

# Education Kit Handbook

## Additional Guidance on Including Children with Disabilities

# Recreational Activities

## Purpose

The purpose of this note is to provide teachers, caregivers, instructors and trainers with practical ideas on how best to include children with disabilities in all their activities. It acts as a supplement to the UNICEF Education Kit Handbook. The first part of the note is common to all three modules (Early Childhood Development, Basic Primary Education and Recreation). It provides general information on why it is so important to take an inclusive approach and focus on ensuring children with disabilities are not only present, but can participate fully and achieve. It also provides suggestions on how to raise awareness and encourage the community and others to get involved in ensuring all children benefit from learning and play opportunities and provides practical suggestions on how to reach out to children with different disabilities. The second part of this note focuses on a particular module of the handbook and provides concrete examples and practical advice on how to include all children in activities.

## Acknowledgements

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*We would appreciate any feedback on the guide as a result of its use. Please send any feedback to [disabilities@unicef.org](mailto:disabilities@unicef.org)*

## PART ONE

Children with disabilities are often excluded from activities that other children take for granted, like making friends, playing with friends, having fun, playing sports and other recreational activities. They are often excluded from many of the things that help children develop and give them opportunities to reach their full potential. Yet they have the same right to be included in these activities as all children.

These guidelines will give you – the caregiver, teacher, instructor or trainer – practical ideas for including children with disabilities in all activities. Each child you work with is unique. By recognising the individual needs of every child you will be able to offer the same quality of education and instruction that all children need and have a right to. You are an important person in each child's development.

Whichever module of the UNICEF handbook you are using, if you are flexible in your approach to teaching and training and use your imagination, you can be confident in teaching **ALL** children, including those with disabilities.

**Think about what a child CAN do,  
not what he/she CANNOT do.**

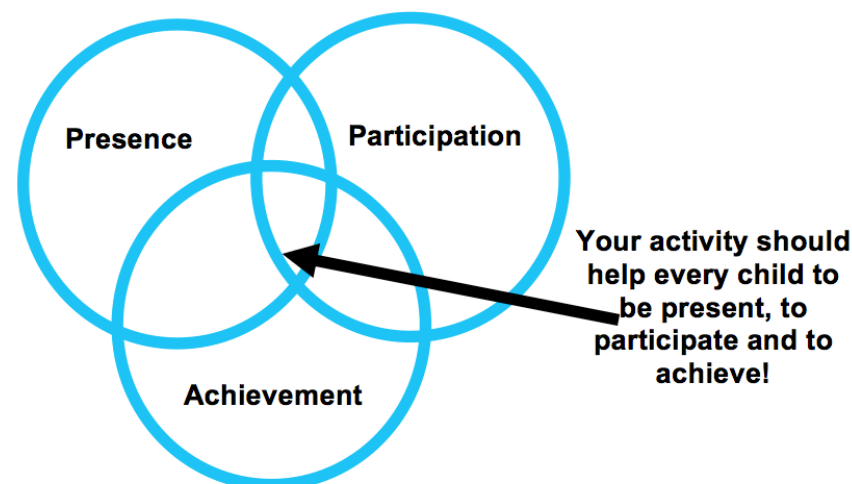
**See the child – not the disability.**

## Raise awareness that children with disabilities will be included in your activities

Whichever module of the emergencies handbook you are using and whatever ages the children are, you will need to spread the word in the community that children with disabilities are welcome to join in and will be included. You need to do this when planning the activities, and keep doing it throughout your programme.

Your main message will be that children with disabilities can *attend* the school, early childhood centre, or recreational activity, and that they can *participate* in the activities and *achieve* something too, just like other children can.

Activities are not inclusive if children with disabilities are just physically attending the school or activity. Inclusion is about providing the opportunities for **ALL children to be present, to participate and to achieve.**



## Ideas for raising awareness

- Hold community meetings to tell leaders and community members about your activities and plans for including children with disabilities. Give specific examples of how you will include them.
- Inform people during meetings with local authorities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), clubs and parents groups.
- Invite parents and carers of children with disabilities into school or to the place where you hold your activities. Explain to them that their children have a right to join in the activities, and show them what sorts of activities you will help their children to do.
- Inform any disabled people's organisations (DPOs) in your area about your school or activity, so that they can encourage local children with disabilities, and their parents, to join in your activities.
- Post notices in your local shops, clinics, schools, youth clubs, etc.
- Tell people: word-of-mouth is always a very effective way of spreading information.
- Include the concept of inclusion in your curricula and manuals, so teachers and children are aware of it, have an opportunity to interact positively with children with disabilities, and can spread the word back in their home or surroundings.

## How to help children with disabilities join in your activities

### *Important things to remember*

- All children have different abilities and needs. This is normal. We should not be frightened by these differences, but should see difference and diversity as a resource that we can use.
- You do not need to be a medical or disability expert to find ways to help children with disabilities participate in your activities.
- Encourage children to help and support each other. Children will often accept help from their friends but may not like to be singled out as 'different' by an adult.
- Make sure your physical environment is appropriate (accessible, safe and secure) for children with disabilities. I.e. ensure that the steps are of low height, handrails, ramps, and wide doors are available and there is enough space to move around with a wheel chair, etc). See the section 'helping children who have physical impairments' for more ideas.
- Try to ensure indoor spaces are well-lit (remove window coverings if necessary). However, remember that some children who have difficulty seeing may find it harder to see in very bright light, so be prepared to adjust the lighting or window coverings.
- Make toilets as accessible as possible by clearing pathways and keeping the surrounding area and the toilet itself clean. Remember that some children who have problems moving or seeing may need to touch the floor or walls or would benefit from the installation of a simple handrail. Ensure there is clean water and soap or ash available. Make sure that

children who have problems seeing know where to find the toilets. Create a buddy system so that children can help each other get to/from the toilets.

- Spend some time watching the children (for instance while they are playing together). You may notice things that particular children seem to be good at or enjoy, and things that they find difficult or upsetting.
- Ask the children what support they need in order to join in. They may be the best people to tell you how you can adapt an activity or lesson so that you include them.
- Find out if the child uses any assistive devices (such as a wheelchair, crutches, splints, canes, hearing aides, magnifying glasses, mobile phones, tablets, communication boards etc) or could benefit from some if they are available.
- Involve family, friends and community members whenever possible. Ask their advice and learn from their experience of living with and caring for their children with disabilities.
- Spend some time before each session choosing activities that are most suitable for the children in your class/group and the space you have available.
- Try to find ways to change activities, so that all children can participate and achieve. Do not try to make a child do a particular activity if he/she is not able to do it or finds it too difficult.
  - For instance, if the instructions for an activity say that the children should 'run to the other side of the area and pick up a stick', you could adapt the activity so that it is slower (e.g. ask the children to 'walk to the other side of the area and pick up a stick'). This would ensure that children who

can walk but not run, and children who are using mobility aids like crutches or a wheelchair, have a fair chance of participating in the activity.

- Remember, also, that not every child has to do the same activity at the same time. You could plan the session so that some children are doing fast, physical activities and others are doing activities that involve communication rather than moving.
- Do not worry if your first idea does not work – be flexible and try another way. Try to use lots of different teaching and communication methods.

### ***Helping children who are deaf or cannot hear very well***

If you have a child in your class/group who cannot hear what you are saying, there are many things you can do to communicate with them, and help them communicate with you and the other children. Here are some ideas:

- Get the child's attention before you begin to speak. Do this gently (don't shout at them).
  - For instance you could raise or wave your hand so they look at you. You could even have a toy or a flag that you hold up to tell all the children that you are ready to start speaking and they all need to look at you.
- Make sure that the child who cannot hear is sitting in the best place to see you at all times.
- When you are explaining something or giving instructions, use pictures and objects to show children what the subject or activity is about.

- You can also use gestures (hand/arm movements), facial expressions and body language to help you communicate.
- Give a demonstration of the activity so that you show the children what you expect them to do.
  - You could even ask a few of the other children to role play the activity, to show the rest of the group what to do. You might need to spend some time with these children before the session so they can prepare their role play.
- Try to learn some of the signs and gestures the child uses at home (if any).
  - You could start with the signs for the child's name and your own name, and then use gestures to ask the child to show you signs for words he/she wants you to learn. Ask the child's parent/caregiver, brother/sister, etc, to spend some time with you and the child to help you learn these signs. Encourage the other children in the class/group to also learn some signs.
- If the child can hear a little, you should speak very clearly (but don't shout) and use consistent language. Always use the same word for a particular object and the same words for instructions. Explain to the other children that they need to be quiet when you (or someone else) is speaking, so that there is no 'background noise'.
- Always check the child understands the instructions. You can do this by observing the child during the task or involving them in a role play or demonstration.
- Encourage children to work in small groups or pairs, so that the child who cannot hear very well works with friends who can give support and help with communication.
- Sometimes there might be other people in the local community who could help you to work with deaf or hearing-impaired children in your class/group.
  - For instance, there might be some people who use sign language, who could volunteer for a few hours to help you with the activities.
  - You might also find people who can provide the child and his/her parents with medical advice relating to their hearing problem, if this has not already been done.
  - If the child is literate, s/he may be able to use the talking software which are built into most smartphones and tablets (e.g. 'Talkback and 'VoiceOver') to communicate.

### ***Helping children who are blind or cannot see very well***

If you have a child in your class/group who has trouble seeing, or who cannot see anything, there are many simple steps you can take to help them join in the activities:

- First of all, you can help the child to become familiar with the school or activity area. The other children can help you with this too.
  - You can walk around the school/area with the blind or visually impaired child and explain what the environment is like. Show them where there are obstacles (such as holes, steps, fences, etc), and where the toilets and water supply are.
  - You could ask the child if he/she thinks some obstacles should be removed to facilitate his/her movement.
- Encourage other children to help and support the child who is blind or visually impaired, but make sure they allow the child to be as independent as safely possible.

- Always use objects and tactile teaching aids (things that the child can touch, so that they can feel the shape and texture).
  - For example, the best way for a child to understand ‘a banana’, is for him/her to hold, touch, smell and taste one. Also, try to use objects that make a noise (for instance, you can make a ball that blind children can hear).<sup>1</sup>
- If you are writing on the board or giving children written instructions on paper, always read these aloud too, for the children who cannot see them.
- If you are showing pictures or objects, describe the pictures or let the children who cannot see (and all the other children) touch the objects.
  - You could also ask the other children to describe the picture or object to their friends who cannot see.
- Check the child understands what is expected of him/her. You can do this by watching the child or asking him/her to demonstrate the task.
- If the child can see a little, make sure he/she sits near the front of the classroom or activity area so that he/she can see what you are doing and any objects you are showing, etc.
- If the child reads and writes Braille, try to find out if there are any organisations or individuals locally who can help you get Braille materials (and maybe even help you to learn to read and write some simple Braille, such as the alphabet).

<sup>1</sup> This can be made by taking a small bell, or even a small container of stones or seeds that rattles when you shake it. Wrap the bell or stone-filled container in layers of old plastic bags or fabric, and tie string around it so that it become ball-shaped.

- Explore whether e-readers are available or children have access to smart-phones or tablets with built-in talking software.
- There may be other people or organisations in the local community who could help you to do ‘mobility and orientation’ training with blind and visually impaired children, to help them become more independent with moving around safely.

### ***Helping children who have physical impairments / who have difficulties with moving***

All children have different physical abilities – some can run fast, others cannot; some have good balance, others do not. This is normal – we are all different. Some children have more difficulties than others with moving around or co-ordinating their movements. There are lots of simple things you can do to help them join in activities:

- Make sure the ground around the school or activity area is as obstacle free as possible, so that children with physical impairments can move around more easily and safely.
  - For instance, stones, fallen branches, litter and other items can be cleared from paths and play areas; and holes can be filled in. School children and community members could be invited to help with ground clearing. You could ask people with disabilities in the community for their ideas on low-cost ways to make your learning space more accessible.
  - Make toilets as accessible as possible by clearing pathways and keeping the surrounding area and the toilet itself clean. Ensure there is clean water and soap or ash available. Create a buddy system so that children can help each other get to/from the toilets.



- If you are using an indoor space, make sure you are using a room on the ground floor, which does not have a step or steps to the entrance, or which has a ramp:
  - If all of the indoor spaces have steps to the entrance or are inaccessible in other ways, think about whether you can hold the activities outside instead (if it is safe to do so).
- If you are using a classroom, make sure there is space for children to move easily and safely between the desks and chairs/benches.
  - If the room is too full with furniture, try to move some of it before the activity starts, or even ask some of the children to help you move furniture as a team-building activity at the start of the session.
- Encourage children to help each other with activities that involve movement.
  - You can also adapt the activities so that children work in pairs and need to help each other to complete the activity.
- Be flexible with the timing of activities, and with the start/finish times.
  - For example, if a child needs to move from another part of the school or from another place to come to your activity session, remember it may take them longer to get there.
- There may be people or organisations locally who can give you advice or help with making your building or activity area more accessible. For instance, adults with disabilities or

DPOs may be able to give advice on simple changes you can make to the area, or advice on where to find support for making bigger changes like building ramps, installing handrails or accessible toilets.

### *Helping children who have difficulty learning or understanding*

- Plan activities and lessons so that children who have difficulty with learning, and those who don't, can work together in pairs or groups. Children can help each other with tasks, and they can learn from each other.
- Try not to overwhelm a child who has learning difficulties with multiple tasks at the same time. Make sure the child is given one task or activity that he/she can cope with, so that you can praise him/her and encourage improvement. Then move to the next task.
- When giving instructions, use simple language (e.g. words that you know the children will understand).
- Break each task into small steps.
  - Give one line of the instructions, then wait for the children to do that part of the task, and then give the next instruction, and so on.
- Some of the ideas you use to help children with visual, hearing and physical impairments will also help children who have difficulty learning or understanding.
  - For instance, showing pictures and objects, letting children touch objects, or giving a demonstration of an activity may help children to understand better the instructions you are giving them.



- Repeat important information and instructions, but find different ways to explain the task (don't just repeat the same sentences).
- Do not overreact to difficult behaviour unless it is disrupting the whole class or is dangerous. Redirect the child's attention or consult parents and caregivers about the best ways to help the child. Be generous with your praise when things run smoothly.

## Keeping children safe

Children with disabilities are often much more vulnerable than other children. Sometimes they do not hear a warning, cannot shout for help or run away, or tell a responsible adult when something has happened.

Here are some ideas to help you keep children with disabilities as safe as possible:

- Group all of the children into 'circles of friends' who will help each other in an emergency situation, or if one of them gets hurt or has a problem.
- If you are giving children information about what to do in an emergency, make sure that children who cannot see or hear are able to access this information. Make sure the information is clear and simple for children who have difficulty with learning or understanding.
- Include the children in designing routines for how to react to emergency situations. This approach helps them to memorise the routines. Ask the children for their ideas about how to ensure the emergency plan is suitable for themselves and

their friends with disabilities. Test the routines and monitor if children with disabilities can participate and receive the support they need – nobody should be left behind.

- Remember that some children cannot shout for help – give them a whistle or some other device they can use to call or signal for help.
- Be 'approachable'. Let the children know they can come to you and you will listen.
- Involve parents and carers in designing and testing all plans for keeping their children safe in an emergency.

## PART TWO

This guide will give you practical ideas for including children with disabilities in the recreational activities provided in UNICEF's kit.

Each child you work with is unique. By recognising the individual needs of every child and planning or adapting your activities to meet those needs, you will be able to give all children the opportunity to enjoy recreational activities.

People may think that children with disabilities cannot take part in sporting or recreational activities. Children with disabilities may therefore be given the role of referee, or may be expected to just watch the activities from the side-lines. However, with a little careful planning and small changes to your activities, you can demonstrate clearly that it is possible for children with disabilities can participate fully in the same recreational activities as their peers without disabilities and achieve the same results.

### Preparation

When you are planning and raising awareness about the recreational activities, make sure you tell everyone that **all** children are welcome and that children with disabilities will be able to take part.

If you have meetings with community leaders, local authorities, families, clubs and NGOs to discuss the activities, give them specific examples of how children with disabilities can be included. Invite them to watch the activities so they can help you spread the word that children with disabilities are welcome and will participate fully. Parents or caregivers who have younger children with disabilities may want to observe or even assist.

During the registration process, make sure you complete the 'Any Special Needs' section on the registration form. When copying the form into your registration book, use an additional page for the special needs of children with and without disabilities. Examples of special needs will vary from child to child. Such needs could include, for instance, the need for the child to take extra toilet breaks, or the need to be with their close friends during the activities so they can get support with sign language or moving around. Ask the child what his/her particular needs are and talk to the parents or caregivers for additional information.

Never turn children away – there is always a way to include them. Sometimes asking family and community members for advice and support will help you find a new way to adapt an activity to include a certain child. Adaptations to activities can often make them more interesting and accessible for all children.

When planning your activities, think about how to include children who have difficulty understanding, learning or interacting. Children with learning or developmental disabilities are often forgotten and isolated within communities. Seek help and advice from their parents, caregivers and siblings.

## The activity area

Physical access can be a barrier to inclusion. Often the solutions are quite simple. By making small changes to the environment, you can make big changes to the life of a child.

### Outdoor spaces

- Make sure you hold your activities in a safe space that is easily accessible to the community.
- The area should be large enough for the numbers of children and types of activities you are planning. The area also needs to be clear (e.g. no bushes) so that you can see every child and what they are doing at all times.
- Try to choose an area that is not too noisy.
- Clear away any rocks, stones, rubbish and other obstacles that might make the area difficult or dangerous for children who cannot move or see very well. Clearing obstacles will make the area more accessible and safe for all children. You could ask the children and community volunteers to help with this task. Tell them why you are doing it, as this can help raise awareness that you are planning inclusive activities.
- Make toilets as accessible as possible by clearing pathways and keeping the surrounding area and the toilet itself clean. Ensure there is clean water and soap or ash available. Make sure that children who have problems seeing know where to find the toilets. Create a buddy system so that children can help each other get to/from the toilets.

### Indoor spaces

- Activities should take place on the ground floor of the building.
- If there are steps into the building, you could ask parents or

community members to help build a ramp. If a ramp cannot be made, ask the parents, caregivers or siblings of children with physical disabilities if they can come with the child to help them get into and out of the building in a way they are comfortable with.

- Make sure the room/area for the activities is clean and free of obstacles. You may need to rearrange furniture or remove some of it to make space.
- Try to ensure that rooms are well-lit (remove window coverings if necessary). However, remember that some children who have difficulty seeing may find it harder to see in very bright light, so be prepared to adjust the lighting or window coverings.
- Ensure the room is well-ventilated (i.e. that there is plenty of fresh air).

## Important things to remember

You can find more practical advice on how to help children with disabilities in the 'Overall Guidance' booklet. The following is a summary of useful things to remember:

- Think in advance about how you can adapt activities to help certain children join in. Discuss these ideas for adaptations with them. Ask the child what support he or she needs to be able to take part. If children are not sure what help they want/need, brainstorm together and try out different ideas to see what works best.
- Watch the activities carefully to ensure all children are safe, and to learn more about each child's needs and abilities.
- Encourage children to help and support each other. Children will often accept help from their friends but may not like to be singled out as 'different' by an adult.

- Whenever possible divide the children into smaller groups and vary the activities. Have some 'fast' and some 'slow' versions of activities. For instance, a basketball activity might involve children running around or moving with their mobility devices, but it could also involve all children sitting and throwing a ball through a hoop (the hoop could be set at different heights or distances to suit the child). If you have some children in the group who have difficulty learning, understanding or interacting you may want to avoid making changes to an activity during the session as this could be confusing or upsetting.
- As well as speaking clearly, use signs, gestures, body language and demonstrations during the activities to help children who cannot hear very well, or who have difficulty understanding. Be consistent – use the same signs for all activities. For example, one hand in the air for 'stop'. Teach your volunteers and helpers to use the same signs and gestures. Make sure you stand where everyone can see your mouth when speaking or your gestures/signs.
- For children who cannot see very well, make sure they have a chance to touch and feel objects, and make sure you read out any written instructions or describe any pictures that are used.
- Involve parents/caregivers of young children as much as possible from the start. They may want to watch the activities to reassure themselves about their child's safety. They may also be willing to volunteer in organising and supervising a group of children. This will give them the opportunity to observe their own child without appearing to be over-protective. Keep a flexible approach.
- Be patient, repeat instructions several times and demonstrate the activity clearly until you are sure everyone understands what to do. Children who have learning or developmental disabilities may take longer to understand instructions. Make sure they are sitting with friends with whom they interact every day and who can assist them.
- Do not worry if some of your ideas for adapting activities don't work immediately. This is part of the learning process. The most important aspect is for all children, with and without disabilities, to feel included and have fun.

## Ideas for adapting activities from the kit

Please refer to the overall guidance booklet for more general ideas on how to make your activities and instructions accessible and more inclusive for children with disabilities.

### Example 1: Human mobile phone

This is an activity from 'Section three – indoor activities'. The activity requires children to sit in a circle. One child whispers a message to the child next to them. The children take turns to whisper the message to their neighbour, until it reaches the last person. That person then has to say the message out loud.

### Helping children who cannot hear or speak very well

- When the message needs to pass between children who cannot hear or speak very well, the two children can be allowed to turn their backs on the circle (or even move to the corner of the room briefly) so that they can secretly communicate using sign language, gestures or writing instead of whispering. Encourage children to sit next to friends with whom they are used to communicating.
- You could ask everyone to secretly pass on the message using gestures or sign language (unless there are children who cannot see, in which case that part of the 'chain' can use whispering to pass the message). When you get to the last person, they have to speak or write down what they think the message is. It can be very funny to find out how much the message has changed on its journey around the circle using different communication methods!

### Helping children who cannot move easily

- The instructions require children to sit on the floor. This may be difficult for children who use wheelchairs or who cannot move easily. If children are willing, then their friends could help them to sit on the floor (and then later help them get up again). Alternatively, you could ask all children to sit on chairs or kneel in a circle.

### Other adaptations

These ideas may help all children feel more comfortable with the game, particularly those who have **difficulty understanding, learning or interacting**.

- Make sure that all children understand what to do in the game. Have a practice. Those who find it difficult to understand instructions can watch the activity before joining in.
- Give all children the choice whether they want to participate. If they don't want to participate, they could still sit in the circle and then make a sign to show that the message should skip them and be passed to the next person. Some children may want to play the game with a buddy (friend/family member) sitting with them.
- Create some smaller groups, so that children do not have to play the game within a large group – this may be less intimidating. Some children could build confidence to play the game by first repeating a sentence just in pairs with their friends or siblings.

## Example 2: Frisbees

This is an activity from 'Section two – outdoor activities'. A large area is marked out on the playing field and then divided into two halves. Team 1 stands in one half. Team 2 stands in the other half. They have to throw a Frisbee back and forth between the two halves, and if someone drops it, the opposing team gains a point.

### *Helping children who cannot move easily*

- Play a version of the game where everyone sits on the ground or on chairs, or where everyone has to stand in one position (they cannot move their feet). The thrower is not allowed to deliberately throw the Frisbee into a space where there is no one sitting/standing! You could encourage the thrower to throw the Frisbee more accurately by changing the scoring system. For instance, the child who catches the Frisbee wins 1 point for their team, and the child who accurately threw the Frisbee to the catcher wins 2 points for their team!

### *Helping children who cannot see very well*

- Split the children into two teams.
- Ask the children to sit or stand in a queue, one child behind the other, all facing the same direction.
- Place some stones, sweets or dried beans in the 'dish' side of the Frisbee. Count exactly how many items you put in the Frisbee.
- Give the Frisbee to the child at the front of the queue. The child has to pass the Frisbee to the child behind them. The Frisbee is passed down the queue like this, as quickly as possible.

- The team whose Frisbee reaches the end of the queue first gets a point.
- The team who has the most items still in the Frisbee gets a point.

### *Other adaptations*

These ideas may help all children feel more comfortable with the game, particularly those who have **difficulty understanding, learning or interacting**.

If any children seem worried about passing a Frisbee that contains stones or other objects, you could instead time them to see which group passes the empty Frisbee faster. If you want to avoid having a winning and losing team, you could time each group and add their times together. With each round of the game everyone is aiming to reduce the combined time.



### Example 3: The dog and its bone

This is an activity from 'Section three – indoor activities'. Children sit in a circle. One child sits in the middle (this child is the 'sleeping dog', or could be called the lion or tiger if that is culturally more relevant). This child is blindfolded. A ball or other item is placed next to them – the 'bone'. The children in the circle must take turns to try to steal the bone without the sleeping dog noticing. The blindfolded child must point when they think they sense movement or hear noise. If they point in the right direction, the child who was trying to steal the bone has been caught and it is the turn of the next child in the circle to try to steal the bone.

#### *Helping children who cannot move easily*

- Allow children to sit on chairs in a circle rather than on the floor, or allow the 'sleeping dog' to sit on a chair instead of the floor.
- Adapt the activity so that the child who is trying to steal the bone stays in the circle (i.e. they don't have to move their body too much). The 'bone' needs to be placed in a direct line from their position (make sure the 'sleeping dog' does not see/hear where the 'bone' is placed). The child can be given a stick with a hook or a net on the end. They have to try to hook/net the 'bone' without the sleeping dog realising which direction they are coming from.

#### *Helping children who cannot see very well*

- Children who cannot see well may prefer to play the role of the 'sleeping dog'.
- However, if they want to try to 'steal the bone' you could try to find a way to make a noisy bone! For instance, if you have a

radio or mobile phone you could use that instead of the bone and could play some music quietly so the child who cannot see can instead hear where the 'noisy bone' is. They have to try to steal the 'noisy bone' without the sleeping dog realising which direction they are coming from.

#### *Helping children who have difficulty understanding, learning or interacting*

- Demonstrate the game at least once and make sure everyone understands.
- If some children are worried about playing the game in a big group, have fewer children in the circle, or allow one child at a time to try 'stealing the bone' while the others watch from further away.
- Allow children to have a buddy with them when they are playing the role of the blindfolded 'sleeping dog'.





