

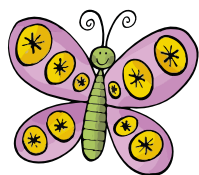
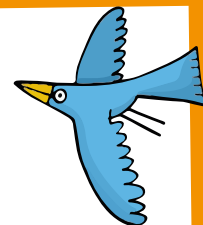


children
in
hospital
IRELAND



THE PLAYFUL PROJECT

Table of Contents



| | |
|--|----|
| Acknowledgements | 4 |
| Foreword | 5 |
| Section 1: The Power of Play | 6 |
| Play as a Right | 6 |
| Play and Development | 6 |
| Play and Learning | 6 |
| Play and Choice | 7 |
| Play and Healing | 8 |
| Play and Fun! | 8 |
| Play in the Hospital Setting | 9 |
| Play in the Ward | 9 |
| Play for Children in Isolation Rooms | 10 |
| Play in the Emergency Department | 11 |
| Play in the Outpatients Department | 12 |
| Section 2: Making Play Inclusive | 13 |
| Children with Additional Needs | 13 |
| Communication and Play Tips | 14 |
| Tips from Down Syndrome Ireland | 15 |
| Tips from AsIAM | 16 |
| Section 3: Play Ideas | 17 |
| Arts and Crafts | 17 |
| Card Games | 19 |
| Celebrating Books | 20 |
| Construction Play | 21 |
| Creative ReUse with ReCreate | 22 |
| Creative Writing with Fighting Words | 25 |
| Involving the whole family in play | 27 |
| Music and Play | 28 |
| Pretend Play | 29 |
| Storytelling | 30 |
| Storytelling with Children's Books Ireland | 30 |
| Good read-aloud titles | 31 |
| Technology and Play | 32 |
| Treasure Basket | 33 |
| Section 4: Sensory Play in Early Childhood | 34 |
| The sensory play toolkit | 34 |
| Tips for using the sensory play toolkit | 39 |
| Adapting sensory play for children with additional needs | 40 |
| Sensory Stories | 41 |
| Tips for sensory stories from ChildVision | 42 |
| Sample sensory stories from Enable Ireland | 43 |
| The Pop-up Picnic with Helium Arts | 44 |
| Appendices | |
| Appendix A: Resources | 45 |
| Appendix B: Bibliography | 46 |
| Appendix C: Contributors | 47 |





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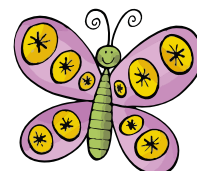
We consulted with volunteers, hospital play specialists and staff members in 13 hospitals across the country about what works when facilitating play for young children in hospital and the areas in which volunteers might need more support. Arising from the strategies and needs identified in the consultations, we developed resources, training videos and training opportunities to empower volunteers. It is our hope that this manual can be a resource to inspire and support all Children in Hospital Ireland volunteers.

We are indebted to the great number of people, from both inside and outside CHI, who assisted in the development of this resource: we greatly appreciate their contribution.

In particular:

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Deirdre Cowman
Playful Project Officer
Children in Hospital Ireland



Foreword

I am delighted to introduce this resource manual which is the culmination of a year of consultations, workshops and training events. The manual is intended to be a resource for all CHI volunteers working with children in hospital in the age-group 0 to 6 years old.

Children in Hospital Ireland (CHI) was formed in 1970 by a group of parents who were committed to promoting positive changes to support children and before, during and after the hospitalisation of a child. Since then, CHI has advocated for the child's right to the best healthcare, and their right to education and play while they are in hospital. CHI is widely recognised to have played an important role in influencing many of the improvements in the way hospitals respond to the needs of children and their parents which have taken place in Ireland since the 1970s.

Today, CHI has over 450 volunteers engaged in children's hospitals and paediatric wards across the country. In all, our volunteers are present in thirteen hospitals. It is these volunteers who are the face of CHI and who support parents and children in hospital through providing information and play activities. We know that play is an essential right of every child; its importance is signalled by the fact that a specific Article in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is devoted to the right to play.

This right is especially important and relevant when a child is in hospital and facing the challenges of being ill and away from home. Play brings a sense of normality and familiarity to a child in hospital when other things may be strange and perplexing. CHI volunteers are present in hospital playrooms, in wards and also in Emergency Departments and Outpatient Departments. For children, the CHI play service provides distraction, fun and a sense of calm and for parents it provides a break when they know their child is happy and safe.

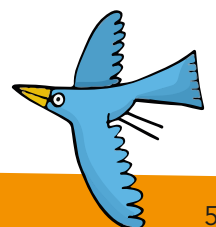
This resource manual for facilitating play is full of ideas for games, crafts and other hospital-appropriate activities for children in the 0–6 age group. It serves as a valuable reminder of how young children can continue to have fun even when they are in hospital. The manual is available to download from our website and it is accompanied by short training videos, which are also available on our website.

The development of the manual would not have been possible without funding provided by the Early Childhood Ireland Pyjama Day Fund at the Community Foundation for Ireland. We in CHI are most grateful for this funding, which not only facilitated the production of the manual but enabled CHI to provide volunteer training, supports and resources tailored to the specific needs of the young child in a hospital setting.

Particular acknowledgement must be made of the work of the Playful Project Officer, Deirdre Cowman, who organised workshops, consulted with CHI volunteers, hospital staff and other, like-minded, organisations, and drafted the text of this manual. Her work has been central to bringing this excellent resource manual and other training materials to fruition.

Anna Gunning
CEO, Children in Hospital Ireland

January 2019



The Power of Play

“Children need the freedom and time to play.
Play is not a luxury. Play is a necessity.”

- Kay Redfield Jamison

Play as a Right

Play is fundamental to a child's life. A child has the right to play and this is acknowledged in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which, in Article 31, recognises 'the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts'.

Likewise, Article 7 of the EACH Charter (the set of principles for children's healthcare developed by the European Association for Children in Hospital) states that 'children shall have full opportunity for play, recreation and education suited to their age and condition'.

Children in Hospital Ireland recognises that because a child is in hospital it does not mean that their right to play is suspended. Indeed, sick children need to play more than ever. As a CHI volunteer you help to ensure that children in hospital can fully enjoy their right to play.



Play and Development

In facilitating play in the hospital setting, you are also helping to support a child's development. The brain grows fastest in the first five years of life and the wiring of the brain makes multiple and complicated neuron connections that contribute to our future ability to learn, achieve and be happy. Play strengthens and supports the connections between the neurons of the brain and provides a rich opportunity for physical, intellectual, language, emotional and social development.



Play and Learning

There is growing evidence for the role of play in many aspects of learning, especially in the early years. While the CHI volunteer role is not about education, it is clear that by facilitating play, you are also providing rich learning opportunities.

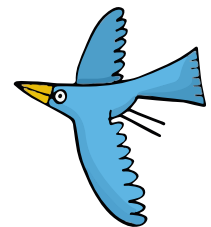


Aistear (the Irish word for journey) is the curriculum framework for children from birth to six years in Ireland. One of the key principles of Aistear is that children learn and develop through play and hands-on experiences. Aistear presents children's learning and development through **four themes**:

1. Well-being is about children being confident, happy and healthy.
2. Identity and Belonging is about children having a positive sense of who they are, developing a sense of their culture and heritage and feeling that they are valued and respected as part of a family and community.
3. Communicating is about children sharing their experiences, thoughts, ideas and feelings with growing confidence and competence in a variety of ways and for different purposes.
4. Exploring and Thinking is about children making sense of the things, places and people in their world.



Think of all the ways that children explore these themes in their play in the hospital!



Play and Choice

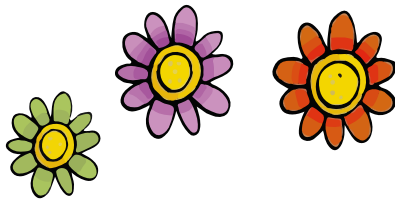
Choice is so important for children in hospital – they may feel like they have little control over what happens to them in hospital, so volunteers have an important role in offering children the opportunity to choose what they want to play with and how they want to play.

- Choice can be offered to babies by giving them a range of objects which they can explore to discover their weight, smell, texture, colour and shape. Remember to always be aware of infection control procedures in the hospital.
- Toddlers need more creative materials so you can offer blocks, simple jigsaws, craft materials, toy cars, musical instruments etc.
- Young children have increasing language skills and may be developing interests in symbols such as pictures and words so offer a range of picture books, games, and materials for pretend play.

Play and Healing

An added bonus of play in the hospital setting is that it can have a special therapeutic effect. Play can be a natural way for children to relieve stress and work through different emotions and experiences. Research supports the role of play in health and wellbeing – for example, play is associated with decreased stress, increased positive emotions, improved brain function, boosted immune system and enhanced bonds with friends and family.

Professionals such as hospital play specialists, play therapists, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists also harness the therapeutic power of play in their work to support children's healing (for example, in preparing children for invasive procedures, for supporting children's rehabilitation or for promoting coping skills for children who face long periods of hospitalisation).



Play and Fun

There is no denying that play can be fun and that is why children are drawn to it! One of the key features of play is that it is enjoyable. There is no right or wrong way to play and play will look different for each child.



Play in the Hospital Setting



Play in the Playroom

Many CHI volunteers are based primarily in playrooms. These rooms are generally well-stocked with toys, games and arts supplies and may be supervised by a hospital play specialist.

In the playroom, the volunteers may facilitate free play and/or organise some play activities such as arts and crafts, games or story time.

My six-year-old daughter had a brief stay recently for a broken arm operation and was delighted with the playroom provided. The volunteers were fantastic; their focus on the children and the warmth they showed them was wonderful to see. Hospital can obviously be very stressful for both children and parents and the medical staff don't have the resources to spend a lot of time with them. Your volunteers fill that gap superbly. If there was a little more of that kindness practised in the outside world what a better place it would be.

"Each week I enter the playroom with a few ideas in my head but I take my lead from the children present. If I have children who are reluctant to join in I start one of my projects and within a short time they usually get involved" (Audrey, volunteer in Drogheda)

Some hospitals also have outdoor playgrounds or play areas so volunteers can organise play activities outside when appropriate. However, children in hospital do not always have access to a playroom or outdoor play area so CHI volunteers also facilitate play in a number of other settings.

Play in the ward

Some children in hospital are not able to visit the playroom and some hospitals do not have play facilities. In these cases, CHI volunteers bring play to the bedside.

The children that you visit on the ward may be waiting for or recovering from treatment or surgery. They may be feeling unwell and in need of distraction; they may be tired and have a short attention span; or they may be well into recovery and eager for something to do. In any case, opportunities to play are essential! CHI volunteers can spend a few minutes talking to the child and/or their parents/carers to find out what they might like to play with before going to the playroom or trolley to get supplies.

Volunteers have pointed out that many children already have toys with them in the wards. The most valuable things you can share with them are your time and your company.

Play for children in isolation rooms

Some paediatric patients require isolation due to reduced immunity, infectious conditions or as a result of a treatment they have had. Where children are in isolation rooms you may be able to bring in material which must be left with the child or disposed of afterwards, or you may not be able to bring in any materials at all. Always check with a nurse if you are not sure.

We asked volunteers what they do when they visit children in isolation wards and their suggestions included:

- Bring a paper plate with a selection of paints – if you don't have any paintbrushes to spare, bring some cotton buds
- Make up a story or sing songs together
- Print or write out their name on paper and let them decorate it as a sign for their bedside
- Provide themed projects that will take time to complete – for example, make a poster based on seasonal events, favourite movies or TV shows etc.
- Bring colouring pages/activity sheets and single-use crayons
- Make animals out of surgical gloves and let the child decorate these
- Make a butterfly/angel/spider out of a paper towel or other disposable materials – this can be kept by the child as bedside decoration or become a prop for a story



For details of how to make the elephant pictured above, see www.cookerandalooker.com/how-to-make-an-elephant-from-a-surgical-glove

Play in the Emergency Department

Children coming to the Emergency Department may have no previous experience of hospital and are likely to have had little or no time to prepare for the experience. They may have long waiting times for treatment and their parent or carer may be anxious or upset. Play can provide a welcome distraction and a way of relieving stress and frustration.

There may be very little play material available in the Emergency Department so volunteers provide play materials from trolleys or storage areas. Appropriate materials include board games, jigsaws, colouring pages and activity sheets, quick craft activities and books suitable for a range of ages and interests. Children can be called away for treatment so activities with flexible time spans are most effective.

Depending on how busy the Emergency Department is and how much space is available, some play activities could include:

Story time – Bring along a story book or make up stories with the children. If there are older children in the Emergency Department you could ask them to tell a story with you or to teach you some new rhymes for the little ones

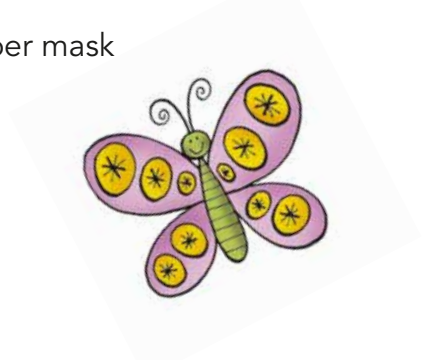
Board game tournament – Set-up some games that don't take too long (for example, Guess Who or Connect Four) and invite the children to take turns playing each other. The small, portable versions of games are good for busy spaces. Games that are familiar to the children are good as there is usually no need to explain rules

Pretend play – use simple props such as toy phones or pots and pans to encourage children to use their imaginations

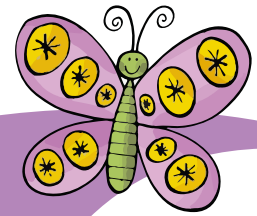
Opportunities for movement – Children can become frustrated or distressed when expected to sit still for long periods so games that provide opportunities for gentle movement can be very welcome (try blowing and catching bubbles if appropriate or set up a game on the floor)

Quick activities – We recently asked some groups of volunteers to suggest ways to entertain a child (or small group of children) if all they have is a couple of crayons, a piece of paper and their imagination. They came up with a long list of favourites that they adapt for the age and abilities of the child including ...

- Noughts and crosses (or Xs and Os)
- I spy (I spy with my little eye, something beginning with ...)
- Take the dog for a walk (doodle one continuous line all over the page and then colour in each section)
- Make and decorate a paper boat, a paper airplane or a paper mask



Play in the Outpatients Department



My two-year-old daughter had an appointment in Outpatients yesterday. I had been dreading it as I remember her appointment last year and what a nightmare it was trying to keep her amused for several hours in the waiting room. Yesterday, however, was a different story. There were two lovely ladies there organising activities. It was really great and made such a difference to us – it is a fantastic service and must be brilliant for parents who have to visit the hospital regularly.

Helena from Dublin

The Outpatients Department may see children in a number of different situations. For some children, this may be a one-off appointment or an initial consultation; other children may be regular attendees. The provision of play can make children feel welcome in the hospital. Play volunteers can lessen the impact of waiting, reduce boredom and often help a nervous child to focus on something else. Children may be called away for their appointments so activities with a flexible time span are a good idea. If there is space, you might set up some board games, jigsaws, building blocks and drawing materials to play with.

- Arts and crafts activities are always popular. Choose crafts which can be quickly finished to take home (for example, simple puppets or greeting cards).
- Colouring pages and activity sheets can be especially helpful when the waiting area is busy. Children (and their parents) may need gentle reminders to return crayons or pencils when they are finished.
- Card games are a good way to involve young and old.
- Make a fish bowl – cut out a large fish-bowl shape from card or paper and ask all the children to draw and cut out a fish to stick to it. You could also make a fish-shaped stencil or have pre-cut fish shapes so that children who are not there for long can simply decorate one to add to the fishbowl

Image of fishbowl art work from Sligo Hospital courtesy of Mary Cavanagh (Hospital Play Specialist)



Making Play Inclusive

Children with Additional Needs

The term 'additional needs' encompasses a range of conditions and circumstances that require particular or specialised support (Owens, 2007). Children with additional needs may include those who:

- Have physical disabilities
- Have sensory impairments like vision or hearing loss
- Have learning or speech difficulties
- Have a health condition
- Have chronic or terminal illness
- Are at risk of abuse or neglect
- Demonstrate challenging behaviour
- Are experiencing emotional trauma
- Have a diagnosed condition such as Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Down syndrome or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Are gifted and talented
- Speak English as a second language

As you can see from the list above, almost all children that you interact with in hospital will have some level of additional need simply by virtue of being in the hospital. Some additional needs are visible while others may be invisible. However, all children play! Some children require extra support from an adult in order to play but one of the benefits of play is that it is flexible and can be adapted to suit the needs of the individual child.

In order to facilitate play for all children, a volunteer might, for example:

- Use pictures or gestures to communicate with a child who is non-verbal, uses a different language, or cannot speak for medical reasons
- Simplify an activity by breaking it into smaller parts
- Keep instructions simple and to a minimum
- Use lots of repetition and take lots of breaks in your storytelling, game or activity
- Provide multi-sensory play experiences and notice how the child responds
- Have some partially pre-prepared crafts ready for children who might have shorter concentration spans

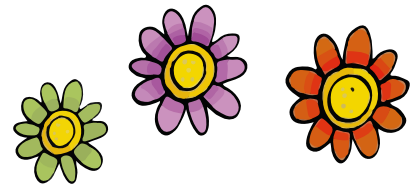
As a play volunteer, you are not expected to be an expert in different conditions but it can be helpful to keep in mind that some additional needs may influence how a child plays. It is important to remember that all children have the capacity to engage in play and as a CHI volunteer you should do your best to adapt play to the needs and abilities of all children.

The following section provides some tips for facilitating play for children with additional needs. Further tips for supporting children with additional needs can be found in the section on sensory play.

Communication and Play Tips for Children with Additional Needs

Strategies provided by Katherine Deegan, Liaison Worker for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Registered Healthcare Play Specialist, Waterford Children's Disability Services

- Providing visual supports by showing the actual object being referred to is always beneficial for children with special needs. For example, if asking 'Would you like to do colouring or a jigsaw?' hold up a colouring book or markers as well as a jigsaw so the child can see what the choice is.
- Another use of visual supports can be using a small white board or paper to write down choices for children to choose an activity.
- Visual supports:
 - Attract and hold a child's attention
 - Provide extra processing time
 - Help the child to focus on message
 - Make abstract concepts more concrete
 - Help to provide predictability in an otherwise unpredictable environment.
- Adjust your communication by using clear and simple language.
- Give time to process and wait for the child to respond.
- Always be at a child's eye level when communicating with them.
- You may need to teach/show the child how to play a particular game or activity, or if this is too socially demanding, suggest that you and Mum or Dad play initially and the child can watch and observe how the game is played.
- If doing group play activities in the playroom, it may be useful to write down what the sequence of activities or what activities the group are doing. Knowing what's happening and when an activity will finish helps to relieve anxiety for children with additional needs.



Tips from Down Syndrome Ireland



Play development of children with Down syndrome – what research has told us:

The development of play for children with Down syndrome follows a universal progression and the same developmental sequence as typically developing children (Down Syndrome Education International, 2016; Venuti, De Falco, Esposito and Bornstein, 2009).

However, according to Down Syndrome Education International (2016) children with Down syndrome:

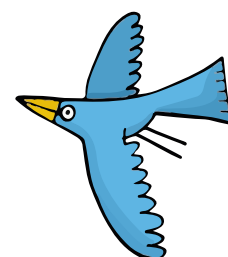
- May be less likely to request play than typically developing children
- May be less likely to explore new objects to find out what you can do with them
- May be less persistent at play
- May get 'stuck' in repetitive play

As a result, it is important to remember that simply providing play equipment does not guarantee that play will happen. For children with Down syndrome, play partners or play facilitators are very important to support them in developing their play skills, as they may be more dependent on someone else to show them how to play. This does not always have to be another adult; it is often another child.

If adults are facilitating play, it is still always important to follow the child's lead and interests. All of us are more engaged in activities that are more interesting to us; children with Down syndrome are no different!

Top tips for facilitating play from Down Syndrome Ireland:

- Children with Down syndrome find listening difficult (and may have hearing difficulties), so provide visual materials to support the spoken word (gestures, signs, pictures)
- Use good, clear, colourful pictures (as many children with Down syndrome have poor vision). Bold, saturated colours are better than pastels
- Language is a significant difficulty for children with Down syndrome. Adjust your own language to compensate. Use short, simple sentences. Don't give multiple instructions in one sentence
- Allow children processing time – pause and give them time to respond (at least 20 seconds)
- Give children with Down syndrome frequent movement breaks, not long periods sitting in a chair
- Consider how accessible the environment is for children with Down syndrome who may have motor difficulties. For example, if a child with Down syndrome is not yet walking, are toys and books etc. in the environment accessible to them, or are they on high shelves?



Tips from AsIAm

Autism is a complex, invisible condition which a person is born with. Autism is a developmental condition which means that the way a person communicates, interacts and understands other people, and the world, is different to those who do not have the condition. It can be described as a 'spectrum' which means it impacts different people, in different ways, to differing degrees at different times and in different situations.

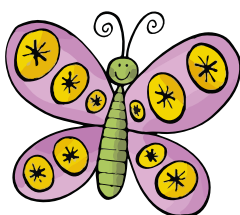


Children on the Autism Spectrum may experience differences in the areas of:

- Communication
- Social interaction
- Social Imagination
- Sensory processing

Top tips for facilitating play for children with Autistic Spectrum Difference

- **Use clean clear language.** Some children on the Autism Spectrum are literal interpreters so may find sarcasm or irony difficult to understand. Other children may be non-verbal or unable to speak so focus less on verbal interaction and more on play activities that don't involve speaking.
- **Use the child's interests to initiate and promote interaction.** Most autistic children have very specific and intense areas of interest that they like to focus on. By using this area of interest as a foundation, you will be more likely to engage them in a positive and enjoyable play experience.
- **Follow their lead.** It may take time for the child to be comfortable with you, so it is best sometimes to engage in 'parallel play' until they feel comfortable approaching you.
- **Be mindful of the environment.** If it is noisy/bright/busy they may find it more difficult to play or interact. Remember that even if we do not find it to be overwhelming, sensory processing differences can mean the child experiences the environment in a very different way.





Play Ideas

Arts and Crafts

Arts and crafts are some of the main activities that our volunteers engage in and craft supplies are usually in high demand in hospital wards and playrooms. Painting seems to be a big favourite!

Opportunities for creative expression contribute to development in early childhood. Arts and crafts provide young children with opportunities for sensory exploration and language development and for practicing fine motor skills.



The important role of arts and crafts is recognised in Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (2009) which includes the Learning Goal that children will express themselves through the visual arts using skills such as cutting, drawing, gluing, sticking, painting, building, printing, sculpting, and sewing.

Arts and crafts activities are especially welcome in the hospital setting as they provide opportunities for self-expression at a time when a child may be feeling especially vulnerable. Arts and crafts have the added advantage of providing something fun for the child to take home with them. It can be helpful to have some pre-made crafts to give children ideas of the sorts of things they can make.

The following page has lots of suggestions and ideas for craft activities to get you started. However, these are just ideas and you should feel free to follow the interests of the children you meet. Remember that it does not matter what the finished product looks like. Allow the children to explore techniques and materials and come up with their own ideas. Have fun cutting, gluing and decorating!

Some suggested arts and crafts activities for young children:

Collage

Provide coloured paper, card and PVA glue or glue sticks and lay out other craft materials like stickers, foam pieces and pieces of crepe paper. Invite the children to explore the materials and create whatever they feel like.

Stained glass pictures

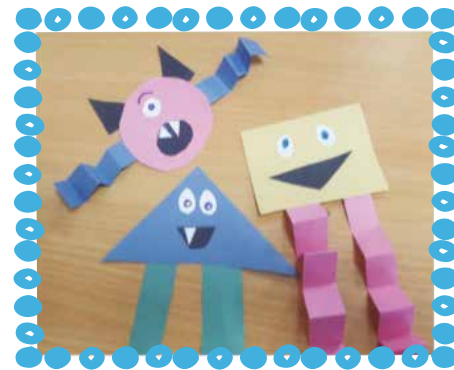
Create the look of stained glass pictures by placing strips of masking tape or painters tape on card and painting each section a different colour using watercolours or acrylic paints. When the paint has dried, gently remove the tape to reveal the finished artwork.

Handprint magic

"I find that simply tracing the outline of a child's or my own hand provides a variety of play ideas – painting a face on the hand print, giving the hand print a manicure, making an animal out of the hand, sticking feathers on it – the children have wonderful imaginations and it is often a great place to start. One child made a character from her handprint and continued to make an entire family of handprint characters." (Caroline, volunteer in Temple Street)

Shape monsters

This craft can help children to identify shapes and colours and gives them lots of freedom to create whatever they want. This can also be a great way to use up any scrap paper that is left over from other projects. Cut craft paper into different shapes and sizes and allow the children to make their own monsters. Folded strips of paper make great arms and legs or you could also use pipe cleaners if you have them.



Self-portraits

Invite the child to make a picture of themselves using any of the art and craft material you have. They can add in images of their favourite people and things in the background. This can be a great way to get to know a child.

Jewellery making

You can use ready-made beads or make and decorate your own from plastic or paper straws, rolled up paper, or modelling clay. Help children to string the beads on stretchy cord and tie the ends.



Card making

Children in hospital may want to make 'Thank You' cards for people who have visited or brought gifts during their stay. They can also make cards for lots of other occasions!



Butterfly Painting

Make paint blobs on one side of a piece of paper, fold it in half, help the child to move the paint around and open out to create a beautiful butterfly design.

Lollipop stick crafts

Lollipop sticks are very versatile and can be used for all sorts of crafts. Popular lollipop stick crafts include treasure boxes, picture frames and puppets.



Seasonal decorations

Cut out shapes to match the time of year and add ribbon loops to tie them up or stick them onto paper chains (examples: hearts in February, shamrocks in March, smiley suns in the summer and snowflakes in winter).

Card Games

Beggar My Neighbour (2+ players)

Deal the cards face down in piles in front of each player.

The player to the left turns one card face-up onto the pot, and so on around the table until someone turns up a picture card (King, Queen, Jack, Ace).

As soon as this happens, the next player must put 'forfeit cards' onto the pot as follows:

- 1 card for a Jack
- 2 cards for a Queen
- 3 cards for a King
- 4 cards for an Ace

If, while playing the forfeit, the player turns up a picture card, then the next player has to make a forfeit.

However, if the forfeit is paid out entirely, then the player who turned up the picture card, takes all of the cards in the pot and places them face down under their own pile of card. A player is out when they run out of cards. The winner is the player who ends up with all the cards.

Old Maid (2+ players)

Remove one of the Queens from the standard pack and deal the remaining cards out, one at a time to each player.

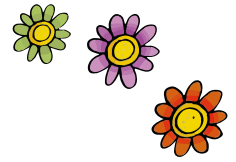
Each player looks through their cards and matches them into pairs of the same value (e.g. two threes, two Queens etc.). The player places any pairs they have in front of them on the table, but keeps the remaining cards in their hand until they can find matches for these.

Once all of the players have sorted and placed their pairs on the table, you should fan out your remaining cards face down on the table so no one else can see what they are. Offer these to the player on your left, who chooses one of your cards. If this matches any of the cards in their hand, they can place that pair in front of them on the table. Then they spread out their remaining cards and let the next player pick a card. Play proceeds in this way until all cards have been paired except one – the odd Queen, which cannot be paired – and the player who has that card is the Old Maid!

Snap (2+ players)

Deal out all cards face down, one at a time, beginning to the dealer's left. It does not matter if some players have more cards than others. Each player puts their cards in a pile, face down in front of them. The player on the dealer's left turns over the top card of his pile and puts it face up starting a pile of cards next to his face down cards. The next player to the left does the same and so on around the table. When someone turns up a card that matches a card already face up on another player's pile, the first person to notice the two matched cards calls out 'Snap!' and wins both piles. This player adds the cards to the bottom of their face-down pile. The goal is to win all of the cards!

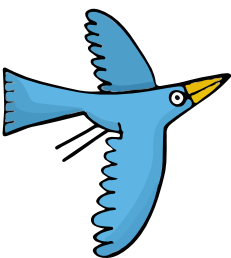




Celebrating Books

Share the joy of reading and the magic of children's books in your hospital. These are just some ideas to get you started. We'd love to hear what else you come up with.

- **Travelling story** – invite each child in the hospital to draw or write a page for the story and pass it on. Volunteers can help the children to think about what might happen next.
- **Illustration station** – Invite the children to submit a drawing based on their favourite book. Make a display of the drawings to celebrate the magic of children's books.
- **Big book quiz** – Come up with quiz questions about popular children's books and see if the children and their families can figure them out.
- **Picture book decorations** – Decorate the ward/s or playroom with decorations inspired by popular children's picture books – for example, The Gruffalo, The Very Hungry Caterpillar, The Tiger who came to Tea.
- **Story time chats** – Make a cosy story corner or visit bedsides and invite the children to take turns talking about their favourite books. Who are their favourite characters? What do they like about the story? Would they change the ending? Who are their favourite heroes and villains? What kind of stories would they like to write?
- **Fairytales fun** – Invite children to tell their own fairy-tales starting with 'once upon a time ...'
- **Harry Potter party** – Organise some Hogwarts-themed games, such as Pin the Glasses on Harry Potter, potion-making or a hunt for magical creatures (hide some toy dragons or pictures of other creatures in the playroom or ward).
- **Picture book activities** – The World Book Day website has activity sheets to go with lots of popular picture books.
- **Baby books** – Visit the baby ward with a selection of books for little ones. Talk to parents about their child's favourite books.
- **Best book poll** – In busy areas like the outpatients or emergency departments, give each child a post-it to write their favourite book and collect all the post-its onto a poster.
- **Story sacks** – Fill a bag, box, pillow case or basket with one of your favourite picture books together with relevant props like masks, toy animals or cut-outs of characters. Help the children to retell the stories or make up their own using the props.



Construction Play

Building blocks, DUPLO and LEGO are huge hits with most children and construction play is great for building a range of skills, including physical skills and problem-solving skills. This type of play can also be a great creative outlet and a way to introduce mathematical and scientific concepts. Building materials are really open-ended and the possibilities are endless for little builders. Building things together can be a great way to encourage cooperative play so it can be especially beneficial for a child who has been stuck in their room without much social interaction.

For under-fives, stick with DUPLO and other bigger building materials and for children aged five or over move on to LEGO and other building sets with smaller pieces.

Ideas for construction play

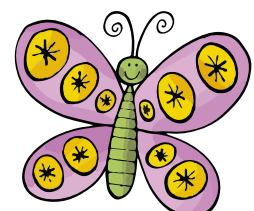
- Stacking cups
- Sorting by colour
- Making things from recycled materials (if appropriate in your setting)
- Counting blocks
- Assemble a race track or train track
- Set up a domino run using building blocks
- Build a house/school/hospital/town/zoo... whatever!



? Did you know that LEGO can be used as a therapeutic medium? It has been found to be especially beneficial for helping to build social skills.

Top tips for using LEGO as a therapeutic medium from Aoife Kelly, play therapist at Safari Kids

1. Less is always more - I use LEGO Serious Play (LSP) starter kit
2. Allow the child to lead the process
3. If the child starts talking reflect what they say, so they know you have heard them. Otherwise, let the child work away in silence with you beside them
4. Only use the LEGO if the child invites you to
5. Maintain focus and attention on the child
6. Wait, watch and wonder and let the child tell their LEGO story when they are ready.



Suggestions for Creative ReUse from ReCreate



ReCreate is a social enterprise making art materials and educational supplies affordable and accessible to every sector of the community. This is achieved by salvaging clean, reusable materials from businesses and distributing them to the members of ReCreate for all kinds of creative purposes. The project is based on a concept known as Creative Reuse, which encourages the reuse of materials that would normally be sent to landfill or for recycling.

ReCreate collects a wide range of materials that can be used within a hospital environment. Tactile plastics, reflective surfaces and unusual objects provoke child-led experiences that are explorative and fun. The materials also make a vital contribution to the development of a range of intelligences and capabilities as there is no right or wrong way to use them. Their open-ended qualities stretch the imagination, introducing a world of possibilities that allow children to make choices and express their creativity. This encourages investigation, invention, physical and imaginative play as the objects are collected, played with, combined, taken apart and put back together in different ways.

Providing a child with opportunities to participate in artistic and creative activities has a positive effect on their wellbeing. As a volunteer, you can engage children in playful processes that can distract from their surroundings and improve their hospital experience. While your role is not to teach, ReCreate's materials also support motor skills, exercising muscles and improving grip as they are gathered and sorted.

When using the materials within a hospital setting it is useful to:

- Approach activities with an open mind: anything is possible when working with young children
- If the child is willing, allow them to lead the activity/process
- Have at least three activities planned: one quick activity that can be done when time is short; the second can take a bit longer and the third can be introduced when you can stay with the child for a greater period of time
- Be inventive and keep it simple: for example, use a large piece of foil for a game of peek-a-boo to encourage curiosity and maybe a giggle

ReCreate's materials can also be included in treasure baskets, suggested on page 33, to encourage children investigate and explore. Please note that these materials will have to be cleaned in accordance with the hospital procedures or replaced after they have been used.



By being thoughtful about what the children touch, hear, see and make during play you can turn the experience into lasting memory. The following creative activities have been chosen to provoke and spark the imaginations of young children within a hospital environment.

Please note that policies and procedures about the use of recycled and reusable materials vary from hospital to hospital so please check with your team leader, the hospital play specialist or the nurse on the ward before planning any creative reuse activities. If your team is interested in accessing clean reusable materials, please contact the CHI office so that we can discuss ReCreate membership options.

Sensory bottle

(This activity involves small parts, so supervision is needed)

The sensory bottle can help calm the young child when distressed: shaking the bottle can release feelings of anxiety.

You will need:

- A clean, empty plastic bottle and lid
- Glitter
- Small plastic beads and loom bands
- Food colouring – red, yellow or green
- Tape if necessary to secure bottle top

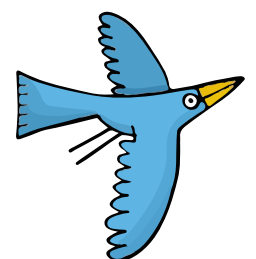
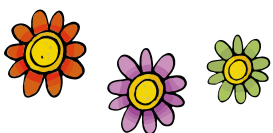


Create a sensory bottle at the bedside, allowing the child to choose and place small items such as glitter, loom bands and plastic beads into a bottle.

Fill the bottle with water, almost to the top. Allow the child to choose a colour for the water and put 2 or 3 drops of food colouring into the bottle. (If the food colouring is scented, ask the child to smell it, thus enhancing the sensory experience for them.)

Place the lid on securely, taping if necessary. If the child is able, let them help you tighten and shake the bottle to reveal swirls of colour, sparkle and magic.

Check with nursing staff about whether the bottle can be safely left with the child after you leave.



Eye spy cone

This quick activity is ideal for when time is limited. It can also be incorporated into a game at the bedside or playroom.

You will need:

- A card board or plastic cone (ReCreate)
- A sheet of coloured cellophane (for example, red, blue, yellow)
- Clear tape
- Stickers
- Crayons or markers (optional)
- Electrical tape to wrap around cellophane to decorate (optional)

First, let the child colour the cone with crayons or markers, adding stickers of their choice. Then ask them to choose cellophane in the colour they like, such as red, orange, blue or green.

Help them cut a square of this and tape it onto the larger end of the cone so you can see it when you look through the opposite end (this part is tricky but worth it).

Play a game of eye-spy, encouraging parents, carers, visitors and staff, if possible, to continue the fun after your visit. Tape two eye spy cones together to make binoculars and go on an adventure deep into the hospital jungle.



Shadow puppets and bed-side theatre

This activity is for children aged 4+ or may be made in advance for the very young.

You will need:

- Cardboard box the size of a pillow or smaller
- Greaseproof or tracing paper
- Tape
- Black or white card
- Lollipop sticks
- Small torch(es)

Place the box on its side and tape the flaps back onto the outside surface of the box. Cut the greaseproof or tracing paper a little larger than the opening on one side and tape it to the box, closing off that end. Have a few shapes or figures made in advance, cut from black or white card and secured to lollipop sticks.

With the open end of the box facing the child, shine a torch at the back of your shapes or figures, moving them around behind the greaseproof or tracing paper to create a shadow puppet show. If the child is old enough, let them cut out their own shapes in black card. Help them stick their shape or character to a stick and use the torches to create a story. Ask parents/carers or visitors to be the audience, involving everyone at the bedside.

Or for a simpler version of the shadow theatre:

Cut a piece of cardboard into the shape of a picture frame. Cover the inside with greaseproof paper or tracing paper (where the picture would be in a frame). Again, shine a torch at the back of the cut-out figures or shapes behind the frame to begin the show.





Creative Writing with Fighting Words

Fighting Words, the creative writing organisation, has provided a suggested activity for young children in hospital based on their successful story-writing workshops. Storybook templates are available from the CHI office so please get in touch if you are interested in running a story-writing session in your hospital using the guidelines below. Don't be afraid to try it out with blank pages if you don't have a template handy! This activity could be carried out one-to-one at a bedside or with a group in the playroom. Adapt it to suit the needs and interests of the child/children you are visiting.

Introduce the session

Explain that you are going to help the child/children create a new story. Remember that the ideas should come from the child and that there are no right or wrong answers!

Think about the main building blocks that every story needs. Feel free to list them:

- o Characters (who is in the story)
- o Plot (what happens during the story)
- o Setting (the time and place in which the story is set)
- o Dialogue (characters talking to each other)
- o Title (what the story is called)



Starting the story To put some structure on the story, it helps to start with four elements. It's not strictly necessary to use each element fully if the story develops in another direction but the elements are useful to remember if the story goes off on a tangent.

Main Character Who is the main character in our story? Is it a person, an animal, an alien, an object? Examples: a dog, a shoe, a slice of pizza.

What is the character's name? We do not need to decide anything about the character yet – we just need to know who the character is and their name.

Greatest Wish What does the main character want more than anything in the world? Is it somewhere he or she wants to go? Something he or she wants to become? Someone he or she would like to meet?

Greatest Fear What is the main character afraid of? The character's greatest fear does not have to be directly related to the Greatest Wish but it can be!

Best Friend Give the Main Character a best friend. Again, it can be ANYTHING and all we need to get started is what the character is and a name for the character.

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

Where does the story start? Let the child decide where the characters are at the beginning of the story and then, as the story progresses, they can bring them elsewhere as they wish.

1. Ensure the child understands the task. Explain it to them and answer any questions that they might have.
2. Suggest the child imagine themselves as one of the characters and ask them, 'How might you feel?' or 'What would you do next?'
3. Remind the child that they can take the story in whatever direction they wish – as the writer they have full control over their own story. Ask them, 'What would you like to see happen?'
4. Ask the child about their favourite story (book, film, etc) and discuss what happens in it.
5. Suggest a couple of ideas and encourage the child to add or change them. Sometimes a starting point is needed and once offered the task becomes far less daunting.



FINISHING THE STORY

The session can run for as long as the child is comfortable. It's not necessary to finish the story if the child is feeling stuck or is getting tired. Remind the child that there is no right or wrong way to stop! They can always return to the story at a later time.

GENERAL TIPS

Listen carefully and be patient: The most important things are the words, ideas and opinions of the child – avoid superimposing your own onto their work.

Be positive! Read or listen to their work and offer comments and praise regarding specific parts. This can boost a child's confidence and encourage them to continue with their writing.

Take a break: If a child becomes frustrated or tired while writing, encourage them to take a break. Talk to them about the story so far by asking open questions, such as:

- How does the character feel when that happens?
- What do you think that the character would do next?
- Have you ever felt like that? What did you do?
- Where might your character go next?

Capture their ideas! Encourage the child to tell the story orally and scribe for them. Capture their ideas and agree the text as you go. You may make suggestions or offer choices as the story progresses ('Are they going to the marshmallow park or the bubble factory?' 'Is it a sunny day or a rainy day?').

Illustrations: Allow lots of time for the child to decorate and illustrate their story. The Fighting Words storybook template has lots of room for pictures. Invite the child to tell you about their picture and offer to write comments or descriptions, if they do not want to do this themselves.

Involving the whole family in play

Hospital visits can be difficult for parents and siblings too. Volunteers can make a real difference through fun and games or even a smile and a chat. Why not encourage families to play together to pass the time and make the experience a little less stressful?



Some ideas for including the whole family in play ...

- Play Snap, Go Fish or other simple card games
- Start a sing along
- Make your own puppets and put on a puppet show
- Have a competition for throwing rolled up paper balls into a basket
- See who can go the longest without laughing
- Play 'What Am I?' using questions that should only be answered with either Yes or No
- Play memory games, like 'I went to shop and I brought ...'
- Have a teddy bears' picnic
- Play Snakes and Ladders, Frustration or whatever board games you have
- Build the tallest tower – use building blocks, Lego, Magformers, Sticklebricks – whatever you can get your hands on!
- Categories (sometime called Tutti Fruitti or Fish, Fruit, Flower) – come up with four to six categories like Boy's Name, Girl's Name, City, Country, Flower, Animal, Fish. Pick a letter and ask everyone in the family to come up with something for each category, beginning with that letter – they get one point for every correct answer, and a bonus point for every unique answer that nobody else has given. As this requires some knowledge of the alphabet, younger children may need to pair up with a grown-up.
- Tell stories or jokes
- Start a bedside dance party or make up a dance together

Add your ideas for including the whole family in play ...



Music and Play

Music brings people together and many young children really love to explore it. You don't have to be a great singer or musician to have fun with music so give it a go! From a very early age, children sing, dance and delight in exploring and making sounds of all kinds, with their own bodies and with all kinds of objects (Whitebread, 2012).

Ideas for music activities and games

- Musical statues – everyone must dance and then freeze when the music stops! You can do this sitting in a chair or if the child is in a bed
- Name that tune – take turns humming or tapping out favourite songs and guessing what it is
- Use your body to make music – rubbing hands together, clapping hands, moving your finger over your lips, tapping your cheeks or legs
- Musical masterpiece – play music and invite the child/children to draw a picture inspired by it
- Make your own instruments – use craft materials to make musical instruments (shakers and drums are fun to make)
- Talent shows – everyone sings or plays their party piece
- Lullabies – sing gentle songs to help children settle down and relax
- Strike up the band! – use the musical instruments in the sensory play toolkit and whatever instruments you may have in the play room or trolley to play along together with familiar songs
- Hot or cold – take turns hiding something and finding it. Give hints for where the hidden object is by playing an instrument loudly when the finder is near and softly when they are far away



Let's get singing

Some volunteers have told us that they find it hard to think of age-appropriate songs to sing with children as it may have been quite a while since they have heard them – so here are some reminders of simple songs that many young children will know! Don't be shy – children love to hear you sing and won't mind what your voice is like. If you're feeling adventurous, try singing rounds where the second person starts the song when the first person is on the second sentence.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Five little ducks | • Polly put the kettle on |
| • Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes | • Rock a bye baby |
| • If you're happy and you know it | • Round and round the garden |
| • London Bridge is falling down | • Ten green bottles |
| • Old MacDonald | • The animals went in two by two |
| • On a cold and frosty morning | • The wheels on the bus |
| • One man went to mow | • This little piggy |
| • One, two, three, four, five | • Twinkle, twinkle little star |
| • Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake | |

For lots more inspiration, as well as all the words, see the great list on the Early Childhood Ireland website www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/work/information-parents/resources-parents/nursery-rhymes

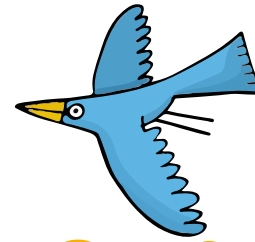
Pretend Play

Pretend play (also known as imaginative or make-believe play) begins from as early as 11 months! Role play and imaginative games can be great ways to help children to make sense of things and to learn about their world.

Toys that resemble objects from the real world tend to be big hits with toddlers taking their first steps into role play – think of all the fun that can be had with toy kitchens, toy phones, dolls and action figures!

Children are the imagination experts and usually have no problem coming up with their own ideas for pretend play. If they need some encouragement, try asking simple questions about the objects. Just in case they need some inspiration, here are some suggestions of scenarios to get you started...

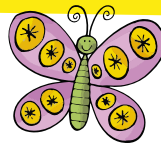
- Shop/house/school/post office/farm role play
- Witches and wizards
- Superheroes
- Teddy bears picnic
- Police station/fire engine/airport
- Astronauts and aliens
- Building site



Some tips for pretend play

- Follow the child's lead
- Listen to what the child is saying
- Repeat what they say to show that you are listening
- Welcome others into the play (friends, family members etc.)
- Describe what you are doing
- Ask the child for suggestions ('What will I make?' 'Who should I be?' 'What happens next?')





Storytelling

We all love to hear and tell stories. Stories help us to understand our worlds and process and reflect on our own experiences. As early as the first years of life, even with limited communication skills, young children begin to share their stories with people who are willing to listen and observe. Storytelling is especially important in early childhood as it helps foster imagination and develop emerging literacy and communication skills.



Children's Books Ireland
Leabhair Pháistí Éireann

Storytelling with Children's Books Ireland

Tips on reading to young children

- Read the book once so you are familiar with it before introducing it to the child/children.
- The most engaging books have lots of bright, big pictures and word repetition. Board books with stiff cardboard pages are great for little hands to hold. If you can get hold of big format picture books for groups, fantastic, but most picture books will be visible within a small group.
- Encourage the child reader to turn the pages where/when possible, especially if it is at bed-side reading.
- Books meant to be sung, or books written in rhyme, mean that children get to clap-along, sing-along, and bounce up and down to the rhythm of the language. The fun physical involvement will keep their interest.
- Change your voice for each character. Say loud words LOUDLY and soft words softly.
- Add hand gestures and foot stomping to go along with the story, encouraging action and movement.
- The best rule is, if you are enjoying it, they will be too; be as expressive as possible.
- Don't skip pages, they always know!

Useful tips to encourage engagement with the book

1. Connect the book to the child's own life experience: 'This book reminds me of all the birds I see in the sky. Can you see any out the window? What is your favourite bird? Can you name any birds for me? Have you seen any exotic birds at the zoo?', etc.
2. Connect the book to other books they might have read, TV shows they might have seen, toys they have with them etc. Consider using topical books, or books matching to seasons and festivals etc.
3. Connect the book to thoughts, memories or feelings: 'This story helps me when I am feeling a bit lonely/scared'; 'This is my favourite story when I want to laugh'; 'When I was little my brother used to read this to me'.



Good Read-Aloud titles

(Recommendations from Children's Books Ireland, 2018)

0–3 year olds

- A Busy Day for Birds by Lucy Cousins
- Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes by Mem Fox and Helen Oxenbury
- Press Here by Hervé Tullet
- Each Peach Pear Plum by Janet and Allan Ahlberg
- Ssh! We Have a Plan by Chris Haughton
- The Gruffalo by Julia Donaldson and Alex Scheffler
- Orange Apple Bear Pear by Emily Gravett
- Dear Zoo by Rod Campbell
- Don't let the Pigeon Drive the Bus by Mo Willems
- We're going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury
- I say Ooh, You Sat Ahh by John Kane



Storytelling with Children's Books Ireland

3–6 year olds

- The Day the Crayons Quit by Drew Daywalt and Oliver Jeffers
- The Lorax by Dr. Seuss
- Elephant and Piggie series by Mo Willems
- A Great Big Cuddle by Michael Rosen and Chris Riddell (Poetry collection)
- Sally Go Round the Stars / A Sailor Went to Sea Sea Sea collected by Sarah Webb (Poetry & Rhyme collections)

Technology and Play

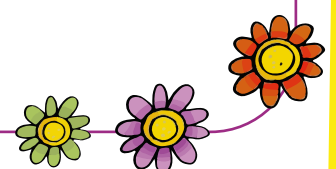


Technology influences all aspects of our lives today – even play! From computer games to electronic toys to the possibilities offered by tablets and smart-phones, play is certainly not what it used to be. While the play opportunities offered by play volunteers generally provide a welcome break from screens, a growing challenge is that many children may opt to play with technological devices rather than engage in traditional forms of play. Some hospital playrooms and waiting areas have games consoles or other digital devices and some children will use their own or their parent's or carer's smart phones or tablets. It is important not to be afraid of technology and to follow a child's lead if they want to play a computer game or use an electronic toy.

Using technology to enrich rather than to hinder children's play experiences:

- Ask the child to tell you about the game or toy and what they like about it
- Use computer games to encourage social interaction – 'Let's see if we can find someone to play this game with?'
- Use digital technology to promote imaginative play and creativity – 'I wonder what would happen if ...'
- If the child is using a phone or tablet to watch videos, you might engage them by suggesting you listen to their favourite song or draw pictures of their favourite show together
- Offer alternatives! Suggest some other fun activities that they might like to try to take a break from their screens. Find related activities – for example, if a child loves playing building games, they might like LEGO; if a child likes watching cartoons, they might like to colour a picture of their favourite character, or if a child likes puzzle games, they might like jigsaws.

Do you have any tips or ideas for engaging children in play with technology?



Treasure Basket*

**Remember that this activity needs to be closely supervised and small children should not be left alone with the treasure basket*

Introduction

A treasure basket offers infants a rich variety of things for them to explore with all their senses. Baskets usually contain everyday items of different shapes, colours and textures such as plastic containers, kitchen utensils and other simple objects like those pictured here.

Treasure baskets are usually associated with 'heuristic play'. This term was coined in the 1970s but the kind of play it describes is nothing new and most people with children will be familiar with seeing toddlers happily entertain themselves with bits and bobs from around the house. This type of play is all about enabling the child to discover or learn something for themselves. It is rooted in young children's natural curiosity. As children in hospital do not have access to everyday items, they may miss out on this important type of play so by introducing treasure baskets volunteers can help support child development.



'Hospitalisation involves a separation from much that is familiar and predictable. It is important that babies and infants are enabled to make the transition home after an admission with minimal anxiety ... For babies who have spent their lives in hospital, the introduction to domestic activity through play is vital' (Walker, 2006, p. 51)

The volunteer's role

- Please note that the treasure basket is designed for children aged 6 months and upwards
- The treasure basket contains a mixture of toys and household items and play should be closely supervised
- Before introducing the treasure basket, clear away other toys, if possible
- Ideally, children should be able to move freely and explore without any encouragement or distraction. However, in a hospital setting the child is out of their comfort zone and in a new situation so may need a little encouragement to play. There may also be limited space so exploring the basket might take place in a cot, a bed or on a small patch of the floor
- A baby or toddler will have a much richer and more stimulating experience if they can explore at their own pace
- If the child has limited movement or a sensory impairment, you may want to put their hand on the items in the treasure basket or hold the items where they can see, hear or feel them
- Heuristic play may not work if the child is hungry, tired or uncomfortable so don't be discouraged if the child seems uninterested – it may just not be a good time to try this form of play
- 20 to 30 minutes of play with the treasure basket is probably enough
- Each hospital will have a sample treasure basket. Volunteers can add other items from the playroom or play trolley to the treasure basket if they like. It is important that selected items are non-toxic, durable, easily cleaned and do not feature sharp edges or choking hazards
- Volunteers are to clean everything in accordance with hospital cleaning procedures and remove anything that is broken or damaged before putting the basket away.

Sensory Play in Early Childhood



Have you ever seen a child mesmerised by a light-up toy, a child who seems totally focussed on the feeling of paint on their fingers or a child who lights up when they hear music? All of these children are responding to powerful sensory play experiences. Sensory play includes any activity that stimulates a child's sense of touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing as well as anything that engages the child with movement and balance. (As, generally, it is not feasible to involve smell or taste in play in the hospital setting, the focus here is on the other senses.)

In addition to being interesting and fun for young children, sensory play also helps the developing brain to build connections. Sensory play can also help with language development and can support the development of motor skills. On top of all that, sensory play can be invigorating or relaxing!

The Sensory Play Toolkit

Children in Hospital Ireland has provided a sensory play toolkit to all the hospitals where our volunteers are based. The sensory play toolkit provides materials to stimulate the senses. In some hospitals, these play materials are kept together in a kit; in other hospitals, they are integrated into the play room or trolley. These materials are examples to get you started – you may think of lots of other ways of integrating sensory stimulation into play in the hospital! These toolkits were put together with materials from an educational supplies shop called Learning Space – you can find out more about them in the Contributors section of the manual.

The guidelines below divide the sensory play materials into two categories:

- For children aged 0–3
- For children aged 4–6

However, you can use your judgement to select a toy from the 0–3 category for an older child if you feel it is appropriate. You may also find other toys and materials in your playroom or trolley that provide a range of sensory experiences for children.



Sensory play materials for children aged 0-3

See Me Sensory Ball

- Good for rolling, throwing and catching
- It's easy to grip so it is good for little hands
- Can be used for a gentle massage of hands, feet or head



Rolling Bells, Egg Shaker and Wave Drum

- Musical instruments that are easy to grip
- Provide auditory, visual and tactile stimulation
- Could be introduced with a song or nursery rhyme
- Wave drum recreates sounds and rhythms of the ocean – this could be introduced with some sea-based songs, rhymes or stories



Poppitoppy

- Push the top of Poppitoppy and the balls jump around
- Provides visual and auditory stimulation
- Shows cause and effect
- Simple toy with no batteries required



Silver Sensory Reflective Balls

- Reflective mirror balls provide a stretched version of reality that is distorted like a fish-eye lens – this can be a fun sensory experience for children.
- Children will be fascinated to see items placed close to the mirrors including their own face enlarged in close-up.
- Made from hard wearing stainless steel
- The packaging indicated that they should not be used on rough surfaces as they can get scratched.



Tin animal sound maker

- Turn or shake the tins to make animal pig, cow or sheep noises
- Can be used for sensory stories
- Good for learning about cause and effect
- Suitable for 18 mth+



Rainbow maker

- Makes a soothing rain noise
- Colourful beads cascade through the tube, creating fascinating sounds and visual effects
- Could be introduced with some rain-based songs, rhymes or stories – let the child have fun making sound effects for Singing in the Rain, Incy Wincy Spider or Rain, Rain, Go Away!





Sensory play materials for children aged 4-6

Expandaball

- This colourful ball expands and shrinks
- Can be a fun way to help a child take some deep, calming breaths – breathe in and stretch the ball as your lungs fill, breathe out and shrink the ball as your lungs empty



Sensory flashing light balls and shape and sound sensory balls

- Ideal for a young child's hand
- The light-up ball set has four balls with different surface textures to explore
- The flashing lights may be visible to some children with visual impairments
- The smaller, textured balls have rattles inside and have interesting shapes and textures
- Squeezing the ball produces a puff of air – another sensation that some children love



Bendable Smiler and Tangles Junior

- Can be fun and helpful for a child that likes or needs to fidget
- For some children, having something that they can squeeze or fiddle with can help to better 'filter out' excess sensory information in their surroundings and their own body
- This can be calming and relieve stress



Body Massager

- Vibrating Body Massager with soft coloured lighting
- 3 special pads for optimum pressure
- For use on hands, feet or shoulders
- Perfect for relaxation and relieving stress
- Consent is very important for any physical touch so always check with the child and their parent/carer/nurse or the hospital play specialist before using
- Pay careful attention to the child's body language and only use if the child is comfortable



Sensory bubble sets

- These shapes contain colourful bubbles that fall and bounce to the bottom
- Can be calming to watch
- Could be used to help a child transition out of an activity (for example, you could say to the child: 'We have to close the playroom when the all the colour is in the bottom of the hourglass')



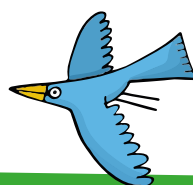
Infinity ring

- The ring starts life flat before springing into a 3D spiral
- The ring feels nice and cool on your arm and is fascinating to watch
- The ring can be passed from person to person – could be good for a group activity



Let's play fan

- The Let's Play fan is a visual aid to support and encourage communication
- The volunteer can use it to help the child to choose how they would like to play
- This could be especially helpful if a child is non-verbal
- It can be used to help the child to express what they would like to do



Soothing sounds

- You can use this item to help children to relax using sound and light
- There is an option to automatically switch off after around 30 minutes
- Provides gentle auditory and visual stimulation
- 5 nature sounds (brook, summer night, sea, bird song and dawn)
- Nature noises could help spark imaginative play or could be used as a backdrop for storytelling



*requires AA batteries

Recordable answer buzzers

- Record your voice, sounds, music or a message of your choice onto this recordable answer buzzer
- Tap a buzzer, record a response, tap again and listen!
- Each response can last up to seven seconds
- Can be used to record sound effects for sensory stories



*requires AA batteries

Tin Humming Top

- Pump the handle to watch and hear it spin
- Provides visual and auditory stimulation
- Shows cause and effect
- Helps to develop coordination and dexterity
- Works best on a hard surface

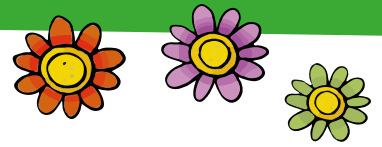


Magformers Set

- Create 3D structures with magnetic shapes
- Hear the satisfying click as they latch together
- Develops hand-eye coordination
- The variety of colours, shapes and sounds helps the development of the senses
- Stimulates curiosity
- Includes a colourful model booklet with construction

**Do not use magnets near any hospital/medical equipment*





Small spray bottle and wind-up fan

- Spray bottle can be used to lightly mist water into the air for a fun sensory experience
- Can be used to accompany a song or story about water/rain/the ocean
- Only include a small amount of water in the bottle at any time
- Create a mist in the air above the child - do not spray directly at a child and never spray into the eyes
- This fan is hand-operated and has soft propellers so is safe for use under supervision
- Some children love the sensation of a light breeze
- Can represent the wind in a sensory story or song



Laptop Tray

- Can be used to hold a few sensory toys to bring to a child in their room
- May be especially useful at bedsides where tables may already be in use
- Where appropriate, it could also be used for messy play experiences like finger painting or playing with water or shaving foam



Tips for using the sensory play toolkit

- Most of the items in the sensory play toolkit are open-ended in terms of their potential use in play and so can be used in whatever way the child would like. Let the child explore and follow their lead.
- Select a couple of items from the toolkit that you think the child might enjoy. Keep age and abilities in mind when choosing materials and if in doubt ask the child, their parents or the hospital play specialist for advice.
- As some children may have issues with sensory overload, it is best not to present a lot of items at once.
- If the child is mobile the items can be placed within arm's reach where they can explore them. If the child has limited or no mobility, you may want to put their hand on the item or hold the item where they can see, hear, feel or smell it.
- The laptop tray can be used to provide a safe space for play. This may be especially useful at bedsides where tables may already be in use. Where appropriate, the tray could also be used for messy play experiences in the playroom – for example, for finger painting or playing with water or shaving foam.
- The tactile play resources can be used to develop sensory awareness for individual children by rolling the sensory ball on the child's hands or feet or using the body massager on hands or feet. Always check with parents/carers or the child's nurse before doing this and pay careful attention to the child's body language to see if they are receptive to it.
- The sensory play items are to be cleaned after use at the end of your shift in accordance with the cleaning procedures in your hospital.
- If items in the toolkit are broken or damaged, please send an email to the office so we can track how long the materials last and do our best to replace them.

Adapting sensory play for children with additional needs

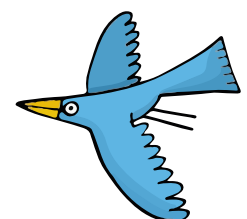
Children of all abilities can participate in sensory play! The most important thing is to observe and respect the child's reactions.

These tips (adapted from www.thegeniusofplay.org) provide examples of how you can adapt simple play ideas for the needs and abilities of the child:

- Children who are blind or visually impaired may benefit from colouring on different textured paper – like corrugated card. They might also enjoy noisy toys, such as the Rainbowmaker; tactile toys like the See Me Sensory Ball or a stress toy; or, depending on the level and type of visual impairment, they may enjoy toys that light up.
- Children who are deaf or hard of hearing might not catch the lyrics of a song; however, they may feel the beat of the drum or enjoy joining in a dance. Music can therefore be part of sensory play for children who are deaf or hard of hearing if you can help them feel the music. They may also enjoy visually stimulating toys and activities. The Let's Play fan may help you to communicate.
- Children who have physical limitations may not have the control to easily follow intricate paint-by-number patterns or detailed colouring pages, but may find success with stamps, chunky brushes and finger paints – elaborate masterpieces can be created with simple movements. They might appreciate your help to enjoy moving toys, such as Poppitoppy, the Infinity Rings or The Humming Top.
- Children who have sensory processing issues can so enjoy sensory play. Some of these children may be highly sensitive to sensory stimulation while others may have low sensitivity. For children crave more stimulation, try finger painting instead of using a brush so that their fingers feel the coolness and movement of the paint directly. They might enjoy stimulating toys like the Rainbow maker or Body Massager. For children who are highly sensitive, finger painting may still be an option – try putting different coloured paints in a sealable plastic bag so they can experience how colours mix and move without ever having to get paint on their hands. They might also enjoy calming toys like the Sensory Bubbles or Soothing Sounds.



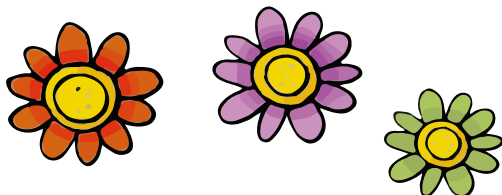
For details of mess-free finger painting see <http://blog.intellidance.ca/blog/2-29-2012/mess-free-finger-painting-i-dont-know-it-all>



Sensory Stories

A child with sensory impairments or physical disabilities may face barriers to fully enjoy a story: maybe they cannot see the picture, hear the story or reach for the book.

Children who experience sensory processing difficulties as part of their condition, for example, children with autism, acquired brain injury or ADHD, may also benefit from integrating sensory stimuli into your storytelling.

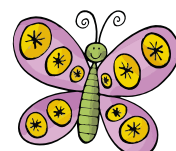


Any story can be adapted to become a sensory story. Keep the stories simple and think of ways of introducing rich and engaging sensory experiences.

Take your time and use props, sound effects, repetition and actions to get the story across. This can also work well with songs and nursery rhymes. You can use items from the Sensory Play Toolkit or other toys and materials that you have access to in the hospital.

Different types of sensory stories you can use:

- Children's story books (typically for babies) which incorporate features that are highly visual, auditory and tactile
- Standard children's story books enhanced by the addition of sensory props to convey the story's sensations (rather than the story's events)
- Simple stories devised by volunteers, based on children's interests and experiences, that are presented primarily using sensory means



Tips for sensory stories from ChildVision



Aideen Brady, the Library and Information Officer from ChildVision has provided some helpful tips and tricks to keep in mind:

'Here in ChildVision, the National Education Centre for Blind Children we have over a hundred Sensory Stories. The library hosts a number of Sensory Story time sessions each week with our students in Early Year Services and the Primary School. Each story session is designed to encourage participation, promote independence and most importantly inject an element of fun! By engaging with the different senses through stories, children get used to everyday sounds, tastes, smells, materials which can reduce anxiety and build confidence.'

'We often use repetition of stories or elements of stories; this allows the children to fine-tune their responses to stimuli. By supporting children in their responses to stimuli in a safe environment, we reduce anxiety and open up the world to them and their families. Sensory Stories are suitable for any child but are particularly beneficial for children with visual impairments or sensory processing difficulties.'

Some tips and hints for creating or adapting a sensory story:

- Keep them short, less than 10 lines – you can convey a lot with a few words.
- They should be brought to life through a selection of sensory experiences.
- Try to incorporate something to touch, to hear or to smell. Start off small and build on the sensory elements as your confidence grows as the story teller.
- Practice makes perfect; take the time to run through the story a few times before you use it with children.
- Think about the stimulus you are going to use.
- Pick one word per line and have sensory stimuli to match it. For example, for a story about getting ready in the morning, you could have a tooth brush to feel, tooth paste to smell, a shower running/toilet flushing sound on a recordable buzzer, etc.
- Where possible, an action like clapping your hands can also be included.
- Be prepared; before telling the story, lay out all your sensory stimuli in the order you will use them. Have them within your reach and keep your story in sight at all times.
- Be consistent in the story telling process; use the same words and the same actions.
- Repetition is good. Be prepared to do the same story over and over again. This will allow the children to understand the story, anticipate what is going to happen and help them with their communication skills.
- Stories should be inclusive and educational but most importantly fun!



ChildVision

National Education Centre for Blind Children





Sample sensory stories from Enable Ireland

These examples (adapted from stories used by Enable Ireland) illustrate how you can make up simple sensory stories using the toys and materials you have access to in the play room or in the trolley.

A Trip to the Farm

(Need toy tractor, rolling bell from sensory play toolkit, bowl of water and toy duck, toy horse, recordable buzzer from sensory play toolkit, spray bottle, rainmaker)

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>Today is a great day to visit the farm! Let's meet the farmer on his tractor.</i> | Show toy tractor. Roll the tractor on the child's arms if they like it. |
| <i>The farmer rings the bell and shouts 'off we go.'</i> | Show the bells and let the child ring it. |
| <i>The tractor stops at the pond and we feed the ducks. The ducks say 'quack quack'.</i> | Show the bowl of water and duck. Let the child put their hand in the water if they like. |
| <i>The tractor passes the horses in the field. What sound do the horses make?</i> | Show the toy horse. Record a horse neigh noise on the recordable buzzer and take turns making the noise. |
| <i>Uh-oh it starts to rain!</i> | Mist the air with spray bottle (avoid spraying the child's face) and/or use the rainmaker to make the rain sound. |
| <i>It's time to leave the farm and say goodbye to the animals.</i> | Wave goodbye to all the animals. |

A Trip to the Woods

(Need craft paper, small fan, Soothing Sounds from sensory toolkit, toy frog or green ball, recordable buzzer from sensory toolkit or you can improvise with other materials that are hospital-friendly)

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>We set off into the woods. We hear the leaves crunch under our feet.</i> | Scrunch paper to make crunching noise. |
| <i>There is a strong breeze out today and we feel the wind on our faces.</i> | Use a small fan to blow air at the child. |
| <i>We pass a river and listen to the babbling sound it makes.</i> | Use Soothing Sounds from sensory toolkit to play babbling brook sound. |
| <i>A green frog hops out of the river. 'Ribbit, ribbit.'</i> | Show toy frog or green ball. It can hop up and down the child's arm if they like it. You can use the recordable buzzer to take turns |

The Pop-up Picnic with Helium Arts

As part of Cruinniú na nÓg in summer 2018, Helium Arts, in partnership with Children in Hospital Ireland, brought multisensory, interactive play experiences to children with additional needs in Our Lady's Children's Hospital in Crumlin and Temple Street Children's University Hospital. These play experiences were inspired by the Helium Arts' Pop Up Picnic Performances for children with complex needs.

A picnic can be a useful framework to contain multisensory play experiences. Helium Arts has provided some tips for CHI volunteers to create the magic of the pop-up picnic during their visits to children in hospital. This may be especially valuable for children with complex needs.

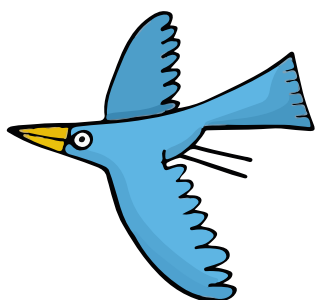


General tips

- Always be child-led in what you do and for how long
- If child is non-verbal 'read' eye movement, body language, consult with parents, staff, etc.
- If something is enjoyed, do it again and again
- Beware of overstimulation
- Follow something very lively or exciting with something calming, particularly as you prepare to leave
- Include parents, siblings, other patients and staff, the child's toys etc.
- Before beginning, check with parents/carers or hospital staff if medical or other obligations mean limited time is available so you can plan to finish in comfortable time

Playing with a 'picnic'

- Make a ritual of opening the bag or basket full of props for your picnic and laying out a tea set – add a song like Sun, Sun, Mr Golden Sun or Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star
- Musical or verbal sound effects can enrich the 'game' and humming can soothe
- A picnic cloth (or shower curtain if more appropriate) might allow for tactile stimulation opportunities
- Do the objects 'perform'? Does the child enjoy touching them, pretending to drink, make slurping noises etc.? Prompt or give assistance where appropriate
- What can you use for play food and how can those objects be used for other sensory experiences? For example, feathers might be 'food' or come from a tea pot. They can fly when you blow them and you can watch them fall slowly. Fan the feathers and feel the breeze
- Balls can be used for massage, rolling firmly on hand, feet, shoulders (always ask parent and child for permission before physical interaction and pay attention to response)
- Balls or other toys with lights inside can enchant (check that the child has no light sensitivity)
- Do we wash our hands? Use a disposable wipe from hospital to give hand massage and use a tissue to dry
- If the child is finding it hard to accept the game is over, give them one gentle 'encore' and involve them in packing up



Appendices

Appendix A: Resources

There are lots of great play resources online. Here are a few that we have found particularly useful. Check out the Children in Hospital Ireland website for more resources and links to our training videos.

www.aistearsiolta.ie

www.earlychildhoodireland.ie

www.easypeasyandfun.com

www.gameskidsplay.net

www.geniusofplay.org

www.handsonaswegrow.com

www.seomraranga.com



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Appendix C: Contributors

Below are brief descriptions of the organisations which generously contributed ideas and suggestions for play during the development of this manual. We are most grateful to all of them.

AslAm

AslAm.ie aims to provide a one-stop-shop for the Autism community in Ireland. It aims to provide the public and those with the condition a portal of information about Autism, to provide a platform for people affected by Autism to share their stories and views, and to provide a strong voice for the concerns of the community. For more information see: www.asiam.ie

Children's Books Ireland

CBI is the national children's books organisation of Ireland. Through a range of activities and events, it aims to engage young people with books, foster a greater understanding of the importance of books for young people and act as a core resource for those with an interest in books for children in Ireland. For more information see: www.childrensbooksireland.ie

ChildVision

ChildVision is the National Education Centre for Blind Children and the only place in Ireland totally dedicated to the education and therapy needs of blind and multi-disabled children. ChildVision looks after children and young people from all over Ireland, ranging in age from birth to 23 years of age. Its staff members include speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, teachers, nurses, braille specialists, social care workers, pet and equine therapists, as well as maintenance and household staff. For more information see: www.childvision.ie

Down Syndrome Ireland

Down Syndrome Ireland offers support and services to people with Down syndrome and their families throughout Ireland. There are 25 branches nationwide which are run almost exclusively by volunteers and provide their members with a wide range of services and social opportunities for babies, children, teenagers and adults with Down syndrome and their families. DSI has a long history of lobbying and campaigning for and on behalf of people with Down syndrome and is very involved in the international movement for the benefit of people with Down syndrome across the world. For more information see: www.downsyndrome.ie

Enable Ireland

Enable Ireland provides services to children and adults with disabilities and their families. Located in 40 centres in 14 counties, Enable Ireland's services include clinical assessment, therapy, education, training, residential, respite, PA and family support services. Covering childhood to adulthood, the expert teams work with the individual and their family on a plan for each life stage. For more information see: www.enableireland.ie

Fighting Words

Fighting Words is a creative writing centre which aims to help people to discover and harness the power of their own imaginations and creative writing skills. Fighting Words unleashes the creative potential of young people by providing free tutoring and mentoring in creative writing and related arts. It hosts workshops for primary school kids, secondary school kids and adults with special needs. It also hosts a range of special projects and programmes for children and teenagers at weekends, midterm breaks and summer holidays. For more information see: www.fightingwords.ie

Helium Arts

Helium Arts is the national children's arts and health charity. Its mission is to empower children living with illness through their creativity and the arts, inspiring those who care for them and supporting creative, healthy environments. The Pop Up Picnic was produced by Helium Arts and created through a devised process by Director, Joanna Williams (Little Big Top); musician, Thomas Johnston (Ceol

Connected); performer and puppet-maker, Niamh Lawlor (Púca Puppets) and prop makers, Orla Kelly and Mia Van Evelingen. Families in County Kildare supported by the Jack and Jill Foundation contributed in the active research for the work, which was also supported by Kildare County Council. For the Pop-Up Picnic film and for more information see:

www.helium.ie/programmes/early-years/pop-up-picnic

Learning SPACE

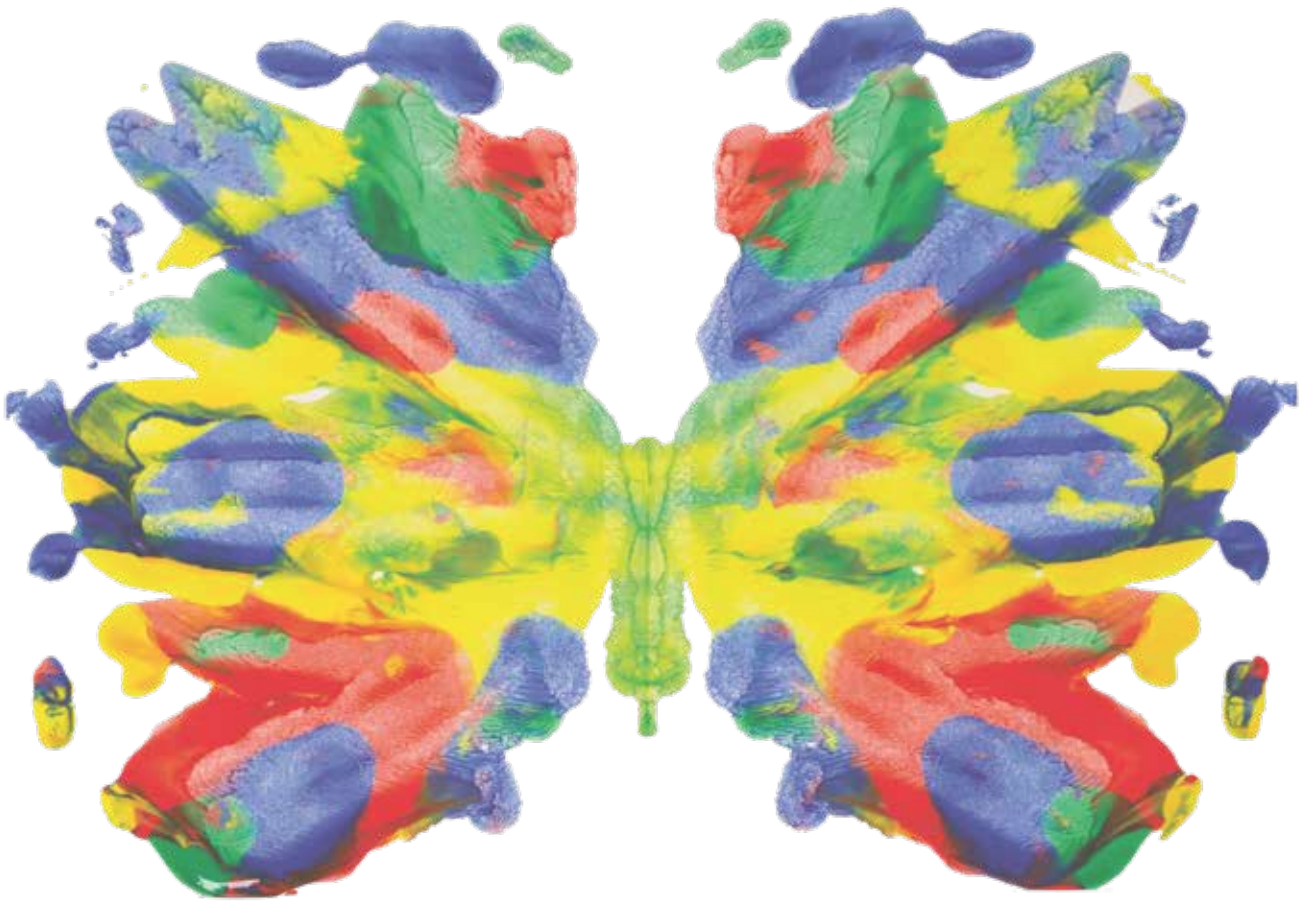
Learning SPACE is an educational organisation providing resources, training, awareness and support to meet the need and interests of all children, with specialist provision for those with additional needs. It aims to empower, educate and enable children reach their true potential. Learning SPACE makes it easier for parents and educators to obtain the most suitable aids for children through their Belfast City centre store, websites and specialist advisors with a background in child education. This award-winning company has supported over 50,000 children and works closely with families, schools, charities, therapists and organisations. For more information see www.learningspaceuk.co.uk.

ReCreate

ReCreate is a social enterprise making art materials and educational supplies affordable and accessible to every sector of the community. This is achieved by salvaging clean, reusable materials from businesses and distributing them to the member of ReCreate for all kinds of creative purposes. The project is based on the concept of 'Creative Reuse', which encourages the reuse of materials that would normally be sent to landfill or for recycling. The ReCreate team also facilitates workshops for all ages and abilities, highlighting how these materials can be used for all kinds of creative and inventive purposes. For more information see www.recreate.ie or contact Deirdre at drogers@recreate.ie or 01 4568798

Safari Kids

Safari Kids is an organisation established to help children of all ages to connect, empower and inspire themselves to enjoy their unique adventure in life. This is achieved through play therapy interventions, creative arts workshops and resources. For more information see www.safarikids.ie



The resource is part of the Children in Hospital Ireland Playful Project funded by the Early Childhood Ireland National Pyjama Day Fund at The Community Foundation for Ireland



Children in Hospital Ireland

W: childreninhospital.ie

E: info@childreninhospital.ie

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