

# Taking an anti-SEND stance

in early childhood



***“The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”***

**Audre Lorde (1984)**

Put simply, this quote reminds us that systems built on harm cannot easily be used to undo that harm. When a system is rooted in deficit, compliance or normalisation, working only within its existing tools and categories is unlikely to lead to deep or lasting change.

The SEND system was created with particular assumptions, including ideas about what is “typical”, “normal” or desirable for children. Even when our intentions are inclusive, relying solely on the language, processes and measures of such a system can unintentionally reinforce those same assumptions and power structures.

For early educators, this does not mean rejecting all systems or refusing to engage with statutory processes. There are legal and professional responsibilities that require us to work within them. However, it does mean **being able to name where harm occurs and to resist it thoughtfully**. Real change often requires more than doing the same thing over and over. It asks us to **think differently**, to question underlying assumptions, and to develop **alternative ways of understanding and supporting children in parallel to the required systems**.

Taking an anti-SEND approach requires early educators to question what they are being asked to utilise in exchange for support for children, and being courageous enough to push back against processes that feel de-humanising.



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