Children and Young People's Occupational Therapy Service



Sense-able ideas

Practical sensory activities for parents or carers to use at home and/or in the community



EAST AYRSHIRE

Health & Social Care Partnership









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Introduction

This booklet has been designed to provide practical ideas and activities to help support your child within all Activities of Daily Living (ADL) for example, self-care, feeding or eating, playing and going out and about and so on. All references to child / children means either a child or young person.

Each page provides:

- Practical strategies:
 - Ideas to help create a more positive experience.
- Functional activities:
 - To help develop your child's independence.
- Games:
 - To help learning in a fun and enjoyable way.

Games and activities can be introduced to your child at any time throughout the day. Try to create lots of opportunities as this can be very helpful for your child's learning. It is also a time when you can encourage your child to develop their independence with Activities of Daily Living (ADL) in a fun way.

The booklet also contains an example of a visual chart, a sequencing story and other useful resources.



Our senses

Our brain helps us make sense of our world around us by constantly processing the messages it receives from what we see, hear, taste, smell and touch. For children who have difficulty processing sensory information it is important to have some understanding of our senses.

	Vision: is what your eyes do, they let us see.
20	Auditory: uses our ears to hear.
555	Olfactory: uses our nose to smell.
ICE CREAM	Gustatory: uses our tongue to taste.
	Tactile: is used when your body feels touch



In addition to these five senses, we also have three other senses that are not as well known.







When our senses work well and together we can pay attention to what we want or need to do. When our brain struggles to make sense of any information it can be confusing and upsetting and we struggle to:

- · pay attention
- keep calm
- hold a conversation
- be productive.

A sensitive approach is needed to help any child who struggles to make sense of their world. The following link provides a child's perspective of sensory difficulties: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1G5ssZIVUw.





Bathing or showering

Bath or shower time can be distressing for many children with sensory difficulties. The following ideas and activities may help your child to have a better experience.



- Before bath or shower time talk to your child to help them understand what to expect: a sequencing story or a visual chart (see pages 34 to 36) can be beneficial.
- A massage before going into the bath or shower can help your child prepare for bathing or showering.
- Use of lavendar, camomile and so on in self-care products can help with relaxation.
- Listening to music whilst in the bath can help keep your child calm (Mozart's classical music for children can be useful).
- If your child cannot tolerate hair washing try rinsing their hair using a sports bottle or cover their eyes using a cloth or shield (different products can be bought at various shops).
- After a bath or shower wrap your child in a soft, warm towel. Once dried, a firm massage using body lotion can help prepare for bedtime.



Ask your child to help you to get organised for example, getting pyjamas, running the bath, turn on the shower, choose bath bubbles and toys to play with.

- Bath paints or crayons can be used in the bath to draw pictures or play games for example, noughts and crosses, number and letter games.
- Use crazy soap or shaving foam (use on the body, side of the bath or tiled walls), spread it out and then use fingers to draw pictures, letters or numbers.
- Use shampoo or bubbles to create crazy hairstyles, during this time you could also include a gentle but firm head massage.
- Have a bath party; for example, play with a beach ball, bucket, watering can, bath netball (various bath toy products can be bought easily).
- · Blow bubbles.
- Singing songs for example, Row, Row, Row Your Boat, 5 Little Ducks went Swimming One Day, Down in the Jungle, 5 Little Speckled Frogs or 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Once I Caught A Fish Alive.
- On-line games or apps can also help your child to understand bathing/showering (search bath games).



Tooth-brushing

Tooth-brushing can be challenging for children with sensory difficulties. The following activities may increase independence with tooth-brushing while addressing sensory needs.



Practical strategies:

- Encourage your child to help set a timer so that they know when to stop.
- Using a sequencing story or a visual chart (see pages 34 to 36) can help to explain the steps of the task.
- Play music, when the music stops the task is complete.
- Use a mirror.
- Try using a reward chart.

Functional activities:

Ask your child to go along with you to the shop to select their own tooth-brush (vibrating tooth brushes provide increased sensory input and can be beneficial for children with sensory difficulties).

- Toothbrush painting: draw or print an outline of a tooth, paint the tooth using a tooth brush or use cotton wool balls and glue them on to the outline.
- Guess the flavour: some children dislike minty toothpaste so try different flavours to find out what they like best.
- Egg-ceptional smile: paint an empty egg box white using a tooth brush, once dry you can use playdoh to show build-up of plaque. You can then encourage your child to brush it off or use string as dental floss.
- Dental songs for example, I'm a pink toothbrush, you're a blue toothbrush.
- Colouring pictures (online search: teeth/dentist).
- Make a toothbrush: colour a lolly pop stick, then glue on a small piece of sponge: use the toothbrush to brush a doll or teddies teeth.
- Imaginative play: pretend to be a dentist; take turns at looking into one another's mouth, or dolls and teddies can visit the dentist.
- On-line games/apps can help your child's understanding of dental care (search dentist games).



- Board games: The Tooth Fairy, Elefun and Friends Crocodile Dentist or Play-doh Dentist (available from various retailers).
- The Tooth Fairy or A Visit to the Dentist book(s) are available from various shops.
- Bubbles: blowing bubbles helps increase awareness of the mouth, you can also use straws to blow bubbles in soapy water or paint, or blow a cotton wool ball or ping-pong ball into a goal.

Toileting

Many children find toilet training difficult. All children develop at different rates: they must show signs of being ready for example, pulling at their nappy, telling you they are wet or soiled. It's important to keep a calm attitude and support your child through every stage.

- Use of a sequence story or a visual chart (see pages 34 to 36) may help your child with the steps involved in toileting.
- Ensure that you have a toilet insert or family toilet seat (can be padded) and a small foot stool or step to ensure that they feel safe and secure (available from various shops). This will help your child access the toilet independently.

- Try keeping a diary of your child's toileting habits this may help you to establish a toileting routine.
- Sit your child on the toilet at regular intervals, at first this may be every 60 minutes. If they show that they can stay dry for 60 minutes then gradually increase the time.
- Use easily removable, practical clothing for example, jogging trousers or leggings.
- Use toilet wipes instead of toilet paper if your child is sensitive to touch.
- Use a reward chart and positive praise.
- Sometimes it can be helpful to miss out the potty stage and train your child to use the toilet from the start.

- Ask your child to help clean the bathroom. This can help reduce any anxieties they may have about being in the bathroom.
- When out shopping, encourage your child to collect toilet paper, wipes and soap from the shelves and place them in the basket or trolley.

- Imaginative play: ask your child to change a nappy or potty train a doll or teddy.
- Use toilet or bathroom colouring sheets for example, dot to dots (online search: toilet or bathroom).



- Use board games for example, Og on the Bog, Doggie Doo (available from various shops).
- Try playing eye spy when they are sitting on the toilet or have a bag or box of their favourite toys to help distract your child.
- Online games/apps can help increase your child's understanding of toileting (search: toilet games).
- Use target aiming games specifically for boys (for example, use a ping pong ball in toilet bowl).

Hair care (combing/washing/cutting)

Hair care can often be challenging for children with sensory difficulties. The following may be helpful.



- Provide a head massage prior to combing, washing or cutting hair which provides deep pressure and reduces sensitivity.
- Use a brush with a large head or try a vibrating hair brush (available from various shops).
- Brush or cut hair in front of a mirror so your child can see when the brush is coming.

- Count or have your child count as you comb, rinse or cut hair. Use firm strokes/pressure as you comb hair.
- Encourage your child to wash or comb their own hair.
- Give definite time limits to the task for example, let's count to 10 then we will stop cutting your hair.
- Break the task into steps and ensure that you have all necessary items ready. It is important to:
 - Talk through the steps.
 - Practice each step in isolation in a stress free environment (where they are comfortable).
 - Gradually, combine steps and perform the task in the place they are most comfortable.
- Use conditioner and/or tangle teezer hairbrush to de-tangle hair as much as possible.
- For tangles start at the bottom and work up to the root.
- Try earphones or earplugs to block out the noise of clippers or hairdryer.
- Use a damp cloth with firm pressure to wipe away all bits of hair after cutting to avoid irritation.
- Use of a sequence story or a visual chart (see pages 34 to 36) can help increase your child's understanding of the task.



 Wash your child's hair before going to the hairdresser to reduce the time spent there.

Functional activities:

- When out shopping, encourage your child to choose shampoo or other hair products.
- Encourage your child to brush or comb someone else's hair or even a family pet's hair.

Games:

 Playing with a styling doll head can help your child learn to the steps involved in hair care.

 Use of on-line games/apps can also help increase your child's understanding of hair care (online search: hair styling).

Finger/toenail clipping

This can be very stressful for children who are sensitive to touch. The following ideas can help you at this time.

- Using a visual chart or timetable can help your child understand what to expect (see page 36).
- Explain what will happen in advance and why it is necessary. For example, I'm going to cut your nails with these small scissors or clippers and I'm



not going to cut your skin. We're going to do it for two minutes and then stop. While I'm cutting your nails you can look at this book.

- It may help to massage your child's hands or feet before attempting nail clipping.
- Sitting on a high stool or chair will let your child see what is happening and when to expect the nail clippers.
- Distracting your child can help during nail clipping, for example, sing a song, encourage your child to look at or read a book or watch a favourite TV programme.
- Remember there is no need to do all the nails at one time, listen to your child and only do as much as they can cope. This will help your child feel more in control and more likely to co-operate.

Functional activities:

 Ask your child to help you gather all the items required for nail clipping for example, body lotion for massage, towel, nail clippers, scissors, nail file and a favourite book or toy for distraction.



Games/activities:

- Finger or toe nail painting will help your child to experience touch without the anxiety of scissors or nail clippers.
- Before nail clipping try a foot soak or use a foot spa, add in your child's favourite bubbles to make it more fun.
- Hand or foot painting for example, use different textures of paper and card to create different sensory experiences.
- On-line games/apps can also help increase your child's understanding of nail clipping (search nail cutting or nail design).
- Explore different tactile experiences for example, arts and crafts, baking.

Dressing

There are lots of quick and easy activities that you can do to help your child to develop dressing skills while also addressing their sensory needs.

Practical strategies:

• Use of a sequence story or a visual chart (see pages 34 to 36) to help learn the steps for dressing.



- Encourage your child to warm-up their muscles before getting dressed for example, exercises like jumping jacks or animal walks can help to reduce sensitivity.
- Soft clothing is preferable; use plenty of fabric softeners when washing clothing.
- Remove tags from clothing.
- Allow your child to choose their own outfit.
- Ensure that your child has comfortable socks and underwear (see resources pages 37 and 38).
- Make life easier for you and your child by choosing practical clothing with elasticated waistbands, velcro shoes or self-tying shoe laces.

Encourage your child to help with different tasks around the home, for example:

- Gather up washing and place in the laundry bin.
- Carry the laundry bin to the washing machine.
- Load and unload the washing machine.
- Hang washing on the line or clothes drier.
- Sort, fold or return laundry to the bedroom.





- Play dress up for example, using a mirror to increase body awareness, you can also try using different materials to help sensitivity to clothing.
- Play with a dressing doll.
- Draw or print an outline of a body and practice drawing on clothes.
- Play with a dressing doll activity book for example, stickers or pop outs.
- Make or print fabrics; try using potato prints, stencils, leaves or finger, hand or feet paints. Use the fabric to make clothes for a doll or teddy.
- Play the clothes line washing game.
- Ask your child to lie on a large piece of paper such as lining wall paper, draw an outline of their body. Throw beanbags at the outline and name the body parts that the bean bag lands on.
- Action songs for example, Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes, Hokey Cokey, Simon Says, I'm a Dingle Dangle Scarecrow with a Flippy Floppy Hat (try adding props).
- Pretend to go on holiday and pack a bag or case.
 Encourage your child to select the clothing they would need to take with them (remember you can choose a sunny or a cold destination).

Mealtimes

Mealtimes can be challenging and frustrating. Common problems include remaining seated at the table, disliking a change to a routine and/or a limited diet. Remember it is important to model the behaviour that you want your child to copy, so eat with them.



- Keep mealtimes structured.
- Use of a visual menu planner that either you or your child can change and be in charge of, it could be photos, pictures or words.
- There are various types of plates, bowls and cutlery that can help your child at mealtimes for example, a heated bowl to keep food warm is ideal for slow eaters, a lipped bowl can help with scooping food, a spork which is a spoon and a fork combined to help your child keep the food on their cutlery. There are also various types of cuterly offering chunkier grips or grooves to help with holding (see the resource pages 37 to 38 for more information).
- Straws and sports bottles encourage sucking which helps develop facial muscles and increases sensory input.



- Using ice in drinks helps wake up the senses in the mouth.
- Taster plates can be used for example, food can be offered from a different plate for your child to try which can reduce the pressure.
- Be cautious about allowing your child to snack or drink near mealtimes to prevent reducing hunger at mealtimes.
- If your child is very fidgety, encourage a short movement break or try using a sand timer to help them to focus more.
- Make sure there are no distractions, for example, TV, loud music, toys.
- Use of a reward chart.

Encourage your child to help at mealtimes, for example:

- Set the table or get their dishes out.
- Put cereal, jam or sauces out or tidy away.
- Wash or dry the dishes, with supervision where required.
- Wipe trays, mats, table and highchair after meals.
- Assist with meal preparation for example, put the cheese in a sandwich or tomatoes on a plate.



Games:

- Role play games for example, make use of toy kitchens or create your own and encourage your child to be a customer, waiter or chef.
- Have a picnic for example, a carpet picnic or go outside. Remember picnics are fun on sunny days but you can also wrap up warm on cold frosty days.

Bedtime

Children with sensory difficulties often have difficulties settling themselves and staying in bed. Lack of sleep can



impact on all the family so it is important to resolve difficulties sooner rather than later.

- Using a visual chart or timetable can be beneficial to help with a bedtime routine (see page 36).
- Ensure that your child's bedroom is calming for example, dim the lights, try a mood or night light.
- Prior to bedtime, clear away any toys to reduce distractions.



- Discourage using television, games consoles or tablets one hour before bedtime.
- Make bath time part of your child's bedtime routine (see bath time information).
- Use of a heavier duvet or sleeping bag can help calm and settle.
- Read a bedtime story; encourage your child to choose the book or story.

- Encourage your child to help tidy the bedroom prior to bedtime.
- Ask your child to help make the bed in the morning.

- Physical games or activities can help provide the sensory input that they crave for example, pillow fights, jumping on or off the bed, obstacle courses, log rolling across flooring. It is important to include this into your bedtime routine for example, physical play, bath time, pyjamas, bedtime snack, story time, lights out.
- Board games for example, Bed Bugs, Good Night Game, Don't Wake Dad, Five Little Monkey's Jumping on the Bed or Ten in a Bed (available from various shops).



- Colouring pages or dot-to-dot (search on line: bedtime).
- Arts and crafts for example, make a dream catcher or a starry sky and moon picture.
- Ask your child to help write their own bedtime story.
- On-line games or apps can also help increase your child's understanding of bed time (search bedtime games).
- Make a den with your child using cushions, pillows, blankets. Let your child know that this will be a quiet area for relaxing. Try adding some quiet background music and some relaxing lighting (for example, Mozart for Children, bubble tube or Orbeez lava lamp, available from various shops).

Indoor play

Play at home can provide your child with a range of sensory experiences. Providing regular opportunities for play can help meet sensory needs.



Practical strategies:

 Use of a visual chart or timetable (see page 36) can help those who have difficulty changing from one play activity to another.



 Encourage your child to help set out games, activities or tidy them away.

- Play rough and tumble games.
- Jumping on the bed (if allowed).
- Log rolling across the carpet.
- Animal walks for example, encourage them to pretend to be different animals like a stomping elephant, crawling cat, slithering snake, jumping kangaroo.
- Build a den using blankets, cushions, pillows.
- Jack-in-the box; paint or decorate a large cardboard box then allow your child to pop out, you can also pretend to push them back in (this helps provide deep pressure to the head).
- Pillow fights.
- Create an obstacle for example, crawl under a blanket or dining chair then step over a book then hop to the couch.
- Play hide and seek.
- Dance: play music and dance along.
- Play musical bumps, chairs and statues.



- Messy play: finger, hand or feet painting, make your own salt dough, hide small characters, for example, bugs, dinosaurs, in jelly and ask your child to rescue them.
- Create a collage using different textured paper, cardboard and try adding other textures for example, tin foil, cotton wool balls, fabric and wool.
- Make pom-poms.
- Play in the sink: encourage your child to make bubbles with their hands using different soaps for example, a bar of soap, liquid soap, crazy soap, you can vary this using soaps with different scents.
- Dress-up: encourage your child to explore different textures of clothing, you can also add different hats and gloves (doesn't have to be specific costumes, adults clothing can often be more fun). Use a mirror to allow your child to observe their creation or ask them to complete a fashion show.

 Form a musical band using pots, pans, wooden spoons or any other household items.



In the garden

There are lots of quick and easy things to do in the garden to help your child meet their sensory needs:



Practical strategies:

 Use of a sequence story or a visual chart (see pages 34 to 36) can help your child understand what to expect in the garden. They can also be used to help your child know when play in the garden will end.

Functional activities:

These activities can easily be adapted to suit the individual's age for example, for younger children items and equipment can be substituted for toy versions.

- Rake leaves.
- Push heavy objects in a wheelbarrow.
- Mow the lawn with a push mower.
- Dig the garden for example, using a trowel or spade.
- Plant up potting plants.
- Fill up watering can and water plants.
- Help clean out the garden shed.
- Sweep the path or patio.



Other ideas:

- Carry washing out to the laundry line and hang it up.
- Washing the windows.
- Carry rubbish out to the bin.

- Playing on a slide or swing.
- Jumping on a trampoline.
- Practice cart-wheels or forward rolls.
- Log rolling across the grass (or down a grassy hill).
- Play in a paddling pool.
- Make an out-door den.
- Play hide and seek.
- Create an obstacle course for example, crawl through tunnels, jump or climb over objects, weave around items.
- Skipping.
- Playing on a space hopper.
- Spinning games for example, pretend to be a helicopter or a spiralling firework.
- Play ball games for example, football, volley ball.



- Dig in a sand pit.
- Create and play with a pin wheel.
- Play chase or tig.

Shopping

Trips to the shops can be a stressful experience for children with sensory difficulties whether it be sounds, smells, visual or personal space. The following advice may be helpful to reduce some of the difficulties.



- Advanced preparation is essential prior to shopping. Use of visual chart or timetable or a sequencing story (see pages 34 to 36) can help your child to know what to expect and reduce anxiety.
- Keep shopping lists short.
- Try to shop during quieter periods.
- Before going out, make sure they are not overly tired or already stressed.
- Have snacks or a special toy or comforter with you.
- To reduce noise levels, allow your child to wear headphones or ear defenders (available online).



- Wearing sunglasses can help your child to process light and cut out some of the brightness or flickering.
- Try using a timer. This will help your child to know when the task will finish and it can also help to build up tolerance.

- Encourage your child to help you to write a list or make a picture list.
- When shopping ask your child to find items, put them in the basket or cross them off the shopping list.
- Ask your child to help carry the basket (take a handle each) or push the trolley (supervision as required).
- Encourage your child to help unpack at the checkout.
- Provide your child with the opportunity to pack a shopping bag and carry it.

- Role play games: encourage your child to play at shops at home where they are more comfortable.
 Try to include various activities for example, serving at the checkout, packing bags.
- On-line games or apps can also help increase your child's understanding of shopping (search shopping games).



- Colouring-in pictures relating to shopping, food, money.
- Ask your child to pick their favourite food, find a recipe and then write a shopping list. After, visiting the shops ask them to help make the snack or meal.

Travel

Journeys can be a challenging time for parent and carers however, there are many strategies that can be helpful in reducing this and make it more fun.



- Preparation is key: tell your child well in advance, where they will be going, how long it may take and what they will be doing when they arrive.
- Use of a sequencing story or visual chart (see pages 34 to 36) can help explain journeys.
- Do not wait until your child needs a toilet, stop frequently to ensure that they have regular chances to go to the toilet.
- Wearing sunglasses or a visor can help reduce visual input for example, glare, flickering or brightness.



- To help reduce irritation by the seatbelt, use seatbelt pads.
- When travelling on public transport listen to music using earphones. If travelling by car play calming music (for example, Mozart for children) or other preferred music.
- Use ear defenders to reduce noise levels (available online).
- Let your child use a tablet or similar device when travelling to help distract them during the journey.
- Have a bag of practical toys or books as a distraction.
- Consider having a healthy snack and drink for your child throughout the journey.

- Ask your child to help you to look at a map and stick a label or dot at the start and end point.
- Ask your child to help plan for the trip for example, packing what will be needed such as clothes, toys, snacks.
- Encourage your child to help on the bus or train.
 For example, they could help by handing over the money.



- Travel bingo.
- Singing songs, for example, wheels on the bus or any other favourite song.
- I spy.
- Spot the colour, model or numbers of cars and buses.
- Alphabet games, for example, fruit, animals or colours.
- Use a pad or paper to draw.
- Magazines or books.
- Follow the sat nav or road map game.





Example of a sequencing story for your child

Getting dressed

Before I leave the house every morning I need to put clothes on



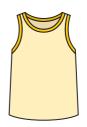
First, I will pull on my pants



Next, I will put on my socks



Then I put on my vest and tights (optional)





Next, I will put on my trousers, skirt or shorts



Then I will put on my jumper/t-shirt/blouse



Lastly, I will put on my shoes



When I am finished dressing myself I will feel really pleased and my family will be happy too.





Example of a visual chart for your child

The visual chart below is only an example; it is suggested that you create a similar chart. Use a range of symbols for different tasks and activities. Symbols need to be cut out and attached to the chart using Velcro or blu-tac. The top row is where symbols are placed for a specific activity that is required to be completed. Once your child has completed this it should be moved to the bottom row. Start with just a few items and gradually increase as they improve their skills and abilities.

Goal:

To develop dressing skills when getting ready to go outside.

To do:		
Put on shoes	Put on jacket	Put on hat
Finished:		



Resource list

There are a range of high street and on-line retailers where you can purchase small aids and equipment to support independence skills in relation to feeding, eating, dressing, bathing, showering, and toileting.

The following list may be helpful but there are other ones too:

Local shops and businesses:

A list of local retailers within Ayrshire can be found at:

www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/retailers.php?county=Ayrshire

On-line retailers:

www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/children/

www.co-operativeindependentliving.co.uk/paediatric-c5

www.essentialaids.com/children-with-disabilities.html

https://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk/bathroom-aids/toilet-aids/commodes

http://www.welcomemobility.co.uk/Departments/Children.aspx

http://www.uksmobility.co.uk/paediatrics

https://www.abilitysuperstore.com/index.php/paediatric

www.sensorydirect.com



Contact information

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Children and Young People's Occupational Therapy Services (East)

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The Johnnie Walker Bond Building

15 Strand Street

Kilmarnock

KA1 1HU

01563 553611

Children and Young People's Occupational Therapy Services (South)

Arrol Park Resource Centre

Doonfoot Road

Ayr KA7 4DW

01292 614988



All new requests for assistance for Children and Young People's Occupational Therapy services should be forwarded to:

The Rainbow House mailbox:

a a-uhb. clinical-rain bowhouse @aapct.scot.nhs.uk

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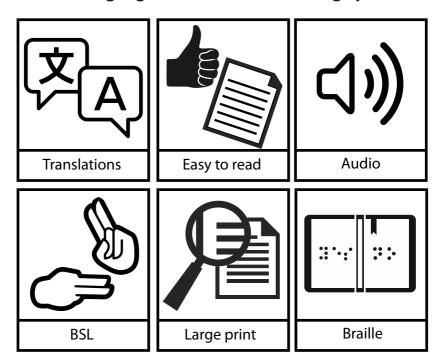




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Last reviewed: November 2020 Leaflet reference: OT16-003-CC PIL code: PIL18-0062