

Help Sheet

0 – 25 Specialist Teaching And Support Service

How to identify play development.

Why?

- This document will support you to identify the 'stages of play' that children are accessing.
- This will help you to:
 - adapt play provision
 - engage with children according to their stage of development
 - provide / scaffold play opportunities for individuals or groups of children
- The stages of play are developmental – as with all learning, children will need time to embed and use previous play types within the more advanced stages.
- As play develops the emphasis on the social situation increases and this may present challenges for some children.
- A child with social communication needs may demonstrate skills in all these play types but due to their special interests their application to different toys and activities may be limited and repetitive.



You will need:

- Time to closely observe the child.
- A copy of the developmental play stages below.
- Time with the SENCo or colleagues to moderate judgements.

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Stages of Play

0-1	sensory and exploratory play	Child uses sensory investigation to explore a range of toys/objects.
1-2	structured play	Child will relate objects systematically e.g. things that go together - shape sorter, bricks into the toy truck. Exploring cause and effect.
1-2	imitation play	Child 'self pretends' using toy objects on self and begins to sequence 'pretend' play activities.
1.5+	symbolic play	Child pretends that one object is another e.g. brick is a phone or pretends that a toy object has real properties e.g. a hot oven.
2-3	sequential play	Child performs several actions/steps together e.g. pretending to cook tea then eat it.
3-4	role play	Child engages in 'make believe' play coping with the frequent changes in the content and nature of the play e.g. child readily changes character.

Reference / Evidence base – informed by:

Caroline Smith (2003) "Venturing into Play: A play skills profile for children with autistic spectrum disorders"