



EASEYS for ASN

Encourage And Support Early Years Skills for Additional Support Needs

[Highland Council](#)
[Pre-school Home](#)
[Teaching Service](#)

'Together Time'

Important first reading [Building the Ambition](#)

Some examples from **Building the Ambition** which are relevant to sharing a song, rhyme or story with children with **Additional Support Needs (ASN)** include:

Does the setting have:

'...comfortable places to relax, be quiet and be with friends. Provide opportunities for small groups of children to listen to a story together, where they can see the illustrations in a book but not in a large setting where engaging with the story is physically too difficult.'

Do staff consider the individual needs:

'Allow the baby to relax by touching soft cuddly toys, and/or by listening to a reassuring voice telling a story.' *'Allow playing with toys which make sounds or books which make noises when pressed.'* (Developmentally some children with ASN may function at a very early stage)

Are family members involved:

'Access to personal stories created with the family, with familiar photos and words.'

Why are sharing songs, rhymes and stories so important for children with Additional Support Needs?

'The majority of brain development occurs in the first three years of a child's life. Reading to and sharing books with babies and young children, and giving them time to respond, feeds their brain, helps them learn new words and grows their vocabulary.'

[Literacy Trust](#)

This is no different for children with ASN but we need to approach and support sharing books differently. Perhaps we should consider that this is even more important for them as many children with ASN may find it difficult to explore literacy in other ways?

So how do we make sharing songs, rhymes and stories more accessible for children with ASN?

- For some children it can be enough to think 'younger' and provide activities and books which would suit an earlier stage of development.
- Think about where you do this activity. Does the child benefit from a distraction free space or having the experience alone with you before joining in with others. Also consider positional options e.g. tummy lying, standing frame etc.
- Can you make the activity accessible by using toys, props or visual supports?
- For some children you may need to think about high contrast books, books with auditory output and supporting independent page turning.
- Enhance the experience by adding sensory activities, movement and rhythm.
- Adapt your language and provide inclusive opportunities in small groups using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)
- Using a favourite character or toy is a great motivator to encourage engagement with a book. Some children benefit from seeing the whole story in a video format first.
- Repetition provides opportunities for children to engage better over time as the content becomes more familiar.
- Cueing in at the start and also at the end can be useful for some children who struggle with transitions between activities.
- These types of activities promote bonding and attachment opportunities.

Hints and Tips!



Share what works well with everyone involved.

Lollipop sticks can act as page turners.



A 'BigMac' or 'Talking Tin' can provide an opportunity for a non-verbal child to participate.



A blanket or fleece is excellent as a cueing-in prop and for enhancing bonding.

Always seek the advice of professionals supporting children to ensure you are using a method suitable for the individual.



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'Together Time'



Story Saacks:

The Pre-school Home Teaching Service has produced some differentiated Story Saacks to support the engagement of children with ASN, including AAC resources.



'Together Time':

The Together Time booklet is designed for parents (and practitioners) and contains a range of differentiated ideas to help children with ASN engage with rhymes, songs and stories. The suggestions are based on our experiences of working with children with a wide range of abilities. Ask your PSHVT for a copy or go [here](#).



Sensory Umbrellas

Creating the ultimate sensory space could be a tall order. But we can create magical, other-world spaces and even carry them with us wherever we go. Introducing... the Sensory Umbrella!

Umbrellas can provide a simple way of screening off distractions and help a child focus on the stimuli we are presenting. The added benefit for a non-mobile child is to create a new environment in which to play, explore and learn. The umbrellas can be linked to story books, songs, rhymes, seasons, festivals, weather, the list is endless!

A word of caution: umbrellas require close supervision. Most umbrellas come with a pointed metal ferrule and the spokes are of a metal construction with plastic caps. There are potential dangers if the child is left unsupervised or if used with a child with unpredictable or challenging behaviours. Used with supervision, however, they offer many advantages and are easily stored and quick to put up.



Points to consider before you implement a new strategy in your learning environment:

- Before you begin to put something new in place consider reading around the subject first to help you get a better understanding.(see Links section)
- Have you talked to the child's parents or carers to find out what their favourite songs, rhymes and stories are?
- Have you asked any professionals working with them for advice on what approaches suit their needs best?
- How will you introduce and monitor the impact?

Make your plan:

Links

[Teddy Talk Supporting EAL Children in Nursery School](#)

[Words Up—Key Messages](#)

[Books for All books in accessible formats](#)

[CALL Scotland—Augmentative and Alternative Communication \(AAC\)](#)

[Book Bug Scottish Book Trust](#)