



# Disability inclusion

## Talking with children about disability

It is important that we talk with children about differences and disability. After all, disability is a normal part of life, and being open about it encourages inclusion. Sometimes adults feel worried about talking about disability with children, but children are often accepting of differences. They are not born with the outdated preconceptions about disability that adults sometimes have.

### **Some tips for talking about disability with children.**

#### *1. Lead by example*

Be friendly and welcoming to everyone at Playgroup yourself! Say hello!

Ask the parent about their child, like you would with any child, how old they are, what they enjoy playing with, and what their favourite book or TV show is.

The last thing a parent of a child with a disability wants, is for no-one to ask them about their child for fear of saying the "wrong" thing.

#### *2. Talk about differences*

Discuss with children how everyone is different in some ways, but we have some things in common.

For example, "You both like jumping up and down, you are both smiling!"

#### *3. Talk about disability simply and honestly*

Discussing disability and differences in a matter-of-fact way normalises unfamiliar things.

Answer children's questions honestly and in a way they will understand.



If you don't know the answer, you can say that, and you could say "Let's ask him", or "let's ask his mum."

You can say things like:

Q: "why isn't Billy talking?"

A: "Billy doesn't use words to talk. He uses signs. It's just a different way of talking."

Q: "why is she making that noise?"

A: "Maybe Sophie is excited, and she likes the music. Maybe this is how her body says that she is excited. I think your body might jump around when you are excited!"

Q: "What is that thing?"

A: "That's a walker. That helps some people move around if walking is tricky for them"

#### *4. Encourage friendship*

If a child is curious about someone with a disability, encourage them to "say hello!", instead of saying "don't stare".

Encourage a child to show a toy or a book to a child, or to ask them to play.

*Thank you to Playgroup SA for sharing the information in this document.*