



Playday

Your guide to holding an inclusive event

Playday – everyone's included!

Playday is the national day for play in the UK, a celebration of children's right to play and a campaign that highlights the importance of play in children's lives.

To celebrate, Play England and partners are calling on everyone to make an extra special effort so children can play. Hundreds of communities across the UK will put on local Playday events and activities. In addition, thousands of children, young people and their families will mark the occasion by simply getting out to play!

Playday is a great opportunity to get the community together to enjoy positive play activities. Playing together supports children to develop relationships, understanding and tolerance. The more children experience playing together with children of different cultures, backgrounds and abilities, the more tolerant, adaptable and empathic they become.

Inclusive play is good for everyone, and planning to include children and young people with a learning disability in your playday needn't cost you additional time or money – but it is something you need to plan for.

Me2 is a panel of young people who have a variety of disabilities: there are Me2 members with a learning disability, members with autism, others who are deaf or have visual impairments and those who are wheelchair users. They work with Mencap to help play settings become more accessible and enjoyable for children like them. They provide training to play providers and the children who use the services about how to include disabled children in everything they do. Here is their guide on how to ensure everyone is included.

Thank you for reading our guide to inclusive playdays. Lots of children with a disability find it really hard to attend community events because people don't plan to meet their needs. We are really happy that you want to change this by making your playday inclusive. Here are the questions you need to ask yourself to be sure that everyone's included at your playday:

Did you invite us?

When you advertise your playday think about how we will know that disabled children are welcome. There are some easy ways to let us know that you want us to come:

- Send invitations to places we go: lots of children with a disability don't go to mainstream schools, so why not advertise your playday at the local special school, with short break providers and with special educational needs coordinators (Sencos) at mainstream schools.
- Use words like 'open to all ages and abilities' so we know you've thought about us. Lots of children like us have got fed up with going to events where we are not made welcome – we might feel too nervous to come along unless you tell us that the playday is for us too.
- If you have photos of children on your invitation, it would be nice to see a photo of a disabled child. This is another way of letting us know we are welcome.
- Tell us what activities you have planned – that way we can decide if there is anything we might enjoy.

Did you plan activities we can do?

When we ask you to plan activities we can do, we don't mean that everyone should be able to do everything. Part of what makes play exciting is that it challenges us: it's important that we have the opportunity to experiment with new things. Also it wouldn't be fair to say that no one can play football because one of us is in a wheelchair (although wheelchair football is really fun!). We don't want other children to stop having fun because of us – we just want to be able to have fun too!

We are more likely to be able to join in if you offer a variety of play activities.

Think about including:

- indoor and outdoor play
- things we can do standing up
- things we can do sitting down
- things we can lie down to do
- running around play
- noisy spaces and quiet spaces
- clean spaces and messy spaces.

The more different things you offer, the more likely we are to be able to find something we can enjoy.





Can we contact you?

Every disabled person is different: we don't expect you to be able to anticipate all our needs, so it's always useful to get in touch so we can ask you questions.

Often there are simple solutions that will make it easier for us to enjoy playing with you. For example, if we know our wheelchairs don't fit under your tables, we can ask our parents to bring a lap tray for us or see if you have one at your centre. That way we can still take part in the art activities that interest us.

If we think we will only be able to come to the playday for an hour, we might want to ask you when the activity we really want to do is – so we know we won't miss it.

Remember: we know our own needs and just want to enjoy play alongside other children. It is ok to ask us what support we need to be included. It is likely to be less than you expect.

Have you set up your space thinking about our needs?

It's really good to put activities far enough apart in your venue so that a wheelchair can fit between them. This is important not only for wheelchair users but for anyone unsteady on their feet.

Where there is floor play, or toys at below-waist level, the areas for this kind of play should be marked clearly so that children with visual impairments don't have to worry about tripping over.

It is often useful to provide a quiet area that we can go and sit in if all the activity and noise is stressing us out.

Have you planned how we will know what to do when we arrive at the playday?

We hope your playday will be really successful and there will be lots of people there enjoying themselves. It would help us to enjoy ourselves if we know:

- who the staff are, if we need to ask questions – think about wearing matching t-shirts or name badges
- where everything is – it is helpful to have clear signs to different activities, a map of your venue and clear pathways between activities
- what to expect when – if there is lots going on, a timetable is really useful so we don't have to worry about missing anything.

Do you know how to talk to us and involve us in play?

There are some really simple ways the people working at your playday can help us to have fun:

- Smile and say hello – make us feel welcome.
- If you don't know what help we need, ask us. We or our carers will be happy to tell you.
- Like all children we prefer it if you talk to us in clear, simple language.
- Some of us have auditory processing delay, which means it will take us longer to respond to what you say. Please wait at least 30 seconds before repeating yourself or you might interrupt us while we are working out what you said, which can be very confusing and upsetting for us.
- If we use communication methods other than speech, be patient – what we say is still important. If you are struggling to understand us, please ask us to find someone who can help you understand us.
- Be flexible: we might do things differently or need you to help us differently from how you help other children.
- Don't 'look after' us. Play is about risk for us too – as well as independence and building relationships with other children. If you are overprotective and by our sides all the time, we won't get to play in the same way as other children.
- RELAX: remember it's a playday – everyone is here to have fun.

Good luck organising your playday – we hope it's really successful and that our advice helps you to include disabled children on the day.

If you need further support or information about how to make your setting more inclusive, you can email training@mencap.org.uk

