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Business Plan: Benney's Mystery Box

Part 1: Business Plan and Rationale

Early years settings play a fundamental role in supporting the development, wellbeing and inclusion of young children. For children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), access to appropriate resources and inclusive practice is particularly important in ensuring meaningful participation in learning experiences. However, many early years practitioners face challenges in meeting diverse needs due to limited resources, time constraints and financial pressures. Castle Education (N.D) states that the financial restraints lead to a worse standard of education for the children and increases the pressure on the teachers and other staff. As a result, there is a growing need for innovative, practical and affordable resources that support inclusion while aligning with early childhood development principles. This business plan introduces Benney's Mystery Box, an inclusive sensory-based resource designed to support children with ALN during structured group activities such as bucket time. The product combines sensory exploration, visual engagement and predictable

routines to encourage attention, participation and emotional regulation. NHS (2026) states that this is important for children with ASD as the use of clear and simple visual timetables and the sensory and visual aspects, help them with transitions and reduces their anxiety. This section of the business plan outlines the rationale for the idea, links to early childhood development, leadership and partnership approaches, marketing strategy and financial feasibility.

Rationale for the Business Idea

Children with ALN often experience barriers to learning within group-based activities, particularly those that require sustained attention, listening and social interaction. Info (2026) states that some barriers can be a wide range of factors such as the cognitive, social, emotional and physical environment. Bucket time is widely used in early years settings to develop attention and listening skills. However, it can be challenging for children that process information differently and those with communication needs or difficulties with emotional regulation. Without appropriate resources, these children may disengage, become distressed or be excluded from group learning opportunities. Benney's Mystery Box was developed in response to these challenges. The concept is grounded in the recognition that sensory-based learning, when structured and purposeful, can significantly enhance engagement for children with ALN. By providing a single, adaptable resource that supports multiple areas of development, the product aims to reduce barriers to participation and promote inclusive practice. From an entrepreneurial perspective, the business idea reflects innovation by addressing a clear gap in the early years market. Rather than relying on multiple individual sensory items, Benney's Mystery Box offers a cohesive and recognisable product that can be used consistently across settings. This approach not only supports children's learning but also offers a cost-effective and sustainable solution for early years providers.

Product Description

Benney's Mystery Box is designed as a large, durable bucket that is suitable for regular use within early years environments. The front of the bucket features Benney the Bear, a friendly brown and goldish-yellow bear with a big smile and a distinctive hat. Happy designer (2018) states that animal characters are beloved because of their psychological appeal. Animals are seen by children as non-threatening and are viewed as comfort figures, allowing children to form emotional connections with them. The character has been intentionally designed to appear warm, approachable and engaging, helping to draw children's attention and create a positive emotional response. For children with ALN, visual consistency and familiarity are particularly important. Benney the Bear acts as a visual cue that signals routine, predictability and enjoyment. Rutherford *et al.* (2020) states that this can help reduce anxiety and support emotional regulation, particularly for children who may struggle with transitions or unfamiliar activities. The character also encourages curiosity and anticipation, which are key factors in sustaining attention during group activities. Inside the bucket is a carefully selected range of sensory and interactive items, including bubble sticks, bubble wrap, wind-up toys, fidget tools, push-and-pull toys and textured objects. Each item is chosen to provide varied sensory input while remaining appropriate for group use. The contents of the box can be adapted depending on the age, developmental stage and individual needs of the children, making the product flexible and inclusive.

Links to Early Childhood Development

Benney's Mystery Box supports several key areas of early childhood development. Action for children (2022) states that sensory play plays a vital role in cognitive development by encouraging exploration, curiosity and problem-solving. Through interacting with the items in the box, children can develop their understanding, attention skills and early reasoning abilities. Language and communication development is also supported through adult led interactions during bucket time. Practitioners can model vocabulary, describe actions, encourage turn taking and respond to children's attempts to communicate. Gov.Uk (2022) explains that for children with speech and language difficulties, sensory based activities provide meaningful and motivating contexts for communication. Social and emotional development is another important area supported by the product. Group use of Benney's

Mystery Box encourages shared experiences, joint attention and positive interactions with peers and adults. The predictable structure of bucket time, combined with the familiar presence of Benney the Bear, can help children feel secure and emotionally regulated. Physical development is supported through the manipulation of objects within the box. Activities involving pushing, pulling, winding and handling textured materials help develop both fine and gross motor skills. For children with sensory processing differences, exposure to a range of sensory inputs in a controlled environment can support sensory integration and self-regulation.

Leadership and Good Practice

Effective leadership is essential to the successful implementation of Benney's Mystery Box within early years settings. Nancholas (2026) states that leaders play a key role in promoting inclusive values, supporting staff understanding and ensuring that resources are used appropriately. Inclusive leadership involves recognising the diverse needs of children and creating environments where all children can participate meaningfully. Entrepreneurial leadership, as explained by Li *et al.* (2020), is demonstrated through innovation, adaptability and responsiveness to feedback. The development of Benney's Mystery Box requires ongoing reflection and evaluation to ensure that the product remains effective and relevant. Gathering feedback from practitioners and observing children's responses allows for continuous improvement and refinement. Good practice also involves supporting practitioners through guidance and training. Svenska (2025) states that clear instructions, example activities and opportunities for professional development can help staff feel confident in using the resource effectively. This ensures that the product enhances practice rather than becoming a novelty item.

Partnerships

Strong partnerships with stakeholders and external agencies are central to the success of Benney's Mystery Box. Capital One (2025) believes that partnerships can lead to access to more resources, decision making support, expanded network and audiences and long term stability. Collaboration with early years professionals, ALN coordinators, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists helps ensure that the product aligns with evidence-based practice and meets the needs of children with ALN. Parents and carers are also important stakeholders. Providing clear information about the purpose and benefits of the product helps build trust and encourages consistency between home and setting. Parental feedback can offer valuable insights into children's engagement and support future development of the product. From a business perspective, partnerships with early years networks, training providers and local authorities can support marketing, distribution and credibility. Sustaining these partnerships requires clear communication, shared values and a commitment to inclusive practice.

The Marketing Strategies

The marketing strategy for Benney's Mystery Box focuses on accessibility, visibility and trust. The primary target audience includes early years settings, nurseries and child carers. Marketing would utilise a combination of online platforms, professional networks and early years events. Adobe (2022) states that online marketing is at an all time high as of 2022 with social media platforms using algorithms to achieve brand recognition, audience engagement and increase the website traffic. Visual branding plays a key role in the marketing approach, with Benney the Bear acting as a recognisable and appealing symbol. Demonstration videos, testimonials and case studies can help practitioners understand how the product works in practice and how it supports children's development. Social media platforms and early years forums offer cost-effective ways to reach the target audience. Marketing messages would emphasise inclusion, child development benefits and affordability, addressing key concerns within the sector. Atcheson (2022) states that highlighting inclusion is the best way to market as it gives everyone a chance to take part and give their say, those people feel heard and will want to support products and ideas based around inclusion.

Financial Sustainability

Financial viability is essential for the long-term sustainability of the business. Key costs include product design, materials, manufacturing, packaging and marketing. By producing the product at scale, unit costs can be reduced, allowing the product to be priced competitively while maintaining quality. This strategy, as explained by Dealhub (2025), is called competitor based pricing. Benney's Mystery Box offers value for money due to its reusable nature and adaptability. Settings can use the resource repeatedly across different age groups and developmental stages. Optional add-on packs or replacement sensory items could provide additional income streams without significantly increasing production costs. This then helps to avoid scenarios where the toys or other items within the bucket gets broken or lost and helps avoid the bucket becoming surplus to requirements. Budget forecasting would include realistic sales targets, ongoing operational costs and contingency planning. Careful financial management ensures that the business remains sustainable while continuing to support inclusive early years practice.

Part 2: Critical Analysis of the Potential Impact of Benney's Mystery Box on Young Children's Development in early years settings

Inclusive early years practice is underpinned by the principle that all children, regardless of ability or need, should be able to participate meaningfully in learning experiences. For children with Additional Learning Needs, this requires thoughtful planning, appropriate resources and skilled practitioner support. This section analyses the potential impact of Benney's Mystery Box on the development of young children, with the core focus on inclusion, accessibility and development. It also compares the concept with existing resources and approaches that are used within early years settings, which draws on relevant research and policy perspectives.

Inclusion and Participation in Early Years Settings

Inclusion within early years education extends beyond physical access to provision and instead emphasises active participation, belonging and engagement. Children's commissioner for Wales (2018) states that children with ALN are at increased risk of exclusion from group-based activities due to difficulties with attention, sensory regulation and communication. Benney's Mystery Box has the potential to reduce these barriers by offering a structured and flexible sensory resource that supports engagement within group work like bucket time. The predictable structure associated with the mystery box, combined with the consistent presence of Benney the Bear, may support children who benefit from routine and familiarity. Predictability is particularly important for children with ALN, as uncertainty and unexpected change can lead to anxiety and disengagement. NASS (2026) state that predictability supports emotional regulation and enhances engagement, which is the core focus of the designed product. By creating a sense of anticipation and emotional safety, the resource encourages participation rather than avoidance. However, inclusion is not achieved just through the provision of resources. The effectiveness of Benney's Mystery Box depends heavily on practitioner understanding of how to use the product. Without reflective practice, there is a risk that the resource could be used incorrectly, meaning there could be a chance that the children are present but not meaningfully engaged. This highlights the importance of professional judgement and observations to ensure that the resource correctly and effectively supports inclusive practice.

Impact on Attention, Engagement and Self-Regulation

Attention and self-regulation are foundational skills that underpin children's learning and social development. Autism speaks (N.D) suggests that sensory-based approaches can support attention by providing meaningful stimuli that align with children's sensory needs. For example, visual support, fidget toys and open spaces can be effective accommodations. Benney's Mystery Box encourages focused attention through its mystery element, varied sensory inputs and interactive components. GriffinOT (2026) states that for children with ALN, particularly those with sensory processing differences, access to appropriate sensory

input can support regulation and focus and can reduce behaviours associated with distress or overload. The inclusion of fidget tools allows children to engage their senses in a controlled manner, potentially supporting emotional regulation during group activities. Despite these potential benefits, it is important to critically consider individual differences. Arky (2026) explains that sensory experiences that are regulating for some children may be overwhelming for others. Practitioners must therefore adapt use of the resource based on careful observation and knowledge of each child's needs. This reinforces the idea that Benney's Mystery Box should be used flexibly rather than as a fixed intervention.

Communication, Language and Social Development

Opportunities for communication and interaction are central to early childhood development. Benney's Mystery Box provides a shared focus for children and adults, supporting joint attention. During bucket time, practitioners can model language, label actions and respond to children's attempts to communicate, creating opportunities for interaction. As explained by Jones (2026), for children with speech, language or communication needs, sensory-based activities can offer real, meaningful contexts for communication. The use of a character such as Benney the Bear may further support engagement by encouraging emotional connection and imaginative interaction. From a social development perspective, group use of the mystery box promotes turn taking and shared enjoyment. These experiences support the development of social skills and a sense of belonging. However, practitioners must remain mindful of group dynamics to ensure that all children are supported and that quieter or less confident children are not overlooked.

Comparison with Existing Resources and Practice

Many early years settings already utilise sensory toys, bucket time activities or improvised sensory boxes. While these resources can be effective, they are often inconsistent in quality. Benney's Mystery Box differs in that it offers a cohesive, purpose designed resource

grounded in its focus on inclusivity and development. Commercial sensory resources can be expensive and inaccessible, particularly for smaller settings with limited budgets. Building Blocks (2025) states that one of the common signs of sensory issues is the high costs of the equipment next to the consequence of the item breaking, broken item means no sensory development for children and more money being spent needlessly. By offering a single, adaptable product, Benney's Mystery Box addresses issues of affordability and consistency. The character-based design further differentiates the product, as emotional connection and familiarity are particularly beneficial for children with ALN. However, it is important to recognise that no single resource can meet all developmental needs. Existing approaches such as child led sensory play, outdoor learning and individualised interventions remain essential components of inclusive practice. Benney's Mystery Box should be viewed as a complementary resource rather than a replacement for established approaches. The aim is to add and not to replace.

Long-Term Developmental Impact and Early Intervention

Early intervention is widely recognised as critical in supporting positive outcomes for children with ALN. By promoting engagement, attention and regulation during the early years, Benney's Mystery Box has the potential to contribute to improved readiness for later learning environments, including school. Stephenson (2004) states that regular participation in structured group activities may support children's confidence, resilience, willingness to engage in learning. it also helps to form and create a unity with the other children, developing their social abilities. These skills are particularly important for children with ALN, who may otherwise experience repeated difficulties within educational settings. Nevertheless, long-term impact is dependent on consistent and appropriate use. Without integration into broader inclusive practice and ongoing assessment, the benefits of the resource may be limited. This highlights the importance of embedding Benney's Mystery Box within a holistic approach to early childhood education.

Ethical Considerations and Professional Responsibility

Ethical practice in early years education requires that resources designed for children with ALN are used in ways that respect children's dignity and individuality. TeachKloud (2023) states that it is important to be ethical and consider the children's rights, safety and wellbeing. There is a risk that specialist resources can label or segregate children if not used thoughtfully. Benney's Mystery Box addresses this risk by being suitable for all children, promoting inclusion rather than separation. Practitioners have a professional responsibility to ensure that the resource is used to support development rather than manage behaviour. Over-reliance on the product as a behaviour management tool could undermine its developmental purpose. TeachKloud (2023) also adds that the product must be used to support positive social and emotional development. Using the product as a behaviour management tools will potentially hinder its effectiveness. Ongoing reflection, observation and adaptation are therefore essential.

Limitations and Risk Management

While Benney's Mystery Box offers significant potential benefits, it is important to acknowledge limitations. The effectiveness of the resource is highly dependent on practitioner skill, understanding and consistency. Inadequate training or high staff turnover may reduce impact. There is also a risk that repeated use without variation could reduce engagement over time. To reduce the risk of this, the contents of the box should be refreshed periodically, and activities adapted to reflect children's evolving interests and needs. Risk management strategies include providing clear guidance, supporting professional development and encouraging reflective evaluation.

Conclusion

The concept of Benney's mystery box demonstrates strong potential to support inclusion, engagement, communication and emotional regulation within early years settings. When compared with existing resources, Benney's Mystery Box offers an affordable and developmentally informed approach to sensory-based learning. However, its success depends on the practitioner's use of the product. When used thoughtfully and ethically, Benney's Mystery Box has the potential to contribute meaningfully to inclusive early years provision and support positive developmental outcomes for young children.

10 minute business pitch – Benney's Mystery Bucket

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to present my business idea today.

My business idea is called Benney's Mystery Bucket, and it is an inclusive sensory resource designed specifically to support children with Additional Learning Needs during bucket time in early years settings. Anna (2022) describes bucket time as an intervention development that helps autistic children develop communication, interaction and attentional skills.

Bucket time is commonly used in early years to develop attention, listening and engagement. However, children with ALN often experience difficulties with this. Some children find it hard to focus for sustained periods, others become overwhelmed by group activities, and some may disengage altogether. Ambitions (2025) states that children with ASD may struggle to stay focus because of the differences in brain structure and function. Benney's Mystery Bucket was created in response to this challenge, with the aim of making bucket time more inclusive, engaging and supportive for all children.

Benney's Mystery Bucket is presented as a large bucket, directly linking to the structure of bucket time. On the front of the bucket is Benney the Bear, a friendly brown and golden-yellow bear with a big smile and a cool hat. Benney's appearance has been designed very deliberately. Mental Itch (2026) state that children can develop emotional attachments to

cute and cuddly animals, like a bear, as typically a cuddly animal was their first toy in life. This creates a bond of unconditional love and trust between child and object. This can lead to an increased alliance, either with the object or the handler of the object. The idea is that the children will like the look of the bear, want to play with the bucket because of the bear, and will want to have a friendship with the bear. For children with Additional Learning Needs, visual engagement is often key to gaining attention. The warm colours, simple facial features and friendly expression help attract children's focus without being overwhelming. Benney the Bear acts as a visual anchor during bucket time. Rather than children becoming distracted by the wider environment, their attention is naturally drawn towards the bucket and the character on it. This is particularly important for children with ALN, as attention is a foundational skill for learning. By creating a positive and familiar focus point, Benney the Bear helps children feel calm, curious and ready to engage.

Inside the bucket is a carefully selected range of sensory and interactive items, including bubble sticks, bubble wrap, wind-up toys, fidget tools, push-and-pull toys, textured objects and other resources. Each item has been chosen to support engagement while avoiding overstimulation. The resources are flexible and can be adapted to meet the individual needs of different children. A key feature of Benney's Mystery Bucket is the element of mystery. Children do not know what item will be taken out next, which builds anticipation and curiosity. At the same time, the predictable structure of bucket time provides reassurance for children with ALN who benefit from routine. This balance between originality and predictability supports inclusion and sustained attention.

In terms of child development, Benney's Mystery Bucket supports several key areas within early years practice. Firstly, it promotes communication and language development. this is supported by The Autism Page (2026) who states that focusing on one thing at a time is beneficial as they can focus solely on the one item and not be overwhelmed. As items are introduced, practitioners can model language, describe actions, encourage turn-taking and respond to children's reactions. For children with limited verbal language, the sensory nature of the resources allows them to communicate through gestures, eye contact and engagement. Secondly, the bucket supports personal, social and emotional development. Bucket time can be a challenging group activity for children with Additional Learning Needs.

By using calming and engaging sensory resources, children are more likely to remain involved and experience success. The Autism Page (2026) states that children have positive reactions to different things and understanding how they work comforts them. Also, the visual aspect of it is vital, so the visual appeal has to be high, with the item being colourful, exciting and appealing. The familiar presence of Benney the Bear also supports emotional security, helping children feel safe and included within the group.

The bucket also encourages creativity and imagination. This is important because, as stated by Raising Children Network (2026), imagination and creativity is vital for building confidence, expressing feelings and emotions, communication skills, decision-making, problem-solving and critical thinking. Although bucket time is structured, the items can be explored in open-ended ways. An example of this could be, using bubble wrap as a listening activity, wind-up toys can encourage shared enjoyment, and fidget tools can support self-regulation. This flexibility allows children to engage at their own level while still participating in a group experience.

From an entrepreneurial perspective, Benney's Mystery Bucket is innovative because it responds to a specific need within early years settings. Rather than being a generic sensory resource, this product is designed specifically for bucket time and for children with Additional Learning Needs. Big Dreamers (2025) states the importance of having support in helping develop children with ASD because it can make a significant difference in their developmental trajectory. The innovation lies in its simplicity, adaptability and clear purpose. Effective leadership within early years involves recognising barriers to participation and finding creative solutions. Benney's Mystery Bucket reflects inclusive and ethical leadership by prioritising children's needs, supporting practitioners and promoting equal access to learning experiences. This is supported by Blue Gems (N.D) Who states that successful leaders have the ability to display intense focus and pay attention to the small details in order to help the development of others. They can identify that children with ASD need time to focus and concentrate on one certain item.

The product is easy to implement, reusable and adaptable across different settings. Partnership working is also an important aspect of this business idea. Benney's Mystery Bucket supports collaboration between practitioners, parents and external professionals.

Practitioners benefit from a ready-to-use resource that enhances bucket time sessions, while parents gain reassurance that their child's additional needs are being supported. Bucket time can also be done in the home. This is supported by Magic Words (2019) who states that doing it in school and in the home is beneficial as it increases engagement and anticipation. External professionals, such as ALN coordinators and speech and language therapists, could also contribute to the ongoing development of the bucket to ensure it remains appropriate and effective.

In terms of financial feasibility, Benney's Mystery Bucket is cost-effective to produce. Start-up costs include the bucket itself, sensory items, branding and basic marketing. The product can be sold as a complete bucket, with optional refill packs to maintain interest over time. For schools with poor finances, this is a very good option to have as the impact of other items like iPads or other technological comforts can have a negative impact both on the finances of the school and on children with ASD. Inclusive (2025) states that too much screen time can lead to overstimulation, difficulty in focusing and troubles with social skills. This model allows early years settings to access an inclusive resource without significant financial pressure. Marketing would focus on early years networks, local authority inclusion teams and social media platforms commonly used by practitioners. Demonstrations during staff meetings or training sessions would be particularly effective, as seeing the bucket in action highlights its benefits immediately. There are also countless example videos and tutorials on other video platforms to help parent who may want to do Benney's mystery bucket at home.

In conclusion, Benney's Mystery Bucket is an inclusive, innovative and practical resource designed to support children with Additional Learning Needs during bucket time. By combining strong visual design, sensory engagement and structured routine, the product supports attention, communication, creativity and emotional security. Through effective leadership, building partnerships and smart business planning, Benney's Mystery Bucket has the potential to make a meaningful and sustainable impact within early years settings.

Thank you for listening, do you have any questions?

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