

Uplyft.
strong young futures

Early Years Inclusion Support Guide

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Early Years Inclusion Guide

All children, regardless of their ability or background have the right to be included in their community and take part in the range of activities many communities offer to promote the learning and development of young children. These activities provide children with everyday experiences and interactions with their peers which are essential to a child's development. Ensuring that the same opportunities are accessible for children who may have developmental delays or disabilities to participate is also crucial to their development and much more than simply having a child attend a mainstream group or program. Inclusive settings for children focus on the whole environment and identifying where adjustments may be required so that all children can play, learn together, and make meaningful connections with each other.

Purpose of this Guide:

This guide has been developed to offer organisations, services, groups, or local governments who provide early childhood services with suggestions on ways to create a more inclusive environment for children with developmental delays or disability, and their families. The guide has been structured to provide information at the planning stage of an activity, during the delivery of an activity, and after an activity.

The intention of this guide is that it will support organisations to approach inclusion at every stage of service delivery, help guide program planning in order to imbed inclusive practice, and prompt discussions and conversations about ways individual services can make adjustments for the purpose of inclusion. Organisations may wish to adopt some, or all of the proposed considerations outlined in this guide.

The guide has been broken down in the following four areas:

1. BEFORE your activity begins
2. DURING your activity
3. AFTER your activity
4. Glossary of Terms



Disclaimer:

The development of this guide was made possible through Uplyft's partnership with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and via Uplyft's Community Capacity Building initiatives. It is essential to acknowledge that this guide is not an exhaustive list of all possible strategies and approaches for children with disability and developmental delays, and it should be considered as a resource document only. Inclusion is a dynamic and evolving concept, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to creating inclusive environments. It is encouraged that organisations continue to seek feedback from parents and carers, people with a lived experience, as well as peak disability bodies to ensure services and supports meet the needs of families with children with developmental delays and disability. Uplyft also welcome feedback from families and communities in order for this resource to evolve and continuously improve over time.

Furthermore, while we have made diligent efforts to develop a comprehensive guide, we recognise that the resource itself may have certain limitations. We understand that some aspects of this resource may not be fully accessible to adults with disabilities working within organisations who wish to implement this guide, and we apologise for any unintentional oversights (for example those who require plain language materials). As we seek to model disability inclusion in our internal practices, we want to fully disclose the limitations of this guide.

BEFORE		Further Information	Comments
STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS When planning for your group or activity, it's important to consider if staff or volunteers require additional training or upskilling to support children with developmental delays or disability and their families.			
Have staff or volunteers facilitating your group or activity completed any Disability Awareness Training or have experience supporting children and families with developmental needs?		See more here	
Do staff and volunteers who are supporting your group or activity feel confident in engaging with children who may have developmental delays or disability and their families? Is additional training required?			
Have you considered if additional staff members may be required if there will be multiple children with additional needs present at your group or activity?			
Have staff contacted families prior to your group or activity to confirm attendance and better understand a child's support needs? This includes having a good understanding of the child's communication skills, motor, cognitive, social/emotional, self-care, behaviour, hearing and vision, and any Assistive Technology (AT) they may require. This is a great way to not only gather information around a child's needs but also build rapport and alleviate any nerves that a family may have about engaging with your service for the first time.			
Are you able to display any Disability Awareness Training certificates staff have completed or acknowledgements that your space is safe and inclusive to make everyone feel welcome?			
PROMOTIONS AND COMMUNICATION There are lots of things you can do in preparation of a group or activity which promote inclusion of children with developmental delays or disabilities and their families. Many of these occur at the planning, promotions, and communication stage and are easy to implement, are low to no cost, and take little time or resources.			
Have you included strengths-based language in promotional material or flyers to demonstrate inclusion? This may include such things as 'all abilities welcome', 'inclusive to all children', 'flexible to your child's needs'.			

BEFORE		Further Information	Comments
Have you ensured the language used in the description of your group or activity is not deficit focused or labelling? If in doubt, always ask people with disability for their preferred language or use helpful online tools as a guide.		See more **here**	
Have you considered if your program will include a Chill Out Space? If so, has this been included on your flyer or website? Having a calming area where children and parents can take a break, if necessary, may make the difference in a family attending your activity or not.			
Have you considered how families registering their attendance for your group or activity can advise you of their child's access requirements? Is this information captured on relevant intake forms? This may include a child's need for ramps, accessible parking, Sensory friendly Chill Out Spaces or an Auslan (Australian Sign Language) interpreter. If using an online platform to promote your event, consider ways this information can be captured at the time of registration as this promotes inclusion and limits the number of points of contact a family needs to make to access your service.			
Have you ensured that any access and inclusion information relating to your group or service is easy to locate on your website?			
Have you considered including a Frequently Asked Questions section on the website which could outline Accessibility information?			
Are your contact details clearly visible on your flyer or promotional material in case families need to contact you to discuss their child's support needs further?			

BEFORE		Further Information	Comments
PHYSICAL INCLUSION When selecting a suitable location for your group or activity, it's important to consider in the planning stages if the environment will be inclusive to children who may have physical support needs.			
Have you considered the physical Accessibility of your building/space? Things to consider are: • Ramps to enter the building • Clearances • Even path of travel • Width of doors • Non-slip floor surfaces • Accessible toilets and change tables		See more **here** See more **here**	
Will there be ample parking, ACROD parking or a drop-off area available at the location?			
Will children and families be able to navigate and maneuver around the environment easily? Will there be a clear pathway between main areas to the toilet? Consider if activity tables, toys, or play equipment obstruct access to shared areas.			
Have all furniture and fixtures in your space been checked as stable and secure? Some children with disabilities will use furniture to prop their body up and navigate the space. Securing furniture with brackets, straps, wall anchors, and other methods enhances the safety of your group and ensures potential hazards are minimised. It is important to note that older children with disabilities can place significant strain on furniture therefore regular safety checks and adjustments are crucial.			
Have you considered the height of activity tables and whether all children would be able to sit comfortably at the table to participate?			
Children who mobilise with wheelchairs or strollers will require enough clearance when seated at a table to participate in tabletop activities. Other adaptions may need to be made such as the use of a child's wheelchair Tray Table for tabletop activities.			

BEFORE		Further Information	Comments
Have you ensured your environment is clean and organised to reduce excessive clutter and visual distractions? Where possible, make sure that furniture and large objects are arranged in a consistent and predictable way in order for children to navigate their environment easily.			
Have you considered if equipment, toys, and materials in your environment can be accessed for children who may have limited fine motor skills? Limited fine motor skills can impact a child's ability to play with items and participate in activities. When planning your activities, consider the incorporation of Switch Activated Toys jumbo children's pencils, or pencil grips.			
Have you considered if the group intends to overflow to outside areas or a playground, if so, will there be a continuous, even pathway to this for those using Mobility equipment?			
Are playgrounds or play equipment enclosed and gated to ensure children can remain in a safe boundary?			
Have you considered the Accessibility of your playground or playground equipment and if it caters to a range of abilities? For example, does a sandpit prevent a child using a wheelchair to access the playground? Can a child using Mobility equipment access the carousel with their peers? Can a child with a physical disability safely use the swing?			
Have you prepared a variety of activities that cater to different abilities? Ensure a balanced range of activities are on offer to engage children who may have developmental delays or disabilities that favor certain strengths.			
Have you considered your emergency procedures and if additional support will be required to assist any children with developmental delays or disability and their families to exit?			

BEFORE		Further Information	Comments
COMMUNICATION/ VISUAL SUPPORTS A visual support refers to things we can see, such as an object, drawing, schedule, photograph, sign or picture, to give us information and help support with communication. Visuals can help to provide structure and routine, encourage independence, improve understanding, avoid frustration, and offer opportunities to interact with others.			
Have you considered including Visual Supports alongside your planned activities to further support communication? For example, you may like to incorporate visual communication supports that correspond to themes, books, or activities you will deliver during your group or activity. You may also like include these in other play environments or areas throughout your centre such as kitchen themed visuals displayed at the home corner, or personal hygiene visuals placed in the bathroom.		See more here	
If a child will be attending with an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) system, have you discussed this with the family prior to the group? Talking to a family about their child's communication device or system will give you an opportunity to be shown how to effectively use it to engage with the child. There are many different types of AAC devices, such as low technology options (Communication books, Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS), PODD Communication Books (PODD)) and high technology options (Eye Gaze Device, iPad equipped with specialist AAC software applications, Liberator Rugged AAC Device). Some children may even be using Key Word Sign as another way to communicate.			
BEHAVIOUR			
Have you referred to your organisation's safety plan for any children who may have behaviours of concern? Some children may have an individual Positive Behaviour Support Plan. You may like to speak with the family prior to the group, to get familiar with their child's support plan.			

BEFORE		Further Information	Comments
TRANSITIONS Transitions happen whenever a child switches from one activity to another or when moving from place to place. Children with developmental delays or disabilities may require additional support to manage transitions due to various reasons: • Routine and Predictability: Many children with disabilities thrive on routine and predictability. Transitions can disrupt their sense of familiarity and security. • Sensory Sensitivities: Children with sensory processing difficulties might become overwhelmed by changes in sensory input during transitions. • Communication barriers: Children with communication difficulties, might struggle to understand the transition and express how they feel. This can lead to frustration and resistance. • Cognitive Processing: Some children may have difficulties understanding the concept of transitions, the sequence of activities or the expectations associated with change. • Social interaction: Some children with social skill difficulties may have trouble understanding social cues involved with joining/leaving a group or activity.			
Have you considered the addition of Visual Timers? They can be a helpful tool to support a child's transition between activities. This can alleviate a child's stress and prepare them to move onto the next activity.			
Have you considered implementing Visual Schedules outlining the various activities planned for your group? These are commonly used visual supports that provide information about what is happening, in what order. They help create an environment that is predictable and understandable. Visual Schedules can prepare children for changes or Transitions.			
Have you considered using a First, Then, Next Strategy or Visual Supports? This can assist children to understand Transitions, set expectations and prepare for change when moving between different activities.			
CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING			
Have you considered if Auslan (Australian Sign Language) Interpreters will be required for children attending who are Deaf or hard of hearing? It's important when accessing an interpreter, they are qualified and experienced.			
Have staff completed any Deafness Awareness Training to better understand the needs of Deaf or hard of hearing children and their families attending?			

BEFORE		Further Information	Comments
Have you selected video material that has clear and correct captioning?			
Have you prepared activities, toys, or games which have clear visual elements that can support Deaf and hard of hearing children to fully participate? Are there ways to incorporate signs or visual cues into games to make them more inclusive?			
Can you display some Auslan (Australian Sign Language) posters around the environment to encourage others to learn Auslan and make children who are Deaf or hard of hearing feel welcome and included?		See more **here**	
Are there any staff within your service who have Auslan (Australian Sign Language) language skills and can they be present for the group or activity? Are there ways all staff can develop these language skills to better support communication?			
Have you considered a visual alert system such as flashing lights or Visual Timers to draw the child's attention in case of an announcement or emergency?			
CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE LOW VISION OR ARE BLIND			
Are group resources available in accessible formats for those requiring a Screen Reader? This may also include any visual descriptions for online pictures, photos, or videos that you are sharing as part of your group or activity. This ensures written material can be accessed for children at reading age.			
Have you selected books that are available in accessible formats such as Braille and audio books if necessary? Consider books that are rich in descriptive language and have opportunities to include tactile or Sensory elements that the child can engage with as the story progresses.			
Have you considered ways to include tactile print or Braille into any planned tabletop activities?			

BEFORE		Further Information	Comments
Have you made additional copies of books or images you plan to use in group or mat activities for children with low vision to view at their own pace and in close proximity? Have you considered if book copies or images are required in High Contrast Visuals to better support children with low vision to distinguish the illustrations.			
Have you pre-prepared any activity sheets required in large print format with clear contrast, and enlarged size to enhance visibility for children with residual vision?			
Have you arranged the play area in a way that promotes safe and independent movement for a child who has low vision or blind? Ensure you remove any obstacles or hazards so there are clear pathways in common use areas. Consider incorporating tactile cues or landmarks to aid orientation, such as textured mats. Encourage the child to explore and familiarize themselves with the environment.			
SENSORY FRIENDLY SETTINGS Addressing Sensory needs extends far beyond using 'sensory' toys or delivering each activity with a sensory element. Every child has individual sensory preferences and responds differently to sensory stimuli. It's important to observe the child and note the child's response to different sensory stimuli including sounds, touch, light, movement, and smell. Consult with families and any therapists involved to gain a better understanding of a child's individual sensory profile.			
Have you considered the inclusion of a Chill Out Space or cozy corner at the venue? Some children who may have developmental delays, disabilities, or Sensory processing disorders may feel overwhelmed by lots of noise, bright lights, strong smells, or large groups. Providing a small space can allow children to take a break away from the activity to regulate their emotions before participating again. This space may include soft lighting, minimizing loud noises, soft furnishings and textures, and calm colours.		See more here	

BEFORE		Further Information	Comments
Have you considered the number of activities it would be realistic to achieve in your timeframe? Allowing for comfortable Transitions between activities prevents some children from becoming overwhelmed. To further support a smooth transition, you may like to use Visual Schedules, Visual Timers, First, Then, Next Strategy, and other Visual Supports.			
Have you considered room temperature and ways to adjust this to accommodate children who have difficulty regulating their body temperature?			
Have you considered an available area within your space for children who require frequent movement breaks to keep themselves regulated?			

DURING		Further Information	Comments
STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS			
Can new families attend the group early to ensure there is time to discuss the planned activities and any necessary adjustments that may be required? Families are a wealth of knowledge and may be able to help troubleshoot access and inclusions barriers you may have.			
Have staff identified any children who use disability specific equipment and have they been shown how to support the use of this equipment in your group or activity? Some children may require disability equipment to participate in your group or activity. This may include an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device or system, Mobility equipment, or hearing or vision technology. It's important not to shy away from equipment because you are unfamiliar with it, instead ask family members if they can show you how to use it.			
Can staff show new families around the common areas in your space, in particular, the kitchen facilities, toilets? Some families may carry different medications and food or drink for their children that require refrigeration.			
Do staff feel confident adapting activities for different ages and abilities to encourage participation? When working with children with additional needs, you may need to be flexible with the activities and make unplanned changes on the day.			
Are there staff members who have been identified to have particular skills (I.e. Auslan (Australian Sign Language), emotional regulation, multilingual etc.) that can support families on the day of your group or activity? Are families aware of these people?			
Do staff members have access to resources that might support participation on the day? This may include such things as communication boards, Visual Supports, Switch Activated Toys, Sensory equipment, disability equipment, or familiar items brought in by family members.			

DURING		Further Information	Comments
Can staff promote time for peer support during the group such as introducing parents to each other, or allowing space for families to interact while children are occupied?			
Are there opportunities during the group for staff to support interactions between children such as facilitating turn-taking activities, modelling questions and comments, sharing with peers, and show and tell?			
PHYSICAL INCLUSION In addition to the physical Accessibility of your space, there are other things you can do to ensure a child with physical needs can be included in an activity or group.			
Have you determined through conversations with the family if they have any additional pieces of equipment that may assist the child with participating in your group? Some children with physical disabilities may already have equipment that can support them to engage in different activities. This may include such things as a Tray Table for a wheelchair, Alternate or Adaptive Seating, and Transfer Mat or Transfer Board.			
Have you considered where the main activities will occur during your group or activity? Consider where you will have mat time, tabletop activities, free play, or if you will access a playground. This will help you determine the best positioning to ensure each child is equally included in the activity. Some children with physical disabilities may have Alternate or Adaptive Seating to allow them to sit next to their peers during mat time.			
Have you got adequate space for parents or carers who wish to physically support their child during activities by having them seated on their lap? Some parents or carers of children with physical disabilities may prefer this to the use of disability equipment for certain activities as it may place their child in an ideal position to engage in an activity.			
Have you considered where toys and activities are placed throughout the room? Ensure toys and activities are within reach and are accessible for all children in your group. When using Switch Activated Toys, consider appropriate placement of switch for the child.			

DURING		Further Information	Comments
Have you considered if hand over hand support for fine motor activities such as arts and crafts or blocks may be required?			
COMMUNICATION			
Do you actively engage with visual communication supports during mat sessions or group activities? Using Visual Supports in your environment is more than simply having them on display. Ensure the communication support is at eye level for children, point to symbols whilst using spoken word at the same time, and encourage children to use the supports if they have something to say. Even children using verbal communication can benefit from the use of Visual Supports in their learning and development.			
Do children with an individual Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) system have it available to them during all activities and environments to maximize communication opportunities within your setting? Are staff attempting to use the AAC device when interacting with a child during the group or activity?			
Are instructions clear, simple, and direct to support a child's understanding? Alongside clear instructions, you may like to incorporate Visual Supports and aids.			
BEHAVIOUR			
Have you referred to a child's individual Positive Behaviour Support Plan in order to best support them within your group or activity?			
Have you considered some of the strategies listed in other sections throughout the checklist to encourage positive behaviour at your group or activity? Such things as Visual Supports, Transitions strategies, Sensory strategies, and environmental modifications may also be helpful in supporting behaviour.			

DURING		Further Information	Comments
TRANSITIONS			
Have you considered using Visual Timers to support children transitioning between activities? When using a visual timer ensure the timer has been introduced as a support tool and is placed in the child's line of sight, ensure you refer to the timer upon the completion of the activity.		See more **here**	
Have you demonstrated the groups schedule or routine of your activity on a Visual Schedules?		See more here	
When using a visual schedule, ensure you have introduced the day's activities, what they involve and refer to the visual schedule as you transition through each activity. Remember to mark the completion of each activity by removing it from the visual schedule and signaling to the group that we are finished.			
Do you have ample time at each activity for children to develop skills and explore tasks? Children with additional needs often require extra time to complete tasks and fully explore an activity. Groups that offer a fast-paced environment with multiple activities can contribute to overwhelm and poor participation.			
Do you refer to Visual Supports when implementing a First, Then, Next Strategy in your group or activity? Using a visual support alongside this strategy can act as a prompt during Transitions.			
CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING			
When working alongside an Auslan (Australian Sign Language) interpreter during your group, are you facing the child and speaking directly to them in 'first person' language? Ensure you consider the positioning of the Auslan interpreter, so their view is not obstructed and is in clear sight of the child or family.		See more **here**	

DURING		Further Information	Comments
Are you able to use other visual ways to supplement communication including gesture, body language, facial expression, and pictures? Consider also incorporating visual communication supports, posters, flash cards, and Visual Schedules into the environment to ensure it is more visually accessible.			
Is the duration of mat time activities or story time sessions of an appropriate length? Where possible, avoid lengthy, drawn-out periods of concentrated listening as this can lead to cognitive fatigue.			
Are you using appropriate ways to gain the Deaf or hard of hearing child's attention? You can do this by tapping the child on their arm between their shoulder and elbow or gently wave your hand in their line of sight. Avoid approaching from behind or touching their head or face to gain attention.			
Is your group or activity held in a well-lit environment, so your facial expression and body language are clearly visible?			
Are there opportunities to incorporate or celebrate Auslan (Australian Sign Language) into play or mat activities to support communication and greater peer connections? Consider the use of Auslan books during story time or the inclusion of Auslan posters relevant to your tabletop activities.		See more **here**	
Are staff confident in using any Wireless Microphone System that may be required for children utilising hearing devices? Ensure Auslan and/or visual communication strategies are still used alongside amplification technology to support communication.			
Have you ensured that any video material shown in your group has captioning switched on?			

DURING		Further Information	Comments
CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE LOW VISION OR ARE BLIND			
Do you describe illustrations and use descriptive language during book shares even when the story is simple or with limited text?			
Have you considered the environment for group activities such as background noise, lighting, positioning, and pace to allow children who have low vision or are blind more time to process information?			
Do you provide more verbal prompts, steps, and actions required for activities? Children who have low vision or are blind rely on auditory information and verbal cues to navigate their environment and interpret information. Ensure you use descriptive language, take the time to explain positioning of materials, and name items the child uses as they complete tabletop activities.			
Have you considered the placement of items during an activity? Consider consistently placing items in the same easily accessible spot, so the child can familiarize themselves with the space, access items as required and build independence. For example, you might always place the playdough on the right-hand corner of their desk and place their water bottle on the left.			
Have you allowed ample time for children who have low vision or are blind to explore and complete tabletop activities?			
Have you provided activity sheets for tabletop activities in High Contrast Visuals?			
Do you clearly communicate upcoming changes and Transitions with as much notice as possible to help the child prepare and know what to expect?			
Do you approach the child by announcing your presence and who you are by saying your name or a friendly greeting to avoid startling them?			
Do you seek the child's permission for physical contact and always ask before offering to guide them around the space? Children who have low vision or are blind often have developed adaptive techniques to explore and navigate their environment and may prefer to do this on their own.			

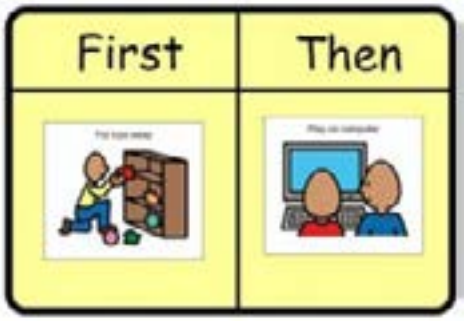
DURING		Further Information	Comments
SENSORY FRIENDLY SETTINGS			
Where you have identified that a child is requiring a Sensory or movement break, have you gently guided them to the designated area? You may like to do this alongside Visual Supports (Visual Schedules, Visual Timers) or other forms of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), if necessary.			
With the support of the child's family, have you considered implementing different Sensory strategies as recommended in the individual Sensory Diet? Please note that not all children will have or require a Sensory Diet. For those that do, this has been developed in consultation with the child's family and therapy team.			
Have you allowed some flexibility for self-directed play during structured activities or routines for those children who may be disinterested?			
Have you considered any excessive clutter in your space which may present as visual distractions during activities?			

AFTER		Further Information	Comments
Making adjustments to create or improve inclusion can be a learning process for everyone involved and It's natural for organisations to encounter challenges. However, trial and error allow for organisations to respond to the needs of children and families, learn from their experiences, identify what works and what doesn't, and make adjustments as they go.			
Have you encouraged connections between parents and carers at the end of your group to allow for peer support opportunities? This may include organising a morning tea while children are being supervised by staff, establishing an online forum for parents, or directly facilitating connections between likeminded parents.			
Have you consulted with families after your group or activity to collect their feedback and reflections? This will allow you to evaluate the effectiveness of the group, identify opportunities and barriers, and make continuous improvements based on valuable insights.			
Have you reflected on the structure and delivery of the group such as the types of activities included, the environment, pace, strategies used and staff skills and confidence?			
Have you considered if a check in call is needed after the group or activity for newcomers or families who may have had a particularly difficult day participating in the group? This shows that you value the family's input and communicates your willingness to problem solve any barriers. It also reassures families that a bad experience should not deter them from coming back.			
Have you had opportunity to reflect as a team after the group or activity to gauge staff skills and confidence? This may help to determine if there are any further opportunities for learning and skill development.			
Have you considered if it may be necessary to consult with a child's therapy team for further strategies to support their inclusion in your group or activity?			

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Description	Image
Accessibility	Accessibility refers to the practice of ensuring that information, products, activities, environments, or services can be meaningfully, effectively, and equally used by all people, specifically for people with a disability. When considering accessibility, it is helpful to consider various needs, abilities and barriers. For example, a child's learning/cognitive, motor/mobility, vision, hearing and auditory abilities.	 Image description: One blue circle which reads 'Accessibility' surrounded by six circles each with icons inside. Icons include a person in a wheelchair, a finger touching buttons, a magnifier with the letter 'a', an ear, the sign language interpreter symbol, and CC (closed captions).
Alternate or Adaptive Seating	Alternate seating refers to the use of non-traditional seating options in a classroom or learning environment which can be helpful for children with a physical disability or sensory processing disorder to participate in different activities such as mealtimes or play. Please note that alternate or adaptive seating should only be prescribed by a suitably qualified professional (I.e., Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapists).	 Image description: A woman with brown hair and fair skin sits at a table holding a piece of paper next to a young boy who is sitting in a red activity chair to support his physical needs.
Assistive Technology	Assistive technology refers to various devices, software or equipment that is designed to help people with a disability. Assistive technology can better enable children with a disability to communicate, navigate their environment, access information, and meaningfully participate in various day to day activities. Examples may include simple items like handheld magnifiers or more complex systems like Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices or systems.	 Image description: Five rows of five circles in different colours against a black background. Each circle contains a different symbol relating to types of Assistive Technology.

Term	Description	Image
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)	Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) refers to various methods of communication to assist children who struggle to effectively communicate verbally. AAC can include using Key Word Sign, symbols, communication books or electronic devices to enable a child to effectively communicate. Image credit: Vocalsaints.co.nz	 Image description: A small child points to a picture communication symbol displayed on a communication board, held up by a person wearing a red shirt.
Auslan (Australian Sign Language)	Auslan (Australian Sign Language) is the sign language used by the Australian Deaf Community. Auslan is a visual language that conveys meaning through handshapes, facial expressions, body language, and space. Auslan is not just signs presented in an English structure as it is a legitimate language with its own syntax, grammar, and linguistic features.	 Image description: A woman with blonde hair and a light blue shirt signs the letter 'f' to a young girls with blonde hair and a light blue shirt who is also signing the letter 'a.'
Braille	Braille is a system of tactile writing and reading designed for people who are blind or who have low vision. The system consists of raised dots arranged in various patterns to represent letters, numbers and punctuation. By feeling these dots with their fingertips, people can independently read or write.	 Image description: A child with fair skin has both hands placed on a white page with braille.
Chill Out Space	A Chill Out Space is a quiet space for children to use if they need to take a break from an activity to regulate their emotions and sensory needs. A Chill Out Space provides a reduced stimulation environment that allows children to calm down, relax and refocus before being able to re-enter and participate in the activity. Image credit: Programminglibrarian.org	 Image description: In the centre of a dimly lit room sits a mat with colourful block, surrounded by crash mats and bean bags.

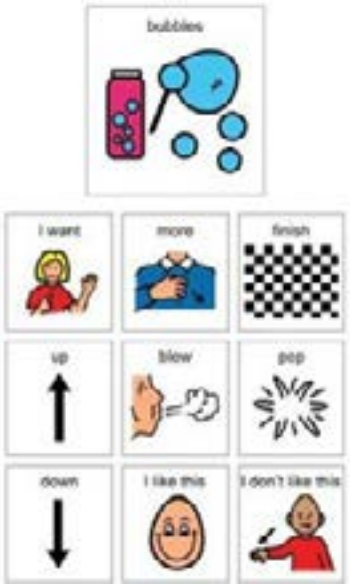
Term	Description	Image
Eye Gaze Device	An eye gaze device is a form of technology that enables a child to use the movements of their eyes to operate a computer or communication device. Image credit: DrGavinFarrell.co.uk	 Image description: A young girl with brown hair and a black and white striped top sits in front of a computer screen which uses her eye gaze to communicate.
First, Then, Next Strategy	The First/Then/Next strategy assists parents and teachers to describe the order of actions to children with developmental delays or disability. This strategy is often accompanied by a visual support to set children's expectations and prepare them to transition between activities in sequence. Image credit: MyBoardmaker.com	 Image description: Two columns on a piece of paper. One column has the heading 'First' with an animated picture of a child putting toys away. The other column has the heading 'Then' with an animated picture of two children playing on the computer.
High Contrast Visuals	High contrast visuals feature high contrasting colours which allow children with low vision to more easily distinguish between shapes, letters, numbers in illustrations. Image credit: ToviiDynavox.com	 Image description: A communication board on display with picture communication symbols in high contrast colouring.
iPad equipped with specialist AAC software applications	An Apple iPad can be used as an electronic Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device when paired with specific applications and software. For example, the Prologuo2Go App. AAC must always be prescribed by a suitably qualified Speech Pathologist. Please liaise with the family and/or therapist to learn how you can use a child's device with them. Image credit: AACCommunity.net	 Image description: An iPad displaying specialist AAC software with various picture communication symbols.

Term	Description	Image
Key Word Sign	Key Word sign is a form of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) that can be used to support understanding, speech and language and interaction with others for children with communication difficulties. For each key word or concept, there is a corresponding sign to depict the message. Key Word Sign also integrates spoken words and dialogue alongside each sign. Signs from Key Word Sign are borrowed from Auslan (Australian Sign Language) and unlike Auslan, Kew Word Sign is not a language. Image credit: EarlyEd.com.au	 Image description: A young boy with glasses sits at table with a plate and drink bottle, next to him sits a woman signing 'finish'.
Liberator Rugged AAC Device	A Liberator Rugged is just one example of an electronic Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device that is known for its durability, particularly around exposure to water, dust, dirt, drops, knocks, and scratches. AAC must always be prescribed by a suitably qualified Speech Pathologist. Please liaise with the family and/or therapist to learn how you can use a child's device with them. Image credit: Liberator.co.uk	 Image description: A Liberator Rugged AAC device in a black and orange rubber case displays various picture communication symbols and words.
Mobility equipment	Mobility equipment refers to devices that are designed to enhance mobility for children with a disability or reduced mobility. This equipment may include wheelchairs, specialised strollers, children's walking aids or children's crutches.	 Image description: (Left) A young boy in a red shirt pushes against a blue walking frame with wheels. (Right) A young woman knelt down next to a young boy who is seated in a wheelchair with a headrest, both are smiling.

Term	Description	Image
	Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS) is just one type of AAC that some children (particularly children with Autism) may use to communicate. PECS is a type of AAC that uses pictures, symbols, photographs or words to communicate. A child with communication challenges or who is non-speaking can communicate their thoughts, needs or wants by exchanging a picture or sequence of pictures with an adult. Image credit: hes-extraordinary.com	 Image description: A woman holding a picture communication symbol sits across a table from two young boys, a boy in a red shirt points with his index finger at the picture.
PODD Communication Books (PODD)	Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD) is just one type of AAC that some children may use to communicate. The standard PODD book is a visual communication system used to assist children with communication difficulties to effectively communicate. A PODD communication book can consist of various symbols, pictures, and words to support communication. It may also consist solely of written or verbal prompts to be read out to children with visual impairments. PODDs can have different formats depending on each child's individual communication needs. Image credit: spectronics.com.au	 Image description: A PODD book with different categorised pages stands upright displaying different picture communication symbols.
Positive Behaviour Support Plan	Children with behaviour support needs may receive specialist support from a Behaviour Support Practitioner (usually with a background in Occupational Therapy or Psychology). This practitioner may develop an individualised Behaviour Support Plan which will include strategies to promote more positive behaviours. A family may share this Positive Behaviour Support Plan with services so staff can understand how to best support the child with complex behaviours. Image credit: coursehero.com	 Image description: A copy of a de-identified NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission Positive Behaviour Support Plan.

Term	Description	Image
Screen Reader	A screen reader is a software program that allows children who have low vision or blind to read text that is displayed on the computer screen. The text is translated from text to speech or into Braille. Image credit: Alibaba.com	 Image description: A person's hands on either side of a screen reader device positioned on top of a book.
Sensory	We rely on our senses to process information, in terms of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. Our environment is full of different sensory input, including strong smells, noise, lights, clothing, temperature, and large crowds. For children with disabilities such as Autism Spectrum Disorder or sensory processing disorders they can sometimes be over or under stimulated by sensory input from the environment around them, which can lead to emotional dysregulation.	 Image description: A grey circle with an animated image of a brain surrounded by five circles each containing an animated image of an ear, nose, mouth, hand, and eye.
Sensory Diet	A sensory diet is an individualised plan of activities, adjustments or accommodations to assist a child to regulate their emotions and meet their sensory needs. Image credit: ToolsToGrowOT.com	 Image description: Two worksheets, one titled "Sensory Systems" followed by colourful animations. The other titled "Sensory Strategies and Activities" followed by colourful animations.

Term	Description	Image
Switch Activated Toys	A switch activated toy has been modified so the original switch is rerouted to a larger switch which is more accessible and easier for a child to operate. Switch activated toys are designed to promote play and interaction for children with a disability and have various benefits including enhancing a child's physical, cognitive, and social skills. Image credit: Adaptabilities.net	 Image description: A battery operated children's toy with a green and blue pond with ten small rubber ducklings inside. Two small rubber ducklings sit outside the pond next to a cable which connects from the toy to a large button switch.
Transfer Mat or Transfer Board	A transfer mat is a device used to manoeuvre and position a child with a disability or reduced mobility between daily tasks. This device can enable greater social participation by ensuring that the child can be comfortably positioned alongside their peers on the floor during activities rather than a wheelchair. Image credit: RainbowCare.com	 Image description: A blue transfer board with spaces on the left and right side to hold on to.
Transitions	Transitions occur when a child changes between different places, people or activities. For example, switching between their home environment to childcare or changing from one activity to another.	 Image description: A kindergarten classroom has four tables and chairs positioned around the room. Two children sit at different tables completing activities, a teacher is standing holding a pen and paper.
Tray Table	A wheelchair tray table is a simple piece of equipment that attaches to a wheelchair to provide a flat and functional surface for eating, working, reading or daily activities. These trays minimise the need to transfer a child with reduced mobility between their wheelchair and another chair.	 Image description: A young boy in a wheelchair has one hand on his chin and the other resting on the tray table next to a book and a pencil case.

Term	Description	Image
Visual Schedules	Visual schedules are commonly used Visual Supports that provide information about what is happening and in what order. They help provide an environment that is predictable and understandable and can prepare children for changes or Transitions. Visual schedules can be individualised to incorporate photos of the child's own items and environment.	 Image description: (Left) Four images on a white background numbered one to four of a girl completing her morning routine. The four images are titled 'get up time', 'bathroom time', breakfast time', 'and ready to school time.' (Right) Four images on a blue background numbered one to four of a boy completing the toileting routine. The image is titled 'How to use the toilet?'
Visual Supports	Visual supports are tools or aids that use pictures or symbols to assist people with a disability or communication disabilities to effectively express their needs, wants or ideas. Visual supports can be customised to suit each child's individual needs using symbols, pictures, or photographs. Examples may include communication boards, Visual Schedules, or choice boards. You can find further information from browsing the internet and speaking to suitably qualified professionals, such as a Speech Pathologist. Image credit: EsesTherapiesToolbox.com.au	 Image description: A communication board displaying ten picture communication symbols relating to bubbles.
Visual Timers	A visual timer is a helpful tool for children with developmental delays or disability to understand the concept of time and time management. It can help a child to understand how much time has passed and how much time is left, which can be very helpful in situations where a child is transitioning between tasks and activities. Image credit: ECLG.nl) (right)	  Image description: (left) A young girl wearing a black and white striped top sitting at a desk, is writing in a book with a pencil next to a sand timer. (Right) A blue analog timer positioned in front of a green and purple timer shows in red the remaining time left.

Term	Description	Image
Wireless Microphone System	A wireless microphone system helps to eliminate the impacts of background noise, acoustics, and distance by transmitting sound directly to a child's hearing device (such as a hearing aid or cochlear implant) through a transmitter worn by the speaker. Image credit: HearingLikeMe.com	 Image description: A teacher stands in front of a whiteboard wearing a wireless microphone on a lanyard around her neck. Two girls sit at desks in front of her, one with their hand in the air.

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