

Aistear

Creatchuraclam na Luath-Óige
The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework



**Learning experiences
for home settings**

Learning experience 1: Jack's New Zealand roots**Theme: *Exploring and Thinking*, Aim 1 and Learning goal 5****Age group: Babies and young children****Setting: Home and childminding**

Every evening Luke reads a bedtime story to his son Jack (5½ years) and his baby daughter Kate (16 months). As they snuggle up to their Daddy, Kate helps to turn the pages and points to her favourite characters. She loves 'lift the flap' books and Luke told Kate's childminder, Mags, about this when she was starting with Mags a few months ago. Mags has a number of these books and Kate loves to sit on her knee on the garden seat looking at them.

Luke also told Mags about Jack's interest in books, especially books about sport. Luke is originally from New Zealand and he and Jack love to read about rugby. Jack has taught the other children at Mags' to play rugby, and a few weeks ago Luke arranged for Mags and the four children she minds to go to a local school rugby match. She also purchased two books about New Zealand as Jack and his family are planning a trip there during the summer to visit his grandparents. The children and Mags are learning a lot about New Zealand. They are finding out about the weather, the sports people play, the food they eat, and the types of farms they have. They are also comparing these with the village in Co. Tipperary where they live. The children are really excited about Jack and his family flying on a huge aeroplane. They are even building one just like it in Mags' playroom. It's massive!



Reflection: How can I build on children's interests to enhance their learning and development, and to strengthen their sense of identity?

Learning experience 2: The beat of the drum**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 2 and Learning goal 2****Age group: Toddlers****Setting: Home and full and part-time daycare (crèche)**

Gloria moved to Ireland from North Nigeria three years ago. She speaks English and helps out in the toddler room on a Tuesday morning every two weeks. Her grandson Lee (2½ years) has been attending the crèche since September and is in the toddler room. On each visit, Gloria brings along something from North Nigeria for the children to see, play with, and learn about. These items are all familiar to Lee. Today she brings an African drum. She plays it while she sings an African song. The children gather round her. Some sway and some clap while others dance to the beat. Lee and some of his friends join in with some of the repeated words and phrases. Afterwards, the children take turns to play the drum. Next time, Gloria plans to play some outdoor games with the toddlers. Sorcha, the room leader, takes a few minutes of video which she shows the children after Gloria goes home.



Reflection: In what ways can I involve parents and grandparents in giving the children rich experiences?

Learning experience 3: Helping me to learn**Theme: *Communicating, Aim 3 and Learning goal 2*****Age group: Young children****Setting: Home and infant class (primary school)**

Kara (4 years) is in junior infants. Her parents left school early. They have difficulties with literacy and know this is a disadvantage. They really want Kara to do well in school and to get a good education. But Kara says she doesn't like school. Kara and her family have the support of a Home School Community Liaison co-ordinator, Betty. Betty encourages Kara's parents to talk to her teacher, Ms. Nugent, and she suggests some questions they might ask. Ms. Nugent encourages them to help Kara in whatever way they can. She suggests that they use a picture book to read a story or to tell her stories themselves about when they were children. They can draw pictures together at home and talk about them. If they have time they can come in some days and help out in the classroom.

Ms. Nugent also encourages Kara in school by asking her what kind of books she likes to look at and read. Kara replies, *Books about babies are good and books about dressing up and going to my friend's house.* Ms. Nugent regularly uses books on these topics when reading stories to Kara and her friends. She puts dress-up clothes and props such as tiaras, dolls, buggies, and hand-bags in the pretend play area. Ms. Nugent regularly talks to Kara's mam to see how they can continue to work together to support Kara at home and in school. Betty also liaises with Ms. Nugent and Kara's parents regularly to ensure Kara and her family have positive school experiences.



Reflection: What can I do to give extra support and encouragement to some parents?

Learning experience 4: An open-door policy**Theme: *Well-being*, Aim 1 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Toddlers and young children****Setting: Home and sessional service (playgroup)**

Mina greets the children and their parents as they arrive at the playgroup every morning. She finds these few minutes of contact invaluable. Parents can let her know if they would like more time to chat about their children and she arranges a time to suit. At the beginning of the year she also lets them know that she can be contacted by phone every day from 1 p.m. to 1.30 p.m. if they have any concerns, or just want to chat about how their child is getting on in the playgroup. She reminds them of this regularly, and many of them find it reassuring that they can keep in touch like this. Some children are brought by relatives or childminders, and this form of contact is invaluable for their parents as they can ring Mina during their lunchtime.

Mikie (2 years and 11 months) started in the playgroup a month ago. His mam, Lucy, is very shy and Mina makes a special effort to have a chat with her once a week. Mina shows Lucy something, such as a photograph of him playing or a picture that Mikie has made. She uses this to encourage Lucy to talk about Mikie. She asks about things he likes to do at home and she offers ideas to Lucy to help extend what he is learning in the setting.



Reflection: What strategies could I use to help parents to feel more confident in talking to me about their children?

Learning experience 5: The newsletter**Theme: *Exploring and Thinking*, Aim 4 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Toddlers and young children****Setting: Home and full and part-time daycare (nursery)**

The staff of the Happy Start Nursery have made a welcome pack for parents of new children. The pack includes the nursery's mission statement and information about how the staff support children's learning and development. They also send home a short newsletter each month so that parents know what songs, stories and activities the children are doing. Children are involved in deciding what information is included. An example of a recent newsletter available in English, French and Polish (the main home languages of the children) is included below. The staff also plan to use text messages for parents who want to receive reminders about events in the nursery.



Reflection: How can I share more information with parents about what their children are doing in my setting?

See the newsletter on the next page.

May 2009

Doing Great Things Together!

Happy Start Nursery: Senior toddlers and pre-schoolers

Our day out in the woods!

A big thank you to all the parents who came with us on our trip to Glengarra woods. A great day was had by all. The children tell us that they enjoyed the trip on the bus and the picnic the best! They also loved splashing in the puddles in their wellies. Since our return we have been learning about the trees and flowers that grow in the woods. We have also begun to learn about making honey since we discovered the bee hives hidden in the corner of the woods. Mr Mackey, who supplies honey to the local shops, is visiting the pre-school on **June 12**. He will bring some honey and show a video of the bees. Why not join us at 10 a.m. that day?

Photos of the Glengarra trip are on display in the main hall.

Time for more stories

We are going to the library as usual on the **last Friday of this month**. Thanks to the parents who came with us last month.

Have you spotted our bus?

Since the children enjoyed the trip on the bus to Glengarra Wood so much we decided to make our own bus. Thanks to Darren's daddy who gave us some lovely big cardboard boxes to work with. After much hard work we now have our own colourful buses complete with steering wheels, horns and seats. To build on the topic of transport Ava's mam Nora is coming in next week to talk to us about her job as the driver of the primary school bus. Many of the children in the pre-school will be travelling on this bus when they start school in September. Nora will be here at 10.30 on Thursday morning **May 14**. Come along if you can and stay for a cup of tea/coffee afterwards in the parent room.

Rhymes

As you know we always include a nursery rhyme or a poem in our newsletter. This month the children asked us to give you the words of the song, *The Wheels on the bus*. They'll teach you the actions. Hope you enjoy it.

- The wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round, round and round,
- The wheels on the bus go round and round, All through the town.
- The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish ...
- The doors on the bus go open and shut ...
- The horn on the bus goes beep, beep, beep ...
- The gas on the bus goes glug, glug, glug ...
- The money on the bus goes clink, clink, clink ...
- The people on the bus go chatter, chatter, chatter ...
- The wheels on the bus go round and round ...



Look who has a birthday in May

Rarish Obert will be 2 on May 1st.

Sharon O'Brien will be 3 on May 7th.

Fiachra Long will be 4 on May 15th.

Kia Mihas will be 5 on May 17th.

We hope you all have a lovely birthday.

Important date for your diary

During the **first two weeks in June** we hope to meet you and your child for a short while. Your child will show you his/her portfolio so you can see what he/she has been doing and learning through the year. If the time and date don't suit please contact Michelle on 084 6655437.

Learning experience 6: Paul's daily diary

Theme: Identity and Belonging, Aim 1 and Learning goal 5

Age group: Young children

Setting: Home and infant class (special primary school)

Paul (5 years) has moderate general learning disabilities. He goes on a bus every morning to attend Holy Angels' Special School seventeen miles from home. His parents rarely visit his school because of the distance, so they and his teacher use a daily diary to keep each other up-to-date on how Paul is getting on. This means that his parents can talk to him about what happens at school and can reinforce his learning at home. It also means that his practitioners are able to take what happens at home into account, as Paul has difficulty communicating this himself.

Paul was very excited recently when his family got a new puppy. His mam wrote about this in his diary. His teacher used this information when planning his activities for the week. Paul screeched excitedly when Miss O'Malley knew the name of the puppy and he seemed to really enjoy it when she read him a story about a sheepdog working on a farm. An example of an extract from Paul's diary is included below.



Reflection: What special arrangements can I put in place to share information with parents I don't often see?

Figure 2: Extract from Paul's daily diary

February 28

Hi Fiona

Paul had a poor night's sleep. Seemed fine when he came home from school. Had his tea and we went for a walk with him in the wheelchair. Toby, the puppy came too. As usual Paul had his bath and we read him a story but for some reason he never settled. He may be tired in school today. I know I am!

Regards

Aileen

February 28

Thanks Aileen. Jackie, Paul's physio did a session with him today. I told her he might be a little tired. She did some gentle exercises with him and when she brought him back to class he seemed very tired so we put him in the quiet area with his teddy and his blanket and he went for a short sleep. He had a good lunch and seemed in good form after that. He's still enjoying the books about animals. He's also getting very good at knocking the towers of blocks with his head and your practice at home is really showing. Hope you sleep tonight.

As always, give me a call on 087227569 at any time,

Fiona

Learning experience 7: Showing empathy**Theme: Identity and Belonging, Aim 4 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Young children****Setting: Home, childminding and infant class (primary school)**

Mike, a widower visits his daughter Saoirse's school today to hear how she is getting on in senior infants. The school has a policy of giving parents a written mid-year report in February at the parent/teacher meetings and again towards the end of June. This is Mike's first face-to-face meeting with Saoirse's teacher. His wife Mary used to look after all contacts with the school. Saoirse's childminder, Niamh, drops and collects Saoirse from school every day while Mike is at work and she fills Mike in about how things are going at school. She knows Saoirse's teacher well and has an informal chat with her regularly, especially since Mike asked her to do this for him. The school has been very good about supporting Saoirse since her Mammy died five months ago. Miss Buckley, Saoirse's teacher, has been in regular phone contact with Mike since then. However, Mike is still a bit nervous about the meeting.

Miss Buckley immediately puts Mike at ease and reassures him that Saoirse is doing very well. She goes through the report card in detail with him and regularly asks him if he has any questions. She also shows him samples of Saoirse's work on display on the walls, in her books, and in her portfolio. She shares some photographs with him. Two of these show Saoirse minding two babies while playing with a friend. The caption beside the photographs reads, *Don't worry Lucy. I'll look after you.* Miss Buckley explains that Saoirse and her friend were pretending that Lucy's mammy was sick and died. She asks Mike how Saoirse is getting on at home and he tells her about the things she enjoys and the things that she finds hard, now that her Mammy is gone. Miss Buckley gives Mike the report card to take home and tells him to call or to send in a note if he wants to talk to her about Saoirse. She reassures him that she will continue to keep a close eye on Saoirse and that she will give him a call in a few weeks to give him an update. She re-emphasises that Saoirse is doing well in her learning and is coping well at school after losing her Mammy.



Reflection: Do I give enough thought to the events and circumstances in families' lives which can impact on children's learning and development?

Learning experience 8: Dan the music man**Theme: *Communicating, Aim 4 and Learning goal 3*****Age group: Babies, toddlers and young children****Setting: Home and childminding**

Dan is a musician. His own children love music, and he has sung with them at home since they were babies. Now he comes to their childminding setting once a fortnight on one of his days off work to play his guitar and sing songs with the children. They are fascinated by his guitar. They want to know how heavy it is, what it is made from, and how strings make music. Dan shows them how it works. One day he brings along his drums and introduces them to drumming. He uses spoken rhythms to help them tap out the beat: *An-nie Jou-ber* (names with the younger children) and *Do you want a cup of tea?* (sentences with the older children). The children look forward to his visits. They practise almost every day so they can show Dan how good their clapping is when he returns. Before his next visit Noeleen the minder and the children make guitars and drums from junk materials. They can't wait to show Dan their band!



Reflection: What special talents do the parents have that I could tap into and share with the children I mind?

Learning experience 9: It's never too late.**Theme: *Communicating*, Aim 3 and Learning goal 2****Age group: Young children****Setting: Home and sessional service (pre-school)**

When Sonia was young she missed a lot of school. As a result, she had difficulties reading and she found it hard to work with written information. When her children's pre-school sent notes home she had to ask her sister to read them for her. Over time she got to know Maggie, another parent. Maggie persuaded her to go along with her to the classes in the parents' room. There was a crèche in an adjoining room where Sonia's toddler could stay. Sonia and Maggie chose a craft course for beginners. Sonia's four-year-old Evan was delighted to see her coming into his pre-school. Sonia enjoyed the course and felt more confident about talking to Evan's practitioner. Next, she attended a parenting course and felt that she was able to contribute a lot to it from her own experience. The teacher who organised the courses encouraged her to enrol in an adult literacy class. Sonia is making good progress. She especially enjoys reading to her children and looks forward to notes coming home, which she can now read herself.



Reflection: What can my colleagues and I do in our setting to help parents in their role as their children's educators?

Learning experience 10: Bláithín's dad**Theme: *Well-being, Aim 4 and Learning goal 6*****Age group: Young children****Setting: Home and infant class (primary school)**

Joan and Con have three children at primary school. They are both active members of the Parents' Association (PA) and take turns going to meetings. They have built good relationships with the teachers and other parents since their first child started school. A new housing estate has been built locally and the number of children attending the school has greatly increased. The PA and the school staff recently helped to organise an open day for parents of new children. Patrick whose daughter Bláithín started junior infants this year, went along. The PA are also developing an outdoor play area for the infants which includes a place for planting. Con suggested to the teachers that Patrick might be interested in getting involved in setting up the outdoor area. Patrick looks after his children each weekend since he and his wife separated. He is a part-time builder. Patrick is delighted to be asked and especially so when the teacher suggests that the children might help him out. His daughter Bláithín is delighted about this. Patrick feels that he is contributing positively to his children's learning and development and also benefiting the school community by using his skills.

Over the next few weeks Patrick, the class teacher, children, and some other parents enjoy working together and have the play area ready for the sun in June!



Reflection: Are there ways in which I can encourage dads to become more involved in their children's learning and development?

Learning experience 11: Do you understand my culture and traditions?**Theme: Identity and Belonging, Aim 2 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Toddlers****Setting: Home and sessional service (playgroup)**

Joseph (2 years and 11 months) and his family are Travellers. They recently moved to the area and Joseph's mammy, Kathleen, enrolled him for two mornings a week in the local playgroup. The manager, Joan, meets with Kathleen and explains how the service works and shows her the different rooms and the outdoor play area. Joan asks Kathleen about Joseph and his likes and dislikes. She explains that she knows very little about Traveller culture and traditions. Joan asks Kathleen to tell her a little about their way of life and the Traveller traditions that are important to her. Understanding these will help the staff to support Joseph. Kathleen tells Joan that as a family they generally travel in their trailer during the summer months and settle in one area for the rest of the year. She also explains that most Travellers are not as nomadic as they used to be. Kathleen says that Joseph loves animals, especially horses and dogs. She tells Joan that she doesn't want Joseph to be discriminated against because he is a Traveller. She is worried because her older children had negative experiences in other settings.

In preparation for Joseph's arrival, and with Kathleen's help, Joan gets some books and jigsaws that depict Traveller life today. She organises displays of animals for Joseph to look at when he arrives. She tells the children that a new boy is joining them. A few days after Joseph's arrival Joan talks to the children about their homes. She uses wall displays to reinforce some of the points they talk about. These include pictures of the children's homes such as trailers, flats and terraced houses. They use these to talk about 'where we live'. The children bring photographs of their families and homes, and make lollipop stick models of them using junk materials, fabrics, wool, glitter, fancy paper, and card. They display these beside their photographs. Over the coming days they enjoy sharing stories about their family, pets and outings. Joan observes the children during their activities and ensures Joseph is included and that he is beginning to form friendships. She updates Kathleen regularly on how he is settling in.



Reflection: How much do the children and I know about each other's family life and community?

Learning experience 12: A big move**Theme: Well-being, Aim 1 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Babies****Setting: Home and childminding**

John has been a stay at home Dad for the past six months. He and his partner Bernice are now looking for a setting to look after their baby, Eimear (1 year) three days per week, as John is returning to work part-time. They would like to find a childminder as they are keen for Eimear to experience a setting similar to her own home. John and Bernice contact the local Health Service Executive for a list of notified childminders in their area. They have short-listed three and have made arrangements to visit them. They prepare a number of questions they want to ask. Each childminder describes her training and qualifications. All three have first-aid training. Through the childminding grant from the local County Childcare Committee all three have bought a range of toys and safety equipment. Each childminder has access to an outdoor area.

When they get home John and Bernice go through their notes and they agree that Liz's home would suit Eimear the best. It is a bungalow with easy access to a garden with lots of grass and a plant area. Liz minds two other pre-school aged children which John and Bernice think is important for helping Eimear to learn to interact with other children. Liz interacted very well with Eimear, and Eimear seemed to like being with her. Liz made John and Bernice feel welcome and at ease. She gave them a booklet with information about her childminding service, including the types of activities she organises and the routines she follows with the children. She also explained to them that she uses a little notebook each day to record basic care provision and the child's activities, expressions and achievements. She takes regular photographs and gives these to the parents. John and Bernice appreciate these as a way of sharing information. They ask Liz for references from other parents. After checking these out they contact Liz. Together they fill out an application form and discuss Eimear's preferences, medical conditions, allergies, vaccinations, comfort items, games she likes to play, routines, and general contact information. Eimear spends a short time each day with Liz over the coming two weeks. Liz uses the information from John and Bernice to help Eimear settle in and feel happy and content in her new setting.



Reflection: What information should I gather from parents to help children settle in my setting?

Learning experience 13: Transitions**Theme: *Well-being*, Aim 1 and Learning goal 3****Age: Young children****Setting: Home, sessional service (pre-school) and infant class (primary school)**

Simon (almost 6 years) attends his local primary school. His parents became concerned about his behaviour when he was around two-and-a-half. Simon had difficulty concentrating and completing activities. They spoke to the public health nurse. She felt that there was no immediate cause for concern and advised them to send Simon to pre-school the following September. He settled in well. The ratio of adults to children was very good and Simon was assigned a Key Worker, Kelly, who often spent time in one-to-one interactions with him and helped him to play and interact with other children in the group. Kelly helped break down tasks for Simon and modelled things for him a number of times. She gave one piece of information or direction at a time which helped him to join in activities with others. Simon especially liked water play and being outdoors. Kelly helped set up a buddy system and Rachel really enjoyed being Simon's special friend. Simon spent two years in the pre-school.

Simon's parents were concerned about his transfer to primary school. He was going to the local school where there were 19 junior infants, senior infants and first class children in the classroom. Simon's parents met the principal and his teacher before he started school and they outlined their concerns and the additional help Simon had received at pre-school. They arranged to meet again in mid-October when the teacher had a chance to get to know Simon. After that meeting Simon was referred for an educational assessment. Following his assessment, an Individual Education Plan was drawn up and a special needs assistant was appointed to help him in the classroom for 10 hours per week.

Simon is now in senior infants. He spends time with the school's special education teacher working on specific skills that will help him to learn. His parents are pleased with Simon's progress and the work his teachers are doing to ensure that his needs are met. They get regular feedback from the school and they talk to his teacher once a fortnight by phone to find out what they can do to help Simon progress.



Reflection: How can I improve how I work with parents of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) to involve them more in their children's learning and development?

Learning experience 14: Feeding the ducks**Theme: *Communicating, Aim 1 and Learning goal 1*****Age group: Babies****Setting: Home**

Leah (13 months) and her dad are feeding ducks at the lake. Leah is pointing towards the ducks animatedly. Her Dad points to the ducks and agrees, *Yes they are ducks Leah and now we are going to feed them.* Leah points to the bread. Her Dad gives her some, smiles and comments, *You like feeding them don't you Leah?* Leah nods. She babbles, *kak kak.* Her Dad affirms her contribution, *The ducks say 'quack, quack' don't they Leah?* He recounts a rhyme about ducks and she claps her hands and points excitedly at the ducks while he does this.

Reflection: How can I use everyday experiences to help children understand more about the things around them?



Learning experience 17: The big base drum**Theme: *Communicating, Aim 1 and Learning goal 6*****Age group: Babies****Setting: Home**

Callum (9 months) and his Da are sitting on the floor at home playing together. Callum has been playing with some of his toys but Da senses he is getting bored. His Da gets an empty biscuit tin from the kitchen. He gives it to Callum. Callum lifts it, and moving it notices a sound inside it. He searches for the source of the sound. After a few minutes he looks at Da and screeches, indicating he wants to see inside the tin. Da takes the lid off. Callum reaches in for his set of play keys. They put other nearby things into the tin and take them out. Da talks about what they are doing. After a while Da goes to the kitchen and brings back a wooden spoon. He puts the lid on the tin and starts to bang on it with the wooden spoon as he sings, *I am the music man*. Callum shrieks with laughter. Da gives the spoon to Callum and he bangs loudly on his new drum copying what his Da was doing. Da sings again while Callum drums. Da talks to Callum describing and affirming his actions. Callum shows his delight in his achievements through taking turns in the conversation, laughing, gurgling, and smiling. Callum shows his new skills to his uncle Jimmy later that day.



Reflection: What new skills can I model for children?

Learning experience 20: I did it, I stood up!**Theme: *Exploring and Thinking*, Aim 4 and Learning goal 4****Age group: Babies****Setting: Home, and full and part-time daycare (crèche)**

Baby Daniel (10 months) is learning to pull himself up to a standing position. Monica, his Key Worker, is watching closely nearby. Daniel has tried several times to pull himself up by holding on to a roll-along toy but as soon as he grabs it the toy tends to move and Daniel slides back down on the floor. He is starting to get frustrated. Monica describes what Daniel is doing, *You are trying to stand up on your own, aren't you?* She encourages him to persevere by smiling at him and telling him how well he is doing. *I think we could stop these wheels moving*, she suggests as Daniel falls again. She encourages him to try once more by showing him that the toy will not roll because it is now locked. Daniel grabs onto the toy again and slowly pulls himself up. He screeches with delight at Monica once he stands upright. Monica affirms his achievement by clapping her hands, describing what he has done and calling to her colleague to come and see. Her close proximity and keen interest act both as physical and emotional supports. She takes a photograph later in the day of him standing which she shows to him and uses to again describe his great achievement. She also shows it to his dad when he is collecting him that evening. She then puts it on display in the hallway with the date and a short description of the endeavour! Daniel's mam stops to look at it in the morning when she drops him off, and talks to him about what he did. They exchange smiles.



Reflection: How can I encourage children to persevere with difficult tasks?

Learning experience 23: Wearing shorts in winter!**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 1 and Learning goal 6****Age group: Babies****Setting: Home**

Mommy is at home with baby Aoife (16 months). It is winter-time. She is about to dress Aoife so that they can walk to school with her older daughter Lorraine. Aoife leads Mommy to where she spotted a pair of summer shorts the day before and indicates that she wants to put them on. Mommy tries to explain that the shorts aren't suitable for a cold winter's day. She makes *brrrrr* sounds and rubs her legs to warm up. She points to warmer clothes, smiles and nods, and explains that these will be cosy and warm for Aoife today. Then Mommy offers Aoife the choice of wearing her navy jumper and jeans or her purple tracksuit. Mommy observes Aoife's reaction and as soon as she shows an interest in the tracksuit Mommy responds: *So, you would like to wear your tracksuit today Aoife. Oh, it will keep you nice and warm, I wish I had a fleecy one like this.* Aoife then smiles and nods her head. When outside, Mommy repeats the *brrrrr* sounds and describes how cold it is. Aoife's smile tells Mommy that she understands.



Reflection: What opportunities can I use to give children choices within reasonable limits?

Learning experience 27: Boxes galore!**Theme: *Exploring and Thinking*, Aim 3 and Learning goal 1****Age group: Toddlers and young children****Setting: Home**

Jenna is a single parent and is at home with her two children, Robert (2½ years) and Rebecca (5 years). They live in a disadvantaged area in the city centre. At times Jenna finds it hard to cope with the children, especially as the flat has no access to a garden and the nearest park is a bus ride away. Pat, the family support worker, has been helping Jenna to join in with the children in their play. Pat and the family have been to the local electrical shop to get an assortment of empty boxes. Jenna and the children play together to turn these into garages and apartment complexes. Pat provides paints, glitter and glue, and the whole family work together happily in the kitchen deciding who is going to do what. At school Rebecca paints pictures, which she takes home to decorate the apartments. Jenna helps Robert to make a ramp for his car to get into the garage. Later that week, Jenna, Robert and Rebecca go for a walk and compare their garages and apartments to the ones in their locality. They have fun walking along and suggesting things to add to their cardboard apartments.



Reflection: What resources and materials can I get in my community to help improve the learning environment for my children?

Learning experience 32: Water play**Theme: *Exploring and Thinking*, Aim 1 and Learning goal 1****Age group: Babies****Setting: Home**

Mammy puts baby Alisha (8 months) on the towel beside her baby cousin Leah (10 months) so that the two of them can put their hands into a basin of tepid water. Mammy sits on the ground and models putting her own hands in and out of the water. Her splashes make bubbles. Leah watches her intently and copies her actions but Alisha is a bit reluctant to join in. Mammy describes what she is doing while making eye contact with Alisha. She explains: *Look Alisha, Mammy and Leah are putting our hands in and out of the water. Look I am touching Leah's hands in the nice warm water. You can do it too!* Mammy gently takes Alisha's hand and places it in the water. She watches Alisha's body language, which is now positive, and continues with her descriptive comments on the girls' actions and emotions while using their names frequently. As soon as she notices a waning of interest in the water play she suggests another activity for the two babies.



Reflection: How can I help children try new activities together with confidence?



Learning experience 34: Making dinner with Granny

Theme: *Well-being, Aim 3 and Learning goal 2*

Age group: Babies

Setting: Home

Granny minds her twin grand daughters Abi and Ava (17 months) two days a week. The girls regularly watch Granny in the kitchen as she makes the dinner. Granny chats to them about what she is doing. Today she brings some old pots, pans, spoons, carrots, and potatoes out into the garden so that the girls can play together. She models making the dinner, stirring the potatoes and carrots in the pot. Granny talks to the girls about cooking the dinner for Mummy when she gets home from work. Granny ensures that materials are plentiful and occasionally provides a commentary on what the girls are doing. She watches as they become engrossed in the activity, stirring the vegetables in the pots and feeding them to their teddies. Later the two girls help her wash the potatoes in the sink when she is cooking the dinner.



Reflection: What can I do to encourage children to interact with each other during their play?

Learning experience 41: Playful routines**Theme: *Well-being*, Aim 1 and Learning goal 1****Age group: Babies****Setting: Home and childminding**

Charlie (10 months) has a special relationship with his daddy, Luca. During care routines Daddy interacts and plays with him. Charlie loves it when Daddy says and plays *This little piggy* with his toes when he is changing his nappy. He also loves to play *peek-a-boo* with him when Daddy hides behind the door and pops his head in and out, much to Charlie's delight. Charlie also likes it when Daddy pretends his spoon is an aeroplane when he is feeding him. Charlie especially loves when Daddy flies him up into the air pretending he is the aeroplane. His childminder Linda also interacts with Charlie in a playful way. Luca has told Linda about the games he plays at home with Charlie. Linda plays these games with him too, making the transitions between his home and her home a happy experience for Charlie. Linda gradually introduces new games and other playful routines to Charlie and she in turn shares these with Luca when he collects Charlie in the evenings.



Reflection: Do I know what playful routines children enjoy at home, and how can I use these to make their transitions between settings easier?

Learning experience 53: Getting to know you**Theme: *Exploring and Thinking, Aim 1 and Learning goal 2*****Age group: Babies****Setting: Home**

Meagan (5 months) is lying near her cousin Doireann (8 months). The girls are on a mat which has lots of play objects attached to it, such as mirrors, crinkly materials, rattles, animal sounds, fabric flaps, and dangling animals. Meagan shows Doireann that she is enjoying her young cousin's company. She stretches out her hand and touches Doireann's leg. Both children smile and coo with delight. Meagan's mum, Niamh, shows the girls the different features of the mat. She lies beside the two children and presses buttons to hear the animal sounds. She encourages the girls to feel the different materials. She holds their hands to help them use the rattles. When the girls appear to lose interest she sings *Round and round the garden* using actions with each of the girls. The girls let her know they love the tickly feel of her finger doing a circular movement on their hands as she sings with them. Doireann holds her hand out many times signalling for more. After singing, Niamh points to their clothes and body parts and describes these. *Doireann has white socks on, Meagan has blue ones. Doireann is touching Meagan's fingers nice and gently. Do you like that Meagan? I think you do.* And so the exploring and talking continue.



Reflection: What can I do to help children interact with and learn more about each other through play?