

The Little Book of Transitions

SUNDERLAND TRANSITIONS GUIDE ON MOVING
FROM PRE-SCHOOL TO RECEPTION

together for
children
SUNDERLAND



Choice
WELLBEING SERVICE

Nursery to Sch



Choosing a
Nursery

First Day
at Nursery

Choosing
a School

ool Transition



After
School

Starting
School

Preparing
For School

Throughout this guide you will
find QR codes to use them:

1. Open your phone's camera app.
2. Point the camera at the QR code.
3. Wait for a notification or icon to appear.
4. Tap the notification or icon to open the link or app.



WELCOME



The Little Book of Transitions is here to help you and your child navigate those tricky transitions!

We'll guide you step by step, from the moment you begin thinking about which early years provider is right for your child, all the way through to choosing a primary school and getting ready for the changes ahead.

This little guide is packed full of helpful information, offering the right advice and support along with handy tips and tricks so you and your child can feel as prepared and confident as possible.

We know that children come from a wide range of early experiences including nurseries, playgroups, childminders, and family based care. While every journey is unique, many of the same ideas and approaches can help make these transitions smoother for everyone.

Follow along on Tommy and FiFi's journey as we walk with them and see how they handle their own transitions!



All information was correct at the time of production*



CHOOSING A PROVIDER

Choosing a Childcare Provider

Choosing the right childcare provider is a big decision, and there are a few important things to think about when finding the best fit for you and your child. First, it helps to think about the type of childcare that suits your family's needs and routine. Here are some of the main options:

- **School Nursery** – These are often attached to a school or may be privately run. They usually follow school term times and have shorter hours that match the school day.
- **Day Nursery** – These welcome children from babies right up to school age. They're usually open all year round and often offer longer hours, which can be helpful for working families. Some are private, while others may be linked to a school.
- **Childminder** – Childminders care for children in their own homes, often with a small group of other children. They usually look after little ones from babyhood through to school age (and sometimes beyond). Many childminders can be quite flexible to fit around your schedule.
- **Nanny** – A nanny looks after your child in your home and is directly employed by you. This can be a good option if you're looking for care tailored to your child in a familiar environment.

Whatever you choose, the most important thing is finding a setting where your child feels happy, safe, and supported to learn and grow.

CHOOSING A NURSERY



Tommy and Fifi are going to a nursery.

When choosing a nursery, it can be quite overwhelming. Not knowing what to ask or what you're looking for can be quite nerve-racking.

Begin by visiting nurseries where you can look for things such as:

- Distance: Is the setting in the right area for travelling?
- Activities: What activities do the nursery offer?
- Outdoor space: Whether the nursery has an outdoor play area or garden for children to play in.
- Feedback: Whether the nursery provides feedback about your child's day .
- Involvement: Whether the nursery allows you to be involved in your child's learning .
- Outings: Whether the nursery takes children on outings or into the local community.
- Fees: What the nursery's fees include.
- Type of nursery: Consider how the setting fits with your family's needs. Does it offer extended hours or remain open during school holidays?
- Support: Can the setting meet the needs of your child?

Once you've narrowed down your options, schedule visits to view the space and meet the staff.



For help with nursery fees and eligibility go to:
www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/

CHOOSING A NURSERY



What if My Child has Additional Needs?

- To help your child successfully settle into nursery or reception, provide their teacher with thorough information about any additional support they may need. This will allow for the development of personalised strategies.
- It's possible that summer-born children and those with English as an additional language may require further assistance.
- If your child has or may have special educational needs (SEND), developmental differences, or delays, it's important to recognise that their progress may follow a different timeline.
- Providing help early on can significantly impact your child's development. Contact your child's nursery, school, health visitor, or a Family Hub to learn more.



Support in the
early years



Sunderland
SEND ranges

Children with additional needs within nursery should be offered reasonable adjustments in regards to uniform. If your child is comfortable with wearing uniform, stores such as ASDA offer seam free options to help with sensory needs.



CHOOSING A NURSERY



Cared for children and adopted children

Cared for children may be entitled to funded childcare if the following criteria are met:

- Accessing the extended hours is consistent with the child's care plan; and where there is a single foster parent family, the foster parent must be engaged in paid work.
- Outside of their fostering role.
- Or Where there are two foster parents in the same fostering household, both are engaged in paid work outside of their fostering roles.

Applications for children who are placed with prospective adoptive parent(s) must make their own application through the Childcare Service Childcare Choices, even if the formal adoption order has not yet been granted by the courts, as the parent(s) are no longer considered to be the child's foster parents.



For more information on childcare and applications please follow:
<https://www.togetherforchildren.org.uk/childcare>

APPLYING FOR NURSERY



Ideally, you should start looking for a nursery place and applying for admission around your child's second birthday to secure a spot at your preferred setting, as waiting lists can be long and popular settings fill up quickly. It's best to apply well in advance, especially if you need a place for when your child turns three years old.

Key points to remember:

- Start early.
- Check local policies.
- Different areas might have different application deadlines and eligibility criteria for nursery places, so check with Together for Children (TFC).
- Think about the type of setting.

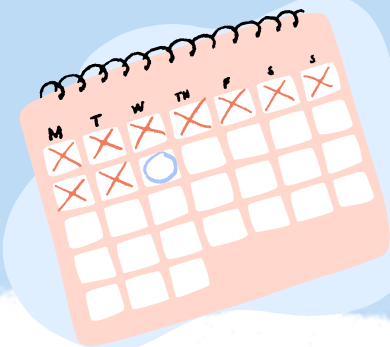
Early Learning provides children with the opportunity to learn, play and to develop skills. They follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum, which will continue through their Reception year at school.

To discover more about funding and fees below at the .Gov website!

Where to apply for nursery:
www.sunderland.gov.uk/



KEY DATES

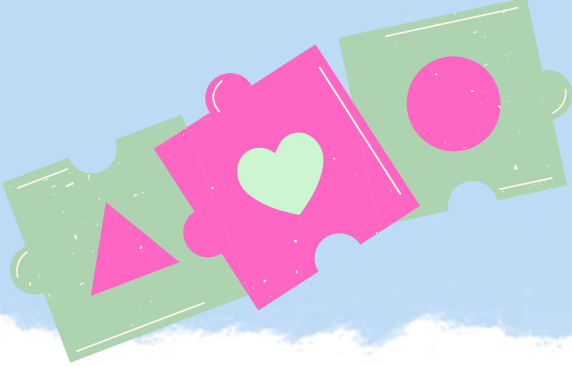


Below you will find the key dates that outline when you can expect your child to begin their nursery, please confirm with your nursery, as each are different!

Children Born Between:	Term	Term Beginning
1st April and 31st August	Autumn	On or after 1st September
1st September and 31st December	Spring	on or after 1st January
1st January and 31st March	Summer	on or after 1st April

For more information on key dates use the QR code or go to
<https://www.sunderlandinformationpoint.co.uk>





PREPARING FOR NURSERY

It might feel like just moments ago you were cradling your little one in your arms, but in the blink of an eye, they're beginning to show their unique personality and now you're getting ready for their very first day at nursery!

So, you've done all your research on the nearby nurseries, made all the visits, and found one that you love. Now, it's time to start preparing your child for their new adventure into independence.

It can be hard to predict how your child will react to attending nursery for the first time, some children stroll straight in taking it all in their stride. Others may find being separated from their parents and carers a little harder to adjust to.

No matter how your child reacts at first we hope they soon settle into their new routine, loving all the new toys to play with, songs to sing, activities and making new friends.

While starting nursery may seem a little daunting for your child, (and maybe for you too!) don't worry, there are plenty of ways that you can make the transition easier for everyone concerned.

Social Stories

You can use visuals to help your child prepare for the big change of going to nursery.

It helps your child to visualise where they are going and how their day will look.

They can also help them to share their needs and feelings if they are feeling overwhelmed by their new environment.



PREPARING FOR NURSERY



Separation Anxiety

Separation anxiety is a normal part of a child's development but it can be tough! Using consistent routines and a positive goodbye will help to ease the anxiety for you and your child.

Here are some tips for helping with separation anxiety at nursery:

- Start early: Visit the nursery with your child before they start, and try short separations with someone they trust.
- Take time to read the nursery's policies on separation anxiety so you know how they'll support your child during the settling-in period.
- Create a routine: Establish a morning ritual, like a greeting or activity, to help your child feel secure.
- Bring a comfort item: Let your child bring a favourite toy or blanket to help them feel at home.
- Be calm and confident: Say goodbye in a positive, firm way, and smile.
- Follow through: Return at the time you promised, and keep your word so your child will trust you.
- Support your child in building a relationship with their key worker by encouraging a close bond and using books and toys to help them feel comfortable.
- Get to know other parents: Attend events at the nursery to help your child feel more comfortable with other children.

For more information on separation anxiety use
the QR code or go to
<https://www.unicef.org/parenting/child-care/managing-child-separation-anxiety>





BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF NURSERY

- Talk about nursery in a positive and excited way to help your child feel comfortable.
- Speak to the nursery about any settling in sessions they offer to allow you to visit and support your child's transition.
- Discuss your child's needs with the nursery staff to ensure a smooth transition.
- Find children's books that explain what to expect at nursery to help your child understand the change.
- Prepare a nursery bag with spare clothes, weather-appropriate clothing, a comfort item like a favourite blanket or toy, labelled personal items and let your child choose some of their nursery clothes or backpack to feel more included in the process.

During the handover

- You will have chance to say goodbye
- You will have a chance to share: any upsets, food intake, sleep times, and toileting
- Remember, nursery is play-based and fun!

During the handover

- Your child will have a chance to say bye
- Your child will be encouraged to take off their coat and look for their peg to hang their coat with their image on.

Here's a handy video via QR to help your child with their coat
Or search The Preschool Coat Flip



FIRST DAY OF NURSERY



During their time in nursery

- Your child should be wearing pants through the day to school.
- Some children will not be dry at night but this is quite normal.
- Start toilet training as soon as your child is showing signs that they are ready- this will give you time to make sure they cope with going to the toilet at nursery or school.



Washing Hands

- Talk about germs, explaining that they're invisible and can make us unwell.
- Use sensory materials like wet oats or paint mixed with rice to simulate germs. Shake hands with someone else to show how germs spread.
- Practice washing hands while singing Happy Birthday.



We know that this doesn't always go to plan, your Health Visitor is always on hand to offer guidance and support. You can get in touch with them here:

03000 031552

Here's a handy website with loads of advice!
www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people





FIRST DAY OF NURSERY

Dressing Teddy

- Find clothes that will fit a large teddy bear or doll and encourage your child to practice dressing them.
- Make getting dressed in the morning fun by turning it into a game. Have your child lay out their clothes in the order they'll wear them and time how long it takes. Start with two items and gradually increase.



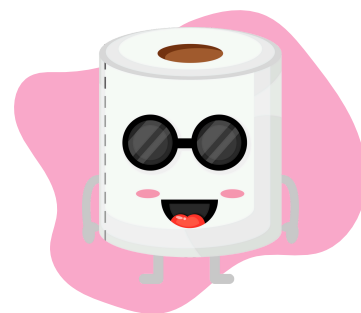
Shoes & Socks



- Allow enough time for them to do it independently. Put your shoes and socks on at the same time, describing your process.
- Create fun by finding various shoes around the house and exploring how they fasten.
- Practise rolling down socks and sliding them onto toes before pulling them up.

Using the Toilet Independently

- Encourage independence during toilet use.
- If wiping is challenging, build confidence by starting small.
- Avoid creating anxiety about school toilets.



For more information on potty training for children with additional needs:



For more information on potty training follow the QR here:



Tommy and Fifi are now on their way to school
for an exciting new adventure!
Before leaving Nursery, Tommy and Fifi will get
a chance to visit and explore their new big
school!





MOVING ON

Delaying your child's start in reception

Some parents consider deferring school entry for children born in the summer term. This isn't always the best choice. Here are a few important things to consider:

- **Schools Provide Strong Support for All Children**

Schools provide strong support for all children, and reception will help your child settle into school, whatever their starting point. Schools receive SEND funding and have access to a range of resources to provide extra help where needed, ensuring every child gets the support they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

- **Moving Through School With Their Peers is Beneficial**

Missing a year of school can affect your child's academic progress and make it harder for them to keep up with key learning milestones. Staying with children their own age supports not only their learning but also their social development. Friendships formed early often grow stronger over time, and going through school transitions-like starting secondary school-together helps build confidence and a sense of security.

- **Future School Moves Can Be More Complicated.**

If your child starts school a year later, they will be outside their usual age group.

More information on
admissions follow the QR
code here:



MOVING ON



This means you may need to reapply for them to stay in that year group every time they move to a new school. This applies when moving:

From an infant to a junior school.

From a primary to a secondary school.

To a new school in a different area.

Each school or local authority makes its own decision on out-of-year admissions, so there is no guarantee your child will stay in the same year group throughout their education. Some schools may require them to move into their correct age group later, which could mean skipping a year.

Deferring your child's school start doesn't automatically mean they will receive an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

If your child has additional needs, schools can still refer them for an EHCP needs assessment. Schools are well equipped to support children with a range of needs, regardless of when they start school.

If you think your child may need an EHCP, speak to your local authority's SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) team for guidance.

If you're unsure about when your child should start school, speak to your child's chosen school. They can help you decide what's best for their learning and development.

[Find more information from the .GOV website on EHCPs here:](#)





CHOOSING A SCHOOL

Choosing a school can be difficult and it can be hard to know where to start. But remember, you should have plenty of visits and opportunities to ask questions. The best time to start exploring and applying is during the autumn term of nursery.

Here are some tips for helping you to choose a school right for your child:

- Look at if the school is in walking distance and how busy the route is, check out the parking nearby if you cannot walk there.
- Look at the other support school offers around their physical and emotional wellbeing (it is also known as pastoral care).
- Take a look at what wraparound care (before and after school) is offered, you can also check availability and whether there is a waiting list.
- If your child attends a nursery, ask staff which schools children move on to.
- Look up local schools on the local authority website and you can also read Ofsted's Parent View survey. Remember that this does change so don't base your decision on just this information.
- Take a look at the school's website for any other specific information such as their policies.

Some schools offer staggered starts at the beginning of reception. Please enquire about this beforehand, so you can navigate work and drop offs!

For information on when to apply for school use
[the QR or go to](https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/schools-admissions)
[https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/schools-](https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/schools-admissions)
[admissions](https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/schools-admissions)



PREPARING FOR SCHOOL

Talk to your child:

As their school place is confirmed, let them know and start to talk to them about it.; tell them their teacher's names, what the school looks like and anything else that might help them process this change. Ask the school for information about what the first day will look like so your child knows what to expect. Let them know it is okay to feel nervous about this change.



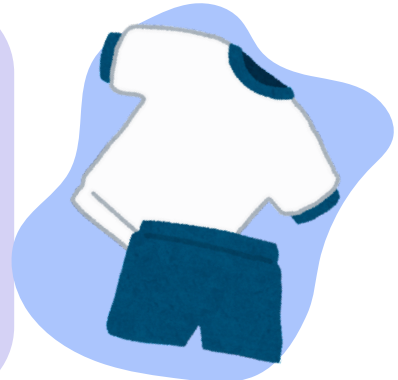
Practice the school run:

Your child will no doubt be wondering what school is going to be like, such as what happens when they arrive and how their day will look.

During the summer holidays, why not practice the school run so they can see what their journey will be like and get them excited about starting school.

Uniform:

Make preparing for school uniforms fun by trying them on just before school starts to account for growth. Involve your child in shoe shopping and choosing their lunch box to help them get ready. When trying on the uniform, have them practice fastening buttons, zips, and velcro to avoid frustration at school during bathroom visits or P.E. changes.

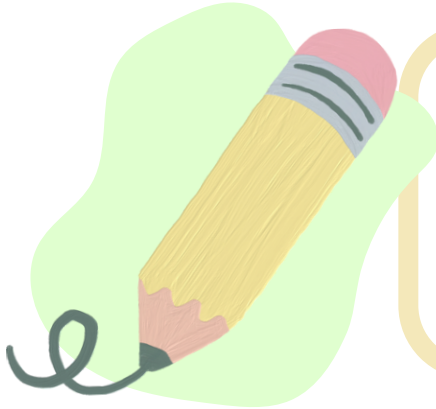


PREPARING FOR SCHOOL



Toileting:

If your child is not fully toilet trained or has accidents, inform the teacher and pack spare underwear in their school bag. Teach your child to wipe properly, pull up their pants, flush the toilet, and wash their hands.



Know their name:

Children may recognise their name by sound, but it's important they know what it looks like written down and be encouraged to try and write it. Just learning to hold a pencil is a positive step. They won't be perfect at doing this which may upset them, but let them know practice makes perfect!

Independence:

Nurture your child's independence to make sure they can carry out simple tasks by themselves. This includes:

- Getting dressed - avoid anything they might struggle with like fiddly buttons.
- Putting on shoes - go for easier styles like velcro.
- Eating - being able to open their lunchbox and items within such as yoghurts and using cutlery.



BUILDING MY BRAIN



Chatting to your child is something you probably do every day, but I bet you never realised how supportive and educational this can be!

Build a bond with me

Understanding what you do shapes my brain

Make time to sing and talk to me

Prepare to play and read with me



Play with me

Let me explore

Allow me to take the lead

You can use everyday items to play along with me



BUILDING MY BRAIN

Take turns chatting throughout my day

Ask me to turn off my screens

Listen and respond when I communicate

Keep your language simple



Sit with me

Help me take turns

Ask me if I would like to help

Repeat and respond and add to my sentence

Enjoy the time we spend together



BUILDING MY BRAIN

BUMP

From only 15 weeks, your baby can already hear familiar sounds! Follow the QR code to see how this helps your baby learn about the world around them!



PLAY

Play can really help your little one's communication skills. Using the QR code, see what activities you could try at home or when you're out and about!



TALK

Children learn by hearing you repeat words to them when you talk. Follow the QR code to try the name game and help them learn new words!



SHARE

Encouraging your child to share is a great way of helping them to practice this skill. Use the QR for sharing game ideas you can try with your child!





THE NIGHT BEFORE SCHOOL

Establish a school-friendly bedtime routine

- Try to go to bed and get out of bed at the same time each day.
- Be consistent, it may take time to put a routine in place and for it to work.
- Have a relaxing routine to help your child wind down.
- This could include a warm bath, brushing teeth, cuddles, bedtime story, and avoiding devices before bed.

For more advice on sleep go to:
www.sleepfoundation.org/school-and-sleep/back-to-school-sleep-tips



Bedwetting at this stage is completely normal. Starting school can be a stressful experience for a child, but it often improves as they become more comfortable with their new routine and school environment.



For more advice on how to approach bedwetting follow the QR code

Top Tip!

Get prepared the night before. Lay your child's uniform out, socks and shoes, coat and bag so that in the morning you're all prepared for the first day of school.

THE MORNING BEFORE SCHOOL

Your child's teeth

- Children should brush their teeth every morning and just before bed.
- You will likely need to help them do it until they are about 7 years old.
- Register with a dentist for 6 monthly check-ups
- Avoid sweets, sugary snacks and drinks.
- Dummies are not recommended for children of school age.
- If your child has sensory needs, there are a variety of sensory chews available that are more appropriate for use in a school setting.

Healthy eating and drinks

- Children should be eating 3 meals appropriate for their age.
- Encourage 5 portions of fruit and vegetables every day.
- Eating independently where possible.
- Your child should be drinking from a proper cup and not a bottle.
- Semi-skimmed milk and plain water are the best drinks for your child.



Check out this fun video by
Something Special, on
brushing teeth!



THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

Heading into School

- Staff will have less time to have conversations upon handover, so calls afterwards are preferred.
- Staff will always contact you if there is a problem, or see you at the end of the day.
- Your child will be expected to find their peg by finding their name.
- Once they've found their peg, they will be expected to remove their coat and hang it independently.



Turn taking

Turn taking and sharing is an important skill for school. To prepare your child for this you could try:

- Playing simple games like Snakes and Ladders or adapted child-friendly versions.
- Play fun verbal games during car journeys, such as I Spy.
- Roll a ball between each other stating “Mummy’s turn” and as you roll it “Tommy’s turn”.
- Engage in activities like building a marble run or Lego model, making sure to take turns.



DURING THE DAY AT SCHOOL



Lunchtime

Lunchtimes at school can be very busy and can overwhelm a child. You can prepare them in different ways for school dinners or packed lunches:

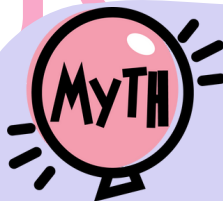
- Practicing using knives and forks with easy to cut foods or use playdough and make it into a game.
- Give your child water in a cups at mealtimes.
- Encourage your child to tidy after themselves, putting leftovers in the bin.
- Prepare a picnic together
- Explore different containers to use as a lunchbox
- Make a list together of lunch box foods.

PE and changing

Your child may have PE lessons, where they may need to get changed out of their uniform and back into it after.

To get your child used to changing by themselves, here are some ways to help them:

- Practise with different types of zips, buttons and velcro.
- Have fun finding different shoes around the house and exploring how they fasten.
- Leave enough time in your day so that your child has enough time to try and get dressed independently.

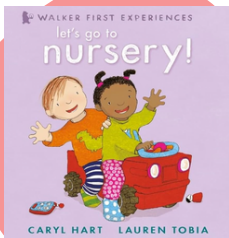


Children should be able to get themselves dressed perfectly.

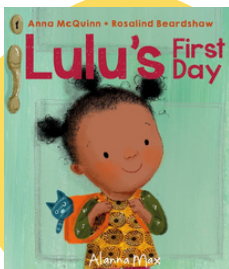
WRONG

Dressed in any way is good to us!

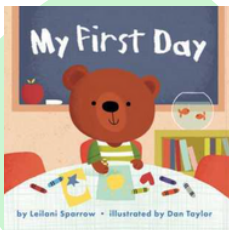
FUN FAMILY READING - NURSERY



This sweet book about the potentially anxiety-making environment of nursery focuses the experience on the friendship between little ones that play there together. Both children help each other when conflict or accidents happen, making this a reassuring read, as well as one with a message about sharing and thoughtfulness.



Lulu is very excited to be starting preschool – she's already visited, so she knows what to expect, and she's also picked out her outfit. When she arrives at the start of the big day itself, Mum stays for a cup of tea while Lulu gets acclimatised. Lulu chooses what she wants to do. Does she want to play with the sand? Paint a picture?



The first day at school or nursery can be a little scary, but there is so much to do that little bears and bunnies won't be able to feel sad for long! There are friends to make, snacks to share, play to be played and painting to be done amongst a host of other exciting things. And when the end of the day comes, after a story, it's time to put coats on again and go home: tomorrow will be so much fun!

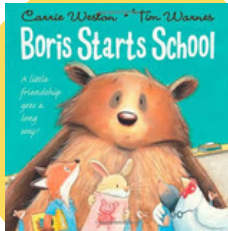
For more books to read together, check out the QR
code or the website
www.booktrust.org.uk/booklists/s/starting-school/



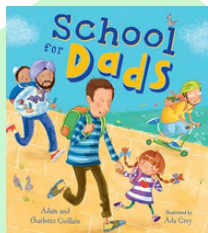
FUN FAMILY READING - SCHOOL



Biff, Chip and Kipper - Roderick Hunt; Alex Brychta
From finding his peg to painting a picture and making friends to losing his teddy, a lot happens to Kipper on his first day.



Boris starts school - Carrie Weston & Tim Warnes
Throughout Boris's first day of activities, from reading and writing to lunch, play and home time, things just seem to go wrong for him. Being large, hairy and a little bit grizzly, Boris doesn't mean to scare all the other animals at school; he just wants to make friends. Then something unexpected happens and Boris becomes a class hero.



School for Dads - Adam & Charlotte Guillain; Illustrated by Ada Grey
Little Anna is fed up with her father always being late for school pick up. But then roles are reversed and it's the dads who have to go to school run by their children. This book is a refreshingly light-hearted way to introduce children to the concept of school and how fun it can be.

For more books to read together, check out the QR
code or the website
www.booktrust.org.uk/booklists/s/starting-school/



FAMILY SUPPORT

FAMILY HUBS

At the core of every Family Hub network is a great Start for Life for babies, from conception through to 2 years old. Support is also available to families of children aged up to 19, or to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) aged up to 25. Our ambition is to ensure that local families can access the right support, at the right time, in the right place, with the right people.



PORTAGE

The Sunderland Portage Service is a home-visiting educational support program for children aged 0–3 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families. Delivered by Together for Children Sunderland, the service is designed to empower parents and carers through structured, play-based learning tailored to each child's developmental needs.



HEALTH VISITORS

Our health visiting service provides support to families with pre-school children.

Health Visitors are specialist trained nurses who can assess the development of infants and young children and provide advice and support to meet the identified needs. They offer home visits to all families in the community from pregnancy through to school entry as recommended by the National Healthy Child Programme.



This guide was built to support
you and your child through
transitions.

Remember, you can always ask
more questions, it's an exciting
step in your child's journey!