

# Using Picture Planners

Neurodivergent children can find it difficult to predict the structure of the day, plan activities and cope with unexpected changes. This can often be a cause of anxiety and distress. The child may not recognise that this is an issue that is not experienced by others and is therefore not likely to verbalise the cause of distress.

Picture planners can help a child to predict the day ahead, which can reduce their anxiety. It can also help them to develop independence around an activity (such as getting ready for bed) or to prepare for changes to their routine.

A selection of picture cards can be downloaded for free at:

[neurodivergencewales.org/en/parents-carers/childrens-picture-cards/](https://neurodivergencewales.org/en/parents-carers/childrens-picture-cards/)

When using picture planners, try to:

- Ensure planners are used in a consistent manner, it is useful to utilise the same pictures at home and school.
- Lay out the planner in the same way each time, the most common way of doing this is top to bottom, but you can also choose left to right.
- If a child needs a lot of detailed planning support, plan sections of the day each time if necessary – this may be a morning routine or bed time routine.
- If the child needs less detailed planning support – plan longer periods in advance
- Place the planner where the child can reach it, and encourage them to remove activities after they are completed.
- Ensure that activities are removed after completion (if not by the child, then by someone who can help). It is important that the first card on the planner is the current activity, so that the child can understand what is happening now and what is next.
- Make planners transportable, using a clipboard, tablet or smart phone can help the child to understand whilst on the move.
- Use planners for sleep problems. Consistent routines can help with sleep problems, for some children being able to see that waking up in the morning follows sleep can help to decrease anxiety.