

# Settling down

Children with MSI can have difficulties in the following four key areas, sleep, feeding, personal care and play. Below are some ideas from parents and professionals related to each:

## Sleeping



- Regular routine and a 'winding-down sequence'
- Opportunities during the day for exercise and rest
- Warm the bed, dim the lighting
- Find ways to catch up on **your own** sleep

## Feeding and eating

- Have a go at identifying the cause of the difficulties
- Cue your child in what is about to happen e.g. a bib or spoon as a consistent 'object cue'
- Slow down your own movements
- Allow and encourage them to touch food

## Personal care (bathing, toileting dressing)

- Establish a regular routine for each day and praise positive responses
- Cue your child and indicate the stages (e.g. dressing) through touch with words (e.g. this is going over your head)
- Toileting - make sure their feet are on supported on the floor or step and have someone or something to hold on to

## Playing



- Try and go at your child's pace, they may need to repeat actions many times
- Choose toys that suit their needs. There are specialist equipment but everyday objects may be better e.g. brushes, fabrics, torches, warm water in a bowl (Always check for safety)

# How are you feeling?

Here are some natural reactions and common feelings for parents who find out they have a baby with MSI:

**Distress**

**Sense of loss**

**Shocked or  
in disbelief**

**Lonely and  
isolated**

**Angry**

**Helpless**

This is a time of **high emotion**. Other families say that getting back to doing some ordinary, everyday things with your family and friends can give you a bit of space to enjoy and get to know your new baby.

## Support

Because children with MSI often have complex needs, families may meet a range of professionals, each with a different role. Remember that professionals are there to help you, as well as your baby.

[www.sense.org.uk/](http://www.sense.org.uk/)

Sense Information and Advice can help you find the right support for you and your family. They can offer you free and impartial information.

[www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)

Contact a family provides support and advice to the families of children with special needs.

## References

The leaflet was adapted for the CVUHB 0-5 Psychology Service from Early Support's 'Information for Parents - Multi-sensory impairment' booklet, with contributions from Sense.

# Multi-sensory Impairment (MSI)



## Information for parents

Psychology Service for children (0-5) with Global Developmental Delay / Emerging Learning Disabilities and their families

Cardiff and Vale UHB

# What is MSI?

Children with MSI have impairments of **vision and hearing**. They may be born with MSI or acquire it later. Many of these children face other challenges, such as medical conditions, physical or cognitive disabilities.

## How it affects children's development

The effects on development are wide ranging including;

- Deprived of sensory information and may be very slow to learn to use their residual senses
- Relationships will often take longer to develop
- Learning to move independently
- Generalising skills and concepts from one situation to another
- Ability to anticipate events
- Learning may happen more slowly

Children with MSI face big challenges, but with the **right support**, they can maximise their use of vision and hearing and develop the confidence to be inquisitive and start exploring.

Families are the most knowledgeable people about their children and are their best source of nurturing and learning.



## Getting started TOP TIPS

### Building relationships

#### Building trust

- Stay close to your child as much as possible, so they can pick up information about you through smell, touch and warmth.
- Other families members having a particular way of identifying themselves e.g. the same bracelet each time

#### Being supportive

- Children may need frequent breaks from looking, listening, exploring or communicating. Some play activities will be more demanding than relaxing.



#### Following the child

- Wherever possible, allow your child to control what is happening.

### Helping them to understand the world

#### Being consistent

Develop set routines for the day, and be as consistent as possible.

#### Helping understanding

Tell your child what is happening, alongside cues e.g. armband for swimming

#### Taking time

This is important but also difficult to maintain. If you can allow yourself extra time, it helps long term

### Sensory development

- Playing, talking or singing with your child very close to you
- The closeness will help them to feel safe and secure



### Communication and interaction

All children with MSI communicate, however understanding their communication as it is developing many take **trust, patience and skill**.

- Use consistent routines
- Use cues to signal what will happen next
- Follow the child's lead and respond to any signals they give

The more your child realises that other people respond to their communication, the more motivated and skilled they will become.