
Creating Accessible Childcare Settings

Guide to creating accessible Early Years settings for SEN children

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Introduction

Whether you are starting up a new setting or refurbishing an existing setting, you will find the following guidance helpful in assisting you to create the most supportive environment from the outset. A typical setting will include children with a wide range of abilities, from the more advanced child to those with special educational needs (see Appendix 3). This guide is not intended to be the answer to everything and the advice provided is based on current good practice. Managers are encouraged to seek advice from other sources, including the local Children's Services, builders and architects.

This guide is intended to provide the flexibility for you to plan for children with a disability in general and not for a specific child. For example, if any refurbishment is planned, such as to toilet/changing facilities, it would be prudent to ensure these are inclusive and fully accessible.

The principles included in this guide can be applied to any nursery setting whatever the size, and settings who provide services to older children through Out of School clubs. It can also be useful for those considering child minding within their own home and will also be helpful when assisting parents and staff members who have a disability.



Legislation

In order to understand the legislation that guides any design and build process to meet the needs of disabled children there are a number of technical guidance documents that should be consulted (some of these are summarized below). Simpson.J (2006) highlights that

‘What none of these documents achieve is a definition of how these areas should differ for children. This is particularly difficult when designing to meet the needs of younger children and those with profound needs.’

The Building Regulations Approved Document M (2005)

The building regulations govern building design and construction in England and Wales (Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own regulations). Part M of the regulations sets minimum standards of access for the use of buildings by all users. It specifically avoids reference to and/or defining disabled people. It is intended to be an inclusive approach ensuring all people have full access of buildings and their facilities.

The building regulations are supported by ‘Approved Documents’;

‘Approved Documents are intended to provide guidance for some of the more common building situations. However, there may well be alternative ways of achieving compliance with the requirements. Thus there is no obligation to adopt any particular solution contained in an Approved Document if you prefer to meet the relevant requirement in some other way.’ (Ref Access to and use of Buildings Approved Document M)

Whether you are building a setting from new or refurbishing/adapting an existing building, it is recommended to engage the services of builders and architects who have knowledge of Approved Document M and British Standard BS 8300:2009 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people. Where possible, seek advice from a local Occupational Therapist, particularly in a situation where there is a specific child in mind.

Special Educational Needs & Disability Act 2001 (SENDA)

This Act is an amendment of Part 4 of the Education Act 1996 and the object of it is to ensure that a person with a disability is not treated less favourably than a person without a disability. It applies to all settings who provide funded early years places and includes the provision of alternative teaching methods and supplies, provision of teaching support and changes to the physical features of a building. It supports the attendance of children with disabilities within mainstream schools and early years settings.

Early years settings must take all reasonable steps to ensure that a child with a disability can be safely accommodated and supported in the setting, taking into consideration the following factors:

- *the financial resources available to the responsible body*
- *the cost of taking a particular step*
- *the extent to which it is practicable to take a particular step*
- *health and safety requirements,*
- *the relevant interests of other people*

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 and Equality Act 2010

From 1 October 2004, under Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), service providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to overcome physical barriers to access.

The Equality Act replaced previous anti discrimination laws with a single act to make the law simpler and to remove inconsistencies. The Act sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone, such as direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, victimisation and failing to make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person.

The act prohibits unfair treatment in the workplace, when providing goods, facilities and services, when exercising public functions, in the disposal and management of premises, in education and by associations (such as private clubs).

Remember when considering improvements to the physical environment think about the duty to make reasonable adjustments - no-one expects the impossible.

Reference to the above documents are crucial to ensuring the best possible outcome for design of an inclusive nursery and elements of these recommendations have been included in this guide. NB The dimensions given in these documents are designed with adults in mind and are not always suitable for children.

We strongly recommend that you refer to ‘Designing for disabled children and children with special educational needs Guidance for mainstream and special schools - BUILDING BULLETIN 102’. This is comprehensive and informative document when designing for pre-school children and older. This will be of particular use for settings that offer Out of School services.

Overall design considerations

When specifying the detail of any new build, adaptation or refurbishment it is worth considering the following elements:

Space

Some children may need more space for moving around. Others may require more ‘personal’ space or space to calm. Additional space may be required for staff to support a child moving around the building, assisting in toilet / changing area. Specialist equipment can take up a lot of valuable storage space and be cumbersome to move. Never underestimate the amount of storage space that may be required!



Safety / security

Safeguarding is essential. However, consider how this may impact on a child's independence e.g. use of fire door closers may restrict a child's access between playroom and toilet. Use of finger guards on door hinges are often essential but can reduce doorway width. If fire exits have a push down bar within child's reach this may pose risk of child 'escaping' to an unsupervised area.

Young children with severe and profound learning difficulties or complex health needs may be at risk of heat injury from un-guarded standard radiators with surface temperature of 60 - 70°C. Whenever possible consider installing low surface temperature radiators (around 43°C and no greater than 46°C). Under-floor heating may also be worth considering as an option to provide safe ambient temperature. However this can be slow to respond to sudden changes in room temperature, e.g. sudden heat loss when a door is opened, and may require supplementary heating.

Decor / Materials / Finishes

How durable are the materials such as doors, architraves, walls? How easy are they to repair and redecorate? If budget allows, it is often more cost effective to provide a high quality durable finish which will withstand accidental damage. Avoid hard edged corners or rough textures on furniture, fixtures and flooring materials.

Sensory

Does noise echo or reverberate around the room? There are a number of solutions, including lowering ceiling heights, using sound absorbing materials such as acoustic plasterboard over bare walls. Strategically placed heavy curtains and soft furnishings act as a simple way to absorb sound.

When planning the layout design of the nursery can you accommodate a space to create sensory calm and/or a safe space to create a sensory stimulating area? Clever planning and layout will enable you to achieve this.

Avoid using bright primary colours for large surface areas such as walls, furniture and storage. Also avoid fixtures and fittings that are reflective or overly shiny which can be overstimulating and/or distracting for children particularly those with autistic spectrum conditions (ASC), challenging behaviour or visual impairment.

Lighting

Wherever possible, try to ensure a good level of natural light but consider the direction of sunlight coming into each space. Too much direct sunlight or glare can cause distress / discomfort to some children. Blinds are often a simple way to control the amount of light entering but consider

- type of material (e.g. how easy they are to keep clean?)
- how much light they block out (e.g. do you want 'Black out' blinds to create dark area or translucent blind to lower amount of light in room),
- type of blind - roller or slatted. NB some slatted blinds can create a strobe effect which can affect some children

All light fittings should be low glare taking care to avoid any lights that flicker or make any unwanted noise. Consider installing dimmer switches in rooms where you would like to create sensory calm areas.

Avoid having lights directly over changing beds as it can be distressing for young children and babies to stare directly into bright light. Consider installing up lighters in early years rooms, especially in areas where young babies / children may be lying on their backs . NB This type of lighting can sometimes be less distressing for children with autism.

Temperature

Extreme highs and lows in temperature can cause discomfort and distress to children with SEN and disabilities who may be more sensitive to subtle changes in temperature and have complex health needs. In playrooms, the recommended ambient room temperatures are between 18°C-21°C for clothed, ambulant and active children. For children with limited movement / complex physical difficulties the recommended ambient temperature is 23°C. In areas where children may be wet or partially clothed for significant periods of time, the suggested ambient temperature range is 25°C-30°C.

NB When temperatures of 28°C and above are reached overheating is said to occur. Children with special needs may be more sensitive to high temperature and overheat at a lower temperature.

Ventilation

Children with complex health needs are often susceptible to cross infection and poor ventilation can often be a potential source of contamination. Ventilation in areas such as toilets and changing rooms needs to be effective, ideally free flowing fresh air.

External access

Car parking

With any young child or baby, negotiating getting out of the car and into the nursery is always a challenge. For a child with mobility, emotional or behavioural difficulties it can be increasingly difficult. For example, transferring a young child who cannot yet walk from the car to a buggy requires additional space, and a child with emotional and behavioural difficulties has the increased potential of running into traffic.

If you are considering where to site a new setting, car parking will be an important factor. If possible, a designated car park adjacent to the nursery would be the ideal solution. However, if this is not available consider the following:

- Is there a car park nearby that could be used?
- Are there quiet residential streets nearby? Can you obtain a parking permit?
- Consider operating a greeting service e.g. parents text the setting once parked and a member of staff meets to assist.
- Negotiate with the council whether a designated drop off zone can be allocated.
- If there is no dropped curb, contact the local highways department to investigate the possibility of dropping the curb (a cost may be incurred).

If you do have a car park, consider the following:

- Aim to allocate a designated accessible parking space as close to the entrance as possible (see photo 1), ideally with a covered car port. Clear signage regarding the use of the space.
- Consider the overall security of the car park with regard to lighting (particularly during winter months), proximity to the main road, fencing/gates. Individual settings may wish to consider installation of CCTV system or similar.
- Use as smooth a surface as possible such as tarmac or wet pour concrete (surfaces such as gravel and flag stones can become uneven and difficult to push buggies and wheelchairs).



Photo 1 Example of Accessible car parking space adjacent to ramped access.

Main entrance

Your main entrance may be perfectly appropriate for the majority of parents and children. However, when upgrading or selecting a new property, consider whether an alternative entrance would be more suitable for adaptation i.e. level access, wider doors, ramping.

Steps, ramping and rails

Where level access is not feasible, consider the possibility of installing a permanent ramp. Ramps should be as shallow as possible with a gradient of around 1:20 or less (i.e. for every 1 cm rise requires the ramp to come out 20cm, 10cm rise requires the ramp to come out 200cm). It should be noted that a long ramp with a gradient of 1:20 can still be a potential barrier to children and adults with mobility difficulties.

The maximum permissible gradient is 1:12 (i.e. for every 1cm rise requires 12cm long ramp - 10cm rise = 120cm long ramp). NB When refitting existing buildings it may be permissible to use a shorter steeper ramp. It is advisable to provide a raised lip at the edge of ramps to identify the edge of the ramp to all users e.g. a person with a visual impairment.

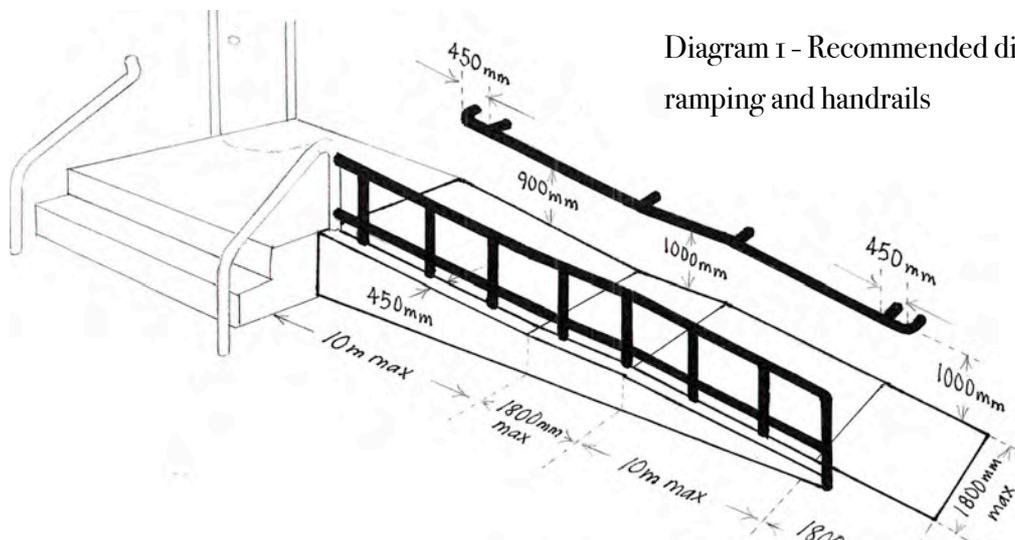


Diagram 1 - Recommended dimensions for ramping and handrails

Handrails - ramps

Ideally, handrails should be provided on both sides of all ramps with rails set at an appropriate height for adults (approx. 900mm from ramp surface) and additional lower set rails for young children (40mm - 45 mm diameter at a height of 500mm - 600mm from ramp surface).



Photo 2 Example of ramp with handrails suitable for both adults and young children, and raised edges.

External steps

Where steps are to be used outside the following should be taken into consideration:

- Each step is level and not ramped
- Unobstructed width of a steps should be minimum 1800mm wide
- Rise of each step should be uniform and no less than 150mm
- Tread depth for steps should be 280mm, with a slip resistant surface
- A step should not overlap the one below. If an overlap is unavoidable, the minimum overlap should not project by more than 25mm
- Flight of steps should not rise more than 1200mm. If flight of steps need to rise above 1200m then a landing 1800mm x 1800mm should be provided
- Level unobstructed landing of 1800mm x 1800mm at the top and bottom of each flight of stairs. Doors should not open out onto landings
- Nosing of each step should be distinguished by contrasting colour and luminance
- Ideally external steps should be protected from bad weather

Handrails - external steps

- Handrails should be provided to both sides of the stairway, with profile of 40mm -45mm diameter
- Where fixed to wall, rails should be 60mm -75mm away from any adjacent wall or surface
- For adults, handrails should be fixed between 900mm and 1000mm above nosing of each step, and between 900 and 1100mm above each landing. For children additional handrails should be fixed at approx. 500mm - 600mm from nosing of each step.
- If stairway has two or more flights, separated by landings, each handrail should be continuous
- When width of stairs is greater than 1800mm a central handrail should be provided
- Handrails should extend 450mm beyond the stairs
- End of a handrail should either be curved and fixed to the floor or turned into the wall

Entrance lobby

The main door into the setting should be wide enough to accommodate a double buggy and any doormats should be flush with the floor (avoid natural materials which may cause traction for wheelchairs / buggies).

Consider the height of the door entry system (e.g. intercom, doorbell) and ensure that is it within reach of an adult sitting in a wheelchair. Ensure that there is a visual contrast between the door entry system and the background as a white doorbell on a white frame can be difficult for a parent with a visual impairment.

Ideally, the door should have an automatic opening mechanism such as a touch pad clearly stating which direction the door opens.

Internal access

Doorways and circulation space

The number of doors should ideally be kept to a minimum as they take up space and generate traffic.

Approved Doc M/M1 Section 7 (2005) recommends / states that “internal doors need to be of suitable width to facilitate wheelchair manoeuvre. A wider door than generally provided would allow easier manoeuvring when it is necessary for a wheelchair user to turn into a doorway opening, as opposed to approaching head on”. See Table 1 for recommended doorway widths in relation to width of corridors and passageways.

If a new build, doorways should ideally be a minimum 800 mm clear opening width. 750mm is the recommended minimum if converting doorway within existing building. NB Double buggies are wider than wheelchairs and this should be taken into consideration, particularly at external entrances.

If the approach to a door requires a 90 degree turn and has a narrow access route of 1200 mm width, the door width should be a minimum of 825mm (775mm for existing builds). In existing buildings, if corridors are narrow, wider doors should be considered.

Table 1 Minimum width of corridors and passageways for range of doorway widths. Ref Approved Doc M/M1

Doorway clear opening width (mm)	Corridor/passageway width (mm)
750 or wider	900 (when approach head on)
750	1200 (when approach not head on)
775	1050 (when approach not head on)
800	900 (when approach not head on)

Corridors should be as un-obstructed as possible and any fixtures, such as radiators and fire extinguishers, should be recessed wherever possible (consider under floor heating). If this is not possible, the obstruction should be guarded.

Where possible vision panels should be provided to all doors except where privacy is required. Kick plates fitted to the bottom of doors reduce potential level of damage from buggies, frames & wheelchairs.

Safety considerations - fire doors

It is likely several of the doors within the setting need to be fire doors. Therefore these doors will have to satisfy the necessary fire regulations and the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).

SENDA states: "...a door closer must produce an opening force of below 30N between 0 and 30 degrees and below 22.5N between 30 and 60 degrees' (Note: N = Newton is a measurement of force).

Fire doors with maximum opening pressure of 30N can be difficult for some young children with or without disabilities to open independently. Often young children hold onto door frames for stability when passing through and are at risk of trapping their fingers if the door closes automatically. It would be advisable to fit hinge guards to appropriate doors. Take into account potential reduction of clear opening width to each doorway and where possible increase maximum opening possible to accommodate hinge guards.

There are several different types of door closers which can make it easier for an adult supporting a child to pass through a doorway. Electro-magnetic door closers are connected to the fire alarm to allow the door to be held open during normal use. Upon activation of the fire alarm or a power failure, the door closer will close the door securely. Types of openers which make passage easier include:

- Delayed Action - Delayed Action allows the door to stay open longer and a greater number of people to go through the door before it begins to close. With Delayed Action, the door is opened and then delays for a set period of time before closing. The delay is adjustable by valve and can be adjusted to suit each application.
- Free Swing Devices - A free swing door closer enables a door to operate without the user feeling any resistance i.e. just like a door without a door closer. This allows the door to be left in any position, such as ajar if preferred, until on activation of the fire alarm or power failure the electromagnetic control releases, enabling the door closer to function and close the door securely.
- Electromagnetic Hold open devices - Fire door can be held open for however long is required. Door can still be released manually and in the event of a fire the door will close automatically.

NB Approved Document M recommends: The use of "swing free" controlled door closing devices should be limited to applications where doors are located for access to rooms or similar locations and not part of a circulation route. The use of "delayed action" controlled door closing devices should similarly be avoided in circulation areas.

Thresholds

Thresholds at doorways should ideally be level, but if not, they should be no more than 15mm high with chamfered or rounded edges. If you are considering installing uPVC doors (e.g. patio doors) they often have fixed thresholds which can be a trip hazard and if possible specify the installation of a level threshold. Alternatively you can purchase threshold ramps (see appendix 2).

Stairs and handrails

When designing new settings other than dwellings (i.e. houses) internal stairs need to comply with Building Regulations 2004 Part M section 1 and 3 which includes the following design considerations:

- Level landing is provided at the top and bottom of each flight of stairs. A flight of stairs should normally contain no more than 12 risers except in small premises where space is restricted then no more than 16 risers is acceptable
- No doors swing across landings
- No single steps
- Nosing of each step (edge) are made apparent by means of a permanently contrasting material 55mm wide on both the tread and the riser.
- The rise and tread of each step is consistent throughout the flight of stairs i.e. steps are all same size.
- A step should not overlap the one below. If an overlap is unavoidable, the minimum overlap should not project by more than 25mm
- The rise of each step is between 150mm and 170mm. The going (tread) of each step is at least 250mm. NB in school buildings 150mm is the preferred height (this dimension should not exceed 170mm) and the preferred tread is 280mm
- Risers are not open

- Handrails with profile of 40mm -45mm diameter should be fixed to both sides of the stairs, are continuous across each flight and landing, and set at heights that are convenient for all users. For adult use the recommended height for handrails is between 900mm and 1000mm from the pitch of the flight of stairs. Between 900mm and 1100mm from the surface of the landing. For young children additional handrails should be fixed at approx. 500mm - 600mm from pitch line of stairs.
- Handrails should extend at least 300mm horizontally beyond the top and bottom of stairs, terminate in such away that reduces the risk of clothing being caught
- Where fixed to wall, rails should be 60mm -75mm away from any adjacent wall or surface and contrast visually with background without being highly reflective
- The recommended clear width of stairs should be minimum of 1000mm and maximum of 1800mm. If stairs wider than 1800mm a central handrail should be considered.

In existing settings and in particular settings within 'houses' whilst stairs do not need to meet all of the criteria set out above it would be good practice to ensure that as long as they do not restrict access, rails are fixed both sides of the stairs set at appropriate heights for adults and children. Stairwells should be adequately lit with visual contrast strips at the nosing (edge) of each step.

Playrooms

A playroom should be designed specific to purpose and available space. Play should be accessible to all children regardless of ability or developmental stage. Young children are at a developmental stage of exploration and movement, this should be encouraged and the play environment should offer children the ability to move freely and easily between activities.

Signage

With all activities, introduce good signage early and keep it age appropriate. For example, start with simple images, and / or photos, and then introduce text with the images. With pre-school children it can be appropriate to eliminate the images and to just use text for simple common activities such as 'cars'.

Floor level play equipment

It is well documented how important it is for young infants to experience play in different positions on the floor. The following equipment will enable you to offer a variety of play experiences:

- In order to encourage babies to spend time on their tummies (prone) it is essential to provide them with interesting, stimulating and comfortable play areas and activities. There are many commercially available playmats that do this (see appendix 2). Prone play is an important developmental stage which helps to develop upper body, trunk and head control in preparation for sitting and crawling.



- There are many ways to support a young child whilst they are developing their sitting balance; using yourself, cushions, 'V' cushions, 'widget' cushions and equipment such as Bumbos (see photo 3) and Jenx/Lecky corner seat (see appendix 2). Corner seats are often recommended by therapists for children with additional needs.



Photo 3 - Bumbo Seat

- Carefully positioned toys and activities will encourage children to reach and move out of their base of support and so promote crawling.
- By offering toys and furniture of varying heights, this will encourage a child to begin pulling to stand and furniture cruise.

Seated play equipment

Once at a seated activity it is important to ensure the child is well supported and stable in order to encourage the development of fine motor skills and cognition. Good seating requires the child to have their feet placed on a firm surface, their bottom to be well back in the chair and to be at such a height that enables them to easily reach activities on a table. Table heights need to correspond with seat heights. A good rule of thumb is for a child's seat height to be approx. 20cm below the table top.

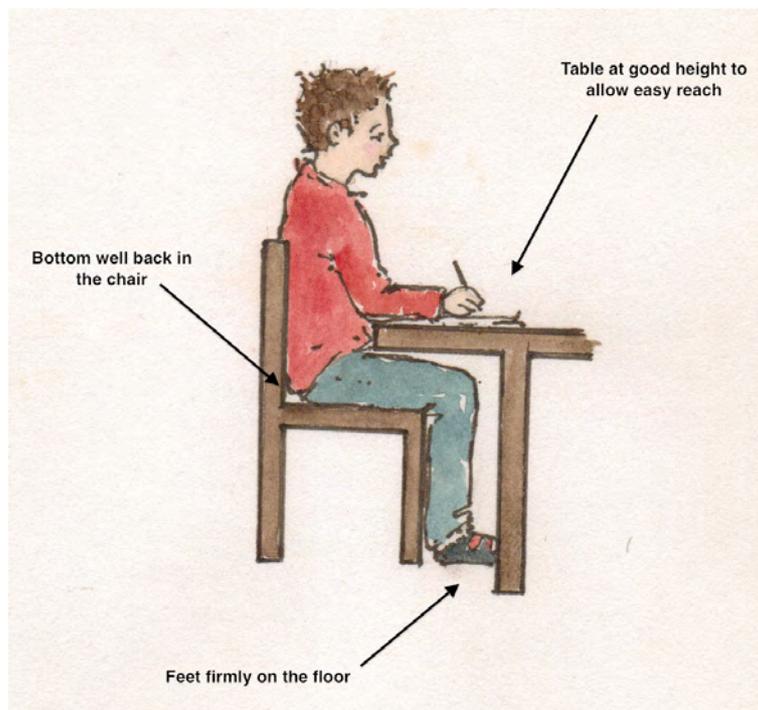


Diagram 2 Good seating position

A number of nursery chairs that can offer this are:

- Woodcrest chair, Childshape chairs (Community Playthings) - (see photo 4)
- Foxdenton (G & S Smirthwaite)
- Tripp Trapp
- Leckey PAL
- Heathfield (NRS and Joncare) (see photo 5)
- Rifton toddler chair

NB: This list is not exclusive and there are other, similar chairs available.



Photo 4 - Woodcrest Chair



Photo 5 - Heathfield Chair

Equipment selection needs to suit the environment, whether it is a permanent setting or a shared use facility. Consider whether the items can stay in position or if moveable furniture will offer more potential use within a room, e.g. creating a snug corner or role play area.

The sensory environment

It is vital to create a calm but stimulating environment. Carefully consider basic elements such as paint colour for walls and ceilings, and opt for using display boards in preference to filling a whole wall. Refrain from too many pieces of artwork hanging from ceilings and across rooms; you may need to factor in to your design plan an alternative means of drying children's

artwork. A room that is too decorative can be over stimulating for young children and can affect their ability to learn, their behaviour and/or mood.

The sensory environment can be difficult to control in childcare settings. Rooms can become very noisy and, with Free Flow play in winter, can be rather cold. When building from new it is easier to factor in insulation and sound absorbing materials such as under-floor heating and wall finishing, but false ceilings, mats and rugs can be used to dampen acoustics and improve temperature in rooms with high ceilings in existing buildings.

When it is not possible to change the physical building, children who are over sensitive to noise and visual stimulation will benefit from easy and spontaneous access to quiet areas/dens. These can be easily created through the use of ‘roomscales’ (see photo 6) pop up tents, big cushions, bean bags and using soft toys. Space to accommodate this should be considered within the design of the play room and will be best sited, if possible, in a darker area or an area with natural rather than artificial light.

The ideal floor surface is where part carpet and part non-slip vinyl flooring is used. If this is not possible opt for non-slip vinyl flooring throughout as carefully placed mats and rugs can be very effective.

This document is intended to help you to develop an appropriate environment for children. However, careful consideration must be given to the toys and activities introduced into your setting in order to optimise the learning environment created.



Photo 6 - Example of playroom using ‘Roomscapes’, vinyl flooring & rugs

Dining areas

As mentioned above, good seating is essential to allow children to develop independent skills for eating and drinking, such as using cutlery or beakers. Mealtimes are incredibly social times, with children developing many communication skills using peers and adults as role models. A calm and structured environment is integral to enabling young children to develop the above skill areas.

Furniture

It is much more cost effective to select multi-functional equipment within your nursery such as height adjustable furniture. Tables and chairs are readily available from many manufacturers at comparable cost. If there are financial restrictions it is more advantageous to opt for an adjustable height table as chairs are more easily purchased in different sizes and there are many options to adapt, e.g. using a foot block or wedge cushion.

- ‘Community play things’ height adjustable tables and chairs
- Stokke Tripp Trapp, Baby Dan high chairs or similar chair with adjustable seat and footplate (photo 7)



Photo 7 High chair with adjustable seat and footplate height

Utensils

- The slanted Doidy cup (see photo 8) is designed to encourage drinking from an open cup rather than from spout. The slanted design also minimises the amount of head and neck movement required to drink from the cup
- Junior caring cutlery or similar (see photo 9) - cutlery with moulded handles and finger placement guides.
- Non-slip matting such as dycem can be used to hold plates/ bowls in place at the table



Photo 8 Doidy cup



Photo 9 Junior Caring Cutlery

Toilet / washing facilities

Location

If planning a setting from scratch try to accommodate toilet and changing facilities as close to playrooms as possible, ideally situated off the room to allow children to access independently where appropriate.

The amount of available space is one of the most important considerations when supporting a child with their toileting needs. A child with a physical or learning disability may need support into the cubicle, on/off the toilet, getting clothing down / up, attending to hygiene needs. Having at least one toilet cubicle with a door which opens outwards (photo 10) is often a simple way to create additional space within the cubicle and make assisting a child in / out of toilet easier.



Photo 10 Example of extra width toilet cubicle next to standard width cubicles. All doors opening outwards.

The layout, fixtures and fittings within the toilet should reflect the age of the children and help them to develop their personal care skills. The recommended toilet height for children aged 3-5 years is 300–350 mm with smaller toilet aperture. Toilet paper dispensers should be positioned within the child's reach. Similarly soap and paper towel dispensers should be fitted at appropriate heights to encourage independence.

Equipment

There are various steps and seats available to assist any young child to use the toilet independently. The following list is a selection of items that can be used with a child with additional needs:

- Wide non slip height adjustable steps e.g Adjustable step stool from Nottingham Rehab Supplies. Steps usually used as bath step but give wider platform for child to transfer on/off high toilet safely.
- Childrens toilet frames which go around the toilet
- Toilet seats with integral grips
- Fixed toilet seats which reduce the aperture size of adult sized toilet e.g. 2 in 1
- Magnetic door catches for privacy and ease of opening

Children with additional needs may have a weak grip and have difficulty using some types of taps e.g. crystal taps, push down taps. There are various types of taps available which would increase a childs independence including:

- ¼ turn Cross head taps - allows a child opportunity to develop a twisting action.
- Individual ¼ turn Lever taps - lever handle around 10cm or longer
- Single lever taps
- Twin lever mixer taps
- Toggle action taps - have a vertical toggle which only require small degree of movement to operate

NB Remember to ensure that 'hot' or mixer taps have pre-set temperature limit to prevent scald injuries.

Accessible toilets

When planning toilets, it is worth investigating if there is sufficient space within the setting to create an accessible toilet. NB When discussing plans with a builder, architect or design consultant please note the dimensions given in Approved Document M for an accessible toilet are inappropriate for children.

Diagrams 3, 4 and 5 are from Building Bulletin 102 and are examples of layouts & dimensions of accessible toilets for disabled children.

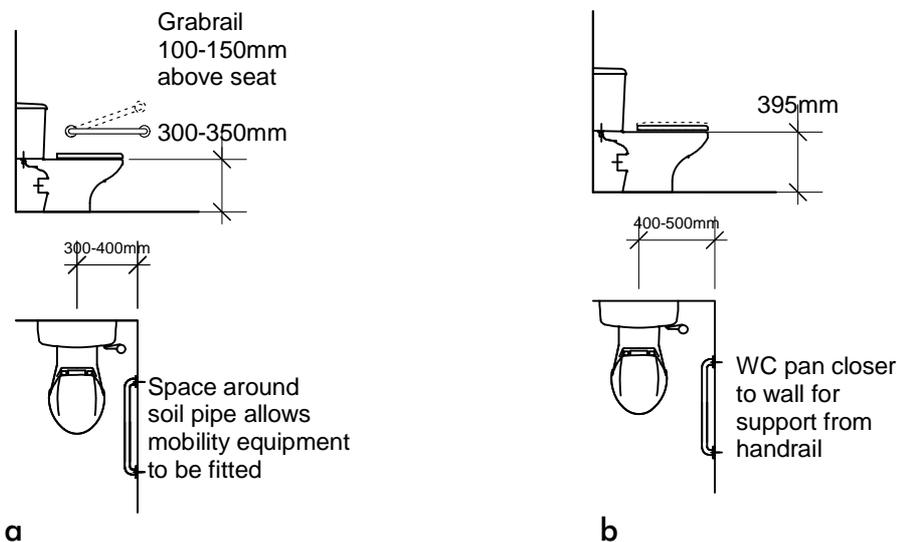


Diagram 3 - Key dimensions around the toilet for:

- a) Nursery and infant age children with or without disabilities
- b) Older primary age children with or without disabilities

Horizontal grab rails should be fixed 100 -150 mm above the toilet seat. A vertical rail can also be fixed adjacent to the horizontal rail to assist a child in standing. Additional drop down rails can be fixed to open sides of toilet, 100 - 150 mm above seat height.

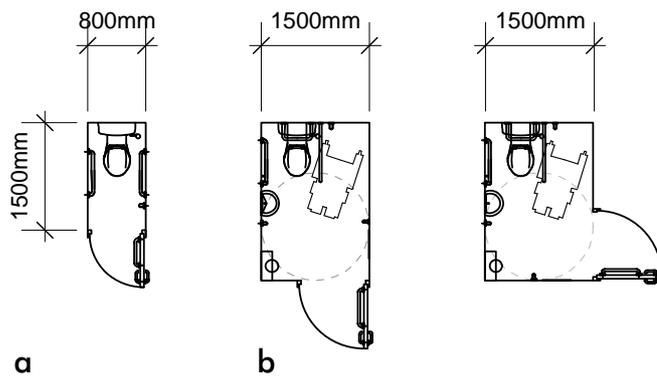


Diagram 4 - Accessible toilet layouts for;

a) Ambulant disabled child

b) Corner layout with additional space for transfer and assistance

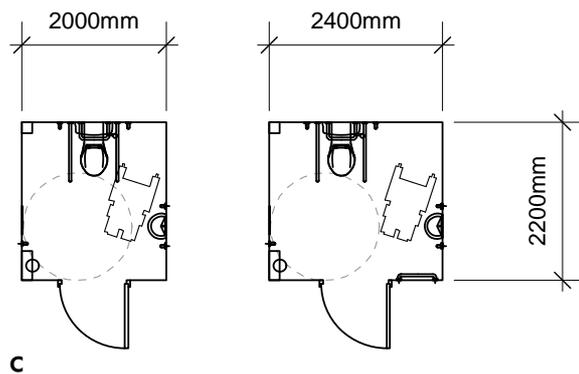


Diagram 5 -

c) Central layout to allow staff to assist both sides.

Layouts in Diagrams 4 & 5 meet the standards of BS 8300

Lower height cubicles should be a minimum of 800mm height for an ambulant disabled child with the door opening outwards wherever possible. D ring door handles and magnetic door catches would increase a child's independence to access the toilet.

Changing area

Consideration should be given to providing a separate changing area within, adjacent or near by playrooms that cater for each age group of children. Changing areas for babies can be accommodated within rooms but consideration should be given to privacy, ventilation, space available and storage of nappy changing equipment.

The amount of available circulation space is one of the most important factors to consider when designing changing areas for younger children. Children with SEN can often take longer to become continent. To reduce manual lifting it would be worth considering the following options:

For ambulant children able to climb up and down with minimal assistance there are a range of changing tables with integral steps (photo 11). There are several types available e.g. Community Playthings, Eibe, Jonticraft.



Photo 11 - Changing table with steps from Community Playthings.

Children who could transfer to a low surface but would be unable / or unsafe to climb there are several types of height adjustable tables available including:

- Wall Mounted (Photo 12)
- Free Standing (Photo 13)
- Mobile (Photo 14)



Photo 12 Example of Wall mounted changing table



Photo 13 Eibe Height adjustable changing table



Photo 14 Example of Mobile changing table

Dependent on type, height adjustable tables can be operated manually, electronically or hydraulically from a low height for a child to transfer onto and then be raised to a comfortable working height for the carer. There are several types of height adjustable change table commercially available but they are often expensive to buy. Further information on changing tables for children can be found at www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk

For older children unable to self transfer you may need to consider the use of a hoist in combination with a changing table. Mobile hoists are freestanding hoists which lifts a child and transfers them from one position to another, such as from a wheelchair to changing table and back. Ceiling track hoist are a fixed tack with a hoist unit suspended underneath which travels along the track. Ceiling tracks can be single straight or curved tracks which cover a limited amount of floor space or 'X-Y' type which cover whole floor area. As there are several different models of hoists available of various different shapes and sizes we would advise seeking further guidance before purchasing or installing one. See diagram 6 from Building Bulletin 102 for suggested layouts for use of a mobile hoist within changing rooms.

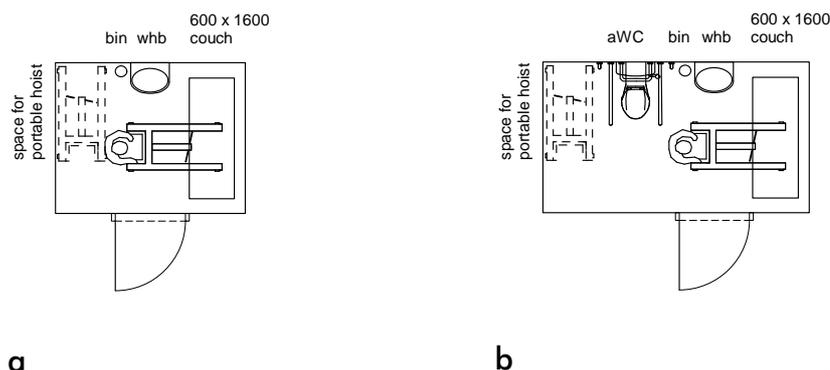


Diagram 6 - Suggested layout for changing room (a) and assisted toileting (b) for early years. Both layouts are shown with mobile hoists.

If planning to provide services for older children e.g. Out of school club, it would be advisable to check with a builder / architect to clarify if the ceiling is suitable for installation of ceiling track hoist. For short term use it would be sensible to check if it is possible to hire either a mobile or ceiling track hoist. The Independent Living website (<http://www.independentliving.co.uk/rental.html>) provides useful information regarding hire of equipment.

Outside play

The Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2008) states:

The outdoor environment

- Being outdoors has a positive impact on children's sense of well-being and helps all aspects of children's development.
- Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors.
- It gives children first-hand contact with weather, seasons and the natural world.
- Outdoor environments offer children freedom to explore, use their senses, and be physically active and exuberant

Children are non-judgmental and have a much more simplistic outlook than adults, being more uninhibited and have greater interaction with their surroundings. Being within nature provides children with unlimited sensory experiences that are continually changing.

“Natural outdoor environments have 3 qualities that are unique and appealing to children as play environments – their unending diversity; the fact that they are not created by adults; and their feeling of timelessness – the landscapes, trees, rivers described in fairy tales and myths still exist today.....Adults typically see nature as background for what they are doing. Children experience nature, not as background for events, but rather as a stimulator and experiential component of their activities.”

White, R. & Stoecklin, V.



When designing an outdoor space, it is necessary to consider;

- Safety and security of the children.
- If fencing is in place or is to be installed, consider whether it can be climbed by a small child using a foothold and potentially pose a further risk of the child escaping or falling from a height. There may be various solutions, e.g. for wooden fencing, ensure that the vertical palisade is on the inside with no or minimal gap to prevent child getting foothold.
- Natural light i.e. sun traps and shaded areas
- Floor surfaces i.e. grass, safety flooring, hard surfaces
- Size of equipment, taking into consideration storage and security
- Permanent play equipment vs storable equipment i.e. plastic folding slides etc
- Space
- Use of bikes/trikes/ scooters if required
- Heights of play areas – sand and water trays, also permanent vs temporary or multi-purpose. Consider split height play equipment to accommodate for the wide range of height differences in young children. These will also accommodate the wheelchair user.

When considering the comments made by White & Stoecklin and the EYFS principles, it is not essential to have a state of the art purpose built outdoor play centre. Sometimes simplicity will offer a more challenging and stimulating environment for the young mind.



There are many design companies out there to assist you in developing your outdoor play area, all these should provide you with the necessary information pertinent to safety aspects such as absorbent surfaces and free-fall heights. A surface must have a critical height value (measurement of impact absorbency) equal/greater than the maximum free-fall height. Safety

flooring specifications are much easier to decide upon if selecting permanent play structures, however when temporary structures are used, it is advised to opt for a surface of greater absorbency impact value than necessary, should replacement items be higher.

According to Kompan Play Institute there are 6 key principles when designing for inclusive play for child with additional needs:

1. Accessible
2. Multi-functional (when possible)
3. Designed to allow play from all sides
4. Equipped with diverse play opportunities
5. Clear in colour and design signals
6. Provided with special solutions for special needs where relevant

Summary

In summary, this document is intended to act as a guide for the development of a design brief at the planning stage of any refurbishment or new build to maximise accessibility for children. At the time of writing, the information provided is based on good practice and current legislation. It is not intended to be all encompassing and should be used to signpost you to other supporting documents and sources of further information.

In the design stages, it is advisable to seek expert advice from local authority Early Years services and Occupational Therapists. HPC registered Independent Occupational Therapists may provide environmental assessment and guidance throughout the design/build process.

Reference

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- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) Available at: <http://www.hoboweb.co.uk/se0-blog/send/> (Accessed 16 March 2011)
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Doody cup [Online image] Available at:
<http://images.esellerpro.com/2204/I/834/1/lrg862.jpg> (Accessed 16 March 2011)

Eibe height adjustable changing table
[Online image] Available at:<http://liveimageserver.dlf.org.uk/mee//products/med/0047876.jpg> (Accessed 16 March 2011)

APPENDIX 1 - Definitions of SEN

The terms explained below are those used when children are provided with support that is additional to or different from the support normally given to children of the same age in an educational setting. Not all children with SEN in early years settings have been formally identified as having difficulties. However, this is the period of time that these difficulties are becoming evident, and these children will need a supportive environment. It can also be a stressful time for the parents/carers who are undertaking the diagnostic process.

The definitions and the related environmental considerations should give some general guidelines to help support a child with a confirmed or potential SEN within the setting. Some of these children will have additional assistance, both through equipment and/or adult support in the nursery. This may require additional space. They may also have support from outside agencies such as Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Speech and Language Therapy who will ideally need identified space to work with the child or a group of children.

Specific Learning difficulty (SpLD)

This is an umbrella term for a range of difficulties including; dyslexia, dyspraxia/DCD, Aspergers and attention difficulties such as ADHD and ADD. Children with these difficulties will struggle with the development of their motor skills, sensory and perceptual skills (how they make sense of the world around him), information processing skills, memory skills and their attention skills. Whilst at nursery age these skills are in a stage of rapid development and it is often not clear when children have problems in these areas. However, nursery staff should always be mindful of this and the environmental setting should be supportive of children with potential problems as well as those with confirmed difficulties.

Children with SpLD need a flexible approach to learning with space for movement activities and good acoustics. They will also need consideration of how they are positioned during activities such as story time to ensure that they are able to attend to and understand the staff member.

Learning difficulties; Moderate (MLD), Severe (SLD), Profound & multiple (PMLD)

A child with a learning difficulty has impairment in their intellectual and social development which impacts of their daily functioning. A learning difficulty will be evident from childhood and is not the result of an illness or accident. The severity of a learning difficulty can be classified as moderate (MLD), severe (SLD) and profound and multiple (PMLD) and this classification tends to be based on IQ (35-50 – Moderate, 20-35 – Severe, less than 20 – Profound). At nursery age, children are less likely to be identified as having difficulties with IQ but will show slow achievement of developmental milestones and difficulties mastering basic functional activities such as dressing/undressing, toileting, mark making and understanding of basic concepts such as colours, sequencing, spatial concepts like over/under.

The environmental considerations for children with learning difficulties will depend on the severity of their learning difficulty. Children with more moderate difficulties will need similar support to those with SpLD, while those with more severe difficulties will need more space for greater support and more accessibility considerations, moving and handling risk assessment, infection control and moving and handling advice and support. They may also require extra storage space for larger mobility or seating items.

Behaviour, emotional & social difficulty (BESD)

The term behaviour, emotional and social difficulty covers a wide range of difficulties including being withdrawn and isolated, being disruptive, being hyperactive with poor concentration and having immature skills. Of course, all nursery and pre-school children have a natural element of these behaviours, but they become a difficulty when they become a barrier to learning and development. Also to be taken into consideration is the nature, frequency, persistence and severity of the behaviour, and any abnormal behaviour.

A child with behaviour, emotional and/or social difficulties will need to be supported in all these areas which may involve input from social workers, educational psychologists and the mental health service (CAMHS). Risk assessments will need to be carried out to ensure their safety and that of their peers, and their environment should be as supportive as possible with minimal distractions and with safe/quiet spaces. The child's safety should be the highest

consideration with only robust, tamper proof objects within their reach and locks on any accessible cupboards/doors. They should have access to large, secure outside space.

Speech, language & communication needs (SLCN)

This classification of SEN relates to a child whose acquisition of their speech and oral language skills are significantly behind their peers. They may also have difficulty with their understanding and use of words in context and struggle getting others to understand what they want to say.

A child with communication needs should have clear, pictorial signage, good lighting and acoustics and may benefit from sound insulation and sound-field systems. Even at nursery age, many children are capable of using communication aids and assistive technology, and storage for these will be needed. The child should be well positioned in order to gain the most from activities. Local therapists will provide recommendations in situations where additional support is required such as the use of signing, communication aids and PECS.

Autism spectrum conditions (ASC)

Children with an autism spectrum conditions have difficulty with verbal and non-verbal communication and interpersonal relationships. They may struggle to understand social behaviour, which impacts on how they interact with adults and other children and may have difficulty with thinking and behaving flexibly and so have obsessive or repetitive behaviours. Many children with ASC also have difficulty processing sensory information such as sound, smell, touch and movement, affecting their responses to these sensations. As the name suggests, there is a range of effects and presentations, from higher functioning children (often referred to as Asperger Syndrome) to the more severely affected.

The most ideal environment for children with ASC is one that is calm and ordered with limited visual stimulus and good acoustics. Sudden and background noises should be avoided and they should have a calm, quiet space which they can use as a time out/calm down space. Their social skill development will need to be supported and specialist ASC teaching and resources may be used.

Hearing impairment (HI)

The term Hearing Impairment is used for children with a range of hearing loss, from mild, where they have some difficulties with hearing, especially in noisy surroundings, to profound and complete hearing loss.

For a child with hearing difficulties, an environment with low sensory stimulus, particularly background noise, with good acoustics and sound-field systems and hearing loops will be beneficial. Specialist HI teaching strategies and the development of signing will be needed.

Visual impairment (VI)

The term Visual Impairment describes a child with impaired sight, either partial or complete, who requires additional support even after corrective methods are in place such as glasses or surgery.

Lighting in the nursery environment is essential for a child with visual impairment, with good quality ambient and task lighting, visual contrasts, tactile trails and maps. Good acoustics and a clear, safe uncluttered environment are also essential. Specialist VI teaching strategies and resources such as the teaching of braille and tactile aids will be needed.

Multi-sensory impairment (MSI)

Children with multi-sensory impairment have both visual and hearing loss, although neither is necessarily total loss. Due to the lack of visual and sound sensation, they experience difficulties in perception and communication and often have other difficulties relating to multi-sensory deprivation.

Children with a multi-sensory impairment will need a combination of strategies for both the hearing and visual impairment detailed above.

Physical disability (PD)

Children with a physical disability SEN have a physical impairment that has a substantial and long term impact on their daily lives and requires adaptation to their environment and the school/early years curriculum. There is a wide range of conditions, some that are obvious where the child must use assistive devices such as wheelchairs, and some that are not immediately apparent and include children with significant sensory and fine motor difficulties. Children with a degenerative condition, such as Duchennes Muscular Dystrophy, may begin to present with physical symptoms whilst pre-school age and may deteriorate at different rates. They will require specialist support for their physical and emotional needs. Some children with a physical difficulty may not necessarily have SEN, being able to access the curriculum without requiring additional provision.

Children with a physical disability are likely to need large pieces of equipment that will need storage and manoeuvring space inside and outside the nursery. These children may also have difficulty negotiating steps and thresholds, whether they use a mobility aid to help them to walk or if they use a wheelchair or buggy to get around, and so installation of ramps and threshold covers should be considered. The use of pieces of equipment such as these result in moving and handling procedures and risk assessment, particularly when considering emergency evacuation and nappy changing/toileting of pre-school age children. These children may also have additional health needs that may require nursing/medical support.

APPENDIX 2 - Equipment

The equipment listed below is a selection of equipment commercially available and may be found at alternative suppliers. The supplier details are included at the end of the list.

Seating

Classroom style chairs:

- Heathfield chair - Smirthwaite, Nottingham Rehab Supplies (NRS)
- Lecky My PAL – standard floor chair with high chair accessory
- Toddler chair (Rifton) - Jenx Ltd
- Fox Denton - Smirthwaite
- Breezi and Teezi Breezi with high chair accessories -Jon Care & NRS. The Tripp Trapp, BabyDan, Stoke, East Coast and others are the commercially available versions of wooden height adjustable high chairs. However, the Breezi chairs have a longer base for more stability and are more versatile with more accessories available. Some of these chairs will accommodate children from approximately 6 months to adult.

Equipment for babies to encourage independent sitting:

- Bumbo commercially available from suppliers such as Mothercare and Boots
- Blow up seat rings commercially available from suppliers such as Mothercare
- Seat rings such as Jo Jo Silvercross Riverbank Boat 3 in 1 playmat and gym and Early Learning Centre Blossom Hill
- Babynest pillow - available from Jo Jo Maman Bebe, Mothercare, Bloomin Marvelous etc
- Widgey cushion - The baby catalogue and others.

Room dividers and activity areas

- Room dividers, furnishing & fittings -Wesco
- Roomscapes & room dividers - Community Playthings

Toileting equipment

- 2 in 1 Family seat from NRS and other suppliers such as Argos, Ikea
- Toilet trainer seat - Jo Jo Maman Bebe
- Step stools commercially available from suppliers such as JoJo Maman Bebe
- Height adjustable bath steps - NRS

Eating and drinking

- Junior Caring cutlery - essentialaids.com, NRS
- Doidy cups - kiddicare.com, bickiepegs.co.uk, NRS
- Flexi cutlery - welcomemobility.co.uk
- Oxo training cutlery & plate- Jo Jo Maman Bebe
- Jo Jo Beaba 360° spoon - Jo Jo Maman Bebe
- Steady spoon (toddler size) - Homecraft

Moving and handling equipment

- Threshold ramps such as NRS Rubber threshold ramp (others available)
- Excellent ramping kits from Easiaccess
- Changing tables with integral steps - Community Playthings, Eibe
- Paediatric adjustable height changing tables from a range of suppliers including Homecraft, Eibe, NRS

Advice Websites

- www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk - Clear, practical advice on daily living equipment for young people
- www.independentliving.co.uk - Signpost to equipment suppliers and advice
- www.communityplaythings.co.uk - Free downloadable resources on design

APPENDIX 3 - Equipment for play

Below are a few suggestions of the types of toys that would be appropriate for each age range in order to provide children with the optimum learning and development opportunities. It is essential to consider the developmental stage of the child rather than their actual age as these may not be the same; some children may have a developmental delay for a number of reasons where other children may be more advanced.

Baby 0 – 6 months

- Simple cause and effect toys
- Toys and appropriate everyday items of various textures, colours and of different weight and size
- Sensory toys such as musical, lights and vibrations and sensory balls that can be used to promote visual tracking
- Baby seating such as ‘Bumbos’ and baby rings
- Encourage time on the tummy through activity floor mats
- Ceiling decorations/ hanging toys can offer stimulation when babies are on their backs.
- Baby floor gyms will offer many stimulating activities

Baby 6 – 12/18 months

- This age group will continue to enjoy the same activities as young babies, challenge them by making them move to access them.
- Introduce interesting floor textures for crawling/ tunnels to crawl through
- Start to use low tables and surfaces to encourage pull to stand/ cruising and table top play
- Push and pull toys
- Cause and effect
- Mirrors – children are starting to develop body awareness

- Introduce more messy play
- Action songs and rhymes, children at this age enjoy adult interaction.
- Introduction to books, use hard board books, textured and/or fabric books
- A variety of balls, balloon balls, beach balls, textured and sensory balls as well as many commercially available options

NB Paediatric Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists DO NOT advocate the use of baby walkers.

Toddler 12/18 months – 36 months

- Heavy good quality push along / sit and ride toys to reduce the risk of tipping
- Developmentally age appropriate toys to promote fine motor skills and perception such as posting, shape sorters, stacking etc (for further ideas / suggestions see *ELC website which categorizes toys by 'learning skill' and age range*).
- Early mark making chunky crayons, chalks (e.g. ELC My first chalks, My First Crayon), potato prints, Aquadraw
- Messy play e.g. finger paints, shaving foam, sand, water
- Introduction to imaginative play such as dolls, cars, tea sets, finger puppets – make use of everyday objects
- Use easels or paper stuck to walls to help develop trunk and upper limb strength and control.
- Introduce construction activities, such as duplo, lego, stickle bricks, train tracks
- Books, e.g. lift and flap and/or pop-up books promote conversation/ communication and interaction
- It is time to introduce more climbing/ large activities, such as steps and stairs, chairs and settees, ladders to platforms and slides.
- Ball games using a variety of different shapes, sizes and weights.

Pre-school

- This is an extension of the Toddler stage and the quality of signage becomes important in readiness for school
- Promoting independence with more personal care skills – dress up and role play are excellent mediums to do this
- Move on to more formal gross motor activities, such as balance beams and climbing frames, bikes and trikes
- Development of pencil skills and pre-writing skills using a wide variety of mark making tools
- Use easels and different materials to write in and on e.g. sand, shaving foam, gluing and sticking, play-dough (mould out shapes)
- Introduce fine manipulative activities to encourage the range of hand grasps, threading, lego, beads, pegs (clothing), peg boards (insert)
- Scissor skill activities - Variety of scissors and cutting activities are available from Peta UK ltd (<http://www.peta-uk.com/>)

APPENDIX 4 - Equipment Suppliers

G&S Smirthwaite Ltd

17 Wentworth Rd ,Heathfield Industrial
Estate, Newton Abbot TQ12 6TL
01626 835 552

www.smirthwaite.co.uk

James Leckey Design,

Kilwee Business Park, Dunmurry, BT17
0HD, Northern Ireland
0800 318 265

www.lecky.com

Jenx Limited

Wardsend Road
Sheffield S6 1RQ
United Kingdom
tel: +44 (0) 114 285 3376
email: contact@jenx.com

www.jenx.com

Nottingham Rehab Supplies

Clinitron House, Excelsior Road, ASHBY
DE LA ZOUCH, Leicestershire, England,
LE65 1JG

0845 120 4522

www.nrs-uk.co.uk

Homecraft

Nunn Brook Road, Huthwaite, Sutton in
Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, NG17 2HU, UK
Tel: 08444 124 330

www.homecraft-rolyan.com

Kingcraft

26D Orgreave Crescent, Dore House
Industrial Estate, Sheffield, S13 9NQ
0114 2690697

www.kingcraft.co.uk

Jo Jo Maman Bebe

0871 423 5656

www.jojomamanbebe.co.uk

Sensory Direct

Sensory Direct (UK) Limited, Unit 17C,
Shrub Hill Ind Est, Worcester, WR4 9EL
01905 619996

www.sensorydirect.com

Easiaccess

Independence House, Federation Way,
Lancaster Road, Dunston, Tyne & Wear
NE11 9JR

0800 321 7430

www.easi-access.co.uk

Wesco

Unit 20 Manvers Business Park, High
Hazels Road, Cotgrove, Nottingham, NG12

3GZ

0115 9899765

www.wesco-group.com

Community Playthings

Community Playthings, Robertsbridge, East
Sussex, TN32 5DR

0800 387 457

www.communityplaythings.co.uk

Eibe

eibeplay Ltd, eibe House, Forsyth's Home
Farm, A3 Bypass Road, Hurtmore, Surrey

GU8 6AD

01483 813834

www.eibe.co.uk

Perfectly Happy People Ltd (The Baby Catalogue)

93 Bollo Lane

Chiswick

London W4 5LU

0844 826 4200

www.thebabycatalogue.com

Jon Care

7-8 Radley Place, Radley Road Ind Estate,
Radley Road, Abingdon, OX14 3RY,

01235 523 353

www.joncare.co.uk