

INFORMATION FOR EARLY YEARS PRACTITIONERS

The Importance of Play for Young Children

Play underpins learning and all aspects of children's development. Through play children develop language skills, their emotions and creativity, social and intellectual skills and motor skills.

Providing children with a range of playthings will help them learn in a number of ways:

- Sand and water play can be an early introduction to science and maths.
- Playing with dough, drawing and painting pictures, dressing up, playing with dolls can encourage creativity, imagination and expression of feelings.
- Building blocks, jigsaws and shape sorters can help with recognising different shapes and sizes, putting things in order and developing logic.
- Playing ball games, dancing, running, climbing all help to develop body movement, strength, flexibility and co-ordination skills.
- Games help with turn taking, sharing and mixing with others.
- Singing, playing simple music instruments help to develop rhythm, listening and hearing.

Stages of Play

- At **6 months** - a child is reaching out and seizing any play objects within reach.
- **12 -24 months**- the child is beginning to understand cause and effect. Giving the child a variety of musical instruments, pop up toys, pop up picture books, simple fitting –toys and inset puzzles, rolling toys, pegboards, duplo and large bricks.
- **2-3 years**- children take more interest in jig saw puzzles, nesting boxes, stacking toys, posting boxes and screw toys.
- Around **3 years** - the child engages in imaginative play involving invented people and objects. Boxes can become a pretend house or boat. Children will join in with more social and make-believe play with their peers.
- Around **4 years** make –believe and dressing –up are favourite activities. Children can be doctors, nurses etc. Providing props will spark imaginative play. Setting up pretend places like a police station, shop, hospital etc. Puppets can be great fun too.

