

Disability Access Fund (DAF)

Case Study # 4

A Setting in the South of England

We are a setting specifically for children aged 0-5 with additional needs. Our centre is small and has been designed with the children's needs in mind to best enable them to access as much as possible independently. This was proving more difficult in the garden due to the nature of the space and the challenges associated with being a child with a physical disability. We already had lots of outside resources such as sand, water, bikes, scooters, climbing frame, slide, but none of these could be accessed independently by our children who are unable to move around the garden without the support of an adult, such as those with Cerebral Palsy.

As a team we discussed the need to have more toys available outside that were of interest to the children, could be accessed independently, and could be left outside and not be damaged by the weather. After some research we found a low level shed which contained shelves for holding tubs which could be used to store a wide variety of toys. We purchased this using money available to us from the Disability Access Fund and it cost us £550. We filled the shed with toys of interest to the children including balls, small world, blankets and cushions, train set, cars, dolls, kitchen items, drawing resources, and foldable tunnels and tents. We labelled each tub using a picture and the word so that the children can clearly see what is in each tub and will also know where to tidy it away to.

We have seen some really positive outcomes since purchasing the shed. Children who were previously not engaging well during garden play are now self-selecting toys and seem happier to be outside. We have seen some lovely shared play which is reinforcing turn taking skills and also improving social communication. Children with physical disabilities who use wheelchairs and walking frames have been able to take themselves to the shed without the need of an adult and children with Autism have been seen to select toys and use different spaces within the garden to set up train tracks and small world play alongside their peers. The shed also has blackboard paint on the doors so that the children can engage in mark making and improve their fine motor and literacy skills. It has also been observed that staff are engaging more with the children as they are able to model appropriate play and extend learning through planning in the moment.

Our setting has definitely benefitted from the money made available to us from the Disability Access Fund and as a charity we are extremely grateful for the extra funds which help support not only the child it is intended for but all the children who attend the setting.