Early Years

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Early Years

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Early Years

Introduction

This Early Years section of the Ordinarily Available has been devised through collaboration. It has been produced to support practitioners delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Each child is unique and has individual needs. Some children may enter a setting with an identified Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND), while others may show emerging needs that become apparent through ongoing observation. These needs might be short-term or could indicate a longer-term SEND that requires sustained additional support.

This guidance is designed to support early years providers in achieving positive outcomes for all children by promoting high quality inclusive practice that values diversity and ensures every child can thrive. It encourages providers to maintain high aspirations for every child, fostering a belief in their potential and supporting their individual learning journeys. A child-centred approach is central, placing each child's interests, needs, and voice at the heart of planning and provision. Strong, respectful partnerships with parents and carers are essential, recognising them as key partners in their child's development. The guidance also emphasises the importance of early intervention and the use of a graduated approach to identifying and meeting children's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Finally, it advocates for timely and informed decision-making, including access to additional funding where appropriate, to ensure that all children receive the support they need to flourish.

Universal for all children

Introduction

The Early Years Ordinarily Available Provision document is intended to be used alongside the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory and non-statutory guidance. These resources provide extensive information about high quality provision for all children, including those with additional needs.

We have intentionally chosen to direct Early Years providers to the original documents and the rich information they offer, rather than replicate key messages within this Ordinarily Available Provision document.

Practitioners should refer to the following key documents:

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2
The EYFS and its associated materials serve as the primary source of guidance for supporting young children in the early stages of their education. It outlines what high-quality, inclusive teaching looks like—provision that supports all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Practitioners are expected to implement the strategies described under high-quality teaching. When a child shows emerging needs, these strategies must be applied, and their effectiveness reviewed. The outcomes of this review should then inform future planning and provision. Early Learning Goals (ELGs) mark the expected developmental milestones by the end of Reception. They help assess readiness for Year 1 across key areas like communication, literacy, maths, and personal development.

Non-Statutory Guidance
The following two non-statutory documents are designed to complement the EYFS. They are valuable tools that help practitioners to:
- Understand typical developmental milestones and how to support children's learning at various stages
- Embed the characteristics of effective learning, which are essential for all children
- Identify appropriate provision based on a child's current development, focusing on what the child can do now and what they need to learn next

Development Matters
www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters--2

Birth to 5 Matters
https://birthto5matters.org.uk

Progress Check at age 2 – non-statutory guidance for early years foundation stage
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6284c0a2e90e071f61322177/Progress_check_at_age_two_non-statutory_guidance_for_the_early_years_foundation_stage_.pdf
This guidance supports early years practitioners in accurately assessing a child's development, health, and wellbeing. It emphasises the importance of close collaboration with parents and other professionals involved in the child's life. Following the completion of the progress check at age two, parents and practitioners can work together to take informed and appropriate steps that serve the child's best interests.

High-quality teaching refers to the inclusive practices and support systems that ensure all children are provided for, regardless of their individual needs

Targeted

For some children, the examples of high-quality provision outlined in the EYFS documents may not fully address their individual needs. These children may require support that is either different from or additional to what is typically provided for others of the same age.

The targeted section of this Early Years Ordinarily Available document outlines:
- the targeted provision that a setting can deliver independently; and
- the targeted provision that a setting can deliver with support from the Local Authority.

Targeted provision is delivered in addition to the universal expectations set for all children. As part of the graduated approach (Assess, Plan, Do, Review), the strategies used will increase in both frequency and intensity to meet individual needs more effectively.

This document does not include examples of high-needs provision. It also does not cover types of support that cannot be delivered independently by a setting, such as the use of PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) or Braille.

It is essential that each child is recognised and understood as a unique individual

How is the targeted section organised?

The targeted section of the *Ordinarily Available* document is structured around the four areas of need identified in the SEND Code of Practice (0–25 years, 2015):

- Communication and Interaction

- Cognition and Learning

- Social, Emotional and Mental Health

- Sensory and/or Physical, including medical needs

Some children may have needs that span more than one area of the SEND Code of Practice. It is important to refer to all relevant sections to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach to support.

One Planning

It is essential that everyone involved has a thorough understanding of the child as an individual. All practitioners should be aware of the child's likes and dislikes, their unique needs, and the most effective ways to support and motivate them.

Practitioners should engage in relevant SEND training to better understand individual needs and apply effective support strategies. SENCos must attend termly network meetings to stay updated on developments and share best practices. All Early Years practitioners are strongly encouraged to subscribe to Halton's bi-weekly Early Years Newsletter for local updates, training, and guidance.

Communication and interaction

Most young children are naturally eager to communicate and engage with those around them. However, some may struggle to use language effectively, which can impact their confidence and social development. To support all children, it's essential to create a whole-setting approach that encourages communication in a variety of ways.

A communication-friendly environment should include:
• Visual aids, picture cues, and sound cues
• Simple signing to support understanding
• Opportunities for children to practise communication with adults and peers
• Alternative methods of expression to boost self-esteem and wellbeing

It's important to start from where each child is developmentally and build from their strengths. Providing consistent, supportive interactions helps children feel understood and valued.

Halton Early Years providers are encouraged to make effective use of the WellComm Early Years Toolkit as a key resource for identifying emerging speech, language, and communication needs. By using this toolkit, practitioners can clearly determine each child's next steps and ensure that support is embedded through planning, provision, and daily interactions.

INTERACTING		
What does it look like?	Ordinarily Available Provision	Resources
The child demonstrates greater difficulty than typically expected for their age in the following areas: • Engaging in social interaction and play with both adults and peers. The child may engage in parallel play but shows limited awareness of or interest in others, and may sometimes actively avoid social contact. • Participating in cooperative play, including	**Environment:** • Provide a calm, low-stimulation environment for intervention and small group activities to help the child focus and engage more effectively • Use of Objects of Reference to support understanding and reinforce the language being used **Experiences and Opportunities:** • Regularly engage the child in simple, enjoyable people-play games such as chasing, copying, or tickling games to build social connection and shared enjoyment • Integrate songs and rhymes into daily routines (e.g. during nappy changes, handwashing, or dressing) • Support the child to play with another child who demonstrates good social interaction skills (e.g. "Ready, steady, go" and simple turn-taking activities to encourage interaction) • Use one-to-one play-based interventions to encourage interaction. Include anticipation games to promote joint attention and turn-taking • Include the child in small groups focus activity to further develop their ability to interact, take turns, and engage with others	• Halton Early Years Communication Audit • Typical speech, language and communication development • Halton's ShREC Poster • People Play • Help for Early Years Providers - Interactions **Training/Webinars** • The ShREC Approach • TALK Adult Child Interactions (link available from early.years@halton.gov.uk

challenges with turn-taking and sharing toys.	**Strategies:** • Get down to the child's levels so they can clearly see your face and facial expressions • Follow their lead. Begin by playing alongside them, mirroring their actions and sounds. The initial goal is for the child to feel comfortable with your presence, gradually progressing to shared play • Help the child notice, understand and respond to others' non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice • Adults consistently model how to listen and respond to others • Allow the child sufficient time (10 second rule) to process verbal and non-verbal information before expecting a response • Acknowledge and positively reinforce both verbal and non-verbal attempts at interaction by the child	**HLE Resources** • Create Opportunities to Communicate • Face-to-face interactions • TALK at Home Packs

SOCIAL COMMUNICATION		
What does it look like?	**Ordinarily Available Provision**	**Resources**
Children with social communication difficulties may: • Have difficulty using both spoken language and non-verbal communication (such as gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact) to engage with adults and other children • Have difficulty understanding social situations, including following social rules and responding to social cues • Have difficulty taking turns in play or conversation. • Show limited	**Environment:** • When children feel comfortable and safe, they are more likely to communicate • Provide areas for focused activities that have as few distractions as possible • Use a designated spot/cushion/mat for sitting in a group • Have available fidget toys / wobble cushion • Use consistent verbal labels for areas of the setting and activities/ times of the day • The child may benefit from some time to co-regulate or self-regulate, especially from over stimulating situations. This can be providing them with a quiet space, sensory resources, outdoor activities etc. This should be offered before the child feels overloaded with experiences **Experiences and Opportunities:** • Use a personalised approach to teaching social rules, such as modelling behaviours or using puppets • Small world and large doll play provide valuable opportunities to model and practise social skills within a safe, play-based environment • Use motivating activities and resources when encouraging engagement e.g. spinners, bubbles, flashing toys, pop up toys etc. Every child will be different • Provide cause and effect resources e.g. pop up toys, pull along toys, peek-a-boo etc • Utilise a range of multi-sensory approaches to support spoken language e.g. symbols, pictures, real objects, role-play • Provide turn taking opportunities and activities through daily routines	• Cause and effect resources • Intensive interactions stages 1-7 • Intensive interactions tracker • Sensory Circuits and Sensory Breaks • Visual Supports **Training/Webinars** • TALK Social Communication in the Early Years (link available from early.years@halton.gov.uk • Refer to STAS training directory **HLE Resources** • Giving Choices • Follow their lead

Communication and interaction

interest in interacting with others or playing cooperatively. • Have difficulty recognising and responding appropriately to the emotions and intentions of others • Find transitions and changes to routine challenging • Display a strong preference for sameness, such as adhering to rigid routines or engaging in repetitive play	• Create opportunities to communicate through giving a small amount or turn of a preferred item and waiting for the child to request that they want more • Incorporate sensory activities into the day to meet sensory need e.g. trampette, massage, walking, stimulus reduction, exercise • Regularly encourage peer interactions by creating opportunities to include other children in play • Use high interest toys like bubbles, noisy or pop-up toys to encourage simple interaction and turn taking **Strategies:** • Routines are very important for children with social interaction difficulties. Make the routine clear (e.g. by using a visual) and warn children in advance of any changes during the session Support the development of appropriate social behaviours in specific situations by using Social Stories™ and modelling techniques (e.g. taking turns on trikes, or requesting a toy from another child) • Give choices throughout the session in as many situations as possible e.g. during snack, outdoor play, giving a choice of toys etc • Simplify choice making if a child is struggling - Offer a choice of 2: use verbal and visual of the item/activity e.g. 'bubbles or ball'. Offer a choice of a preferred item/activity and one that the child wouldn't want e.g. 'bubbles or sock' • Consistently use individual visual supports throughout the day e.g. now and next boards, objects of reference and mini schedules • Help the child to notice by changing your tone of voice, body language, facial expressions • Exaggerate intonation when speaking and delivering instructions to highlight key words • Slow down the delivery of information with time given to allow processing • Break down instructions into manageable chunks and give in the order they are to be carried out • Get face to face, allowing the child to see your face and eyes easily and to allow you to pick up subtle communications from them • Accept and respond to any means of communication made by the child such as a brief look, eye gaze, reach, point, vocalisation or word • Say the child's name to gain their attention - and before giving instructions. This might be alongside a visual cue such as a Makaton sign for look, hand over hand etc • Follow the child's lead and make the context and reason for communication motivating and interesting • Repeat and revisit activities particularly in small groups as this can offer reassurance and build confidence • Use a range of appropriate labels to help children understand and name their emotions and feelings	

Communication and interaction

	• Promote joint attention by following the child's interests and lead, sitting closely and giving eye contact, copying and commenting on what they are doing • Enter into the child's world, playing with them in play of their choosing, following their interests • Gradually introduce new areas of play by ensuring the resources and play opportunities are interesting and motivating for the child • Use positive language that lets them know what you do want them to do rather than what you don't e.g. use 'stop' instead of 'no', 'walk' instead of 'don't run' etc • Use visual supports (e.g. objects of reference, core boards, now and next boards) to support transitions, prepare for change, reduce stress and anxiety and increase independence	

Adults should recognise the importance of preparing children for change, as unexpected transitions can be challenging for them to manage

ATTENTION AND LISTENING		
What does it look like?	Ordinarily Available Provision	Resources
The child demonstrates greater difficulty than most children of the same age in the area of Attention and Listening. This may include: • Difficulty sharing attention with adults or other children • Their attention span might seem shorter than that of other children the same age • They may struggle to stay focused during activities led by adults	**Environment:** • Establish a supportive listening environment by creating designated areas within the room that minimise visual distractions and encourage the development of listening skills • Reduce background noise to enable children to focus during interactions and hear each other clearly • Consider lighting, noise levels and access to quiet spaces - see Halton's Communication Audit • Use carpet mats to help children identify their space and support focus during group sessions **Experiences and Opportunities:** • Promote the development of listening and attention skills by engaging children in small group activities, paired tasks, and one-on-one interactions • Reduce the number of children for certain activities, such as story time, to create a calmer and more focused environment • To maintain children's attention and encourage active participation, group and story sessions should be kept short and highly interactive. Using puppets and props during stories and songs can make the experience more engaging and visually stimulating. Incorporating	• Halton Early Years Communication Audit • Typical speech, language and communication development • **TALK** to Me Outside – Listening Walk • 'Attention and Listening Skills' section at the back of 'The Big Book of Ideas' from page 184. • Help for Early Years Providers – Listening and Understanding • ECAT (Every Child a Talker) • www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happypeople

Communication and interaction

movement into songs and storytelling helps sustain interest and supports physical development. Additionally, pausing during well-known stories or songs allows children to join in by filling in the gaps, promoting memory recall and a sense of involvement

- Ensure expectations are age-appropriate. Consider whether the length of time children are expected to sit and attend is suitable for their age and developmental stage.
- Wobble cushions, fiddle toys, or weighted lap pads can help some children maintain concentration
- Use phrases like "one more then finished" or traffic lights to help children recognise when an activity is nearing completion, to extend their concentration and ease transitions
- Provide opportunities for children to focus and tune into sounds around them
- Play 'Ready Steady Go' games - Start with hand over hand as children practice waiting for 'go'. Gradually increase the time they wait for 'go' as they become familiar with the rules
- Play 'Turn Taking' games - Reduce the number in the group to ensure the child doesn't have to wait too long for their turn. Reinforce simple language 'It's … turn'. Give specific praise
- Incorporate songs, rhymes and stories into daily routines
- Ensure there are plenty of opportunities for outdoor and physical experiences

Strategies:
- Use child's name to cue them in before giving instructions
- Get down to child's level before giving instructions
- Reinforce language such as 'good sitting', 'good looking', 'good listening'
- Ensure an adult is present to offer support, provide reminders, and gently redirect the child when it's time to focus on listening
- Pair verbal language with visual e.g. gesture to ear for listening, Makaton for sitting and looking
- Listen to what children say and use some of their words in response to model good listening
- Now and Next - introduce adult-led activities and daily routines using visual aids to help the child understand and anticipate transitions. Present a visual cue—such as an object or picture symbol—that represents the current activity ("Now") and another that shows what will happen next ("Next"). Allow the child time to process this information. If helpful, use a visual timer to count down the remaining time for the current task. Before transitioning, gently prompt the child to shift their attention to the upcoming activity

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- Consider using 'Lola the Listening Leopard' resources www.yellowdoor.net/products/helping-young-children-tolisten/
- Backward chaining
- Listening and Attention Activities
- Sensory Circuits and Sensory Breaks
- Visual Supports

Training/Webinars
- TALK Norms (link available from early.years@halton.gov.uk

HLE Resources
- Turn Taking
- Face-to-face interactions
- TALK at Home Packs
- Rhymetime, Anytime!

Communication and interaction

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>Consider sensory processing needs - Will the child benefit from some heavy work before being expected to focus either in play or adult-led activities?
Backward chaining - Support the child to participate in a small portion of an adult directed activity (e.g. the last minute of carpet time or the last turn in a small group activity) and work backwards in small steps to build their involvement leading up to completion of the adult directed task or routine
Use phrases like "one more then finished" or traffic lights to help children recognise when an activity is nearing completion, to extend their concentration and ease transitions</td><td></td></tr>
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RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE - UNDERSTANDING		
What does it look like?	Ordinarily Available Provision	Resources
Children with receptive language difficulties might: • Struggle to follow instructions, especially two or more part instructions • Seem like they're not listening or paying attention. • Frequently need things to be repeated or clarified. • Have trouble understanding stories or back and forth interactions. • Respond inappropriately to questions. • Appear confused during group discussions or activities. • Avoid activities where there is a reliance on	**Environment:** • Use consistent language for areas of the setting and names of the children • Keep language used in routines consistent (e.g names for parts of the day - group time/circle time) • Use visual support strategies • Use quiet spaces to support concentration • Reduce distractions in the environment • Use real objects to generate new vocabulary and make learning more meaningful **Experiences and Opportunities:** • Provide real-life, first-hand experiences to introduce vocabulary using a multi-sensory approach • Embed language into every day routines using every interaction as an opportunity to model and reinforce vocabulary • Revisit key words and experiences regularly to help embed vocabulary in a variety of meaningful contexts • Sing a wide variety of songs, rhymes and poems every day • Read stories using props and puppets, and actions • Sing songs that have actions alongside and use props/ puppets • When reading together, pause to look at the pictures and explore the book together – dialogic book talk/interactive reading • Pause during well-known stories and songs, let the children fill in the gaps • Repeat the same stories and songs - children love repetition and this supports their understanding **Strategies:**	• Halton Early Years Communication Audit • Typical speech, language and communication development • Use 'The Big Book of Ideas' following the WellComm screening - focusing on activities related to receptive language, questions 1-5. • www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happypeople **Training/Webinars** • TALK Difficulties (link available from early.years@halton.gov.uk **HLE Resources** • Face-to-face interactions • Waiting • Add words • TALK at Home Packs • Rhymetime, Anytime!

Communication and interaction

| understanding language | • Use simple, clear language. Be aware of the pace of your talking - slow down and say less if necessary
• Emphasise keywords/vocabulary when speaking.
• Gain the child's attention by using their name or a gentle physical prompt to ensure they are focused before speaking
• Engage at the child's level by lowering yourself to their eye level and showing genuine interest in their activity/play
• Comment on what the child is doing and wait for 10 seconds to give them time to respond
• Give instructions in manageable chunks and in order. Provide instructions one at a time to help the child stay focused and avoid feeling overwhelmed
• Repeat instructions given to a whole group to individuals, using their name first to cue them in
• Use visual timetables, objects of reference, photos, symbols, choice boards, and sequence cards to reinforce verbal instructions and support understanding
• Rule of 5 (4 comments to 1 question) – make more comments rather than asking questions
• Use hand movements, facial expressions, and body language to reinforce spoken language
• Explain what new words mean with simple language, provide examples, using visuals and gestures, and where possible relating to the child's own experiences
• Model everyday language (e.g. action words).
• Model language related to emotions (e.g. "You're very excited today", "That feels disappointing")
• Use words at the child's level. Add an idea to what the child has said to increase understanding (e.g "Bus", "Yes, we take the bus to nursery")
• Give choices throughout the session in as many situations as possible e.g. during snack, outdoor play, giving a choice of toys etc
• Help children make links to past experiences by referencing previous activities, events, or learning – photographs can support this | |

EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE - TALKING		
What does it look like?	Ordinarily Available Provision	Resources
Children with expressive language difficulties might: • Have a limited vocabulary for their age. • Struggle to form complete or	**Environment:** • Create a language rich environment by narrating daily activities, using clear and consistent names for things and actions, and use varied vocabulary **Experiences and Opportunities:** • Create opportunities to talk such as invitations to play, curiosity talk boxes, treasure baskets, feely bags, language wheels, talk partners etc	• Halton Early Years Communication Audit • Typical speech, language and communication development • Use 'The Big Book of Ideas' following

Communication and interaction

grammatically correct sentences. • Use shorter or simpler sentence structures than children the same age. • Find it hard to recall words or use the correct word in context. • Repeat words or phrases frequently. • Have difficulty telling stories or explaining things clearly. • Show frustration when trying to express themselves.	• Engage in turn taking activities to support children to take turns in conversations • Share books and stories to develop and extend vocabulary. When reading together, pause to look at the pictures and explore the book together - dialogic book talk/ interactive reading • Sing a wide variety of songs, rhymes and poems every day • Tell stories with rhythm and rhyme, and retell familiar stories often to allow children to join in with repeated refrains • Provide story props alongside familiar stories for children to retell, and re-enact familiar stories through role play • Play word games such as 'What's in the bag' **Strategies:** • Remove barriers to communication such as a dummy's when the child is not upset • Model a variety of words (e.g. nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs) • Model good language through using grammatically correct sentences • Model talking about feelings and emotions • Accept and respond to non-verbal communication attempts and model what they would say if they could say it • Respond to babble or any attempt of a word • Introduce and repeat new vocabulary and concepts in a range of contexts and situations • Link new vocabulary to what the child already knows • Expand on sentences by adding a word (e.g. If the child uses 2 words say the sentence back using 3 words) • Recast sentences (e.g. if child says something wrong, say it back to them correctly) • Offer choices throughout the day	the WellComm screening - focusing on activities related to expressive language, questions 6-10 • Help for Early Years Providers – exploring language • www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happypeople **Training/Webinars** • TALK Difficulties • TALK Extending Language (links available from early.years@halton.gov.uk **HLE Resources** • Face-to-face interactions • Commenting • Create Opportunities to Communicate • Giving Choices • Translate • Add words • TALK at Home Packs • Rhymetime, Anytime!

Model rich language when commenting on a child's actions, helping them link your words to what they are doing

Communication and interaction

SPEECH		
What does it look like?	Ordinarily Available Provision	Resources
The child demonstrates greater difficulty with the speech than typically expected for their age. This may include unclear speech; • Omissions (Leaving out sounds) • Additions (Adding extra sounds) • Distortions (Imprecise sound production) • Substitutions (Swapping one sound for another) • Syllable Reduction (e.g. "bay" instead of "baby") • Fronting or Backing - replacing sounds made at the back of the mouth with those at the front, or vice versa (e.g. saying "tat" instead of "cat")	**Environment:** • Accept ALL communication including nonverbal communication **Experiences and Opportunities:** • Provide phase one phonological awareness activities (tuning into environmental sounds, rhyming, alliteration) • Provide sound play activities (e.g. symbolic sounds - animal sounds) and stories that explore sounds (e.g. Peace at Last) • Clap out syllables (e.g. children's names, familiar objects). • Sing songs/nursery rhymes throughout the day • Use mirror games (e.g. Mr Tongue) to support awareness of mouth **Strategies:** • Model clear and natural speech during interactions • Repeat back what the child says with the correct speech sounds • Focus on what the child says not how they say it • Don't ask children to repeat after you e.g. 'say it like this..'. • Ask the child to show you what they want to tell you about, use gesture alongside • Blame yourself for not being able to understand before asking the child to repeat themselves 'My ears are not working' 'let me turn my ears on' • Use clues in the environment to try to understand what the child is saying • Avoid saying that you understand if you don't, instead be patient and show that you're listening	• Halton Early Years Communication Audit • Typical speech, language and communication development • Use 'The Big Book of Ideas' - supporting speech sounds (at the back of the book) • www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happypeople • Mr Tongue **Training/Webinars** • TALK Difficulties • TALK Speech Sounds (links available from early.years@halton.gov.uk **HLE Resources** • Face-to-face interactions • Commenting • Create Opportunities to Communicate • Giving Choices • Translate • TALK at Home Packs • Rhymetime, Anytime!

Cognition and learning

COGNITION AND LEARNING		
What does it look like?	**Ordinarily Available Provision**	**Resources**
The child may experience more significant challenges than typically expected for their age across all areas of the curriculum, even when provided with high-quality provision. The extent of learning difficulty can range from mild to moderate. The following indicators highlight the range of potential difficulties that may be observed: • Difficulty with joint attention • Fleeting or poor concentration and memory skills • Struggles making choices • Limited play experience, repetitive play, or difficulty exploring toys and activities • Challenges with generalising learning across contexts • Reluctance to take risks or engage in problem-solving • Low confidence in approaching new tasks, often	**Environment:** • Use visual aids to support understanding, selecting the most appropriate type based on the child's developmental level—starting with objects of reference, then photographs, and progressing to symbols • Ensure resources are clearly labelled with photos/pictures and words and are at the child's level allowing independence • Minimise distractions to help children stay focused. Create a calm environment with low visual stimulation and reduced noise levels • Create an environment rich in developmentally appropriate resources to encourage exploration and engagement, even if that means using resources typically found in younger age rooms **Experiences and Opportunities:** • Encourage exploration of new areas or activities by introducing motivating resources, such as bubbles, to spark interest • Offer varied opportunities to practise skills, using different materials and contexts (e.g. building with a range of blocks and construction sets) • Use shorter, interactive stories and visual aids to help maintain children's focus and support the development of their attention span • Adopt a small-steps approach by breaking tasks into manageable parts. Teach and practice each step before progressing (e.g. start with threading one bead, then two) • Incorporate basket work to promote focus and provide clear structure. Begin with a single task and gradually increase complexity, allowing children to build confidence and improve their listening and attention skills • Offer activities with a clear beginning and end to support task completion (e.g. inset puzzles or building with a set number of blocks) • Model and teach new skills in small groups, including children who demonstrate positive behaviours to encourage learning through observation • Include regular breaks for children with sensory needs who may struggle with sustained attention • Share strategies, approaches, and celebrate progress with parents	• Visual Supports • Rule of 5 • Help for Early Years Providers • Building attention – the bucket! • Activities to help improve memory skills • Games and activities to develop listening and attention • Making choices • Copy Me Box **Training/Webinars** • TALK Visual Supports • TALK Extending Language (links available from early.years@halton.gov.uk **HLE Resources** • Face-to-face interactions • Waiting • Add words • TALK at Home Packs

relying heavily on adult support • Appearing isolated or disconnected from peers • Difficulty understanding, recalling, and following routines or sequences • Misinterpretation of social situations • Behaviour that may reflect underlying learning or communication difficulties	**Strategies:** • Visual schedules help children understand and follow the structure of the day. They can also support sequencing tasks (e.g. getting dressed or using the toilet) • Now/Next boards can encourage participation in unfamiliar activities and help extend attention and focus • Choice boards empower children to make decisions about their activities and communicate their preferences, promoting independence and engagement • Incorporate children's interests to expand their experiences (e.g. if a child enjoys trains or dinosaurs, include these in various activities like sand play or painting) • Give specific, positive praise for all efforts, not just successful outcomes, to build self-esteem and motivation • Use phrases like *"I wonder…"* or *"What if…"* to stimulate thinking and language without demanding specific answers • Break tasks into manageable steps by presenting activities in small, achievable parts to build confidence, ensure success, and maintain engagement (e.g. such as threading one bead, then two) • Introduce basket work. Use structured, short tasks presented in baskets to support listening and attention skills. Start with a single, simple activity and gradually increase complexity to build confidence, independence, and sustained focus **Strategies to develop play skills** • Copy the child's play and pause to observe if they respond or engage • Model and expand play by demonstrating and gradually introducing new actions to enrich the experience (e.g. stirring the tea during pretend play) • Provide two sets of toys or materials to model and encourage copying of play sequences • Incorporate the child's favourite characters or engaging items (e.g. bubble machine) to spark interest and gently encourage exploration of new areas or activities • Use hand over hand techniques to help the child explore new materials or actions (e.g. touching messy play items) **Also refer to the strategies suggested for Receptive Language (Understanding) and Attention and Listening in the Communication and Language section**	

Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH)

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH (SEMH)		
What does it look like?	**Ordinarily Available Provision**	**Resources**
A child who presents with greater social and emotional difficulties than most other children of their age which show themselves in ways such as: • Finding it difficult to regulate their behaviour, or express strong emotions in appropriate ways • When dysregulated are at risk of causing harm to themselves or others • May cause harm to the environment, resources or theirs or other people's belongings • May be withdrawn or isolated • Struggling to make and maintain friendships, or have difficulties interacting with other children	**Key Person** • Every child has a key person, with whom they can form a strong attachment relationship, and who is a trusted base for the child to return to when they are feeling stressed, overwhelmed or dysregulated • Time is prioritised with the key person in order to develop strong attachment and a trusting and supportive relationship. When a child does not feel safe and secure in the knowledge that their needs will be met, they will find it difficult to regulate their emotions. • The setting cultivates strong relationships with families, where information about any changes in circumstances or other situations that can influence behaviour can be shared • All staff have an understanding of circumstances that can impact children's behaviour and ability to regulate, both in the short and longer term • Setting staff support each other with co-regulation. A stressed, dysregulated or overwhelmed adult will find it very difficult to co-regulate with a child **Environment:** It is important to make sure the environment is supportive of emotional regulation and is not contributing to frustration. A supportive environment should include: • Regular access to an outdoor area • Well organised resources that are attractive and easily accessible to children • Plenty of satisfying options for children to choose from – children are not bored • An environment that is not cluttered, too noisy, busy or overwhelming • There is enough space for large-scale play where needed (the construction area has enough room to build large constructions, without risk of being trampled, for example, by children playing in the sand) • An environment that is reflected on regularly to ensure it meets the changing needs and interests of all children • Quiet, cosy spaces, both inside and outside **Experiences and Opportunities:** • Turn-taking games • Problem-solving activities • Yoga, mindfulness, and other calming exercises • Familiar, consistent routines	• Steps of Emotion Coaching • Co-regulation • Calm Boxes • Creating a Cosy Corner • Outdoor Calm Spaces • Structured Running • Crawling **Thrive Resources** • PACE – the four key features of the attitude needed in Thrive work – playful, accepting, curious, empathic • W.I.N (I Wonder… I Imagine… I Notice…) • Quick Wins Document • The Vital Relational Functions (VRFS) **Other Services** Thrive assessment for individual or small group of children **Training/Webinars** • Emotional Regulation and Behaviour Training for all setting staff • Sensory Processing Training

or adults
• Struggling to interpret or understand social rules
• Poor concentration or finding it difficult to attend to age appropriate tasks / activities
	• The routine is right for the current group of children, and is not leading to additional frustration:
	  - Children are not expected to sit and listen for too long
	  - Adult led activities are carried out in small groups
	  - Transitions / waiting times are kept as short as possible
	  - Children do not feel rushed by too many transitions
	  - Staff are able to stop and change things around if they notice children are starting to become bored, tired or frustrated
	
	Strategies:
	• Visual supports- timetable, now and next, spot timers, objects of reference etc to support the child in understanding the routine, and knowing what is going to happen next
	• Soft landing – children are welcomed and helped to settle by their key person, transition objects from home are welcomed, there is a quieter cosy space for them to come into first, before joining the larger group etc
	• Co-regulation with a trusted adult
	• Naming and validating children's emotions, in the moment
	• Emotion coaching
	• Giving choices
	• Use specific, labelled praise to help children understand exactly what it that is they did well
	• STAR charts (Setting, Trigger, Action, Result) are used to identify any potential triggers for the behaviour
	• Suggesting, modelling and supporting the use of strategies to support sharing and turn-taking, such as the use of sand timers
	• Staff model the use of appropriate language for children to use, for example "When you have finished, can I have a turn please?"
	• Use ready, steady, go games to promote waiting
	• Movement breaks, sensory breaks
	• Staff help to scaffold children's thinking by thinking through solutions to problems out loud
	• Exploring strategies for supporting regulation, such as breathing exercises, finding a quiet space or going for a walk /run around	

Physical and sensory:
Hearing Impairment (HI)

PHYSICAL AND SENSORY – HEARING IMPAIRMENT		
What does it look like?	Ordinarily Available Provision	Resources
• Deafness, also known as hearing impairment (HI), affects a child's ability to hear and process sounds, including speech and environmental noise. It is caused by physical damage to parts of the hearing system—this could be the outer, middle, or inner ear, or the auditory nerve. • Deafness can affect one or both ears and varies in degree: mild, moderate, severe, or profound— terms that have specific medical definitions based on hearing thresholds. • It may be temporary or permanent. When deafness is long-term or permanent, it can impact a child's listening skills, attention, language	**Strategies:** • Implement targeted support through individual and small group interventions, as recommended. These may focus on areas such as attention and listening skills, understanding, speaking, social interaction, and alternative communication methods like British Sign Language (BSL) • Provide regular opportunities for children to apply and generalise the speech and language skills they develop during these sessions. Where needed, request training and guidance from the Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (QTVI) • It is important that adults working with the child develop a strong understanding of how deafness impacts their development, including the daily challenges associated with hearing impairment. This knowledge should also cover strategies for using, managing, and caring for hearing aids and other assistive technologies, as well as how to create a positive listening environment that supports the child's learning and communication Adults should adopt the following strategies to support deaf children's access to spoken language and communication: • Gain attention before speaking, and use the child's name to signal communication • Speak clearly and naturally, avoiding exaggerated speech or shouting • Keep your face visible and avoid moving around while talking; ensure good lighting to support lip-reading and facial cues • Use short, simple sentences and repeat or rephrase instructions as needed • Encourage turn-taking and repeat peer contributions during group discussions to aid understanding • Allow extra time for processing spoken language, completing tasks, and responding—be mindful of listening fatigue • Support understanding with visual aids, concrete objects, and contextual clues • Introduce new vocabulary with clear explanations and visual reinforcement • Use pre-teaching and post-teaching to support concept development and overlearning • Check understanding regularly, using open-ended questions and visual prompts	**Training/Webinars** Training should include: • deaf awareness • communication strategies • environmental factors (e.g. acoustics and lighting) • implications of any hearing loss • classroom management strategies and group and individual interventions

development, communication, and ability to access learning. Children with permanent deafness may: • Need audiological support, such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, or radio aid systems, to help them access sound. • Find it difficult to function in environments with moderate to high background noise, which can interfere with their ability to hear clearly. • Miss out on incidental learning, such as overhearing conversations or picking up on environmental cues. • Face challenges in developing language and communication skills, which may affect both understanding and expression. • Experience difficulties with social interaction, particularly in group settings or fast-paced conversations. • Mishear or misunderstand spoken or written	• Provide additional support when needed, especially for complex topics, and ensure this is embedded in everyday practice The Qualified Teacher of the Deaf (QtoD) will conduct specialist assessments of listening, language and other appropriate areas for deaf children on caseload and contribute to/attend planning meetings as appropriate. **Environment and Groupings:** All activities should be fully accessible to deaf children, with adaptations made where necessary. Adults are responsible for managing the environment to ensure the best possible listening conditions for all children. This includes: • Positioning rooms and activities to ensure clear line of sight to the speaker • Thoughtful seating and grouping arrangements, placing children with hearing or listening difficulties close to the focus of discussions, especially during carpet time or storytelling, so they can see who is speaking • Minimising background noise by closing windows and doors, and creating designated quiet areas if necessary. • Being mindful of social interactions, recognising that deaf children may miss verbal exchanges and need support to engage fully • Ensuring children can express their knowledge and understanding accurately, using a range of communication methods suited to their needs. This should inform how groups are formed and help remove barriers to learning • Using visual, object-based, written cues, and contextual support to aid comprehension • Creating 'quiet zones' can be highly beneficial, offering a calm space where noise levels are kept low. These areas can be enhanced with soft furnishings such as rugs, cushions, carpets, or a reading tent to absorb sound and create a cosy atmosphere. Deaf children—and others—can use these spaces for quiet activities like sharing books, completing puzzles, or having calm conversations Many deaf children can still access appropriately adapted auditory information when supported by a good listening environment. With the use of personal amplification devices—such as hearing aids or cochlear implants—and, where suitable, a radio aid system provided by the QToD outreach service, their access to sound can be significantly enhanced Specialist advice should be sought from the QToD on how best to support the development of literacy and language skills in deaf children The QToD will carry out specialist assessments in areas such as listening, language, and other relevant developmental needs for deaf children on their caseload. They will also contribute to and attend planning meetings as appropriate **Support** A child with permanent deafness may use one or	

information, leading to confusion or miscommunication.	two hearing aids, bone-anchored hearing aids (BAHAs), or cochlear implants, which are provided by a hospital or audiology clinic.	
• Have additional needs related to their social and emotional wellbeing, such as feelings of frustration, isolation, or low confidence.	Adults in the setting are responsible for monitoring these devices to ensure: • Correct and consistent usage • Cleanliness and absence of damage to ear moulds • Functioning batteries • Clean and intact tubing • Clear sound quality without distortion The child may also be provided with a radio aid system, which should be used, managed, and maintained by staff working directly with the child	

Hearing loss can affect one or both ears and may range from mild to profound in severity

PHYSICAL AND SENSORY – VISUAL IMPAIRMENT		
What does it look like?	Ordinarily Available Provision	Resources
A vision impairment is a condition diagnosed by a hospital that affects a child's ability to see clearly. This type of impairment can impact a child's overall development and their access to learning. While a child with VI may wear glasses, these often do not fully correct their vision. Additional support and adaptations may be needed to help them engage with their environment and learning activities effectively	The following are general strategies to support children with a diagnosed vision impairment. Specific recommendations will be provided by the Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (QTVI) following individual assessment. **Environment:** • Adjust lighting to reduce glare and visual clutter; use blinds if necessary. • Position the child in group or circle times to maximise their use of vision, as advised by the QTVI. • Keep main walkways clear and uncluttered. • Use demarcation techniques (e.g. changes in flooring or furniture placement) to define key areas. • Clearly mark any changes in floor level, such as steps or slopes. • Re-orient the child to the environment regularly, especially after any changes to furniture or layout. • Keep mobile toys (e.g. bikes, scooters) in clearly marked areas. • Provide adult support during outdoor play, especially where activities rely on visual cues. • Ensure outdoor equipment (e.g. climbing frames) is brightly coloured and clearly marked—specific guidance will be given by the QTVI. • Offer additional support in free-flow areas, such as when using steps or slides.	**Training/Webinars** Speak to QTVI about relevant training

Strategies:
- Offer adult support during craft and tabletop tasks, particularly to develop fine motor skills like pencil grasp.
- Ensure adults avoid standing with their back to windows, as this can cast shadows and obscure facial visibility.
- If a child has stronger vision in one eye, adults should position themselves on the child's better-seeing side.
- Use the child's name to gain attention, and provide clear verbal cues and extra commentary to support understanding.
- Use precise locational language (e.g. "The water jug is on the snack table by the window" instead of "It's over there") to help the child navigate and identify objects.
- Be aware of the distance from which the child can see faces during social and group activities. You may need to describe facial expressions of peers and explain their meaning.
- Always use the names of other children in group settings to help the child identify who is speaking.
- Ensure the child's work is displayed at eye level so they can easily see and take pride in their contributions

Experiences and Opportunities:
- Support the child's self-awareness and identity as visually impaired through books, role play, and inclusive resources.
- Use dark, high-contrast materials for mark-making, such as felt-tip pens, blackboards with chalk, or whiteboards with dark markers.
- Use coloured glue to improve visibility during sticking activities, and consider placing cut-out images on contrasting backgrounds.
- Encourage pouring play (e.g. sand and water) to help the child develop depth perception and spatial awareness.
- Provide a variety of picture books, including tactile options like the *That's Not My...* series.
- Use toys and materials with simple visuals and varied textures, including plastic, wood, and metal.
- Include home corners, treasure baskets, and items for sensory exploration and imaginative play.
- Use high-contrast table coverings during tabletop activities like snack time or crafts.

Halton Family Hubs Online
Halton Family Hubs provide a central place for families to access information, advice, and guidance to support children from pregnancy through to adulthood.
As a professional, you can:
- **Signpost families** to the website for universal activities, groups and events (via the Runcorn and Widnes timetables).
- **Access provider events and services** to share with families.
- **Make a referral** into Family Hub support if additional help is needed.

Visit www.haltonfamilyhubs.co.uk to explore resources, timetables, and referral pathways.