

## Top Tips For Working With a Child who has Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH)

The SEN Code of Practice talks about children who have social, emotional and mental health needs. This fits into the PSED area of Development Matters.

The emotional wellbeing of children is just as important as their physical health. Good mental health gives children the resilience to cope with whatever the world throws at them and to become well rounded adults. To help to keep children mentally well they need to feel loved, trusted, understood, valued and safe. They need to be hopeful and optimistic, to have opportunities to enjoy themselves and succeed, to recognise what they are good at and to have a sense of belonging in their family and the setting. Children need strength and resilience to cope when things go wrong and to have the ability to solve problems.

- All practitioners need to be consistent in the messages they give to children about their behaviour and what is and isn't acceptable within the setting
- Have agreed language and strategies when responding to unwanted behaviour outlined in the setting's behaviour policy
- Some children may need a personal behaviour plan, which is written with the child's parents / carers

- Place high value on and do not underestimate how crucial the keyworker relationship can be. A positive keyworker relationship is very important to give the child a secure base in the setting — be flexible, see how relationships develop and do not be afraid to change key workers
- Effective attachment is crucial to children's development.

### Enabling Environments (What Adults can Provide)

- Stories/roleplay/puppets to help children consider others feelings, ways to help others feel better and dealing with conflict options
- Consider stories/books that focus on a range of emotions

- Behaviour = communication!
- Use systematic observation to work out what the reasons for the behaviour are
- Use information gathered from observations to avoid or provide support in difficult situations
- ABC / STAR charts etc. can help record your observations

- Provide a calm, quiet, restful area where children can go if they need some time out
- Children need the time and freedom to play in and outdoors
- To help soothe anxious children allow them to bring in comforters from home and to share photos of their family life etc.
- Keep routines consistent and predictable and support through visual aids