

# Brilliant Babies to Terrific Toddlers


A Tool for Reflection



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# Introduction

This document has been designed to support early years practitioners and childminders working with babies, and will support experienced practitioners and aid management induction for those less experienced or who are new to working in early years. Communication and the Key Person Approach is integral throughout the document, and it has been designed to be used flexibly according to needs. For example, one section at a time can be explored, or it can be used as a reference to support and develop a particular element of practice.

The contents provide the opportunity to reflect on and evaluate everyday practice to ensure babies are fully supported in the setting. 'Keys to best practice' throughout the document offer points for consideration, communication and language tips and other elements of good practice for reflection.

The document has been divided in to easy-to-read sections containing the main areas that can be explored when working with the very youngest children and can be used as an aide-memoire at staff meetings. It is designed with best practice in mind and is not intended to be used as a health and safety document. Practitioners should refer to relevant guidance regarding health and safety and Government guidelines to minimise all risks and ensure children are kept healthy and safe.

The first three years of life are a period like no other. We now know that a baby's brain is not fully developed at birth and continues to grow. It is the close, stimulating interactions and the environment exposed to them that will have the most significant influence on their brain development. During these early years, babies and young children experience phenomenal growth in brain development and in their understanding of themselves and the world around them. They are active and curious learners from birth, able to lead their own learning within the context of close, intimate, and supportive relationships with responsive adults. As human beings we are born with a drive to form relationships with others. Understanding attachment theory and the

implications it can have on a baby's development and later emotional dispositions, underpins the need for a robust Key Person Approach. Settings are required to have a named key person, but it is the trusting relationship and strength and quality of the relationship that makes an effective key person and how this is embedded in to practice that matters. In a childminder setting the childminder is the key person; in a group setting each practitioner is an allocated key person to a number of babies. Regardless, it is the quality and strength of the key person/child relationship that makes a difference. The impact of the key person's relationships with families cannot be underestimated and those close links and conversations with families are priceless.

“ A person's a person, no matter how small ”

Dr Seuss



We know a great deal about the environments in which babies and toddlers thrive, but there is still much to learn about how to create these environments in the context of early childhood education and care. There is evidence that pedagogy for children under three needs to be specialised and different to provision for older children (Sound Foundations 2014).

We sometimes forget how much babies know. Even before birth they can see light, hear sounds, and recognise their families' voices. Just think of all the development that happens between being born and reaching the grand old age of two. Getting it right from the start is vital for a baby's future. It is a big responsibility for practitioners, but babies are so interesting there is never a dull moment working with them.

**Babies really are amazing!**





## Definitions

The Cambridge dictionary describes 'baby' as 'a very young child, especially one that has not yet begun to walk or talk'.

This document refers to 'babies and young toddlers' which refers to infants under the age of two.

References to families includes and acknowledges parents, carers and the wider family support network.

## Section 1:

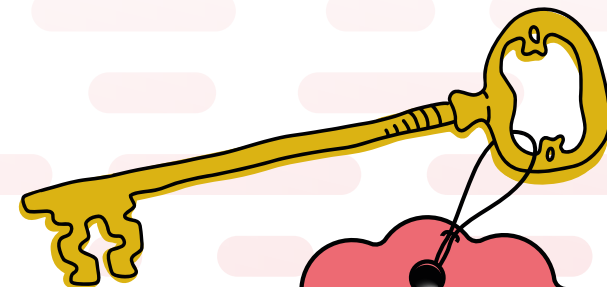
# Key Person

## What is a Key Person?

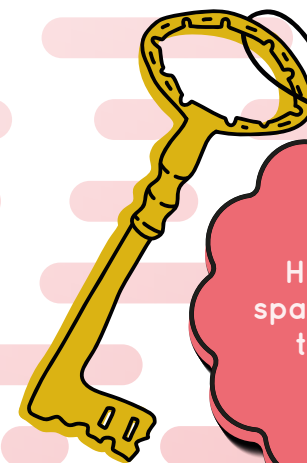
The term key person was created by Elinor Goldschmeid and Sonia Jackson (Goldschmeid and Jackson 1994) to describe an early years practitioner's special relationship with a baby in an early years setting. At the centre of the approach is the attachment between the baby and the practitioner. The key person is so important it has become an early years foundation stage requirement for all early years settings and with the family at the heart of the approach there are advantages for all, but particularly for the baby.

It can be emotionally demanding to meet the needs of a distressed baby, and it is important to be able to talk about the challenge this can present. Regular supervisions can offer the opportunity to discuss these challenges. It is important to be aware that if a key person is feeling overwhelmed by a baby's constant distress, this may not help the baby to settle.

The key person role is rewarding and at times challenging. It is vital that the setting sees the key person approach as a whole setting responsibility. If a key person is struggling to settle a baby, the rest of the team is there to support them. There are times when a key person relationship is hard to establish and needs to be handled with care and sensitivity. Consideration may be given to how the needs of a baby can be met by the setting. This may involve transitioning to a different key person in a thoughtful, planned and timely way and in full agreement with the family.



Follow young  
babies' lead as  
they explore their  
surroundings.



Have a quiet  
space for babies  
to be calm.

## Characteristics of a Successful Key Person:

Able to build a relationship with family and child and to reassure families that someone cares for their child.

Has a sound understanding of the development of babies.

Able to tune in to the baby and notice what they like doing. Notice how they respond to the rhythm of the day and develop a deep understanding of the baby's needs.



Someone who can be emotionally and physically available to the baby.

Someone families can trust who meets the care needs of babies.

Calm in sometimes stressful situations.

Professionally loves the babies they care for and be an advocate for the baby.



Someone who has good listening skills.

Someone who enjoys being with babies, talking, laughing and having fun.

Able to see the world through the eyes of the baby.

Someone who can communicate openly with families, *"he really missed you at first but settled well after a little while"* is more comforting than *"the minute you left he was fine"*.





A key person supports a baby to:

- feel loved and important
- explore, learn and develop independence
- develop a sense of security
- manage feelings and behaviour
- develop confidence and self-reliance
- relate to others
- become securely attached.


A key person who is responsive to a baby's needs, responding quickly and consistently allows the baby to develop a sense of security as they become confident that their key person is dependable. This in turn creates a secure base from which the baby can explore. A 'tuned in' key person, who is responsive to babies will support them to feel more secure and settled, building their self-esteem and setting the structures for babies to build strong relationships throughout their life. Babies who form strong relationships with stable practitioners will go on to develop self-regulation and resilience. Tuned-in key persons are aware of babies' feelings, interests and body language, making babies feel cared for and loved.



## How to Create a Key Person Approach

In a group care setting the key person approach is a whole setting approach, where practitioners are tuned in to each other and willing to support each other's role in a supportive and consistent way. A setting should have a policy, clear vision and established approach to the role of a key person. Part of the key person role will be supporting routines and should include procedures specific to caring for a baby.

### Things to think about



What would you like to achieve from the approach?

Safe sleeping, nappy changing, making bottles or storing breast milk.

Is there a common team and families' understanding of the approach?

What would children and families like to achieve from the approach?

How will it look in practice?

Making sure that the key person/buddy knows all that is needed about the baby.

## Working with Families

Ensure continuity by giving regard to the baby's and staff attendance patterns, so that the member of staff allocated as the key person follows a similar pattern of attendance to the baby. It is important for a key person to be identified as early as possible, for example, if the setting visits the family in their home, this could be the start of the key person building a relationship with the family. If home visits are not available, a book could be sent home with information about the key person. For example, a photograph of the key person and buddy, a picture of the room and something about the key person, for instance, their pet or favourite food. This will enable the family to share information with the baby to begin familiarity with the key person before they even enter the setting for their 'settling in visits'. By talking to families, the key person can reach a shared understanding of baby's needs, their routine, mood, how to respond to babies' emotions, what they like to do, favourite books and rhymes etc; this enables a strong partnership to be established. Ask families about their baby; this will foster a mutual respect and acknowledgement that they know their baby best and the information that they share will form the baby's care plan and the key person's response. As the relationship progresses, plan time to share information learnt about each baby with the family. Vital to the success of the key person approach is the role of the buddy. The buddy is available to the baby when the key person is not. The buddy knows the baby well and has as much knowledge about the child as the key person. This will give babies and families a sense of security by knowing someone is there for them. Sharing information between the buddy and key person is key to the success for continuity of care, meeting the baby's emotional and learning needs.



Engage in playful interactions that encourage young babies to respond to, or mimic adults.



At times of transition (such as shift change) make sure staff greet and say goodbye to the babies and their carers. This helps to develop secure and trusting three-way relationships.

## The Key Person Role in Transitions

Starting an early years setting can be a very anxious time for both the baby and their family. For many families this is the first time they have trusted another adult to care for their baby. Many families do not have a choice about leaving their baby in an early years setting, and they would rather be at home with their baby. It is important for the key person to empathise with families and offer support to make the transition easier. Making this transition as easy as possible will set the foundation for a successful partnership.

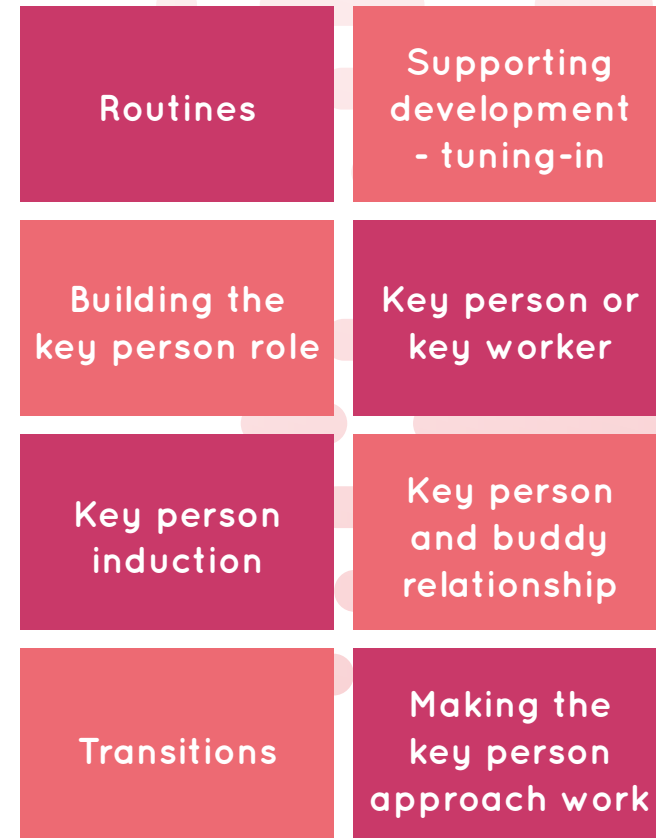
## Things to think about

- Ensuring the key person is allocated to the family prior to the child starting.
- The number of settling in sessions needed with the families.
- The length of the first settling in sessions without the parents.
- Informing parents what happens during settling sessions and what is expected.
- Supporting a key person trying to settle a baby.
- If a transitional object is needed.
- Having a comfort item of mummy/daddy that they have worn, such as a scarf (imbued with motherness and smelling of home).
- The setting policy on the use of dummies.
- Making baby's favourite toy available each time they attend.
- Having photos of the baby and family in the setting ready when baby starts.
- Establishing a routine to help baby.
- Making time for handover at the end of the session.
- The importance of saying 'goodbye' so that baby learns that mummy/daddy will return.
- Telephoning or texting parents to let them know how baby has settled.



## Implications for Practice

Implementing the key person approach takes time, commitment and consideration to make it work. There is often debate about using the term key person or being a key worker. A key worker tends to be a term used by the police, health and education and implies a person who is responsible for handling a case and completing paperwork. Whereas a key person is used to describe a way of working in which strong, caring relationships are made between an individual child, their family and the key person. Being a tuned-in key person will support babies to be free to explore and learn and provide a safe base to return to when baby needs reassurance. Babies respond when interest is shown in what they are doing, for example, noticing them find a daisy in the garden and talking to them about it or helping them find another, encourages more exploration, and supports their early learning, first and foremost in the prime areas; for example, their communication and language skills and the specific areas such as their mathematical development. Babies' self-esteem and self-confidence is boosted when adults notice what they are doing and respond with delight and enjoyment at their discovery. Being truly tuned-in to babies means you can notice what they are doing and provide further opportunities that enable them to be successful and happy people.



## Supporting Routines

Help babies know what to expect and feel safe by providing the same routine as at home. If routine activities are mirrored in a similar way to home, babies will feel more relaxed. For example, if at home, babies feed themselves, and this is also respected in the setting, it is familiar and consistent. Routine activities do not need to happen at the same time, but it is the sequence of events that helps babies anticipate the day and engage with the key person.

### Things to think about

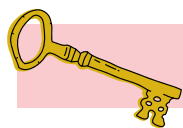
- The key person or the buddy always changes their key baby's nappy.
- The key person or the buddy always feeds their key babies.
- The key person or the buddy always puts their key babies to sleep.
- Routine tasks are seen as a learning opportunity and a one-to-one time.
- Routine tasks are given time and value.
- The key person or the buddy gives babies the opportunities to repeat, recall and predict what happens next by providing familiarity. For example, singing familiar rhymes during nappy changing.
- Opportunities are provided for snuggles and one-to-one time throughout the day.



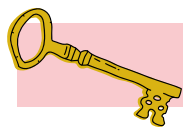
## A Case Study About:

# Manpreet

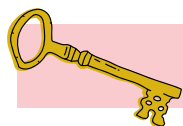
Manpreet, a young baby lies cradled in her keyperson, Sue's arms and drinks from a bottle. When Manpreet stops sucking for a moment, Sue says, "Manpreet, you are hungry today!" Manpreet gazes intently at Sue's face for several seconds, then returns to her bottle and resumes sucking. Jane a bank staff practitioner, arrives to release Sue, Manpreet's keyperson, for her lunch break. Sue passes Manpreet to Jane and leaves the room, without saying goodbye. Jane sits down and offers Manpreet her bottle, but Manpreet refuses to drink and turns her head away. Jane tries for some time to feed Manpreet but is unsuccessful and Manpreet begins to cry. Jane says to Manpreet, "Have you had enough, you are tired shall we change your nappy and put you to bed?" Protesting Manpreet is changed and put down for a sleep.



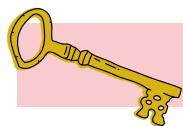
Have Manpreet's needs been met?



Think about this experience from Manpreet's perspective. What might she be feeling?



How do you organise routines to allow the keyperson to support their key children?

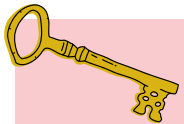


Is there a buddy key person system where you work? How is that reflected in practice?

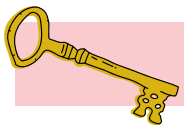
## A Case Study About:

Jakub

At snack time, 18 month old Jakub bumps his arm on his spouted cup, tipping it over on the table. He watches a little milk dribble out, then picks up the cup, takes a drink, and sets the cup upright again. After a slight pause, he repeats this action, this time dipping his finger gently in to the milk and repeats this again before drinking the rest of the milk. He then begins to eat. He holds a cracker in one hand and tries to eat his lunch with the other using a spoon. After several attempts to get some green beans onto the spoon, he drops the spoon and eats the beans with his fingers, still holding the cracker in the other hand. He continues to eat his lunch with his fingers. He has eaten about half when he holds his cup out to a practitioner, saying, 'more' indicating he wants a drink.



What can you learn about Jakub in relation to the prime areas of learning and his development from this observation?



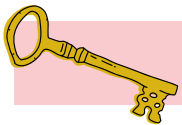
What further experiences would you plan for Jakub?

## A Case Study About:

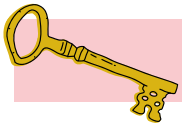
Harry

The key person called out that it was snack time for nine month old Harry. He began to crawl to the table and stopped at a chair. His key person gave him a biscuit and picked him up and placed him in a chair at the table. Harry put the biscuit to his mouth and began to suck and bite. A practitioner was sat in the crescent shape of the table with a large silver platter of melon and banana. She reached over and gave Harry a piece of melon and banana, which she placed on the table in front of him, saying "melon, banana". Harry reached for the melon, and it slipped out of his hand down the side of his chair unnoticed by his key person. Harry looked as though he was going to cry. Harry's key person said, 'Would you like a drink?' She began to give out the cups to each of the children. Harry quickly recovers and when he received his drink, he immediately began to suck the spout. A child sitting at the table began to bang her cup on the table. Harry watched and then copied the same action. The practitioner put her hand on the cups and said, "no thank you". The practitioner gave Harry more melon. Harry eagerly sucks and bites his melon but leaves his banana. Harry points to the plate of food indicating he would like more. He is told to eat his banana, but he pushes it away. He leaves his banana. "All finished Harry!" the practitioner says and picks Harry up and places him on the floor, Harry begins to cry.

"I think he is ready for his sleep" says the practitioner.



In what way has the practitioner tuned in to Harry?



Would you do anything differently?





## Section 2:

# Working with Families

## Developing Positive Relationships with Families

Parents and carers are children's first and most enduring educators and make a critical difference to children's outcomes. Therefore, fostering a genuine and meaningful partnership with both parents and carers (all families) is an essential feature of any high-quality setting.

Key persons working with babies build up expertise about how they learn and how each baby operates within the setting. But it is the family who knows their babies best, and unless information is shared between the key person and families, babies' care and learning needs will be neither fully understood nor, ultimately, met.

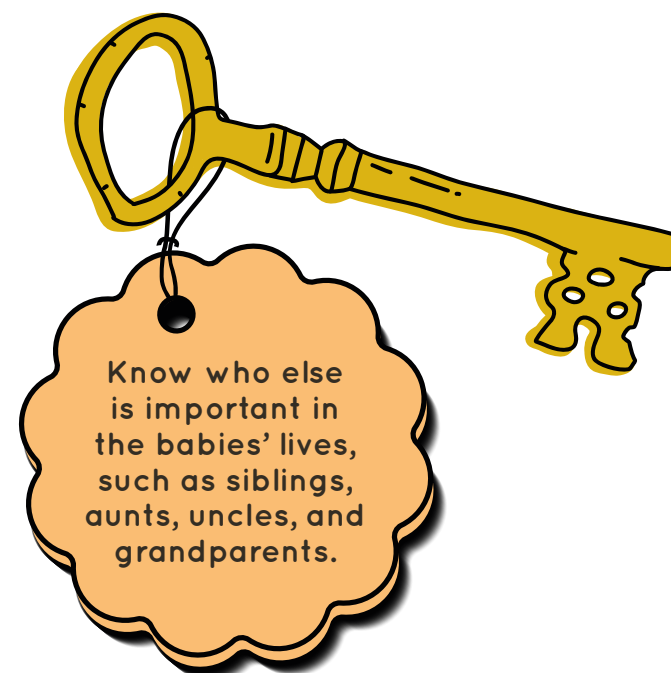
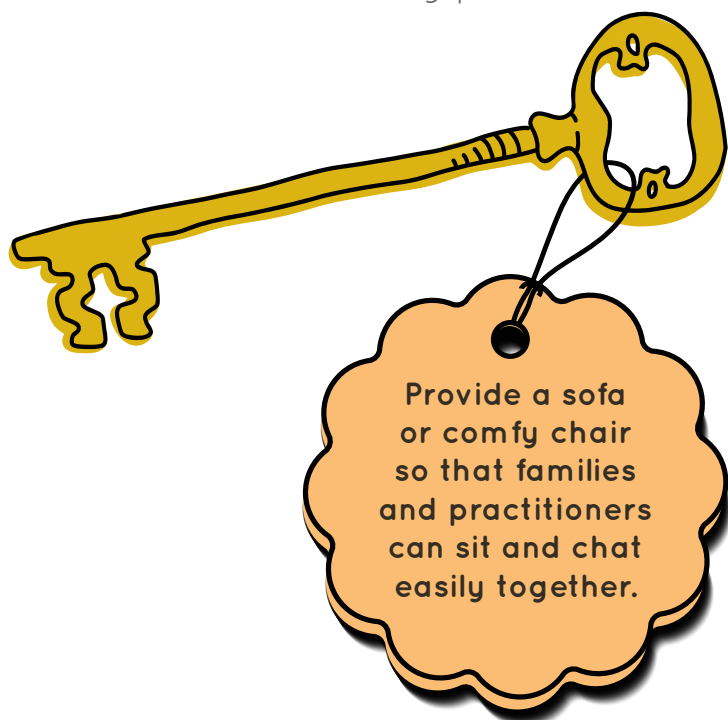


## A Successful Transition from Home to Childcare – The Settling-in Process

The settling-in period is a time for a baby and their family to get to know the key person and setting, and for the key person to get to know the family and their circumstances. The family needs to feel confident that the key person and buddy will care deeply for their child, keep them safe, interact and play with them and take care of their physical needs in a way that complements their family values. The key person has the important role of being a crucial link for the baby between the setting and home. The key person helps the family to feel their baby is in a safe and nurturing place.

The settling-in period is a good time to find out about any specific or additional needs that babies may have that have not already been shared. For example, will the key person need any additional training or will specialist equipment be needed to ensure the baby is fully included?

Creating and sharing a 'Family Guide to Settling Your Baby in to Our Setting' will also help families to navigate the settling-in process. This will work alongside the setting's 'Settling-In' and 'Key Person' policies.





## Visits to Family Homes

Visiting the family home is an invaluable opportunity for the key person to forge an intimate, respectful and trusting relationship with not only the baby but with the other family members present. Keeping the visit informal, not using it as a form-filling exercise, but more as an opportunity to just to get to know each other and for the baby to develop an initial bond with the key person. Visiting the home supports understanding the baby within the context and culture of their home and can provide key insights in to particular approaches the family may have with their baby that are useful in developing an individual care plan for their baby. Information previously provided by the family on the application form can be discussed in more detail, such as any special health or dietary requirements as well as the baby's likes and dislikes, which will help reassure families that their baby is going to be well cared for.

## Planning the Transition in to the Setting

It is important that families understand that settling-in sessions are essential for the wellbeing of their baby. This should be made clear from the very beginning.

Families need to understand how the settling-in sessions work, for example, during the first session they will be able to sit and chat, and the baby will get to know their key person more as they play together. It is important that the families know what will happen during the sessions, so they know what is expected of them. Starting at a setting can be a very emotional time for families, and they may need as much support as the baby.

Families should stay with their baby at the initial settling-in visits to introduce them gradually to the setting and so that they can acclimatise to separating from their parents/carers and settle comfortably. All babies are different and will be at differing stages of their development. Some babies will appear to settle quite easily and quickly, and some babies will take more time. Always afford time to the settling-in process, and do not rush. Babies (and often their parents/carers too) will take time to bond effectively with their key person and to become familiar with the routines within the setting and the environment in order to feel happy, secure, and safe.



- Encourage parents/carers to write down any questions about the settling-in process or the setting prior to their first visit as it is easy to forget things they may want to ask.
- Tell parents/carers they can email or call if they have questions but explain you may not be able to respond to their email or talk immediately, but will get back to them as soon as possible.
- Arrange visits when the baby is most content, not hungry or tired; this will be less stressful for the baby. It may be useful too for you to see how the baby is fed or put down to sleep to enable you to follow their routine later.
- All practitioners should know when a baby is coming for a settling session. In a group setting, an extra member of staff may be needed, or in a childminding setting the childminder's family may need to know.
- Think about how you will record any key points the family may share; constantly taking notes could be a barrier, but you don't want to forget key information the family has told you.
- It takes time to feel comfortable and trust someone you don't know, so families may not tell you important information straight away.
- Show the family you are interested in what they have to say and be prepared to share some details about yourself.

## Developing the Relationship between the Setting and the Families

Practitioners must engage with all families, respecting gender and cultural differences and tailoring support to meet their needs. The method of engagement that works for one family may not always work for another. It is important to be prepared to adapt the ways in which you work to accommodate different families and their continually changing needs.



“

Each child's neurological markers are unique, based on their individual experiences and temperament. It's our responsibility to familiarise ourselves with their home backgrounds, attachment experiences and history prior to attending the setting.

”

Mine Conkbayir April 25 2018 EYE

## The Benefits of Working in Partnership with Families


Families	Practitioners	Babies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel valued, respected and will reduce levels of stress and worry.</li> <li>• More involved in their babies' learning and development.</li> <li>• Confident to share information about their babies.</li> <li>• Know their family values, practices, traditions and beliefs are understood and considered.</li> <li>• Comfortable visiting the setting, talking to, and planning with their key person.</li> <li>• Understand why early childhood care and education is important.</li> <li>• Have increased confidence in their own parenting skills.</li> <li>• Know more about their babies' experiences outside the home and use this information to support learning and development in the home.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the babies and their families and use this information to make learning more enjoyable and rewarding.</li> <li>• Help babies develop a sense of identity and belonging in the setting by actively engaging with and finding out about family values, traditions and beliefs, and building on these as appropriate.</li> <li>• Benefit from parents'/carers' skills and expertise.</li> <li>• Can provide a more emotionally secure environment for children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel secure and more able to relax in to exploring and experiencing the educational opportunities for them.</li> <li>• Will find the separation process easier.</li> <li>• Will move from one setting to another with greater confidence.</li> <li>• Learning will be more enjoyable when their home life is 'visible' in the setting.</li> <li>• Will enjoy hearing and seeing their home language in the setting when their home language is not English.</li> <li>• Use a familiar adult as a secure base from which to explore independently in new environments.</li> </ul>

**Source:** Adapted from Building Partnerships between Parents and Practitioners

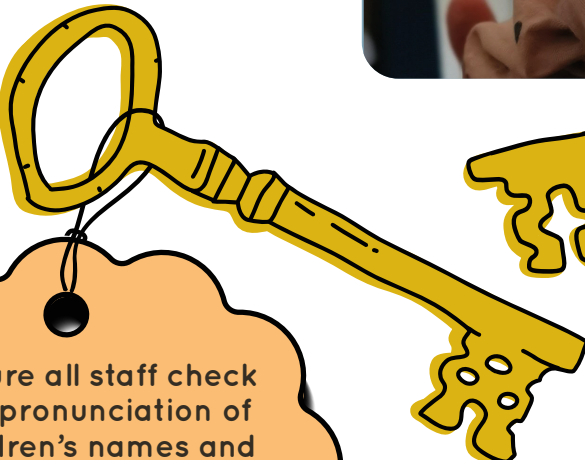


## Respectful Relationships

Babies experience their world as an environment of relationships, and these relationships shape all aspects of their development - intellectual, social, emotional, physical, behavioural and moral. Building genuine partnerships with families involves a commitment to forge respectful and reciprocal relationships and acknowledging and accepting families as children's first and most influential educators. Work with families should be non-judgemental and empowering by building on and valuing families' existing strengths, knowledge and experience.



Encourage families to bring in a familiar item from home as a transitional (comfort) object.



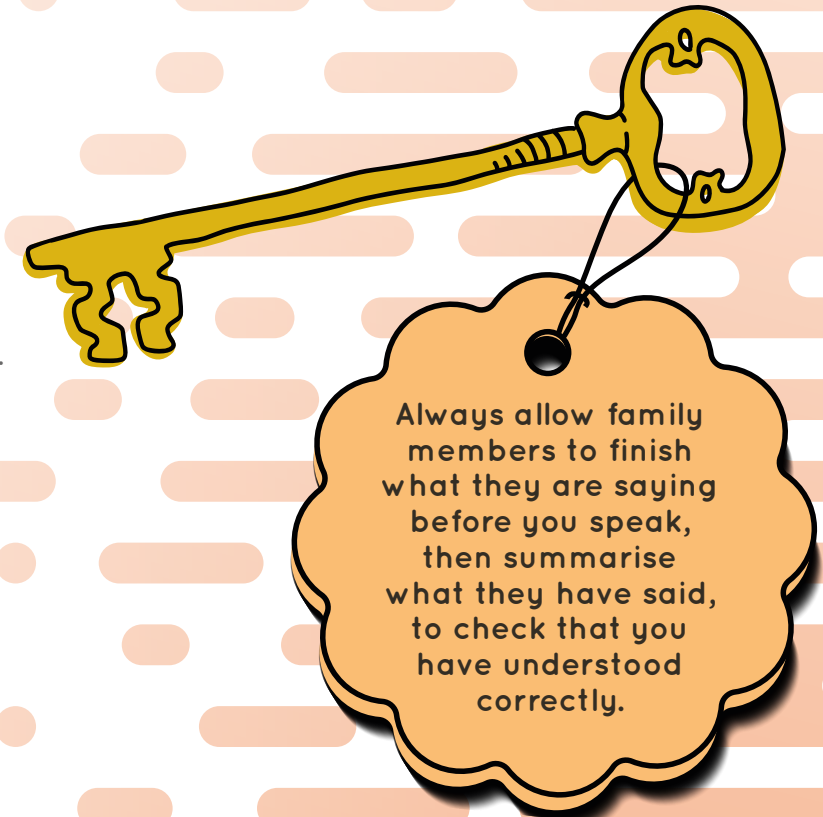
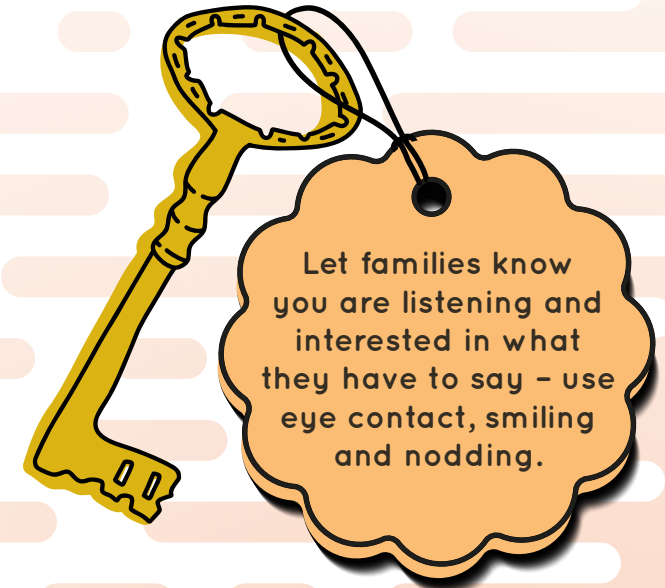
Ensure all staff check the pronunciation of children's names and those of the family. Make sure that shortened names and nicknames are not substituted instead by staff.



Discover from families the copying games and interactions that their babies enjoy and use these as a basis for your play.

## Twelve Things to Think About

1. Making every family feel valued and welcome.
2. Making time to listen to families and getting to know them.
3. Different methods of engagement that work for individual families.
4. Communication with families for whom English is not their first language.
5. Sharing information with families everyday about baby's care, learning and development.
6. Developing opportunities to share each other's expertise and knowledge that ensures support for each baby is effective.
7. Actively seeking families' views on childcare matters relevant to their baby to ensure continuity of care.
8. Finding out about family's personal cultures.
9. Communication with families with different attendance patterns.
10. Enhancing family involvement with babies' care, learning and development.
11. Being mindful of the mental wellbeing of parents and carers and signpost if necessary.
12. Taking any concerns they express seriously and follow up.





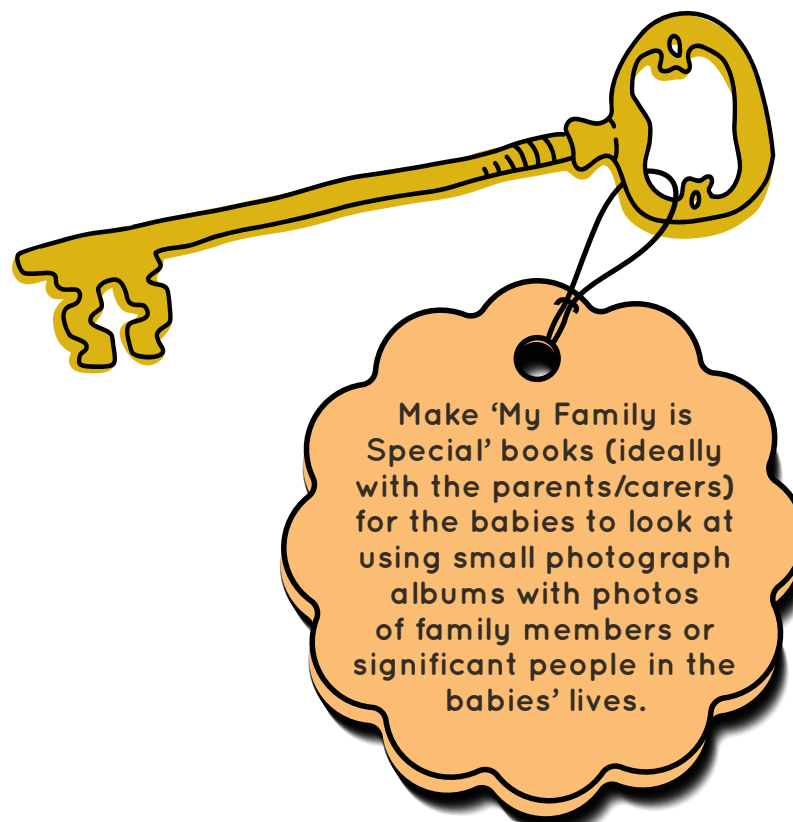
## The Importance of Effective Communication

Effective communication is key to establishing and maintaining positive partnerships with families. Listening is the foundation of effective communication. Listening is an active process. When you actively listen, you benefit from gaining an insight in to the families' in-depth knowledge of their baby and you show families that you value their experience, ideas and opinions and take their concerns seriously. There are many ways settings can communicate, engage and involve families.

Face-to-face, informal conversation on a regular basis, such as at the beginning and end of the day, will ensure important information gets exchanged and help children see key adults in their life communicating with each other.

Displays on a permanent designated information board can be an effective way of communicating with families about the routines and activities of the week. Digital communication can help families stay informed, become more involved, and access information at any point throughout their day.

Written communication through a daily diary or log, is important to ensure the wellbeing of babies.



**Make 'My Family is Special' books (ideally with the parents/carers) for the babies to look at using small photograph albums with photos of family members or significant people in the babies' lives.**

## Encouraging Effective Communication Involving Every Family

Every family is different, some may be a blended family, others culturally and linguistically diverse. All families will have different support and communication needs and may respond to your setting's communication strategies and support in different ways.

It is important to consider the variety of family backgrounds and the possible barriers to effective partnerships to ensure settings are inclusive. This should not be regarded as additional to what is provided and should form part of the setting's policies and practice in providing high-quality provision for all babies and their families.

You will also often find that you are liaising primarily with mothers of young babies and you need to be mindful of the fathers in babies' lives and the role they play within the dynamics of the family. Becoming a father can be very challenging and overwhelming too so ensure you endeavour to liaise with all relevant family members.



## Establishing Positive Partnerships with Families for whom English is Not Their First Language

The role of the key person is especially important when working with families for whom English is not their first language as they will quickly understand how they can best communicate with the family. If the key person constantly changes, this understanding will be lost. You will need to give and receive the same information as with any other babies starting at the session so finding the best way to communicate is crucial. Sometimes families request that they don't

want the setting to use their home language; practitioners should explain the importance of the home language and how this will support babies' language development in both languages. It is useful to have some key words in the home language, for example, names of close family members, comfort objects, words used at home for key routines and cultural rhymes and lullabies. A leaflet to explain how children will learn English from a strong foundation

in their home language could be useful to share and translate. Translating documents can be helpful or asking if there is a family member or friend who could help with interpreting. Using an online translator can be useful for short conversations (ensure that any interpreter understands the need for what is said to remain confidential). Think about what you need to translate, what is important for families to know or to be able to tell you.



## Personal Culture

The emotional impact on a family of leaving their baby in a childcare setting cannot be underestimated. Practitioners play a vital role in alleviating families' concerns. Despite some families appearing to feel positive about leaving their baby, looking forward to returning to their work or having some free time, most parents/carers will experience anxiety and distress at leaving their very precious baby, with some parents and carers feeling bereft and distraught. It can obviously be distressing for a baby to see their primary caregiver upset and stressed, so time and sensitivity given to the adults is just as important. Be mindful that some parents/carers may actually be struggling with their mental health and may need support in seeking appropriate medical help.



## Things to Think About

**Be empathetic and respectful** - Listening is important. Do not dismiss a family's feelings by saying "don't worry", "don't be silly". Instead, you could say, "I can see you're very upset, that's okay, it's a really big thing. How can I help?" which validates feelings and shows genuine concern.

**Ask questions** - Asking lots of questions face to face about the baby's life at home, personality and preferences can really help. This shows genuine interest and, importantly, the parent/carer is reassured that you have heard them. Encourage the parent/carer to ask anything that is on his/her mind, especially something he/she feels might be silly to ask - it is often these points that bother them the most!

**Consider a buddy for the family** - It can be extremely supportive to offer peer support for families from those who have been in a similar situation. Do you have a parent/carer at the setting who would connect with another parent/carer? Would they be open to talking about their journey?

**Professional love** - Partnerships with families can at times be challenging. How do you build meaningful relationships with parents and carers whilst maintaining professional boundaries and reassuring anxious families that you are not replacing them in their baby's affections? Professional Love in Early Years Settings was a piece of research led by Dr Jools Page to give confidence to practitioners when working closely and intimately with young children and their families.



## Creating a Welcoming Environment

When parents and carers visit your setting or are dropping off or collecting their baby, it's important that the environment is welcoming and that they see themselves reflected in the setting and that they feel comfortable.

Are the pegs/cubbies easily accessible for both the baby and parent/carer?

Are families encouraged to come in to the room when dropping their baby off or picking them up?

Are families able to stay with their baby if they want to?

Are resources displayed with thought and easily accessible?

Can families see that there are resources that their baby will be interested in?

Is there somewhere where family members can sit comfortably should they wish to?

Is there a room for family to drop off their baby and talk privately should they wish, or can arrangements be made to talk privately later?

Is there a private quiet space to breastfeed, if required?


Can families see their baby and family reflected in the environment?





## Enhancing Family Involvement in their Baby's Learning and Development

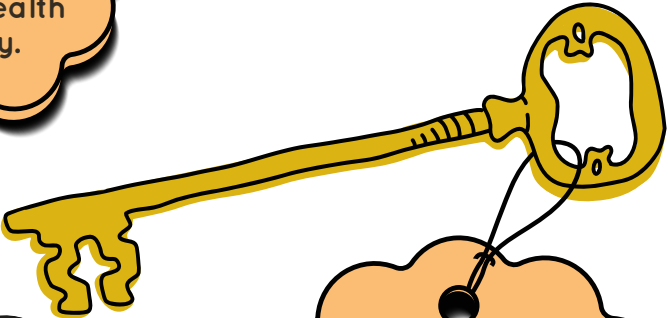
Working in partnership with families is central to caring for babies. All families are interested in the development of their baby and practitioners help foster this further. Discussions with families about their baby and their progress are important along with ideas on how they can support their baby whilst at home. Families can help and encourage their baby better if supported with ideas. As a professional a parent/carer sees a practitioner as someone they can ask for information, advice and support.



Support families with making their own treasure basket, being mindful of health and safety.



Plan regular sessions when families can come and play, exploring with their baby and discuss how the activities support their baby's learning and development.



Provide stories with repetitive phrases and structures to read aloud to children to support specific vocabulary or language structures.



## Top Tips for Supporting Families

- Ensure you are up to date with the latest information regarding the care of babies such as weaning, sleep routines, use of dummies, toilet training etc. Being up to date with key information or knowing where to signpost for support or information will help your confidence when having discussions with families. Consider having a range of pamphlets/information leaflets on key topics to provide to families.
- Make time for informal conversations with families. This helps to build a genuine relationship and helps you to get to know both the baby and family so when more pressing issues arise you have a good knowledge and understanding of the family to draw on.
- Think before you speak, especially when you are talking with families about difficult or sensitive issues. Use a private space to have confidential conversations.
- If you are not sure about what to say next or how to say it, do not respond straight away. For example, "I'd like to think about that more. Can I get back to you tomorrow?" Seek support/guidance from your manager.
- Use ordinary, everyday language that families can understand; professional jargon may feel daunting or alienating. Sometimes the best way to help is simply by listening. Families might just need to feel that their concerns have been heard; you don't always need to look for a solution straight away.



Singing, action rhymes and sharing books give children rich opportunities to understand new words. Share favourite songs and books with families.

# Time to Reflect

## Working with Families

Practitioners - take time to find out about babies' experiences and interests to help them make sense of what they are trying to communicate.

Things to Think About	What to Look for
<p>Families are given information about the key person, their role, who they are and how the approach works in practice.</p> <p><i>(It is important for the families and the baby to know who the key person is as soon as possible, ideally prior to the child starting.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The welcome pack includes information about the key person role.</li> <li>• A book/leaflet is included which tells the family who their child's key person will be and includes a photograph.</li> <li>• If possible, the key person visits families at home.</li> </ul>
<p>The setting gathers relevant and plentiful information about each baby.</p> <p><i>(Although they all share the same developmental traits, each baby and their family history will be unique. Families know a lot about their baby and are usually very happy to talk about them).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting collects and uses information from families during settling visits.</li> <li>• Families are provided with a 'special box/tin' to include important things that will help the baby settle. This is made easily accessible so when a baby may appear insecure, they can seek comfort from the items.</li> <li>• From the first settling visit, information is gathered by the key person to assess a baby's starting points.</li> <li>• 'All About Me' forms ask for information about individual routines and personal care such as sleeping preferences, development, interests, family, preferences that will help with starting points and planning. (Giving families a form to take home may not gather all the information needed; it is better to have a conversation).</li> </ul>

Things to Think About	What to Look for
<p>The key person has time to support baby and the family when they are settling in and help them to become familiar with the setting.</p> <p><i>(It can be hard when caring for a group of babies to make time to spend with a new family and baby. This could mean that the baby and parents do not have the opportunity to start to build the complex triangular relationship between baby, family and key person. New babies need one-to-one attention).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The key person is available for every settling-in session, so babies learn to trust and depend on someone familiar to care for them and be their emotional support.</li> <li>• Extra staff are available to cover settling visits, so the key person can be out of ratio.</li> <li>• The setting has a policy regarding how many babies may start at a setting/new room on the same day.</li> <li>• There are 'planned times' in the first six months to stop, review and meet with the family to discuss the baby's emotional wellbeing related to settling in. For example, after one week, one month, three months etc. This is a joint review and included in the baby's learning journey.</li> </ul>
<p>Monitoring systems are in place to ensure that all practitioners have a settled, positive relationship with their key children.</p> <p><i>(This is an emotional time for families when they can be feeling real anguish about leaving their baby with people they hardly know. They may have many different feelings about leaving their baby).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families share information with the key person.</li> <li>• Key person shares information about the baby in the setting.</li> <li>• Key person supports families with how to support their baby's learning at home.</li> <li>• The manager checks with families that the key person approach is working well for them.</li> <li>• Practitioners remain professional and non-judgemental regarding parents'/carers' reasons for leaving babies and toddlers in childcare.</li> <li>• Practitioners show understanding and support for families through what is understandably a very emotional time.</li> <li>• Setting gathers feedback from families on the settling-in process and family/staff partnerships.</li> <li>• There is regular meaningful contact between key person and families, if not face to face, then by phone, email, contact books etc.</li> <li>• There is evidence of parental input in the babies' learning journals.</li> </ul>

Things to Think About	What to Look for
<p>Families are involved in transition processes.</p> <p><i>(Families who have built a trusting relationships with their baby's key person may find it difficult to move to another. As much care and time will be needed to build relationships with their baby's new key person).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transitions are discussed with families to agree timings and readiness.</li> <li>• Families are invited to the new room to meet the new staff and key person.</li> <li>• Families can have settling visits in the new room with the baby.</li> </ul>
<p>Families know their child's key person buddy and understand their role.</p> <p><i>(This will ensure that even when the key person is not in the setting, families will feel confident their baby's needs will be met).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families are informed if the key person will not be in the setting.</li> <li>• The buddy is introduced to the family and may sometimes sit in on discussions with key person and family.</li> </ul>
<p>Information about babies is shared with families.</p> <p><i>(If families are regularly kept informed about their baby's progress, later conversations about referring their child for extra support will not be such a shock).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settings find ways to share information with all families. This may mean adapting communication methods for some families.</li> <li>• Shared information is consistent for all families.</li> <li>• Children's interests, friendships, wellbeing, routines, learning and development, are examples of information that can be shared.</li> </ul>
<p>Transitions are sensitively handled if a baby's key person changes. For example, when a key person leaves the setting or moves to another room.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transitions are flexible and meet each family's individual needs, just as their initial settling sessions did.</li> <li>• Families need a transition to a new key person as well as the baby.</li> <li>• Transition timings are discussed with families to agree together when they feel the baby is ready to move to another room.</li> </ul>

Things to Think About	What to Look for
<p>Absent family members who have parental rights are kept informed about their child. For example, when a mother and father live apart.</p> <p><i>(This may require a sensitive approach. Settings will need to be clear about how and when information will be shared).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The setting is clear about who can receive information about a baby in their care and how this information is best shared for each person. The key person may write a professional letter to a family about their baby periodically if the parent/carer is absent from the family home, for example, in the armed forces or in prison.</li> <li>• Setting arranges separate meetings for absent parents where appropriate.</li> </ul>
<p>Family culture/customs/festivals are celebrated in the setting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key person talks to families about their culture, festivals and customs and invites them to share these in the setting.</li> <li>• Key person explains that they cannot 'celebrate' something they do not practice themselves but can acknowledge and mark the occasion.</li> <li>• Key person asks families about the rhymes, songs and stories they share with their baby – some families are happy to record these so babies can hear them in the setting.</li> </ul>
<p>Families are regularly involved in planning routine times with the key person.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weaning and sleep routines may be discussed.</li> <li>• Families will sometimes ask advice about baby's routines, so practitioners should have up-to-date information available.</li> <li>• The setting is clear about their sleeping policy, for example, not letting babies sleep in pushchairs, or preventing a very tired baby from sleeping.</li> </ul>
<p>There is a space for family members to feed their baby.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An area is available for a mother to breastfeed her baby.</li> </ul>

Things to Think About	What to Look for
Families are made aware of the importance of family books/family photos in the setting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Babies can see their family in the setting.</li><li>• All families are included.</li><li>• Pictures should be displayed in a book or at babies' eye level.</li></ul>
Key words in the baby's home language are shared with the setting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This may require sensitive handling as some families feel the child should only be spoken to in English in the setting. Having a conversation about valuing a baby's home language is vital.</li></ul>



# A Case Study About:

## Stanley

Stanley is eighteen months old and is out for a walk with his childminder Ted. They are going to the local park; a place they often visit. They are heading to Stanley's favourite place in the park, a small humped bridge over a river.

Stanley is running down the path saying "run, run, bridge", suddenly his attention is caught by a duck just taking flight. He stops and tracks the duck across the sky. "Duck" he says as he points, "Duck flying" replies Ted. At that moment Stanley notices a boat on the lake, "boat" he says. Before Ted can respond Stanley resumes running excitedly saying "run, run, bridge".

On arriving at the bridge Stanley runs over it, turns, and runs back smiling saying "run, run, bridge". He stops and looks through the railings, spotting some ducks. "Duck" he shouts, "Yes, ducks" said Ted and then continues, "Look Stanley, ducklings, baby ducks, ducklings." Ted starts to sing the song "Five Little Ducks" and Stanley joins with the words, quack, quack, quack. Stanley continues watching for a few minutes then turns and runs over the bridge. There is

a very small puddle just over the bridge and Stanley turns his attention to this. He jumps over the puddle, "big jump" he says, seemingly surprised at how far he has jumped. Stanley proceeds to jump in the puddle, "muddy puddle" he says as he jumps in. He repeats his jump several times, sometimes saying "muddy puddle" sometimes saying "oh Stanley". After a while Ted says, "come out of the muddy puddle Stanley". Stanley starts to continue down the pathway and suddenly stops and looks down at his feet. "All wet" he says. Ted responds, "you are a bit wet Stanley, shall I roll up your trousers?" Stanley agrees and once his trousers are rolled up, he reaches out to hold Ted's hand as they continue their walk.



**What does this tell you about Stanley's development?**



**How could Ted support Stanley back in the setting?**

## A Case Study About:

Alina

Alina is 22 months and her parents have just started to provide lunch from home. Today Alina has cubes of processed cheese, pieces of ham, quavers, yogurt, and a bag of chocolate buttons.

Alina is given her ham and cheese to eat first, which the practitioner places in front of her on the table. (She is not given a plate). She slowly eats her ham and cheese and is then given her yogurt. Alina is then given quavers; she is not given her chocolate buttons as the practitioner feels they are not healthy and she has had enough.



Is this lunch appropriate?



How could you work with her family to provide a healthy lunch?



What do you think about the practitioner's decision not to give the chocolate buttons?



How do you decide if babies have had enough to eat?



Should there be rules about what the babies eat first? If so, why?



How should you promote family style dining?

# A Case Study About:

## Rosie

Rosie is 20 months old and has just started at the setting. Mummy has been to all the settling sessions with Rosie as she is separated from Rosie's mum. However, mum will sometimes be collecting Rosie as her parents have shared care.

Rosie has Down Syndrome and mum is very focused on her medical needs and making sure she gets the right support to meet her individual needs.

She is sitting up unaided, and Rosie's mummy says she has started to bottom shuffle at home. Mum says that Rosie can say single words, such as, gone and more. Mummy has told the setting that Rosie, has medication for an underactive thyroid. She has a heart defect, low muscle tone and is also having regular physiotherapy to strengthen her ankles and legs. Rosie laughs and squeals when mummy holds her under her arms and lets her gently bounce, she is not yet taking weight on her legs. Rosie has started to feed herself finger foods and mummy says she gets very excited when she sees food on the way and laughs and squeals, She also gets excited when music is played.

The key person notices during the settling visit that Rosie loves interaction with people and has been fascinated by other babies in the room. She is very good at making herself understood and communicating non-verbally, for example, opening and shutting her hand when she wants something.



**What information will you need to gather from Rosie's parents?**



**How will you keep both parents updated?**



**How would you move the focus from what Rosie cannot do to celebrate what she can do?**



**How would you support Rosie?**







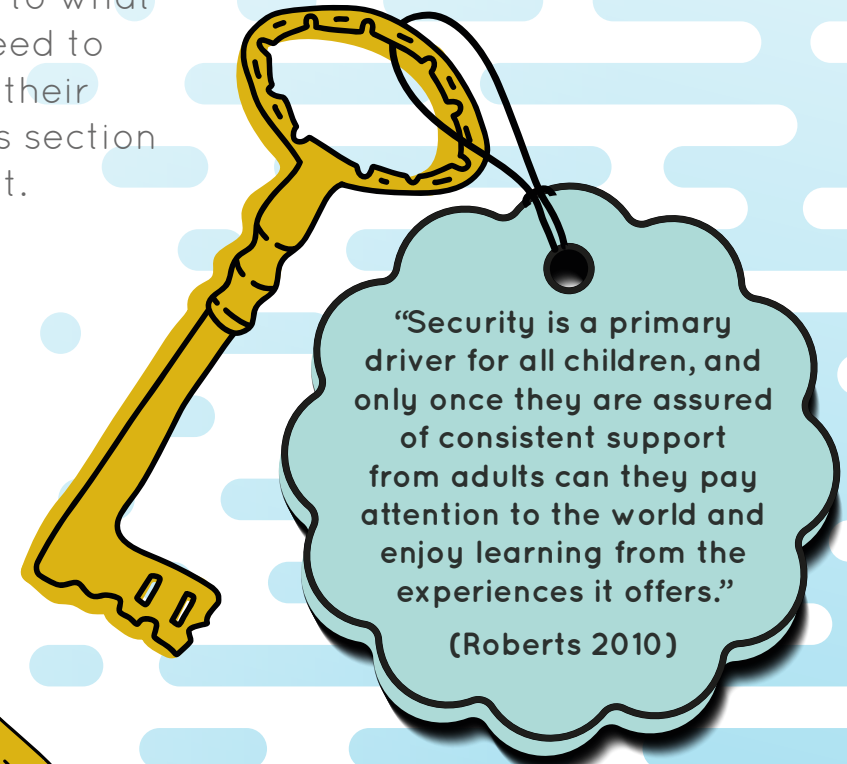
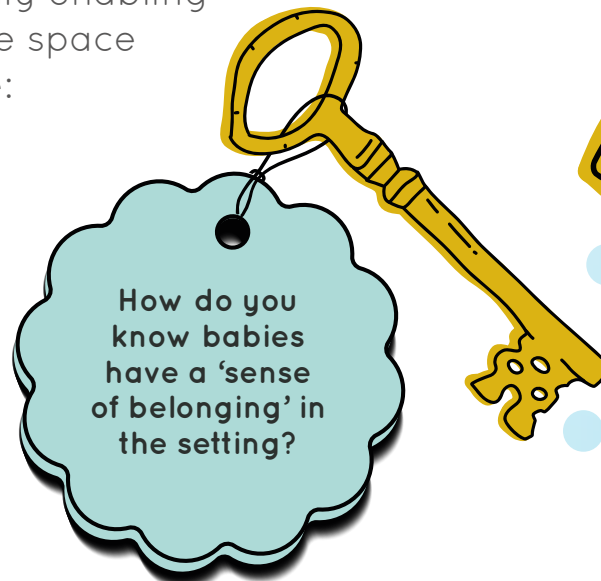
## Section 3:

# Environment

Babies need to feel secure and know they will receive consistent support from the adults that care for them before they can pay attention to what is going on around them, the world and all it has to offer. They need to be cared for in an environment that meets their needs, supports their development and also considers their emotional wellbeing. In this section we are going to consider the emotional and physical environment.

In previous sections the importance of establishing strong relationships and building strong emotional bonds with the babies in settings as well as with their families has been highlighted. Creating an emotionally enabling environment means creating a safe space for babies and their families where:

- there are consistent boundaries
- they are accepted and valued
- they are understood
- inclusivity is valued
- feelings are respected.



## Emotionally Enabling Environment

An emotionally enabling environment is created by 'everyone' in an early years setting whatever their role. This includes a childminder's family in a childminding setting or an office manager in a large setting.

The emotional environment is how babies feel when they are in the setting. Babies need to feel secure, loved, safe and that they belong. If the relationship between the baby and the key person is secure, the baby will thrive in the setting. Practitioners that show empathy towards the babies they care for and acknowledge their feelings, which can fluctuate very quickly over short periods of time, help them to be emotionally secure. Emotional control and social skills are a work in progress for babies under two.

Practitioners who care for babies in a room dependent on age must ensure the resources meet the babies needs. However, for babies that have the opportunity to mix or interact with older children, for example, in a childminding setting, there are benefits. Babies can learn from older children, and older children learn to care for the babies. It can be difficult for practitioners to cater for mixed age groups. For example, can older children play without interference from babies and can babies play safely? The safety of babies where children are cared for in mixed-age groups must be a priority, to ensure babies are protected from more boisterous play and small toys.

“


Babies and young children are very perceptive and aware of feelings and the atmosphere around them. Relationships between adults and children, between adults and other adults and between children themselves all have an important role to play in developing the young child's sense of self and their understanding of how to interact with others.

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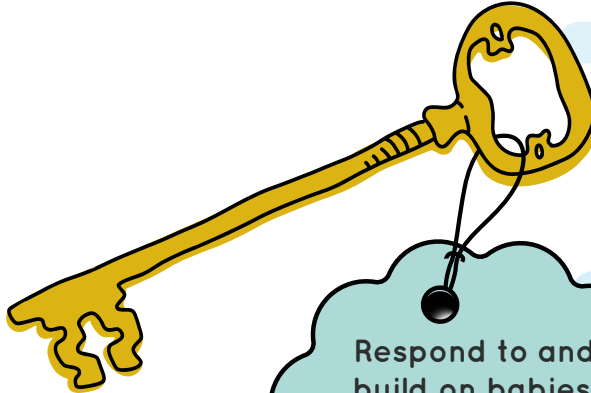
**Birth to Three: Supporting Our Youngest Children.  
Learning and Teaching Scotland 2005**




A baby learns through the experiences they receive. What they taste, smell, hear, touch and feel has a huge impact on shaping their brains. The environment offers a wide range of familiar, new, exciting, strange, wonderful experiences for babies when they have a secure base of a trusted adult.



Say or sing made up rhymes or songs while stroking or pointing to the babies' hands, feet or cheeks.



Respond to and build on babies' expressions, actions, and gestures. Babies will repeat actions that get a positive response.



Make sure the key person stays close by and provides a secure presence and a refuge for times the baby may be feeling anxious.



## Working with Families

Creating a welcoming environment that reflects users of the setting tells children, families and their community how they are viewed. Cosy homely areas that enable families to sit and chat together with the key person, or look at child development records will set the scene for future relationships. Photographs, art displays, spoken and written language and inclusive resources will show how you celebrate similarities and differences of children, families and the community.



## The Physical Environment

Research shows that the environment in which babies are cared for influences their growth and development. Babies need a predictable environment which supports their sense of security and their emotional well-being. Babies cared for by a childminder are generally in an environment that is familiar to them, a bit like home. However, babies cared for in a nursery environment often find themselves in a landscape where not much is familiar, and the space does not represent what they know. Finding ways to make a nursery room feel like home can be challenging, but with thought, a homely feel can be achieved.

There are ideas below, but it is good practice to make changes gradually in response to the changing developmental stages and interests of the babies and monitor their response. Constantly rearranging the environment will confuse the babies and may cause distress or be overwhelming.

A comfy sofa or chair creates a homely feel:

- Babies can pull themselves up and cruise around it as they develop their physical skills.
- It is a comfortable place for practitioners to feed a baby. This will also help the baby to feel relaxed.
- It provides a space for babies to watch from.

Plants bring the natural world in to a setting. (Be sure they are safe and will stand a little investigation from an inquisitive baby).

Add family photographs or 'treasures' from the baby's world to provide a sense of belonging. Art, wall hangings or lamps can add to a homely feel.



Sometimes babies just want to lay back, wave their feet in the air, suck their thumb and daydream, especially for those who have an extended day in a setting, so a space for this should be provided.



A space babies can explore independently, accessing resources will enable babies to be motivated to explore. Ensure the space is safe so babies can investigate safely without the practitioner constantly saying 'don't do that' or 'no' as babies explore the environment.

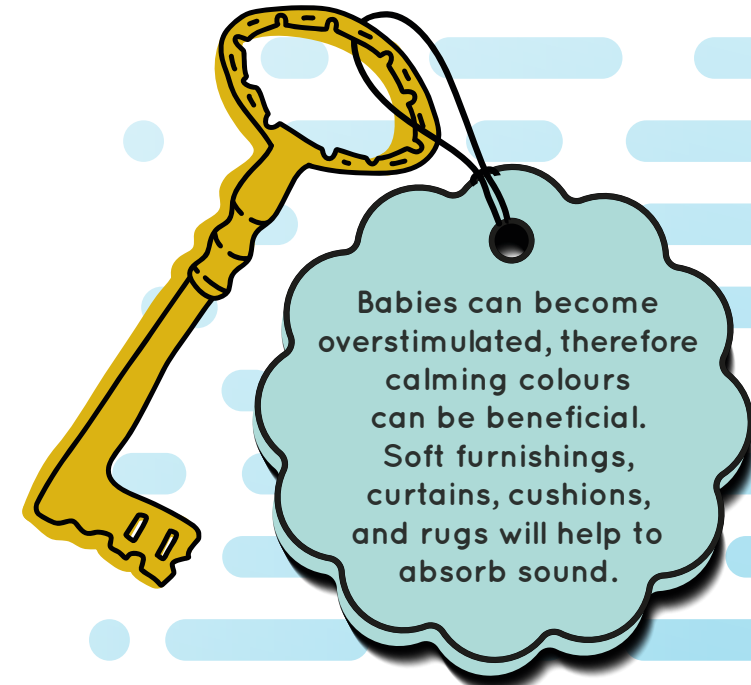
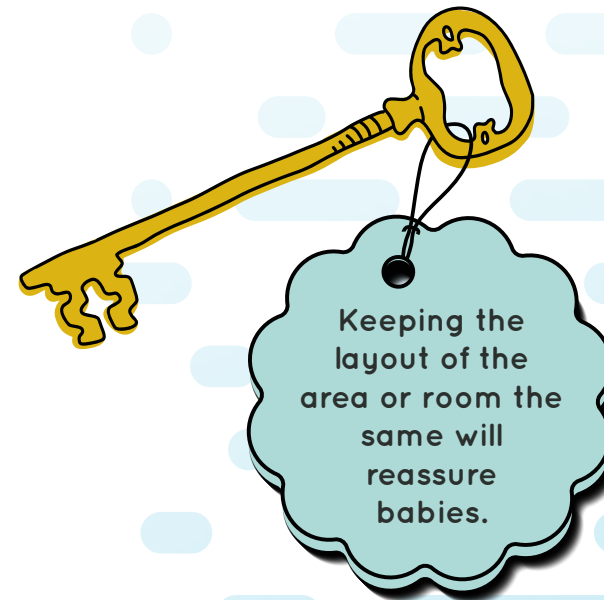
Cushions give support to babies who are just beginning to sit up unaided. Cushions offer a space to cuddle up and share a book. They can also offer a sensory experience by using different fabrics, such as African wax print, bright Mexican fabric, Aztec print, heavy tartan, furry or embossed fabric.



## A 'Pack Away' Baby Space

It is slightly more challenging in a 'pack away' setting to provide, for example, sturdy furniture for babies to pull themselves up on and cruise around, also a place for babies to sleep and a separate space in mixed age groupings for babies to retreat to.

In a pack away setting practitioners need to think about how they make the baby area familiar, keeping the area the same each day to support the babies' emotional and physical needs. Easily transportable resources such as resources in baskets will make setting up easier. Practitioners can make gradual small changes to introduce new things for the babies. A book basket, for example, can continue to contain babies' favourite books whilst adding new ones. Using soft furnishings throughout the setting will help to keep the noise levels down, as babies need to be able to hear and be heard.



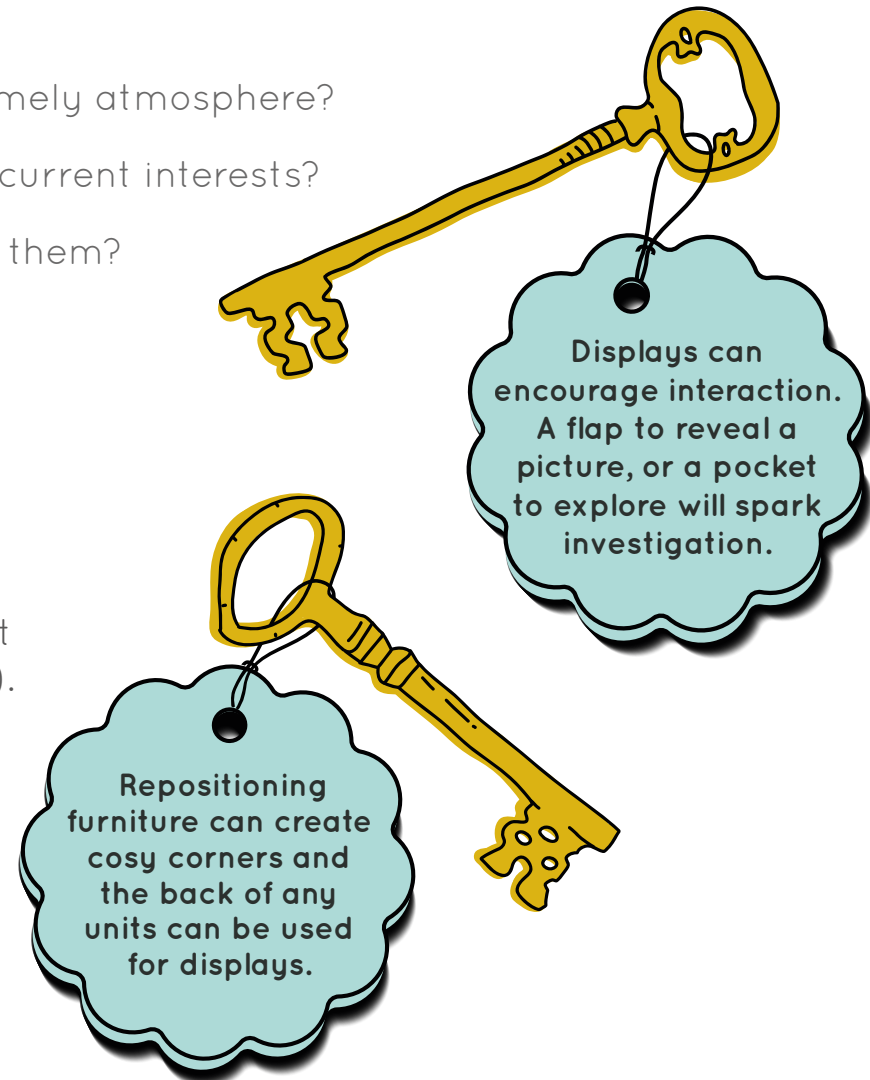
## Displays

When considering the ideas on the previous pages displays can complement and add to a homely feel such as the family photographs mentioned. But very busy wall displays can make a room feel chaotic, therefore, practitioners should think carefully about the purpose of the displays:

- Do notice boards with adult information create a homely atmosphere?
- Are displays relevant to the babies and reflect their current interests?
- Are displays at the babies' eye level so they can see them?

Also consider the following:

- Use neutral backgrounds which allow what is displayed to stand out.
- Keep babies interested by changing displays.
- Laminate pictures or photographs to make them last (tape around the edges to contain any sharp edges).
- Use Velcro behind pictures and photographs, so babies can remove and transport them. (Always be mindful of choking hazards).



## Developing Physical Skills

As babies develop their physical skills, the environment will begin to offer changes in their experiences. Firstly, babies will try and try again to grasp something nearby, then, when they finally are able to grasp it, they can then begin to discover what it feels like and what they can do with it. They will practise and hone this new skill.

A safe space for non-mobile babies that is big enough for them to practise stretching and rolling without being at risk of being trampled on by a new walker is essential. An area that can be sectioned off when necessary can be useful. Think about those heads down crawlers or the new walker who has no control over their destination.

What a crawling baby cannot reach, a toddler will suddenly find they can, and they will learn from the new opportunities this offers. Imagine the joy of a new walker who suddenly manages to climb on and off the sofa.





## Safe Sleeping

A safe sleeping area which is comfortable, monitored, well ventilated, softly lit, quiet and is not too hot is essential. Practitioners new to working with babies must make sure they understand the key points for safe sleeping and be aware of Sudden Infant Death (SIDS) information. The latest guidance on 'safe sleeping' should form part of any new practitioners' induction and regularly discussed and feature as an agenda item at staff meetings.

Current research says that sleeping babies need to lie flat, have space to move and be able to fully flex. They should not be left to sleep in pushchairs. Working with their families, the key person will know how babies like to sleep, for example, do they like to take their shoes off or be held when they wake. Sharing this knowledge with the key person and buddy is important for consistency.

When considering the indoor temperature, a thermometer should be placed low down to make sure the temperature is suitable for the babies. Heat rises and babies spend most of the time on the floor. 20°centigrade or 68°fahrenheit is a recommended indoor temperature. Babies tend to get fretful if they get too hot. It is essential to keep babies warm in cold weather and cool in hot weather both inside and outside.

There is no need to have lights on all day as natural lighting is best. Strip lights can be harsh for babies laying on their backs to look up at. Secure lamps or wall lighting appears softer and open blinds and curtains allow natural light in to rooms.



## Mealtimes

A place that is easily cleaned so babies can self-feed and be creative is important. There is so much learning that happens during mealtimes including interaction, conversation, developing physical skills and socialising, so it is not a time to rush.

Mealtimes can get messy so having a dustpan and brush and cloths to mop up spills to hand can make this a better experience for both the baby and the practitioner. A flannel can be very useful but remember to tell the baby that you are going to wipe their face. Do not surprise them by wiping their face before they are prepared for it. You could offer them a flannel to wipe their own face and then just finish it off.

Babies need predictable and consistent routines. They know lunch is on the way as they learn quickly that lunch comes after a particular activity. You may notice how excited babies get when they see their lunch being prepared.

Practitioners can help babies to make informed choices from a limited range of options. Babies like to feel in control and they like to make choices. For example, offering two bibs for them to choose from gives babies the opportunity for a controlled choice.



## Nappy Changing Area

As babies become more aware and more independent, routine tasks can take longer. For example, babies may like to gather their own nappies or help with preparing the nappy changing area. Be patient and do not rush and take time to talk about what they are doing and why. Ensuring there is a pleasant space to have a nappy changed or sit on a potty will make the experience positive for babies. Dignity is important too, so ensure the area is semi-private and away from the main play area. All practitioners must know how to clean this area, so it smells fresh. This will also reduce the risk of cross infection.





# Arranging a Baby Space - A Well Organised Environment

## Sensory and Natural Resources

Babies learn about the properties of objects and materials by banging, mouthing, touching and moving them. Babies live in the here and now; they are dominated by sensations from the sensory experience and what they are feeling in the moment. Babies like to explore with their mouths (as the mouth is the most sensitive area) as they find out and make sense of the world, therefore thorough risk assessments need to be carried out. When adding resources such as natural, found, authentic and recycled items that do not carry a Kitemark assurance of safety, be sure they are safe for babies to explore. A rich sensory landscape, stocked with resources with different properties, such as heavy and light objects, hard and soft, smooth, and rough, things that make a noise, items to combine and dump, things that crinkle and sparkle, things that can be manipulated and which give sensory feedback, all make for a rich and stimulating environment.



Ongoing risk assessments are required when working with babies. That item a non-mobile baby explored could become something to throw once they become mobile!

The richer the sensory environment and the greater the freedom to explore.

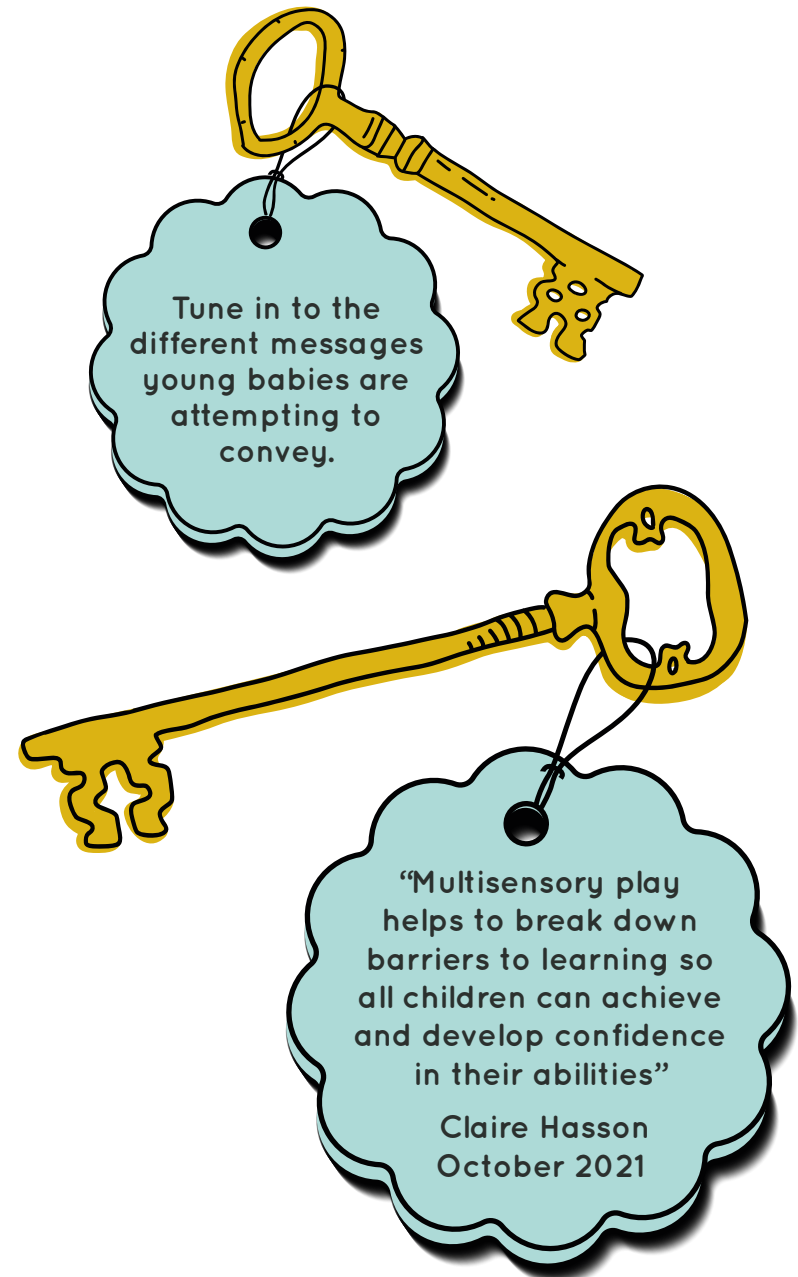
Sensory experiences are an opportunity to introduce new vocabulary.

## Role Play Items

Provide a soft bodied doll with a blanket, spoon and bowl, a buggy, saucepan and wooden spoon or metal cups and plates. These give babies more sensory feedback than plastic toys. Older babies enjoy home like activities, such as, using a cloth to wipe the table or helping to mix dough.

## Baskets or Boxes to Store Personal Possessions

Having a place to store their own personal possessions can reassure a baby. They can access the objects when they want them and this also gives them a sense of belonging in the setting. A shoe box with a picture on the front is a cost-effective solution which can hold their transitional objects, such as a dummy, book of family photos or something else from home.



## Easily Accessible Resources

Babies need opportunities to make choices about what they play with. Practitioners should ensure a careful balance between having too many resources that may be overwhelming and too few resources which will become boring. Babies like to make choices but if there are too many choices this may place undue stress on the babies.

Appropriate storage should be provided so that babies can easily access resources, for example, from sturdy baskets on the floor. Resources stored on shelves should not be too heavy so that a baby pulling them off may hurt themselves. All furniture should be sturdy so that a baby pulling themselves up cannot pull it down on top of them.





## Music

Music can have an amazing effect on babies, even before they are born. Playing music for babies while they are still in the womb can help stimulate their brain development. Being exposed to music throughout their infancy and babyhood can help babies to regulate their moods and improve cognitive skills. Musical instruments should be available and easily accessible for babies to experiment with and explore. Music, songs, and lullabies can be calming and comforting for babies and can be fun to dance to or sing along to. However, constant background music can make it difficult for babies to hear language and adds to a raised noise level, making it difficult for babies to hear or distinguish sounds.

## Physical Challenges

Providing babies with opportunities to hone and practise their physical skills is important to develop their muscles and coordination. For young babies 'Tummy Time' will be one of their first exercises and can continue through their first year! It is important because it will lead on to crawling. It is not essential to 'do' 'tummy time' once babies are crawling because babies will naturally get physical benefits while moving. However, it is still beneficial to have some play time in the prone position. Physical challenges will support babies' active, whole-body learning. Mattresses or pillow mountains offer challenge for crawling babies. Steps can be introduced, firstly to crawl up, then down and then later to walk up then down.

## Open-ended Resources

Babies do not understand what it means to share, so having more than one of a popular resource can sometimes stop babies from becoming distressed. Investing in open-ended resources tends to be easier as there are more of them.

## Cosy Book Area

A variety of books, well maintained, in different areas of the setting which reflect the diverse profile of the children attending should be made available. These should include, homemade books, popular culture, board, cloth and lift the flap books. Pop up books are better shared with an adult as they can be quite delicate and babies may need support handling them. Ask the families about the stories they read and songs they sing at home.



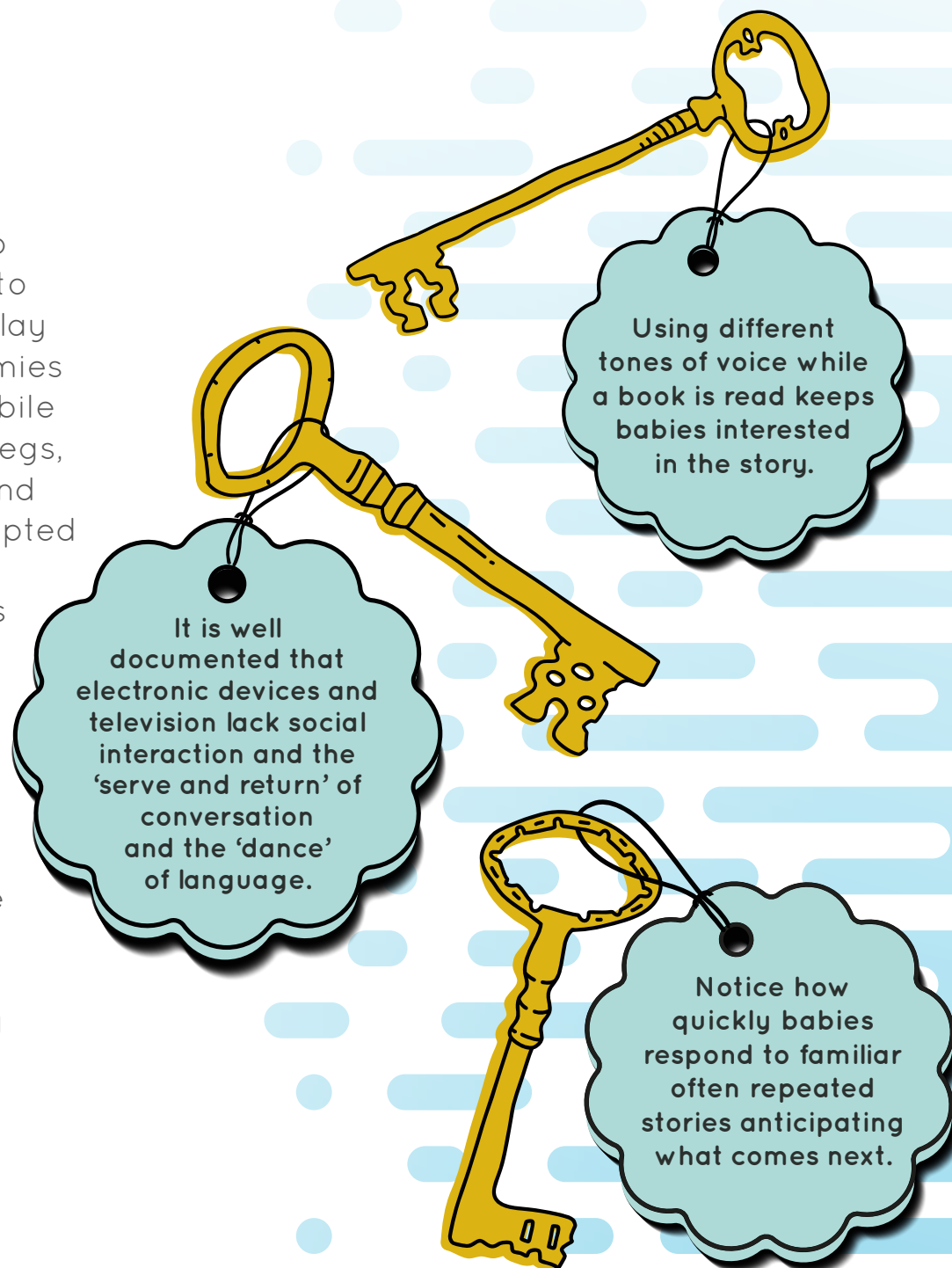
## Creative Activities

Most babies like to explore creative and sensory activities but these need to be well prepared in advance by practitioners and well supervised. Some babies like to watch for a while or some may need some encouragement to take part. Making use of sensory bags or putting paint on a tray and covering it with cling film might entice them in. For babies it is all about the experience and not the end product. End products are for adults; think about what learning if any, takes place for the baby during activities with an adult cut template. Allow babies opportunities to be creative in your setting.



## Clear Space

Having an area that is free from resources gives children space. Babies need space to move. Try not to allow too much furniture to take up valuable space, as babies like to play standing up, kneeling, laying on their tummies or sitting on the floor. Babies like to be mobile and like to move - waving their arms and legs, practising rolling and reaching, crawling and walking. Flexible spaces which can be adapted to cater for babies' abilities, interests and developmental stage is needed for babies to become active whole-body learners. Babies need freedom of movement and space to try out new skills. If babies spend too much time in car seats, buggies or chairs, opportunities for movement and exploration are lost and less learning will take place. Babies explore with their whole body. Notice how a baby will curl their toes around an object or rustle a piece of paper with their feet as they sit on it. They often like to sit with their backs to a solid object or get in to a small space. Babies learn through their senses. It is how they build connections in the brain.



## Does your Environment Support the Holistic Nature of Babies' Development?

- Think about those babies who want to watch for a while or return to an activity. Provide opportunities for babies to repeat the same experience again and again. This helps them make connections in their brain.
- Enhancements to the environment will encourage babies to explore. Familiar resources can be presented in a different way to provoke interest. For example, balls might be added to a metal bowl, or the farm animals set up in the garden.
- Practitioners' view of the space will be from high up. Babies tend to be floor based, so taking photographs from a baby's perspective, for example, laying or sitting on the floor may highlight areas that could be developed or made more interesting.
- Babies spend much of their time on the floor, so it needs to be easily cleaned and comfortable. Soft mats will be welcomed by a crawling baby, although they can also be a trip hazard to a new walker. Using a rug gripper can avoid slips. Bathmats around water play can help contain the water and are washable.
- Clearing up needs to be a calm and unhurried process. Involve babies in clearing away using gestures and simple respectful language naming the items.
- Think about supporting the development of babies' vision in their first few months of life; consideration should be given to providing black and white items or photographs. However, too many items could be confusing and may distress babies.
- Remember the best resource babies have in the setting is their key person. Think about the interactions they have with babies who will love the attention from their familiar person.





## Create

Spaces to retreat to, which allow babies to be active or quiet without interfering with each other, for example, dens created with a large box with a piece of material draped over and a cushion inside.

A box of items to safely throw; scrunched up paper with masking tape, a rolled-up sock, bath scrunchy (take off hard tag), sponge, soft balls etc.

Resources such as a homemade posting box or a tissue box with light scarves or small soft fabric squares that babies can pull out and stuff back in.



## Provide

Containers for messy play such as a tough spot. It needs to be stable enough not to tip over if a baby leans on the side and paint pots need to be weighted.

Mobiles, strings of glass beads to catch the light, a prism near a window to create a rainbow, paper and ribbons that move with the wind through an open window.

Stacking rings, nestling cups, simple puzzles, teethers, push and pull toys, scoot on or ride on toys without peddles, easel (right size for age group), items they can put in to another, baskets, bowls, bags, etc.

Items to build, knock down, stack (soft blocks, boxes, stacking cups).

Large crayons and chalks (tape large pieces of paper to a table, floor or wall).

Instruments, small enough to handle and sounds that won't startle other babies, like bells or soft sounding shakers.

Mirrors, push and pull along toys. Items they can move around, pile up, gather, empty and fill.

Interesting objects and textures, for example, a bunch of keys, a range of metal bowls, some flowers to explore.

Sand or water in a tray or tough spot on the floor - funnels, driftwood, shells, pebbles, seaweed, brushes, water wheels and sand wheels, scoops, egg boxes, pinecones, small bottles, a tea strainer, jugs, a small sieve, short pipe, a muffin tray, metal and wooden bowls, small pots and pans, a small wok, spoons and ladles are suggested items to explore (although not all at once).

Baskets of material such as survival blankets, velvet, corrugated card and silk. This can be used in a variety of ways as babies love to play peek-a-boo.

Items a baby can smell, such as socks filled with herbs, or small fabric bags, which have cotton wool with a few drops of appropriate essential oil, empty containers such as the lid of a fabric softener container (even washed it will still smell), a lemon, some mint. Fragrance can be added to dough and water.

Cardboard boxes that babies can crawl in and out of, put things in and out of, or just sit in.

Remember to ensure thorough risk assessments are completed as babies, like to put things in to their mouths’.

Sand, water, messy play such as part cooked pasta, jelly, cornflour to encourage sensory development (but be aware babies will more than likely eat this).

Dolls and soft toys are very real to babies and they often have strong feelings for them so we as adults need to respect this and treat them accordingly.

## Outdoors

Babies need to access the outdoor area daily just as older children do. The outside area offers babies opportunities they may not be able to access inside. The outside environment is special, exciting and offers babies the sensory input they crave. Babies become immersed in the world around them and the sensory input it provides.

The outside environment offers all sorts of exciting experiences, for example, mud, birds, bugs, people, transport, rain, breeze, shadows, walking in puddles, or watching a worm move along the ground. Babies can also enjoy opportunities that replicate life at home, for example, going to the park, feeding the ducks or going to the shops.

Babies will start to recognise their local area and begin to get excited when they are near a favourite location. Each time you visit an area they will build on what interests them. For example, one day they may be fascinated by hiding under the branches of a weeping willow tree and the next visit be fascinated by the bridge over a stream. The outside offers a variety of surfaces and gradients for babies to practise new skills and take risks such as walking, crawling, or running on different types of surfaces or up or down a hill.



**Do not ask too many questions. Instead comment on the baby's actions.**  
"You have found the ducks."

**Make language meaningful.**  
For example,  
"There are lots of ducks today."



## Enhancing the Outdoor Environment

- Allow babies to explore what interests them. For example, the bark or leaves on a tree.
- Be prepared for babies to become interested in things you would not expect!
- Be sure that babies experience different types of weather, essential for their sensory development.

### Think about:

- clothing for both adults and children or 'all in one' suits for wet or cold weather
- preparing a bag with any items needed, for example, nappies, wet wipes or first aid items
- making the outside as accessible as possible by ensuring there is easy access through the door to the outdoor area, with an accessible ramp or slope
- a shady area for babies to lay under, to ensure they do not get too hot, for example, a tree or an umbrella.

### Add:

- windchimes, streamers, windmills
- things to catch the light
- herbs to smell
- a rug to sit on and share a story
- bird feeders to attract the birds
- flower boxes or planters.





# Time to Reflect

## Environment

*“Routines, environment and play opportunities should balance the new, exciting and challenging with the familiar, safe and secure.” (Manning-Morton, J. 2005)*

Things to Think About	What to Look for
<p>Consider the space in the room. Could the space be rearranged and used in a better way.</p> <p><i>(Babies’ newfound ‘uprightness’ opens up new doors of opportunity. They can now run, walk, climb, move materials from place to place, push and pull resources, balance, reach and experience freedom).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cosy spaces where one or two babies can snuggle and be alone safely.</li> <li>• An area for messy activities.</li> <li>• Resources and activities are accessible to all.</li> <li>• Enough space for babies and adults to move around.</li> <li>• A safe space for non-mobile babies.</li> <li>• Room for babies to roll, crawl and walk.</li> </ul>
<p>Resources and materials provide interest, stimulation and some challenge. This will allow each baby to have some success and provides a sense of achievement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A good range of toys, materials and resources that offer extensive opportunities for babies to explore and develop their skills, senses, and knowledge.</li> <li>• Open-ended resources made from natural materials.</li> <li>• Limit brightly coloured plastic toys.</li> <li>• Resources for creativity, for example, large paper, chunky brushes and crayons.</li> <li>• Opportunities for babies to explore and experiment, transport, empty and fill.</li> </ul>

Things to Think About	What to Look for
Practitioners reflect the lives of babies, their families and their communities in the environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A diverse selection of resources and activities to reflect the diversity of the babies attending and the local community.</li> <li>• Evidence of the diversity of current families in setting, for example, displays.</li> <li>• Family members are acknowledged by name when they enter the room.</li> </ul>
Staff provide a good range of materials especially natural and open-ended resources to cater for different interests and developmental skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Things to hold, manipulate, take apart, climb over, under or through, to put together, open-ended sensory materials, balls, blocks, props for imaginative play, easy to grasp items, soft and cuddly, a simple home corner or creative and malleable materials.</li> <li>• Household objects: pots, lids, keys, boxes, spoons, things they can set in motion, things they can put inside and take out again, things to post, things to take apart and put back together, objects they can pull themselves up on, things that make a noise, boxes to climb in and out of or just sit in.</li> <li>• Containers to fill and dump.</li> </ul>
Resources/opportunities in the outside area reflect the specific skills and developmental needs of babies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular opportunities for non-mobile babies to experience the outdoors, not just in a buggy but places to lie under with hanging objects to look at.</li> <li>• An outside environment which allows babies and toddlers independence, movement, and the power to choose.</li> <li>• An outside area which has been given as much thought as the inside area.</li> </ul>
<p>There are extensive sensory opportunities which babies have access to both indoors and outdoors</p> <p><i>(Babies and toddlers learn with their whole bodies and all their senses. This can be reflected in the environment and in activities on offer).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colour, temperature and texture that babies can explore through sensory experiences so that when they are ready to use the words, they can be connected to something that makes sense.</li> <li>• Resources that can be combined, for example, mixing the sand with water or transporting items to other areas.</li> </ul>

Things to Think About	What to Look for
Experiences and activities focus on the doing rather than an end product.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little or no adult directed play.</li> <li>• The freedom for babies to explore and experiment in their own way and not follow a pre-determined pattern.</li> </ul>
Displays are appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant displays at babies' level which they can explore and touch – (but not too many).</li> <li>• Realistic pictures of animals, routines, familiar things, people they love.</li> <li>• Displays are 'visited' by the key persons with their babies.</li> <li>• A mirror where babies can see themselves.</li> </ul>
There are flexible materials that can be used in many different ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Themed baskets' such as a collection of wooden items.</li> <li>• An empty box - a receptacle for lots of items today and a drum tomorrow.</li> </ul>
You are providing enabling environments to encourage the learning of new movement patterns and motor skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular music and movement, action rhymes and songs.</li> <li>• Different types of music: hold the baby and dance around to fast music and then rock to gentle music, march to strong music.</li> <li>• Things babies can throw in the air and catch, such as tissues, soft scarves, or bubbles.</li> <li>• Ride on toys as appropriate – <i>(can toddlers put their feet on the floor, do they have four widely spaced wheels for stability?)</i></li> <li>• A variety of resources to encourage physical play, for example, balls, streamers, cardboard boxes and empty containers.</li> </ul>
Babies have the opportunity to experience tummy time daily.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interesting items for baby to look at or reach for to encourage them to get used to tummy time. Some babies may prefer to lay across their key person's lap or have a rolled-up towel placed under their chest.</li> </ul>

Things to Think About	What to Look for
<p>Babies develop their vestibular sense.  <i>(‘feelings of position and movement in relation to the physical environment and of temporally escaping gravity and then returning to be grounded’)</i> Lindon 2001</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for babies to swing, have tummy time, practise rolling, dancing, rocking, or bouncing. Key persons carrying babies in a variety of positions or playing balancing games.</li> </ul>
<p>Proprioceptive awareness.  <i>For example, by having opportunities to work their hands, feet, fingers and toes in sensory stimulating materials: this helps them become more aware of the messages of their own bodies (where their bodies end and the external world begins)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for babies to develop their proprioceptive awareness. For example, by removing babies’ socks so they can find their feet and feel items with their feet.</li> <li>• Regular opportunities for tummy time.</li> <li>• Games like ‘Row, Row, Row, the Boat’.</li> </ul>
<p>Babies have the opportunity to cross mid-line.  <i>(By crossing over their arms and legs and reaching side to side and by physically moving from side to side such as weaving in and out of obstacles)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A variety of physical activities for babies so that they experience many different movements. For example, during singing, actions rhymes or being held while the key person moves around.</li> <li>• Crossing the mid-line strengthens the corpus callosum which connects the left and right sides of the brain.</li> </ul>



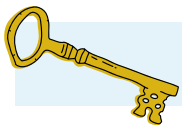
## A Case Study About:

# Archie

Jo was struggling to settle nine month old Archie one morning. His Dad said he had been up quite a lot in the night and could possibly be teething. Jo also had two other key children she was supporting that morning. Jo was becoming anxious, and this was affecting how she dealt with Archie. Another practitioner, Anne, could see how stressed Jo was becoming and asked if she could help. Jo agreed she needed help and asked Anne to support her other key children while she spent time settling Archie. This allowed Jo to relax and focus on Archie. She was more able to be emotionally available, take on Archie's feelings and support him without feeling she was neglecting her other key children.



How do you work as a team to support the key person approach?



How does this link to the emotional environment?



## Section 4:

# Building Blocks to Learning

Babies and toddlers thrive in the context of a positive relationship when they are loved and well cared for. Key persons must consider the individual needs, interests and development of each baby and toddler in their care and use their knowledge to provide enjoyable learning experiences that will provide a strong foundation for babies' learning and development in the three prime areas. Exploring and investigating through

play helps babies learn about themselves and the world they live in. Early years practitioners have a crucial part to play in laying the foundations that babies and toddlers need for future learning. Including schemas, treasure baskets and heuristic play in to everyday practice will contribute to the characteristics of effective learning through playing and exploring, active learning, creating and thinking critically.

“

Children learn through their senses, absorbing in to thought what they taste, touch, hear and smell. Their complex multisensory interconnections act as the main sources of information from the brain, and these in turn, strengthen these cognitive structures (schema) which develop in to later concepts.

”

Chris Athey (2003)

## Schematic Play and Behaviours

Babies, as we know, learn so much through their five senses - sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. The world is a fascinating place and as they become more curious and able, they will be compelled to explore how things work. Babies learn through repeatedly trying things out, experimenting and practising utilising all their senses, which in turn forges strong memories and builds their knowledge bank within the brain which is developing most rapidly in the first two years of life. By the age of two, the brain amazingly reaches about 75% of the weight of an adult brain and will have more than 100 trillion cell connections (synapses), which is the most the brain will ever have.

We all learn best through repeating actions again and again and whilst observing even the youngest of babies you can start to see patterns in their behaviours emerging (the kicking of legs in their urge to move, the waving of arms banging their highchair table). It can be easy to dismiss these actions as just things babies do which some adults can find puzzling and even at times annoying, for example, a baby repeatedly dropping their bottle from a highchair, or continually opening and closing a cupboard door. Behind every action is a thought (thought in action) and the foundation of creating and thinking critically is being fostered with this scaffolding of learning through understanding cause and effect.

What is interesting for adults to understand is these repetitive explorations could be the first indications of a very young child's schematic disposition and focus of learning. This will give the practitioners and families a valuable insight in to fundamental urges and often odd fascinations babies will display in their drive to learn and develop an understanding of the world around them. This understanding will help practitioners and families to offer appropriate resources and support to promote the learning and development and ensure that babies are appropriately supported in their learning.

“

A cluster of pieces which fit together.

”

**Tina Bruce, 1997**



## What is a Schema?

Quite simply a schema is a repeating pattern in human behaviour. Schemas were first identified by Jean Piaget, a child psychologist in the 1950s and his work was further pioneered and researched by Chris Athey in the 1980s at the Froebel Institute Nursery where she carried out many observations of young children and detailed her findings. There have since been many books written by early years specialists on schematic play which are useful for further reading.

Even as adults, most of us will demonstrate schematic behaviour which helps anchor us when we are upset, tired, angry or scared. Babies' schemas are also a fantastic mechanism for learning, as they keep testing out and experimenting through repeating the same or similar actions with different resources and opportunities. They are little scientists and can be very determined in experimenting and developing their own theories and then testing them out in whatever way possible and forming new theories which are in turn tested through repetitive exploration.

It may be difficult to determine schemas in a baby's interactions with the world as these are more readily noticeable as babies become more mobile and interactive with toys and resources around them. Some babies and toddlers will have a pre-dominant schema which is often easy to spot and may remain with them throughout life. Some may move from one schema to another over time and others may display a cluster or several schemas at the same time which can make it more difficult to identify. When familiar with the concept of schemas it becomes clear how some schemas are closely connected with another, for example, trajectory and transporting, containing and enveloping.

There is no need to get concerned about not being able to readily identify a schema... it is more vitally important to richly observe the babies in the setting and to discuss what fascinations and interests you have noted with the families, who will be able to reciprocate with their knowledge. Through these exciting conversations, practitioners and parents/carers may be able to determine emerging schematic patterns within the play and behaviour and plan activities and opportunities to support babies' learning. The more 'tuned-in' to babies adults are, the higher their wellbeing and involvement will be. Treasure Baskets and Heuristic Play are two fantastic open-ended opportunities for babies and toddlers to freely explore and potentially illustrate schemas in their play.

## Types of Schemas

There are over 30 identified schemas with some being derivatives of others. Here are eight of the most commonly observed schemas in both younger and older babies. Remember that schematic patterns in older babies will be easier to spot as they become more mobile than younger babies and schemas become more sophisticated as children learn and develop. Do not rush to make decisions about schemas as you will need to identify a pattern in a variety of opportunities. Look where they are focussing their gaze as that will indicate where their fascination lies. Be patient with their drive to repeat actions over and over again. The following Four Ws Mantra is a useful tool when working with young children.

### 1. Wait

Do not rush to identify a schema. There is plenty of time.

### 2. Watch

Sit back and spend time observing... really 'tune in' to what they are fascinated with.

### 3. Wonder

Think about what you are seeing; have you seen this exploration before in any way?

### 4. Wow!

Exciting realisations... celebrate and plan with the family.

## Trajectory

A fascination with straight lines and arcs using their bodies or objects.

### What you may observe

- Dropping things from the highchair or pushchair.
- Kicking their legs and waving arms up and down.
- Moving themselves in straight lines across the floor.
- Pushing and pulling items in straight lines.
- Being fascinated with seeing items being rolled across the floor in straight lines or items down a gutter pipe etc.
- Banging items with hands or other items, including water in the bath.
- Throwing items.
- Watching water running from a tap.
- Being drawn to the swings and slides at the park.
- Lining objects up.
- Early mark making in straight lines.
- Hitting and kicking when frustrated.

### Trajectory explorations support learning about...

Length, distance, height, weight, quantities, volume, size, shape, pattern, speed, order, sequencing, muscle development, small and large coordination and balance. Object permanence develops (when items disappear and babies notice they reappear).

### Introducing related words...

Up, down, along, straight, high, low, move, push, pull, pour, kick, fast, slow, along, reach, stretch, tall, short etc.



## Containing Fascinated with putting items and/or themselves in to containers ... and out again.

### What you may observe

- Putting objects inside a container – pots, cups, bowls, bags, boxes etc.
- Taking the items back out again.
- Transferring items from one container to another (links to transporting).
- Trying to climb in to containers – some may be too small.
- Pouring liquid from one container to another but not stopping when full.
- Putting plug in to low level sink and turning tap on and watching sink fill up.
- Liking to be held and cuddled.
- Trying to master using spoons and ladles to contain items to be put in to containers.

### Containing explorations support learning about...

Spatial awareness, volume, size, number, weight, lengths, distance, rhythm, sounds, developing the vestibular system (balance and spatial orientation), developing the proprioceptive sense (where their body is in relation to the space).

### Introducing related words...

In, out, inside, full, empty, heavy, light, cover, gone, let's count, put back in, etc.





## Rotation

Fascination with items that move in circular motions and/or moving themselves in circles.

### What you may observe

- Fascination with moving and watching the wheels on toys rather than the toy itself.
- Transfixed with watching the washing machine turn clothes.
- May pay attention to ceiling fans and windmills.
- Like spinning tops.
- Enjoy stirring contents of bowl.
- Like being spun around.
- Engage with the motion of a rolling ball.
- Fascinated with water going down a plug hole.
- Early mark making may be predominantly in circles.
- May be drawn to the roundabout at the park.
- May spin themselves as they become more adept on their feet.
- Attracted to the rotating knobs on equipment.

### Rotational explorations support learning about...

Speed, spatial awareness, developing the vestibular system (balance and spatial orientation), developing the proprioceptive sense (where their body is in relation to the space), cause and effect, hand/eye coordination, perception, balance.

### Introducing related words...

Round and round and round, spin, twirl, dizzy, twist, turn, circle, fast round, slow, curl up, roll, catch etc.

# Transporting

Compelled to constantly move things and themselves from one place to another.

## What you may observe

- Being keen to get moving, possible early crawler/walker.
- Often liking to be carried.
- Generally happy to get in to buggy and car seat.
- Watching things move.
- Liking to carry things from A to B and possibly back again.
- Will tend to always be on the move or moving something.
- May arrive everyday with an item and/or want to take an item home with them.
- May push buggy and carry bags empty or full of random items (linked to containing schema).
- Fascinated with forms of transport and books depicting transport.
- Being pro-active at tidying up time.

## Transporting explorations support learning about...

Motion, distance, length, speed, time, space, shape, size, quantity, weight, number, positioning, balance, noise recognition.

## Introducing related words...

Fast, slow, car, bus, train, plane, full, empty, move, stop, go, in, out, come, load, unload, over there, heavy, open, close, backwards, forwards, sideways, up, down, along, through etc.

## Enveloping

Found to be covering over and enveloping items or themselves.

### What you may observe

- A baby who likes to be swaddled.
- Wrapping themselves in cloths.
- Playing peek-a-boo.
- Hiding behind curtains, furniture, cupboard doors etc.
- Want doors to be closed.
- Covering themselves over with a blanket.
- Being excited by getting in a small tent or den.
- Wanting to peel their own bananas and take their own tops off yoghurts etc.
- Getting upset if offered half a cracker, or piece of fruit as they want the whole.
- Covering themselves with sand, water, paint etc.
- Putting lids on containers.
- A tendency to completely cover over a piece of paper with paint.
- Playing with envelopes and/or making envelopes with paper, cloths etc.

### Enveloping explorations support learning about...

Spatial awareness, concepts of light and dark, object permanence, concepts of division, emotions, heightened sensory awareness, cause and effect, ratios.

### Introducing related words...

Under, over, in, out, big, small, light, dark, gone, hide, hidden, boo, cover, inside, beneath, snugly, messy, wash hands.

## Connecting

Concentrates on making items connect together and making links between objects and themselves.

### What you may observe

- Attempting to join items together – magnetic trains, building blocks etc.
- Interest in disconnecting items again.
- Placing items onto tracks, guttering, marble runs.
- Attempting simple jigsaw puzzles.
- Trying to click the harness together in buggy.
- Liking to physically touch things – making a connection with tapping or pointing.
- Being drawn to light switches etc that turn on and off.
- Trying to make things ‘fit’ together, for example, lids on pots and pans etc.

### Connecting explorations support learning about...

Technology, size, cause and effect, sequencing, patterns, relationships, matching, consistency, colours.

### Introducing related words...

Together, undone, in, out, fit, undo, do up, push, pull, click, open, close, build, connect, match, tower, tall, high, along, different colours, etc.

## Scattering

Attention captured by the cause and effect of scattering and spreading items about.

### What you may observe

- Randomly tipping out the contents of containers and then walking away.
- Spreading items with their arms and legs in delight.
- A tendency to splash water and scatter sand about.
- A desire to pull all the tissues or baby wipes out of its container.
- Jumping in puddles and watching the spray.
- Enjoying feeding birds with crumbs and spreading fish food on top of the aquarium.
- Tendency to flit around the environment – not stay at an activity for long.
- Mark making may appear as dabbing.

### Scattering explorations support learning about...

Weight, volume, space, strengthening eye muscles (watching feathers fall) cause and effect, spacial awareness, quantities, sizes, noises, textures.

### Introducing related words...

Spread, sprinkle, shower, rain, splatter, puddle, jump, throw, scatter, shapes, sizes, name differing textures.



## On Top

Determined to climb up pieces of furniture, on worktops, adults, trees, etc including putting items on top of other things.

### What you may observe

- Reaching up and wanting to be picked up as want to be high up.
- Climbing onto laps, sofas, chairs, tables etc as they become more mobile.
- Stacking items on top of each other.
- Putting tops on pots etc.
- Reaching up to high surfaces to place something.
- Subtle 'on top' explorations, for example, just placing their foot on top of an adults, placing a hand on top of an activity.
- Standing and playing with items on top of a low table.
- Wanting to stay at the top of the slide rather than come down.
- Confidence while exploring, quite disgruntled if thwarted.

### On Top explorations support learning about...

Perspective, distance, height, balance, climbing skills, can-do approaches.

### Introducing related words...

High, up, down, far, over there, down here, distance, reach, hold on, grip, keep going, steady.

## Going Through Boundaries

Experimenting with passing themselves or items through a boundary.

### What you may observe

- Moving through openings and gaps.
- Posting objects through slots like a post-box, flip-top bins, empty tissue boxes.
- Dropping items behind radiators.
- Poking objects through mesh fencing.
- Fascination with posting items down a carpet tube or similar.
- Love pop-up toys.
- Moving through boundaries like a tunnel or open-ended box.
- Excited with running through the low branches of a willow tree or fly blind on a door.
- Tendency to focus play with the tunnel on a train track rather than rest of track.

### Going Through Boundaries explorations support learning about...

Weight, size, capacity, hand/eye coordination, movement, density, force, speed, problem solving, cause and effective critical thinking.

### Introducing related words...

Through, inside, hiding, gone, where is it, fit, space, too big, too small, look, there it is.

## Points to Consider

Schemas are a fascinating and invaluable approach to understanding why babies, particularly older babies, are so innately driven and determined to carry out certain actions, behaviours and play in their earliest years. There is always more to learn so...

- Practitioners can enhance their learning by reading further on schemas.
- The key person should talk to parents, carers and other family members about what they have 'noticed' rather than 'observed' in their child's play and behaviours at home. Often babies will display more confident and expressive behaviours within their own home.
- Support each other in the setting by planning related opportunities to extend babies' fascinations and learning.
- Provide a readily available range of open-ended resources and opportunities for spontaneous exploration and discovery that provide for all the schemas – many household items are ideal rather than commercially bought items.

- Allow babies the freedom to explore, take calculated and supervised risks and to experience the cause and effect of their explorations.
- Remember health and safety is of paramount importance without thwarting learning experiences. Many opportunities can be reorganised to provide adequate safety as long as vigilant supervision is in place.
- Schemas do not stop when a baby reaches two ... this phase is just the start of a lifetime of repetitive behaviours being a fundamental part of an individual's being.

While schemas are a normal aspect of development, should there be emerging developmental concerns there may be circumstances where you may need to sensitively discuss with families seeking additional support and a possible referral.

“

Children and scientists are the best learners in the world, and they both seem to operate in very similar, even identical ways, that are unlike even our best computers. They never start from scratch. Instead, they modify and change what they already know to gain new knowledge.

”

Gopnik, July 2010

## What is a Treasure Basket?

The treasure basket is an approach that was inspired by Elinor Goldschmied (Goldschmied and Jackson 1994). In this approach the practitioner offers a seated baby (who is not yet able to move independently), a low rounded basket that is filled with a range of carefully selected and safe natural everyday objects of varying tactile qualities for them to enjoy.

Treasure baskets support a baby to:

- handle and mouth objects in order to find out about their physical characteristics
- have first opportunity to make simple choices and develop preferences
- form the initial gateway towards independent contact with the outside world
- explore and develop current schemas or ways of learning
- develop attention and concentration.

## How to Create a Treasure Basket

The basket should:

- be round in shape
- be made from wicker, willow, raffia or other natural woven material
- have a flat broad base so that the basket doesn't tip
- have low sides so that it is low enough for a baby's small arm to reach across and to reach in their hand, yet still deep enough to contain a large number of objects to explore.





## A Treasure Basket Could Contain:

### Objects Made from Wood



- Egg cup
- Bracelet
- Small turned bowl
- Napkin ring
- Spoon/spatula (various)
- Cotton reel
- Curtain ring
- Baby brush
- Door wedge
- Pegs (dolly and clothes)
- Honey spoon
- Small rolling pin
- Coaster
- Block
- Ball
- Empty salt and pepper cellar



### Natural Objects



- Fir cones
- Feathers
- Loofah
- Shells (various types)
- Pebbles (various shapes)
- Sheepskin
- Natural sponge
- Pumice stone
- Lemon/orange (to be regularly replaced)
- Coconut shell
- A piece of driftwood



## Objects Made from Metal



- Small whisk
- Egg cup
- Bangle
- Chains
- Metal spoons/utensils
- Tea infuser
- Powder compact
- Garlic press/lemon squeezer
- Bunch of unused and newly cut keys
- Small tins with smooth edges
- Curtain rings
- Sieve/tea strainer
- Large belt buckle
- Egg poacher
- Plug and chain
- Set of measuring spoons on a ring
- Nutcracker



## Objects Made of Leather and Textiles



- Velvet powder puff
- Pompoms
- Small cloth bags (these could contain lavender, thyme, clove etc)
- Various offcuts of fabric (12 x 8cm)



- Leather wallet/purse/ glasses case
- Fabric wallet/purse/ glasses case
- Bean bag
- Coloured ribbon
- Fabric juggling balls
- Rag doll
- Small teddy/soft toy
- Raffia mat



## Objects with Bristles



- Shaving brush
- Wooden/plastic nail brush
- Small wooden cosmetic mirror
- Bamboo toothbrush
- Pastry brush
- Bottle brush (various sizes)
- Shoe brush
- Make-up brushes (various types)





## Health and Safety Considerations When Using a Treasure Basket

A treasure basket **must** always be used under the supervision of an adult.

### Management and storage of the objects.

- When the treasure basket is not in use, cover the basket with a cloth to ensure that the objects remain dust free.
- When making a treasure basket it is important to ensure that the objects are fully checked and cleaned before use.
- When objects begin to get tired or broken, they should be removed and replacements provided.

### Keeping the objects clean.

- It is essential that objects are regularly cleaned to keep them fresh and in good condition.
- Make sure that objects are 'washable, wipeable or disposable' (Elinor Goldschmied).
- If there is concern about the safety or hygiene of an object, then don't include it in the basket.
- Do not put any items in to the basket which are considered to be small enough for a baby to swallow.



## Setting up a Treasure Basket Session

### How long

- Offer a session that lasts between forty minutes and one hour.
- Shorter sessions have plenty of 'play value' and it takes little time or effort to set up.



### When

- Choose a time of day when the babies are alert and fresh – are they emotionally calm and content?
- Set aside a time with minimal disruption – avoid times when parents are dropping off or picking up.

### Where

- Find a quiet area.
- Ensure the space is comfortable – is the floor space carpeted or does it have a large soft mat?
- Provide supporting cushions for younger babies.

### How often

- Ideally the treasure basket should be offered to the babies on a daily basis.
- It is important that the atmosphere is calm and the adult is attentive – miss a day if there are unexpected disruptions or changes to routine.



## Inspiring Babies' Learning – What Will You See?

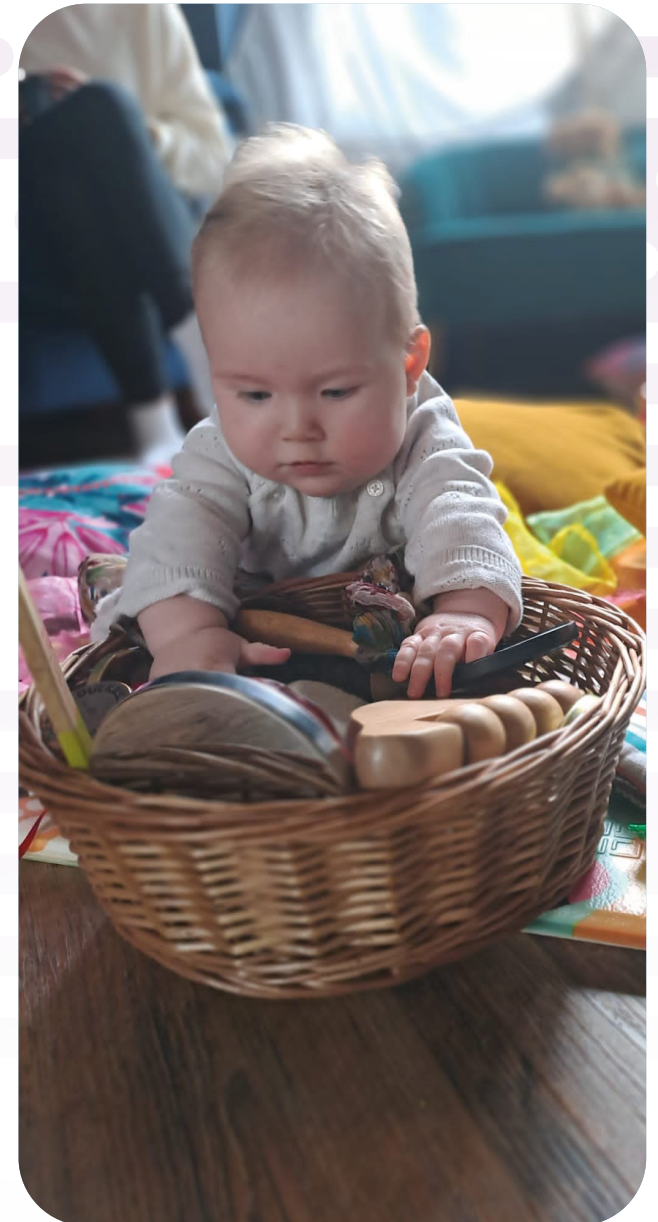
Babies will make simple choices. They will select, test and sometimes discard items. They may return to an item and examine it again. Sometimes babies will show that they prefer a specific object.

Babies may communicate in their own way with other babies, taking an interest in what they have selected. Sharing objects shouldn't be an issue because there should be plenty of objects in the basket to explore.

Babies will often display patterns of play (schema) when they explore different objects. They may try out the same action with a variety of different objects or a wide variety of actions with the same object.

Babies will concentrate when exploring objects within a treasure basket. They will take time to select and examine items with all their senses.

Babies' explorations will help to develop their cognitive understanding and develop logical thought processes.



## How Treasure Baskets Promote Learning

The treasure basket gives babies the opportunity to handle and explore many different objects to enrich their experience, stimulate their curiosity and provide the foundations for language development.



Objects in a treasure basket offer the opportunity to stimulate all of a baby's five senses. When creating a treasure basket, ensure that there are a variety of sensory experiences for the baby to explore, including:

- **Touch** – objects provide the baby with experiences of weight, texture and shape
- **Taste** – a baby uses their mouth to explore objects and taste can be explored when adding fruit in to the basket
- **Sound** – the crinkling of an emergency blanket, the clunking as a chain falls in a tin, ringing of bells, banging objects together all add to the wonderful sounds the baby or the object can create
- **Smell** - all of the objects will have their own individual smell, but the basket could be enhanced with small material bags filled with natural scents such as lavender or sage
- **Sight** - fill the basket with a range of shiny, metal, wood materials and introduce a variety of colours and shapes in to the basket.

Treasure baskets offer babies choice. Babies are naturally curious about the world around them and the more opportunities they have where they can make choices the more those opportunities will feed their curiosity. It is the variety of objects in a treasure basket that promotes a baby's curiosity and interest. It is important to remember that until a baby can move independently, their choices are limited to what the adults around them will give them to play with.

Containment is an important aspect of a baby's play and learning. Emotional containment is essential for babies to feel safe and secure and develop the confidence to learn about the world around them. The physical environment also provides a feeling of containment. The treasure basket offers a baby a form of containment. The basket is a physical container for the objects; in addition, the objects are contained rather than scattered. The nature of containing objects seems to arouse greater interest and pleasure for babies and helps them to focus on the objects and play is often more sustained.

As babies handle different objects, they learn many abstract concepts linked to the physical qualities of objects such as:

- weight
- texture
- malleability
- transparency, translucency and opaqueness of objects
- temperature
- scent.

Babies who have had experience of holding, mouthing and experimenting with objects understand these concepts long before they have the language to express them. Young children's first words often reflect their direct experience and primarily come in the form of nouns.



## The Role of the Key Person in Supporting Treasure Basket Play

Treasure baskets need to be introduced, offered and developed sensitively. It is important that babies have secure and positive relationships with their key person so that they are confident to explore and enjoy the objects within a treasure basket knowing and trusting that the adult is nearby in what Elinor Goldschmied describes as 'friendly company and emotional anchorage.' The key person needs to understand the learning potential of the objects as well as the learning process of the baby in their care.

### Facilitator

- Making sure the objects in a treasure basket are suitable and varied and cleaned/replaced to keep them in top quality condition.
- Being emotionally comfortable with the objects on offer.
- Being attentive to a baby's emotions and intentions.
- Being supportive, responsive and unobtrusive – supporting a baby to freely learn things for themselves.
- Being a calm presence – developing the skill of '*alert stillness*' (Elinor Goldschmied).

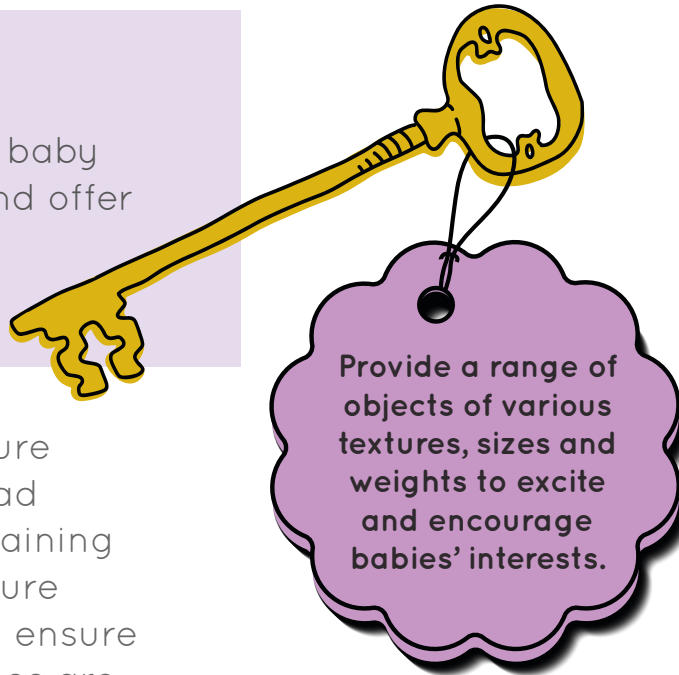
### Observer

- Being observant without intrusion or distraction.
- Picking up the non-verbal cues from a baby and responding appropriately.
- Noticing the baby's interests, reactions, preferences, what they are doing with the resources, how do they manage the weight, shape and size.



## Regulator

- Noticing when the baby has had enough and offer an alternative.



There could be a 'treasure basket champion' to lead practice and oversee training and the quality of treasure basket play. They could ensure treasure basket resources are safe and replenished regularly and families are given information to help them understand why treasure basket play is offered and its benefits.



## How Can Families Be Involved in Treasure Basket Play?

Share a fact sheet or information about the benefits of treasure basket play for their baby.

Take sequences of photos with rich annotations of individual children's treasure basket play explorations and share with families.

Encourage families to provide opportunities for treasure basket play at home and use valuable information that families can provide about their babies' interests and fascinations at home that influence items you might include in the basket.

Make a list of objects that you want for a treasure basket and enlist the help of families to bring in suitable items from home.

Host a family information session on treasure basket play outlining how it supports babies' learning.

If you have online learning journals you can upload short video footage to families in protected folders.

“

(Babies) suck, grasp, touch and feel objects, (rehearsing) behaviours which foster their earliest learning...

”

**Elinor Goldschmied 1989**

## Building on Treasure Basket Play

Treasure basket play can be developed for older children. In addition to a basic treasure basket, which has a mixture of different objects, themed baskets can be developed. The ideas below are not exhaustive but a starting point.

Ideas for interest baskets categorised by materials could include:

- wooden objects
- metal objects
- leather objects
- rubber objects
- glass objects
- fabric objects.

Ideas for interest baskets categorised by function could include:

- bathroom objects
- boxes and purses
- kitchen objects
- woodland objects
- different types of brushes
- things to wear.

Ideas for interest baskets categorised by 'characteristic' could include:

- objects that have a scent
- objects with handles
- transparent objects.
- objects that make a noise
- objects that open and close



## Heuristic Play

Usually, at the age a baby begins to be mobile, they not only discover that they can move their body, but they also begin to move and explore objects. Before very young children have acquired and can understand language, they are making sense of the world through their senses. They are ready to explore and naturally curious about the world around them.

Heuristic play is a term used to describe the play of very young children when they handle, explore and experiment with objects. The term 'heuristic' comes from the Greek word '*eurisko*' which means to 'discover or gain an understanding of'. This is exactly what mobile babies do when they put an object inside a container and discover that a smaller object can fit inside a hollow larger object, or that a round object can be rolled, or that objects with a flat surface can be stacked. It is essential that mobile babies are provided with appropriate materials to pursue their explorations, stimulate their senses and satisfy their curiosity.

Piaget states that 'play is children's work, that is what they do, it is their occupation'. He saw very young children as 'little scientists', exploring and experimenting, moving on from being content to feel and ponder objects to wanting to find out what can be done with them.

Heuristic play is an approach deeply rooted in young children's natural curiosity where the child leads the exploration. Elinor Goldschmied conceived the term 'Heuristic Play' to explain how to provide a more structured opportunity for this kind of exploratory play. Heuristic play consists of 'offering a group of children, for a defined period of time in a controlled environment, a large number of different kinds of objects and receptacles with which they play freely without adult intervention' (Goldschmied and Jackson 1994).

# The Principles That Underpin Heuristic Play

## The Resources Available

There needs to be plenty of equipment and sets of the same things available in order to promote the skills of concentration, exploration and problem solving.

## Setting up a Heuristic Play Session

Heuristic play sessions should be set up away from noise and distractions. This allows babies to concentrate on and explore equipment. If it is not possible to have a separate room, try screening off a small area within the main play space.

## The Role of The Adult

The adult role is to sit quietly and position themselves where they are not directly involved in the play but can observe the session and intervene and redirect play if needed. For example, holding a long tube so that a baby can reach inside to remove a small object and then repeat the action of posting and retrieving. Also, it gives ample opportunities for adults to observe closely a baby's explorations and fascinations. This approach supports babies' learning because it enables them to make their own discoveries.

## The Type of Materials Used

Babies are provided with a wide range of natural, domestic and recycled materials. It is important to gather a variety of objects with different properties and uses.

## Timings and Frequency of a Heuristic Play Session

The timings of a heuristic play session need to be carefully considered to ensure that babies are settled and able to fully engage with the experience. Ideally, heuristic play in some form would be offered every day but to be beneficial offered at least three times a week.

## The Intent of Heuristic Play

Play can and does take many forms and evolves as a baby develops. Whether play is alone or in groups, noisy, messy, energetic or quiet - all babies will benefit from engaging in heuristic play.

Heuristic play builds on what a baby already knows and can do. This helps them to practise and rehearse newly acquired skills and concepts to support future learning.

Heuristic play is an effective approach to support a baby's opportunity to explore, imagine and develop creativity.





# Implementation of Heuristic Play

## Space

Heuristic play must be planned and unhurried. Ideally, the heuristic play resources would be laid out 'ready' for the children when they enter the room or space. Materials are set out in clusters for each baby with a range of materials in each cluster.



## Inviting

How will you keep the space inviting? Adults need to inconspicuously tidy and reorder the heuristic play environment, so it remains inviting.

## Different Age Groups

Think about how you can manage different age groups of children. Consider timings when younger babies are sleeping or when using treasure baskets with younger babies. Consider how you can keep the time tranquil and limit interruptions as these will impact on levels of concentration and involvement.

## Tidying up

Children should be encouraged to help to collect items and place them in the bags/baskets at the end of the heuristic play session. Finally, consider storage - sacks can be hung on high pegs with shelves above for the many tins and containers you might collect.

## Impact of Heuristic Play

Heuristic play provides open-ended and exploratory experiences that benefit very young children's social and emotional development.

It encourages older children to extend their imaginative and creative thinking and use their language skills to begin to use one object to represent another (for example, a wooden block as a mobile phone).

One of the biggest benefits of this kind of play is the ample opportunities for independent decision-making. It allows children to feel that they have the chance to control their environment and learning, and to be able to play independently of adults.



Provide different sizes and shapes of containers. Apply heuristic play principles in other playful experiences such as water and sand play, so that babies can experiment with quantities and measures.

Heuristic play strongly supports babies to begin to explore using trial and error methods. In this way, they learn about the properties of materials and experience concepts such as size, shape, capacity and mobility.

Learning how to maintain attention and focus on an activity is an important skill for children to develop. When children are particularly fascinated and engaged by what they are doing their concentration levels are considerably higher.

## The Role of the Key Person in Facilitating Heuristic Play

Settings need to ensure that all practitioners understand their role during heuristic time. Settings need to ensure that heuristic play is balanced with the provision full of plentiful opportunities to support and encourage children's language and emerging speech patterns. However, the adult's role should not be underestimated (see below).

Quality, planned experiences for children can best be provided by a skilled and knowledgeable adult who knows and understands the children's interests and has a secure, trusting relationship with them. The key person is ideally placed to carry out this role as they will be attuned to the individual behaviour of the child and also to be a facilitator for their patterns of play. Sometimes, detailed observations can be made of a child or small number of children.

## The Role of the Key Person in Supporting Heuristic Play Sessions

Think about the timings of heuristic play throughout the week so that babies attending on different days all have the opportunity to participate in heuristic play.

Ensure a rich and plentiful range of materials in order to maximise interest and concentration, and minimise conflict over specific objects.

Set out items to achieve a stimulating environment that evokes exploration and investigation.

Give appropriate supervision to ensure that babies are safe at all times as they play but you should not interfere in the play.

Clearing up is an extension to the session. It needs to be a calm and unhurried process.

Involve children in clearing away using gestures and simple respectful language, possibly naming the item.

## The Role of the Key Person in Observing Heuristic Play

Observing babies involved in heuristic play provides adults with an insight in to each child's development and helps to support the planning of next steps - helping to meet the learning and development requirements of the 'Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage'.

By taking a quiet observer's role the adult's presence gives babies assurance and supports them to become involved in their play and explorations.

Noticing babies' interests and fascinations enables provision to be planned that reflects their unique characteristics, fascinations and enthusiasms.

Sensitive observation during a heuristic play session will give the key person an insight in to several aspects of a baby's development including their cognitive skills, awareness of others and coordination.



**Provide a range of objects of various textures and weights in treasure baskets to excite and encourage babies' interests.**

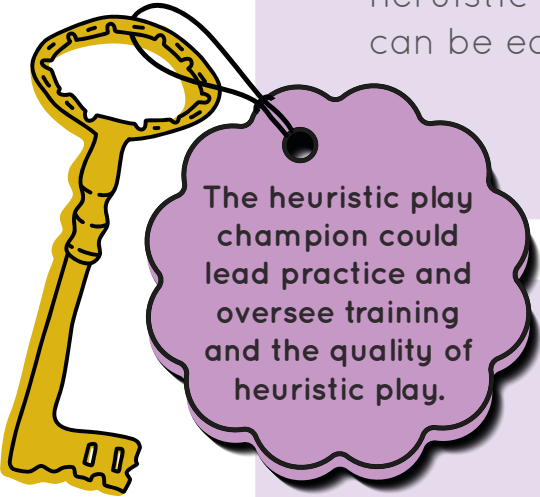
### **Collecting and replenishing resources for heuristic play can be arduous.**

You can make this easier by involving families, friends and colleagues. Continue to build the collection of heuristic play resources so they can be easily replenished.

### **Sustaining the momentum of consistent heuristic play practice.**

Identify a 'heuristic play champion' - someone who passionately believes in the benefits of heuristic play and keeps other staff motivated and involved.

## **Potential Barriers to Heuristic Play and Possible Solutions**



The heuristic play champion could lead practice and oversee training and the quality of heuristic play.

### **Do staff understand the benefits of offering heuristic play?**

Ensure all staff access professional development to support their understanding of heuristic play as part of their induction process.

### **Things can be difficult to manage?**

Ensure that sessions are planned throughout the week. Ensure that sessions are offered at the right time of day, so that children are not too tired to participate and staff are available.



## How Can Families Be Involved in Heuristic Play?

Provide a display of photos of heuristic play with links to what children are learning and the characteristics of effective learning. Take footage of children engaged in heuristic play to share with families.

Share a fact sheet or information about the benefits of heuristic play for their child.

Involve families in the development of resources by asking them to add to your heuristic resource collections.

Take sequences of photos with rich annotations of individual children's heuristic play explorations and share with families.

Provide a heuristic play session for families and share an informal presentation on the benefits of heuristic play in supporting very young children's learning.

Encourage families to provide opportunities for heuristic play at home – they probably do it without realising it!

If you have online learning journals you can upload short video footage to families in protected folders.

## Offering Heuristic Play Materials

The materials offered to children during a heuristic play session are not conventional plastic toys. They are a range of collections of everyday containers (please see list below).

The objects for heuristic play can be drawn from many different sources, for example:

- natural objects – pebbles, shells
- household objects – wooden doorknobs, dolly pegs, curtain rings
- recycled objects – lids, corks, cardboard tubes
- toys – various types of balls, wheeled and wooden vehicles, wooden blocks
- general purpose objects – bath chains, hair rollers, coasters, scourers.

## Suggested Materials to Promote Heuristic Play

### Containers

- Biscuit or bottle tins with lids
- Various sized tins with smooth rims
- Wide necked plastic bottles
- Yoghurt pots or jars
- Glass jars (tiny ones with thick glass)
- Flowerpots
- Nesting Ali Baba baskets
- Cardboard or wooden boxes (with/without lids)
- Cardboard tubes (for example, Pringles)



### Objects to Collect or Make

- Cardboard cylinders (eg insides of kitchen paper, cling film or foil)
- One metre lengths of silk or velvet ribbon or lace
- Sanded wooden 'off cuts' from a carpenter
- Bunches of keys
- Metal jar lids of all sizes (jam, pickle, coffee and so on)
- Wine and champagne bottle corks (large)
- Pinecones and shells
- Different sized metal/wooden spoons
- Very large buttons (5cm diameter)

## Objects to Buy

- Curtain rings (wooden and metal)
- Rubber door wedges
- Wooden dolly pegs (smooth)
- Lengths of bath chain (some 50cm, some one metre)
- Keyring links (ten links make a long enough chain)
- Round wooden doorknobs
- Simple and easy to handle wooden 'men' (without moving parts)
- Small wheeled wooden vehicles



## Objects Which Carry and Contain

- Large measuring spoon
- Purses and wallets
- Baskets and rigid carrier bags
- Large water containers with handles

## Objects Which Stack

- Kitchen roll holders with bracelets and curtain rings
- Wooden mug trees
- Wooden bricks of various sizes
- Small boxes of various sizes
- Set of nesting coasters

## Objects Which Roll

- Pom-poms
- Hair rollers
- Rubber balls
- Ping pong balls
- Wooden balls
- Foam balls
- Cotton reels
- Electrical cable spools (empty)
- Tubes (plastic or cardboard)



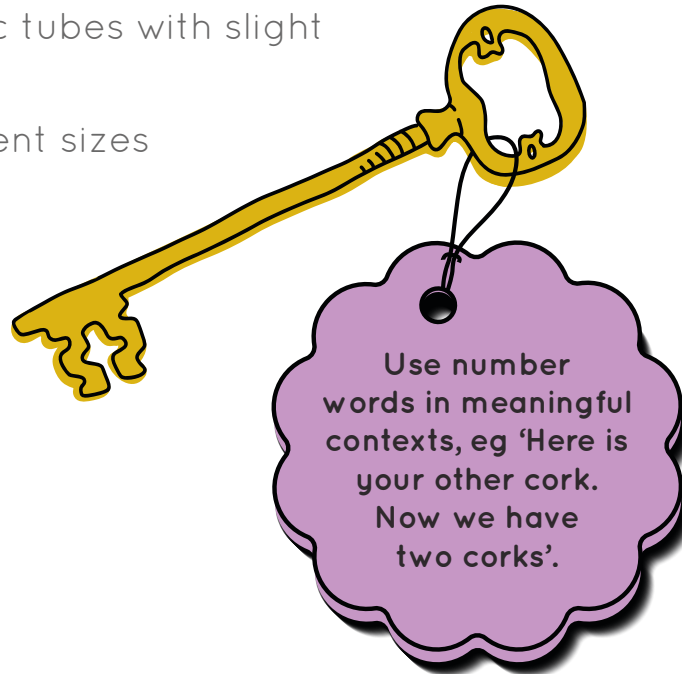


## Posting Objects

- Shoe boxes with hole in the lid and set of balls
- Boxes with slits in lid and large buttons (minimum diameter five centimetres)
- Tins with holes in lid with drinking straws
- Large buttons
- CDs

## Slotting Objects

- Rubber or wooden CD storage and square coasters or CDs
- Money boxes (minus bottom) and large buttons
- Several cardboard or plastic tubes with slight difference in diameter
- Several hair rollers of different sizes



## Ensuring the Safety of Heuristic Play Objects

Babies and young children should always have hygienic and safe playthings. One of the most important responsibilities of a practitioner is to ensure the safety of a baby so it is essential that all objects on offer are safe. Heuristic play objects should be regularly checked for damage, splinters and sharp edges or points. It is important to make sure that all materials are safe and age appropriate. Remember:

- make sure the items are 'washable, wipeable or disposable' and throw away disposable items after each use
- do not include small objects for babies that may cause a choking hazard
- there may be some items that you need to remove for older children (eg chains that can swing and hit others)
- all objects must be checked for any obvious hazards
- an adult should remain sitting close enough to observe when there is an imminent threat (and can move the child's hand or take an object from them)
- only choose items you are comfortable with the children exploring
- robust risk assessments need to be in place and completed for heuristic play as well as a cleaning policy.



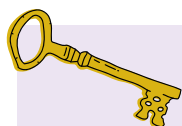
## A Case Study About:

# Kofi

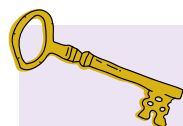
Eleven month old Kofi likes to play with cars; he has learnt how to spin the wheels of his truck after he turns it on its side. His dad told his key person that he often watches the washing machine or tumble dryer go around and laughs when he is spun around by dad.

Today in the setting they have some large and small stainless steel bowls for babies to explore. Kofi spends some time banging them with a wooden spoon, listening to the ring. After a while he loses interest and begins to moan. His key person turns the large bowl over and places a ball inside, she makes the ball

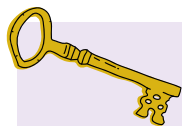
roll around the bowl. Kofi watches intently and when the ball stops spinning, looks at his key person to indicate he wants her to do it again. He smiles and then watches again as the ball spins. As it stops Kofi reaches for the bowl and jerks his arms; the ball moves but does not spin. After a couple of attempts the ball spins. Kofi smiles and watches the ball. He repeats this for some time, sometimes succeeding to make the ball spin, sometimes not. As he explores, his key person gives a commentary to what he is doing. "You've made the ball go round and round, round and round."



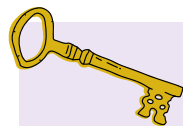
**What schematic play do you think Kofi is interested in?**



**How would you support Kofi's language development?**



**How would you further support him?**



**How do you use the information families provide about their children?**

## A Case Study About:

# Quinn

Quinn is seven months old and is sitting with her treasure basket, which contains an abundance of natural resources. She reaches in and her hand touches the jar lid containing a picture of her parents. She opens and closes her hand listening to the sound as it clatters against other objects. She often repeats this action as she explores, seemingly enjoying the noises she makes; most of the time she is making sounds, squealing, and babbling. Quinn then bends to mouth the lid. She reaches in to the basket grabbing a piece of material, she turns to where her key person is sitting quietly, she smiles; the key person responds by smiling and nodding, giving reassurance to Quinn, who returns to exploring the basket.

Quinn squeals as she continues to rummage in the basket. There is a scarf from the basket which she often returns to look at and touch. Quinn removes a piece of voile from the basket which she often turns to touch and places it by her side.

Quinn tries to pick up a small ball on a piece of string but does not quite manage it; she looks cross for a second. Quinn resumes exploring, as she does so, the basket turns slightly, this focusses her attention on a long handled wooden spoon; she bends her body so she can mouth it as it stands in her treasure basket. Quinn returns her attention to the jar lid and manages to pick it up, bangs it on the side of the basket, mouths it for a short time and returns it to the basket.



What further activities or resources will you provide for Quinn?

## A Case Study About:

# Malia

Malia is eight months old. Her key person has observed that she possibly has a trajectory schema. She can mostly sit unaided and enjoys playing with her treasure basket, especially the wooden spoon, enjoying passing it from hand to hand and waving it with an outstretched arm. She loves to be outside, and she really likes to feel the leaves of the trees putting both hands out and waving them. She recently showed delight when, after rain, she was showered with rain drops. Malia also likes looking at books, dropping things from her highchair and splashing in water.



**How could the key person support Malia in the setting?**



**How would you share this information about Malia's schema with her parents who both speak English as an additional language?**



## Further Reading

Elfer, P. (2002) Attachment and the Key Person Role [www.surestart.gov.uk](http://www.surestart.gov.uk) accessed 1st August 2009

Elfer, P, Goldschmied, E and Selleck, D (2003) Key Persons in the Nursery | *London, David Fulton*

Baby Bonds: Parenting, Attachment and a Secure Base for Children | *Sutton Trust 2014*

Why Love Matters | *Sue Gerhardt 2003*

From Birth to One the year of opportunity | *Maria Robinson 2003*

Treasure Baskets and Beyond: Realising the Potential of Sensory Rich Play | *Gascoyne, S. 2012*

Developing Play for the Under 3s: The Treasure Basket and Heuristic Play | *Hughes, A.M. 2006*

Treasure Baskets and Heuristic Play Ideas for Children from Six Months to Seven Years  
| *Featherstone. S.2013*

People Under Three: Young Children in Day Care  
| *Goldschmied, E. and Jackson, S. Second Edition 2003*

Treasure Baskets and Beyond: Realising the Potential of Sensory Rich Play | *Gascoyne, S. 2012*

Developing Play for the Under 3s: The Treasure Basket and Heuristic Play | *Hughes, A.M. 2006*

People Under Three: Young Children in Day Care  
| *Goldschmied, E. and Jackson, S. Second Edition 2003*

# Heuristic Play Product Suppliers

## Suppliers of Heuristic Play Products include:

[www.cosydirect.com](http://www.cosydirect.com)

[www.earlyexcellence.com](http://www.earlyexcellence.com)

[www.hope-education.co.uk](http://www.hope-education.co.uk)

[www.littleacornstomightyoaks.co.uk](http://www.littleacornstomightyoaks.co.uk)

[www.playtoz.co.uk](http://www.playtoz.co.uk)

[www.reflectionsonlearning.co.uk/](http://www.reflectionsonlearning.co.uk/)

[www.tts-group.co.uk/](http://www.tts-group.co.uk/)

Working with babies involves taking care of the most vulnerable members of our society. Guiding and nurturing babies to make sense of the world, be effective communicators, happy, active, and healthy human beings is a privilege that those working with babies know only too well. A warm, strong attachment with the key person underpins babies' developmental achievements and forms the building blocks for learning throughout life. Experiences and environments that support the interactive process of early language and brain development bolster good baby room practice and contribute to the rapid development and growth of babies' brains. Therefore, it is clear that high-quality baby provision with knowledgeable and experienced key people has a crucial role to play in babies' development and it is hoped that this document will provide some guidance to the amazing workforce working for amazing babies and their families.

“In the first few years of life, a child's brain develops rapidly, driven by a mix of experience, environment and genes.....in the early years their brains are particularly sensitive.”

Lighting up young brains 2016, Save the Children

