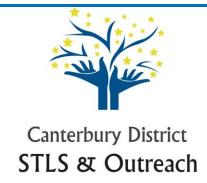# ADVICE SHEET

General Strategies to support all children – Visual Support

- Try to establish clear, predictable routines/timetables.

- Decide what type of visual support would be the most useful. This will probably be a mix of objects, gestures, signing, photos, symbols and text, depending on the age and stage of development of the children.

- Decide where the visual props will be kept. They may be on a child accessible display, in a book or a Velcro-baseboard. Staff may carry a set of portable symbols/photos in a pocket. The location is important as they need to be very handy for both adults and children.

- Decide if the visual timetables will go from left to right (to aid early literacy skills), or from top-to bottom. If you are in a multi room setting they should be in the same place in each room (not hung on doors or where they are not accessible to children. They should always be in a straight line

- The number of pictures you use for timetables will vary depending on age/stage of children. For baby rooms about 3 symbols, toddlers about 5, pre-school 5 to about 8. They should be a clear representation of what the activity is. If photographs are used try and use actual objects not just children in an area.

- If you are using visual supports for a timetable make sure they are large enough for all children to see. For individual children they can be smaller

- Regularly revisit the timetable. Remove activities that are 'finished' so children can 'see' where they are in the day.

- Ask all practitioners to 'self-register' using photographs so children/parents can see if their key person/buddy is in that day

- Provide practitioners with 'survival language' key rings for each of the rooms so children can indicate if they want a drink, something to eat, want to go to sleep etc. The pictures will vary from room to room

- For children with EAL provide 'survival language' prompts. These will be a photograph or a symbol with the English word underneath. Next to it or on the back will be the word in the child's home language and then it broken down phonetically so practitioners can say the word

- Support children who find it difficult to settle by having a picture book they can take home showing them arriving at the setting with parents/carers, main activities of the day (snack, outside play etc.) and then being collected.

- During snack time, instead of a generic picture use individual photographs of what is on offer that day, showing the fruit whole and cut up.

- Label equipment with photos/pictures (and remember to write the words underneath): you can label toys, storage containers, tables, furniture, equipment, people etc
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- Prepare your prop bags for use at story/song time

- Use boxes, pots and baskets. Try to place equipment that you have out, in it's own box or pot, so the children know where things belong e.g. there's a space for scissors, a pot for pens, a tray for paper, a box for glue and stapler etc.

- Use a box for available sand toys, playdoh cutters etc and place in the activity area.

- Use screens, chairs, large pieces of fabric/curtains etc, to create boundaries between areas to make your different activity tables/mat/areas, as clearly and separately defined as possible.

- To restrict number of children in an area, at the sand tray for example - 4 baseball caps available/ 4 'spots' on edge of sand tray or outlines of pairs of shoes for soft play.

- If children are given special 'jobs' each session, reinforce with e.g. wearing a tiara, or scarf.

- Talk about feelings and have symbol cards ready. E.g. 'happy', 'sad', 'angry' 'afraid'. Create a feelings 'thermometer'. Using basic feelings such as happy, sad, frightened etc. Also include an 'ok' face as children need to know they do not have to have an extreme of emotion.

- Get in the habit of using gestures & a few clear signs, to back up your key message. Start with 5 and build up so they are used consistently. Ensure there is a balance of verbs and nouns.

- Show children the visual props frequently so they 'learn' what it means (i.e. sand timer for waiting for their turn)

- Provide a choice 'board' or 'book' so children can 'see' what has been provided for the enhanced provision. For some children this may only be a choice of 2 others will cope with more

- Use props to provide warnings of change of activity, surprises/ the unexpected.(lunchtime tambourine etc.)

Further information can be accessed through the following websites

www.widgit.com

www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resources/

http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources/tools%20for%20teachers.aspx

www.do2learn.com

www.resourcesforinclusion.co.uk