

Reasonable Adjustments in Early Years

What are Reasonable Adjustments?

Under the **Equality Act 2010**, early years providers have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children to ensure they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared with their peers. This duty applies to nurseries, pre-schools, childminders, and schools.

A reasonable adjustment is:

A change to the environment, routines, policies, resources, communication, or teaching approaches that removes or reduces barriers and enables a disabled child to access, participate in, and benefit from early education.

The duty is **anticipatory**, meaning settings should think ahead about potential barriers and consider how children can be included successfully, rather than waiting until difficulties occur.

What Makes an Adjustment "Reasonable"?

When deciding whether an adjustment is reasonable, settings should consider:

- Will it reduce or remove the disadvantage?
- Is it practical to implement?
- Is it proportionate to the setting's resources?
- Will it enable the child to access and participate in everyday experiences?

Examples of Reasonable Adjustments

Environment

- Provide a quiet or calm space for children who become overwhelmed.
- Use clear labels, photographs, and visual prompts.
- Create uncluttered and well-organised learning areas.
- Reduce sensory overload where possible.
- Ensure physical accessibility through ramps, accessible furniture, or adapted layouts.



Communication

- Use visual timetables and now-and-next boards.
- Support spoken language with signs, gestures, photographs, or symbols.
- Break instructions into smaller steps.
- Allow additional processing time before expecting a response.
- Use Makaton or alternative communication approaches where appropriate.

Teaching and Learning

- Differentiate activities so children can participate at their own level.
- Adapt resources to meet individual needs.
- Use children's interests to increase engagement.
- Offer additional adult support when needed.
- Present learning in a variety of ways, including practical and sensory experiences.

Social and Emotional Support

- Use social stories to prepare children for new experiences.
- Provide a consistent key person.
- Support children through transitional times.
- Use emotion cards or visual scales.
- Plan opportunities for supported peer interaction.

Sensory Support

- Provide ear defenders or headphones.
- Offer sensory toys or fidget resources.
- Allow movement breaks throughout the day.
- Provide alternative seating options.
- Create sensory regulation opportunities within daily routines.

Examples for Specific Needs

Autism

- Visual timetable.



- Transition warnings.
- Now-and-next board.
- Quiet space.
- Ear defenders.

Hearing Impairment

- Staff understand the child's hearing equipment.
- Visual cues support verbal communication.
- Careful seating arrangements during group activities.

Visual Impairment

- Use tactile and sensory resources.
- Provide clear contrast in the environment.
- Maintain consistent room layout.

Physical Disabilities

- Accessible layouts and equipment.
- Adapted furniture.
- Safe access to all areas of provision.

Key Message for Practitioners

Reasonable adjustments are not "special treatment". They are practical steps that remove barriers and ensure children with disabilities can access the same opportunities, experiences, and learning as their peers. Most reasonable adjustments are low-cost, easy to implement, and form part of inclusive practice.

