

Independence in the family home



What is independence

What is Independence?

Independence refers to a person's ability to carry out everyday tasks, make choices, and manage aspects of their life with as little support as possible.

It does not mean doing everything alone, but rather having the **skills, confidence, and opportunities** to participate actively in daily life.

What is independence

For children and young people, independence develops gradually.

It includes :

Practical skills (like dressing or preparing food),

Communication skills (expressing needs and preferences),

Emotional skills (coping with change or solving problems).

Why is independence important

It supports their ability to navigate everyday life in a way that is meaningful and appropriate to their individual needs.

1. Encourages a Sense of Control and Autonomy

Independence helps pupils feel more in control of their environment and daily routines. Being able to make choices—no matter how small—supports dignity and personal agency.

2. Builds Confidence Through Achievement

When pupils successfully complete tasks, even with some support, it reinforces their belief in their own abilities. Small successes can have a significant impact on confidence.

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Why is independence important

3. **Supports Communication and Expression**

Many pupils with SEND rely on alternative ways to communicate. Developing independence helps them express their needs, preferences, and feelings more effectively.

4. **Enhances Quality of Life at Home and in the Community**

Independent skills enable pupils to take part in family routines and community activities, reducing reliance on others and increasing inclusion.

Why is independence important

5. Prepares for Future Independence at an Individual Level

Every pupil's pathway into adulthood will look different. Developing independence ensures they are equipped with the skills needed for their next stage, whether that involves supported living, employment, or further education.

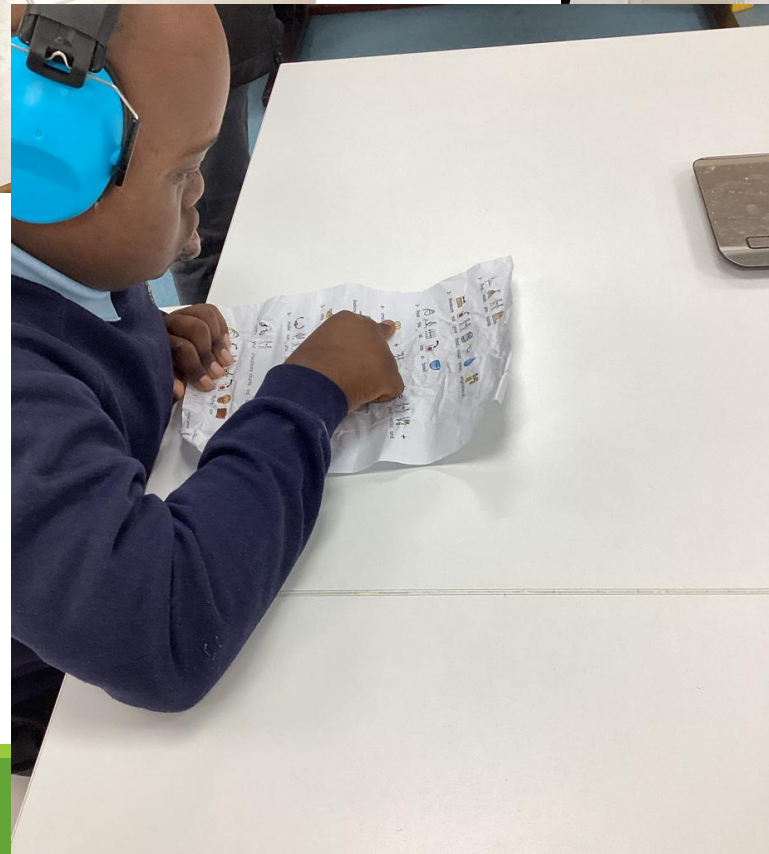
6. Reduces Anxiety and Frustration

When pupils understand routines and can complete aspects of tasks themselves, it can reduce uncertainty, leading to fewer frustrations and improved emotional regulation.

Independence is different for all

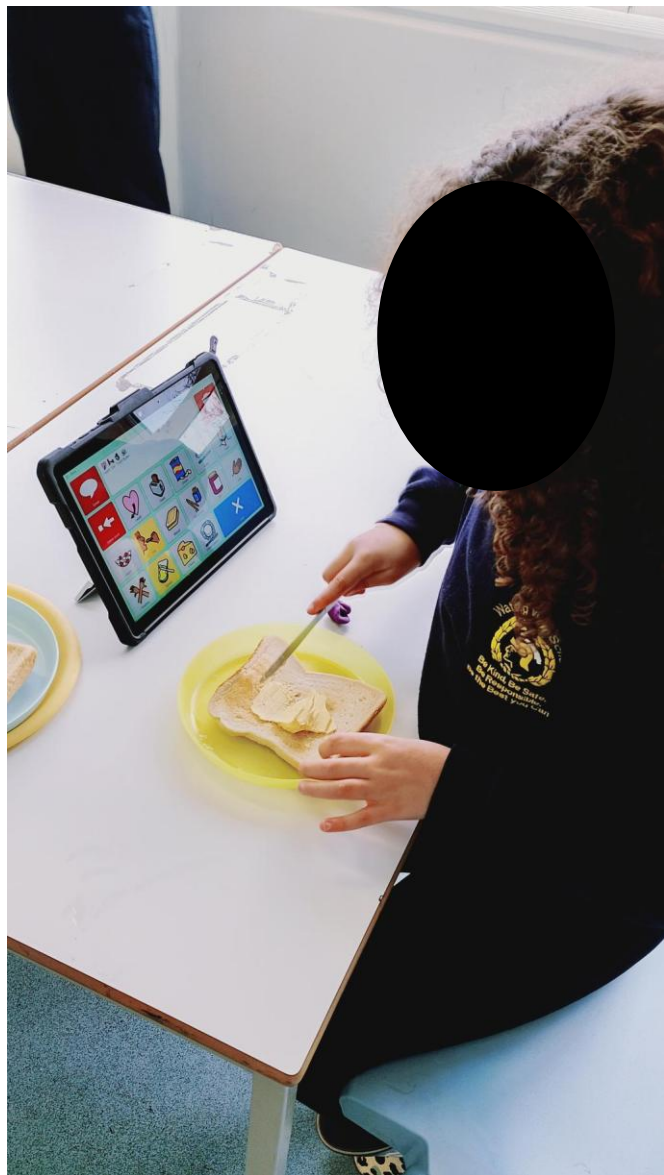
- ❑ It doesn't mean doing everything alone but it means being able to function with it means being able to *function with confidence and predictability* in everyday life, often with the right supports in place.
- ❑ Independence looks different for every child and should be adapt to suit their needs .
- ❑ For students with profound and multiple learning disabilities the focus is on *active participation*, sensory engagement, and building awareness within routines.











Barriers to independence

- Doing too much for the child
- Lack of time (rushing routines)
- Communication difficulties
- Sensory needs
- Emotional regulation
- Physical difficulties

The role of parents and carers

❑ Create opportunities for independence

You play a really important role in developing your child's independence at home.

This doesn't mean expecting them to do everything on their own—it's about creating opportunities for them to try.



❑ Allow extra time

Giving extra time is key. What takes us 30 seconds might take your child several minutes, and that's okay.

It's also important to allow processing time—after giving an instruction or asking a question, give your child a few extra seconds to understand and respond, rather than repeating or stepping in too quickly otherwise they may not have processed the instruction and it will take longer.

Breaking tasks down into smaller steps can make things feel much more manageable.

The role of parents and carers

❑ Celebrate effort not just success



It's really important to celebrate effort—not just when something is done perfectly.

For many pupils tasks can feel challenging or overwhelming, and progress may happen in very small steps.

If success is only recognised when something is 'perfect,' children may become **discouraged, anxious, or reluctant to try.**

By praising effort, you help your child build **confidence and resilience.**

Celebrating effort also supports **motivation.**

When children feel that their attempts are noticed and valued, they are more likely to engage, repeat the task, and gradually develop their skills.

The role of parents and carers

□ Break things down into smaller steps

-Teach one step at a time

Independence doesn't happen all at once—it develops over time, and every small step matters.

For some children, putting on a whole outfit might be too much—but putting on one sock is a great start.

Progress may be slow at times, and that's completely okay.

What matters is that your child is moving forward at their own pace.

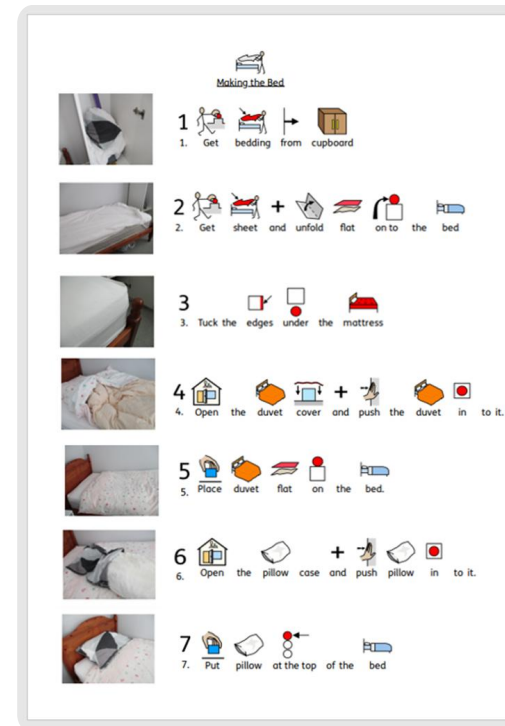
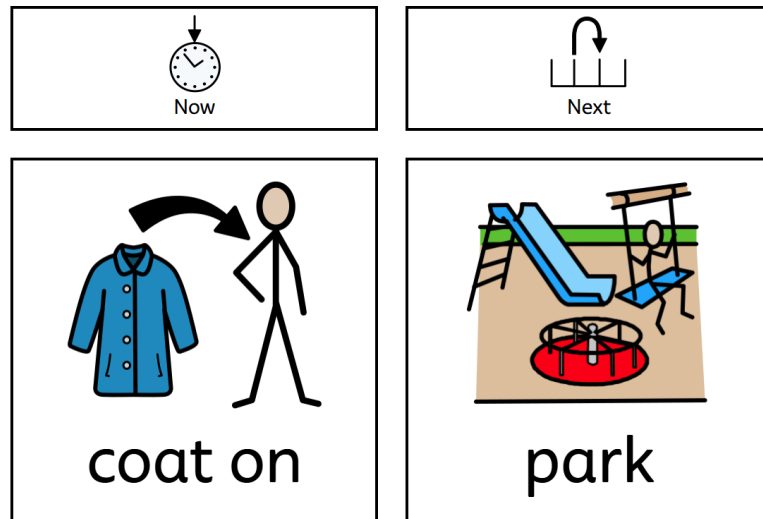
-Practice regularly so that it becomes part of their routine.

Practical strategies at home

Visual supports can be really helpful—things like

In task schedules or now-and-next boards give children a clear structure.

Give clear simple instructions



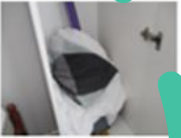
Visuals

The brain processes images
60,000 times faster than audio.

Visuals make learning more permanent.
Typically in 3 days we will remember
10% of all we hear
35% of all we see
65% of all we see and hear at the same time.

In task schedule

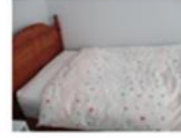

Making the Bed


1.  1. Get bedding from cupboard


2.  2. Get sheet and unfold flat on to the bed


3.  3. Tuck the edges under the mattress


4.  4. Open the duvet cover and push the duvet in to it.


5.  5. Place duvet flat on the bed.


6.  6. Open the pillow case and push pillow in to it.


7.  7. Put pillow at the top of the bed

Photo and symbol schedule



3

3. Tuck the edges under the mattress



4

4. Open the duvet cover and push the duvet in to it.



5

5. Place duvet flat on the bed.



 
Cleaning the Toilet.

1.   
Lift the toilet lid up.

2.    
Squirt the toilet cleaner into the toilet.

3.      
Brush inside the toilet with the toilet brush.

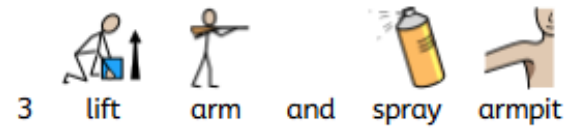
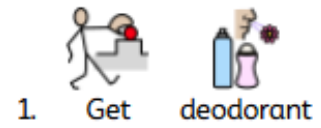
4.  
Flush the toilet.

5.  
Close the toilet lid.

Photo schedule



Symbol schedule



Practical strategies at home

- ❑ Model the task first – show them what to do before expecting them to try
- ❑ Repetition and routine are key. The more a child practices something, the more they understand what to do and confident they become
- ❑ Gradually reduce support over time.

Practical strategies at home

□ Gradually reduce support over time. – Backward chaining method

What it means:

- Adult completes most of the task
- Child completes the **last step**
- Child experiences success every time

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Building Independence in daily Routines

Building independence is about creating *predictable, structured routines* that reduce anxiety and increase confidence.

For the **morning routine**,

giving choices—such as selecting between two outfits—can help pupils feel in control without becoming overwhelmed.

Visual supports like picture schedules or step-by-step charts can make tasks like brushing teeth clearer and more manageable. Consistency is key, so encourage parents to keep the sequence the same each day.

At **mealtimes**, opportunities for structured participation. Pupils can help with simple, clearly defined tasks like placing items on the table or stirring ingredients.

When introducing cutlery, it may help to teach one skill at a time, using modelling and repetition.

Building Independence in daily Routines

For the **evening routine**, it is important for them to wind down in a calm, predictable way.

Tidying toys can be supported with clear expectations, such as using labelled boxes or “finish” baskets.

Getting ready for bed should follow the same steps each night, supported by a visual timetable, to signal that the day is ending and promote a sense of security.

Building Independence in daily Routines for pupils with PMLD

Independence for these pupils is about being involved, making choices, and developing awareness within daily routines.

morning routine -involve your child in choosing clothes by offering sensory choices—such as different textures or colours—and observing responses.

During tooth brushing, even small actions like holding the toothbrush, responding to touch, or anticipating the routine are meaningful steps toward independence.

At **mealtimes**, participation might include being involved in food preparation through sensory experiences—feeling ingredients, smelling food, or activating a switch to assist with a simple task.

When using cutlery, hand-over-hand support may be needed, and the goal is engagement rather than mastery.

Building Independence in daily Routines for pupils with PMLD

For the **evening routine**, tidying toys could involve reaching, touching, or indicating preferences, rather than fully completing the task.

Preparing for bed should be a consistent, sensory-rich routine—using familiar sounds, lighting, or calming interactions to help the child recognise the transition to sleep.

Managing challenges

- Expect moments of difficulty – these are part of learning not failure
- **Stay calm and consistent — your response helps regulate your child's emotions**
- Use simple language:** In moments of stress, reduce talking. Short, clear phrases and only use important words.
- Pause before reacting:** If needed, take a breath before responding so you don't escalate the situation.

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Managing challenges

Keep responses predictable: Try to respond in the same way each time (e.g. offering a break, using the same calming strategy and using the same words). This builds a sense of safety.

Have a “go-to” strategy: This might be a calm space, a favourite sensory item, or a familiar routine that helps your child settle.

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Managing challenges

□-Recognise that refusal is often linked to overwhelm, anxiety, or difficulty regulating emotions

- Look beyond the behaviour – ask yourself why are they refusing – is the task too hard, too long, unfamiliar or happening too quickly
- Reduce the demand- break the task into smaller steps
- Use visuals – Now and next with something motivating after.
- Build in regulation time: if your child is overwhelmed ,allow time to calm before reintroducing the task.

Activity

- ☐ What is one skill your child could start practicing at home?
- ☐ What support might they need?

Key takeaways

- ❑ Independence looks different for every child
- ❑ Small steps lead to big progress
- ❑ Consistency is key
- ❑ You are helping prepare your child for the future
- ❑