a boardgame with a play worker, there are so many different choices that we do tend to find on the whole that children achieve a lot of success a lot of the time in breakfast club.” **Co-headteacher Boxgrove Primary School**





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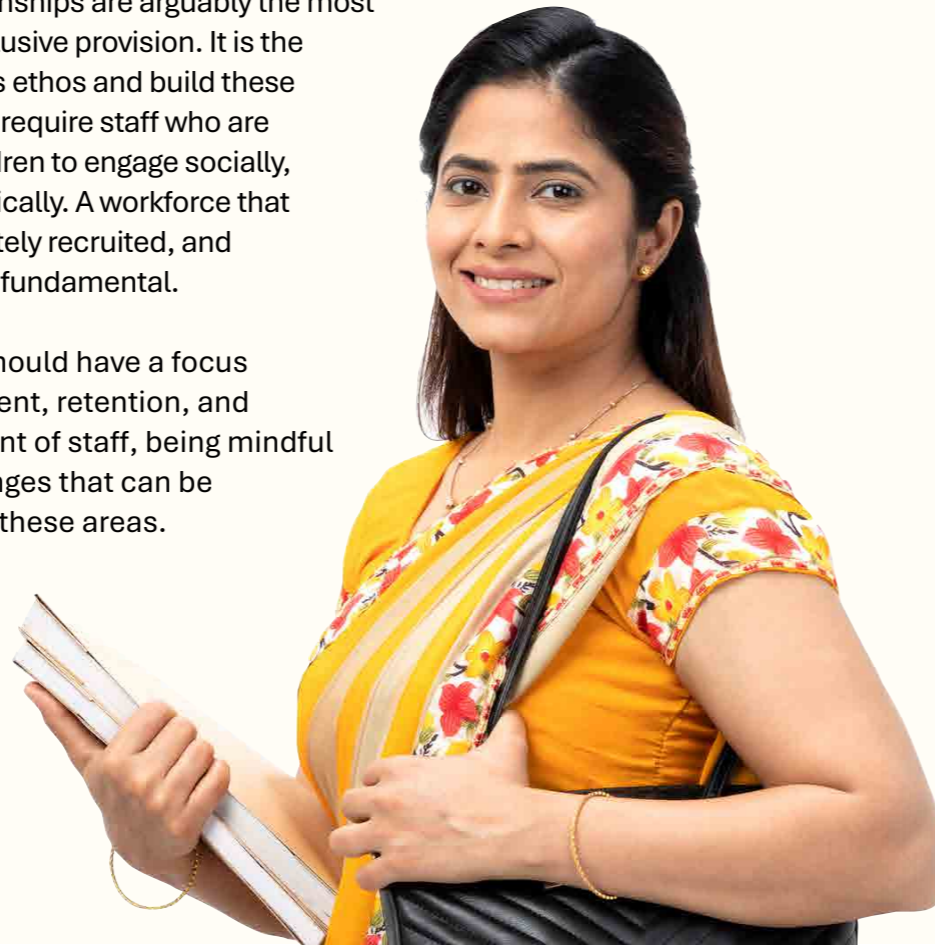
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Developing the workforce

Wraparound providers play a crucial role in the lives of children with additional needs, offering vital support to families while creating opportunities for children to learn, socialise, and build new skills beyond the formal school environment. The role is rewarding and fulfilling, and practitioners can have a meaningful positive impact on children's emotional, social, and academic development.

Building a robust, dedicated workforce is key to meeting the diverse and potentially complex needs of children with SEND in wraparound provision. As stated throughout this toolkit, good practice for children with SEND is everyone's responsibility, and a child-centred ethos and positive relationships are arguably the most important element of inclusive provision. It is the workforce who create this ethos and build these relationships, so settings require staff who are skilled in supporting children to engage socially, emotionally and academically. A workforce that is well-trained, appropriately recruited, and adequately supported, is fundamental.

All settings, therefore, should have a focus on the areas of recruitment, retention, and professional development of staff, being mindful of the significant challenges that can be presented in all three of these areas.



Recruitment

One of the first steps in building a strong workforce is to ensure that recruitment strategies specifically target and embrace individuals who will add value to inclusive provision. Staff will have skills or experience working with children with additional needs, and/or have demonstrated a passion for inclusion and developing their personal practice in supporting children with SEND.

Wraparound staff should not only be selected based on their qualifications and experience, but also based on their communication skills, their empathy, their ability to work collaboratively, and their commitment to inclusive practices. These skills are particularly key as the role requires close collaboration with children, [parents and carers, and other professionals](#), to create a cohesive and nurturing environment for all.

In provision connected to a school, it can be valuable to consider recruiting staff already employed by the setting. This can provide continuity of personnel and approach for children and families, as well as knowledge of strategies used throughout the school day. School staff are also likely to have accessed appropriate training and have built skills to support children with a range of additional needs. More information on recruitment can be found here: [Staff Recruitment - childcareworks.org.uk](#)



Reflection: In an existing setting, it can be useful to consider the skillset of the existing staff team. Are there any gaps in the staff skillset and experience? What future needs can be anticipated? Considering the goals of the setting, and the vision for the provision moving forward, will help to develop the criteria for recruitment.



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Interviews

Leaders need to consider what they are looking for before the interview process. Having structured questions to support this will be helpful in ensuring consistency. As well as asking about qualifications, skills, and experience, interviews are a chance to explore whether a candidate will fit well with the ethos and values of the setting. The interview is an opportunity for them to show their passion and enthusiasm for supporting all children, including those with additional needs.

As part of the interview process, it is useful to observe candidates working directly with children wherever possible, as this can demonstrate a clear commitment to a person-centred, positive approach towards Inclusion.

Settings should also remember to ask about and make [necessary reasonable adjustments](#) for candidates as part of the interview process.

Retention

Children, parents/carers, and colleagues will thrive in settings where staffing is consistent and motivated, and morale is good. So, once a skilled workforce is recruited, retaining staff is a key priority. High turnover of staff can disrupt the continuity of care and support that children with additional needs rely on.

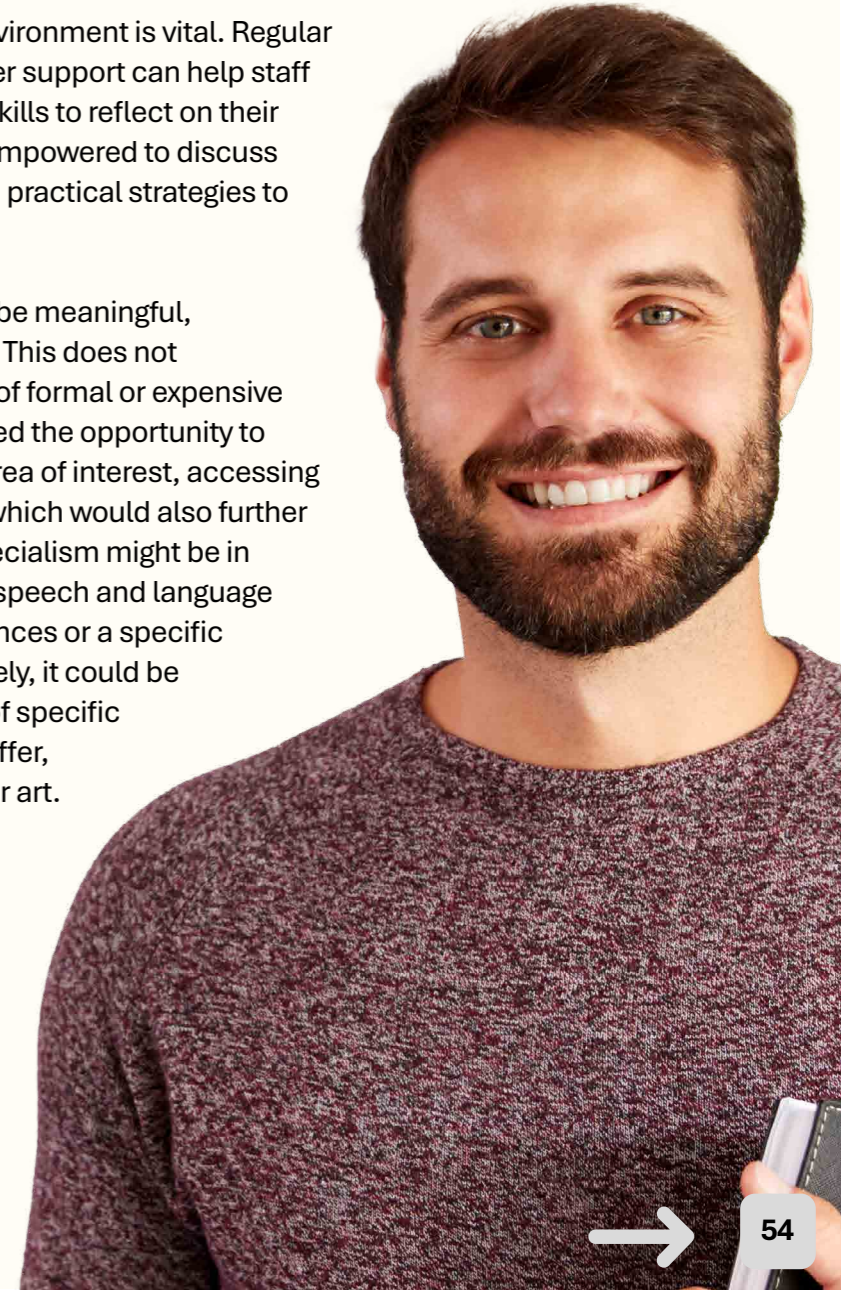
To retain a committed workforce, it is essential to provide a supportive work environment and to offer incentives that promote job satisfaction and wellbeing. It is important to cultivate a supportive work environment that acknowledges the unique challenges of working with a diverse cohort of children. Staff wellbeing should be prioritised, ensuring that they feel valued and equipped to meet the physical and emotional demands of their roles.

While pay is an important consideration, often constrained by budgets and other factors can significantly impact retention. Providing clear progression opportunities and additional responsibilities tailored to SEND specialisms can be highly motivating.

A nurturing and collaborative environment is vital. Regular debriefing opportunities and peer support can help staff to develop the confidence and skills to reflect on their role. Staff should feel safe and empowered to discuss challenges and be provided with practical strategies to manage these.

Professional development should be meaningful, with accessible training pathways. This does not necessarily need to be in the form of formal or expensive qualifications. Staff could be offered the opportunity to become ‘advocates’ in their own area of interest, accessing training, resources, and research which would also further support the whole setting. This specialism might be in particular areas of SEND, such as speech and language needs, autism, motor skills differences or a specific physical or health need. Alternatively, it could be around developing the inclusivity of specific activities or areas of the setting’s offer, such as music, outdoor learning, or art.

Empowering staff to set their own goals and targets sends a clear message that each team member is valued for their uniqueness and has something to contribute to both their own professional development, and to enrich the setting’s provision for children with additional needs.





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The principles of **co-production** apply to staff, as well as to children, parents/carers and other professionals. Providing opportunities for staff to give their views, and acting on these wherever possible, highlights the importance of each team member and helps them to feel heard and valued.

Showing respect and open communication costs nothing but goes a long way to ensuring that staff feel an integral part of the setting. Small gestures of appreciation can also be well received, from a simple verbal thank you, to written notes, small gestures, or a more formalised process. These incentives don't have to be expensive, but they can have a significant impact on morale

A strong induction process sets the foundation for long-term staff engagement. Induction should not only introduce new staff to the setting's policies and procedures, but should also immerse them in its inclusive ethos. Training at this stage typically includes SEND and inclusion, safeguarding, positive behaviour support, sensory regulation, communication strategies, health and safety, allergy awareness and food hygiene.

Creating a culture of continuous development

Embracing a culture of continuous training and development helps to maintain knowledge and motivation, and training offered to staff around SEND should not be seen as a one-off event, but as an ongoing process.

A good starting point is to complete an audit of current staff expertise and training, and to find out what training is desired and needed. This is likely to include general training about inclusive practice, and awareness and strategies to support particular diversities and areas of need. It may also include more specialist training, for example around visual or hearing impairment, or specific health or physical needs, including use of particular equipment. Establishing a culture of continuous professional development can involve creating

opportunities for practitioners to attend workshops, webinars, conferences or events where they can learn from specialists and experts in their field.

In addition to formal training, settings should encourage peer-to-peer learning and collaborative practices. By fostering an environment where staff can share experiences, strategies and challenges, the workforce can build new skills and further develop existing inclusive practices. Establishing a community of practice, where staff come together to solve problems and share successful strategies, can be an invaluable part of professional development. The sharing of reputable articles, books, podcasts, and similar can also help to develop skills and knowledge in a cost and time effective way. Linking with other settings and professionals can build on this even more effectively.

It is also important to engage in reflective practices. Regular feedback, opportunities to discuss successes and challenges together, and chances for self-evaluation help practitioners consider what is going well and identify areas for personal and team development. By prioritising reflection and feedback, practitioners are more likely to feel supported in their role and enthused to continue growing their knowledge and skills.

Training should be accessible and mindful of work/life balance and cognitive load. Regular short, bite-size chunks can prove more impactful than occasional one-off sessions.

“Establishing a relationship between the local authority and the out-of-school sector has been important to understanding what they need, which is not always the same as schools and education settings.”
Early Years, Access, and Inclusion Manager, Buckinghamshire Council's Early Years Service (including SEND support to the out of school sector).



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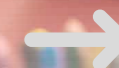
Summary

Building a skilled, motivated, and well-trained workforce is essential for delivering effective wraparound provision for all children, including those with additional needs. A focus on targeted recruitment, staff satisfaction and wellbeing, strong relationships, continuous professional development, and supportive leadership, can ensure that settings develop a workforce who can meet the ever-evolving needs of children. By creating a supportive environment where practitioners feel valued, cared for, and well-equipped, settings can build teams who are passionate and dedicated to providing the high-quality inclusive provision that all children need to thrive.

Wraparound provision should be nurturing, supportive, and fun – for children and for adults alike.



Reflection: If you are a setting leader, consider recruitment, retention, and training in your provision. Are there any actions you could take in any of these areas to further develop inclusive practice? If you are a setting practitioner, reflect on the training you have had in relation to SEND. Are there any areas where you feel you would like further support?





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Top Tips

- When recruiting staff, consider skills, experience, and passion for inclusion. Observe candidates interacting with children where possible.
- Complete an audit of staff skills and knowledge. What further training is needed around SEND?
- Provide opportunities for professional development. This does not need to be expensive and there is some high-quality free training available.
- Build a collaborative approach, giving staff opportunities to contribute to the development of provision, reflecting and sharing successes and challenges together.
- Proactively develop relationships with other organisations such as schools, your local authority, specialist agencies, or other wraparound providers. This may bring opportunities to team up for support, training, or to share resources.



Further information

Training provision

- Online short course providing: [An introduction to speech, language and communication from Speech and Language UK](#)
- Range of CPD training courses from high quality practice to condition specific introductions: [Events listing | Nasen](#)
- A series of 10 training videos produced by nasen, on behalf of Childcare Works, to support inclusive practice in wraparound provision: [Inclusive Practice in Wraparound Provision](#)
- Series of online CPD units for schools and education professionals: [Online CPD Units | Whole School SEND](#)
- List of suggested training providers for schools and childcare providers: [Training providers | Out of School Alliance](#)

Resources

- General information and resources for wraparound providers: [All Resources - childcareworks.org.uk](#)
- Short recording on: [Breaking Down Barriers – Helping Providers See Opportunities, Not Challenges – from childcareworks.org.uk](#)
- Short recording on: [Recruitment and Retention in Early Years and Wraparound Provision from childcareworks.org.uk](#)
- Toolkit for: [Recruiting and Retaining your Workforce in wraparound provision from childcareworks.org.uk](#)
- Bank of information support and resources: [Resources listing | Nasen](#)



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Case study: Buckinghamshire Council Early Years Service

About the local authority

Buckinghamshire Council's Early Years Service comprises of over 200 state schools and academies, attended by 88,304 children and young people (as of Jan 2022). The Early Years Service is responsible for supporting out of school provision such as wraparound care, breakfast clubs and holiday activities and food (HAF) programmes for primary-aged children.

Supporting a culture of continuous development

In 2024 the team identified the need to improve the confidence of the sector to support children with SEND, by widening access to traditional training and support to include all out of school providers.

They developed a comprehensive inclusion training programme, focused on issues specific to the sector, and underpinned by relevant examples and strategies suitable for children and young people with SEND. The training offers a mix of learning and practical support, with workshops on how to adapt activities to be more inclusive, and information to develop practitioner confidence and awareness of SEND. Providers were also given resources to help them quickly and easily implement the training in their settings. The [resources included](#) visual supports and a One Page Profile to use with families of children with SEND to aid communication.

The final training programme included:

- Impact of trauma in early childhood
- Making sense of autism (adapted from Autism Education Trust training)
- Seeing beyond behaviour (including information and guidance about regulation)
- Safeguarding
- Inclusion in practice
- Inclusion conference: Working together to get it right

Early in the roll-out of the training programme, feedback from attendees highlighted that a later start time would make the sessions more accessible. The majority of training now takes place between 7 – 9pm, which resulted in a positive impact on attendance. Providers also noted that many of them employ university students in their settings, so the training sessions are now run as close to the end of term as possible to enable them to attend.

The team are working with settings to ensure that the training is made available to as many staff as possible, and during their next phase they plan to introduce recorded webinars that can be shared more widely across staff teams.

A stronger and more confident workforce

The training has been extremely well received, with increased confidence levels reported, alongside providers feeling better prepared to support children with different SEND. The majority of those who have attended the training have developed their own One Page Profile template, and many of them are accessing the new resources developed for the programme.

The inclusion conference was a particular success as it gave a basis for developing practice rather than just sharing information. The event saw a high level of participation and created opportunities for sharing ideas and success stories. A highlight was having some young people with SEND presenting about their own lived experiences in the sector and how they can be supported. As a result, providers reported feeling inspired to go and make changes in their provision.



I love it when staff do their best to help me, it makes me feel valued like everyone else.” **Child, Buckinghamshire Council Early Years Service**



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Case study: Buckinghamshire Council Early Years Service, continued

Lessons learned

The team identified the following areas of learning to share with other local authority teams embarking on a similar project:

- ✓ Establish a relationship between the local authority and the out of school sector, as it is important to understand what they need, as this will not always be the same as schools and educational settings.
- ✓ Use an initial inclusion audit to understand what settings have already accessed and what areas they need to support.
- ✓ Reflect on your training offer. Is there enough accessible, relevant training, that reflects the local picture? Are there opportunities for services that families can access to train together?
- ✓ The key contact approach is effective, as having the same person as a contact in the LA allows them to highlight training needs and other areas for support.
- ✓ Include safeguarding as a thread through all the training, as well as a separate offer, helps get those key messages and updates across.
- ✓ Adapting existing resources developed for Early Years settings and schools is good start, as long as it reflects what happens in the sector.



We've made significant progress in creating a more inclusive environment where all children feel welcome. By adapting our activities and offering additional resources, we've ensured that children with additional needs can participate fully and meaningfully in our wraparound care."

Provider who attended Buckinghamshire Council Early Years Service training





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Conclusion

This toolkit has been designed to support those offering breakfast club, after-school, and holiday provision for children in a range of contexts and settings. These out-of-school settings play a vital role in providing a safe, supportive, and enriching environment beyond regular school hours. The insights, strategies, case studies and resources shared here aim to support practitioners to deliver inclusive, person-centred provision, fostering positive outcomes for all children, including those with SEND.

The role of wraparound providers in the lives of children with additional needs cannot be overstated. Practitioners can make a genuine difference in the lives and experiences of children by offering high-quality provision promoting inclusion, resilience, independence and nutrition, and considering individual strengths, motivations and barriers.

This toolkit has highlighted the importance of adopting a collaborative approach. As providers, it is important to work closely with children, parents and carers, schools, local authorities, and other organisations to ensure consistency of support and a joined up, multi-agency approach, to ensure that each child is supported holistically. Alongside whole-setting inclusive practices, development of individualised support plans that align with children's school SEN support or their EHC plan provision, can significantly enhance the quality of support provided in wraparound settings. Collaboration is key to ensuring that children, families, and staff, feel supported, valued and understood.

The toolkit emphasises the need for providers to be familiar with the legal frameworks governing such support, including the SEND Code of Practice 2015. Understanding the legal obligations, and best practices, ensures that providers can offer the necessary support whilst advocating effectively for children. This knowledge of statutory frameworks empowers providers to navigate complex or sensitive situations, ensuring that children receive the full support that they are entitled to, both in and out of school.





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The toolkit also stresses the importance of inclusive and welcoming environments, including those where food is provided. Providers should create spaces and provision where diversity is embraced, and all children feel that they belong. A positive, inclusive culture not only benefits children, but also enriches the experience of staff, families, and all stakeholders involved.

Finally, the toolkit highlights the importance of a strong, skilled, confident and stable workforce. Ongoing support, collaboration, and training, ensures that staff are equipped to support children effectively and with confidence. This continuous development allows staff to remain motivated, adaptable, responsive, and informed of best practices to support children with additional needs.

By accessing the strategies and resources highlighted in this toolkit, providers can create enriching, nurturing provision where every child has the opportunity to flourish and succeed, both during and beyond the school day.



Considerations and reflections resource for practitioners

Practitioners can access a practical **considerations and reflections resource**, designed to enhance the learning and guidance provided in the toolkit, helping you to reflect and build on existing practices. [Click here to access the resource.](#)



What you see day to day at our breakfast club provision is adults having positive interactions with children and you can't even begin to measure the impact that has on the young people within our school environment."

Boxgrove Primary School



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This page highlights external organisations where the user could locate further learning, resources and support.

General information and guidance for wraparound providers

- [Anna Freud: Mental Health And Wellbeing](#)
- [Childminding UK](#)
- [Contact: The charity for families with disabled children](#)
- [Education Endowment Foundation](#)
- [Family Action](#)
- [Family Lives](#)
- [Magic Breakfast](#)
- [MAIN: Together Raising Smiles](#)
- [Nasen](#)
- [National Children's Bureau](#)
- [National Network of Parent Carer Forums](#)
- [NSPCC](#)
- [Out of School Alliance](#)
- [PANS PANDAS UK](#)
- [Parent Hub](#)
- [Premier Education](#)

SEND organisations

- [ADHD UK](#)
- [Afacic: Support for young adults and children with speech language and communication needs](#)
- [Ambitious about Autism](#)
- [British Dyslexia Association](#)

- [Council for Disabled Children](#)
- [Downs Syndrome Association](#)
- [Mencap: Supporting people with learning disabilities](#)
- [National Autistic Society](#)
- [National Deaf Children's Society](#)
- [National Development Team for inclusion \(NDTi\)](#)
- [PDA Society: Pathological Demand Avoidance](#)
- [Royal Society for Blind Children](#)
- [Seashell Trust: Learning Disability Charity](#)
- [Sense: For disabled people](#)
- [Speech and Language UK](#)
- [The Children's Trust: For children with brain injury](#)
- [Thomas Pocklington Trust](#)
- [Young Epilepsy](#)

Organisations offering CPD for education practitioners

Please be aware that some of these options include paid for resources. These are merely suggestions and not recommendations.

- [Chartered College of Teaching](#)
- [iHasco: The eLearning Experts](#)
- [SENDcast: Podcast and CPD around SEND for schools and parents](#)
- [The Education People: CPD, Training, Safeguarding](#)
- [The Key](#)
- [The National College: CPD for Schools, Trusts, Colleges & Nurseries](#)
- [Twinkl: Primary Resources](#)
- [Widgit Online](#)



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Acronyms

See below list of acronyms and their meaning found throughout the toolkit.

Acronym	Meaning
ACEs	Adverse childhood experiences: Potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (ages 0-17) and can have long-term negative impacts on health, well-being, and life opportunities.
ADHD	Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder: A neurodevelopmental condition that can be characterised by inattentiveness and distractibility, hyperactivity and impulsivity, or a combination of these.
AT	Assistive technology: Any device, software or service that can assist individuals in the completion of, and participation in communication and/or activities.
CAMHS	Child and adolescent mental health services: An NHS service that assesses and treats young people with emotional or mental health difficulties.
DCD	Developmental coordination disorder: A condition affecting physical coordination.
EEF	Education Endowment Foundation: An organisation dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement.
EHC plan	Education, health and care plan: A statutory document for children with the most severe and complex needs.
EP	Educational psychology: The study and application of psychological principles to support children's learning and development.
EYFS	Early years foundation stage: A framework for the care and education of children from birth to five years old.
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation: An EU law that governs how personal data of individuals in the EU and EEA is collected, processed, and stored.
GOV.UK	Government of the United Kingdom: The official website for the UK government.

Acronym	Meaning
HAF	Holiday activities and food programmes: A programme providing healthy meals, enriching activities, and free childcare places to children from low-income families during school holidays.
HTML	Hypertext markup language: The standard language for creating web pages.
IEP	Individual education plan: A tailored plan developed to support the educational needs of a child.
IHP	Individual health care plan: A plan detailing the health care needs of a child.
ISP	Individual support plan: Tailored support plans for children developed in collaboration with parents, carers, and professionals.
LACA	Lead association for catering in education: An organisation representing the school food sector.
MLD	Moderate learning difficulties: Learning difficulties that require additional support.
NHS	National Health Service: The publicly funded healthcare system in the United Kingdom.
OT	Occupational therapy: Therapy focused on helping individuals perform everyday activities.
PMLD	Profound and multiple learning difficulties: Likely to include severe and complex learning difficulties as well as a physical disability or sensory impairment.
PPDS	Pre-packed for direct sale: Foods that are packaged on the premises before the consumer orders them.
PVI	Private, voluntary and independent: Refers to providers of childcare and education that are not part of the state sector.





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Acronym	Meaning
SALT	Speech and language therapy: Provides treatment, support and care for children and adults who have difficulties with communication, or with eating, drinking and swallowing.
SEMH	Social emotional and mental health: Including (but not limited to) emotional difficulties such as anxiety and depression. ADHD falls into this category.
SEN	Special educational needs: Refers to the needs of a child or young person who has a learning difficulty or disability that requires special educational provision.
SENCO	Special educational needs coordinator: A qualified teacher in a school or maintained nursery school who has responsibility for co-ordinating SEN provision.
SEND	Special educational needs and disabilities: Encompasses both special educational needs and disabilities, recognising that an individual may have one or both.
SLD	Severe learning difficulties: More significant learning difficulties that require substantial support. This is likely to apply to all areas and include associated difficulties with mobility and communication.
SpLD	Specific learning difficulties: Specific learning difficulties, affect one or more specific aspects of learning. This encompasses a range of conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia.
UDL	Universal design for learning: An educational framework that aims to remove barriers and enable children to interact with activities in their own way.
UK	United Kingdom: A country in Europe consisting of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

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