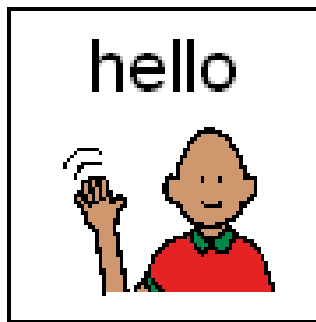


Early Years Speech and Language Therapy

Getting Ready for School

Supporting Children with Language Difficulties
that are moving from Early years to School Settings





Introduction

- Your child is due to start at school in September. They may be starting at a Mainstream School, an additional provision/resource base for language difficulties or a Special School.
- Preparing for change is important for all children. It is particularly important for children who have language difficulties as these children can take longer to understand when something is changing.
- As you will already know children with language difficulties have difficulties with talking about their feelings. Starting a new school can bring up lots of different emotions which can be complex for a child with communication needs.
- You are an expert on your child. By working together with you, we want to ensure your child's transition into their new school is as smooth as possible.
- You can support school staff in getting to know your child and make this a smooth transition.



Before the Summer holidays...

- Speak to your child's current nursery and their new school. Ask for, or create some simple visuals to help prepare your child for the changes. For example, you could gather photographs of their new school, new teacher and the uniform they will wear. These may be available on the school's website or the school may be able to send you some photographs. You could then look at these with your child over the summer holidays.
- Some schools might produce a video or a transition book for you and your child to look at over the summer holidays.
- You can also **make some visual supports yourself**—see “visual support” section of this pack.
- Find out from the new school, who the key people helping your child will be. This might be their class teacher, a learning support assistant (LSA), the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (**SENDCo**) and/or the Inclusion Manager.



During the Summer holidays...

- Practise putting on your child's new school uniform. This can help your child get used to the routine.
- Look at your transition book or the photos you gather of the new school, teacher etc. together over the summer holidays. Remember repetition is key!
- Read books about going to school—see “books about starting school” section of the pack
- Practice the new journey or route you will take to school with your child. Depending on your child's level of understanding, you could draw a picture or a map together, from your home to their new school and talk with them about the route and the things you will see or hear on your way.

Visual Support

Using objects, pictures, photos and symbols to support your child's communication.

- Visual support can help your child understand what is going to happen next, when they may not be able to understand an explanation in words.
- Children can also use visual supports to express themselves. They can use a visual to show you what they want or need if they are not quite able or ready to say the words.
- Visual supports include objects which remind the child of something familiar, photos of familiar objects or activities, symbols that represent a familiar objects or activity or Makaton signs.
- Depending on your child's level of understanding, different visual supports may be helpful.

Some examples of how using visual support can help your child's understanding at this time of change but also in general in their day:

Photos on your phone (portable): Having photos available on your phone to show your child is really easy and helpful!

You could take photos of your child's school, their new teacher, the classroom, the playground etc. You may be able to access these on the school's website or the school may be able to send some to you via email.

You can also show your child photos on your phone of other items or activities to let them know what is going to happen next in your day.

If you want to make symbols to support your child's understanding, you can use the following link:

<https://www.boardmakeronline.com/>

But you don't need to have special software to make symbols - taking pictures on your phone or using images from the internet can be just as good!



Visual timetable (at home/nursery/school):

This is a sequence of pictures, symbols or photos that tells your child what you are going to be doing for example for the day.

You can look at what's happening and take the pictures off after each activity, which gives you an opportunity to talk about what's up next.

This supports your child to understand what is happening but also gives them an idea of what's coming up later, helping them to move from one activity to the next.

It can help to have a symbol to represent events that pop up unexpectedly—this encourages your child to be flexible.



Social stories (at home/nursery/portable):

Social stories are a great way to help your child understand specific situations they might find stressful or challenging. You can write them yourself, tailoring them to your child's level of understanding and need for visual support.

They can help your child predict what is going to happen and what will be expected of them. They are a way of helping your child manage and prepare for the unexpected.

See the **“how to write social stories”** document and “Peppa Pig” example at the back of this pack.

Check out other examples on ‘Pinterest’ (www.pinterest.co.uk)

And **‘Story Maker’** in the ‘App Store’ on your phone

In September: Communicating with your child's new school...

- Make contact with these staff members early on, don't wait until there is a problem. You will be able to provide advice and information about your child so they can help them settle in better.
- When your child starts at school agree how you can regularly share information about your child. This could be by using a **home-school book**. Both you and the relevant staff members can share information about your child e.g. successes and/or challenges at home/school and useful strategies. Or it could be an online system that school use.

If there is something you are really concerned about however, it can be better to talk face-to-face. The class teacher and SENCO are your main contacts.



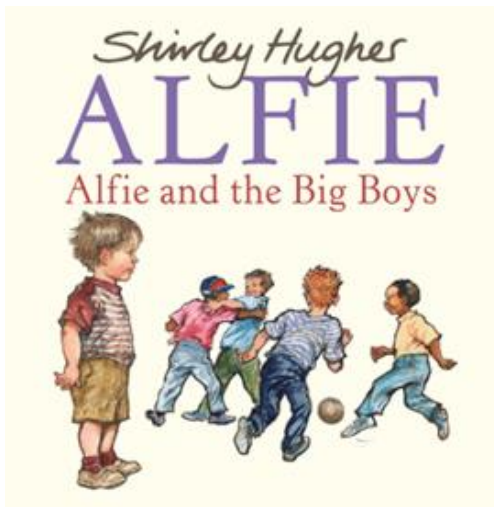
Inclusion Passport....

- A great way to communicate with the key people who will be working with your child is to make a **"Inclusion Passport"**.
- You can find a blank "Inclusion Passport" template at the back of this pack. Fill this in with the key information, staff need to know about your child and give it to their new teacher.
- A "Inclusion Passport" helps adults who don't know your child get to know their likes and dislikes and how s/he communicates.

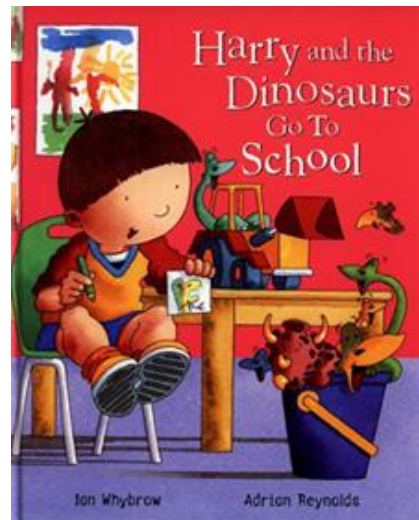


Books about starting school:

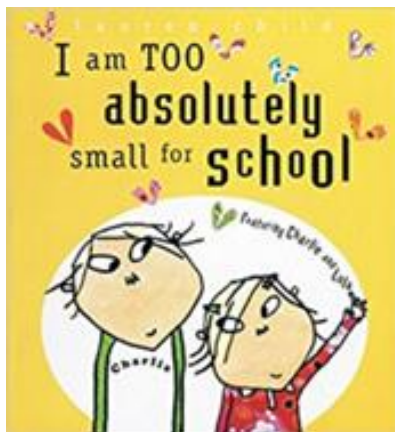
Another great way to prepare your child for school is to read stories together about this topic... here are a few book suggestions, but there are many more!



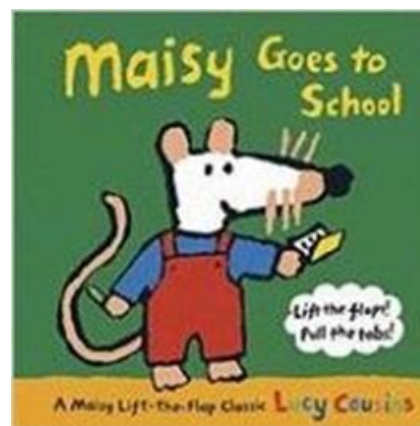
'Alfie and the big boys'
by Shirley Hughes



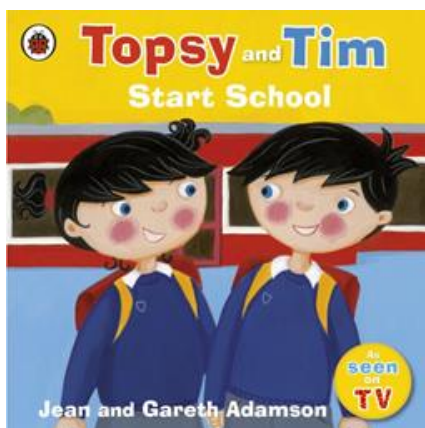
'Harry and the Dinosaurs go to school'
by Ian Whybrow & Adrian Reynolds



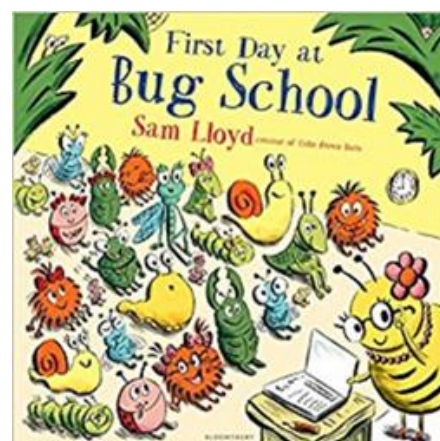
'I am absolutely too small for school'
by Lauren Child



'Maisy goes to school'
by Lucy Cousins



'Topsy and Tim start school'
by Jean & Gareth Adamson



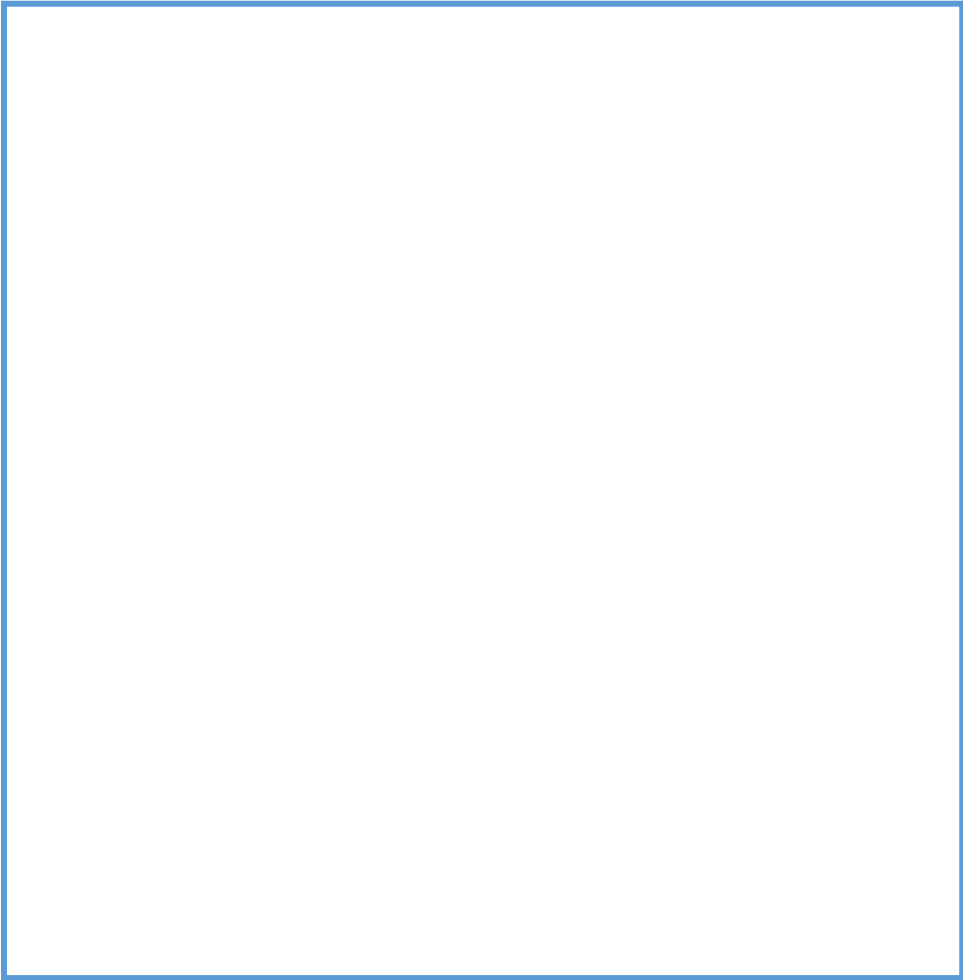
'First Bug Day at School'
by Sam Lloyd

Appendix:
Forms and Information
about support and
accessible activities

Inclusion Passport

All About...	(Child's Name)	I like to be called...	
D.O.B		My new school is...	


This is a photograph/drawing of me:



Inclusion Passport

All about me	
<p>People (or animals!) who are important to me:</p> 	
<p>Things I like to do or play with</p> 	
<p>Things I am good at</p> 	
<p>Things I don't like</p> 	
<p>Things I find difficult</p> 	



Inclusion Passport

Communication	
<p>How I communicate</p>  <p>My home languages are</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 50px; width: 250px; margin-top: 10px;"></div>	<p>e.g. pulling people towards what I want, making sounds, single words, phrases, pictures etc</p>
<p>How you can help me</p>	
<p>Please don't</p>	

Inclusion Passport

Emotional Regulation	
Sometimes when I am feeling..	I might....
What helps	
Sometimes when I am feeling..	I might....
What helps	
Sometimes when I am feeling..	I might....
What helps	
Please don't	

Inclusion Passport

What I can and cannot eat (allergies) 	
How I eat (cutlery, finger food, specialist equipment)	
About my health (any medication, swallowing or mobility difficulties etc) 	
Other professionals who work with me	
Other important information	e.g. If your child is still in nappies or needs support/prompting to use the toilet

This passport was made by _____

on date_____.

Social Stories

What is a social story?

- Social stories were created by Carol Gray in 1991. They are short descriptions of a particular event or activity which include specific information about what to expect in the situation and why.
- Social stories are written for children to help them learn and understand social rules and cope in social situations.
- Social stories are devised for your child's level of ability and may include photos, symbols, pictures, and words/written text.
- Social stories are normally quite short – just 2 to 12 sentences long.

Introducing a social story

- Identify a social situation, friendship skill or event that your child needs help with (such as 'saying hello to people', 'going to the doctors' etc)
- Think of a title that asks a question that the story will describe (e.g. 'how do I say hello to people?')
- The social story is written from the child's perspective and uses positive sentences instead of negative (I should look at people.....)
- A social story has a reassuring and patient quality and it is important to introduce it in the same friendly, gentle way
- Share the story only when your child is calm. Do not share the story during the difficult or upsetting event or as a consequence for bad behaviour
- The social story should be individual to the child and address what it is about the situation that is difficult

What is taking turns



*Sometimes I want to play with the same toy
Other children are sad if I grab it
I could say 'can I have a turn'
I could swap a toy with them
This is a kind thing to do*

Tips for writing a social story

- Write it from the child's perspective, in the first person
- Use photos where possible. Include the child's photo in the story
- Read it before the situation happens, not afterwards. Otherwise, it may be seen as a 'telling off'
- Ask other people if needed to help you figure out why your child is doing something and what alternative strategies they could possibly do instead
- Use a computer program like iphoto photobook or i-social story app
- Use the following structure for a simple social story:

1. **Describe the situation:** *you need to explain what the situation is from the child's perspective*

Sometimes I.....

2. **Say what effect this has on others:** *This may not be obvious to a child with social communication difficulties and needs to be explained clearly*

This makes other people feel.....

3. **Give your child an alternative that they could do.** *A social story isn't about pointing out the negative behaviour but showing that there is another way. Think about what your child might do instead and be realistic about how possible it is what you are asking them to do*

instead, I could.....

4. **End on a positive statement:** *It is important to explain why your strategy is better. e.g. why is tapping someone on the shoulder a better attention-seeking strategy than shouting?*

This is a good thing to do.....

Each section could have one page or as many as you need!



Social story about going to school...

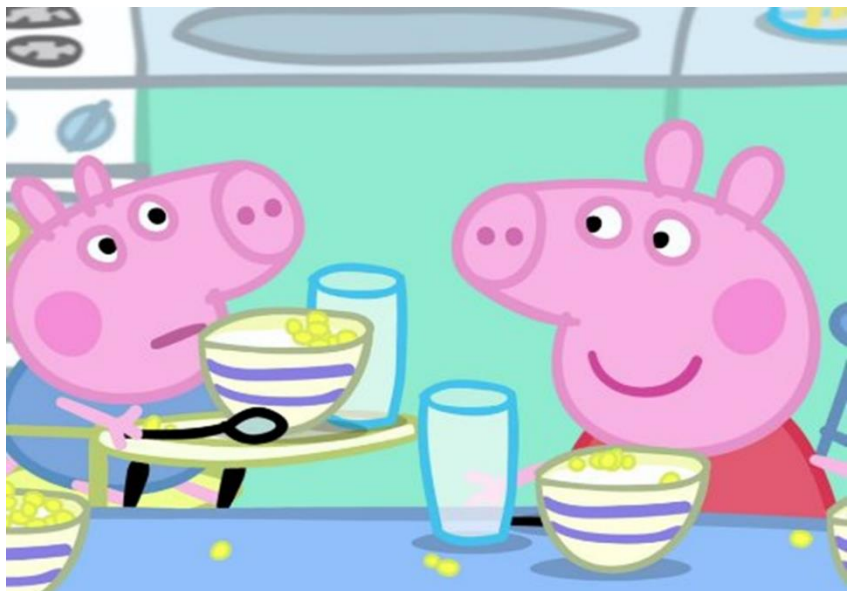
Going to
school....

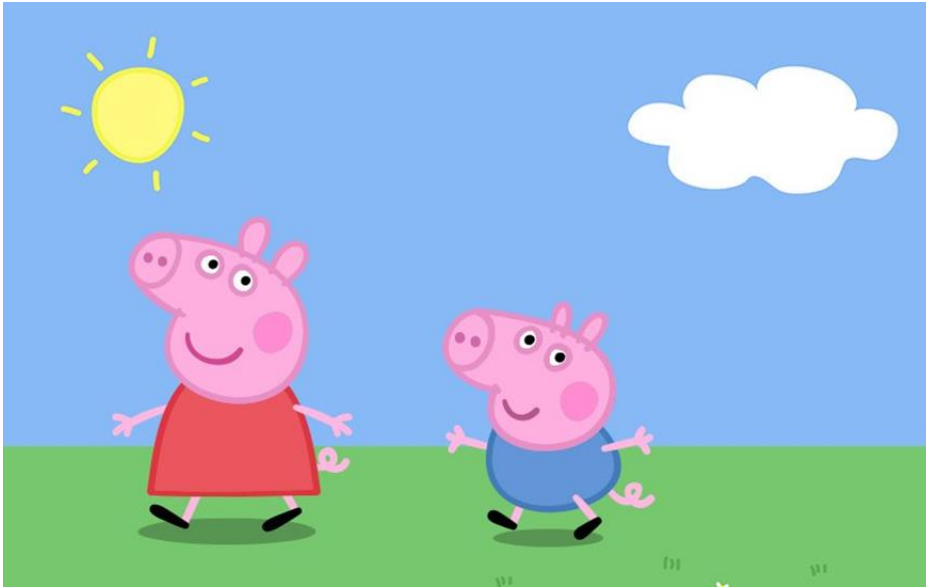


First I
get
dressed



Then I have
my
breakfast...





Next I walk
to school

Sometimes
we go in
the car



When I
arrive at
school, I
see my
teacher
and all my
friends

Ideas for home...

- **“Talking is Teaching”** - activities, information and helpful tips for parents.
Check out the Staycation toolkit!: <https://talkingisteaching.org/resources>
- **“Vroom!”**: Boost your child's learning with Vroom's fast and fun tips to your phone or via email: <https://www.vroom.org>
- **“Hanen”** - Information about supporting communication in children with language difficulties . Strategies can be helpful for children with language difficulties. Parents can sign up for top tips and weekly updates and a newsletter: <http://www.hanen.org/Home.aspx>
- **“The National Literacy Trust”** as lots of ideas at <https://small-talk.org.uk/> and <http://wordsforlife.literacytrust.org.uk/baby/milestones>
- **“First Words Project”** - information and helpful tips for parents: <https://firstwordsproject.com/resources/>
-
- The **“Tiny Happy People”** created by BBC can help you develop your child's language and communication skills. Explore simple activities and play ideas here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people>
- Learn **“Makaton”** Sign Language with Singing Hands: <https://singinghands.co.uk/what-we-do/forthcoming-events/> and CBeebies: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/joinin/something-special-getting-started-with-makaton> There are lots of ideas on their website <https://www.makaton.org/>

Useful Websites

- **PACEY:** Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years on “Being school ready”:

<https://www.pacey.org.uk/working-in-childcare/spotlight-on/being-school-ready/#readyforschool>

- **Bi-Borough Childcare and Early Education Service**—Starting School ; Practical Tips for Parents and Carers:

https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/biborough/directory/files/starting_school_tips_for_parents_carers.pdf

and apps...

- Social story Creator and Library (App store)

Search: in “Google Play” (android app store) or the Apple “App store” for lots of options.

Local Centres for Activities and Support: The following are specialist centres for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and their families:

Hammersmith and Fulham:

The Stephen Wiltshire Centre Old Oak Children's centre [Stephen Wiltshire Centre | London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham \(openobjects.com\)](#)

Family information Service Directory

<http://search3.openobjects.com/kb5/lbhf/fis/service.page?id=YhvL7YW7bOk&localofferchannel=0>

Old Oak Children's centre [Your community - Peabody](#)

Kensington and Chelsea:

St Quintin's Centre North open 7 days a week

St Quintin's Centre South open Saturdays and school holiday

<https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/st-quintin-centre/st-quintin-centre-0>

Westminster:

Bessborough Family Hub (in Westminster, but open to families from all 3 boroughs)

[Bessborough Family Hub | Westminster City Council](#)

Tresham Centre

<https://fisd.westminster.gov.uk/kb5/westminster/fis/service.page?id=Hb8ZbVn90Rk&localofferchannel=0>

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Local Offer:

The local offer contains information on local services and support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and their families.

Hammersmith and Fulham: www.lbhf.gov.uk/localoffer

Kensington and Chelsea: www.rbkc.gov.uk/localoffer

Westminster: [What is a 'Local Offer'? | Westminster FIS](#)

Support Groups for families:

With information about local events, sources of support, tips and advice:

Hammersmith and Fulham: <https://www.family-support.org.uk/>

Masbro Centres (Urban partnership group) [Masbro Children's Centres, play and](#)

[learn in Hammersmith & Fulham \(upg.org.uk\)](https://www.upg.org.uk)

Kensington and Chelsea: <https://www.fullloflifekc.com/>

Westminster: <https://www.wppg.org.uk/>

SEN Summer Activities 2022

Swimming

- Paddling pool & splash pad - [Make a splash in Ravenscourt Park and Bishops Park | LBHF](#) Free!
- Free swimming for under 8's, discounted prices for adults - [THE HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM RESIDENTS PAY AS YOU GO CARD \(better.org.uk\)](#)
[Kensington & Chelsea Residents Pay As You Go Card \(better.org.uk\)](#)
- Discounted swimming [Get active for less with the ActiveWestminster Card - ActiveWestminster](#)

Summer In the City

Free events over the summer organised by Hammersmith and Fulham for the whole 6-week holidays.

[For more information go to:](#) [Welcome to Summer in the City | London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham \(lbhf.gov.uk\)](#)

H&F Play and Picnic in the Park

Free play day for all with bouncy castles, face painting, etc. 15th July 2023

[For more information go to:](#) [1082993_cmc_site23_picnic_flyer_a4_rev2.pdf \(emlfiles4.com\)](#)

Oxygen Trampoline Park

Toddler sensory play [Acton Toddler Sensory Play | Oxygen Freejumping](#)

Sensory session every Sunday between 5pm-6pm carers go free.

[More info:](#) www.oxygenfreejumping.co.uk/locations/acton/

Solidarity Sport

Run a programme throughout the summer of sports, Health eating, Arts, Crafts, Dance, Games

[More info at:](#) www.solidaritysports.org

Science Museum

Pattern Pod interactive sensory space [Pattern Pod | Science Museum](#) under 9's

The garden-interactive space construction water, light and sound PROVIDE YOUR OWN APRONS or bring a change of clothes. [The Garden | Science Museum](#)

Earlybirds [Early Birds | Science Museum](#) Dates in June and July 2023

Natural history Museum

Sensory story telling [Adventure Babies | Natural History Museum \(nhm.ac.uk\)](#) little ones up to four 4, 11, 18 July, 1, 22 August, 5 September

Story Telling

383-387 High Street, Stratford, London E15 4QZ

Taking place in July and August

More info - [Discover Centre](#)