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Sensory areas

Family Action's Childcare in Schools team is supporting a number of school-based childcare settings to develop a sensory area - either inside the setting or outside.



Developing a sensory area

As part of the process, our target settings are considering issues such as:

- 1 aims and objectives
- 2 consulting with staff
- 3 suitable room or space
- 4 health and safety issues (eg position of sockets)
- 5 costs/budgets
- 6 staff experience/training
- 7 maintenance of the equipment
- 8 policies and procedures
- 9 products on the market
- 10 storage of resources and equipment.

Some settings have also attended an interactive sensory workshop run by another childcare provider to learn more about:

- specific sensory needs of the users (eg sight, sound, touch)
- reasons for using sensory areas (eg manage emotions, relaxation, sensory stimulation, enjoyment)
- different types of sensory items (eg bubble tubes, projectors, wave machines, star cloth, fibre optic lights)
- different types of sensory areas (eg dedicated sensory room, small area of the usual room set up as a sensory space, den, tent or basket containing sensory items)
- how they can make cheap DIY sensory resources (eg at one of the workshop sessions, settings learned how to make a sensory umbrella using basic arts and crafts materials, fairy lights, torches)
- more technical sensory tools (eg an Ipad app, which gives children the impression of being on a rollercoaster)

- incorporating 'sensory' into the outside area (eg one of the settings is considering erecting a corrugated roof extension so that pupils can hear and experience the pitter patter of raindrops falling)
- planting sweet smelling or fragrant herbs and plants (eg lavender, thyme, honeysuckle).

Useful links to different providers of sensory toys and other resources can be found on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/pages/Learning-Exchange/904749822892733).

Tips from other settings about setting up sensory areas can be found in the 'Tips and templates' and 'Learn from others' sections of the Learning Exchange: www.learning-exchange.org.uk

Further information

- Family Action is funded by the Department for Education (DfE) to support school-based childcare providers with developing high-quality and inclusive childcare for 0-5s with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Find out more about the project, and download a wide range of free resources from: www.learning-exchange.org.uk
- Our Learning Exchange Facebook page gives links to events, suppliers, equipment, training and venues that might be of interest to school-based childcare providers: www.facebook.com/pages/Learning-Exchange/904749822892733?sk=timeline

Produced by Family Action: Unit 24 Angel Gate, City Road, Islington, London EC1V 2PT
www.family-action.org.uk

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