

Help Sheet

0 – 25 Specialist Teaching & Support Service

How to introduce a small group experience.



Why?

- Some children with SEND are used to following their own child-led interests and will need support to join a small group activity.

You will need to:

- Make a set of activity card that reflect what happens at group time e.g. singing, story, playing, tidy up etc. Ensure that some activities are highly motivating to the group e.g. bubbles.
- Make a board with a 'start' label. Make a 'finished' label and put it on a box or envelope (see photo). Boards can go top to bottom or left to right.



How?

- Choose two activity cards to introduce the timetable e.g. 'playing' and 'bubbles'
- Attach the cards to the board with Velcro.
- When the children enter the small group area point to the first activity on the board and say the word "playing".
- When the first activity is completed, take off the activity card and say, "playing finished". Place the activity card in the finished box/envelope.
- Point to the second activity and say, "bubbles".
- Gradually reduce the amount of time playing and increase the number of short adult-led activities.
- The child may not understand the words but, if used consistently, they will come to understand the concept.
- You must always follow through on the activities offered to build trust in the process.

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- When the child engages with the board, less motivating activities can be introduced but always work towards a motivating activity at the end of the session e.g. bubbles.

Examples of activity cards:



Things to note:

- Try to make the area where the group takes place as 'clutter free' as possible. An empty room with nothing on the wall except the visual timetable is ideal.
- It is useful to have somewhere out of reach / contained to put items that are not in use e.g. a high shelf or a box with a lid.
- Prepare the timetable and resources before gathering the children together for the group.
- When introducing small group activities 'playing' is a good activity to put first on the board. By starting the session with child-led play the children can:
 - self-regulate after the transition to the group / area
 - get used to the learning environment
 - build relationships with a familiar adult and peers
- By carefully selecting toys, the play can also be used for learning e.g. a treasure basket of themed objects to develop vocabulary.
- For children who are ready to sit, listen and attend 'sitting spots' can be a good prompt to support children to know where to sit. If children are not ready to sit, try activities with movement e.g. action songs, lycra, catching bubbles.

Reference / Evidence base – informed by:

I can -<https://ican.org.uk/>