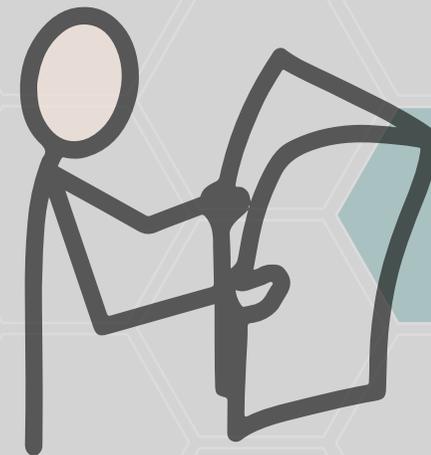
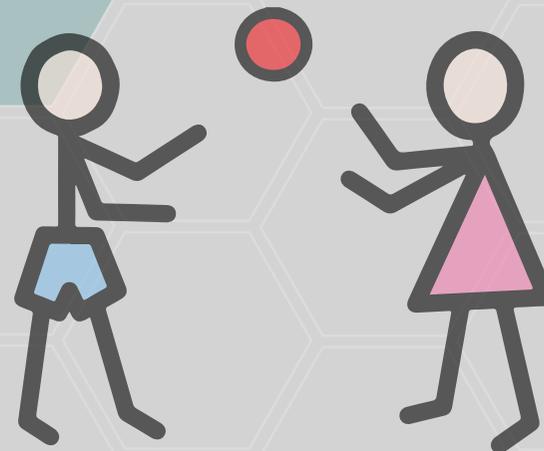


My Play and Leisure



Equals SLD (Semi-Formal) Curriculum Schemes of Work

My Play and Leisure

Basic Principles

It is very difficult to over-emphasise how important Play is to the development of both the child and the adult that the child will become. All animals play; it is one of the crucial ways of learning within a safe and secure environment, but it must be given **TIME**. So often, within a conventional curriculum model, play is only allowed to develop up to the age of six, and from then on is assumed to be secondary to the serious business of formal education. For those with learning difficulties however, whose learning takes so much longer to develop, Play, with a capital P and as a key area of learning needs to be expanded at the rate and speed which each individual learner can make sense of. Play **MUST** take a central part in any Curriculum discussions, **MUST** be given time to develop and will probably continue to be central for the whole of the learners' school career.

For those who are at the earliest stages of intellectual development, play, and playing games....

'are not time out from real work; they are the most intensive developmental work you can do' (Nind and Hewett, 2001; p66).

Functions of Play. There are very many functions of Play, among them being to help the learner to:

- experience interaction with others
- learn about social interaction
- practice and develop social communication
- encourage in the making of friendships
- learn new skills in a safe environment
- explore own body and senses
- develop kinaesthetic senses

- explore the surrounding world
- develop a safe understanding of emotions of both self and others
- develop fine and gross motor skills
- develop flexibility of thought
- develop Theory of Mind
- develop Central Coherence

On top of all of these, Play is essentially about HAVING FUN and with FUN comes a multitude of learning opportunities.

Difficulties with Play. It is also however, very difficult to over-emphasise how challenging Play is for most learners with SLD, and if they have an additional autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), it is probably even more challenging! This is because children, young people and adults with SLD:

- are unlikely to learn spontaneously and will find the art of generalising one learned experience of play into another very difficult ;
- will have difficulties remembering what they played last time and with whom, and exactly what the rules were last time, and of course, the time before that;
- will have poor expressive and receptive communication skills, thus making for extreme challenges in joint play;
- will have difficulties in repairing communicative breakdowns so that misunderstandings and children’s natural squabbles will become insurmountable barriers to extended play experiences;
- will have poor concentration skills and may not be able to follow the ‘rules’ which themselves may be changed from minute to minute. They may wander off to some other attraction within a very short time;
- will have difficulties in repairing communicative breakdowns so that misunderstandings and children’s natural squabbles will become insurmountable barriers to extended play experiences;
- will have difficulties with the abstract nature of creative play.

In addition, and especially if they have an additional ASD, those with SLD

- will probably have problems with flexibility of thought, perhaps engaging in rigid routines or rituals which prevent the development of play skills;
- may lack social reciprocity;
- may exhibit behaviours which may be circular, with repeating patterns;

- may naturally incline to preferring solitude and therefore lack the motivation to communicate socially;
- may lack social and emotional directedness;
- may have a high level of compulsions and rituals;
- may have only a limited ability to communicate in unstructured situations;
- may have a limited ability to communicate beyond simple requests;
- may use inappropriate language and have difficulties mapping language to the task;
- may have difficulties understanding non-verbal communications;
- will probably lack theory of mind and an understanding of others thinking differently to themselves;
- may have difficulty with emotional involvement with other people.

These lists are limiting factors for learners with SLD and may explain why such learners struggle to play, but there is of course, a chicken and egg scenario here, since the fact that such learners struggle to play may also contribute to the establishment and continued existence of these limiting conditions. If we can teach learners with SLD (and SLD/ASD) to play, we may thereby help them to break into effective social communication, creativity, thinking, problem solving, formulating and maintaining relationships, purposeful self-engagement, narrative and storytelling, theory of mind, developing self-confidence, self-belief and self-esteem.

PLEASE NOTE. It is a grave mistake to think of any of the play opportunities noted here as being inappropriate because learners are too old. It's not about the play or what you are playing it's about the learning opportunities that the play realises. The key is the level of enjoyment gained by the learner. The greater the level of enjoyment, the more involvement, and the more likely they are to include and to allow themselves to be included by, others. You may want to lean the play towards more age appropriate learning opportunities (moving water play to a washing up style activity for example) but we must remember that age has nothing to do with having fun and we must think VERY carefully before stopping learners having fun because WE deem it age inappropriate.

Progress and what it might look like. In all of the suggestions relating to Play progress, there are clearly going to be many related directly to other Equals Semi-formal (SLD) Schemes of Work (SoW). This will be especially so with *My Communication*, and *My Thinking and Problem Solving*. The Equals Semi-formal (SLD) Curriculum has been designed to be holistic in nature, so that for example, we do not expect *My Communication* to be taught discretely (*'its 10.00 on Monday; drop everything else because now we're working on communication'*). Play progress will naturally be strongly related to other Equals SoW and it would be largely stating the obvious to point out the cross curricular links every time they occur, since they occur all of the time.

Parents and carers. Schools should consider operating ‘open access’ sessions for parents through regular parent invites to ‘learn how to play’. Other areas of learning in the Equals Semi-formal (SLD) Curriculum, such as *My Communication* have highlighted the huge potential for parental involvement in areas like signing, and play is no different.

Do we learn to play, or is it an innate gift? Neuro-typically developing children generally learn to play naturally, without conscious effort from ‘teachers’. Staff members (SMs) may *facilitate* the learning of play but they don’t consciously teach it.

‘The ability to play freely and co-operatively comes more or less fully formed with the neuro-typical, conventionally developing child by the time the child enters the formal process of schooling at the age of 5 or 6’ (Imray and Orr, 2015, p359).

And there is a difference between Play and Games. Play is free, exploratory, open ended, variable and process based; games, from *Round and Round the Garden* to *Musical Chairs*, from football to chess, are structured, rule bound, formalised and product based. In neuro-typical development, the exploration of free play comes first

‘Here, process (freedom) precedes product (structure).’ (Imray and Orr, 2015, p360).

Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development is key here. It makes sense to assume that the help and support given by others (the ladders and scaffolding for learners to climb up) needs to revolve around structure, since structure is, by definition, the one consistent thing that’s missing from free play. Yet it is also the one thing that those with SLD (and of course ASD) often need the most. This sees a direct, linear and developmental relationship between process (free play) and product (games). Process play does not have any end in mind, children are *‘learning how to do it whilst doing it’* (Peter, 1997, p29). The general and invisible rules of free play become established over many, many hours of practice; once these (invisible) rules are broadly understood, neuro-typical, conventionally developing children are able to branch out into product play, which relates much more to the formal rules and order that fits in with adult life.

For those who need structure the early introduction of formal product based play that are games may be essential, as this drastically reduces the free play variables to manageable proportions, and structure in play is most easily placed into games.

For those with SLD Play needs to be taught every day both in and out of the classroom; for some, it will form the bedrock of primary education and may well be **MUCH** more important than formally teaching literacy and numeracy – both of which can be taught very effectively through the medium of play. This can be in the form of encouraging ‘playfulness’ (Watson and Corke, 2015) but teaching play in the form of structured games playing also allows children a base from which they can stretch into freer forms of play.

We might therefore, have two broad types of play to ‘teach’

1. Structured play (games) – product based, structured, rule bound, adult led and adult modelled. The vast majority of structured games playing is automatically social and co-operative in nature, the exceptions being computer games.
2. Free play – process based, fluid rules, child led, adult modelled, may cover all levels of play, may cover all social dimensions of play.

Free play itself is categorised under five social dimensions, namely

1. Solitary
2. Parallel
3. Shared
4. Turn-taking
5. Co-operative

and five levels of play, namely

1. Sensorimotor
2. Relational
3. Functional
4. Symbolic
5. Socio-dramatic

all of which are fully explored within the SoW itself and run parallel to each other. There is therefore no reason why the two types of play should not be taught concurrently; one is not better than the other or even better for a particular type or age or developmental level of learner; they are merely different ways of trying to get to the same objective.

The importance of Play to the development of the person and the maximising of what a person can do and what a person can be, means that Play must be given LOTS of discrete time within the weekly and daily classroom schedule that goes far beyond the time normally allocated as 'playtime'. Play is not an optional extra; it is an essential rib of the body of learning.

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Structured Play

Structured Play (Games) Learning Opportunities	Staff member's (SM's) role in enabling	Progression (and what it might look like)
<p>One to one or small group games such as tickle monster; Row, Row, Row Your Boat; rolling a ball or throwing and catching; peek-a-boo; Mr Potato Head; This Little Piggy; Round and Round the Garden; blowing bubbles and trying to pop them before they hit the ground.</p>	<p>These games are excellent for working into Intensive Interaction as a means of kick-starting an interaction, but can be played at any time there is a spare 5 minutes.</p> <p>Keep to the same rules every time.</p> <p>Pause before the 'big' ending as in '<i>And the laaaaaasssst little piggy ran.....(big pause).....wee, wee, wee, wee, all the way home</i>' to encourage anticipation and turn taking.</p> <p>Be aware that the close up physical interaction games may not be suitable for some learners on the autistic spectrum who do take easily to close physical contact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner positively responds to the staff members (SM) initiation of the game. • Learner recognises that both parties in the game have roles to play (such as SM threatens to tickle and learner giggles in anticipation). • Learner requests the game by for example, holding his/her hand out for Round and Round the Garden. • Learner initiates the game by taking the lead.
<p>'Activity' games that can quickly develop into free play for those learners who might be at that developmental level, such as ordinary playgrounds with swings and round-a-bouts and especially adventure playgrounds.</p>	<p>The rules of these games may be as simple as '<i>I sit on the swing and you push</i>' but these can be valuable for establishing and building friendships and trust between learners and staff, as well as encouraging</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner expresses pleasure at the game. • Learner appropriately requests the help of a SM.

<p>Playgrounds and adventure playgrounds should not just be restricted to the very young since they are fantastic resources for all ages if the learners enjoy them. They are excellent for developing the kinaesthetic proprioceptive and vestibular senses. It is accepted that swings and roundabouts might only develop solitary play, but this is an excellent goal in itself.</p> <p>There are numerous games such as Shark Attack for playing in the swimming pool and playground, as well beach ball catch and water polo.</p>	<p>communicative opportunities, as in <i>'Push please!'</i></p>	
<p>Small group or one to one games for any age such as Hide and Seek; Pass the Parcel; Musical Chairs; Blind Man's Bluff; Musical Statues; Simon Say's; Sleeping Lions; What's the Time Mr Wolf?; balloon and spoon relay race; barrel relay race; three armed relay race (tie children's arms together rather than their legs); skittles; Flap the Kipper; treasure hunts.</p> <p>Prize Walk Numbers, like musical chairs only with numbers in big circles drawn onto the floor. When the music stops, children have to run to a circle and stand on it. A big die gets thrown and those</p>	<p>These games are the essential stuff of structured play and should be played regularly, probably throughout learners whole school career. There is no reason why any of these games should ever be considered to be age inappropriate, as long as learners continue to enjoy them.</p> <p>There are SO MANY games that can give so many opportunities for learning that it might be best to have a group of 5 to 10 per term. The most popular ones can stay for the next term as well.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner positively responds to the staff members (SM) initiation of the game. • Learner recognises that both parties in the game have roles to play (such as SM starts the music while the learner walks around the chairs). • Learner responds positively when playing the game. • Learner's ability to concentrate and follow the rules improves over time. • Learner formally requests the game by for example, choosing the particular game symbol.

<p>standing on that number are the winners. This can be easily transferred to a team game so that points are added up and the team with the most points wins – group hug!</p> <p>Bean-bag-toss game – into different sized holes for different scores; Hop-scotch; Ring-a-Ring-a-Roses; The Farmer’s in the Den.</p> <p>Games like The Farmer’s are excellent for working on Theory of Mind (understanding that others have different thoughts, feelings, wants, beliefs to yourself) where children have the opportunity to be the farmer, the wife, the child, the dog. There are no doubt, numerous variations of this game around the world that will carry different cultural significances.</p> <p>Duck, Duck, Goose; Hokey-Cokey (as in the song <i>‘You do the Hokey-Cokey and you turn around, that’s what its all about’</i>). Practiced hands at this will pause for children to take the lead as to what the next action might be. Songs such as Hokey-Cokey are also excellent for gathering children back into</p>	<p>Assign a symbol for each game that’s velcroed to a Games Board or kept in a box or book for more able learners, that is always in a specific place in the classroom. Have large versions of each symbol that the whole class can see, and can be held aloft when shouting ‘Let’s play MUSICAL CHAIRS!!’</p> <p>Encourage learners to take turns to make choices on the game to be played. Have all the class photos on the Games Board so that everyone can see whose turn it is next to choose the game.</p> <p>When learners have played the game 20 or so times, encourage the more able learners to take control of the game, so that they’re the ones (perhaps with initial support) switching the music on and off for example.</p> <p>Extend this to specific learners taking complete charge and clearing the classroom, getting the resources out before the game is played, clearing the resources away and putting the classroom back together again at the end. Mistakes will be made and additional time will be taken, but this is how learners will learn (see</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner is involved with organising the resources when the game is chosen and putting them away again when the game is finished. • Learner requests the game outside of the time allocated for Play. NOTE: it may not be possible to play the game at this time, but it is the active request that is important. Staff might negotiate a suitable (additional) time to play the game. • Learner initiates playing the game during formal playtime. Staff will probably need to model rounding up other learners to join in the game. • Learner initiates playing the game during formal playtime and engages other learners to join in without staff support. • Learner(s) initiates playing the game during formal playtime without staff support, both getting out and putting back all the resources.
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<p>concentration mode when games (as they sometimes do) get a bit rowdy.</p> <p>Tag and variations of it like Shark Attack where learners have to run/walk/swim from one end of the hall or the playground or the swimming pool to the other without being caught (and disgustingly eaten) by the shark. Learners become sharks when they themselves get eaten. For older learners this might become Zombie Attack.</p>	<p>Equals <i>My Thinking and Problem Solving SoW</i>).</p>	
<p>Board games for older and more able learners such as lotto/bingo; ludo; kim's game; snakes and ladders.</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above.</p>
<p>Card games (for more able learners) such as snap; pelmanism.</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above.</p>
<p>Any game that doesn't require cooperation within it such as matching pictures, lotto, building a picture alongside each other.</p> <p>Any game where the outcome doesn't rely upon others such as splatting aliens on a floor projector.</p>	<p>Set up the game.</p> <p>Ensure that there are sufficient resources for multiple players without necessarily having to share.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerating another in sight playing with..... • Tolerating another in reach playing with..... • Tolerating another next to playing with..... • Showing interest in the parallel play of another when both are playing with..... • Engaging in shared and/or turn taking play with another when both are playing with.....

<p>All sports such as football, cricket, rounders, skittles, relay races, team wellie boot throwing, any game with rules where some co-operation is required and where a team ethic can be fostered.</p>		<p>As for small group or one to one games for any age.</p>
<p>Computer, i-pad, smart phone games.</p>	<p>The list of what games these might be is far too changeable and ephemeral to detail here.</p> <p>Also, these are somewhat different to other games as they are usually designed for solitary play.</p> <p>As such, they travel in a different direction to the emphasis of this SoW and become rather like playing solitaire or completing a jigsaw or crochet or needlework or stamp collecting that might have been regarded as a 'hobby' in days gone by.</p> <p>There is however, no reason why these should be ignored simply because they are solitary, since learners may gain considerable satisfaction and enjoyment from playing the. They may therefore come under the broad label of leisure.</p>	

Free Play

Although fluid and unwritten, there are broad and general socially acceptable rules that abound (such as for example, we don't deliberately hurt others, we are not rude or insulting, we share resources, we don't steal others' resources etc) but generally play is taskless and targetless. There is an understanding amongst educators that the socially acceptable rules will be broken occasionally, but this is an opportunity for learning to take place. Players take it where they will with SMs assisting those who struggle, and standing back from those who find it easy. These principles focus around the ideas of **Process Based Teaching**.

Sherratt and Peter (2002) in discussing the nature of teaching play and drama to those on the autistic spectrum (and not necessarily with severe learning difficulties) describe both the levels and the social dimensions of play.

The five **levels of play** are

- **Sensorimotor Play** – that is, primarily exploratory, where the properties of objects are felt, squeezed, shaken, smelled and mouthed etc. These are very early cognitive functioning explorations normally associated with working with PMLD (P1 to P3/4 ish) though of course we do not out-grow these skills and will still use them if we need to, even as adults. Who has not popped bubble wrap for the pure sensory pleasure of it!
- **Relational Play** – that is, the exploration of the object reveals its properties, so that we discover that it bounces, or makes a noise when squeezed, or fits nicely into this big box.
- **Functional Play** – where specific toys are used as designed, for a specified purpose. These might be cars, dollies, tea sets etc. Notice that although the child's relationship with the toy is functional, pretence may still come into play as the cars are raced or crashed, and the dollies are fed or need changing.

- **Symbolic Play** – where pretence comes into play in terms of the object, which comes to stand for something else, such as a stick becoming a sword or crooking both arms (as in the sign for ‘dolly’) becomes a mother holding her baby or running with both arms held out wide becomes a plane.
- **Socio-dramatic Play** – which now involves acting situations out with roles. Even here however, it should be noted that other play participants, either children or adults, are not necessarily required. It is perfectly feasible to have a multi-cast five act playlet with just one actor taking all the roles.

Although these levels of play are broadly developmental, they do not axiomatically relate to either age or cognitive ability levels. We are talking about play here, and very many people without learning difficulties gain pleasure from being engaged with play that is well within their cognitive compass, as in playing patience or colouring in for example. Sensorimotor play might be considered to be a level of play exclusively suited to learners with PMLD for example, but there is no reason why an able learner who is working within the higher reaches of the P scales and beyond should not engage in sensorimotor play if that is what s/he enjoys.

The levels of play do not necessarily relate to the levels of social interaction. We tend to think of play as being a social activity because that is generally what neuro-typical conventionally developing learners do automatically, but those with SLD and/or ASD do not do automatically. Because however, Equals believes that Play (as a fundamental Area of Learning) is an ideal opportunity to encourage much needed practice of social interaction skills, this SoW has generally looked at Progression as being about progressing into social rather than solitary play. We make no apologies for this, but recognise that for some, and especially those learners who are on the extreme end of the autistic continuum, this will be anathema. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to introduce and give practice at, developing social play, just that it might take an extremely long time, and might never be fully achieved. Success is however, relative, and even a small success at improving social relationships can be a big stride forward.

With regard to the **social dimensions of play**, Sherratt and Peter (2002) regard them as being

- **Solitary** – as it implies, this is play which involves only one person. Much play falls within this category and is perfectly reasonable and usual for this to be the case. However, for those with learning difficulties, and especially for those with learning difficulties and autism, this may be the only play engaged with. As such, there can be a tendency, particularly for those with autism, towards such play being limited, repetitive, stereotypical and obsessive.
- **Parallel** – not necessarily playing with but playing alongside, and there may be no acknowledgment or even recognition of the others' presence.

- **Shared** – in the sense that the resources or group of objects are shared, and through there may be an acknowledgment of the others' presence it is fleeting rather than sustained.
- **Turn-taking** – the first stirrings of co-operative play in the clear acknowledgment of the others' involvement in the activity.
- **Co-operative** – where the learner(s) directly engages with others in the direction the play might take.

The relationship between these two areas, that is, levels of play and social dimensions of play, are vital to the development of play and play skills, since in theory, learners may achieve the highest level of play (socio-dramatic) but engage in such play with no social element at all. Consideration has to be given to the desires of the individual and it may well be, especially for those on the autistic spectrum, that no social dimension is desired, but we can and should try to encourage social play. Humans are after all social animals and live in social groupings, and though we cannot force it on an unwilling learner, education's role should not be to isolate further.

At this stage it is really important to note that although both the levels and social dimensions of play are broadly developmental indicators, that is, they will broadly apply to the play development of neuro-typical, conventionally developing learners, they are not linear and 'progress' is not dependent on achievement within the previous level.

Solitary Play is play which involves only one person and is generally the way neuro-typical babies begin to find out about the immediate world around them. Everything and anything becomes an object to be reached for, squeezed, banged, crunched, shaken, mouthed, and generally explored. **Solitary Play is the gateway to intellectual and physical maturity and is an essential first step on the road towards realising the individual learner's potential to play.**

It may be however, that those with learning difficulties struggle even with this first step because of a variety of potential difficulties. They may, for example,

- have physical gross and fine motor, visual, hearing or sensory difficulties;
- be not quite at the intellectual level which promotes curiosity;
- be fearful of the consequences of curiosity and have withdrawn into themselves;
- have additional autism which squeezes solitary play into play which becomes repetitive, stereo-typical, obsessive and circular;
- have not been given the time and encouragement (the laddering and the scaffolding) which the individual needs because it has been assumed that the learner cannot play, or only plays in a certain (restricted) way.

This latter point is crucial because conventional curriculum models such as the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) and the National Curriculum assume that the foundations of play are well established by the time the child reaches the age of six. Not only is Play, as a subject, not taught within conventional curriculum models, it is positively frowned upon as not 'work', as something that is done in spare time (playtime), as a treat for 'hard work' or 'good work', but (interestingly) not as work itself.

Time (or rather to give it its true emphasis, TIME) therefore becomes a key factor. For those with severe learning difficulties, it is a grave mistake to assume that learning, including learning how to play, falls within the time scales that fit into conventional curriculum models.

Free (solitary) Play learning opportunities	Staff member’s (SM’s) role in enabling	Progression (and what it might look like)
<p>Heuristic (Greek for ‘discovery’) Play with boxes, tins, wooden clothes pegs, balls of varying sizes, plastic cups that fit into each other, bits of rope, space blankets, lycra, plastic chains – anything that rattles, makes a noise, can be squeezed, bounced, banged, fitted into and taken out from etc. Arrange the whole in a large or small space.</p> <p>Play with foodstuffs, particularly uncooked or cooked pasta, rice, beans; dry cereals – have water or milk in a separate tin or bowl to see if the learner mixes the two – wet cornflakes have a very interesting viscosity; dough in various stages of plasticity; any foodstuffs such as flour, sugar, honey, butter, cream which when mixed can form all sorts of interesting feels, smells and tastes; fruit salads with different hard and soft fruits; jelly (again in all its forms of various solidity and</p>	<p>Unlike Play at later levels, particularly parallel, shared and turn-taking, the SMs role here is not to be a child and play like a child, but to be entirely divorced from the play itself. Any play that occurs in solitary play, is the sole function of the learner. It is not the SM’s role to play, but to be an enabler, an inviter, a facilitator.</p> <p>Start with what interests the learner but don’t stop there. Introduce new things and try them often, over a long period of time. Don’t give up if they’re rejected or ignored.</p> <p>One of the editors witnessed a teacher waiting for a learner to pay attention to an offering that was blue tacked to a stick and offered to the learner at regular intervals for a minute or two at a time, whilst the learner was intently engaged in solitary play. The learner totally ignored the</p>	<p>Learner (L) accepts the near presence of the SM.</p> <p>L looks at play objects.</p> <p>L reaches for play objects.**</p> <p>L concentrates on solitary play of own choosing for increasing lengths of time.</p> <p>L accepts different offerings of opportunities to play (for example, knocking over a stack of bricks or cups set up by the SM, taking an ‘offering’ placed or held within the learner’s vision and reach).</p> <p>L positively engages with SM by look or touch (though not necessarily as part of the play).</p>

<p>consistency including raw); mashed potato (again, in various levels of consistency and warmth). Be prepared for and do not be confounded by the mess that WILL occur.</p> <p>Cups or large bricks that stack and can be knocked over with a touch; bubbles blown from a height; various balls of all descriptions and sizes; sea shells; bubble wrap; feathers; hand-cream; corn-flour paste; jack-in-the-boxes; scouring pads; stickle bricks; clay with various other objects to stick into the clay; water filled balloons; fine water spray; bells; various mobiles; leaves; mirrors; slime pots; latch-switch operated fans; latch-switch operated music; chime bars and bells and any musical instrument that the learner can make a sound from independently; clay; shaving foam; vibrating cushion and other vibrating toys; bumble ball; sponges; various materials e.g. felt, leather, satin, lycra, hessian, fur etc. etc.</p> <p>Sand and water play, with lots of buckets, spades, spoons, jugs, bowls, cups etc. for pouring and digging. Following water fed round by a pump down long shutes with little holding pools along the way is</p>	<p>offering for 38 minutes! (it was timed) but eventually took it and added it to his play.</p> <p>This, to outside observers (a senior leader or an Ofsted inspector for example!) could have given the appearance of nothing happening, of no progress being made, of no learning taking place, but the waiting (the TIME GIVEN) was crucial to the learner’s progression and no progress would have occurred without it.</p> <p>The second element of TIME is to ensure that learners are not rushed through the stages or given up on. This is not a matter of one size fits all, and some learners may take several years to move through the stages. Be courageous! Be prepared to wait!</p> <p>As a general rule we would advise the least amount of talk possible. Take your cues from Intensive Interaction techniques and recognise that talking will probably not be appropriate for learners working at these very early developmental levels. Talking will probably only confuse and obfuscate.</p>	<p>** It may be for learners with visual impairments, that the object will need to be placed in or very near to the hands, but be very mindful of not imposing against the learners wishes.</p>
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<p>particularly attractive to learners of all ages and might even be considered as a justifiable item of big expense ahead of the soft play room or a sensory room. It is certainly likely to get used a lot (especially if you can place it indoors), is much less likely to break down and is not complex to switch on! Both sand and water play are excellent vehicles for converting solitary play to parallel and onto shared and turn-taking simply because they are so attractive to learners who are operating at early developmental levels.</p> <p>Such play is not necessarily related to the individual learners' interests but might be deliberately set up or be dependent on general 'subjects' if working within the National Curriculum, or 'areas of learning' if working within the Equals Semi-formal (SLD) Curriculum.</p> <p>Such play opportunities can for example, typically occur in Art, where learners freely explore materials set before them, or such activities as messy play as well as sand play and water play noted above.</p> <p>Staff may also just set up Play opportunities as would typically occur in a nursery by providing free access to very</p>		
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<p>many toys and objects of interest. These toys may be explored in a sensorimotor, relational or functional manner, depending upon the intellectual level the learner has reached.</p> <p>Such Play opportunities MUST NOT be restricted to early years or even primary education. For those with SLD, these events may well offer valuable learning opportunities for the whole of the learners' school careers.</p>		
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Parallel Play is any play engaged in alongside another but not with another. The resources are individually claimed and are not shared, though it may be that some of the other's resources may be 'taken'. Were the other not there it would be classed as solitary play, but the other is important because s/he marks a significant movement which involves accepting the presence of others in the actual engagement in play.

<p>Free (parallel) Play learning opportunities</p>	<p>SM's role in enabling</p>	<p>Progression (and what it might look like)</p>
<p>Any solitary free play initiated by the learner or derived from solitary play experiences and developments.</p> <p>For those on the autistic spectrum, this may be stereotypical, repetitive or even obsessive play such as twiddling with string, flapping paper, finger flicking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be there, in the moment, available to indicate to the learner that you really enjoy watching feathers, or whatever is the motivating play interest is, too. • Play with the feathers, but make no obvious attempt to engage the learner. The interest for engagement should 	<p>Tolerating another in sight playing with (feathers or whatever is the motivating play interest is).</p> <p>Tolerating another in reach playing with.....</p>

<p>against the light, watching feathers fall, playing with running water. There are many etceteras here, but they will all be related to the things that really interest individual learners.</p> <p>In a way, this may not be not ‘free’ play since it is likely to be quite structured and limited with a number of rigid rules, though these rules may only be truly known by the individual learners themselves.</p> <p>Remember that this is process based learning. The process will be similar to that employed by carers with very young babies. There will be no targets or expected outcomes; the child learns to do by doing. Your learners will learn to play by playing, but what they will learn and the pace they will learn it at will vary considerably from one learner to the next.</p>	<p>come from the learner, in the learner’s own time and at the learner’s own pace.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for indications of interest, a glance, a smile, coming over to you to take your feathers (make sure that you have LOTS in order to replace any taken by the learner). • Remember that this is likely to be a long, slow process, so be patient and don’t push too hard too fast for the learner to engage with you. • Model different things you might do with the feathers such as stand tall to drop them from a height, blow them from your hand, blow them across the floor, gather lots and whoosh them up in the air, drop them with a backlight to look at the reflections, use different sizes and colours of feathers. • It may be that the learner will steal the staff member’s (SM’s) play resources. Allow this to happen and DO NOT OBJECT, but immediately replace the resources stolen. This is engagement at least. • By the same token, stereotypical, obsessional, repetitive play may be broken by a staff member making a 	<p>Tolerating another next to playing with.....</p> <p>Showing interest in the parallel play of another when both are playing with.....</p> <p>Engaging in shared and/or turn taking play with another when both are playing with.....</p> <p>Showing interest in the parallel play of another when both are playing with something other than the learner’s particular motivating interest(s).</p> <p>Engaging in shared and/or turn taking play with another when both are playing with something other than the learner’s particular motivating interest(s).</p>
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	<p>game of ‘stealing’ picking up, touching, though the SM must be careful not to overdo it and merely aggravate and alienate the learner.</p>	
<p>Any free exploration opportunities set up by staff.</p> <p>Typically, this might be such opportunities as sand and water play, with LOTS of buckets, spades, spoons, jugs, bowls, cups etc. for pouring and digging, especially if the size of the sand pit and the amount of water allow for several staff members (SMs) and learners to play at once. Flowing water fed round by a pump down long shutes with little holding pools along the way is particularly attractive to learners of all ages.</p> <p>Both sand and water play are excellent vehicles for converting solitary play to parallel and onto shared and turn-taking simply because they are so attractive to learners who are operating at early developmental levels.</p> <p>Such play is not necessarily related to the individual learners’ interests but might be deliberately set up or be dependent on general ‘subjects’ if working within the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate the play opportunities by providing the materials. • Be a child! Play like a child! Play with the materials yourself just to see if other learners are interested in what you are doing. • Facilitate being together so that social interactions are encouraged. Think about your room organisation so that learners who do not work well together are kept well apart. This should be a positive experience. • Try not to force social interaction but encourage it to develop. If it all goes pear shaped after one or two minutes, stop and try again later. • Model ways to explore and play with the equipment and resources. • Observe carefully in order to inform progress and next steps. Write key points on post-it notes to collect later and review. • Video the results on a static wide angle lens camera. These are important tools 	<p>Tolerating another in sight playing with.....</p> <p>Tolerating another in reach playing with.....</p> <p>Tolerating another next to playing with.....</p> <p>Showing interest in the parallel play of another when both are playing with.....</p> <p>Engaging in shared and/or turn taking play with another when both are playing with.....</p>

<p>National Curriculum, or ‘areas of learning’ if working within the Equals Semi-formal (SLD) Curriculum.</p> <p>Such play opportunities can for example, typically occur in Art, where learners freely explore materials set before them, or such activities as messy play as well as sand play and water play noted above.</p> <p>Staff may also just set up Play opportunities as would typically occur in a nursery by providing free access to very many toys and objects of interest. Such Play opportunities MUST NOT be restricted to early years or even primary education. For those with SLD, these events may well offer valuable learning opportunities for the whole of the learners’ school careers.</p>	<p>for working out what has happened in the whole class, especially when individual staff will probably be concentrating on individual (or small groups) of learners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember that this is process based learning and when working with the whole class, staff will need to have some way of working out in retrospect, exactly what the process was. • Carefully set up the environment to provide opportunities, allow space for running and exploring in parallel. • Have a multiplicity of the same resource. • Be prepared to allow this process to develop over time. This is not a half term or even a whole term’s work but could take many terms. The pace of progress is dependent upon the learners and learners will develop at their own pace. 	
<p>Games in the ball pool, which are especially good for rough and tumble and king of the castle. Staff are often wary of such games as they can sometimes quickly get out of hand, and there is a risk of learners getting hurt; but there is no</p>	<p>As above.</p>	<p>Tolerating another in sight playing with.....</p> <p>Tolerating another in reach playing with.....</p> <p>Tolerating another next to playing with.....</p>

<p>chance of learning what is an appropriate amount of rough play if they don't have the practice. Sessions can start off being very short, perhaps a minute or two several times during the day, and build up from there. Such activities might go some way towards the physical curriculum as well as allowing learners opportunities to let off steam.</p>		<p>Showing interest in the parallel play of another when both are playing with.....</p> <p>Engaging in shared and/or turn taking play with another when both are playing with.....</p>
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Shared Play – in the sense that the resources or group of objects are shared, and though there may be an acknowledgment of the others' presence, it is fleeting rather than sustained.

<p>Free (Shared) Play Learning Opportunities</p>	<p>Staff member's (SM's) role in enabling</p>	<p>Progression (and what it might look like)</p>
<p>Free Sensorimotor Shared Play with one staff member (SM) or a small group.</p> <p>Activity Suggestions include: Sand play Water play</p>	<p>Provide the materials and the time to play.</p> <p>Be a child! Play like a child! You are looking to invite the learner into <i>your</i> world of play, but don't force it. This is process based learning and the process will happen when the learner is ready and not before.</p> <p>Observe how pupils use materials provided.</p>	<p>Tolerating another in sight playing with (sand or whatever the activity is).</p> <p>Tolerating another in reach playing with.....</p> <p>Tolerating another next to playing with.....</p>

<p>Play with pasta; rice; beans; dough; various balls of all descriptions and sizes; sea shells; jelly (again in all its forms of various solidity and consistency including raw); bubble wrap; feathers; hand-cream; cornflour paste; jack-in-the-boxes; scouring pads; stickle bricks; mashed potato (again, in various levels of consistency and warmth); dry cereal; water filled balloons; fine water spray; bells; various mobiles; leaves; mirrors; slime pots; vacuum cleaner with nozzle attachment; latch-switch operated fans; latch-switch operated music; clay; shaving foam; foot spa; vibrating cushion and other vibrating toys; bumble ball; sponges; various materials e.g. felt, leather, satin, lycra, hessian, fur etc. etc.</p> <p>Sensory play as in using the senses of</p> <p>Touch, Taste, Smell, Hearing and Sight</p> <p>Kinaesthetic – using the proprioceptive and vestibular senses - rocking chair; swings; hoists;</p>	<p>Engage in intensive interaction approaches, mimicking pupils' interactions but allowing them to lead the play.</p> <p>Model possibilities and opportunities to further explore the potential of the resources, for example pouring, filling, emptying, banging things together, bouncing things around, making sounds etc.</p> <p>Using the materials and resources within the Activity Suggestions is a really good way of discovering what learners really like and what learners really dislike. Such knowledge is key in enabling both Play and Communication.</p> <p>Ensuring a surfeit of toys and play equipment offers the maximum opportunities for sharing and modelling.</p> <p>Shared peer play can be started by giving a learner two (of something they like) and encouraging the learner to give one to a peer.</p> <p>Early shared play may be extended through sharing watering the school vegetable patch, making a collage, moving a table etc.</p>	<p>Showing interest in the resources of another when both are playing with.....</p> <p>Sharing the resources of another</p> <p>Engaging in turn taking play with another when both are playing with.....</p> <p>Consider how you will record evidence to enable accurate assessment of learning and informing next steps. For example photographs, observation sheets, video recording, post-it notes etc.</p> <p>In group free play especially, it is useful to have a SM specifically posted to act as trouble shooter (sorting potential peer conflicts, ensuring resources are evenly distributed) and recorder. It means lessening your one to one potential, but increases the chances of things going smoothly and ensures that interesting things are spotted that otherwise might have been missed.</p>
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<p>physio balls; trampoline; secretary’s spinning chair; balance boards; ball pool; rough and tumble.</p>		
<p>Free Relational Shared Play with 1 to 1 or with a small group.</p> <p>Activity Suggestions include:</p> <p>Heuristic play with boxes, tins, wooden clothes pegs, balls of varying sizes, plastic cups that fit into each other, bits of rope, space blankets, lycra, plastic chains – anything that rattles, makes a noise, can be squeezed, bounced, banged, fitted into and taken out from etc. Arrange the whole in a large or small space</p> <p>Sand play</p> <p>Water play</p> <p>Messy play</p> <p>Art play, for example with paint, glue, clay etc</p>	<p>Provide the materials and the time to play.</p> <p>Be a child! Play like a child! You are looking to invite the learner into <i>your</i> world of play, but don’t force it. This is process based learning and the process will happen when the learner is ready and not before.</p> <p>Observe how pupils use materials provided.</p> <p>Engage in intensive interaction approaches, mimicking pupils’ interactions but allowing them to lead the play.</p> <p>Model possibilities and opportunities to further explore the potential of the resources, for example putting things in tins and taking them out again, making towers for learners to knock down, banging things together, bouncing things around, making sounds etc.</p> <p>Using the materials and resources within the Activity Suggestions is a really good way of discovering what learners really like and what learners really dislike. Such knowledge is key in enabling both Play and Communication.</p>	<p>Tolerating another in sight playing with (sand or whatever the activity is).</p> <p>Tolerating another in reach playing with.....</p> <p>Tolerating another next to playing with.....</p> <p>Showing interest in the resources of another when both are playing with.....</p> <p>Sharing the resources of another</p> <p>Engaging in turn taking play with another when both are playing with.....</p>
<p>Free Functional Shared Play with 1 to 1 or with a small group.</p> <p>Activity Suggestions include:</p>	<p>Provide the materials and the time to play.</p> <p>Be a child! Play like a child! You are looking to invite the learner into <i>your</i> world of play, but don’t force it.</p>	<p>Tolerating another next to playing with.....</p>

<p>Sand play and water play but explore buckets and spades and various other tools, build sandcastles, dig holes.</p> <p>Dressing up for a particular topic or drama or role play</p> <p>Dressing appropriately for weather/activity e.g. theme related clothing such as hat/scarf/gloves for snow/arctic.</p> <p>Using particular instruments relating to different cultures, religions, celebrations such as bells at Christmas, African drums in an African topic etc.</p> <p>Musical instruments scattered around a room etc.</p> <p>Lego, Duplo, Brio train and car sets, dollies and dolls houses, farmyards, castles, space stations etc etc.</p>	<p>This is process based learning and the process will happen when the learner is ready and not before.</p> <p>Functional Play with water and sand will be greatly enhanced by extension from the normal sink and sand tray onto a more ambitious level with LOTS of buckets, spades, spoons, jugs, bowls, cups etc. for pouring and digging, especially if the size of the sand pit and the amount of water allow for several staff members (SMs) and learners to play at once. Try and arrange for flowing water fed round by a pump down long shutes with little holding pools along the way. Both sand and water play are excellent vehicles for converting solitary play to parallel and onto shared and turn-taking play simply because they are so attractive to learners who are operating at early developmental levels.</p> <p>Model possibilities and opportunities to further explore the potential of the resources, for example pouring, filling, emptying, banging things together, bouncing things around, making sounds etc.</p> <p>SM may begin to take a step back to allow peer led play. Provide opportunities for peer led play, considering the dynamics of the group to maximise these opportunities.</p> <p>Continue to develop language, sign and symbol use.</p> <p>Consider opportunities within themes and topics and provide ample opportunities for shared play within these, as well as opportunities relating to current events</p>	<p>Showing interest in the resources of another when both are playing with.....</p> <p>Sharing the resources of another</p> <p>Engaging in turn taking play with another when both are playing with.....</p> <p>Social interaction opportunities may begin to occur with both SMs and other learners.</p>
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	<p>such as the Olympics, Royal Celebrations, charity events etc.</p> <p>Using the materials and resources within the Activity Suggestions is a really good way of discovering what learners really like and what learners really dislike. Such knowledge is key in enabling both Play and Communication.</p>	
<p>Free Symbolic Shared Play – with 1 to 1, with a small group or with a larger group.</p> <p>Building on previous sessions but clearly as we are discussing symbolic play, there is no limit to what might become a play object or a play theme.</p> <p>Introduce enhancements to the activity such as different clothes and costumes to represent different characters in the play.</p> <p>Introduce everyday objects into the play so that plastic colanders become hats, pieces of rope become snakes, cardboard boxes become boats.</p> <p>Use familiar poetry and drama and stories to hang the play onto since</p>	<p>Clearly symbolic play will be associated directly with the learners’ abilities to understand abstract concepts and pretence. Generally speaking, symbolic understanding will probably begin to <i>emerge</i> at around P4 ish but will by no means be established at this cognitive level.</p> <p>To a greater or lesser degree, all learners with SLD will probably have some difficulty with immediately grasping symbolic play and a considerable amount of modeling will be required.</p> <p>As a broad rule, the further along the learner is on the P scales, the quicker they are likely to understand play symbolism as long as it is modeled first and then repeatedly modeled, and is not too obtuse.</p>	<p>Tolerating another next to playing with.....</p> <p>Showing interest in the resources of another when both are playing with.....</p> <p>Sharing the resources of another</p> <p>Engaging in turn taking play with another when both are playing with.....</p> <p>Social interaction opportunities may begin to occur with both SMs and other learners.</p>

<p>the familiarity of the 'script' will help to ease the learners into the pretence and onto socio-dramatic play.</p>		
<p>Free Socio-dramatic Shared Play – with 1 to 1, with a small group or with a larger group.</p> <p>The absence of a script is critical to the emergence of socio-dramatic free play, though the previous use of poetry, stories and drama will help to ease learners into the concept of abstract play and perhaps give ideas for extensions. The Bear Hunt becomes The Monster Hunt for example.</p> <p>It should be recognised that socio-dramatic play will be a very difficult concept for learners who are still at the shared play level, and may not often be reached.</p>	<p>Additional to above:</p> <p>Provide opportunities for imaginary play scenarios, especially considering learning environments most likely to stimulate imaginary play such as forest schools areas, outdoor learning, immersion, sensory or theme rooms etc.</p>	<p>Tolerating another next to playing with.....</p> <p>Showing interest in the resources of another when both are playing with.....</p> <p>Sharing the resources of another</p> <p>Engaging in turn taking play with another when both are playing with.....</p> <p>Social interaction opportunities may begin to occur with both SMs and other learners.</p>

Turn-taking Play represents the first stirrings of co-operative play in the clear acknowledgment of others' involvement in the activity. Although this is about sharing the resources in a common-sense understanding of turn taking (*'Let Johnny have the bike now as it's his turn'*) we are also now asking learners to **engage directly with others** so that the play may go off in a direction not totally in the individual learner's control because someone else has the resource. This then opens up several possibilities for the learner and the staff member's role in guiding play towards a co-operative model becomes key.

Free (Turn Taking) Play Learning Opportunities	Staff member's (SM) role in enabling	Progression (and what it might look like)
<p>Relational and Functional play. Playing with a common, central resource with lots of equipment but one or two key resources that are strictly limited.</p> <p>The play might be, for example: sand and/or water play with one jug heuristic play with one box; Brio train tracks and carriages with one train; Lego or Duplo with one Lego or Duplo car; dressing up box with one super-hero cape; or whatever play is enjoyed by more than one learner as long as there is one (limited) commonly enjoyed resource .</p>	<p>Initiate the play opportunities.</p> <p>Guide the individual learner's play towards using the one key limited resource.</p> <p>Model how to wait for the key limited resource to be free.</p> <p>Model and develop coping strategies when the game breaks down.</p> <p>Facilitate being together, so that learners see positive social interactions and have positive experiences of turn-taking.</p> <p>Model the correct use of communication, both verbal and non verbal</p> <p>Model play with the equipment/resources.</p> <p>Observe in order to inform progress and next steps. This level of play will be considerably improved if staff can arrange for one of their number to be the 'room</p>	<p>Individual learner turn taking with a familiar SM</p> <p>Individual learner turn taking with a familiar peer with SM support</p> <p>Individual learner turn taking in a familiar small group with SM support</p> <p>Turn take with a familiar peer without obvious SM support</p> <p>Turn take with a familiar peer without SM support</p> <p>Turn take without support in a small group.</p> <p>Turn take without support in a larger group (four or more).</p>

	<p>manager'. This person acts as both the trouble shooter and the observer.</p> <p>Risk assess – allow for close proximity play where suitable. Be aware how to diffuse situations</p> <p>Carefully set up the environment to provide opportunities for interaction and both turn-taking and co-operative play.</p> <p>Ensure the appropriate communication aids are available, particularly modeling the correct sign for the limited resource.</p> <p>Provide comfort, the correct equipment and of course maximise mobility as much as you can for each individual learner.</p>	<p>Copes with sabotage with support (see <i>My Thinking and Problem Solving</i>)</p> <p>Engages in turn taking successfully with a wide variety of SMs and peers in a wide variety of situations and contexts.</p>
<p>Relational and Functional play.</p> <p>Playing with a common, central resource (as above for example) with a limited and distinctly finite amount of equipment.</p> <p>To the list above can be added any play which naturally involves limited resources such as outside playground equipment such as swings, slides, scooters, bikes, trampoline etc.</p>	<p>As above.</p>	<p>As above.</p>

<p>The limitation of a number of resources (rather than one particular resource) now places considerable additional tension and strain on the co-operative abilities of learners and needs to be moved into slowly and with care, as there is a risk that this can backfire.</p> <p>This does not mean to say that the risk should not be taken!</p>		
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Co-operative play develops from turn-taking in not only recognising the existence of others in one’s own play, but openly involving them or being involved by them within the play itself. This means that the direction the play takes (rather than merely the resources) is shared with both a recognition and acceptance of the desires of others. Here, Theory of Mind (the recognition that others have different thoughts and feelings to ourselves) which is established in neuro-typical, conventionally developing children at around the age of 4 years, is brought into play. There may well be disagreements between learner and staff member or learner and learner(s) about the direction of the play, and coming to terms with such disagreements is a major part of the learning process. The length of time spent in each particular act of co-operative play will vary and may not be very long for some learners as they flit in and out of the shared and turn-taking phases, but this is also a learning process for which considerable practice time is needed.

Free (Co-operative) Play Learning Opportunities	Staff member’s (SM) role in enabling	Progression (and what it might look like)
<p>Functional, Symbolic and Socio-dramatic Free Play Provide learners with opportunities to enter into play with other children. Examples of these opportunities could include:</p>	<p>Begin with basic communication prior to the play, ensuring that all learners have an awareness of others involved in the activity and what their involvement might be. Introduce resources to learners and the idea that they will share them during the activity.</p>	<p>Learner enters into play with at least one familiar SM. Learner communicates with SM during play. Learner shares resources with SMs more readily during play activities.</p>

<p>Sand and water play extended into a mini-drama 'OH NO! There's a huge wave about to drown everyone on the beach!!'</p> <p>Various simple symbolic games such as <i>The Farmer's in the Den</i>, <i>Shark Attack</i> etc. These are simple role-playing games which require learners to 'become' the farmer, or the wife or the dog or the shark or the victim of the shark.</p> <p>Small world toys</p> <p>Household items such as telephones (talking to Mum) kitchen items and how they're used, cardboard boxes for packing items for a holiday etc, etc.</p> <p>Lego and Duplo and Meccano which can provide the basis for imaginary (symbolic) extensions.</p> <p>Fancy dress to take learners into all sorts of imaginary worlds.</p> <p>Class shops that allow for the roles of shop-keeper, Mum, Dad, baby brother etc.</p>	<p>SM may need to play the role of 'mediator' initially to enable interactions to occur.</p> <p>SMs may need to model cooperative play initially, gradually stepping back and allowing pupils to interact with one another in a cooperative manner.</p> <p>Repetition and time will be necessary to enable acquirement and reinforcement of these skills (moving from acquiring, to developing, to consolidating and generalising).</p> <p>Model how to adapt to new 'rules' and the fact that the direction of the play will probably change and take unexpected directions. This is no longer the play of your turn, my turn'.</p> <p>Support learners in developing their awareness of others' needs around them.</p> <p>SMs will need to differentiate learners' needs in that some will need lots of support and some hardly any. Facilitation will be needed for those who struggle with co-operative play while stepping back for those who take to it more easily.</p>	<p>Learner enters into play with at least one peer.</p> <p>Learner communicates with peer during play.</p> <p>Learner shares resources with peer more readily during play activities.</p> <p>Learner plays with a small group of peers initially.</p> <p>Learner plays in a small group of increasing number.</p> <p>Learner takes turns with support.</p> <p>Learner becomes aware of the needs of other participants.</p> <p>SM role begins to diminish.</p>
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<p>Socio Dramatic extensions may also involve:</p> <p>Puppet theatres</p> <p>Sensory Stories (Search on line for Jo Grace and Pete Wells for different types of sensory story). Normally these are centred around the main adult story-teller, but they can easily be extended to encourage learner's to take on the roles of the different elements of and characters in the stories.</p> <p>Familiar action books such as <i>The Bear Hunt</i> and <i>The Gruffalo</i>.</p> <p>Familiar fairy stories such Grimm's Fairy Tales. These need not be age specific as many are dark and have strong adult themes of danger and warning. Little Red Riding Hood is all about the 'wolf' you don't want your daughter to run off with!</p> <p>Drama and Poetry, especially Keith Park's dramatisations used in Call and Response (see Equals' <i>My Communication SoW</i>)</p>		
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<p>Narrative and Storytelling, especially Nicola Groves' ideas also detailed in Equals' <i>My Communication</i> SoW</p> <p>Role play of any description.</p>		
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Leisure

This is not a scheme of work as such, and nor can it ever be, because Leisure will inevitably be very different from one to learner to another. The definition of Leisure is certainly related to the enjoyment of free time, and the recognition of Leisure as having a capital letter in the way that Mathematics or English does in a mainstream curriculum relates to the movement of the Equals SLD Curriculum towards a semi-formal (non-academic) curriculum model.

Within such a model **Leisure is a NECESSARY and ESSENTIAL Area of Learning**. That is, time must be allocated to giving each and every learner sufficient opportunities to discover and then refine skills related to particular leisure pursuits. Clearly this is something that grows in importance as the learner moves through the school, and one must therefore expect more curriculum time to be given over to Leisure from year 9 or 10 on (ages 13/14 or so). With younger learners we might well work within a quite broad range of activities, operating on the principle that the school needs to provide opportunities for learners to find out for themselves what they like (and don't like). Nobody knows what they don't know and learners need the opportunity and encouragement to experiment with as

many potential leisure pursuits as they can. Not only in terms of breadth of leisure pursuits generally but also of in terms of breadth within each particular leisure activity. For example, music, both the listening to it and the playing of it, seems a fairly easy option to offer, but have we considered giving learners time to explore different types and genres of music from classical to pop to jazz to opera to soul to grime to easy listening to baroque to blues etc, etc. We may be surprised by the choices that our learner's make! It may be therefore that we regard Leisure as being a 'subject' that becomes more refined with age and something that is part of the preparation for adulthood.

It may be that Leisure is more related to play in the early years, and certainly, if we take a fairly broad definition of play, there is a naturally strong relationship between the two. It is related to personal choice, meaning different things for different people which involves a respect of the choices that learners' make whatever they may be. There may however be a difference between a *need*, such as for example rocking on the spot or flapping a piece of string, in order that the individual can ground himself in time and space, and leisure activity such as crocheting. Stereotypical and obsessive behaviours offer blurred boundaries – the difference between things people need to do and things people like to do, and it may be that for those with SLD, they come to same things. How many times have we heard people say *'I have to (swim or run or complete the Times crossword or play a computer game)it's the only thing that keeps me sane!'*

The school's role must be to provide breadth of choice as well as depth of experience, and also to recognise the barriers to these, which might be, time, behaviour, resources, financial restrictions, access, distance, the level of social interaction required, availability of venue etc. It may be that the school's role is to find options to overcome these barriers. We also have to note the necessary partnership with parents and carers and how important it is that families, respite etc and school work together and of course there needs to be a strong forging of links to the learners' next destination.

In any event there is a constant need to provide new experiences and to NOT assume that what is liked now will always be. Learners must be allowed to fail at succeeding at the leisure activity in order to learn more about it, and schools may need to consider the role of counselling and advocacy for both over and under aspiration. Nonetheless, if the learner can't do what s/he wants, there are always other options – an issue that is discussed at length in the Equals *My Thinking and Problem Solving* SoW.