

## **Script for Video: Choosing an early years setting for children who may have additional needs**

### **Title slide**

This recording was created through coproduction with families of children with additional needs and early years practitioners in our county of Suffolk. It includes information about resources and organisations that they felt would help families to choose the right setting for their child.

### **Slide 2**

Parents may choose childcare for a variety of different reasons.

Childcare can help children on a social and developmental level. Sometimes parents want to work, or do some training, or just need some time to themselves.

There are lots of different types of childcare to choose from and it can feel a bit overwhelming.

And if parents suspect their child has additional needs, they are naturally anxious to know their needs will be supported. You want to know that your child will be safe and happy and looked after.

Choosing childcare is a hugely important decision for the whole family. This video aims to give you a background understanding to build your confidence when looking for the right setting for your child.

### **Slide 3**

This recording will explore:

The different types of early years settings

We'll look at the responsibilities settings have for children who may have additional needs

And we'll explore what to consider, what information to share and what you may like to ask when you are looking at settings for your child.

We'll look at what the law says regarding support for children with medical needs or disabilities



And we'll finish with some resources which may help parents at home.

#### **Slide 4**

The [Early Years Foundation Stage Framework](#) is the legal framework for children's early education aged 0 – 5 years.

This framework is clear that 'every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential.'

(Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework Introduction, paragraph 1)

#### **Slide 5**

So let's start by looking at the different types of early years provision.

#### **Slide 6**

There are two main types of childcare – home based childcare and group-based.

Home-based childcare includes registered childminders, childcare in a home environment and the care of a nanny.

Group based childcare includes day nurseries, playgroups, pre-schools and a school nursery.

Let's look at home-based childcare first.

#### **Slide 7**

Registered childminders are self-employed childcare professionals who work in their own homes caring for other people's children.

They care for small numbers, with a maximum of 6 children, and often care for a range of ages from babies to school-aged children. Childminders can be flexible and offer patterns of childcare to support many families.

They are able to take easy advantage of real-life experiences like outings to the park or a library. Just like other forms of registered childcare, they are regulated and inspected by Ofsted.

Some childminders are able to offer fully funded early education sessions for 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds.



## Slide 8

Nannies are employed by you, to look after your children in your own home.

They care for small numbers of children too (usually siblings) and can take care of all aspects of looking after your child, including caring for their clothes and possessions, and cooking their food.

Some families agree a nanny-share arrangement, where the nanny offers childcare to more than one family.

## Slide 9

Group provision can vary a lot in terms of the times they are open, so it's helpful to think about what you need for your child.

For example, do you need care all year round or only in term time?

What days of the week and hours will you need childcare for?

And what kind of flexibility are you looking for? Will you need an early morning start in order for you to get to work for example, and will you need a lunch club?

This will help you to choose whether a day nursery, preschool, playgroup or school nursery class is best for you or your child. This is a very individual choice.

## Slide 10

All local authorities must provide a [Family Information Service](#) to give parents free and impartial advice about finding childcare and funded early education.

They have details of all the local registered childcare providers so they can tell you about:

- The different types of childcare
- The name and contact details of childcare providers
- They can tell you their opening hours and any costs
- And Ofsted's rating for the setting (where this is available)
- They can explain the funded early education entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds and help you find out if your child is eligible for funded 2 year old education
- And they can help you look for a breakfast, after school or holiday club for your child.



## Slide 11

You can also use the [Family Service Directory](#) on Suffolk's local offer to find what childcare is available in your area. You can type in your postcode and select the type of childcare you are looking for and then press search to find what is offered near you.

## Slide 12

The organisation [PACEY](#) is a professional association for childcare and early years and they have a guide for helping parents to choose childcare which you may find helpful.

## Slide 13

Childminders, day nurseries, pre-schools and nursery classes must all be registered with Ofsted (or with a childminder agency)

They must also follow the early years foundation stage framework and deliver the early years foundation stage curriculum.

The [Early Years Foundation Stage Framework](#) is the legal framework which sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. This includes children with additional needs.

## Slide 14

Many parents who believe their child may have additional needs worry that this might be a barrier to finding the right childcare setting for them.


## Slide 15

All early years providers which offer fully funded places to eligible 2-year olds and to 3- and 4-year olds must meet the requirements of the [SEND Code of Practice](#).

This is statutory guidance, which comes directly from the [Children and Families Act](#) of 2014.

## Slide 16

The SEND Code of Practice says that:



‘All early years providers are required to have arrangements in place to identify and support children with SEN and disabilities and to promote equality of opportunity for children in their care.’

(SEND Code of Practice, para 5.12)

Under the [Equality Act of 2010](#), a child cannot be excluded or denied a place due to health or developmental needs.

## **Slide 17**

All early years providers have duties under the [Equality Act of 2010](#).

As the SEND Code states:

‘They must not discriminate against, harass or victimise disabled children, and they must make reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services for disabled children to prevent them being at a substantial disadvantage.’

An auxiliary aid is anything which gives additional support or assistance to a disabled child so this could be a piece of equipment like specialist seating or toilet aids or it might mean specialist training or perhaps an adaptation to a building.

‘All publicly funded early year providers must also promote equality of opportunity.’

(SEND Code of Practice, paragraph 5.10)

## **Slide 18**

The aims of the [Early Years Foundation Stage Framework](#) include:


- quality and consistency in all early years settings, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind
- and quality of opportunity so that there is no discrimination and every child is included and supported.

(EYFS Framework, Introduction, paragraph 3)

## **Slide 19**

All local authorities must

Take responsibility for all children in their area who have or may have special educational needs



They must set out provision in their local offer that they expect to be available for children with special educational needs or disabilities (or SEND) in the early years

[Section 6 of the Childcare Act](#) puts a duty on local authorities to make sure that there is sufficient childcare in their area to meet the needs of parents.

(Children and Families Act 2014, s24 and Childcare Act 2006, s 6)

## **Slide 20**

Some families may experience difficulties finding childcare and accessing services for a number of reasons.

A family or a professional can contact the [Family Information Service](#) to ask for a referral to the Childcare Brokerage Service.

Under the [Childcare Act of 2006](#) a local authority (or LA) must provide extra support for families to help them access childcare and other support services. Many local authorities like Suffolk offer a brokerage service where someone advises and negotiates on the behalf of someone else.

Brokerage should involve support in securing an appropriate childcare place.

It should offer guidance on local providers who have experienced staff and assistance in contacting childcare providers. This might include making telephone calls, arranging visits and discussing any adaptations or training that might be needed to support a particular child.

## **Slide 21**


There is information on Suffolk's local offer about childcare for children with special educational needs or disabilities (or SEND) and this includes what early education providers must offer and what the law says.

## **Slide 22**

Some parents who contact our service aren't sure how they will know if their child will need extra help so we're going to spend a few minutes exploring how a child's needs may be identified.

## **Slide 23**

Children with more complex developmental and vision or hearing needs may have these needs identified when they are born. This may be through health



assessments such as the hearing screen test, which is used to check the hearing of all new born babies.

Some other children's needs are identified before they enter an early years setting during routine health checks which we will be discussing in a minute.

The SEND Code of Practice says:

'Health services, including paediatricians, the family's general practitioner, and health visitors, should work with the family, support them to understand their child's needs and help them to access early support.'

(SEND Code of Practice 2015, paragraph 5.14)

## **Slide 24**

The Children and Families Act makes clear that where a health body believes that a young child has or probably has special educational needs, they must:

Inform the child's parents and bring the child to the attention of the local authority

They must give parents the opportunity to discuss their opinion

And let parents know about any voluntary organisations that are likely to be able to provide advice or assistance.

(Children and Families Act 2014, Section 23)

## **Slide 25**


Under the Children's Act 1989 local authorities must keep a register of disabled children in their area. This register allows them to send relevant information to families, including information about childcare.

It is a good idea to join the register as soon as a disability becomes clear. You can speak to your health visitor, social worker or Suffolk's Family Information Service about how to do this.

## **Slide 26**

Sometimes a child's needs only become clear as a child grows or when they are in an early years setting.

The SEND Code of Practice says:



All those who work with young children should be alert to emerging difficulties and respond early.

The Code states that a clear approach to assessing SEN 'should be part of the setting's overall approach to monitoring the progress and development of all children.'

(SEND Code of Practice, paras 5.12 and 5.20)

So they will draw on their understanding of your child's progress and attainment, the views of you and your child, and if relevant, the advice of external services.

## **Slide 27**

What if your child is waiting for a particular assessment?

You don't have to wait for an assessment to share what you know about your child's difficulties and what support helps best.

A diagnosis of a medical condition alone will not make any difference to the support a setting will offer – all support is led by a child's individual needs.

An assessment report may however clarify a child's needs, but your knowledge will always be key.

## **Slide 28**

The SEND Code says:

Parents know their children best and it is important that all practitioners listen and understand when parents express concerns about their child's development.'

The Code makes clear that 'parents' early observations of their child are crucial.'

(SEND Code of Practice, paragraphs 5.5 and 5.14)


And we will shortly be looking at the kind of information that will be important for you to share as part of this process.

## **Slide 29**

Next let's look at what to do if you believe that your child may need extra help.

## **Slide 30**

When you have made a shortlist of early years providers, it's a good idea to visit and talk to the SENCo which stands for special educational needs coordinator.



All maintained nursery schools must have one and other providers are expected to identify a SENCo.

Their role includes making sure that all the early years staff understand their responsibilities to children with SEN and making sure that parents are closely involved.

Childminders are encouraged to identify a person to act as a SENCo. Childminders who are registered with a childminder agency or who are part of a network may wish to share the role between them.

### **Slide 31**

Remember you are an expert on your child!

You've been making adjustments to support your child since their birth.

So think about:

How do you get your child's attention?

How do you help your child to re-focus on something, if they have lost attention?

How do you support your child to prepare for something new or different or a change to the usual routine?

And don't forget to share what the best ways are to help your child to calm down if they are upset.

### **Slide 32**

Make key notes to share on your visit. Jot down:

What your child enjoys and their strengths

What they find difficult and what you do at home, and when you are out, which helps with these difficulties


The best way to communicate with your child - If your child has little language, do you use any visuals or signs at home like PECS or Makaton?

Or maybe you use a string of photos to explain a bedtime routine?

And the best ways to help them calm down.

### **Slide 33**

Look around the setting when you visit and ask about the activities children routinely do.



Do you anticipate any difficulties for your child in doing a particular activity or accessing a particular space?

What might help your child to take part?

Ask the SENCo if they have experience of supporting children who present in a similar way to your child. What kind of support did they find worked well?

Can the setting show you examples of adjustments being made to support other children with additional needs?

### **Slide 34**

It's helpful to prepare some questions. These might include:

Asking what training staff in the setting have.

If your child needs particular health and/or care support, the setting may need to identify and access the training before your child starts, for example to meet any medical or communication needs.

You might like to ask how they would ensure that your child has the same quality play and learning opportunities as other children?

Or it may be important for you to know who will communicate with you about your child. Or how progress is recorded and shared with you.

### **Slide 35**

If your child has physical or sensory needs, talk to staff about whether you need an 'environment audit' to be done by an appropriate professional who is working with your child.


The setting may want to speak to and seek advice from an Occupational Therapist if large specialist equipment is required.

In many cases settings can make a request for specialist equipment.

### **Slide 36**

For a child with medical needs you could ask about putting together an Individual Healthcare plan or IHP.

This is different from an Education, Health and Care plan.



An IHP records the key information about a child's medical needs, the actions that are required by staff in the setting to support the child effectively, who will provide the support and when.

([Medical conditions at school template individual healthcare plan](#))

## **Slide 37**

It's important to think about how your child will start at the early years setting.

Would your child benefit from a settling-in period? If so, talk to the settings you are visiting about how this might work.

Some parents may prefer to build up the number of hours they leave their child for, increasing gradually.

This can help everyone to get used to the new routine and for the key person at the childcare setting to get to know your child as well as take any necessary training.

## **Slide 38**

We're moving on now to thinking about getting ready for your child to start.

## **Slide 39**

Once you've chosen an early years setting, they will talk to you about when and how your child can visit.


Tell them if your child finds going to new social environments difficult. You could ask to arrange a first visit when other children are not there and it is quiet.

Some settings may offer you a home visit. This can be a good opportunity for them to get to know your child, including their specific needs and talk through next steps.

## **Slide 40**

You and the setting could together decide whether it would be good for your child to have a special toy or object in the setting with them, or photos of their family or their pet.

The setting may be able to provide a photo book that you can share with your child before they start. This will help them to become familiar with the environment, activities and their key person.



Each child in an early years setting must be assigned a key person who helps make sure that their care is tailored to their individual needs.

### **Slide 41**

It's often helpful to take your child to other social groups (like parent-toddler groups or Stay and Play) to help them get used to being with other children.

### **Slide 42**

But what if you believe that your child may need a specialist setting?

### **Slide 43**

The majority of children with SEND are successfully included in mainstream early years settings, including those with Education, Health and Care (or EHC) plans.

Some children may need specialist provision where the service cares only for children with special educational needs or disabilities (or SEND).

This may be considered as part of an EHC needs assessment or annual review of an existing EHC plan. For other children, early years practitioners usually do the referral paperwork with the support of the parents.

### **Slide 44**


If a child may have SEN which may need support which goes beyond the resources available to an early years setting for SEN support, the family or the setting could request an EHC needs assessment.

These help identify the education, health and care needs which are making it difficult for a child to learn and to access learning. They also identify the support which may be required to meet those needs.

### **Slide 45**

The law says that:

‘A local authority or LA must secure or do an EHC needs assessment if it considers that the child or young person has or may have SEN (special educational needs) and it may be necessary for special educational provision to be made in accordance with an EHC plan.’



In other words, if the child is likely to need support which goes beyond the resources and advice routinely available to a setting to provide SEN support.

(Children and Families Act 2014, Section 36 (8))

## **Slide 46**

A parent or carer or someone with parental responsibility or the setting can request an EHC needs assessment at any time. (Other practitioners, like a therapist or health visitor can also raise your child with the local authority and say why they think an EHC needs assessment might be helpful.)

An EHC needs assessment is the first step towards getting an Education, Health and Care (or EHC) plan.

If a child has health or care needs but no special educational needs, an EHC needs assessment will not be agreed as these assessments are all about unpicking the barriers to learning.

## **Slide 47**

We have lots of information and videos about the EHC process on our [Suffolk SENDIASS website](#) and [YouTube channel](#) which you might find helpful.

## **Slide 48**

The Family and Childcare Trust has information for parents and carers on their website which you may find helpful.

## **Slide 49**

Including videos and written testimonies of the experiences of parents of children with additional needs.

## **Slide 50**

You may also like to explore the information for families on the website of the [PACEY](#), the professional association or childcare and early years.

## **Slide 51**

Finally, there is guidance for parents and carers on the Suffolk County Council website which may help you.



## Slide 52

This video was made by [Suffolk SENDIASS](#) but every county will have an impartial and confidential SEND Information, Advice and Support service.