

Waltham Forest Early Years Guidance

Support for Communication and Language Needs

Developing Play



As children develop, they move through different stages of play, from initially exploring by touching and putting them in their mouths to using their imagination and playing together with their peers:

Exploratory Play

Touching
Tasting
Feeling

Relational Play

Throwing
Stacking
Filling
Emptying

Pretend Play

Acting out
everyday
actions

Imaginative Play

Making up
stories and
scenes

Play is a window to children's thinking. It helps them learn about what is around them and how things work. It is also an important part of language and social skill development- until children can pretend in play, they will not fully grasp language use.

Scaffolding Play- observe what kind of play the child is already doing and think about what the next step could be:

Copy what the child does

(feed a dolly alongside them)

Wait until they show you they are interested in what you are doing

(usually by looking)

Show them a new idea

(Continue to feed the dolly then put your dolly to bed)

Use simple language to describe what is happening

("sleep time dolly")

Pause to give the child time to respond

(they may watch or try to copy)

Repeat!