

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

- Use 'first... then....' language when giving instructions that are not of the child's choosing
- Say what you want not want you don't want: e.g. say "walk" instead of "don't run"
- Turn negatives into positives i.e. say 'when you have...then you can... Rather than 'if you don't... then you can't...
- Be aware of your body language and tone of voice—you need to remain positive and encouraging

- Clear boundaries should be consistently applied by all staff, in all situations
- It may be useful to put in place a 'behaviour plan' so that everyone knows how/what to do and what strategies are being used

- Give the child very clear choices and support them to make a good choice
- Give children thinking time to make a choice
- Give the child a chance to co-operate and comply with instructions
- Praise good choices—be specific rather than a generic "good boy/girl" or "well done"
- Don't offer a choice if there isn't one- say "come and.../ I need you to...." Rather than "can you..." or "would you like to..."

Positive Relationships (Role of the adult)

- Model play and social situations so the child knows what is expected of them and so they learn desired behaviours
- Use social stories to teach and model social rules.
- Plan activities that enable collaboration

- Remember we all have good days and bad days!

- Be realistic in your expectations.
- Remember that a child that has a delay in other areas may also have delayed PSED
- Match your expectation for PSED with the child's developmental age/stage in other areas
- Reflect on your practice / routines and consider whether the expectations are appropriate

- Notice a child following setting routines and expectations of behaviour, ensure you praise this behaviour. This is particularly important for children who struggle to regulate and manage their own emotions / behaviour or who need more adult attention
- Distract / De-escalate: If a child is having a tantrum use distraction techniques. De-escalate the situation by remaining calm, reassure the child and be present for emotional support as and when the child requires it
- Remember some children struggle to cope with an Early Years environment
- Use '*Planned Ignoring*' as a strategy