

## Welcoming Back children with SEND to EY Settings, Nurseries and Childminders after COVID-19

September 2020



**Children with special education needs and disabilities need additional considerations/adaptations to help them settle back in the setting after COVID-19 Lock Down. Some of them will come back happily, others may be more anxious that their routines have changed. Based around the current government guidance below, here are some ideas to help.**

### **Government Guidance on Preparing for the opening of Early Years and Childcare settings, and welcoming children back.**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>

#### **1. Maximise Outdoor Play**

**The government advice says** “Settings should maximise use of private outdoor space. Early years providers, including childminders, may take small groups of children to outdoor public spaces, for example parks, provided that a risk assessment demonstrates that they can stay 2 metres away from other people wherever possible.” ([Actions for Early Years](#)). You should, wherever possible, plan to maximise the amount of time spent outdoors. This may involve a

risk assessment if going to public outdoor space or for any changes to outdoor play areas. Shaded areas should also be created.



To support children with additional needs outdoors:

- Ask parents to apply sun cream each day and send sun hats in.
- Try and source rain suits and wellies for rainy days (including reminding parents to bring in any from home)
- Encourage parents to put children in appropriate clothing
- Keep routines and resources consistent
- Arrange your social Bubbles before the children come back and inform parents
- Consider how to minimise mixing within the setting, for example if different age groups are usually in different rooms, can they use different parts of the outdoor space? To encourage keeping the groups apart as much as possible.
- Have lots of tents/shaded areas for shade/sensory chilling/sleep time
- Carry out individual Risk Assessments if needed for specific children
- Allocate individual seating spots e.g. carpet squares to children with SEND if needed
- Prepare resource boxes and back packs for individual children with SEND with name labels
- Try to avoid using home books, as these could be spreading the virus. If possible use ICT links
- Having stimulus for all sense outside is beneficial, especially music and sound clips
- Have hand washing facilities, tissues and bins outside
- If possible, set up coat pegs outside

- Have a first aid kit stored securely in or near your outdoor space

## 2. The use of Visuals



Children with SEND often respond well to visuals, so ensure sure you have plenty of visuals on display around your indoor and outdoor areas

Here are a few tips to help communication –

- If you use Makaton have Makaton signs in all areas
  - Have a Now/Next Board in each area
  - Have lots of visuals, signs, photos and pictures for communication and routines
  - Have new routines and visual timetables displayed before children return
  - Share the signs and photos with parents
  - If possible, make videos and picture stories to show the parents.
  - Make social stories to show new routines e.g. coming in, snack time, going home, changing
  - Create songs and routines for new stuff e.g. hand washing, nose wiping
- Check the children’s Speech and language Targets, if they have a therapist involved, and adapt to outdoor play
  - Use the child’s current special interests to promote play and engagement

## 3. Time out!

[Govt. Covid guidance on supporting children's mental-health-and-wellbeing](#)

All this change is a lot for everybody to cope with – both children and staff need a break! Be aware that children with SEND may be particularly exhausted and confused by all the new routines. It will be no surprise if you see an increase in behaviours being displayed, this is often Childrens outlet. Make sure you give them and staff lots of time out. This is the time to focus on Childrens mental health and wellbeing. Encourage them back to the provision, build on their confidence, get to know them and any changes that have happened and support their mental health.

Here are a few tips to help relax and build on supporting children back –

- Fresh air can be tiring! Plan more breaks into your timetable than usual
- Have individual allocated outdoor spaces to rest if needed for children with SEND
- Have a relax routine which might include massage, music and comforters
- If a child has sensory needs, make sure staff know what resources and routines help
- Have extra 'chill time' where the child can follow their own agenda/do their own thing
- Use Photos/ Objects of Reference / Visual Timetables / Break Cards to show chill time
- Children with physical disabilities may find accessing the outdoor space continually very tiring – make sure they can have lots of rests or a change of position in the shade
- Some children in wheelchairs may benefit from time out of the chair on mats or cushions as part of their occupational therapy plan.

#### 4. Hygiene is key

It's not always easy to persuade young children to follow the hygiene rules. This can be especially true for children with SEND. So, try and build them into your day, but in a fun way. If possible, create positive hygiene care, including hand washing, outside. And always remember your visuals!

- Have objects of reference e.g. a nappy, ready to support the routine
- Have visuals/communication cards easy to access either on staff lanyards or around the provision.
- Use lots of washing songs, music and rhymes e.g. this is the way we wash our hands!
- Create spaces to avoid going inside when possible e.g. outdoor hand hygiene stations with gloves, bins, wipes, soap, tissues, water, bowls
- Ask parents to put children in clothes that they can pull up & down independently
- Children in nappies should be encouraged to undress themselves with verbal prompts and reducing physical contact wherever possible Encourage pull ups if children seem ready for toilet training – easy to step out of independently



For children who require personal/intimate care due to their age and/or additional needs - The government advice is that children whose care routinely already involves the use of PPE due to their intimate care needs should continue to receive their care in the same way. On

that basis, in a nursery/pre-school setting possibly gloves and aprons might be worn during intimate care procedures. Face coverings are not necessary unless the child becomes symptomatic whilst in the setting, and would be worn by members of staff caring for the child until they can be collected.

More advice can be found by following: [Govt. Guidance Coronavirus Infection Protection & Control in Education and Childcare Settings](#)

## Useful Websites

- **Government Guidance:** [Actions for Early Years](#)
- **Leicestershire's dedicated COVID-19 Early Years Support:** [Supporting you during Coronavirus](#)
- **Nasen – access to a wide range of support for SENCO's, especially on supporting children with SEND -** [Nasen](#)
- **EY Matters – Improving Outdoor Areas on a Budget**  
[EY Matters - Top Tips for Outdoor Learning](#)
- **SIGNS AND SYMBOLS -** [Boardmaker Corona Signs and Symbols](#)
- **Trafford's Top Tips for Children Returning Post Lockdown –** [Trafford SENAS](#)

