Once in a Lifetime:

Early Childhood Care and Education for Children from Birth to Three

Geraldine French and Patricia Murphy

Barnardos
EVERY CHILDHOOD LASTS A LIFETIME

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The photos in the guide are authentic naturally occuring snapshots taken by Barnardos staff in the course of their work. They were taken in Barnardos' Early Years Services in Dun Laoghaire, Loughlinstown and Thurles and in Sharavogue, Glenageary. Many thanks to all the families and staff who participated. Thanks also to Áine O'Súilleabháin for the photos of the Treasure Basket.

Dedication
This publication is dedicated to the memory of our mentor Eilis McKay (1946 - 2004), High/Scope Consultant Trainer whose work touched and inspired friends, colleagues and early childhood practitioners.

Geraldine French and Patricia Murphy

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

It is envisaged that this guide be used as the basis for developing professional practices when working with babies and toddlers in all early childhood settings, including homes.

The guide is divided into six sections. In it we have adopted terms more commonly used in Ireland in place of terms used in the High/Scope literature; for example baby as opposed to infant, daily routine instead of schedules and routines, practitioner instead of carer. The general format adopted is to identify what the element under discussion is; why it is important and how do practitioners ensure that that approach is implemented with the children in their care. The following is a broad outline of the contents of each section.

SECTION 1:
THE CRUCIAL YEARS FROM BIRTH TO THREE

The crucial years from birth to three introduces what the research says about the importance of providing high quality stimulating caring and educational experiences for children from birth to three. It then discusses the general needs, temperament and characteristics of children in this age group.

SECTION 2:
ACTIVE LEARNING AND KEY EXPERIENCES

Active learning and key experiences includes play, initiative and the essential experiences that children must have for holistic development. In essence how children learn best and what they learn. The main principles of High/Scope are identified, an explanation of their importance is provided and key questions to ensure their delivery are pondered.

SECTION 3:
SUPPORTIVE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Supportive social and emotional learning environment discusses the importance of the development of attachment and trusting relationships for babies and toddlers, practitioner support strategies, encouragement and a approach to conflict.

SECTION 4:
PHYSICAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Physical learning environment describes the characteristics of active learning environments, why they are important for babies and toddlers and how practitioners ensure that they provide active learning spaces for the children in their care.

SECTION 5:
DAILY ROUTINES

Daily routines explores how routines for babies and toddlers can be predictable yet flexible and emphasises the importance of gentle separations and reunions for children and parents. The essential components of a daily routine are outlined with a focus on supporting children's individual needs and interests.

SECTION 6:
CHILD OBSERVATION, TEAMWORK AND FAMILY SUPPORT

Child observation, teamwork and family support examines the role of observation in developing child-centred follow-up plans. The importance of open communication between work colleagues and practitioners and parents is emphasised and the benefit of involving parents in daily communication is highlighted.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Additional Needs: All children need affectionate and safe care. Some children have additional individual needs.

Anti-discriminatory Practice: Practice which involves valuing and protecting children from discrimination. Encouragement and the development of positive attitudes to difference is central to an anti-discriminatory approach in addition to challenging discriminatory practices and providing positive models and images for children from a young age.

Area Development Management LTD (ADM): ADM was established by the Irish Government in agreement with the European Commission to promote social inclusion, reconciliation and equality and to counter disadvantage through local social and economic development. It is responsible for the management of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme.

Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE): The CECDE was established to develop and co-ordinate early childhood care and education in pursuance of the objectives of the White Paper Ready to Learn (DES, 1999).

Child-centred: Policy and practice that starts with the child's needs as the principal consideration.

Childminder: Childminding is the largest sub-sector within childcare in Ireland, and is generally undertaken by self-employed people in their own homes providing a loving and caring environment. Childminders who care for more than 3 and no more than 6 children up to the age of 6 years are legislated for by the Child Care Act 1991, interpreted by the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 1996 and its amendments.

Culture: An identity which everyone has, based on a number of factors, from memories, ethnic identity, family attitudes to child rearing, class, money, religious or other celebrations, division of family roles according to gender or age. Cultures are neither superior nor inferior to each other. They are constantly evolving for individuals and communities.

Curriculum: All activities provided by the service that the child engages in. This includes attitudes and values, and should involve how children learn as well as what they learn.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice: This is a term used to describe education based on the knowledge of child development (age appropriateness) and the uniqueness of each child (individual appropriateness). It acknowledges the importance of working with children at the developmental stage (as opposed to age) that they are at.

Early Childhood Care and Education: The term early childhood care and education is used to denote the inextricable linkage between the care and the education of young children up to the age of six years (compulsory school age in Ireland).

Early Childhood Service: This term is used as a cover-all to refer to any early childhood service including full day care, sessional services, drop-in centres, childminders, after-school care and infant classes in primary school.

Early Childhood Practitioner: The title used to describe a person who works with children in a specialised manner in early childhood settings. They may have a diversity of experience and qualifications.

Equal Opportunities: An approach to people that works to redress any inequalities that exist, relevant to cultural origins, gender and for people with disabilities.

Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme: The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) 2000-2006 is led by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and managed through Area Development Management. The Programme's primary aim is to facilitate parents to avail of training, education and employment opportunities through the provision of quality childcare supports.

Family: The word "family" is used, while recognising the changing patterns in families' lives. Many children are growing up with a lone parent or stepparents. In addition, many children are cared for by grandparents, relations, foster parents, or members of their community other then their birth parents.

Full Day Care: As defined by the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations, 1996 Explanatory Guide. A full day care service means the provision of a structured day care service for children for more than 3 1/2 hours per day. Services such as those currently described as day nurseries and crèches are included in this definition.

Gender Role Stereotypes: Fixed and simplified ideas of the usual, appropriate or "normal" activities, abilities, attributes and preferences of girls and boys, men and women. For example: 'Boys are strong, play football and don't cry; girls are delicate, play "mother" and are more emotionally expressive'.

Key Worker System: Each child and family is allocated a specific member of staff, who will provide continuity between home and service and who has a "special" responsibility for the child and the relationship with the child's family.

Minority Ethnic: Belonging to a cultural, or religious group that is numerically smaller than the predominant majority.

National Children's Resource Centre (NCRC): The NCRC at Barnardos provides a library and information service, tailor-made and public events training, consultancy/research and produces relevant publications for childcare providers, parents, professionals and the general public on any matter relating to children and specifically childcare.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA): The NCCA was established to advise the Minister for Education and Science on matters relating to the curriculum for early childhood education, primary and post-primary schools and the assessment procedures employed in schools and examinations on subjects which are part of the curriculum.

Non-sexist: Resources or attitudes are non-sexist when they present neutral images of the roles and behaviours of men and women. Therefore, a book that shows adults sharing domestic tasks is non-sexist.

Parent: For the purposes of this guide, the term parent is used to refer to the primary caregiver in full acknowledgement that the primary caregiver could be a grandparent, stepparent, foster parent or relation other than the father or mother.

Reflective Practice: Reflective practice involves practitioners thinking about their work with children and planning and implementing the curriculum to best support the children's interests and strengths. Understanding how children learn, observing, listening and reflection with colleagues are key components of reflective practice and can be supported by action planning.

Regulations: Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations, 1996, Part VII, Supervision of Pre-School Services of the Child Care Act 1991.

Scaffolding: Is a process by which practitioners support and guide children's learning, enabling children to reach to the next level of ability, beyond their own personal capability at that time.

Sessional Service: As defined by the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations, 1996, Explanatory Guide. Sessional pre-school services mean the provision of:

- A service offering a programme to pre-school children
- A service of up to 3 1/2 hours per session

Services covered by the above definition may include pre-schools, playgroups, crèches, Montessori groups, naíonraí or similar services which generally cater for children in the 2-6 year age bracket. Where younger children are cared for in sessional services the appropriate requirements should apply.

FOREWORD

The topic of childcare is now a daily feature on our media agenda. The focus tends to be on the economic angle – who pays, how much, and supply and demand. The quality of childcare and the developmental needs of children receive less attention.

The importance of the first years in a child's life cannot be overstated. Barnardos has long been committed to the development of high quality early years services for children. This practice guide is being published as a contribution to the development of best practice, particularly focusing on the needs of children from birth to three. It draws on High/Scope principles as well as the learning from Barnardos' extensive involvement in early years services. It links with current developments in early childhood care and education in Ireland, in particular the NCCA consultative document *Towards a Framework for Early Learning (2004)*.

The National Children's Resource Centre is committed to providing information, training and resources to the childcare sector and to parents. We are particularly interested in producing indigenous publications which draw on international best practice adapted to an Irish context. It is hoped that this publication will be a useful resource to practitioners and to parents in their efforts to provide the best early learning experiences for the children in their care.

I would like to thank the authors Geraldine French and Patricia Murphy, the publication's Advisory Group, and Clay Shouse of the High/Scope Foundation in the U.S., without whom this book would not have been possible. I am also pleased to acknowledge the financial support of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the E.U. under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme. Their ongoing commitment to the development of an infrastructure and the dissemination of information and resources as key building blocks, to ensure quality early childhood services, is extremely important.

Anne Conroy
National Manager, National Children's Resource Centre

INTRODUCTION

ORIGINS OF THIS PRACTICE GUIDE

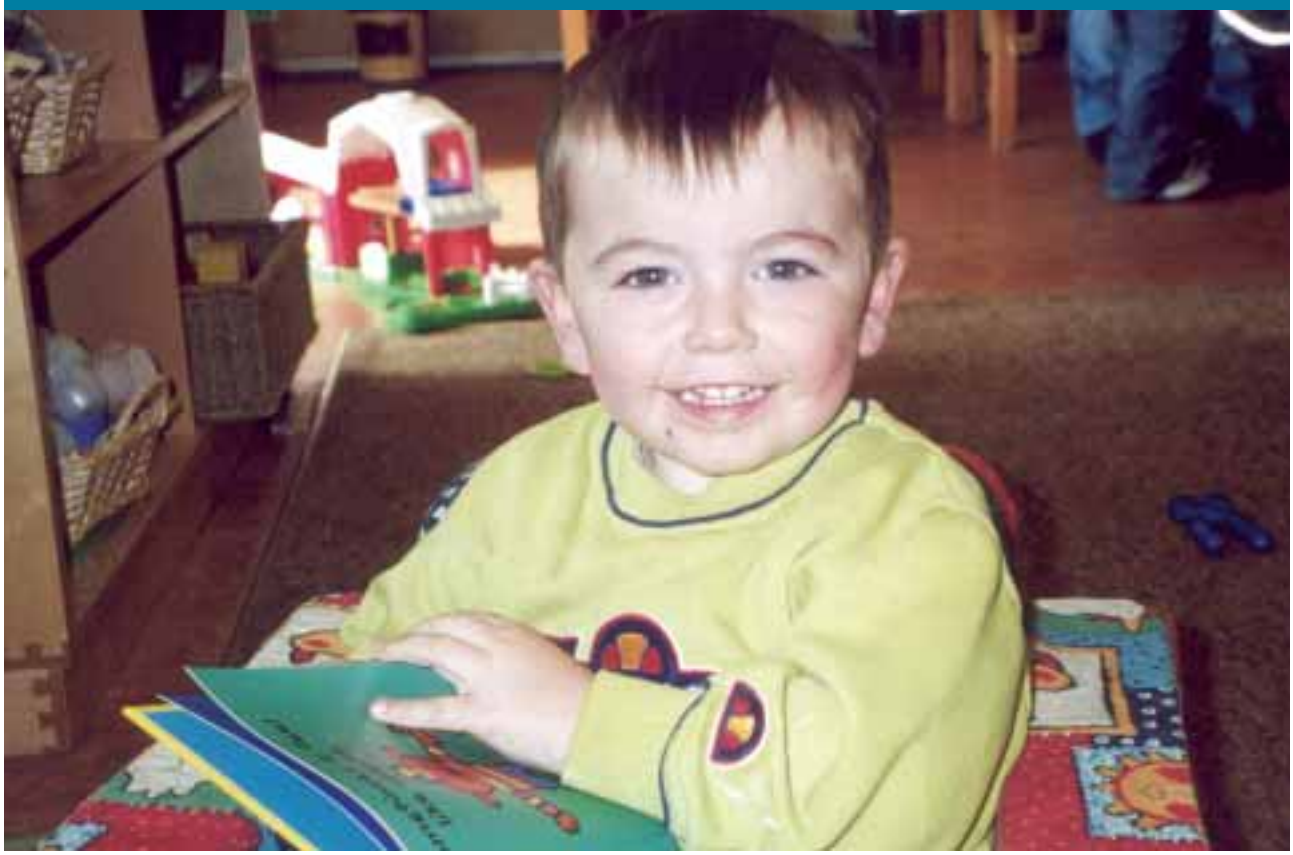
Barnardos' National Children's Resource Centre (NCRC) provides a library and information service, tailor-made and public events training, consultancy/research and produces relevant publications for childcare providers, parents, professionals and the general public on any matter relating to children and specifically child care. Arising from Barnardos' Regional Childcare Development Work and Early Years Services a clear need emerged for an indigenous publication relating specifically to the care and education of the most important years of a child's life: from birth to three. The NCRC, therefore, commissioned *Once in a Lifetime: Early Childhood Care and Education for Children from Birth to Three* to support the development of quality childcare provision for children in early childhood settings and homes.

VISION

The aims of this guide are to:

- Provide practical guidance on the care and education of children from birth to three years.
- Support existing practice.
- Create the development of reflective practice.
- Focus on the practitioner's engagement with children.

It shares the view stated in the *Report of the Expert Working Group on Childcare* (Government of Ireland, 1999, p.4) that 'care and education are inextricably linked elements in a child's holistic development'. It embodies the principles of the High/Scope approach (see below) while acknowledging that not all childcare services or homes are High/Scope based. It reflects Barnardos' policy and practice for the support of families.



Importantly, it links with the emerging conceptual framework for early learning from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and recent developments in the area of early childhood care and education in Ireland. *Towards a Framework for Early Learning* (2004) is the consultative document of the NCCA which focuses specifically on learning throughout early childhood from birth to six years. The Framework for Early Learning is 'intended for adults in all early childhood settings who have responsibility for nurturing children's learning and development. It will support these adults in giving children learning opportunities responsive to their individual strengths and needs, and so help them to realise their full potential as learners' (NCCA, 2004, p.4). It is important to note that the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) is also developing a National Framework for Quality in Early Childhood Care and Education (NFQ/ECCE) which will relate to broader aspects of early years services such as equipment and material, staff qualifications, training, learning objectives, teaching methodologies and related areas. A support framework to encourage compliance with quality standards by early education providers will also be developed.

There are associated areas of the delivery of high quality early childhood services for children from birth to three years that are not the remit of this guide but which are important elements of professional practice. Management of early childhood services must ensure compliance with all relevant legislation and regulations such as the Child Care Act 1991, Pre-School Regulations (1996) and health, safety and employment legislation. Children must be protected at all times and help sought from the Children First Implementation Officer in the local area Health Service Executive (see *Useful Resources*) to develop appropriate child protection policies and procedures. For further information on overall professional practice refer to *Supporting Quality: Guidelines for Best Practice in Early Childhood Services* (French, 2003) and for the development of policies and procedures refer to *A Guide to Developing Policies and Procedures in a Childcare Setting* (Byrne, and Area Development Management, 2003). Matters relating to human resources can be found in *Personnel Practice in Early Years Services – A Guide* (Byrne, 2005).

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is primarily targeted at practitioners in their daily care of babies and toddlers in early childhood settings – not only those who use the High/Scope approach. It is equally appropriate for childminders, parents and other carers who spend time with very young children and who have their best interests at heart.

ABOUT HIGH/SCOPE

The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation was established in 1970 by David Weikart (1932-2003), to continue research and programme activities he originally initiated as an administrator with the Ypsilanti Public Schools, in Michigan, USA. To enhance lives through education, the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation engages in curriculum development, research, training, publishing and communication. The name "High/Scope" refers to the organisation's high purposes and far-reaching mission which is to improve the life chances of children and youth by promoting high quality educational programmes. While High/Scope conducts research in a variety of areas and has developed curricula for a variety of ages, it is perhaps best known for its research on the lasting effects of pre-school education (see overleaf) and its pre-school curriculum approach. High/Scope Foundation activities' include:

- Training early childhood practitioners, primary school teachers and administrators.
- Conducting research projects on the effectiveness of educational programmes.
- Developing curricula for baby/toddler, pre-school, primary school, and adolescent programmes.
- Operating a Demonstration Pre-school in Ypsilanti, Michigan, that serves children in the local community and provides a model of "High/Scope in action" for visiting educators.
- Operating residential enrichment programmes for adolescents at the High/Scope Retreat and Meeting Center in Clinton, Michigan, USA, and at other locations throughout the USA.
- Publishing books, videos, curriculum materials, and assessment tools for practitioners and researchers.
- Establishing the High/Scope Early Childhood Reading Institute.
- Maintaining an International High/Scope Conference of High/Scope-certified practitioners and trainers.

High/Scope's pre-school educational approach is used throughout the world. Centres for the dissemination of High/Scope materials and ideas are located in the UK, Indonesia, Ireland, Korea, Mexico, The Netherlands, and Singapore. In addition Teacher Education Centres are located in Canada and South Africa.

High/Scope research

The High/Scope Perry Pre-school study is a scientific experiment that has identified both the short- and long-term effects of a high quality pre-school education programme for young children living in poverty. From 1962 through 1967, David Weikart and his colleagues in Ypsilanti, Michigan (USA) operated the High/Scope Perry Pre-school Program for young children to help them avoid school failure and related problems.

The researchers identified a sample of 123 low-income African-American children who were assessed to be at high risk of school failure and randomly assigned 58 of them to a group that received a high-quality pre-school programme at ages 3 and 4 and 65 to another group that did not receive a programme. Because of the random assignment strategy, children's pre-school experience remains the best explanation for subsequent group differences in their performance over the years.

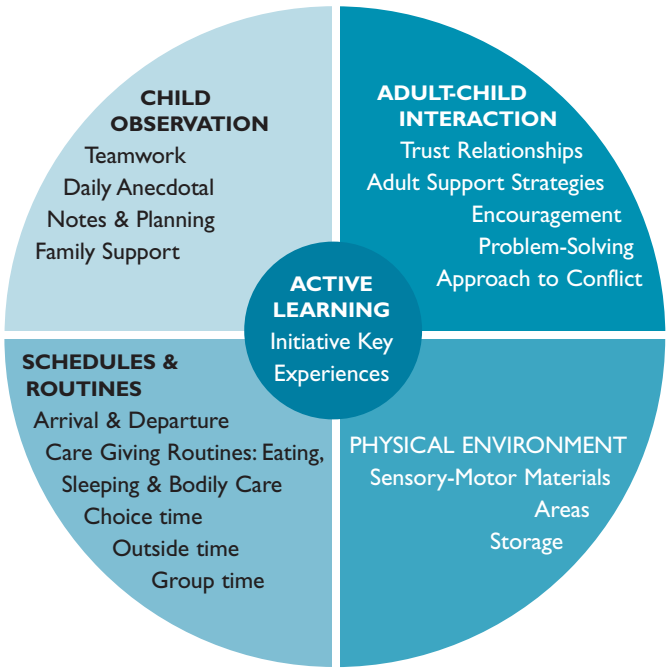
The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40: Summary, Conclusions and Frequently Asked Questions (www.highscope.org/Research/Perry Project/perrymain.htm p.5) concluded that 'high-quality preschool programs for young children living in poverty contribute to their intellectual and social development in childhood and their school success, economic performance, and reduced commission of crime in adulthood. This study confirms that these findings extend not only to young adults, but also to adults in midlife. It confirms that the long-term effects are lifetime effects.' The study draws these conclusions about the pre-school education programme which lasted for 2 years for each child. The practitioners had bachelor's degrees and certification in education, and each cared for 5 to 6 children, adopting what is now called a key worker system (see *Sections 3* and *5* for further information). They used the High/Scope educational model in daily classes of 2 1/2 hours and visited families weekly for a period of 1 1/2 hours. Practitioners studied and received regular training and support in their use of this educational model.

The study forms just one small element of the High/Scope approach and is linked to children in the years before they attend school. High/Scope has evolved to develop their approach for babies and toddlers and for school going children. The following provides an overview of the approach specifically for children from birth to three years.

High/Scope approach - an overview

The High/Scope "Wheel of Learning" below demonstrates the components of the High/Scope educational approach for babies and toddlers. At the core of the curriculum are active learning, initiative and key experiences. The adult - child interaction, physical learning environment, schedules, care giving routines, child observation and family support complete the cycle. For the purposes of this guide some of the terminology is amended to reflect the Irish context.

High/Scope Infant and Toddler Wheel of Learning



Active learning

The cornerstone of the High/Scope approach to early childhood education is the belief that **active learning** is fundamental to the full development of human potential and

The moment by moment interactions of adults and young children are crucial to the healthy emotional development of the child.

that it occurs most successfully in environments that are developmentally appropriate and which therefore meet the needs of children. Children are active learners from the time they are born. They learn through ongoing engagement with people and exploration of their immediate world. In active learning environments children have the freedom to watch, touch, mouth, feel, crawl, climb, explore, choose and manipulate a wide variety of materials. They experience positive responses from their carers, enjoyment, control, interest, probability of success, later they develop feelings of competence and self-confidence.

Active learning allows children to become engaged in play and exploration through **self-initiated** activity. In the care of a trusted adult the baby looks towards the ball rolling on the floor and feels free to reach out to touch it. The toddler chooses to leave the security of his practitioner's lap to crawl through the tunnel to see what interesting experience is on the other side.

Key experiences

The **key experiences** developed by High/Scope are a series of statements describing what children do as they go about their day exploring and learning. They guide practitioners as they observe, support and plan for children and as they evaluate the developmental validity of early childhood practices. Key experience statements are available for babies and toddlers, the pre-school child and the elementary (school going) child.

Babies and toddlers develop a **sense of self** (learning "what is me and what is not me" through to the concept of "I can do it"). They learn about **social relations** (through interacting with practitioners and peers), and learn how to hold things in mind through **creative representation** (by experiencing many times what a banana tastes, feels and looks like babies and toddlers get a mental picture of a banana). Babies and toddlers master **movement and music** basics (through developing muscle control and listening to steady beat). They learn **communication and language** skills (from gestures, "cooing" to "talking"), and about the physical world by **exploring objects** (through mouths, hands and feet).

They learn about **early quantity and number** concepts (a toddler puts more than one object into a box), develop an understanding of **space** ('I got into this Wendy House, now I have to get out') and begin to learn about **time** (for babies time is 'now', toddlers begin to anticipate, 'putting on coats means going for a walk'). Each statement highlights an active learning experience that is essential for the fundamental abilities that emerge during childhood.

Practitioner-child interaction

The moment by moment interactions of adults and young children are crucial to the healthy emotional development of the child. Having a trusting, supportive, consistent, reliable relationship with the primary carers in a child's life provides them with the essential experiences to go forth and explore the physical and social world. In High/Scope settings practitioners aim to ensure continuity of care and to establish **trusting relationships** with children. Central to those interactions are cuddles and positive reciprocal interactions where early explorations are **encouraged**.

A safe environment is established where children are free to initiate activities without fear of reprimand and the world around them is seen from their perspective. Conflicts between children are regarded as opportunities for learning and an approach is recommended for resolving conflicts and supporting independence. Children will become loving, competent, trustworthy adults when cared for in an environment by significant adults where they are treated and seen as loving, trustworthy and competent.

Physical learning environment

The **learning environment** in a High/Scope setting is carefully planned to meet the developing needs of children by providing them with the optimum opportunities to look and listen, to roll, crawl, wobble, toddle and climb, to work independently, to make choices, to make noise, to make a mess, to be comfortable and to be safe. The space is organised into specific **play and care areas** of interest to support children's needs for exploration and involvement with activities such as building, pretending and reading.

The areas are secure and inviting and stocked with a wide variety of easily accessible open-ended natural, found, real life and commercial **sensory-motor materials,** which can be used in creative and purposeful ways providing ample opportunities for problems to be solved in a way and at a pace that suits the child. These materials are **stored** so that children can see, reach and use materials as they need them.

Daily routines

High/Scope advocates that the **daily routine** provides a common framework of support for children of all needs as they pursue their interests and engage in various problem solving activities. Following the cues and initiatives from the child (for hunger and sleep) and in partnership with the parents a routine is established which consists of specific time segments allotted to certain activities and is designed to support children's initiatives and to be flexible but predictable.

The routine enables children to anticipate what happens next and gives them control over what they do in each part of the day. For babies and toddlers the routine is centred on the daily sequence of events such as **choice times, outside time,** and **group times** and is anchored around one primary carer or key worker. The routine will include leisurely **arrivals** and **departures** time, **feeding** and mealtimes, **bodily care** routines and **nap times**.

The provision of opportunities for active learning, the modelling of respectful ways of interacting with others, supporting children's abilities, attention to the learning environment, the establishment and adoption of a flexible but consistent routine, involving families and meeting children's needs are central to High/Scope.

Child development and learning

Some basic tenets of the High/Scope approach from the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation (1996), regarding child development and learning are as follows:

1. Human beings develop capacities in predictable sequences throughout their lives. As people mature, new capabilities emerge.
2. Despite the general predictability of human development, each person displays unique characteristics from birth which, through everyday interactions, progressively differentiate into a unique personality. Learning always occurs in the context of each person's unique characteristics, abilities, and opportunities.

3. There are times during the life cycle when certain kinds of things are learned best or most efficiently and there are teaching methods that are more appropriate at certain times in the developmental sequence than at others.
4. An educational experience, procedure, or method – whether adult- or child-initiated – is developmentally appropriate if it:
    - Exercises and challenges the learner's capacities as they emerge at a given developmental level.
    - Encourages and helps the learner to develop a unique pattern of interests, talents and goals.
    - Presents learning experiences when learners are best able to master, generalise and retain what they learn and can relate it to previous experiences and future expectations.
5. Learning can be viewed as a social experience involving meaningful interactions among children and adults. Since children learn at different rates and have unique interests and experiences they are more likely to reach their full potential for growth when they are encouraged to interact and communicate freely with peers and adults.

WHY BARNARDOS HAS COMMITTED TO HIGH/SCOPE

Barnardos' vision is an Ireland where childhood is valued and all children and young people are cherished equally. Barnardos' mission is to challenge and support families, communities, society and government to make Ireland the best place in the world to be a child, focusing specifically on children and young people whose well-being is under threat.

At the core of Barnardos' work is the belief that every child has a right to reach his or her potential and that their family is crucial to their development. Barnardos works with children in the firm belief that early intervention and finding solutions to problems before they grow is vital – because every childhood lasts a lifetime.

The commitment to early intervention, prevention and the research evidence inspired Barnardos to employ a staff member to complete the High/Scope Trainer of Trainers Course in London in 1987. Consequently Barnardos was responsible for bringing High/Scope to the Republic of Ireland. As a result High/Scope as a curriculum was implemented in Barnardos' Early Years Services and a number of High/Scope Curriculum Implementation Courses were delivered by Barnardos to community based services. In 2000 the Centre for Social and Educational Research (CSER) at the Dublin Institute of Technology conducted an Early Years Review of the services for young children in Barnardos. To ensure that a high quality service was provided, a number of key recommendations were made among which included:

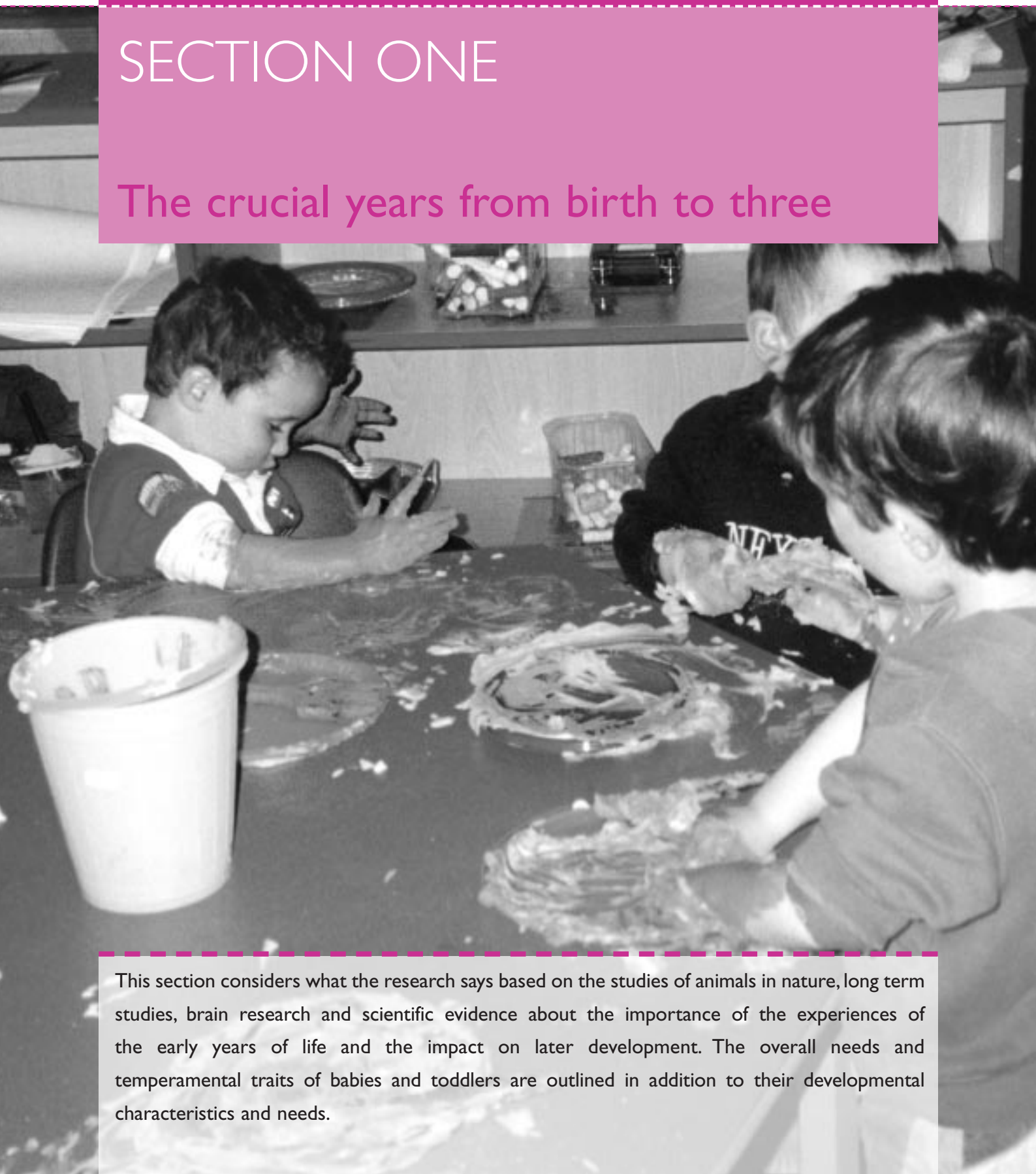
- Staff to undergo in-service training.
- Support with the implementation of the High/Scope Curriculum.

From 2001 Barnardos has reinvested (courtesy of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme) in High/Scope to enhance the quality of their services to young children. High/Scope was chosen as an appropriate model of early learning by Barnardos because:

- It complements Barnardos' policy framework and ethos of care for families founded in a strengths-based approach.
    - The approach to people works to celebrate diversity and to redress any inequalities that exist, relevant to cultural origins, gender and for people with additional needs.
    - It places high regard on the participation of children, young people and parents in the services.
    - Children taking responsibility is encouraged.
    - Strategies for dealing with challenging behaviours are based on respect, conflict resolution and shared control between practitioners and children.
- Research has proven the approach to be of benefit to young children.
- The curriculum caters for babies and toddlers as well as young children and adolescents.
- Valid, reliable observation and assessment systems are an intrinsic part of the process.
- The curriculum is being continually evaluated and updated, using the experiences of early childhood practitioners.
- High/Scope Ireland was established in 1999 (launched in 2002) and training and implementation of this curriculum is available in Ireland nationwide.
- High/Scope contains the components of professional practice for working with children.

SECTION ONE

The crucial years from birth to three



This section considers what the research says based on the studies of animals in nature, long term studies, brain research and scientific evidence about the importance of the experiences of the early years of life and the impact on later development. The overall needs and temperamental traits of babies and toddlers are outlined in addition to their developmental characteristics and needs.

1.1 WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

One of the oldest and most central theoretical debates within psychology and philosophy is regarding whether children's development is as a result of their genetic inheritance (nature) or the influence of the environment they find themselves in (nurture). What is clear is that both genetic and environmental factors play vital parts in a child's life chances. In outline, the evidence for the importance of the environmental factors is as follows: by virtue of coming first, the early years set in motion a train of events that are the basis of later development. A significant body of research evidence links physical, social, emotional and intellectual development with what happens to children in the first five years particularly for those children who are socially and economically disadvantaged (Home-Start International, 2002) as follows.

1.1.1 Evidence from nature and long term studies

Numerous studies of birds and animals have shown that there are particularly sensitive periods when the young attach themselves to the primary carer. This vital process of imprinting is seen in humans as the bond or attachment that develops between a young child and its primary carer, usually at about six months or at least within the first two years. A critical period for bonding for parents occurs within a few hours of the child's birth (Brazelton, 1992). Attachment Theory provides a clear model for how loss and disruption in the lives of young children can result in problems later in life, especially mental health problems (Byng-Hale, 1995). This is further explored in *Section 3*.

Bronfenbrenner (1972) was among the first to recognise the importance of parents in any child-centred intervention. Work conducted in the 1960s and 1970s demonstrated that how primary carers react to children can offer lasting protection. A parent or practitioner is constantly affecting the child's development in the way s/he relates to it. This becomes the dynamic organising force in the personality of the child (David and Appell, 1966).

Freud and Burton-White, differ in their explanations of why the early years are crucial. Nevertheless, in common with most psychologists, they both build their theories on early experience as the basis for subsequent mental and emotional health and well-being (White and Watts, 1973). The developmental psychologist, Piaget, identified a series of stages in cognitive development through which children pass in the first five years. This led him to emphasise the importance of mental and social stimulation at that time for optimum intellectual functioning (Maier, 1969).

Studies focusing on health demonstrate the link between what happens in early childhood and later outcome. Poverty appears to be the greatest risk factor. There are more low birth weight babies, more peri-natal, infant deaths, and respiratory problems as well as behavioural and mental health problems in poor families. A detailed exploration of the impact of parental mental illness, problem drinking or drug use, or domestic violence on children's health and development at different stages of life showed that the short and long-term consequences for children will depend on the combination of resilience and protective mechanisms. Children do not necessarily experience behavioural or emotional problems, but when cumulative caring problems exist, then the risk to children increases. Very young children are particularly vulnerable to the impact of inconsistent and ineffective parenting (Cleaver *et al*., 1999).

1.1.2 Evidence from brain research

Some of the most influential evidence comes from American research on brain development. Early experience determines how the neural circuits in the brain are connected (Bertenthal and Campos, 1987). Children who are played with, spoken to and allowed to explore stimulating surroundings are more likely to develop improved neural connections which aid later learning (Karr-Morse and Wiley, 1997).

The brain develops earlier than the rest of the body. It reaches nearly 50% of its adult weight in the first 6 months, 75% by age 2 1/2 and 90% by age 5. All parts do not grow at the same rate. They are not determined completely by genes. As a rough guide, the part responsible for co-ordination of muscular movement grows very fast from just before birth and through the first year, with the connections that allow the eye to focus peaking at around 3 months.

The key finding from brain research is that the brain is uniquely constructed to benefit from experience and from positive care giving during the first years of life.

The connections neurons make with each other are called synapses. By the time a child is aged 3, the brain has formed 1,000 trillion connections – about twice as many as adults have. The stimulation babies and young children receive determines which synapses form in the brain, that is, which pathways become hardwired. Through repetition these brain connections become permanent. Conversely, a connection that is not used at all or often enough is unlikely to survive.

The part of the brain that deals with memories and coincides with the child's growing awareness of and attachment to caregivers develops between six and eight months. What happens at that time becomes organised into the unconscious internal working model of relationships. In other words the experience young babies have of forming relationships at this time influences all future relationships. In the second part of the first year, the part of the brain responsible for thinking and logic grows very fast, so that 50% cent of intellectual growth is achieved by age four (Perry, 1995; Karr-Morse and Wiley, 1997). What happens to a child during the early months and years does radically affect his later life chances. It has a direct effect on the number of connections made in the brain's circuitry.

Furthermore, chronic malnutrition in this period can affect intellectual performance, emotional well-being, social interactions and dexterity. Children who are neglected, who are in a permanent or semi-permanent state of fear or stress have been shown to have altered brain development, to find it more difficult to learn and to be less stable emotionally (Karr-Morse and Wiley, 1997). How a practitioner relates to children has a bearing on other issues of concern – for example bullying and violence. Where the relevant synapses (connections) are damaged by neurochemicals resulting from chronic stress, the child may be left without the ability to connect, to trust and ultimately to experience empathy. The authors emphasise that the interactive process most protective against violent behaviour begins in the first year after birth (ibid).

The key finding from brain research is that the brain is uniquely constructed to benefit from experience and from positive care giving during the first years of life. These findings, that early childhood experiences profoundly shape the infant brain, are changing the way we respond to the needs of children. In the course of the first three years a totally dependant person will build an incredibly complex brain that will become the beginning of an independent person.

1.1.3 Evidence on the impact of early learning on later development

French (2005) summarised that these are also the years when children are most dependent on the care and education provided by adults. The benefits of good quality early childhood care and education services for children have been widely documented. Sylva, (1993) having reviewed the evidence about the impact of early learning on children's later development, concluded that the impact of early education is found in all social groups but is strongest in children from disadvantaged backgrounds. It was also found that the most important learning in pre-school concerns aspiration, task commitment, social skills and feelings of efficacy. Children who have attended high quality early childhood services are better prepared for school, better able to learn and have fewer emotional difficulties. Subsequent to such findings the UK Government commissioned a review of literature *(Comprehensive Spending Review, 1998)* which concluded that the early years

are the most important for child development and that early development is more vulnerable to environmental influences than had been previously accepted.

This is true for all children, particularly those with additional needs. The term "additional needs" applies to some of the following kinds of circumstances (please note the list is not exhaustive):

- Some children may have a disability, which causes their development to follow a different pattern, or unfold much more slowly, from that of the majority. Examples are a child with Down's syndrome or cerebral palsy.
- Some children, although not experiencing physical disabilities, may have a specific learning need. For example, children may need to have things explained more slowly and more frequently.
- Some children may have a continuing health condition that affects their life. The attachments of such children with others may be disturbed because of frequent trips to hospital. There may be some play activities that they cannot join. Examples are children with severe asthma and those with sickle cell anaemia.

The research literature confirms the benefits of integrated settings. Positive outcomes are manifest in more positive social interaction with peers, more complex play behaviours and general communicative competence (Guralnick, 1994), provided the integrated setting is of an appropriately high standard.

The breadth and scope of the evidence regarding the crucial nature of the first five years was sufficient to inspire a succession of compensatory intervention programmes, notably Headstart and the Perry Project (later High/Scope, see *Introduction* for more information), in the USA in the 1960s. The experimental groups continue to do consistently better than control groups in relation to completing school, continued education, getting a job, sustaining positive family relationships (Schweinhart *et al.*, 1993). Research has also demonstrated substantial savings in social welfare and prison costs, estimated currently in the USA as seventeen dollars for every dollar invested in early intervention (Schweinhart *et al.*, 2004).

In order to benefit from this research and create supportive environments for young children to enhance their development we must also understand the developmental characteristics, the temperamental traits and the needs of young children. The following provides a brief overview.

1.2 DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS, TEMPERAMENT AND NEEDS OF CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO THREE

The organisation of the children's environment, and the activities planned for children should be appropriate to meet the needs and abilities of all the children in the setting. In addition to the basic human needs of food, warmth, shelter, clothes, protection from disease, Kellmer-Pringle (1975) in discussing children's psychological needs identified the need for love and security, responsibility, acknowledgment and new experiences.

The need for love and security is met by the child experiencing from birth onwards a continuous, reliable, loving relationship first, with its primary carers and then an ever-widening circle of adults and contemporaries (see *Section 3*). The security of a familiar place and a known routine make for continuity and predictability in a world in which the child has to come to terms with so much that is new and changing. Settings operating continuity of care combined with a key worker system can facilitate this need (see *Section 3 and 5*). **The need for responsibility** is met by allowing the child to gain personal independence in everyday care, feeding, dressing; having his/her own possessions to own and take care of; having increasing freedom through choice of food/clothes/friends/interests.

Adults noticing a child and acknowledging it genuinely meet **the need for recognition**. All children need to be noticed and given positive attention. Encouragement and realistic expectations in line with the stages of development help the child to enjoy the challenge of learning something new. **The need for new experiences** is met through the provision of play and language. Activities appropriate to the stage of development given at appropriate times help the child to achieve a skill and build on that new skill. If children are not given new experiences no learning can take place. New experiences enable the child to learn one of the most important basic lessons of early life 'learning how to learn'. This brings joy and a sense of achievement.

Greenspan (1997) articulated that children must also have opportunities to experiment, find solutions, to take risks and even fail. Children need clear boundaries and structure and families themselves need stable neighbourhoods and communities. This is in order to provide the appropriate, consistent and deeply committed care required for children to master their developmental levels.

1.2.1 Temperament

All babies are born with universal aspects to their development such as automatic reflexes or that muscles always develop from the head down. There are also some fundamental variations. All babies cry, but some cry more than others. All babies wet their nappies but some babies become distressed by this, others do not seem to notice. These differences are ascribed to the individual temperament of the child.

Temperament is the 'inbuilt predispositions that form the foundations of personality' (Bee and Boyd, 2004, p. 79) and is the focus of many studies by developmental psychologists (Thomas and Chess, 1977; Buss and Plomin, 1986; Kagan *et al*., 1993). Researchers have yet to define and agree the key dimensions of temperament. However, the work of Thomas and Chess (1977) remains influential. They identified that from birth, babies have been found to be different from each other in nine ways:

- *Activity level:* Babies vary in how much they move about. Some squirm a lot in the womb. Some wriggle and roll over in their cots, and as toddlers they will always run rather than walk. Other babies are much less active and stay still for longer periods; they may wake up in the same position they fell asleep in.
- *Adaptability*: Some babies fall asleep wherever they happen to find themselves when they are tired and adjust quickly to change while others need their comfort item or their cot and become upset at any change in their routine.
- *Approach/withdrawal to novelty*: Some babies delight in everything new. Others are much more wary. The "approach" baby splashes with delight in the pool, coos at strangers and welcomes new foods. The "withdrawal" baby is fearful of the pool, turns away from strangers and grimaces at every new experience.
- *Attention span*: Some babies spend a long time concentrating on an activity or a toy and will resist stopping for a change of clothes. Others flit from one toy to another and have no difficulty being redirected.
- *Distractibility*: Some babies are easily distracted from drinking their bottle by the sound of a person coming into the room. Other babies will remain focused on their task.
- *Intensity of reaction*: Some babies laugh with great energy and likewise cry vociferously. Other babies are much milder in their response; they smile when they are happy and whimper rather than cry.
- *Mood*: Some babies are usually cheerful and pleasant. Others seem worried and fuss a lot.
- *Regularity*: Some babies have regular biological rhythms. They eat, sleep and eliminate regularly almost from birth. Other babies are much less predictable
- *Sensitivity threshold*: Some babies have a very high level of awareness. There are babies who react to the slightest sound. They will startle at the sound of thunder while others will not notice.

Psychologists do not suggest that these traits are absolutely fixed at birth. They are shaped, strengthened or counteracted by the child's relationships and experiences. Because their behaviour is more troublesome babies and toddlers with difficult temperaments are more often the subject of criticism or punishment than are "easy" children (Bates, 1989). Once established the pattern of criticism and punishment is in itself likely to have additional consequences for the child. Difficult temperament does not cause later behaviour problems; rather it creates vulnerability within the child. Children such as this may find it more difficult to deal with life's stresses. What is important for any practitioner to know is that supportive responsive adults in a low stress, accepting environment reduce this potential difficulty (Fish, Stifter and Belsky, 1991). In these environments many children move through childhood without any difficulties.

Children come with their own temperamental traits; it is up to the practitioner to get to know the baby or toddler and match their response to the child. For example a child who hesitates to reach out for new experiences, a face, new food, or new piece of play equipment needs more time to grow accustomed to that new experience. Some babies and

toddlers like gregarious experiences with adults tickling them and singing noisily, others prefer quieter more gentle experiences.

In addition to temperamental traits, children from birth through to three years of age have developmental needs and capacities that differ from those in any subsequent time of their lives. *Towards a Framework for Early Learning* (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2004), encompasses the years from birth to school entry age and identifies three broad age groups for consideration within an early childhood education and care curriculum. The overlapping age categories used are:

- Babies: Birth to 18 months
- Toddlers: 1 year to 3 years
- Young children: 2 1/2 to 6 years

This overlap occurs in acknowledgement that there is considerable variation between individual children. Babies and toddlers have distinctive and different needs and characteristics. These will determine the focus of the curriculum as it applies for each learner. The programme must be flexible enough to take into account the varying needs and characteristics of individual children.

For the purposes of this guide which caters for children from birth to 3 years the same principle is employed and the following overlapping categories are used where relevant.

- Babies: Birth to 18 months
- Young toddlers: 1 year to 2 1/2 years
- Older toddlers: 2 years to 3 1/2 years

1.2.2 Babies: birth to 18 months

During these early months of life, the baby is totally dependent on others, has little prior knowledge or experience, and is learning to anticipate events and to communicate her or his needs in a confusing world. In order to develop a sense of their own identity and the strong sense of self-worth necessary for them to thrive and become confident in relationships and as learners, babies must experience intimate, responsive, and trusting relationships with at least one other person within each setting.

Characteristics of babies

- Babies are vulnerable and totally dependent on adults to meet their needs and are rarely able to cope with discomfort or distress.
- The younger the child the greater the development that occurs.
- Babies have urgent needs, for attention, food, sleep, that demand immediate responses.
- They need security through knowing those demands will be met reliably, calmly, predictably.
- Babies are subject to rapid changes in health and well-being.

The needs of babies

The care of babies is specialised and is neither a scaled-down programme for 3-year-olds nor a babysitting arrangement. Any programme catering for babies must provide:

- One-to-one responsive interactions (those in which practitioners follow the child's lead).
- A practitioner who is consistently responsible for, and available to, each baby.
- Higher staffing ratios than for older children.
- Sociable, loving, and physically responsive practitioners who can tune in to a baby's needs.
- Individualised programmes that can adjust to the baby's own rhythms.
- A predictable and calm environment that builds trust and anticipation.
- Experiences to enhance their sense of self.

1.2.3 Young toddlers: 1 year to 2½ years

Young toddlers are rapidly acquiring physical, social, reasoning, and language skills, but these skills still need a lot of practice. Young toddlers tend both to resist and to find comfort in rituals and routines. Swings such as these can cause a wide variety of conflicting feelings, ideas, and actions, which challenge the resourcefulness and knowledge of practitioners who work with toddlers.

Characteristics of young toddlers

- They are full of energy and always moving.
- They live very much in the immediate.
- What toddlers want to do is usually ahead of their language or physical ability.
- Consequently toddlers are often frustrated.
- They like to try things out and see what happens, that is how they gain control of their world.
- They are determined to become competent.
- They are curious and anxious to understand the world around them.
- They learn with their whole bodies and thrive on being given opportunities to explore and create rather than be told.
- They feel very strongly.
- They are impulsive, unpredictable and lack self control.
- They look for social interaction and learn best by watching and imitating others.

The needs of young toddlers

Quite often toddlers are caught between the specialised arrangements for babies and the busy schedule for older children. Programmes designed specifically for toddlers will lessen the tendency for toddlers to become bored, frustrated, or disruptive, as can happen when expectations are set too low or too high. Young toddlers need:

- A secure environment and a programme that provides both challenges and predictable happenings.
- Opportunities for independent exploration and movement.
- A flexible approach which can accommodate their spontaneity and whims at a pace that allows them to try to do things for themselves.
- Adults who encourage the toddlers' cognitive skills and language development.
- Responsive and predictable adults who both understand and accept the toddler's developmental swings.
- Experiences to enhance their sense of self.

1.2.4 Older toddlers: 2 years to 3 1/2 years

Older toddlers have increasing capacities for language and inquiry, increasing ability to understand another point of view, and are developing interests in representation and symbols, such as pictures, numbers and words. They are also physically active. They still experience frustration, but they have a growing capacity for coping with unpredictability and change, especially if they are anchored by emotional support, respect, and acceptance.

Characteristics of older toddlers

- Older toddlers can recognise a wide range of patterns and regularity in their world.
- They are becoming increasingly physically adept.
- They love to ask questions and enjoy humour and nonsense.
- They have developing capacities for symbolisation and representation, art, music, dance, language and number.
- They are beginning to reason.
- Their increasing memory capacity allows for storytelling and for longer periods of focused attention.
- They are beginning to see how they and their families relate to the wider world.

- Their imagination offers the opportunity to begin to explore identities.
- They are able to make friends, begin to take turns and see a situation from another's point of view.

The needs of older toddlers

It is important to make opportunities for the older toddler to experience new challenges, co-operative ventures, and longer term projects. Older toddlers need:

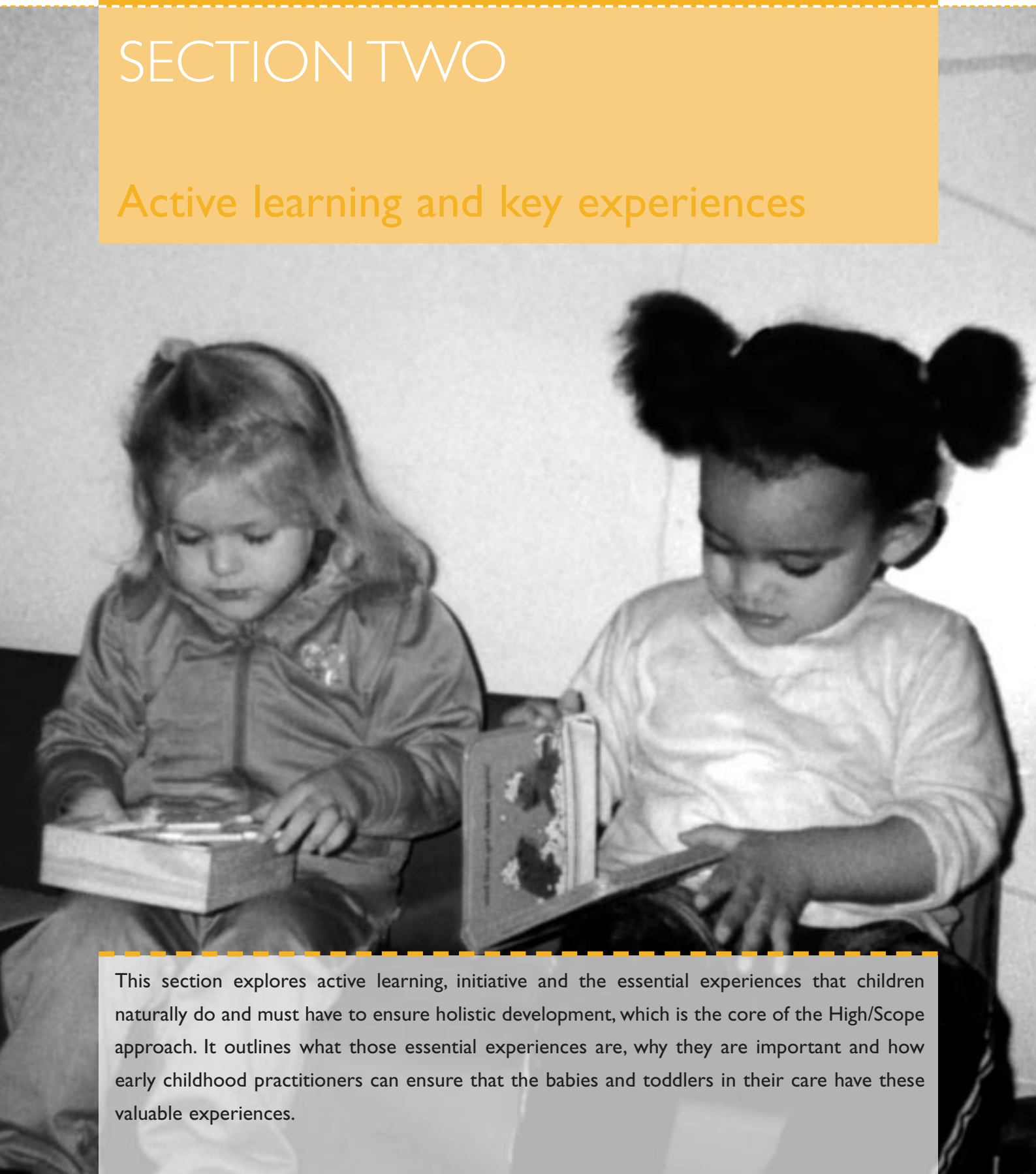
- Practitioners and environments to provide resources and support for their widening interests and capacities.
- Practitioners who can encourage sustained conversations, queries, and complex thinking, including concepts of fairness, difference, and similarity.
- Opportunities to use language to explore and to direct thinking and learning tasks.
- A widening range of resources for creative expression, symbolising, and representation.
- Recognition of their developing sense of humour, which springs from new understandings about how things "ought" to be.
- Challenging opportunities which keep pace with their physical co-ordination and development.
- Partnership between parents and the other adults involved in caring for the child.

Section 1 has considered the convincing scientific evidence about the importance of the experiences of the early years of life and the impact of that on later development. It provided a window to the overall needs and temperamental traits of babies and toddlers in addition to their developmental characteristics and specific needs relating to the overlapping categories of: babies – birth to 18 months; young toddlers – 1 year to 2 1/2 years and the older toddler – 2 years to 3 1/2 years. This information sets the context for the next section which explores how and what babies and toddlers learn in order to ensure optimal development.

Older toddlers experience frustration, but they have a growing capacity for coping with unpredictability and change, especially if they are anchored by emotional support, respect, and acceptance.

SECTION TWO

Active learning and key experiences



This section explores active learning, initiative and the essential experiences that children naturally do and must have to ensure holistic development, which is the core of the High/Scope approach. It outlines what those essential experiences are, why they are important and how early childhood practitioners can ensure that the babies and toddlers in their care have these valuable experiences.

2.1 WHAT IS ACTIVE LEARNING?

Active learning can be described as the full engagement of the baby and toddler in following their personal interests and goals. It is the process by which they explore the world either through: observing (gazing at their hand), listening, touching (stroking an arm or bottle), reaching, grasping, mouthing, letting go, moving their bodies (kicking, turning, crawling, pulling themselves up on furniture, walking), smelling, tasting, or making things happen with objects around them (putting things in and out of boxes, stacking blocks, rolling a ball). Active learning implies that the learning is constructed by the learners themselves (as opposed to being handed down by the practitioner) through direct contact with people and objects. When children actively learn they form unique conceptions of the world, ones that may not conform to the adult view of reality.

Babies and toddlers come into the world primed for action; their knowledge about the world around them and about themselves comes directly through action. According to Post and Hohmann (2000) babies and toddlers:

- Learn with their whole bodies and with all their senses.
- Learn because they want to.
- Communicate what they know.
- Learn within the context of trusting relationships.

How babies and toddlers learn actively

How this learning manifests itself has been identified through the ingredients of active learning for babies and toddlers which are: materials to manipulate (see *Section 4* for further information); choice; communication and language from the child; and practitioner support (Post and Hohmann, 2000, pp. 52-53, adapted with permission) as follows.

Materials to manipulate: Babies and toddlers learn with their whole bodies and with all their senses.

- Babies and toddlers explore and play with materials rich in sensory appeal: household objects; natural materials; soft and cuddly items; easy-to-grasp objects; squishy or messy materials; things they can set in motion; materials they can pull themselves up on and climb; things that make noise; and people.
- Babies and toddlers engage in direct physical action: reaching; sitting; crawling; climbing; carrying; and so forth.
- Babies and toddlers return to favourite materials, repeat satisfying actions, and experiment with materials to find out what else they do.
- Babies and toddlers have access to materials and plenty of space and time for exploration and movement.

Choice: Babies and toddlers learn because they want to.

- Babies and toddlers make choices and decisions all day long.
- Babies and toddlers express preferences for people, materials and experiences.
- Babies and toddlers act with autonomy, independence and curiosity.
- Babies and toddlers persist in actions they initiate.

Communication and language from children: Babies and toddlers communicate what they know.

- Babies and toddlers initiate contact with practitioners.
- Babies and toddlers express feelings and discoveries to receptive and responsive practitioners.
- Babies and toddlers string together sounds, gestures, and words in a fashion that makes sense to them.

Practitioner support: Babies and toddlers learn within the context of trusting relationships.

- Practitioners take an interest in the child's play.
- Practitioners enjoy the child's actions and explorations.
- Practitioners communicate warmth and respect.
- Practitioners acknowledge the child's feelings, from delight to frustration.
- Practitioners provide positive physical contact including cuddling, hugging, holding, stroking and on-the-knee holding.
- Practitioners give the child their full attention and respond readily to the child's signals and approaches, communication and talk.
- Practitioners talk with the child, tell the child what will happen next, encourage the child's problem-solving and read to the child.

2.1.1 Why is active learning important?

Active engagement with exciting materials and loving, consistent, creative and supportive adults provides children with a framework through which they interpret and understand the world. Babies and toddlers are

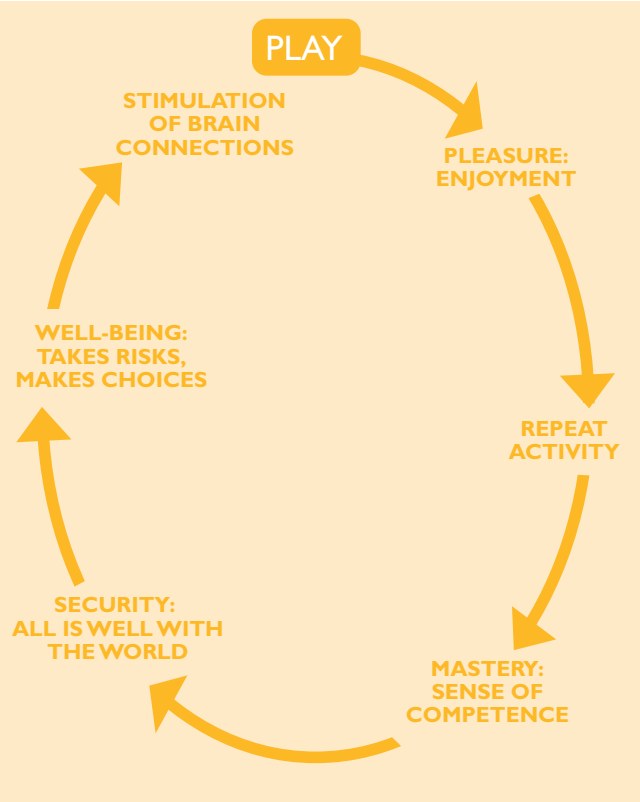
'The young learner develops an understanding of the world through actions and by interpreting what he/she sees, hears, touches, tastes and smells…In this way understanding emerges and develops through the child's own actions and interpretations' (NCCA, 2004, p.40).

experimenters, constantly seeking solutions to their problems– 'Can I reach that face?', 'How far will the ball roll?'

Research has proven (see *Section 1.1*) that direct action (physical and intellectual engagement with experiences) in addition to problem solving and repetition ensures that the synapses (brain connections or neural pathways, see *Section 1.1.2*) become stronger. This is particularly true of children aged from birth to three and those with additional needs as the foundations for all later learning are developed. Children who learn actively have positive dispositions to learning hardwired into their brains. These children are interested in what they are doing, experience enjoyment and, with repetition, probability of success. They experience competence and, as a result, confidence. They are intrinsically motivated to learn.

Through active learning children become engaged in play and exploration through **self-initiated** activity. In the care of a trusted adult the baby looks towards the ball rolling on the floor and feels free to reach out to touch it. The positive response from the practitioner gives children the confidence to explore further. The toddler chooses to leave the security of his/her practitioner's lap to crawl through the tunnel. S/he experiences fun, discovers that s/he can get through the tunnel and finds an interesting experience on the other side. Armed with that success s/he feels confident to explore what is in the fruit basket, knows from past success that this will provide interesting experiences and later on, develops the competence to face challenges and succeed. This learning cycle is illustrated in the following diagram.

Learning cycle



2.1.2 How do I ensure that children in my care learn actively?

In order to evaluate whether active learning is happening in a service, the following should be considered:

- Do the babies and toddlers choose people, activities and materials and follow their own interests and initiatives throughout the day?
- Can babies (or toddlers) lie on their backs with interesting objects within reach?
- Do the babies and toddlers have choices when they

have to carry out an everyday task? ('I can see you don't want to drink your bottle now, you want to look at the light', 'You can climb up the steps to the changing table or I can lift you', or 'You can put on the red apron or the blue apron.')

- Do the babies and toddlers persist in actions they begin and act with autonomy and independence, i.e. can they do the things they are able and wish to do themselves such as feed themselves when they can hold a spoon?
- Are there many age-appropriate materials that the child can use in a variety of ways? (see *Section* 4)
- Do the babies and toddlers have opportunities to explore, manipulate, combine, and transform the materials chosen?
- Are toddlers encouraged to describe what they are doing?
- Do practitioners ensure that children with additional needs can make choices and access the necessary materials to follow through on their intentions?
- Does the child reflect on his or her actions, integrate new experiences into an existing knowledge base, and seek the co-operation of others in his or her activities?

2.2 WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL KEY EXPERIENCES?

In the High/Scope approach the **key experiences** are what babies and toddlers actually do and the knowledge and competencies that emerge from their actions. Based on child observation they provide guidelines which frame the content of early learning and development. They are statements that describe how babies and toddlers explore the environment, learn about themselves, and begin to interact with others in the world. These are the essential ingredients that babies and toddlers must have for optimal development. They are organised under the following ten headings: sense of self; social relations; creative representation; movement; music; communication and language; exploring objects; early quantity and number; space and time. The key experiences are explained as follows with examples of each from the baby, young toddler and older toddler perspective (some items are from the *High/Scope Child Observation Record (COR) for Infants and Toddlers* (2002) adapted with permission).

SENSE OF SELF			
KEY EXPERIENCE	**BABY**	**YOUNG TODDLER**	**OLDER TODDLER**
Expressing initiative	Turns toward or away from a person or object	Moves with persistence until reaching a chosen person or object	Expresses a choice or intention in words
Distinguishing "me" from others	Puts his/her own fingers or thumb into own mouth	Recognises own body parts	Spontaneously identifies self in a mirror or photograph
Solving problems encountered in exploration and play	Moves eyes, head, or hand toward desired object or person	Moves self or object to find an object (or person) that has disappeared from sight	Verbally identifies a problem before attempting to solve it
Doing things for themselves	Cries to express a need	Feeds self finger foods or drinks from a cup	Accomplishes some or all parts of a complex self-help task, such as hand washing, using the toilet or potty or dressing

SOCIAL RELATIONS			
KEY EXPERIENCE	**BABY**	**YOUNG TODDLER**	**OLDER TODDLER**
Forming attachment to a primary practitioner	Snuggles or cuddles in the primary practitioner's arms	Seeks physical contact with the primary practitioner	Seeks out the primary practitioner to communicate needs and desires in words
Building relationships with other adults	Looks away from an unfamiliar adult	Initiates contact with an unfamiliar adult	Converses with an unfamiliar adult
Building relationships with peers	Watches another child	Spontaneously brings an object or shows affection to another child	Makes a comment to another child
Expressing emotions	Face and body express an emotion	Uses physical contact to express an emotion	Names an emotion
Showing empathy toward the feelings and needs of others	Face and body reflect the emotion of the practitioner	Cries upon seeing or hearing another child cry	Uses words or phrases to talk about an emotion displayed by another child
Developing social play	Watches another child at play	Seeks the company of another child and plays alongside	Hides an object for another person to find or runs away from another person in order to be caught

CREATIVE REPRESENTATION			
KEY EXPERIENCE	**BABY**	**YOUNG TODDLER**	**OLDER TODDLER**
Imitating and pretending	Watches another person	Imitates eating with a spoon or drinking from a cup	Uses one or more objects to stand for another
Exploring building and art materials	Explores own hands	During play spontaneously makes scribbles, stacks blocks, or squeezes play dough	Uses words or phrases to label an object s/he is drawing, building or making
Responding to and identifying pictures and photographs	Gazes at a picture or photograph	Points to or makes the sound or gesture of a familiar person, animal, or object in a picture or a photograph	Uses a sentence to identify an action in a picture or photograph

MOVEMENT			
KEY EXPERIENCE	**BABY**	**YOUNG TODDLER**	**OLDER TODDLER**
Moving parts of the body (head-turning, grasping, kicking)	Lying on back, turns head, waves arms, or kicks legs	Throws a ball toward a person or an object	Uses small objects in activities requiring precise co-ordination
Moving the whole body (rolling, crawling, cruising, walking, running, balancing)	Rolls from side to back	Walks unassisted	Jumps
Moving with objects	Sets an object in motion by kicking or batting	Walking unassisted, carries, pushes, or pulls an object	Pedals or attempts to pedal
Feeling and expressing steady beat	Is rocked in a practitioner's arms to the beat	Sways or bounces to music	Pats his/her knees to a steady beat

MUSIC			
KEY EXPERIENCE	**BABY**	**YOUNG TODDLER**	**OLDER TODDLER**
Listening to music	Hears music being played and turns his/her head	Shows delight when a favourite tune is played	Expresses a preference for a particular piece of music.
Responding to music	Turns head toward music	Standing unassisted moves body to music	Walks, turns, or jumps to music
Exploring and imitating sounds	Sounds are responded to by a practitioner	Enjoys rhymes and stories with sounds	Beats a drum
Exploring vocal pitch sounds	Coos and babbles	Screams	Uses voice loudly and softly

COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE			
KEY EXPERIENCE	**BABY**	**YOUNG TODDLER**	**OLDER TODDLER**
Listening and responding	Turns head toward a voice	Looks around when own name is spoken	Acts on an indirect (overheard) request or statement, or responds to an event
Communicating non-verbally	Watches a person, animal, or object	Seeks out and plays with a person, animal, or objects	Initiates and engages in an activity for a sustained period of time and returns to it at a later time
Participating in communication give and take	Looks directly at another person's face and coos or smiles	Babbles or uses a combination of babbling and words, participates in a conversation-like exchange with another person	Sustains a verbal interchange with another person by taking two or more turns
Communicating verbally	Makes cooing sounds	Uses a single word to refer to a person, animal, object, or action	Uses a sentence of four or more words
Exploring picture books and magazines	Gazes at a picture in a book	Turns pages of a book	Uses a phrase or a sentence to talk about a person, animal, or object pictured in a book
Enjoying stories, rhymes, and songs	Stills or brightens upon hearing a story, rhyme or song	Participates in pat-a-cake or a similar word game or finger-play	Asks to hear a specific story, rhyme or song

EXPLORING OBJECTS			
KEY EXPERIENCE	**BABY**	**YOUNG TODDLER**	**OLDER TODDLER**
Exploring objects with the hands, feet, mouth, eyes, ears and nose	Looks at an object or listens to a sound	Performs an action on an object	Uses an object as a tool to complete a task
Discovering object permanence	Gazes as a familiar face moves out of eyesight	Is puzzled when the face "disappears" behind the chair but enjoys the game	Seeks the face and finds it successfully
Exploring and noticing how things are the same or different	Exhibits preference for a familiar voice or face	Uses a sound to name an object	Gathers two or more similar objects from a variety of objects

EARLY QUANTITY AND NUMBER			
KEY EXPERIENCE	**BABY**	**YOUNG TODDLER**	**OLDER TODDLER**
Experiencing more	Sees more than one of the same object	Has access to sets of items, boxes of many blocks, cars, mobile phones	Verbalises that s/he needs 'more' blocks
Experiencing one-to-one correspondence	Touches or handles an object	Takes a peg and fits it into the hole	Puts the red bead into the red bowl
Exploring the number of things	Touches or handles more than one of the same object	Carries two teddies around the room	Verbalises the number of objects 'two cars'

SPACE			
KEY EXPERIENCE	**BABY**	**YOUNG TODDLER**	**OLDER TODDLER**
Exploring and noticing location of objects	Seeks and turns towards a familiar voice	Goes towards the door when s/he wants to go outside	Goes to the area where s/he knows s/he will find an object s/he is interested in playing with
Observing people and things from various perspectives	Lies on his/her back or side while propped up on cushions or in a practitioner's arms	Moves around, sits and stands	Climbs blocks and slides
Filling and emptying, putting in and taking out	Holds the bottle and begins to put it in and out of his/her mouth	Fills a container	Makes an enclosure
Taking things apart and fitting them together	Holds the lid of his/her bottle and the bottle itself	Takes the lid off the play dough box and tries to put it back on	Builds a block tower

TIME			
KEY EXPERIENCE	**BABY**	**YOUNG TODDLER**	**OLDER TODDLER**
Anticipating familiar events	Engages in a voluntary action	Shows anticipation of an immediate event "lunch time" by sitting at the table	Uses a word or words to say what is about to happen
Noticing the beginning and ending of a time interval	Reaches out his/her arms to be picked up when his/her nappy is changed	Leaves the group to play by him/herself	Stops his/her actions at the sound of a signal
Experiencing "fast" and "slow"	Hears fast and slow music	Can make his/her object (car) go fast or slow	Can run fast or slow
Repeating an action to make something happen again, experiencing cause and effect	Drops his/her object and it is picked up by the practitioner, s/he drops it again	Fills a bucket with water and pours it down the water wheel and repeats	Asks to have the same story read again

Everything the child experiences from the moment s/he enters the early childhood setting will become part of what s/he learns. A small baby who hears gentle voices interacting first with his/her parent and then with him/her will begin to construct learning about the task of being cared for in a setting other than home. Practitioners' provision of welcome reminders of home such as special teddies, blankets and soothers and the time taken to support the transition from home to childcare setting supports key experiences. This process involves the key experiences of sense of self (distinguishing me from others), social relations (building relationships with other adults), communication and language (listening and responding) and time (anticipating familiar events).

The practitioner will observe the baby or toddler's expressions of need and intention whether for bodily care, nourishment or play and support the child to fulfil the intention or need. The practitioner sees the tiny baby turn his head towards the voices of a colleague and toddler and acknowledges, 'You hear Mary and Peter chatting at the mirror. Let's go and listen to what they're saying'. The practitioner's colleague turns and responds, 'Hello John, you've just arrived and you want to listen to our chat. Come and sit with us. Peter is looking at his face in the mirror'. John is engaging in the key experiences of movement (moving parts of the body), communication and language (communicating nonverbally) and social relations (building relationships with other adults and peers).

The toddler who arrives and quickly moves eagerly to the water table to fill and empty the containers is clearly engaged in the key experiences of sense of self (expressing initiative), communication and language (communicating nonverbally) and space (filling and emptying). The practitioner follows the child's signals and joins her at the water table, first observing and then commenting, 'You really want to play with water right now. I'd like to play alongside you and see what we can discover'. Adult support is an essential requirement in active learning environments because it communicates respect and value for the choices which children make.

The four themes of the proposed National Framework for Early Learning (NCCA, 2004, see *Introduction* for further information) are well-being, identity and belonging, communication and exploring and thinking. These embody particular areas of learning and development and are complementary to the High/Scope key experiences as illustrated by the following table.

Towards a Framework for Early Learning (NCCA, 2004)	High/Scope Key Experiences (for babies and toddlers)
Well-being	Sense of Self Movement Music
Identity and Belonging	Sense of Self Social Relations
Communication	Communication and Language
Exploring and Thinking	Creative Representation Exploring Objects Early Quantity and Number Space Time

Please note that in *Towards a Framework for Early Learning, Final Consultation Report* (2005, p. 61) it is suggested that these four proposed themes will be reviewed to include 'a greater focus on

(A) The child as a contributor to and participant in the learning process
(B) The creative arts
(C) First and second language acquisition, and the official bilingual status of Irish
(D) The child's "care" needs

and exploring further how the framework's themes might "connect" more readily with the developmental domains used in both the Primary School Curriculum and in much curriculum guidance used outside the formal education system.' Such an approach serves to further complement High/Scope.

2.2.1 Why are key experiences important?

Key experiences are important because they offer a recipe for ensuring holistic development for children. Within this recipe are the essential ingredients that children must have for optimal development. If they do not have these experiences they do not develop valuable skills and competencies. Children naturally engage in these experiences/activities providing they are available to them.

If practitioners are truly looking at what children want/need to do (see *Section* 6 for information on observation), they are compelled to follow the child's lead. Otherwise they are interrupting the work of the developing brain. For example if a baby is exploring food with their hands, they are doing it as an experimenter, to see what happens when ... .Young children are continually constructing learning, but depending on the support from adults two different learning outcomes can emerge. Are they learning to feel and learn about texture, taste, and space with a supportive adult who offers positive regard for the activity of learning or are they learning to be clean and quiet and developing a nervousness or fear about exploration? The practitioner must consider what it is that the child is learning through this experience.

It is at this early stage in life that dispositions for learning are laid down. Children will be positively disposed to life long learning if the learning is around the explorations of the children as opposed to what pleases adults.

Key experiences are also important because they can be used as a framework to guide and interpret child observations; track children's development and plan ways to support, enhance and extend their play. This can be provided through materials (see *Section 4*), routines (see *Section 5*) and interactions (see *Section 3*) that support children's interests and learning.

The adult supports him/her in this interpretation of experiences and in using these interpretations to formulate and test hypotheses and arrive at new understandings. In this way understanding emerges and develops through the child's own actions and interpretations, and through his/her interactions and partnerships with adults and other children' (NCCA, 2004, p.40).

2.2.2 How do I ensure that children have appropriate key experiences?

The following provide guidelines (adapted from High/Scope Educational Research Foundation (2001a) *Key Experiences for Infants and Toddlers*) on what and how to ensure that very young children, including those with additional needs, have appropriate key experiences. Many of these experiences can be planned for at group times (*see Section 5*). In addition it is expected that the practitioners watch the children very closely, record their findings (*see Section 6*) and plan to support their learning and development.

Sense of Self

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to "express initiative" every day?**
  - Provide babies and toddlers with opportunities to make choices during each part of the day.
  - Regard a toddler's 'No' as an expression of initiative rather than an annoying behaviour.
  - Listen and look for choices and initiatives children express in words and actions.

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'distinguish "me" from others' every day?**
  - Provide babies and toddlers with a variety of objects to grasp, hold, explore, and play with.
  - Regard children's possessiveness as a part of their growing sense of self.
  - Support each child's pace, rhythm, and temperament throughout the day.

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'solve problems encountered in exploration and play' every day?**
  - Acknowledge problems as opportunities for learning about how things and people work.
  - Provide materials that invite problem solving (such as boxes with tops, low hammocks to get in and out of).
  - Identify and acknowledge problems children solve ('You rolled over so you could reach the teddy bear!').

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'do things for themselves' every day?**
  - Encourage babies and toddlers to participate and do things for themselves during care-giving routines, e.g. holding a nappy.
  - Be patient and allow plenty of time for babies and toddlers to do things on their own.
  - Include babies and toddlers in ongoing housekeeping tasks: watering plants/gardens, feeding fish, preparing food, setting the table, washing furniture and toys, putting toys back in baskets.

Social Relations

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'form an attachment to a key worker' every day (see also Section 3.1)?**
  - Acknowledge and support babies and toddlers' need for sustained, trusting relationships with parents and practitioners.
  - Make playing and interacting positively with children the primary focus of your day.
  - Respond with empathy to children in distress.

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'build relationships with other adults' every day?**
  - Provide a setting where children feel safe and free to interact with other parents, practitioners, and staff.
  - Incorporate parents and other adults into the setting as a consistent, ongoing part of the programme; develop patterns that include the other adults in the setting.
  - Respect children's initiatives involving other adults in the setting rather than treating other adults as rivals for children's affections.

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'build relationships with peers' every day?**
  - Watch for, acknowledge, and support children's interest in, preferences for, and interactions with one another.
  - Treat each child with warmth, interest, and respect.
  - Provide children with plenty of materials to explore including soothing objects to bite and chew.
  - Acknowledge children's feelings when a preferred playmate is absent or leaves the programme.
  - Support children in resolving social conflicts (see *Section 3*).

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'express emotion' every day?**
  - Watch for, acknowledge, and support children's feelings and emotions as they occur.
  - Remain calm when children express strong emotions.
  - Be aware that children will sense and respond to your feelings and emotions.

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'show empathy toward the feelings and needs of others', every day?**
  - Watch for and acknowledge children's response to the distress of other children (such as crying when another child cries; comforting oneself when another child is in distress).
  - Listen for and acknowledge children's talk about children in distress.
  - Make children's comfort items accessible to children throughout the day.

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'develop social play' every day?**
  - Support children wherever they are on the continuum of social play: watching, peek-a-booing, playing near, playing alongside, chasing, being chased by, imitating, or playing with another child.
  - Provide materials and equipment children can use at the same time.
  - Engage children in simple group games and communal experiences.

Creative Representation

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'imitate and pretend' every day?**
  - Create a warm social setting for children; be aware of your own interactions since children will imitate them.
  - Provide a variety of baby dolls, toy vehicles and animals, and familiar household materials for exploration, imitation, and pretend play and imitate children's actions and sounds as you play with them.
  - Support imitating and pretend play whenever and wherever it occurs.

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'explore building and art materials' every day?**
  - Respect and support children's exploration and encourage parents to value and enjoy children's exploration process.
  - Provide a variety of building and art materials: blocks, paper, drawing and painting tools, clay and dough.
  - Provide ample time each day for exploration and repetition.
  - Support children's choices, ideas, and problem solving.

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'respond to and identify pictures and photographs' every day?**
  - Provide a variety of picture books, art prints, post cards, and photographs.
  - Make photographs of the children as they explore and play at the centre and their families accessible to children.
  - Converse with children about what they see in pictures and photographs.

Movement

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'move parts of the body' (head-turning, grasping, kicking) every day?**
  - Provide children with ample space and time for wiggling, head lifting and turning, pushing up, stretching, reaching, grasping, and kicking.
  - Place appealing materials near non-mobile children to look at, reach for, hold, and kick at.
  - Play simple movement games with children as they lie and sit.
  - Provide toddlers with materials that encourage them to use both hands at the same time (such as large wooden beads and stiff laces).

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'move the whole body' (rolling, crawling, cruising, walking, running, balancing) every day?**
  - Provide ample indoor and outdoor space for movement.
  - Provide babies and toddlers with as much time as they need to try out and repeat a way of moving.
  - Let their actions tell you when they are ready to try moving in a different manner; follow their pace of physical development rather than expecting all children to learn to walk, for example, by a certain age.
  - Provide steps, ramps, stairs, ladders, climbers and

other movement-oriented equipment.
- When children stumble and fall in the course of exploration, play, and learning to walk, give them the opportunity to get up by themselves.
- Join children in their movement activities.
- Carry, twirl, and dance with children.
- Throughout the day, give children the freedom to move rather than confining them to baby seats, walkers, swings, playpens, or cots.

Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'move with objects' every day?
- Provide a variety of materials for children to hold, shake, bang, drop, carry, wave, roll, push, pull, throw, and kick.
- Provide riding toys with and without pedals.
- Provide ample time and space for children to move with objects.
- Encourage and support children's attempts at using alternate hands and feet when moving with objects.

Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'feel and express steady beat' every day?
- Rock babies as you chant and sing to them or hold them and pat them to the steady beat of music, hold toddlers as you dance to music.
- Play music children can bounce, rock, dance, and move to.
- When children move on their own, imitate their actions and chant or sing in time to their motions.

Music

Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'listen to music' every day?
- Sing to children throughout the day.
- Play music to children and watch for their responses.
- Provide live music experiences for children.

Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'respond to music' every day?
- Play music for children to move to at group times.
- Provide music in major and minor keys and in a variety of tempos.
- Play singing games with children (Ring-a-Ring-a-Rosie; Ride A Cock-Horse).

Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'explore and imitate sounds' every day?
- Watch to see what environmental sounds children notice and respond to.
- Read and tell stories with sounds children can make and imitate.
- Provide sound making materials and simple musical instruments for children to explore and play with.

Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'explore vocal pitch sounds' every day?
- Sing songs with children at group times and as part of daily routines.
- Sing the same songs many times and support children's ways of singing and desire for repetition.
- Encourage children's exploration and play with vocal pitch sounds.

Communication and Language

Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'listen and respond' every day?
- Watch for children's personal responses to environmental sounds, voices, and events.
- Talk to each child in a conversational manner even if the child does not yet talk.
- Give children ample time to respond.

Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'communicate nonverbally' every day?
- Anticipate and enjoy children's ways of communicating through actions, gestures, facial expressions, and sounds.
- Persist in your efforts to understand what each child is attempting to communicate.
- Be aware of your own nonverbal communications.

Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'participate in communication give and take' every day?
- Communicate with children face-to-face.
- Respond to children's communication initiatives; match children's pace and intensity.
- To invite conversation, share your comments and observations with children.

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'communicate verbally' every day?**
  - Listen carefully to children's talk; give children your full attention.
  - Respond to what children are trying to say (meaning) rather than to how they are saying it (grammar and pronunciation).
  - Give children ample time to express themselves in words.
  - Talk with children about what they are doing and things of interest throughout the day. Interpret one child to another as needed.

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'explore picture books and magazines' every day?**
  - Make plenty of sturdy picture books and magazines for children to explore and look at available throughout the day.
  - Provide daily on-the-knee reading time for each child; honour their repeated requests for favourite stories.
  - Support children's book explorations: mouthing, carrying, opening and closing books; page turning, looking at pictures, identifying objects, repeating words and phrases, commenting on and asking questions about the story and pictures.

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'enjoy stories, rhymes, and songs' every day?**
  - Tell stories to children – traditional stories and ones you make up.
  - Recite rhymes and sing songs and build a repertoire of nursery rhymes and songs to children.
  - Listen to stories children tell and support their efforts.

Exploring Objects

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'explore objects with the hands, feet, mouth, eyes, ears and nose' every day?**
  - Provide a variety of materials that appeal to children's senses, and watch for what they do with them. Recognising that people and their clothing are "objects" children want to explore.
  - Provide space and time and respect for exploration during each part of the daily routine.
  - Anticipate and support mouthing, banging,

dropping, throwing, opening, and closing. Support children's exploratory choices and initiatives and need for repetition.
- Provide babies and toddlers with outdoor exploration time each day.
- Plan group times around interesting objects to explore.

Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'discover object permanence' every day?
- Provide objects that roll and move so children can visually follow their movement path.
- Watch to see how children respond when something they are exploring or playing with rolls or moves out of sight.
- Play peek-a-boo and hiding games with children.
- Watch for children's persistence in locating desired objects.

Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'explore and notice how things are the same or different' every day?
- Provide children with collections of similar materials: shells, stones, blocks, bottle caps and store similar materials together.
- Watch for and support children's ways of grouping and sorting materials.
- Use descriptive words in everyday conversation with children. ("Your shell has *stripes*." "We're sitting in the *big* chair.")
- Watch and listen for descriptive words in children's everyday conversation. ("Your hair's new!")

Early Quantity and Number

Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'experience more' every day?
- Provide treasure baskets (see *Section* 4.2) and collections of materials for children to select from and explore.
- Provide inexpensive materials children can always have more of if they want it (for example, sand, shells, stones, bottle caps, corks, newspaper, water, dough).
- Listen for and support children's use of "more" in everyday conversation.

Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'experience one-to-one correspondence' every day?
- Provide children with sets of corresponding materials at group time: for example, cups and saucers, pegs and peg boards, jars and lids, markers and caps.
- Comment on correspondences you see children making. ("You put one peg in each hole!" "You put one shoe on this foot, and one shoe on your other foot!")
- Include children in tasks that involve correspondences such as table setting and food serving.

Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'explore the number of things' every day?
- Watch for children's persistence in hunting for two or more objects that have disappeared. (For example, the child finds one shoe and continues to search for the other shoe.)
- Count body parts with children. ("One eye, two eyes!" "I see one, two, three, four, five toes!")
- In the course of conversation, count materials children are exploring and playing with. ('You drew one, two, three lines on your paper.' 'I see one, two, three corks in your cup, and one, two corks in my cup.')

Space

Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to "explore and notice location of objects" every day?
- Organise the play, care, and personal storage space and maintain it with some consistency so children know where things are stored and can easily find them.
- Provide plenty of inside/outdoor space so children can move freely from one spot to another.
- Provide materials children can use for arranging, stacking, and enclosing.
- Watch for favourite materials children choose repeatedly, seek out and look for persistently.

* **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'observe people and things from various perspectives' every day?**
  * Provide equipment that allows children to change levels: for example, ramps, steps, low balance beams, small boulders, tree stump rounds, sturdy wooden blocks, easy chairs, climbers, and lofts.
  * Provide equipment and materials children can get inside and under: for example, sturdy boxes, tunnels, tents, blankets, and play houses.
  * Take children on neighbourhood walks and to local parks and gardens.

* **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'fill and empty, put in and take out' every day?**
  * Anticipate and support children's ongoing interest in dumping, emptying, taking out, and pouring.
  * Provide a variety of easy-to-handle containers and materials to put inside them.
  * Provide daily opportunities for sand and water play.

* **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'take things apart and fit them together' every day?**
  * Provide children with hinged materials to open and close: books, doors, tins and materials that loosely or easily fit together: measuring spoons, measuring cups, a stacking pole and bangle bracelets and magnets.
  * Provide children with materials that fit precisely together: nesting blocks, shape sorters, simple puzzles, pots and lids, boxes and lids, hook-together or snap-together trains, pegs and peg boards, large wooden beads and stiff laces.
  * Anticipate and support children's desire for repetition with these materials and efforts to solve problems of fit.

Time

* **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'anticipate familiar events' every day?**
  * Establish and maintain a consistent routine and talk to children about what is about to happen so children can learn the sequence of daily events and predict what happens next.
  * Create a photo sequence of the day and display it so children can touch and see the events of the day in order.
  * Listen for and acknowledge children's comments and observations about an event that is about to happen: for example, after eating some lunch a child says "I tired", finds her cot, lies down, and falls asleep.

* **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'notice the beginning and ending of a time interval' every day?**
  * Provide a predictable routine and signal transitions with words or sounds from one element of the routine to the next.
  * Listen for and acknowledge children's pronouncements about the end of their participation in a task or activity: for example, 'I go now!' or 'Aw gone!'

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'experience "fast" and "slow"' every day?**
  - At group time, sing and play fast and slow music for children to hear and move to.
  - Provide balls, wheeled toys and rocking toys children can roll, push, rock, and ride at varying rates.
  - Provide space for children to move through at varying rates.
  - Anticipate and support children's personal preferences for a particular rate of movement.

- **Do babies and toddlers have opportunities to 'repeat an action to make something happen again, experiencing cause and effect' every day?**
  - Respond supportively to children's calls for assistance and attention.
  - Watch for and support children's repeated actions (hitting the xylophone to make a sound) and action sequences (stacking the blocks, knocking them down, stacking them up again, knocking them down again).
  - Provide children with and support their explorations of toys and materials that respond predictably when handled in a particular way: for example, squeaker toys; bells, rattles, and shakers; pop-up toys; simple flashlights and low light switches; zipper cases; easy-to-operate indoor and outdoor water taps; toys or materials on strings.

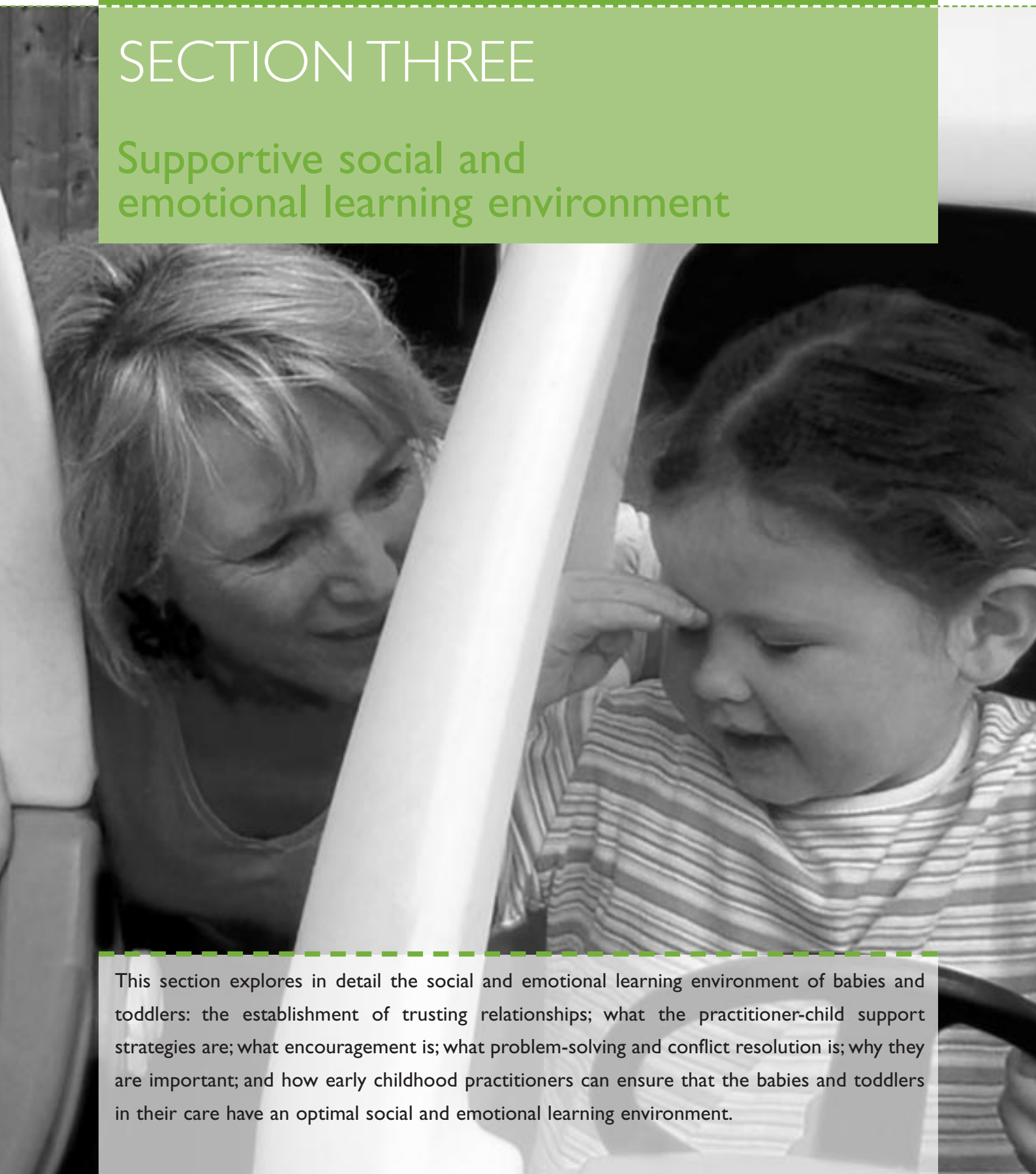
In summary in services that operate to a professional standard:

- Practitioners are familiar with the key experiences related to sense of self, social relations, creative representation, movement, music, communication and language, exploring objects, early quantity and number concepts, space, and time.
- Practitioners observe children (see *Section* 6) and interpret their actions in light of the key experiences.
- Practitioners use the key experiences to guide their interactions with children, to plan for activities that support children's learning and development, and to guide their selection of materials for children.
- Practitioners use the key experiences to track children's growth and development, to share and interpret children's actions to parents.

This section explored how children learn actively and what the essential experiences are that children must have. Practitioners' development of attachment relationships with infants in their care is especially important for very young children's emotional and social development. The next section deals with, arguably, the most important aspect of caring for children: creating a supportive social and emotional learning environment.

SECTION THREE

Supportive social and emotional learning environment



This section explores in detail the social and emotional learning environment of babies and toddlers: the establishment of trusting relationships; what the practitioner-child support strategies are; what encouragement is; what problem-solving and conflict resolution is; why they are important; and how early childhood practitioners can ensure that the babies and toddlers in their care have an optimal social and emotional learning environment.

3.1 WHAT ARE TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS?

Young children need positive relationships with significant adults (both male and female), active participation in play, and to form relationships with their peers (Cowley, 1994). The physical learning environment (see *Section 4* for further information), essential for promoting children's initiative and independence, provides a physical structure for babies and toddlers for optimal learning; interactions between practitioners and children provide the supportive social and emotional structure for children for optimal learning and development.

Arguably the most important element of care giving is the establishment of trusting relationships, developing emotional security within the child. Most practitioners would agree that it is possible in childcare services to have stunning environments indoor and out with a wide range of materials but lack the crucial supportive high quality practitioner-child interactions. A supportive social and emotional learning environment is one in which practitioners apply carefully thought out responses to the children in their care.

It is important to examine trusting relationships and attachment (see also *Section 1* on what the research says) to understand why these strategies are so important in high quality early childhood services. To begin with, the building blocks of human relationships are established in supportive learning environments. Hohmann and Weikart (1995) identified those building blocks as:

- *Trust:* Confident belief in oneself and in others that allows a young child to venture forth into action knowing that the people on whom s/he depends will provide needed support and encouragement.
- *Autonomy:* Autonomy is the capacity for independence and exploration that prompts a child to make such statements as, 'I wonder what is around the corner' and 'Let me do it'.
- *Initiative:* Initiative is the capacity for children to begin and then follow through on a task – to take stock of a situation, make a decision and act on what they have come to understand.
- *Empathy:* Empathy is the capacity that allows children to understand the feelings of others by relating them to feelings that they themselves have had. Empathy helps children form relationships and develop a sense of belonging.
- *Self-confidence:* Self-confidence is the capacity to believe in one's own ability to accomplish tasks and contribute positively to society.

3.1.1 Why are trusting relationships important?

The importance of babies' attachment to their parents has long been acknowledged (Bowlby, 1988). Attachment for parents and their babies is similar to being in love, caring deeply about the baby, never wanting anything negative to happen to it. Forming attachment is important because it ensures that a helpless baby will be taken care of, provides the baby with basic trust in others and gives the baby the sense that s/he is worth caring for. When parents and their babies are attached parents are seen holding, cuddling, rocking the baby, smiling, talking to the child attentively, watching and responding to cues for hunger or distress.

Reassuring research on bonding has recently emerged for families. A parent's bond with his/her child is far more crucial to a child's development than whether both parents work outside the home. A study led by Huston (2005) at the University of Texas, Austin, found that the quality of time spent with a baby, and not the quantity, guided a toddler's social and intellectual development up to the age of 3.

'A child's well-being is an essential foundation for early learning, and all subsequent learning. It is nurtured within the context of warm and supportive relationships with others … their emotional well-being is directly related to the quality of early attachments' (NCCA, 2004, p.23).

The quality of attachment needs to be replicated in the care setting. As articulated by Goldschmied and Jackson (1994, p. 37) 'The young children with whom we work, and who do not yet have language to express what they are experiencing, need to have these special relationships too, and deeply need to have them in a very immediate and concrete way. It is against this backdrop of what we know from our own experience that we have to consider the meaning of a key person for a young child. We can never remind ourselves too often that a child, particularly a very young and almost totally dependent one, is the only person in the nursery who cannot understand why he is there. He can only explain it as abandonment, and unless he is helped in a positive and affectionate way, this will mean levels of anxiety greater than he can tolerate.'

Some important things to take note of regarding attachment are:

- Forming an attachment takes time.
- Parent-child bonds form at different rates for different parent-child pairs.
- Clear-cut attachment is generally evident by the time the child is 3 years old.
- Attachment is primarily a social behaviour.
- Formation of clear-cut attachment has little to do with food. Rather it has to do with how a child and parent interact and relate with each other in all their times together – during feeding, bathing, nappy changing, dressing, going to sleep, waking up, exploring, and playing.
- A child's attachment is generally directed towards their parent (or a parent figure) and lasts a lifetime.
- Through the attachment process, the child constructs an internal working model of how human relationships work. This model serves as the child's guide to future relationships.

3.1.2 How do I ensure trusting relationships with the children in my care?

The main strategy favoured by High/Scope in supporting attachment is a key worker system, small group size and continuity of care to support babies and toddlers with typical and additional needs.

Key worker system

This system has come about from the recognised emotional need for stability and continuity in a child's life in order for all round development to occur (Hennessey *et al*., 1992). It is widely advocated by the Department of Education and Science in the UK (1990) and Goldschmied and Jackson (1994). Each child and family is assigned a key worker. As implied in the title, the key worker has a "special" responsibility for the child and the relationship with the child's family. The key worker:

- Forms a trusting relationship (attachment, bond) with the child and family.
- Cares for the child while the child is at the centre.
- Observes, records and shares their observations of the child with parents and team members.
- Undertakes a home visit in advance of a child coming to the centre.
- Links closely with parents in helping to settle the child in to the centre.
- Understands the child/parents needs.
- Understands cultural differences/key words from child's own language.
- Bridges the worlds of home and centre.

The key workers work in teams so that:

- The child and family have other familiar and trusted people to rely on when the key worker is absent.
- Care and interactions are consistent from one practitioner to the next.

The key worker makes contact at the beginning and end of each day with the child and parent and provides updates on progress and developments. The key worker also takes part in reviews with the children.

Small group size

Each key worker takes responsibility for up to three babies and up to six toddlers. Practitioners work in teams of two or three. The actual ratio is related to:

- The ages of the children.
- The Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations, 1996.

In Ireland the following adult/child ratios apply (Article 7, Pre-School Regulations, 1996):

Service	Age	Adult/Child Ratio
Full Day Care	0-1 years 1-3 years 3-6 years	1:3 1:6 1:8
Sessional	0-6 years	1:10
Drop-in Centre	1-6 years under 12 months	1:8 1:3
Childminder (Caring for more than 3 children)	0-6 years	1:6 (no more than 3 under 1 year of age)

Note, that in August 2005 the Pre-School Regulations, 1996 are under review.

Continuity of care

In High/Scope settings babies and toddlers and practitioners stay together from year to year. High/Scope calls this looping, see *Appendix 1* for illustrations of this system. This ensures that the practitioner is fully in tune with the child's developmental needs and can focus on the stage the child is at as opposed to the demands of the activities in a room potentially geared for older children. Some ways of organising this system are to keep babies and key workers together in the same space for 3 years, from baby and young toddler and older toddler stages. This can be achieved through:

1. The practitioners arranging and adapting the room to support children's developing abilities and the room changes in function from one year to the next.
2. Having three constantly designated rooms, i.e. a baby room, a young toddler room and an older toddler room. Each year the children and practitioners move on to the next room until they finish in the older toddler room and move on to pre-school. The practitioners then return to the baby room and begin to care for a new group of babies.
3. Equipping one large space in three subdivided areas adapted for each stage group.

The aim is to minimise disruption and support the child's attachment to the key worker. The challenging issues of practitioner-child ratios can be dealt with through the augmentation of new children to the service.

3.2 WHAT ARE THE PRACTITIONER-CHILD SUPPORT STRATEGIES?

According to *Tender Care and Early Learning* (Post and Hohmann, 2000, pp. 57-92, adapted with permission) the immediate practitioner-child interaction strategies for building supportive relationships with very young children are: providing continuity of care; creating a climate of trust; forming partnerships with children; and supporting children's intentions.

Providing continuity of care

Each child is anchored around one primary practitioner and their team on a monthly and yearly basis. This replicates the ideal of the family at home where the child is cared for by at least one parent and ideally two. Therefore, in practice this means that in early childcare settings:

- The baby remains with the one primary practitioner until the child is 3 years.
- The schedule of the practitioner is arranged around the child's needs and children and parents are informed about practitioners' absences and returns.
- That practitioner is the one responsible for recording observations of their children.

Creating a climate of trust

The following strategies help practitioners treat children with care and respect and in themselves provide continuity

of care when used by all practitioners in the child's life:

- Touch, hold, speak to, and play with children in a warm unhurried manner.
- Take pleasure in interactions with children.
- Respond supportively to children's needs and attention needing signals.
- Give children time to interact and respond in their own way.
- Support children's relationships with peers and other adults.

Forming partnerships with children

Forming partnerships with babies and toddlers involves sharing control with them where they are free to initiate ideas and also adopt others' ideas to fit their own needs. Some practices include:

- Interacting at children's physical level.
- Respecting children's preferences (for tastes, activities, people).
- Respecting individual temperaments by matching the practitioners' response to the temperament of the child, e.g. if the practitioner is energetic, to slow down the pace while dancing with a less active toddler.
- Following children's lead.
- Watching and listening to children.
- Communicating in conversations where the baby talks and the practitioner talks back.
- Making comments and acknowledgements ('You are eating your yoghurt').
- Look at children's actions from their viewpoint.
- Give choices when they have to do something.

Supporting children's intentions

Throughout the day practitioners are interacting with and learning about the babies and toddlers in their care and supporting their interests and intentions by:

- Focusing on children's strengths and interests.
- Anticipating children's explorations and encouraging their choices in play and explorations.
- Helping children achieve what they set out to do.
- Giving children time to solve problems encountered in play and exploration (see later on in this section for more).
- Recognising and encouraging the child's efforts, ideas, reasoning, problem-solving, and creativity.
- Encouraging ('You crawled through the tunnel', 'You gave the bodhrán to Kate') rather than praising ('Good boy') and or giving rewards ('Here's a lollipop') for their accomplishments (see *Section* 3.3)

3.2.1 Why are supportive strategies important?

Practitioners' development of supportive strategies with babies and toddlers is especially important for children's emotional and social development. When children from birth are treated with warmth, respect and interest from responsive practitioners they are free to learn through sensory-motor exploration.

In *Towards a Framework for Early Learning* (2004, p.17), the consultation document of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) it was identified that the 'cultivation of learning dispositions such as curiosity, risk-taking, concentration, resilience, creativity and fairness has positive life-long implications'. Post and Hohmann (2000, p. 59) would agree: having long term trusting relationships with practitioners who interact in partnership with them and who support their developing relationships with peers; children grow up believing 'I am loved', 'I am a good person', 'I am capable', 'I do not have to be afraid of the world – it's interesting', 'I can go and see what is around that corner', 'I am independent', 'With help from trustworthy adults I can solve problems'.

As discussed in the *Introduction* all children, as part of their development, have sensitive or optimal periods for learning. If we take one example of language development, whereas children may vary regarding the speed of their language development the sensitive period is over for all children by the age of four. This has relevance for the development of a child's first language and a possible second language. Research demonstrates that these adult support strategies promote communication, language and reading. When adults include children in conversation as conversational partners language develops (Wells, 1986; Huttenlocher *et al*., 1991; Hart and Risely, 1995). In a study of reading in 15 countries, Thorndike (1973) found that children who had been read to out loud from an early age became the best readers. Wells (1986) found that the most proficient readers had heard 6,000 stories between birth and age 5.

3.2.2 How do I ensure that children in my care experience supportive strategies?

The *High/Scope Infant-Toddler Program Quality Assessment* (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, Field Copy 2001b, adapted with permission) looks for evidence of the following to ensure warm and supportive adult-child interactions. This evidence is secured through observation (see *Section 6.1* for further information) and the assessment tool is appropriate for all care settings (homes and early childhood services) not just those that are operating the High/Scope Programme.

1. Children's relationships with their practitioners are long term

- Are there policies in the service to promote inclusion and continuity of care?
- Is each child cared for by the same primary practitioner and team from day to day?
- Does each child stay with the same primary practitioner, small group of children and staff team for the duration of the child's enrolment in the baby and toddler programme?
- Are the practitioners' routines arranged around the child's need, e.g. lunch is taken during baby's nap?
- Are families informed about practitioners' absences and returns?
- Do the primary practitioners record observations of their children?

2. Children form trusting relationships with their practitioners

Throughout the *entire day* are children:

- Touched, held and spoken to in a warm attentive and leisurely manner?

Throughout the *entire day* do children:

- Show pleasure in their interactions with practitioners through smiling?
- Receive practitioner attention when they demand, signal, or request it and when they pause in exploration/play?
- Initiate interactions with practitioners?
- Interact at their preferred pace with practitioners?
- Hear only positive comments about themselves and others ('Clare and Mark are in the sand pit.')
- Have their interactions with peers and other adults supported?

3. Children interact in partnership with practitioners

Throughout the *entire day* do children:

- Explore or play at their physical level with practitioners?
- Play and explore near practitioners who watch and listen to them and look at children's actions from their viewpoint?
- Communicate with practitioners in give and take exchanges and conversations involving gestures, sounds and/or words?
- Hear no more than two practitioner directives ('Sit at the table')?
- Hear ten or more practitioner acknowledgements ('Look at your hands' when a baby has experienced gloop) and comments relating directly to their actions ('You're climbing'), interests ('Would you like to get a train for your track?'), ideas ('You've covered your entire page with paint') and feelings ('You are upset because of your sore finger')?
- Have their preferences and temperaments respected?
- Experience choice when they have to do something? e.g. 'Do you want to wipe your face or will I do it?'

4. Children form social relationships

Throughout the day do children:

- Who are non-mobile watch and/or communicate with other children?
- Who are toddlers explore and play on equipment alongside and/or with other children?
- Who have additional needs always have the support they need to engage in social interactions and explorations?
- Seek out children they prefer or indicate an awareness of their absence?
- Interact with other children in a friendly interested manner?

Throughout the day are children's unclear communications interpreted by a practitioner ('Michael, Alex is giving the bodhrán to you')?

Throughout the day do practitioners:

- Take interest in children's play and show joy, warmth and respect?
- Give children their full attention, follow their signals and give positive physical contact through holding sensitively, cuddling and rocking?
- Acknowledge all of children's feelings and talk with them about what's happening, allow children problem-solve and read to them?

3.3 WHAT IS ENCOURAGEMENT?

Encouragement is the psychological support given by one person to inspire or enable another with the confidence (or courage) to undertake a task. It suggests stimulation of a child's activities through approval or help. The encouragement of children is a theme that runs throughout this guide and is manifest through the provision of active learning and key experiences, the social and emotional and physical learning environments, the daily routine and family support. Children experience mastery and success by making their own choices and by being as independent as possible.

Hendrick (1992) advocated the expression of unconditional positive regard towards every child as the fundamental prerequisite to developing children's abilities to explore and to foster a sense of self-esteem. This is in addition to the provision of recognition and acknowledgement for attainment of competence and an expression of genuine respect for every child. Creative activities provide the greatest opportunities for experiencing competence. Interpersonal competence is of utmost importance. The more opportunities children have to acquire interpersonal and instrumental skills, through the support of an encouraging adult, the more likely they are to acquire an inner conviction of their own ability to cope.

3.3.1 Why is encouragement rather than praise important?

Mark Tompkins (1991) notes that praise – well intentioned as it is – has been shown through research and practice to invite comparison and competition and to increase children's dependence on adults. Too much praise can make children anxious about their abilities, reluctant to take risks and try new things and unsure of how to evaluate their own work. Hitz and Driscoll (1988) identified that 'praise is not conducive to self-reliance, self-direction, or self control. If adults as authority figures can judge positively, they can also judge negatively. To judge at all implies superiority and takes

away from children's power to judge their own efforts.' The negative implications of praise:

- Makes children more dependent on adults, which opposes the thrust of baby-toddler development towards increasing independence.
- Makes children more dependent on adults to value their work.
- Takes away children's power to make choices and decisions and to evaluate own work.
- Has a negative effect on self-confidence.
- Can produce "praise junkies". Children may expect rewards and praise even when the adult sees no need for them.
- Causes some children to worry about losing adult approval and making a mistake.
- Causes anger and resentment when used to manage or manipulate. Some children will withhold what the adult wants which leads to adult-child power struggles.
- Discourages risk-taking and trying new things.
- Lessens self-motivation.
- Discourages problem-solving.

3.3.2 How do I ensure that children are encouraged?

High/Scope (Hohmann and Weikart, 1995, adapted with permission) suggests the following encouragement strategies as alternatives to praise:

- Participate in children's play. Practitioners work side-by-side with children using the same materials in a similar fashion. Becoming a "partner" by taking turns with them during play, matching the level of complexity of their play, and generally following their lead.
- Encourage children who are non-verbal or have additional needs through holding them and helping them to reach out of the way items, following their intentions (perceived through following the direction of their eyes); interpreting their signals and checking with them that you were correct ('Did you want this teddy?') supporting them by approving their actions through nodding and smiling.
- Encourage children who are verbal to describe their efforts, ideas and products. The goal is to have children, not adults, evaluate children's work. We want the children to develop self-esteem, to feel good about their work and ideas. One way to facilitate this is to ask children open-ended, divergent questions like:
  'What can you tell me about your picture?'
  'How did you build this hospital?'
  'I notice that you have put many blocks on top of each other. What will you do next?'
- Acknowledge children's work and ideas by making specific comments. Toddlers can be encouraged to later classify and describe their work and ideas by making specific, objective comments about children's work as you talk with them. These kinds of comments also serve as non-judgemental responses when children want adult acknowledgement. Some examples:
  'I see that you have painted a picture that has lots of blue paint on the bottom, and red paint along the side.'
  'Okay, I will wear the big blue hat with the gold band around the middle.'
  'You put your rubbish in the bin, thank you.'
- Focus on children's strengths and interests by attending to what children enjoy and do. 'Harriet you are crawling over to Georgia', 'Jake, you put one sock on.' Imitate Mary's way of squeezing and pounding the play dough.
- Encourage and acknowledge children's choices in exploration and play. 'Sarah you are chewing on your soother. Oops, now you have stopped to smile', 'Miranda, you are squeezing your banana … and licking the banana off your hand'.

3.4 WHAT IS THE PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH TO SOCIAL CONFLICT?

This is a long term strategy supportive practitioners use from toddlerhood through to adolescence. Babies are vulnerable and totally dependent on adults to meet their needs and are rarely able to cope with discomfort or distress. Toddlers are rapidly acquiring physical, social, reasoning, and language skills, but these skills still need a lot of practise. When children practise resolving conflicts from an early age, they develop necessary social skills and the habit of using them. When dealing with social conflict (one of High/Scope's key experiences) young children begin to understand how to respect the needs of others while meeting their own needs. They also begin to see that there is not always a "right" side of the argument, that the feelings of others are important and that it is possible to solve conflicts in such a way that both parties can be satisfied.

For adults working with children in social conflicts, High/Scope (Hohmann and Weikart, 1995) suggests keeping children's developmental characteristics in mind: acknowledge and talk about what each child is feeling; engage children as active participants in the process (rather than solve problems for them) and give children specific information.

3.4.1 Why is problem-solving important?

According to High/Scope (Hohmann and Weikart, 1995) children who are provided with the opportunity to pursue their own ideas in play will inevitably encounter obstacles and conflicts. When children are encouraged to solve problems they are learning to deal reflectively and creatively with unanticipated situations. In the process they come to see themselves as capable of solving problems, this consequently leads to self-reliance, independence and, ultimately, confidence in approaching problems.

3.4.2 How do I ensure that children learn to solve conflict and problems?

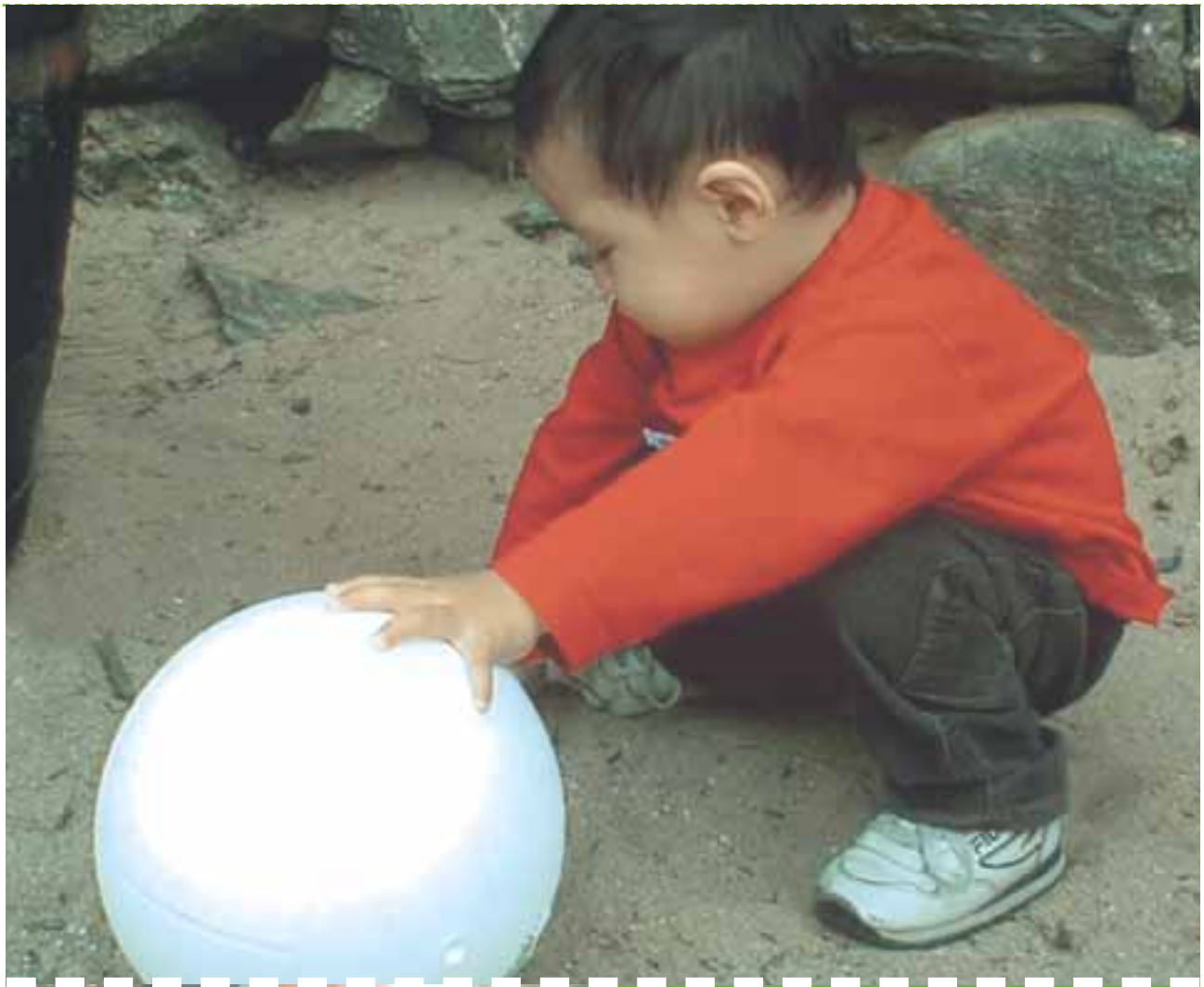
High/Scope recommends that practitioners approach social conflicts calmly, firmly and patiently as a first step. Then to recognise and acknowledge children's feelings and gather information; to restate the problem according to what the children say; to ask for ideas for solutions; restate the suggested solutions(s) and ask the children to make a decision about which one to choose. Finally, to encourage children to act on their decisions and be prepared to give follow up support. Sometimes children with additional needs require practitioners to advocate on their behalf when problem-solving. The following example demonstrates the 6 step approach.

STEPS	EXAMPLES
Step 1 **Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions** Place yourself between the children, on their level. Use a calm voice and gentle touch. Remain neutral rather than take sides.	Blessing and Oscar, two older toddlers, stand in the art area. Blessing holds a paintbrush that Oscar is trying to take away from her. They struggle, becoming increasingly upset. Clara, their key worker approaches calmly and kneels on the floor beside them.
Step 2 **Acknowledge children's feelings** 'You look really upset'.	Blessing and Oscar stop struggling to look at her. 'You look upset!' she says to the two children, stroking each one gently. Blessing nods in agreement. 'I *angry*!', Oscar announces loudly. 'So, you're *angry*', Clara says to Oscar. 'And you're upset,' she says to Blessing.
Step 3 **Gather information** It looks like the problem is ... Is that right?' Let the children know you need to hold the object in question.	'It looks like you both want the paintbrush,' she continues stating the problem as she sees it. Blessing and Oscar nod yes. 'Let me hold the paintbrush,' she says to Blessing who then opens her hand, releasing her grip on the brush. Clara takes it gently from her and holds it in her hand so both children can concentrate on the problem rather than the item itself.
Step 4 **Restate the problem** 'So the problem is ...'	'So the problem is, you both want the paintbrush.' She pauses. The children look at the brush in her hand.
Step 5 **Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together** 'What can we do to solve this problem?' Encourage children to think of a solution. Check to make sure the solution is acceptable to both children.	'What can we do about this?' she asks the children, seeking their ideas rather than offering her own. She wants them to think, and she knows that they will be far more interested in carrying out their own idea, rather than hers, for a solution. At first they look at her blankly, but after a minute or so, Blessing says 'Nother brush!' and heads off toward the easel. She returns shortly with a different paintbrush. She hands the paintbrush to Oscar who takes it with a smile. 'So, now Oscar has a paintbrush,' states Clara. 'I can give the paintbrush back to Blessing.' Neither child disputes this. She hands the paintbrush back to Blessing, and both children toddle off in different directions. With their key worker as mediator, they have solved the problem themselves.
Step 6 **Be prepared to give follow-up support** 'You solved the problem!' Stay near the children.	Clara watches and interacts with both children throughout the day. The paintbrush issue does not re-emerge. She also notes that they sit side-by-side at lunch without incident.

Encourage children's problem-solving in general:

- Look for children involved in problem situations.
- Allow children to deal with problems, practise restraint, avoid interfering prematurely;
  - *Sit down with children:* This gives children more time to work things out on their own.
  - *Give children time to use their own skills:* Wait until children ask for assistance or until they have made an attempt at a solution and seem to be about to abandon the effort.
  - *Refer one child to another:* Whenever possible, refer children to other children who have the skills to help them.
  - *Listen to conflicting viewpoints:* Rather then keeping children from arguing, encourage children to elaborate on their views.
- Interact with rather then manage children.
- Adults who manage (pass out instructions and warnings) rather than interact (play and converse as partners) prevent children from confronting and working with child-sized problems.

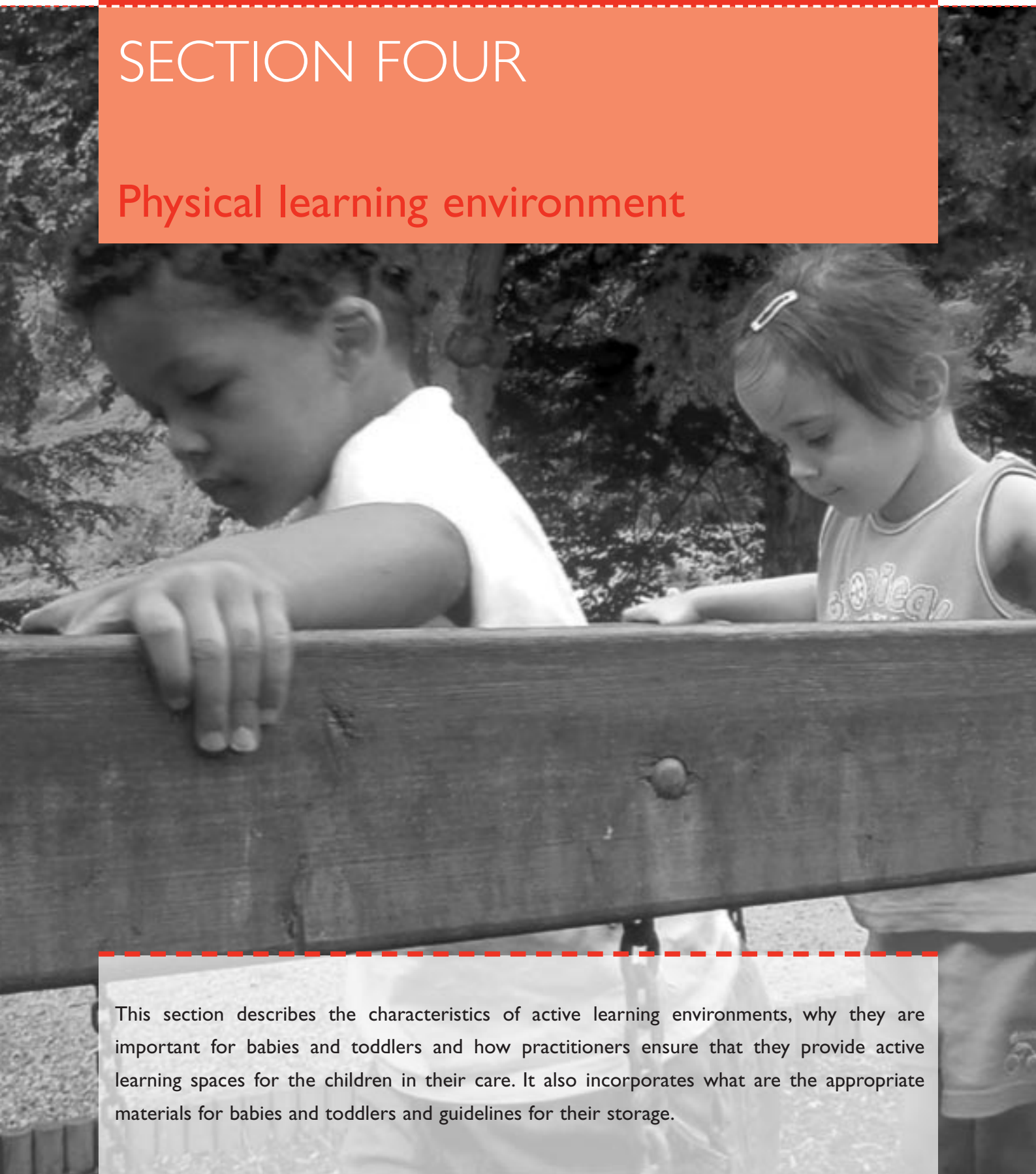
This section explored the social and emotional learning environment of babies and toddlers and how early childhood practitioners can ensure that the babies and toddlers in their care have an optimal social and emotional learning environment. The next section deals with ensuring an active physical learning environment for babies and toddlers.



When children are encouraged to solve problems they are learning to deal reflectively and creatively with unanticipated situations.

SECTION FOUR

Physical learning environment



This section describes the characteristics of active learning environments, why they are important for babies and toddlers and how practitioners ensure that they provide active learning spaces for the children in their care. It also incorporates what are the appropriate materials for babies and toddlers and guidelines for their storage.

4.1 WHAT IS AN ACTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR BABIES AND TODDLERS LIKE?

One of the key components of learning environments for young children is space. The Explanatory Guide to the Child Care (Pre-School) Regulations, 1996 (under review in August 2005) requires that adequate space per child be provided in the premises. The minimum requirements are as follows:

	Age of child	Floor area per child
Sessional Service	0-6	2.00 Square metres
Full Day Care	0-1	3.70 Square metres
	1-2	2.80 Square metres
	2-6	2.32 Square metres
Drop-in Centre	0-6	2.00 Square metres
Childminder (caring for more than 3 children)	0-6	in line with code of practice

Active learning requires a spacious and inviting place where babies and toddlers can freely pursue their personal interests and goals. Active learning environments are designed to provide freedom of opportunity and choice within a consistent structured space.

Practitioners who try to see the world from the perspective of eager and enthusiastic young learners create safe, secure and inviting environments which support their need to explore and learn with all their senses. Babies and toddlers who feel confident that their needs for tenderness, nourishment, rest and bodily care will be met can experiment, create, communicate and play as they choose.

Practitioners face a particular challenge when considering how to meet these physical and psychological needs in a way which is fluid yet stable and accommodates the changing needs and interests of the children. Distinct play and care areas, supporting arriving, departing and play indoors and out need particular attention.

Distinct care and play areas

As represented in the High/Scope Wheel of Learning distinct areas are characteristic of environments which promote active learning. Because much of babies' and toddlers' everyday routines are concerned with eating, sleeping and bodily care it is important that careful consideration is given to the arrangement of these areas. For practical and health reasons certain basic principles apply such as separating food preparation and eating areas from any area used for bodily care. Similarly rest and sleeping areas are located away from play areas so that children can sleep undisturbed. When babies are very small the routine rhythms of feeding, changing and sleeping in the same places in the care of the same trusted adults support the development of trusting relationships and enthusiasm for exploring and learning about the world.

Supporting arriving and departing

The rest of the space can be devoted to providing areas and equipment for the other vital elements of babies' and toddlers' everyday routines. It's important to remember that arriving and departing are major events for very small children, so an area (space permitting) which provides for parents and family members to prepare for parting and greeting and to store baby paraphernalia and special comfort items can be enormously supportive for children, parents and practitioners. Practitioners play a special role in supporting the needs of a variety of families, each negotiating the delicate balance of bonding and separating from their children while coping with the challenge of participating in the workplace or pursuing further study. A setting which provides a space for preparing to part or for re-uniting conveys respect for the tiny details of babies and toddlers lives which have such an important impact on supporting their development and progression.

Supporting play indoors

Indoor play spaces for babies and toddlers need to draw activity to the floor where very young children typically enjoy playing and exploring most. Adults who spend time on the floor with young children will grow to share a perspective and understand the need for soft, comfortable and safe floor coverings which are easy to clean and will cushion falls.

Babies who are not yet crawling need a space separate from more mobile children where they can lie, roll and sit without crowding. Babies who are creeping and crawling need more space to play with a purpose. They may start in a fixed location but will quite quickly need to work their way

across the room to investigate anything which is attractive to them – another child, a low window looking on to the garden or an interesting toy.

It is essential that toddlers have space and opportunity to move freely all the time. They are eager to practise all the new skills, which they have spent many months acquiring, of carrying and assembling materials, climbing, running and jumping.

Active learning for babies and toddlers involves constant exploring using all the senses. Materials need to be carefully selected by practitioners who understand the value of children's facility to construct their own learning from interacting with materials, events and ideas.

Supporting play outdoors

Sadly outdoor play space is lacking in many early childhood services, and outdoor experiences for non-mobile babies, toddlers and children with additional needs is particularly neglected. In services operating professionally practitioners ensure that non-mobile babies and toddlers spend time outside more than once a day. Babies enjoy feeling the warmth of the sun, gazing at nearby sights and moving from place to place in their practitioner's arms or in a buggy. Given a safe and comfortable space babies and non-mobile toddlers enjoy lying on their backs watching the changing cloud formations, listening to the rustle of leaves or indeed passing traffic.

Mobile babies sit and explore objects, crawl up and down hills into boxes or to a standing position while holding on to a low bench. Toddlers use the full space of the outdoor play area for walking, carrying, pushing, climbing, throwing, digging, swinging, sliding and, when skills develop, making up simple games.

The outdoor environment is as important as the indoor environment; babies and toddlers should have access to the outdoors continually (*see Appendix 2 Outdoors for babies and toddlers*). For those children who choose not to explore the outdoors, an outside time is provided in the daily routine (*see Section 5*). Some of the benefits of outdoor play outlined by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation (2001c) are as follows:

1. Air temperature changes improve children's ability to adapt to cold and heat.
2. Cool and colder air improves appetite and energises people of all ages.
3. Exercise and fresh air support children's natural rhythm of sleep and wakefulness.
4. Cooler, outdoor air generally contains more moisture and is easier on the body's airways and immune system than drier heated indoor air.
5. Outdoor play provides a relaxing alternative to crowded living conditions.
6. Outdoor play provides many opportunities for sensory-motor learning.
7. Outdoor play puts children in direct contact with nature and living things.

4.1.1 Why is an active learning environment important for babies and toddlers?

Because babies and toddlers learn from interacting with materials, events and ideas it is essential that practitioners provide environments which give children the freedom and opportunity to explore with all their senses all day long. How babies and toddlers choose to use their time while in the care of practitioners in early childhood settings varies as enormously as their individual dispositions and personalities (see *Section 1.2.1* regarding the temperamental traits of young children). High/Scope provides a framework which supports practitioners in group-care settings to work with the "here and now" needs of the children in their care.

Active learning environments for babies and toddlers are important because early experience of respect for their ideas and intentions and support to carry them out helps children to construct a firm and deep level of engagement with the process of learning. Active learning environments provide order and flexibility, comfort and safety and support children's sensory-motor approach to learning.

4.1.2 How do I ensure that the babies and toddlers in my care experience an active learning environment?

Post and Hohmann (2000) recommend consideration of the following:

Order and flexibility

- Are there separate and hygienic areas for bodily care, food prep and play?
- Are there clear and displayed procedures for food prep, bodily care and emergencies?
- Is there adult and baby and toddler sized equipment and furniture?
- Is there storage that is accessible for babies and toddlers and adult accessible storage?
- Is there a quiet place for sociable children to eat and a quiet place for breast or bottle feeding?
- Is there space for play which supports the mobility needs of babies and toddlers?

Comfort and safety

- Are hazards out of sight, climbers cushioned and floors covered with non-slip material?
- Are the rooms bright, ventilated and comfortably heated?
- Are children who are awake always free to roll, sit, crawl, walk, rock, climb, jump and run?
- Are children's personal possessions and comfort items always available?
- Are soft toys, rugs, pillows and people to snuggle against always available?
- Are photographs of children and their family members always available to see, touch, hold and carry?

Sensory-motor opportunities

- Do toddlers have access to sand, water, art and block play throughout the day?
- Are natural materials such as wood, metal, stone, fibre and paper available throughout the day?
- Are musical instruments available throughout the day?
- Are baby and toddler sized stairs, steps, ramps, climbers and benches available throughout the day?
- Do toddlers have access to things which they can jump off, get inside of, push and pull, rock on, sit on and throw throughout the day?
- Are many books available throughout the day?

Outside play

- Is there an easily accessed outside area enclosed exclusively for babies and toddlers?
- Are there safety surfaces under swings, slides and climbers?
- Is there grass for lying, rolling, crawling and walking?
- Are there shady areas for sunny days or for children who do not like the glare of sunshine?
- Are materials safe and well maintained?
- Does outdoor play equipment or the design of the garden provide children with opportunities to climb, run, clamber over, crawl through, balance on, jump, dig and pedal, pour, sort, pretend?
- Is there a variety of portable and stationary outdoor equipment?
- Does the outdoor provision have hard and soft play surfaces with a suitable all-weather surface?
- Are there areas where children can grow plants, with accompanying strong gardening tools?
- Is there an area where the garden can grow wild, where children can observe weeds and insects in

natural habitat?

- Are there picnic and seating areas for social gatherings?
- Do babies and toddlers have access to flowing water, pumps and pipes?
- Can babies and toddlers play out of doors even on rainy days?
- Does the layout allow adequate space between equipment to avoid collisions?

4.2 WHAT KINDS OF MATERIALS DO BABIES AND TODDLERS NEED?

An environment which has sturdy, low sized furniture and equipment communicates an atmosphere of welcome and belonging for very small children. Low sinks and toilets, low tables and chairs, toy shelves and book racks support the needs of babies and toddlers who operate very close to the ground. Settings also need to have some adult sized furniture for adults' comfort. Adult sized furniture provides a challenge for children (e.g. pulling themselves up) and creates a homely atmosphere. Children who can take some time for a cuddle with a trusted adult on a cosy couch are engaged in the key experience of social relations (forming attachment).

Practitioners in active learning settings understand that babies and toddlers are eager to explore and learn using their whole bodies and all their senses. They also understand the broad and individual rate of change and development which is typical of all young children. Practitioners in these settings balance the need for consistency and repetition with that for challenge and novelty. The aim is to support the sensory-motor development needs of babies and toddlers. The recommended materials are considered within the following categories: the senses; open-ended materials; variety of textures; and space and materials for movement. All materials should be safe and clean.

The senses

Materials which smell (wool, rubber, wood) and which produce sound are valuable in addition to materials which are interesting to touch, mouth, taste and look at and which are natural and perhaps drawn from everyday life like wooden spoons, measuring cups and whisks.

Open-ended materials

Materials which do not have a predetermined function or limited possibility are best. Examples of open-ended materials are wooden blocks, metal measuring cups and seashells. Children can explore and manipulate these materials in whatever way they choose and however the choice is personally meaningful to them. Supportive adults are available to observe children's choices and to support their ideas free from the constraints of worrying that the peg isn't being placed in the round hole. Many commercial playthings are limited in their sensory appeal because they are made of plastic and have a predetermined outcome.

Variety of textures

Very small babies particularly enjoy the opportunity to explore with touch and will happily lie in a cosy spot while busily feeling and mouthing a piece of fabric with a new sensation like leather or felt. One of the best sources of sensory opportunities is other people and babies and toddlers need to spend time just being held in an adult's arms while gazing at the world around him/her. A baby or toddler who has an attachment to a special "blankie" may enjoy this moderately novel experience which builds on a perceived interest in fabrics. S/he is engaging in the key experience of exploring objects (exploring objects with the hands, feet, mouth, eyes, ears and nose and exploring and noticing how things are the same or different). Textural variety can be built into the environment by having different floor surfaces indoors and out, i.e. carpet, vinyl and sisal, grass, wooden decking, soil and stone.

Space and materials for movement:

Babies and toddlers are constantly busy expending an enormous amount of energy mastering the skill of moving from one place to another and gaining control of their bodies (when not sleeping). It is vital that they have freedom to engage in all the essential movements required for the development of these skills. They need space in which to wave their arms, kick their legs, turn over and roll. Later they need to be able to crawl, stand, cruise, walk, run and climb. Materials which move with them are appealing and add challenge to the process. Cardboard boxes are light and easy to carry or to crawl into. Large rubber balls, buckets, pots and pans can be lifted, rolled, slid or pushed. Objects of different weights can be dropped into a container. Push and

pull equipment on wide based wheels support children who are unsteady on their feet at this stage.

The Treasure Basket

Once the baby can sit up, household objects can be collected into a basket for selecting, investigating and discovering. The Treasure Basket devised by Goldschmied (1989) see example above, is a medium-sized, low, round or oval rigid-sided basket, which contains up to one hundred natural and household objects. Objects can include: a pine cone; a lemon; a leather ball; a wooden egg; a natural sponge; a marble egg, a velvet jeweller's box or an egg whisk. The only rules are that the objects should be non-synthetic, and that the adult should feel comfortable about what is put in. The inclusion of a lemon in the basket can offer opportunities for the baby to explore weight, smell and texture, as well as colour. All objects should be checked for safety. The Treasure Basket offers choice and variety, and encourages exploration and independence. Babies spend as long as they want picking up each piece, feeling it, mouthing it, waving it, banging it, exploring it.

4.2.1 Why are materials that support sensory-motor development important?

Sensory-motor materials are important because they provide naturally occurring opportunities for babies and toddlers to engage in the key experiences. Commercial toys have usually been tested for durability and safety and adults can feel reassured by this process but play value and individual children's interests require practitioners to reflect more carefully on the range of materials they offer.

There is a wealth of materials to be found indoors and out which offer far richer learning opportunities than plastic toys in primary colours. Adults need to consider safety and health factors regarding all equipment and should always be careful whether the object is commercially made or acquired from the home or natural environment.

Key experience opportunities for babies

Babies who are not yet mobile need adults to present them with accessible opportunities to explore sensorial objects. Adults place a range of materials in the baby area and, by regularly offering babies choices and observing their interests, support them in beginning to understand the world around them.

- Babies love to explore empty containers by grasping and mouthing them. Later they will discover that they can put a shell or a block inside and make a noise. As Tony shakes the large wooden bead inside a bean tin he is engaging in the key experiences of exploring objects (exploring objects with the hands, feet, mouth, eyes, ears and nose) and space (filling and emptying, putting in and taking out).
- Babies need balls in a variety of colours, textures and sizes.
- Mirrors are fascinating and enthralling for babies who find a natural play partner in their reflection and may coo and "talk" to it for as long as a patient adult is prepared to hold them nearby. Mirrors can be placed in strategic positions on walls and in changing areas enabling babies to see themselves from vertical to horizontal positions.
- Soft dolls and animals are appealing to babies. They are comforting and provide first props for pretend play as babies coo and "talk" to them.
- Babies also enjoy cloth and board books which they

can handle easily and spend time reading with a practitioner in a cosy spot.

- Blocks are satisfying to hold and mouth and then to stack and listen to as they fall.
- Boxes with lids for opening and closing are natural facilitators of the key experiences of sense of self (doing things for themselves) and time (repeating an action to make something happen again, experiencing cause and effect).

Key experience opportunities for younger and older toddlers.
Mobile toddlers enjoy all of the materials which they explored as babies and they now like to make their choices and find their chosen play equipment themselves. They also like to extend and develop acquired skills so an area with plenty of space to move in and easy access to all materials is ideal. At this stage in their development children need naturally occurring opportunities to climb and jump as well as to be still and concentrate.

- If child sized climbing structures aren't provided toddlers will climb on tables and chairs or windowsills so practitioners wisely provide fixed sturdy ladders, steps or ramps on rubber surfaces inside or on sand or grass outside.
- Sand and water are essential for supporting toddlers' need to feel, touch and observe changes: key experiences – exploring objects (exploring and noticing how things are the same and different) and space (filling and emptying, putting in and taking out).
- Books to look at, read and have read are essential for the key experience of communication and language (exploring picture books and magazines, enjoying stories, rhymes and songs).
- Paint, paper, dough, clay and markers provide toddlers with experience to build on when they begin to want to represent their ideas: key experience – creative representation (exploring building and art materials).
- Blocks enable toddlers to manipulate and construct using their whole bodies for lifting, carrying and balancing: key experience – space (taking things apart and fitting them together).
- Materials to pretend play such as dolls, dressing-up clothes, beds, buggies, dishes, pots and pans allow children to imitate what they see parents and family members doing at home and to "imitate and pretend": key experience – creative representation.
- Nesting toys, small pretend people, puzzles, cubes, beads and pegs all provide opportunity for toddlers to refine the skills they've acquired with larger equipment and to engage in the key experience of quantity and number: (experiencing one-to-one correspondence, experiencing more).

4.2.2 How do I ensure that I provide appropriate materials for babies and toddlers?

The following questions adapted from Post and Hohmann (2000) will help practitioners to identify appropriate materials.

Are materials for sensory exploration and play available every day?

- Mirrors, keys on a chain, whisks, bangles.
- Wool, rubber, leather, wood, cork, measuring-cups, baskets.
- Shells, rocks, lemons, pine cones, chestnuts, loofahs.
- Sand, water, dough, paper, paint.
- Soft dolls and animals.
- Rattles, bells, shakers, tambourines, drums.

Are materials to support movement available every day?

- Balls, boxes, cartons, tunnels.
- Small wheeled vehicles, wagons, pull and push toys, wheel toys to sit on and scoot, toys to rock on.
- Ramps, steps, large hollow wooden blocks and vinyl covered foam blocks.
- Space to crawl, scoot, run, jump, roll and sit.
- Outside, a swing over a soft surface and a climber and slide with a soft landing surface.
- Balance beam very close to the ground, very low cloth hammocks over a soft surface.

Are materials for pretending and representing available every day?

- Cloth and board books representing topics appealing to very young children.
- Dolls, baby bottles, blankets, doll beds and prams.
- Dressing-up hats, shoes, scarves, jackets, dresses.
- Toddler sized cooker, fridge, sink and table and chairs.
- Small pots and pans, plastic cups, bowls, plates, empty food containers.

Are materials for fitting together and taking apart available every day?

- Nesting cups and cans, spoons, boxes of graduated size.
- Simple sturdy puzzles, shape sorters and shapes.
- Interlocking materials such as Duplo and Stickle Bricks.
- Wooden hammering bench with pegs and a mallet.
- Large wooden beads and laces, large pegs and peg boards.
- Small people and animal figures, small soft puppets, small cars, trucks, buses and trains.

4.3 WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES FOR STORING MATERIALS FOR BABIES AND TODDLERS?

According to Post and Hohmann (2000) the key to effective storage in an active learning environment for babies and toddlers is access in distinct work and play areas for practitioners, parents and children alike. Labelling is also important. Photographs of possessions and play equipment and words naming them support parents, practitioners and toddlers to easily find and put away everyday items in common use.

Practitioners need to be able to easily access all necessary equipment (sink, fridge, oven) and supplies (nappies, bottles, change of clothes) and parents need designated labelled spaces in which to store daily essentials. Babies and toddlers need convenient access to sleeping, changing, eating and play areas and to all of the equipment appropriate to their needs. Adults store personal belongings and additional equipment on high shelves or in inaccessible presses. Guidelines are provided for the following essential areas: food preparation and eating areas; sleeping areas, bodily care areas, play spaces in general, sand and water area, art area, block area, house area and outside area.

Food preparation and eating areas

- Locate eating areas close to counter space and a sink.
- Store cleaning products away from food and in a locked or out of reach press.
- Store bibs and towels on hooks labelled with children's names or in baskets.
- Store enough bottles, spoons, bowls and equipment to last the day in baskets or on shelves labelled with each child's name.
- It is required by law that those working with food or in a food business need to have training in HACCP (hazard analysis of critical control point). HACCP is an internationally recognised and recommended approach to food safety that anticipates and prevents hazards associated with food preparation.

Sleeping areas

- Locate sleeping areas away from but adjacent to work and play areas.
- Store children's comfort items in their personal cot or cubby.
- Store extra bedding in adult accessible presses labelled with children's names.
- Article 28 (a) of the Regulations requires that adequate and suitable facilities for pre-school children to rest during the day are provided. This is aimed primarily at children in full day care and should apply to children cared for by childminders, sessional services and drop-in centres, which cater for younger children. It is recommended that babies and children under 2 years of age should be provided with suitable sleeping facilities away from the general play area.

Bodily care areas

- Locate bodily care areas away from but adjacent to work and play areas.
- Store cleaning products out of babies' and toddlers' reach.
- Store babies' nappies and changes of clothes in labelled easily accessible baskets or on shelves.
- Store toddlers' nappies and changes of clothes in their personal cubbies so that they can get them themselves.

Play spaces in general

- Locate play spaces for non-mobile babies out of the way of regular traffic.
- Locate toddler play spaces in an open place where they can safely begin to walk without bumping and hurting themselves.
- Store toys and musical instruments on low shelves or in baskets.
- Store books on forward facing racks or in clear plastic pockets.

Sand and water area

- Locate the sand and water area on a non-slip waterproof surface close to a sink.
- Store small buckets and spades on low shelves.
- Sort small boats, corks, sponges, table tennis balls and shells in separate baskets on low shelves.

Art area

- Locate the art area on a non-slip water proof surface close to a sink.
- Store aprons on low hooks.
- Store small quantities of different coloured paint (finger paint is best as toddlers will generally use their hands) in small tubs close to an easel.
- Store markers in tubs or upside down with their caps in holes drilled in blocks of wood for easy access and return.
- Store play dough in airtight see-through containers.
- Store paper on an easily accessed shelf or taped to the wall for parallel work.
- Label each storage container with a photo or sample object for toddlers who can keep an image in mind.

Block area

- Locate the block area in an open space and on a flat surface.
- Store blocks and large trucks on low shelves or stack against a wall.
- Store small cars and vehicles in clear containers or baskets on the floor.
- Store animal and people figures in clear containers or baskets on the floor.

House area

- Locate the house area in a cosy corner.
- Store a small sink, fridge and cooker against the wall or in an L-shape to create a barrier with another area.
- Store pots, pans and utensils on hooks above traced outlines on the wall.
- Store dolls, doll clothes, baby bottles and blankets in baskets or clear containers on low shelves or on the floor.
- Store dressing-up clothes and props (shoes, purses, bags, jewellery) in baskets or clear containers on low shelves or on the floor.
- Label equipment with sample objects or photos for toddlers who can hold an image in mind.

Outside area

- Locate area as close to the inside space as possible with easy access.
- Store non-fixed items (wheeled riding toys and tricycle, rockers and wagons) in a shed or watertight box.
- Store balls, buckets, spades, funnels and sieves (for outside sand and water play) in large nets or bags for easy carrying.
- Store shells, pine cones, feathers, chalk and small containers in tubs or baskets for portability.

4.3.1 Why is it important to provide accessible storage and distinct work and play areas?

Babies and toddlers are constructing learning constantly through their sensory-motor experiences in every aspect of their lives. Practitioners who understand child development and who aspire to support children's individual growth and development construct environments which communicate a sense of respect and purpose.

Distinct work and play areas and accessible storage are the tools which support practitioners to create these special places for children to live and learn.

As Tom goes to his cubby to get his nappy he is engaged in the key experiences of sense of self (expressing initiative, doing things for himself), communication and language (communicating non-verbally) and time (anticipating familiar events).

Katie loves to empty the basket of animals onto the floor, pick out her favourite (the smallest cat figure) and walk around the room while she "coos" to it. Katie is engaging in the key experiences of sense of self (expressing initiative, doing things for herself), movement (moving the whole body), communication and language (communicating verbally), exploring objects (exploring and noticing how things are the same or different) and space (filling and emptying).

4.3.2 How do I ensure an effective physical learning environment?

Practitioners who work on the premise that children learn through active engagement with materials, people and ideas provide effective learning environments. One of the most important characteristics of very young children is their need to move – whether from a horizontal position or a

vertical one. So as well as the important principles of order and flexibility, comfort and safety and support for sensory-motor learning, practitioners should also think about supporting children's movement.

When babies are on the floor do they have:

- Safe, soft space for lying, turning over and rolling?
- Toys and people nearby to grasp, hold and let go?

When babies are sitting do they have:

- Safe comfortable places to sit, a variety of levels and a variety of vistas to look at?
- Very low surfaces to use while sitting?
- Materials and people nearby to play and interact with?

When babies are scooting and crawling do they have:

- Safe open spaces and pathways?
- Ramps and steps for crawling to different levels?
- Tunnels and boxes to crawl through and into?
- Balls to throw, roll and follow?

When babies are standing and cruising do they have:

- Sturdy, well anchored chairs, tables and handrails to hold onto and lean against?
- Sturdy push toys to push and lean against?

When toddlers are walking, riding and rocking do they have:

- Clear pathways with safe surfaces for walking, inside and out?
- Ramps and steps to practise walking up and down?
- Toys big enough to sit in or ride on and push with their feet?
- Rocking chairs, rocking boats/horses and low hammocks?

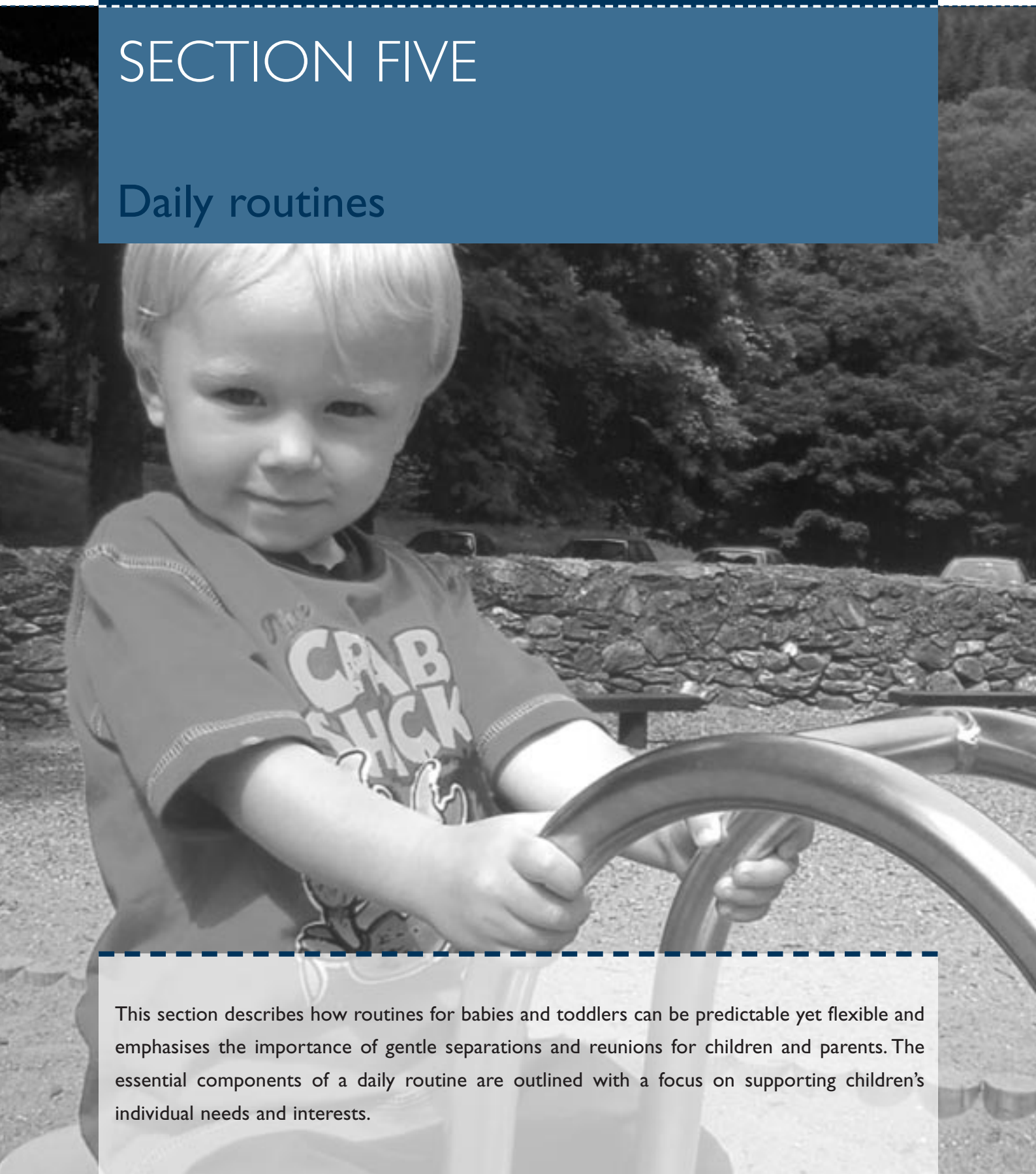
When toddlers are climbing, jumping and running do they have:

- Safe spaces for climbing, jumping and running inside and outside?
- Safe climbers, slides, steps and ladders?
- Different levels and padded landing areas for jumping?
- Trees, rocks, benches, ramps and hills for running up and around?

This section explored the characteristics of an active learning environment for babies and toddlers. It described the separation of care and play areas and the provision of a space to facilitate arrivals and departures. It emphasised the important link between how space and carefully selected sensory-motor materials are arranged and the quality of learning for the children using them. It also focused on the vital role of outdoor play and opportunities to explore nature with supportive adults who engage as partners in play. The next section describes how daily routines for babies and toddlers can be predictable yet flexible.

SECTION FIVE

Daily routines



This section describes how routines for babies and toddlers can be predictable yet flexible and emphasises the importance of gentle separations and reunions for children and parents. The essential components of a daily routine are outlined with a focus on supporting children's individual needs and interests.

5.1 WHAT ARE PREDICTABLE YET FLEXIBLE ROUTINES?

Predictable yet flexible routines are routines which accommodate the individual needs of babies and toddlers for food, rest and bodily care within an overall framework which is consistent and predictable. Practitioners and children benefit from the security of knowing what comes next and that the routine can bend when required to suit individual needs.

Regular daily events are: arrival and departure; one or more choice times; outside times (see also *Section 4.1*); and for toddlers one or more group times. Many variables apply for individual children regarding nappy changing, toileting, sleeping and eating, although children in group care settings inevitably tend to develop a shared routine over a period of time. It's important to also weave individual feeding, sleeping and nappy changing needs into the routine as they arise. Experienced trained adults understand that it takes time for common routines to develop and are relaxed about the timing of the process (see also *Section 1.2* and *1.2.1*). Practitioners try to arrange the day in a way that makes sense for them and the children in their care.

Practitioners who are aware that care giving routines present special opportunities for active learning pay particular attention to how each child responds to these experiences. A small baby may simply lie and listen as s/he is changed, distinguishing the voice of his/her key worker as s/he describes what s/he is doing. A young toddler may carry his/her nappy to the changing area and join in with a song or a rhyme as his/her key worker changes the nappy and an older toddler may need to establish agreement about the need to quickly change the nappy so that s/he may return to play as soon as possible. All of these interactions require delicate and responsive practitioners who understand the value of thoughtful interactions.

Overleaf find some sample daily routines which show how the daily sequence of arrival, choice time, breakfast, choice time, group time, outside time, lunch, nap, group time, snack, outside time, choice time, and departure facilitates each child's individual need for food, rest and bodily care (from Post and Hohmann, 2000, pp. 196-197, adapted with permission).

SAMPLE DAILY ROUTINE FOR A BABY AND TODDLER PROGRAMME - **MORNING**

OVERALL	ÁINE (YOUNG BABY)	SEÁN (YOUNG TODDLER)	BLESSING (OLDER TODDLER)
Arrival (7.30-8.30a.m.)	7.45 a.m. Áine's parent holds her as s/he talks with Norma, her key worker. Parent gives Áine to Norma. She smiles from Norma's arms as her parent leaves.	8.05 a.m. Seán leans against Ger, his secondary key worker and waves to his parent as he walks to his car.	7.35 a.m. Blessing says 'Bye, Bye' to her dad as she sits on Norma's lap (Norma is her secondary key worker). Blessing shows Norma her new hat.
Choice time	Áine lies on a blanket, exploring balls and scarves with her whole body.	In the house area, Seán plays with corks, shells, pots and pans.	In the house area, Blessing puts on bangle bracelets and wraps baby dolls in scarves.
Breakfast	Áine drinks from a bottle while Norma holds her. Áine gazes, smiles, and coos with Norma as she changes her nappy.	Seán eats toast and cereal, drinks juice from a spouted cup, pauses often to watch other children at the table. He greets Ray his key worker when he arrives. Seán climbs up the steps to the changing table. He gives Ray the dry nappy.	Blessing eats toast and cereal. She pours her own and Seán's juice. She hugs Barbara, her key worker, when Barbara arrives. Blessing uses the toilet and washes her hands by herself. 'Me do it!' she tells Barbara.
Choice time	Áine stretches and rolls. She reaches for, grasps and explores a rattle, a small tin, a cloth bear, and a small paper bag. Áine cries and rubs her eyes. Norma puts her in her cot for a nap.	Seán carries and stacks blocks. He brings a book to Ray for him to look at with him.	Blessing loads blocks into the doll's buggy, wheels them to the dolls, builds an enclosure and puts the dolls inside it. She wheels the blocks back to the block shelf at the end of choice time. She and Barbara put blocks back on the shelf.
Group time	When Áine wakes, Norma takes her to the changing table. Áine sucks her thumb and places her hand on Norma's hand as she changes her nappy. Áine drinks briefly from her bottle while Norma holds her. She watches children at group time shaking bells.	Seán shakes bells with the team and the other children, then returns to the book area and looks at books by himself.	Blessing shakes bells, and then plays the drum with the team and the other children.
Outside time	Áine lies on a blanket, wiggles, stretches and watches children on the climber.	Carrying a book, Seán climbs up the steps to the changing table. He looks at the book while Ray changes his nappy. Seán uses a shovel and a rake in the sand box.	Blessing rolls balls down the slide and also under the climber. She brings a ball to Áine. Blessing uses the toilet and washes her hands. She plays for a bit with the stream of water from the tap.
Lunch (begins at midday)	Áine coos as Norma talks to her about how she is changing her nappy. 12:30p.m. Áine drinks from her bottle in Norma's arms.	At Ray's table, Seán eats spaghetti with a spoon and his fingers.	Blessing eats spaghetti and pours her milk. After lunch she wipes off the lunch table with a cloth. 'I do!' She tells Barbara.

SAMPLE DAILY ROUTINE FOR A BABY AND TODDLER PROGRAMME - **AFTERNOON**

OVERALL	ÁINE (YOUNG BABY)	SEÁN (YOUNG TODDLER)	BLESSING (OLDER TODDLER)
Nap	Áine rolls, stretches, and explores balls on the mattress next to the window. She holds a dry nappy as Norma changes her. Áine trades the dry nappy she has been holding for her striped blanket as Norma settles her in her cot for a nap.	Seán climbs up to the changing table. He looks out the window and shows Ray a dog he sees outside. Seán brings a rubber dog and a picture book to nap time. Ray tucks his blanket around him. After his nap, Seán climbs up to the changing table. He is still a bit groggy from his sleep.	Blessing takes books to her cot. Barbara tucks a blanket around her. After looking at books, she sleeps briefly.
Group time	Áine sleeps in her cot.	With Ray and the other children in his group, Seán fills and empties containers with water.	With Barbara, Seán and the other children in her group, Blessing uses water and a paintbrush to "paint" stones. Blessing uses the toilet, washes her hands and her stones. 'Clean,' she tells Barbara.
Snack	Áine plays peek-a-boo with her secondary key worker, Ray as he changes her nappy after her nap.	Seán squashes some banana pieces and licks them off his fingers. Seán brings a nappy from his cubby when Ray asks him to.	Blessing tells Barbara, 'I do it' and peels her own banana half.
Outside time	Since the other children are outside, Áine has her bottle outdoors in Norma's arms. When she is finished, she lies on a blanket, watching and kicking at dandelions. Áine continues to kick her legs as Norma changes her nappy.	Seán rides a tricycle, pushes a small shopping trolley and fills it with balls and leaves.	Blessing puts her stones in a wagon and pulls it about looking for 'more stones.'
Choice time	Áine plays peek-a-boo with Ray. She lies on a blanket on the floor and babbles to Tom, another baby, lying next to her.	Seán looks at books. He "brings" Ray over to the bookrack and tells him to 'sit' and 'read'. Seán climbs up to the changing table. He looks out the window for the dog.	Blessing washes her stones, puts them in her cubby, and rides a wheeled toy. Blessing uses the toilet, washes her hands, and then changes into a clean pair of socks.
Departure (4.00-5.00 p.m.)	4:35 p.m. Áine's aunt arrives. Áine wiggles all over with pleasure. Her aunt holds Áine, snuggles her, and chats with Norma about Áine's day. Then they leave for home.	4:40 p.m. Giving Ray a hug, Seán leaves with his grandmother after taking her to the window and saying 'doggy'.	4:15 p.m. Blessing's parent arrives. Blessing shows her parent her stones, gives Barbara a hug, and leaves with her parent.

5.1.1 Why do babies and toddlers need routine and flexibility?

'Babies' intellectual well-being can be promoted in an environment where consistent routines enable them to make sense of their experience' (NCCA, 2004, p. 25).

The need for routine and flexibility is a substantial challenge and opportunity which practitioners face in their role every day. Adult support must be a constant in all interactions from greeting the child on arrival to saying goodbye at departure. Invariably there will be times when practitioners or children are tired and challenged and it is at these times that a problem-solving approach and an attitude of optimism will enable young children to develop a foundation of trust and confidence.

'Adult support should remain constant from the time a child enters the care setting until the child leaves. The members of a practitioner team do not have the option of switching from having supportive interactions with a child at choice time, for example, to having directive interactions with that child at group time, to letting that child cry in his crib at nap time.' (Post and Hohmann, 2000, p. 204)

Practitioners know that children's differing temperaments influence how they engage with the people and materials in their environment. A child who takes time to make the transition from sleep to play will not welcome an adult hurrying him along and chiding him to hurry to group time but will more likely feel inclined to engage in a power struggle with his caretaker. If the practitioner can remember that flexibility is essential in active learning settings and adjust expectations accordingly, 'You really need some time to wake up before group time, just sit nearby and watch until you're ready,' the learning for the child will be that his need is respected, he can relax and wake slowly and will probably join in readily when he's ready. If he doesn't join in that is respected as well. The group time will go ahead anyway because the children who are ready expect it and it is part of the predictable yet flexible routine in the care setting.

Practitioners and children who have a confident belief in the appropriateness of the routine which provides the framework for their day are free to play and learn together while simultaneously anticipating what comes next. During group time Jennifer climbs onto the lap of her key worker who is reading a story and sits with her eyes fixed firmly on her key worker's face as s/he reads. The key worker continues reading secure in the knowledge that important work is going on as Jennifer engages in the key experience of sense of self (expressing initiative), social relations (forming attachment to a primary practitioner) and space (observing people and things from various perspectives).

Active learning occurs when practitioners and children share control and enable children to make choices about how and when they participate in routine events, which is fundamental for the development of trusting relationships (see also *Section 3.1*). Settings which implement these principles communicate an atmosphere of unhurried child and adult friendly purpose.

- Babies and toddlers in the sensory-motor stage of development who experience predictable and well organised routines and routines which support individual needs, feel safe and secure.
- When babies and toddlers experience regular supportive responses to their needs for eating, sleeping, bodily care and play they develop a sense of continuity and control.
- When babies, toddlers and parents are greeted in a warm and relaxed fashion they feel assured that the setting is a safe and secure place to be.

5.1.2 How do I ensure that routines are predictable and flexible?

Practitioners who work from a needs based perspective become tuned to children's natural rhythms and temperaments and pay attention to what children communicate through their verbal and non-verbal messages. When Diarmuid objects strongly to having his new shoes removed at nap time he is making a clear statement about his need to keep those treasured shoes close at all times. It should not be a problem if he leaves them on, in time he will be able to let go secure in the knowledge that his key worker respects his wishes. The corollary to this anecdote is that Diarmuid's companion in the setting, Josh, doesn't want to wear his shoes at all. Patient and insightful adults

know that Josh enjoys the freedom of bare or stockinged feet and that in time he will choose to wear his shoes when he's ready.

The following questions adapted from Post and Hohmann (2000) will support practitioners to ensure that routines are predictable and flexible:

- Is the day always organised around a set of regular events and care giving routines?
- Is the overall daily routine followed consistently every day?
- Are children's natural rhythms, temperaments and needs accommodated every day?
- Are transitions from one interesting experience to another smooth and unhurried every day?
- Are practitioners patient with children's intense interest in things around them every day?
- Do practitioners value children's need for sensory-motor exploration in each event and routine every day?
- Do practitioners share control of the day with children by giving them choices every day?
- Are practitioners alert to children's verbal and non-verbal communications every day?
- Do practitioners work as a team to provide ongoing support to each child throughout the day every day?
- Do practitioners look at children's actions and communications in the context of the key experiences every day?

5.2 WHAT DO PARENTS, PRACTITIONERS AND CHILDREN NEED AT ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES?

Parents and children need warm confident practitioners who can support them to work through the sometimes very complex process of separating and re-uniting. Very small children who are still engaged in the process of building trust with parents and family are required to extend that circle to include practitioners and peers at the childcare service. The same holds for parents, particularly first-time parents, who may have varying levels of trust for the practitioners and mixed feelings about the whole concept of childcare. The practitioner who can understand all of these issues and remain calm and confident will be a solid resource for parents and children to draw on as they negotiate the daily task of saying goodbye and hello again.

The following outlines Bowlby's (1982) description of typical responses to separation from their parents in children over the age of 6 months in residential care settings.

Phase 1: Protest

- Child may cry loudly, shake self, throw things or self, run toward the door after parent.
- Child seeks to recapture parent and strongly expects parent to return if he or she protests loudly enough.
- Child's protest may begin as soon as parent disappears or may be somewhat delayed; may last for a few hours or, in a residential care setting, for a week or more.
- Child tends to reject comfort offered by others or to cling to the practitioner.

Phase 2: Despair

- Child may cry intermittently, becomes withdrawn and inactive.
- Child still misses parent but his or her behaviour suggests increasing hopelessness at seeing her again.
- Child makes no demands on people in the care setting and appears to be in a state of mourning.
- Since the child is quiet, practitioners may mistake this phase as an indication that the child's distress is diminishing.

Phase 3: Detachment

- Child shows more interest in care surroundings, accepts practitioner's care, food, and toys.
- Child may smile and be sociable.
- When parent returns, child seems to have lost interest in her.
- Child appears to no longer care for anyone.

Things for practitioners to keep in mind about separation

- Protest and despair are a child's normal, healthy responses to separation from the parent to whom the child is strongly attached.
- In typical childcare settings, a child's separation from their parent is temporary – the parent comes back at the end of the day. Practitioners will most often see children responding to separation from parent by protesting.
- As a child protests the parent's leaving, it is important for practitioners to calmly acknowledge the child's

feelings of anger and grief and to offer comfort and contact as long as the child needs it rather than to tell the child to stop crying or to ignore or punish the child for misbehaving.

- The child protests because she or he does not want their cherished parent to leave. While a practitioner cannot be the parent, a practitioner can become a consistent, responsive, dependable, trusted parent-substitute for the child while the parent is absent.
- A child who has not formed a strong attachment to the parent (because the parent is depressed or unavailable), and is left in the care of an ever changing cast of practitioners, may give up trying to find a responsive person to whom to became attached and become detached. This puts the child's future relationships in jeopardy.
- The child's attachment to their parents and the need for a responsive, trusted practitioner in their absence provides the rationale for a key worker system and continuity of care in childcare settings (see also *Section 3.1*).

It is useful to have a reception area where practitioners and families can calmly prepare to part or re-unite but it may be that parents may enter the room to spend time playing with their child before they leave or when they arrive so flexibility is essential. How children behave during these times varies according to temperament, the mood of the day and developmental stage.

Very young babies generally make the transition relatively easily when they are greeted gently and warmly and can feel secure that their needs for feeding, changing and companionship will be met immediately by the same primary practitioner. The daily experience of hearing the same voice greeting them and the same arms holding them in place of parents or relatives forms a base for coping with comings and goings in general. At the end of the day the sound of their parent's voice as s/he returns will probably elicit an excited wriggle or coo as they anticipate being re-united.

When babies start to creep and crawl they also begin to develop awareness that they are separate from their parents and can become fearful of the separation process. They worry that the parent who has gone out of sight may never return and they may cling to their parent in an effort to protect themselves from such a terrifying prospect. Parents may become distressed and feel guilty for putting their child through this trauma and unwittingly reinforce the fear by clinging back. Equally they may want to flee the situation fearing that the longer they stay the harder it will be to leave. Time pressures related to work are also an issue. It is at this stage that practitioners who skilfully support parents and children are most valuable. It's a challenge to remain optimistic when faced with a distraught and fractious family but gentle acknowledgement and patient acceptance applied consistently will carry parents and children through: 'You really want your Mum to stay Tony, it's sad for you to see her go'; 'You just can't stop crying you're so sad about your Dad going to work'; 'You look so stressed about Tony being upset and you're worried about being late for work'.

Young toddlers may still feel anxious about the separation process but they are also drawn to the prospect of getting busy and engaging with practitioners and peers. When parents arrive to collect them they may carry on playing or run to greet them and even cry with relief. This can be disconcerting for a parent who has just begun to feel easier about the separation and s/he may begin to worry that their child has been unhappy all day. Again the gentle affirmation that a practitioner can offer is important: 'He really has been content all day but I think it's still a big relief to know that you always come back. Why not sit and cuddle him for a few minutes before you go'.

As they progress to older toddlerhood children may express their feelings verbally 'Mummy stay'; 'No', but by this time the well oiled machine of support and reassurance and acknowledgement of feelings will enable all concerned to negotiate this all important task. 'In the long run, coping successfully with these rituals gives children a solid basis for coping with the comings and goings of relatives and friends for the rest of their lives.' (Post and Hohmann, 2000, p. 209)

5.2.1 Why are arrival and departure times important?

Busy practitioners who take the workings of their centre for granted can forget the delicacy and importance of the work they are engaged in. Parents make the decision to

place their child in a setting, often under pressure of availability and affordability and obligation to return to work in a certain timeframe. The child has no control or say in the situation and if asked would probably opt to stay at home and enjoy the daily rhythms recently established.

If parents and practitioners can work together to follow the signals which babies and toddlers give them about how they experience the separation and re-uniting process children will develop a sense of control over the experience. Children who feel that their needs and emotions are respected will develop a sense of trust and belief in the people who care for them.

Parents sometimes opt for the seemingly easier approach to separations of slipping out quietly while a child is busy or distracted. This only serves to increase anxiety and foster feelings of mistrust and fear of abandonment. It's much better for a child to experience the pain of separation and be comforted through it by a trustworthy practitioner than to be tricked into letting go of their parent and being left with a sense of betrayal.

Parents and practitioners can work together to establish routines and habits around separations and re-unions so that children can, through repetition, grow to understand that their parents will leave every day and will return every day. They may not understand the conversations going on around them but the gradual predictability that after their parent(s) say 'Bye bye Sarah (key worker), bye bye Lucy and bye bye Teddy, see you after outside time,' they will leave and indeed will return after outside time leads to a sense of well-being and contentment about the childcare experience.

As they work through the separation and re-uniting process children are engaging in the key experiences of sense of self (distinguishing "me" from others), social relations (building relationships with other adults, building relationships with peers, expressing emotions) and communication and language (listening and responding, communicating non-verbally, participating in communication give and take). This process can be undervalued by practitioners and parents who are focused on the tasks of getting to work on time or getting on with the daily routine but the communication that takes place at arrival and departure

times is really important. Parents love to hear about their children's activities and developing friendships or about how much they slept or ate or whether they were well or 'off colour'. Equally practitioners benefit from hearing about similar things from a home perspective and about family news related to the children. Parents, practitioners and children who like and respect each other will all benefit personally and professionally in the here and now and in the longer term.

5.2.2 How do I ensure that the families I support experience comfortable separations and reunions?

By reflecting carefully on the need for gentle and supportive interactions during the separation and re-uniting process, practitioners prepare themselves to implement purposeful strategies for enabling parents and children to say hello and goodbye every day. The following questions suggested by Post and Hohmann (2000) will support practitioners to plan comfortable separations and reunions.

- Is there a comfortable area where parents and family members can prepare at the beginning and end of the day?
- Is there comfortable seating, plants and soft and natural lighting?
- Is space allocated for storing buggies and baby bags with the child and family's name and photograph clearly displayed?
- Are reminders and notes for parents displayed on a notice board in the languages spoken and read by them?
- Are greetings and goodbyes done calmly to reassure the child and parent?
- Are parents' and children's feelings about separation and reunion acknowledged?
- Do parents and practitioners follow the child's signals about entering and leaving the activity of the care setting?
- Do practitioners communicate openly with the child about the parents' comings and goings?
- Do practitioners exchange information and child observations with parents?
- Do practitioners convey optimism that parents and children will achieve a level of comfort about arrivals and departures?
- Does the team assign a primary practitioner for every child and ensure that that person always greets and says goodbye to the child and his/her parents?

5.3 WHAT KIND OF CARE AND PLAY ROUTINES DO BABIES AND TODDLERS NEED?

The importance of predictability and flexibility in the routine has been outlined above. Attention to the crucial nature of arrivals and departures was then emphasised. The detail of how a care giving team might structure the day in a childcare setting is featured below (see also *Section 5.1*). All of these activities occur on demand as children need them and as a regularly scheduled part of the day. Practitioner routines incorporate mealtimes, bodily care and nap time. Other elements of the daily routine include choice time, group time and outside time. Feeding and mealtimes along with bodily care and nap times provide special opportunities for practitioners to provide loving and individualised interactions with the children in their care.

Practitioner routines

Mealtimes

When a tiny baby is hungry and experiences an immediate and warm response from a practitioner who holds him/her tenderly while giving a bottle s/he can relax and concentrate on observing the world, conserving energy, growing and constructing knowledge. Babies need to be held and cuddled many times in a day and bottle time provides a naturally occurring opportunity for this to happen.

Older babies and toddlers want to use their emerging physical abilities to feed themselves. Practitioners support these initiatives by providing cushions to prop and support them or chairs with back and arm supports so that they can use their fingers to feed themselves. Toddlers will begin to alternate between spoon and hands. Children are less dependent on waiting for the practitioner to read their cues about when they're ready for more and they are engaging in active learning as they explore the textures of the food. At this stage they need a practitioner who can share control and be sensitive about when they need help and when they just need comforting murmurs and acknowledgement of their new skills.

Bodily Care
Children need to have their nappies changed or to use the toilet at frequent intervals so these events play an important role in the active learning experience. Adults initiate bodily care routines and largely control the process when babies are very small but they can still use careful observation to learn about the needs and interests of the children. For example Kate's practitioner noticed that she experienced discomfort from the bright sunlight which seemed to shine on the changing area at just the time that Kate needed to be changed every day: 'Kate I can see that the sun hurts your eyes, I have an idea that might make you more comfortable at this time'. She draped a turquoise piece of chiffon across the window to soften the light and Kate was able to relax and enjoy the effect while her thoughtful practitioner changed her nappy and chatted about the plan they had developed together.
Older toddlers will want to participate in the process so accessible cubbies and low changing areas will facilitate their involvement. They may sometimes resist the need to stay still so practitioners who can offer as many choices as possible will fare best in gaining co-operation in this essential task. These routines must be carried out for the physical well-being of the children but the gentle one-to-one communication is also vital for the emotional well-being of the child. Choices such as: 'It's changing time Peter, would you like to get your nappy or would you like me to get it?' or 'Which changing area would you like to use, the low one or the one with steps for climbing up?' will give children a sense of control and respect for their bodily care needs.

Nap Time
Babies generally nap from two to three times in a day. For toddlers at least one scheduled nap time (usually after lunch) happens in a day. Toddlers who have been busy playing and exploring welcome a time to relax and generate fresh energy.

Babies and toddlers may fall asleep anywhere in the centre – in a practitioner's arms, on a quilt in a cosy corner or even on the floor in the middle of a play area! It's advisable to have a designated sleep area where children have their own cot or basket with their own sheets and comforters where children can sleep un-interrupted and safe from passing traffic. **Note:** according to the Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations, 1996, (see *Section 4.3*) it is recommended that babies and children under 2 years of age should be provided with suitable sleeping facilities away from the general play area.

At scheduled nap times toddlers need gentle individual attention as they settle down for sleep. Some will welcome a song or story, others a back rub and some will choose not to sleep but to rest on a cot or mat while looking at a book. Sometimes a child will choose to remain awake and active and it's important to convey an acceptance for this choice and to provide company for the child.

Choice Time
Practitioners who are familiar with the High/Scope pre-school approach will recognise choice time as the baby-toddler work time. Babies and toddlers do not engage in planning and recall time but observant practitioners will notice children expressing preferences and intentions and will support them to access the materials they require.

Choice time offers uninterrupted opportunity to engage with a variety of materials and with peers and practitioners. This is a time for active learning as babies and toddlers engage in key experiences as they fill and empty, put in and take out and hide and find. They construct knowledge about the world and their surroundings and develop a sense of themselves as decision makers and problem solvers. The role of the practitioner at this time is to support and scaffold children's actions and to be sensitive to emerging skills. For example John's key worker has noticed that he is currently very interested in wheeled toys and s/he introduces some new vehicles with large and small wheels for John to work with. Amy's key worker has observed her turning pages and 'talking' as she looks at a book so s/he sits alongside and accepts the book to read as Amy hands it to her.

Outside Time
Children make choices at outside time just as they do indoors at choice time. There are many sensory-motor opportunities outside and it's essential that babies and toddlers go outside at least twice a day and more often when the weather permits (see also *Section 4.1.2* and *Appendix 2* for further information on the outdoors).

'The adult, on invitation by the child, or by his/her own initiative, becomes an active participant in the child's play. In this role s/he may model new actions/movements, introduce new ideas/characters, ask questions or suggest new directions to encourage children to take risks, to be adventurous and curious, and to express their ideas and thinking to consolidate their learning. This articulation can require children to think through their actions and ideas, to be clear, to sequence their thoughts, and to be analytical, bringing them towards higher-order thinking, when learning is potentially deep. Initiating, encouraging, and extending talk and discussion in this way can be very helpful in extending children's learning. Direct involvement in children's play as a player is a particularly effective strategy for children whose capacity for play is impacted by disability/developmental delay or illness. In this case, the adult is an important partner in the child's play, building his/her confidence and using insights into the child's learning, focusing on critical learning moments in the play' (NCCA, 2004, p.53).

Practitioners employ the same strategies of paying attention to children's choices, following their leads, engaging in give-and-take play and chat, supporting interactions amongst peers and helping them to solve problems as they arise.

Group Time

Group time is for older babies and toddlers although non-mobile babies may enjoy watching the activity from their practitioner's lap or propped on pillows nearby. At group time one or two practitioners gather the children to take part in a shared activity. The group is small, no more than four per adult and while all engage with the same materials individual choice is accommodated. Children build a bank of shared experiences and practice being sociable.

5.3.1 Why is it important to provide choices and support children's leads and ideas within the daily routine?

In order to construct knowledge children must have access to a variety of materials which they can choose to manipulate in many ways using their own utterances or language. In order for genuine active learning to occur the work of the child must be supported by an adult who is an active participant in the child's play. It is not enough to set up a well ordered room with many interesting play materials and to then sit by only becoming active when there is a problem or on a whim.

When a practitioner gently holds a small baby, follows his/her gaze to identify the source of interest and then repeats and imitates the child's sounds s/he is engaging with the child's construction of knowledge. When the baby indicates that s/he is finished or tired the practitioner may take a few moments to allow the child to rest and then carry the child to a new spot in the room where s/he might find another object or person to gaze at. The adult may again imitate the baby's soundings and add some gentle comments: 'You're really interested in what Sam is doing at the easel; you're waving your arms and kicking your legs.' The crawling baby who wants to move all over the room and randomly pick up and put down objects is quite happy to have an adult companion join in and do some crawling with him. When they pass the mirror the adult, noticing how the baby stops and looks, suggests that they spend some time exploring that "other" baby and takes him on her knee to share the exploration. When the baby indicates that he is ready to move again the adult acknowledges 'You're ready to move again, off we go' and gently accompanies the baby on his journey to his next choice.

An older toddler who has been busy stacking blocks startles when the tower collapses and stands looking at the pile of blocks. A practitioner comments 'The blocks make a big noise when they fall. I wonder what would happen if we built them up again?' the toddler silently hands the adult a block and begins to make a new tower.

It is through making choices and following through on them with "scaffolding" from reflective and purposeful practitioners that children in active learning settings learn how to express their ideas, become curious and to be problem-solvers.

5.3.2 How can I ensure that the babies and toddlers in my care experience routines which support their needs?

The following questions are adapted from the *Infant and Toddler High/Scope Programme Quality Assessment* (field version 2001b) with permission.

Predictability yet flexibility

- Are the following events included every day – choice time, outside time, group time for mobile babies and toddlers?
- Are feeding, sleeping and bodily care times scheduled and individualised every day?
- Are children told what comes next throughout the day?
- Do children move at their own pace from one activity to the next?
- Does the daily routine ease throughout the day to accommodate individual needs, patterns and habits?
- Do children explore and play throughout the day using their bodies, materials and adult support?

Involving children in bodily care routines

- Do babies and toddlers participate during bodily care routines and make choices about doing things for themselves, e.g. holding a nappy or taking off clothes?
- Are children given information about what bodily care they need so that they can have time to stop what they are doing to prepare for the beginning of the care?

Child-centred and leisurely feeding and mealtimes

- Do primary practitioners always hold babies while giving them a bottle?
- Are parents welcome to come and breast or bottle feed their babies?
- Are older babies and toddlers supported to feed themselves and do they have their own spoon?
- Do babies and toddlers make choices about what and how much to eat, eat at their own pace and spend varying amounts of time eating?
- Do children enjoy the company of practitioners who sit and talk with them during mealtimes?
- Are children fed when they are hungry even if it is outside a designated time?

Rest and sleep times which accommodate individual needs

- Do babies and toddlers sleep or rest when they are tired even if this happens outside a designated time?
- Are babies and toddlers lifted, cuddled and changed as soon as they are fully awake?
- Can toddlers who do not want or need sleep play with chosen items in designated areas or on their rest mat or bed?

Supportive arrivals and departures

- Are babies, toddlers and parents greeted and bid goodbye at a leisurely pace and in a calm reassuring manner?
- Do babies, toddlers and parents distressed by separation and reunion have their feelings acknowledged?

Child-initiated exploration and play

- Is choice or play time always a part of the day?
- Do babies and toddlers make many choices about what, how and where to explore, play and move?
- Do babies and toddlers follow their own ideas supported by their practitioners?

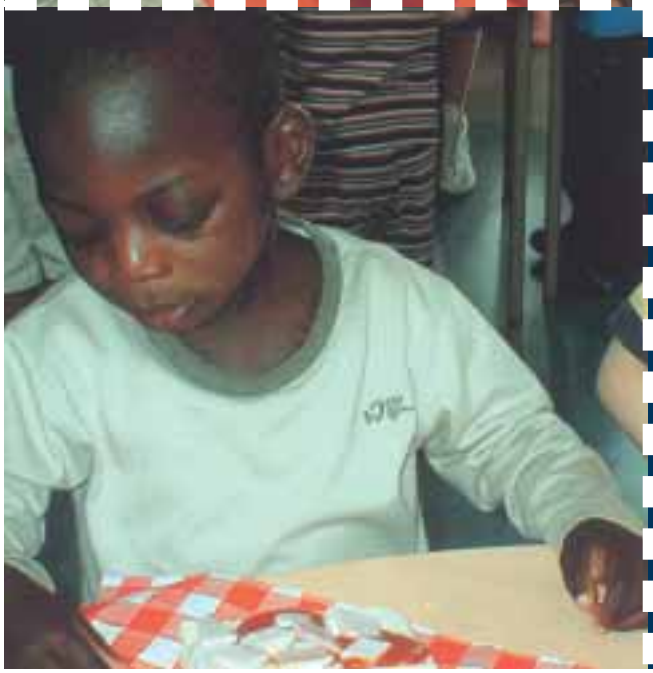
Outside times

- Is outside time always a part of the day?
- Do babies and toddlers roll, creep, crawl, toddle, walk, climb or run outside every day?
- Do babies and toddlers explore natural play materials – sticks, stones, leaves, sand, and grass – with all their senses every day?

Group times

- Do babies and toddlers who are mobile have group time every day?
- Do babies and toddlers explore and play with materials in their own way and for varying amounts of time depending on their ideas and interests every day at group time?
- Do babies and toddlers make many choices about how to use materials during group time every day?

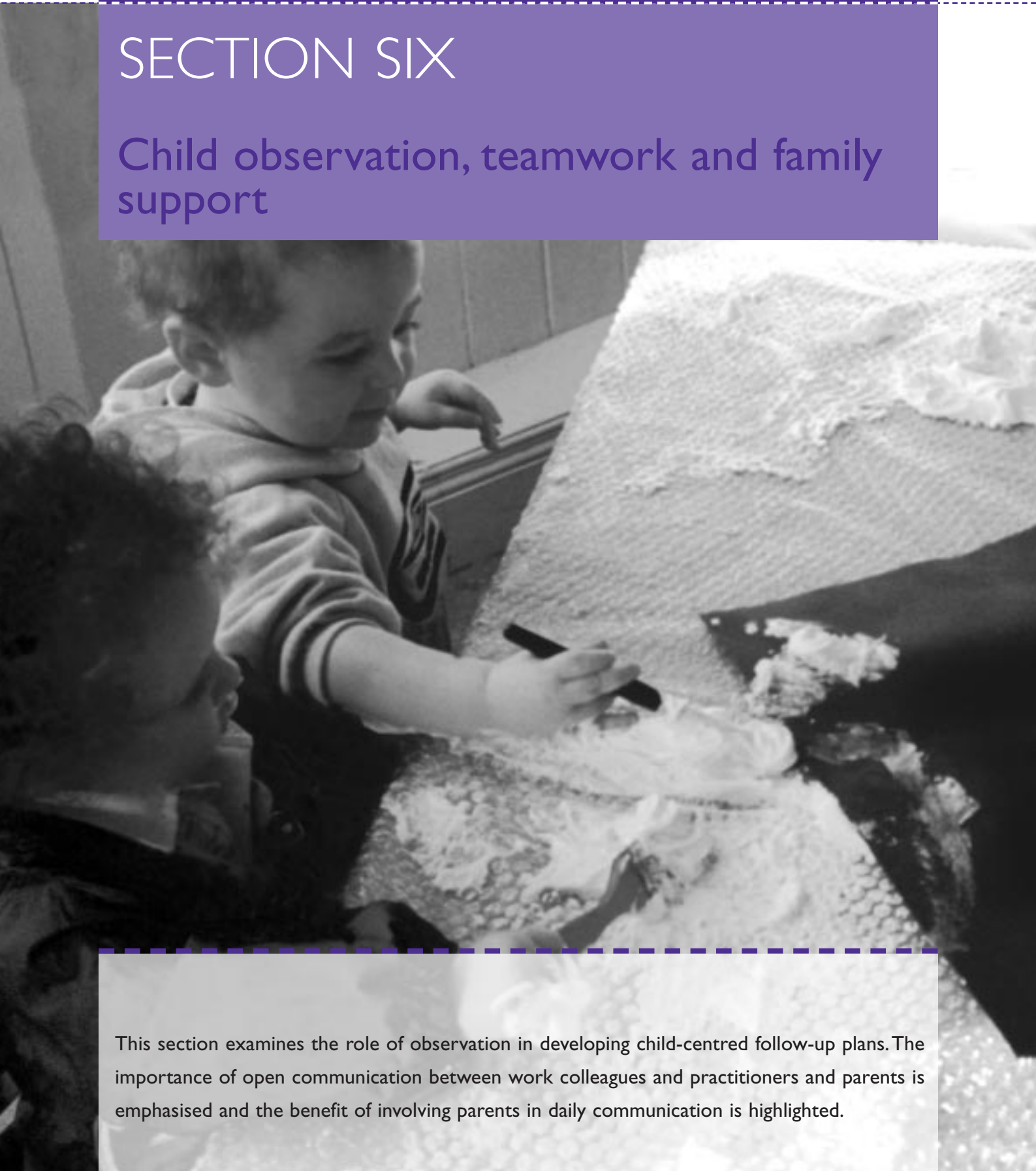
This section described how practitioners can facilitate children's individual needs for food, sleep and bodily care within an overall framework and provided an illustration of a sample daily routine. It discussed children's need for routine and flexibility and outlined how practitioners can ensure that they provide this experience for the children in their care. The section also revisited attachment theory and examined the importance of arrival and departure times for parents and children. The next section describes the role of observation and the importance of communication between colleagues and between practitioners and parents.



There are many sensory-motor opportunities outside and it's essential that babies and toddlers go outside at least twice a day and more often when the weather permits

SECTION SIX

Child observation, teamwork and family support



This section examines the role of observation in developing child-centred follow-up plans. The importance of open communication between work colleagues and practitioners and parents is emphasised and the benefit of involving parents in daily communication is highlighted.

6.1 WHAT DO I NEED TO OBSERVE AND WHAT DO I DO WITH MY OBSERVATIONS?

Practitioners often enjoy exchanging anecdotes about the activities of the children in their care as they go about the daily routines of bodily care, sleeping and choice, outside and group times. Very small children can fascinate and amuse with the wide range of activities and behaviours which they demonstrate. It's important for practitioners to remember that these behaviours provide a window through which areas of practice which need development can be identified and children's actions can be interpreted with reference to child development.

'The reflective practitioner is continually engaged in determining the effectiveness of existing practices with a view to improving future practices and ultimately to improving learning from the child's perspective' (NCCA, 2004, p.63).

Child observation is an essential element of High/Scope practice. The important questions to ask on a daily basis are (Post and Hohmann, 2000, p. 311):

- What did we see children doing today?
- What do their actions tell us about them?
- How can we provide materials and interact with children to support their play and learning tomorrow?

Practitioners watch and listen carefully and keep notepads available on the wall or in pockets for jotting down notes to remind them of important observations for discussion with team members later in the day. The key experiences provide a framework for interpreting children's actions and guiding plans for supporting individual children's interests. Practitioners then discuss, interpret and record objective anecdotes describing the significant actions or sounds of children which can be shared with parents and other practitioners. The following example illustrates this process.

Ger and Barbara discuss the note which Barbara had jotted down during lunch time: 'Leon - juice, tiny bit.' Leon is 2 years and 6 months old.

Barbara: What really interested me was that he said 'tiny bit, not lots'. He was really thinking about exactly how much juice he needed and was able to describe it for me.

Ger: That's really interesting because it's a development from his previous stage of simply asking for 'more', he certainly seems to be thinking about quantity.

Barbara: Yes and also telling me just what he needs!

Ger and Barbara now reflect on what they may do tomorrow based on what they have learned today.

Ger: Leon loves to play at the water table and it's really a natural place to explore the concept of quantity while pouring. I wonder if he would enjoy using some of the plastic lunch beakers and the juice jug while playing there. It would give him an opportunity to pour independently and control the quantity of liquid as he chooses.

Barbara: Yes, and he may choose to chat as he's working which would provide an opportunity to explore words about quantity.

Ger warns: Yes but we don't want to bombard him with a barrage of words just because he's shown some interest.

Barbara laughs: Don't worry, I will remember my S.O.U.L.* strategies and take my lead from Leon but I would like to see if we have any books that I might use to provide other quantity words in a naturally occurring way as we are reading together.

Ger: That sounds like something he would enjoy. I've noticed that he loves to climb on someone's lap at choice time and listen to a story.

Barbara: We'll both be ready to respond and pick up on his interest.

Barbara records under the key experience heading early quantity and number: 20/10: At lunch time Leon said 'a tiny bit, not lots' after he asked for more juice.

* The S.O.U.L strategies for engaging with children are:
- S – Silence: remain quiet and say nothing.
- O – Observe the child.
- U – Understand: by staying silent and observing you begin to understand what the child is doing/thinking and what may be 'behind' the play.
- L – Listen to what the child is saying. This will further develop your understanding of the play.

This example illustrates how carefully Leon's key workers reflect on his words and actions and relate them to the key experiences. They then devise a work plan which demonstrates a thought out yet flexible approach to supporting his interest (see *Appendix 3 Relating child observations to the key experiences*).

6.1.1 Why is it important to examine children's actions and plan follow-up support strategies?

'The child is not the sole learner in the play situation. The adult too is a learner. S/he is an observer of children's play and a listener of their play scripts and discussions. These strategies help the adult to understand the play – its context, its "story", the children's thinking and ideas, their command and range of language, as well as interests and emotions. This information enables the adult to enter the play at opportune points, with sensitivity. But it also allows him/her to extend and enrich the play in the most appropriate way for each child. As an observer and listener, the adult will also be aware of breakdowns in play, and where necessary, intervene to facilitate children in their resolution of conflict' (NCCA, 2004, p.53).

Knowledge of individual children affects the interactions practitioners have with children and parents and also the environment and routines. Therefore the practitioner must be open to reflecting on the messages and insights which they pick up through careful observation of families in their day to day engagement with them. The sharing of these observations with colleagues and parents will ensure that babies and toddlers receive the best possible care in an out of home setting.

Practitioners observe babies and toddlers throughout the day. At the end of the day they discuss and make sense of the children's actions avoiding quick judgements and assumptions. The sound of a baby repeatedly banging a spoon can be hard on the ears and an adult's initial response might be to take it so as to stop the noise. A reflective practitioner might examine his/her response to the situation while also reflecting on the ingredients of active learning and his/her beliefs about how children learn. A problem-solving approach supports the practitioner to identify his/her feelings: 'I'm feeling really irritated by the noise but I can see that Tom is really enjoying the sound and that he is also exploring the key experience of music

(exploring and imitating sounds).' This approach prepares the way for problem-solving amongst team members who know that issues will always be discussed at the daily team meeting.

Discussing a child's action in the context of key experiences enables practitioners to take a developmental approach and to focus on supporting an interest rather than thwarting it. Practitioners who recognise that banging a spoon is a potential lead into a key experience will excitedly consider ways to support, develop and indeed share this interest by entering the play at opportune points, with sensitivity. So the next day might see practitioner and child happily banging a range of surfaces with spoons. The key experience anecdote recorded in the music category would read 5/7: 'At lunch time, Finn repeatedly banged his spoon on the table and smiled all the time as he did it.'

The process of discussing, interpreting and recording objective evidence about children is essential for legitimising children's actions and enabling practitioners to deepen their practice and work in respectful ways. 2 year old Julia became very upset at meal time when her key worker Ray put her teddy out of reach. He immediately stopped to think and talk about the problem. He had been concerned that the teddy would get covered in spaghetti. On seeing Julia's distress he stopped to reflect and he then acknowledged, 'That teddy is really special to you and you seem really upset that I've taken him away.' He waited as Julia nodded tearfully and then asked, 'I was worried that teddy would get covered in spaghetti, but will I sit him here beside you, where he can watch you while you are eating?' He waited and Julia nodded assent. Minutes later Julia sat happily eating her lunch gazing at her teddy. This interaction may never be recorded, lots of things don't make it to paper in a busy setting but the experience for Julia of having her choice respected and supported will play an important part in the construction of her knowledge and sense of herself as an autonomous and active learner.

By routinely reflecting on children's actions and sounds/words practitioners become skilled in supporting babies and toddlers to develop their interests and competencies. It's important to not rush children when they display an interest but to support it and provide a "moderately novel" addition which may extend the learning opportunities. Kate's practitioner noticed that she was interested in the way the sunshine played on the wall at choice time on sunny days. She began by simply sitting with Kate as she watched the light. The care giving team discussed, interpreted and recorded Kate's interest and then devised a plan to support her by ensuring that Kate was given the space to focus on her interest, express her responses verbally and nonverbally, to move to a different vantage point and to explore how reflective materials like mirrors and shiny paper reflected light in a new way. Useful plans do not have to be complex plans (see *Appendix 3*) and it's this attention to active learning which will ensure that they will be effective.

6.1.2 How do I ensure that I use my observations to devise useful plans for the babies and toddlers in my care?

Observation is of particular importance in relation to children with additional needs. In inclusive settings reflective practitioners devise individualised plans for babies and toddlers daily. The emphases may be concentrated with children with specific additional needs. For example practitioners may have to remember to sit and cradle a non mobile toddler just as they would a small baby or a child may have a medical need. Shifting from one aspect of

routine to another may be tough for some children, so attention to children's responses to change is important and ensuring that the child is enabled to move on. A note of caution: children with additional needs are more like other children than different. If we focus on the need there is a danger the practitioner will overlook the more important intentions and interests of the "whole child".

The following questions are adapted from the *Infant and Toddler High/Scope Programme Quality Assessment* (field version 2001b) with permission and if implemented will lay the foundation for child focused planning (see also *Appendix 3 Relating child observations to the key experiences*).

Observing and Planning

- Do practitioners watch and listen carefully as babies and toddlers play and take part in care giving routines?
- Are practitioners alert to babies' and toddlers' strengths and interests in sensory-motor exploration and play, interactions and bodily care?
- Do practitioners jot down notes about babies' and toddlers' actions and sounds/words to use in planning and for sharing with parents?
- Do practitioners meet every day to share observations about children's actions and sounds/words?
- Do practitioners relate actions and words/sounds to child development by referring to the key experiences?
- Do practitioners routinely record their observations to create a permanent anecdotal account of each child to share with parents and other practitioners?
- Do practitioners meet daily to plan ways to support individual babies and toddlers?
- Do practitioners make plans based on observations of each child's strengths, abilities and interests?
- Do practitioners take time to plan without babies and toddlers or while they sleep?

6.2 WHAT DO I NEED TO DO IN ORDER TO PRACTISE OPEN COMMUNICATION?

The focused, collaborative efforts of the adults in children's lives draw together the elements of active learning, practitioner support, a safe and inviting environment, child-centred routines and family support. Throughout each day, members of the practitioner team work together to observe and support the children in their service. The practitioner team also works in partnership with parents, exchanging child observations and striving to provide consistency between children's at-home and away-from-home experiences. Practitioners, parents, administrators and community members form even wider partnerships to advocate for children and to secure the resources needed for high-quality early learning and care settings.

Stable and consistent teams enable children to form the trusting relationships which are a cornerstone for healthy development. It can be challenging to negotiate the emotional and intellectual demands inherent in childcare and relationships of trust amongst practitioners can go a long way towards cushioning the potential stresses. Practitioners who practise open communication foster supportive collegial relationships.

The most useful kind of communication is open communication or speaking in an honest, straightforward way. This means sharing genuine feelings and opinions and taking turns speaking and listening respectfully to each other. Turn-taking and pausing and listening will ensure that focused discussion about setting issues and children's needs can take place. Professional practice supports a teamwork model and advocates give and take and drawing on strengths and differences amongst team members. This dynamic provides an authentic experience for children and models respect for difference and contrast.

Even colleagues committed to the principles of open communication do not always agree. However, their commitment ensures that they engage in joint problem-solving/conflict resolution in order to reach a solution which is supportive for all concerned. Here is an example from practice which illustrates how Ger and Norma work to talk openly about their different views on how to work with Paul aged 18 months who is throwing toys around the room every day (see *Section 6.3.1* for the steps in resolving conflicts with adults).

Ger: I'm really worried about Paul at the moment. He keeps throwing blocks and pieces of play dough all over the room during choice time. I'm afraid that he's going to hit one of the other children and really hurt them or damage some of the furniture.

Norma: Yes I've been watching him too, but he seems to be really enjoying himself and he really doesn't mean any harm.

Ger: He may not mean any harm but what if he hurts someone? Look! I think that we should do something about this! We really need to stop him and encourage him to play with the blocks or the play dough in the ways that they're intended. Soon every other child will be joining in and it'll be mad!

Norma: I can see that you're feeling quite upset about this. I think we've both been trying to stop Paul from throwing and it only leads to him getting really upset and then more determined to throw things. I'm worried that we're setting up a power struggle which will develop feelings of resentment towards us from Paul and he's generally so happy and content. Also the other children are becoming aware that there's tension building up.

Ger: To be honest I think that's partly because they sense that we're not really united about our approach. I've been doing all of the stopping of the behaviour and you've been kind of avoiding the issue.

Norma: You're right and I'm sorry. We really need to devise a strategy to support Paul and we need to be united about it in our approach.

Ger: Why are you so reluctant to address the behaviour, because let's face it, there is a real danger that he might hurt someone?

Norma: Well I think it's because of something I read about toddlers and the difference between "intent" and "volition". It was in a book called *Magical Child* by Chilton Pearce (1992) and it described how for the first three years or so the child is moved by an urge or 'intent' which he can't actually control. He has no will in the adult sense but is impelled into action. Later with support he will gain volition or control. I'm not sure I understood it before but it's beginning to make sense for me now as we talk about Paul.

Ger: Well you've certainly got me thinking now (both laugh). I was feeling quite annoyed about your lack of support. What does this mean for us regarding our work with Paul?

Norma: It means that we have to think more deeply about what he's learning and why he seems to need to do this throwing. It also means that I need to communicate more with you about my practice.

Ger: O.K., for us that usually means looking at the key experiences. Well he's certainly exploring building and art materials (creative representation) although not necessarily in the way we might hope (both laugh).

Norma: Yes and he's also repeating an action to make something happen again, experiencing cause and effect (time) and possibly exploring objects too. We really don't know and we haven't been trying to find out because we've been so unsure about what to do.

Ger: Right, so what do we do?

Norma: I'd like to look on the behaviour as a need and identify a way to enable him to carry out his intentions which is acceptable and safe for everybody. We usually try to support and build on children's interests so how can we apply that principle in this situation?

Ger: We could provide some materials which are soft and tell Paul that they are for throwing. We have some soft foam balls in the store-room which haven't been out this year. This is really making sense to me now, I had become really locked into the whole "unacceptable behaviour" perspective.

Norma: Great! Let's try them, we could place them near the blocks and near the play dough and then we could both be prepared to support him at choice time when he's choosing materials.

Ger: That sounds like a manageable plan and I'm really glad that we've talked this through.

Norma: Me too, sometimes it takes time and communication to work through a problem and prevent it from escalating.

Ger and Norma were enormously pleased with the outcome of their plan. Paul responded enthusiastically to the soft balls which he threw and rolled with adult support for a while before he moved on to a new interest. The balls have become essential materials and Paul facilitated useful learning.

6.2.1 Why is open communication about tasks important?

It is vital that practitioners discuss and come to agreement about the day to day issues that underpin the development of positive working relationships. While many practitioners agree in principle about the kind of setting they want to provide and manage, the actual working out of how they do it can present challenges. Practitioners need to thrash out individual concerns about space, materials, routines and roles and responsibilities. Children and parents will be sensitive to unresolved tensions and atmospheres amongst team members and this can undermine confidence for everybody concerned and lead to worry and anxiety. No parent wants to leave their child in a situation of tension and indeed it's unlikely that a child will want to stay. Beautiful and well equipped premises will count for little if the team within it are not happy in their work.

There will be unavoidable disruptions in any team due to illness or change in staff. Working conditions which encourage staff to feel valued and involved and which aspire to provide a quality programme for children and families are more likely to elicit co-operative work practices amongst practitioners.

To provide the kind of setting where the needs of children and families are met as effectively as possible requires *daily team planning*. If practitioners are meeting on a daily basis to share and discuss anecdotes about children they will also need to discuss the ins and outs of who will load or unload the dishwasher or washing machine and who will meet and greet families as they arrive.

Sometimes the hardest task is to get started. How does a busy team manage to find 30 minutes each day to get together and plan around children's interests and team roles and responsibilities? It requires tenacity, flexibility and management support. Here are some ways that have been tried:

* In settings where children tend to nap at the same time practitioners meet for the first 30 minutes of nap time.
* In settings where children nap at different times practitioners meet when the least number of children are awake and employ an assistant to take care of the non-sleeping children.
* Set aside 30 minutes every day either before children arrive or after they leave.

It is vital that practitioners discuss and come to agreement about the day to day issues that underpin the development of positive working relationships.

There is no perfect time to get all team members together. The important thing is that practitioners consistently do the best they can every day to discuss and problem-solve together. In this way over time children, parents and staff will reap the benefits of living and working in an environment where there is clarity about roles and responsibilities and an atmosphere of respect and serenity.

6.2.2 How do I ensure that the team reaches agreement on the tasks underpinning professional practice?

The following are examples of the kinds of questions that baby and toddler practitioner teams need to address and work out together (Post and Hohmann, 2000, adapted with permission).

Space and Materials

- How will the indoor and outdoor space be arranged or rearranged to promote active learning?
- How might the arrangement of this space work better for non-mobile babies? For mobile babies? For young toddlers? For older toddlers?
- What might be done to make this space more comfortable for children and practitioners?
- What might be added, eliminated, or supplemented to support children's interests and sensory-motor development?
- Are there any physical changes which could be made to the indoor and outdoor space to enhance children's opportunities for movement? For sensory exploration? For social interaction?
- Whose help and support would be needed to make these changes?

Schedules and Routines

- How will the overall daily routine be organised? How can it be ensured that the routine is predictable (so that everyone knows what happens next) yet flexible enough to accommodate individual children and their care routines?
- To what extent are all the ingredients of active learning and adult support being incorporated into each part of the day?
- What would make it possible to give full attention to each child during feeding, mealtime and bodily care routines?
- What choices do children have at mealtime and nap time?
- What do practitioners do at choice time and outside time?
- What do children do at group time?
- What can be done to make arrivals and departures smoother for children and parents?

Roles and Responsibilities

- How will daily tasks be divided? (Who loads, runs, unloads the dishwasher or the washing machine and dryer? Restocks snacks and bowls? Restocks the nappy changing area? Washes toys? Changes bedding? Takes out and puts away outdoor play materials? Cleans paintbrushes? Restocks art materials? Fill and empties the sand and water tables? Adds or replaces materials? Feeds the fish, the animals? Waters the plants?
- How does the team keep track of what needs to be done each day and by whom (see Appendix 4 for a daily planning sheet)? Issues may arise which need general attention.

The following is a sample implementation plan for developing a home corner devised through team consultation which can be a practical guide:

ITEM	HOW TO ACHIEVE	WHEN	WHO TAKES RESPONSIBILITY	RESOURCES NEEDED
Developing the home corner	Map out area and consider what is needed. Reorganise and widen the area by moving the shelves and add equipment and materials	Thursday 14 April Friday 22 April	GP and NK to map the area and devise full materials list and post parent and staff notice board requesting materials by 22 April and to reorganise area	Rug, bean bags, real tea pot, and kitchen equipment, vegetable baskets. Time and people.

- What daily records are kept and for what purpose?
- Who writes and who talks during team planning?
- How are observations and plans recorded?
- How do team members support each other throughout the day as they work with children and families?

How do team members communicate with each other while maintaining the focus on the children?

As colleagues work together many more questions will arise. The important thing is that the focus remains on giving the best care possible to the children and families attending the childcare setting.

6.3 WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF INVOLVING PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS IN ROUTINES AND WORK PLANS?

The benefits of supporting parents to participate in routines and work plans are:

- Greater sharing of information between parents and workers enhancing communication generally.
- Parents spending more time in the childcare setting.
- Family values and beliefs being understood and taken account of by the provider.
- Parents improving their knowledge of parenting and child development generally.
- Greater harmony between home and the childcare service which minimises confusion for the child.
- Parents being seen as valuable resources bringing added value to the service.
- Parents feeling more confident about negotiating their children's later education.
- The involvement of parents improves children's performance and motivation, leads to higher practitioner expectations and increases parental confidence and aspirations.
- Respecting and valuing each other, listening and learning leads to new ways of co-operating.

'Given the tremendous influence parents/guardians can have on their children's early learning, it is imperative that parents/guardians and childminders/practitioners communicate and collaborate where children attend out-of-home settings. Communication built on mutual respect can have a positive impact on learning. Research indicates that where parents/guardians are actively encouraged and become involved in their children's learning in out-of-home settings, there are substantial gains for all. These gains include enhanced parental understanding of appropriate early learning experiences, and positive influences on cognitive and social development that improve children's later educational success.' (NCCA, 2000, p.43)

Its essential that parents and practitioners develop a trusting and amicable relationship so that they can share information on a daily basis. Practitioners need to communicate to parents that they are just as interested in all the small everyday elements of their children's lives as

they are. Such enthusiasm will encourage parents to relax and engage in daily conversations about their children's eating, sleeping and bodily care routines and special interests and activities. This teamwork approach contributes to the supportive environment which underpins active learning and intrinsic motivation.

When Cara's parent arrives to collect her she hears from the practitioner that Cara has had a colicky pain which seemed to ease when her practitioner placed her across her knee and rocked gently back and forth. Cara's parent is relieved to hear that the practitioner has thought so carefully about what her daughter needed and indeed has shared the information, because the smiling contented baby who greets her shows no sign at all of having been upset. Cara's parent feels reassured to know that the practitioner can nurse Cara through a rough patch and pass on a useful tip for her to try at home. She shares how she feels quite anxious when her baby has these bouts of colic and that she feels better knowing that it's not just at home that they happen. The practitioner explains that she also finds it hard to see Cara upset but that she is confident that the colic will pass. Both agree to keep each other informed every day about when it happens and for how long so that they can compare notes and monitor the situation.

These interchanges take time but while parent and practitioner are exchanging information the small person at the centre of it is experiencing signals about the nature of this relationship. She hears her mother laugh as her practitioner tells her about how she reached out to touch her friend Ben as they were lying side by side on the rug. She listens as her mother enquires about whether more nappies or clothes are needed. She hears her practitioner tell how she likes to gaze at the wall frieze as she's having her nappy changed. She hears her mother greet another parent as he arrives to collect his daughter.

During exchanges like these parents and practitioners build their knowledge about what works and doesn't work with the baby or toddler who interests them so much. They interpret signals and behaviours and test hypotheses about what they might mean and how to support them. First-time parents gain support and confidence and experienced parents share and develop their parenting skills.

Practitioners develop their skills and maintain an openness to new insights about children and families. When and if they differ with parents about child rearing practices they are relaxed about discussing contrasting perspectives and open to finding a solution which meets everyone's needs.

6.3.1 Why is parental participation worth working at?

'In this relationship, parents/guardians are respected as partners in the assessment process. They have a wealth of intimate information about their children's early learning which greatly enhances the childminder/practitioner's picture of the children's learning and development. Equally childminders/practitioners can share general and specific insights with parents/guardians on their children's progress. This two-way communication helps to ensure continuity and progression in learning as the children move between their home and their out-of-home settings. This sharing of observations strengthens the partnership between the early childhood setting and families, and thereby benefits the child.' (NCCA, 2004, p. 61)

Relationships based on competition are not conducive to open communication and sharing control. Practitioners need to keep their focus on family learning and to engage in give-and-take communication which is designed to meet the needs of the children in their care. Practitioners do not try to outshine parents in their role and nor do they compete for children's affection. Practitioners support the parent-child relationship and through their close and careful engagement, scaffold the family as it grows and develops a unique identity and culture.

Just as practitioners "start where the child is at" when planning interactions which support active learning for children, so do they tune in to parents' interests, beliefs and values. They may not necessarily agree with them or share them but it is far more useful, respectful and productive to set aside negative attitudes and find a way to build a co-operative relationship.

The child at the centre of a mutually respectful and trusting parent/practitioner relationship is free to engage in the key

experiences of sense of self (distinguishing me from others), social relations (building relationships with other practitioners) and communication and language (listening and responding). Parents love to share new information with practitioners and indeed it's vital that they do. Children will often reach a developmental milestone while out of the day-to-day routine of home and care setting. A baby who could previously be left safely lying on a rug or raised mat may have begun to roll while on holidays and practitioners need to prepare a safe area for the baby to explore his/her new skill. Parents enjoy the affirmation which making links with the key experiences brings and knowledge about the value of supporting active learning can reassure them that the sometimes trying actions of their babies and toddlers are actually to be celebrated. Tom's Dad shared his frustration about Tom's determination to get a fizzy drink from the fridge in the supermarket while shopping, (Tom is 2 years and 3 months). Minutes later he grinned proudly as the practitioner exclaimed 'I have to record that in Tom's key experience sheet, and you know, I really need to start using some pre-school key experience categories (see *Appendix* 5) for him, because this tells us that he's beginning to de-code symbols which is a pre-reading skill. I've noticed here how he picks his favourite cereal packet from the press.' By re-framing Tom's apparently irritating behaviour the practitioner gently shares her childcare expertise and enables Tom's father to understand that his son's behaviour is a useful window through which he and the practitioner can view a naturally occurring example of Tom's rapid development.

If practitioners and parents do find themselves "at odds", and it's likely that this will occur on occasion, a problem-solving approach will maintain the ethos of active learning at times of stress as well as at times of harmony. The following steps for conflict resolution (Post and Hohmann, 2000, p. 330) can be applied when adults are in conflict just as effectively as for children (see *Section 3.3* for conflict resolution with children and *Section 6.2* for an example of conflict resolution with adults).

Steps in resolving conflicts with adults

1. *Approach calmly.*
   Calm yourself, mentally acknowledging your own feelings.
   Prepare yourself to listen.
   Use a calm voice and gentle body language.
2. *Acknowledge adults' feelings.*
   'You look really upset.' 'I can see you have very strong feelings about ...'
3. *Exchange information.*
   Take turns describing the details of the problem situation and your specific needs.
   Use 'I' statements rather than 'you' statements.
   Listen attentively as the other person speaks.
   Remember, this is a dialogue, not a debate.
4. *Look at the problem from the other person's viewpoint.*
   'What is the other person showing or telling us through actions or words about . . . ?'
   'How do our adult needs relate to the other person's needs?'
5. *Restate the problem.*
   'So the problem is ...'
6. *Generate ideas for solutions, and choose one together.*
   'What can we do to solve this problem?'
   Together, brainstorm to come up with ideas for solutions.
   Select an idea and co-design a strategy to try.
7. *Be prepared to follow up the problem.*
   Take turns describing how the strategy is working.
   If necessary, make adjustments together or return to Step 6.

6.3.2 How do I ensure that we work effectively with parents?

The following questions from the *Infant and Toddler High/Scope Programme Quality Assessment* (field version 2001b is adapted with permission) will help practitioners to reflect on how to build successful parent/practitioner partnerships.

Forming partnerships with parents:

- Do practitioners talk to parents every day and share comments and suggestions?
- Do practitioners make plans based on observations of each child's strengths, abilities and interests?

- Do practitioners and parents use a problem-solving approach when there are conflicts?

Welcoming families:

- Do practitioners consistently welcome family members and are they respectful and friendly towards them?
- Is there a comfortable family-friendly space in the centre where parents and family members can gather?

Involving parents in the life of the centre:

- Do practitioners regularly share observations and notes about babies and toddlers with parents at greeting and goodbye times?
- Do practitioners leave babies and toddlers "firsts" for parents to see or hear "first"?
- Are there regular opportunities for parents to spend time with their babies or toddlers at the centre, attend meetings, participate in activities and read or write centre related materials?

Supporting parents to access support services as needed:

- Do practitioners have up-to-date information about community resources?
- Do practitioners make referrals and assist families in accessing appropriate services?

The likelihood of sustained parent involvement and support will increase if parents enjoy their involvement, have choices, do things that interest them and feel successful and competent in their efforts. According to the Dublin City Childcare Focus Group (2005) providers can:

Acknowledge that all parents are different and may want to become involved (or not) in different ways.

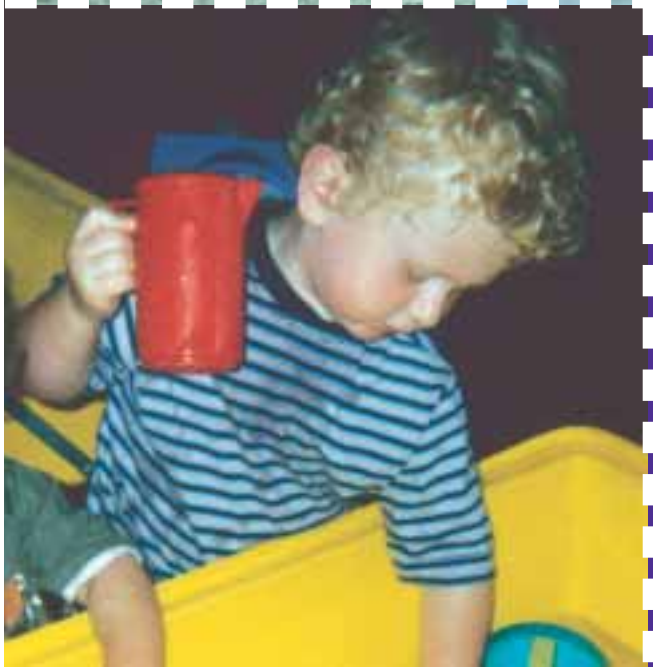
- Develop a childcare policy which recognises parents as the primary educators of their children.
- Ensure a consistent application process with registration and an orientation visit prior to child starting for families with a sensitive settling in process.

- Establish forms on what the child is like, his/her interests in play.
- Generate a parent handbook with abbreviation of policies, signed by parents and translated into the natural language of all parents in the service.
- Communicate who the staff are with photos and who within the staff to go to with problems.
- Consider: a bulletin board with notices on general issues, a newsletter, an activities list on care room doors offering the month's activities and Diaries for babies and toddlers what happened during the day.
- Share positive feedback on the children's play and behaviour.
- Maintain an open-door policy.

Section 6 Child observation, teamwork and family support examined the role and importance of observation in enabling practitioners to develop child-centred follow-up work plans. It described open communication and illustrated a problem solving dialogue between two colleagues. The section also outlined the benefits of involving parents in routines and work plans and explored the steps which support practitioners and parents to resolve conflicts as they arise.

Conclusion

This practice guide provided some insights into how High/Scope principles can support practitioners to care for the youngest of our children in ways which respect and nurture difference and similarity. The need for childcare is a fact of life for many families who value the experience and professionalism of the practitioners who care for their children. In this guide we describe an approach which is gentle and respectful of all children regardless of need; one which builds on strengths and enables the continual growth and development of all the members of the early childhood care and education community.



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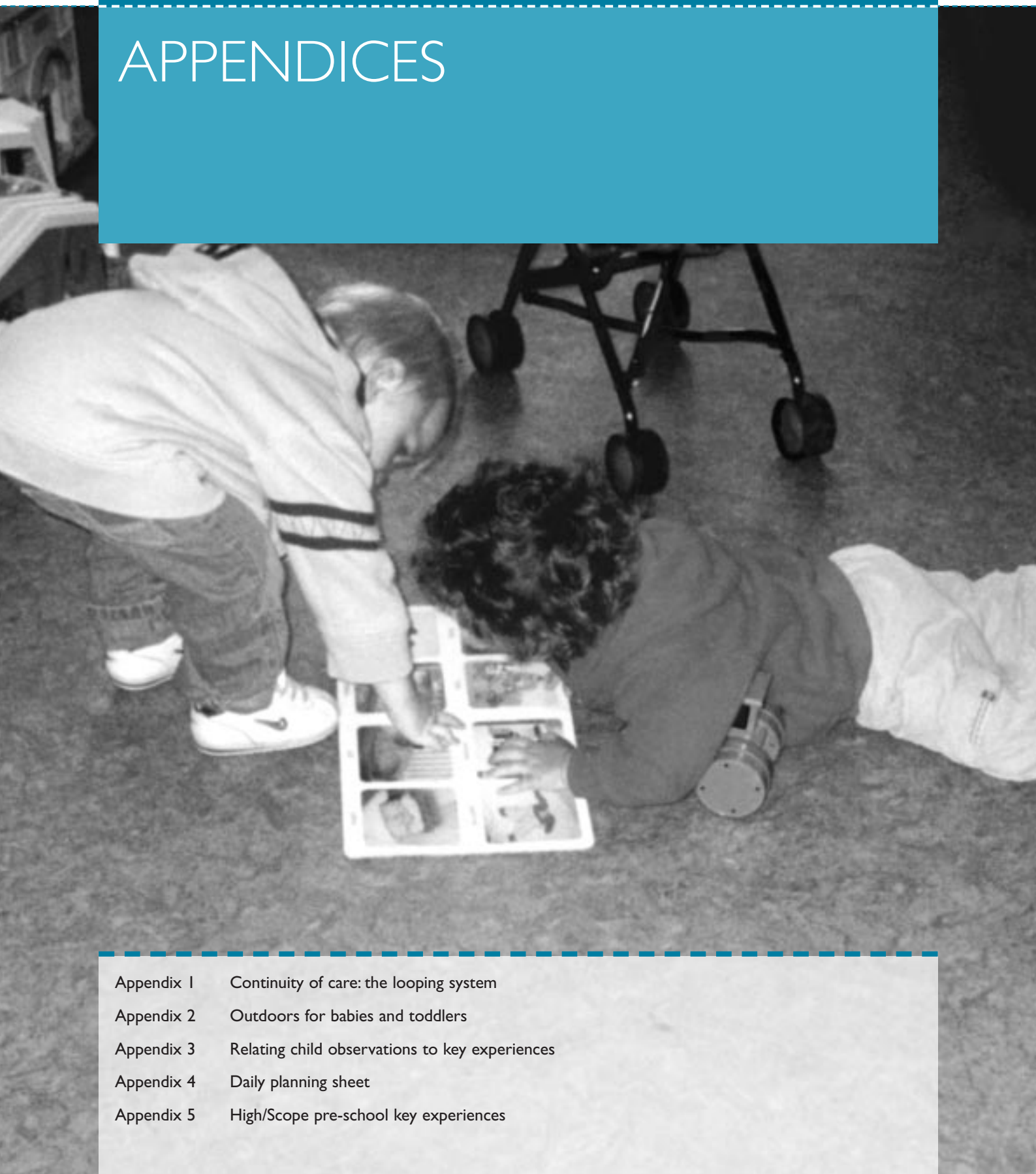
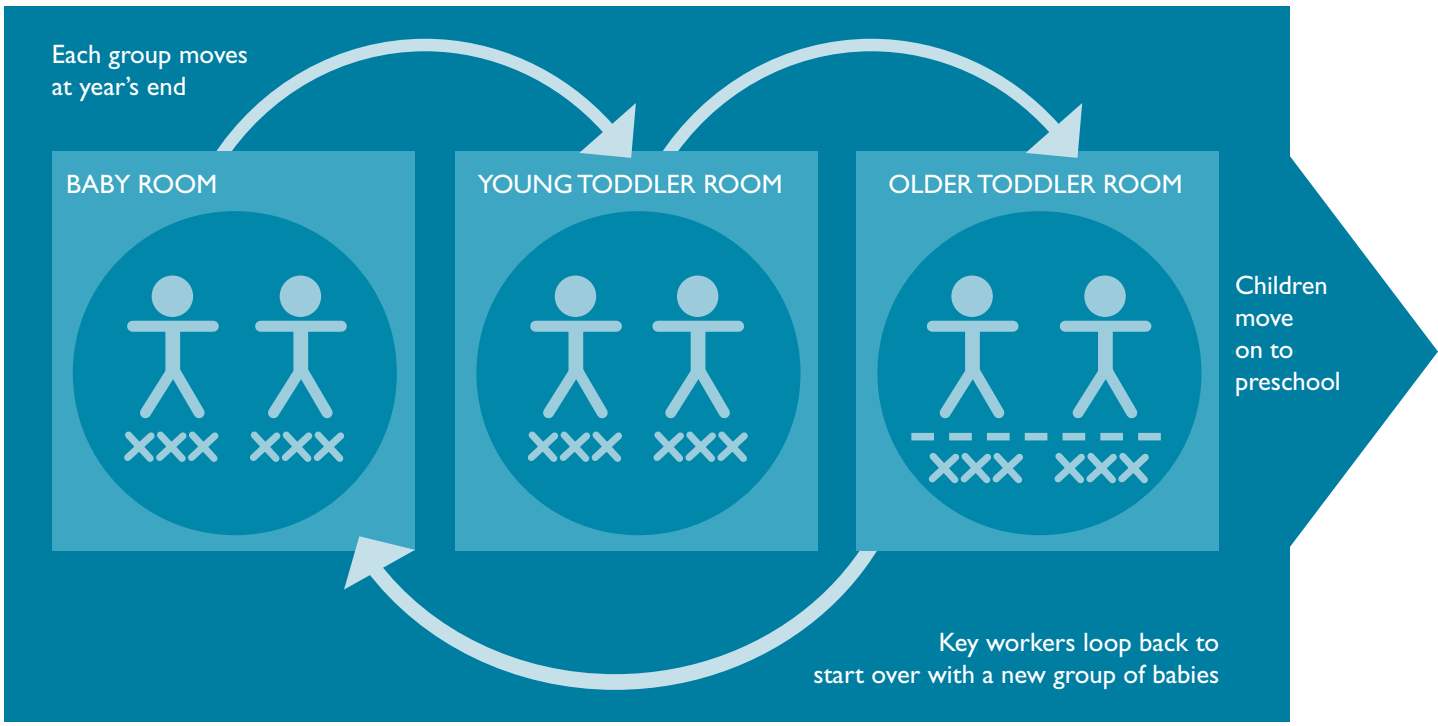
APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1 Continuity of care: looping system

OPTION 1: MULTIROOM WITH LOOPING

Three 2-person teams, 3 rooms, 3-year looping



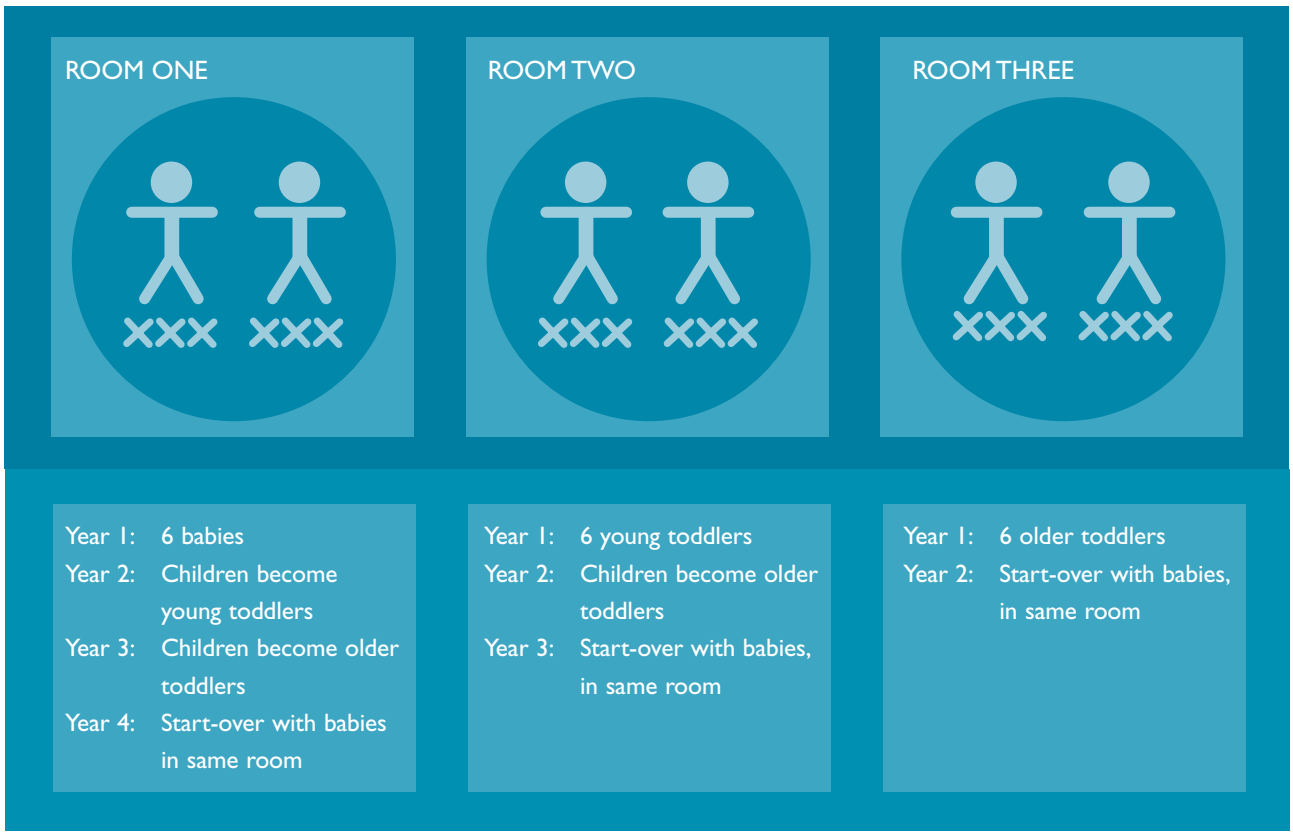
Adapted from Post and Hohmann (2000, p. 297) with permission

This service has a "baby room," a "young toddler room," and an "older toddler room." Each room has a two key worker team with six young children of about the same age. Each year, as the children in a given room grow older, they and their key workers move on to the next room (for example, the former young toddlers move on to the older toddler room with their two key workers). At the same time, children who have been in the older toddler room move on to pre-school, and their key worker team then loops back to the baby room to begin caring for an incoming group of babies. This method ensures that the practitioner is fully in tune with the babies developmental needs and can respond appropriately. The fact that the baby moves to the young toddler room does not mean that s/he is forced to do activities way beyond their stage of development.

APPENDIX 1 Continuity of care: looping system

OPTION 2: MULTIROOM WITHOUT LOOPING

Three 2-person teams, 3 rooms, each team stays in the same room for their children's 3-year cycle

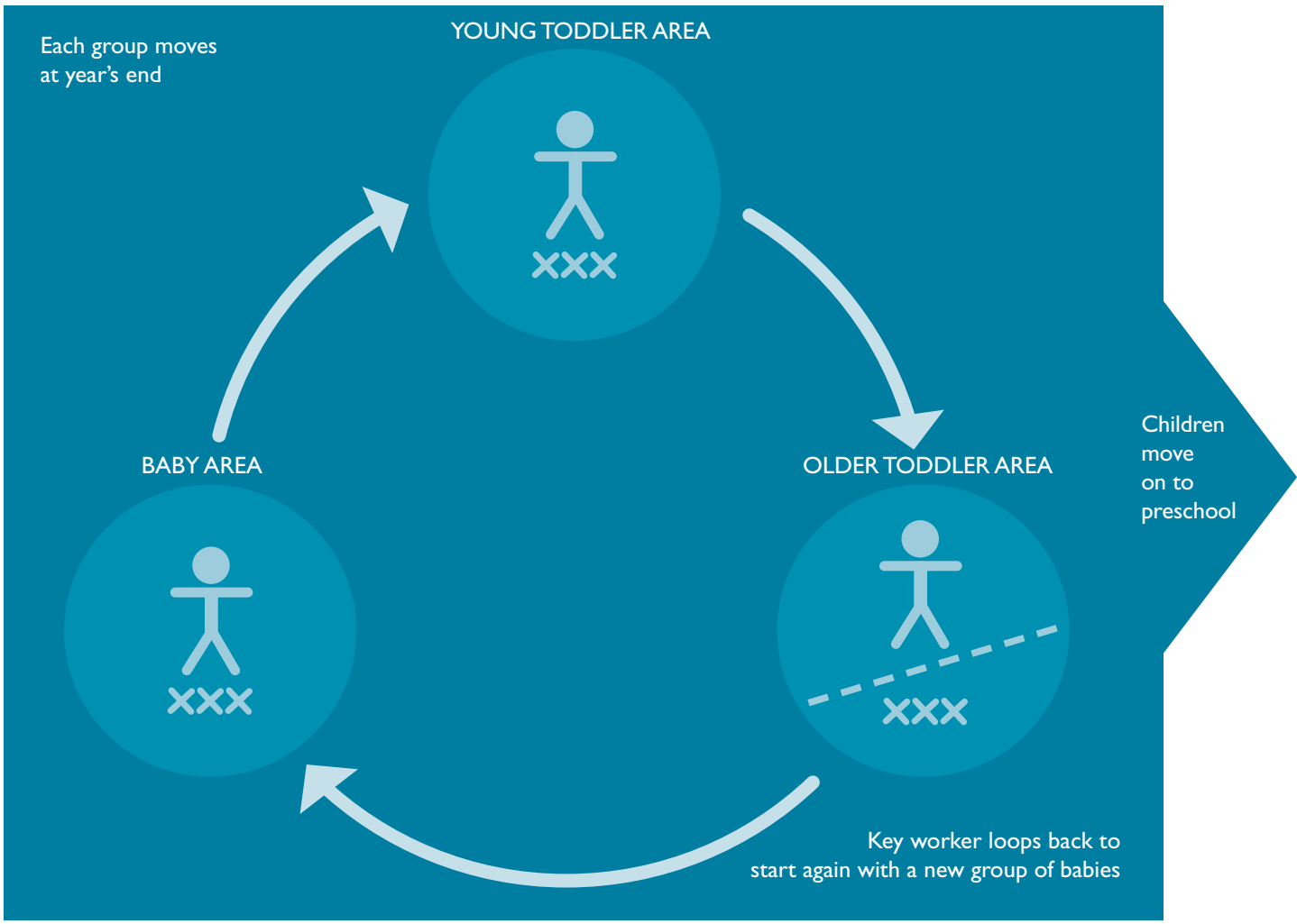


Adapted from Post and Hohmann (2000, p. 298) with permission

This service has, at any given time, three separate rooms—one for babies, one for young toddlers, and one for older toddlers—but the two-person key worker team in each room stays in place with their six (possibly up to eight children) from year to year. Thus, as their children grow from babies to young toddlers and then to older toddlers, the key workers arrange and adapt their room to support children's develop-ing abilities, and the room changes in designation from one year to the next: It is the service's "baby room" one year, its "young toddler room" the next, and its "older toddler room" the next. Again, this method ensures that the practitioner is fully in tune with the babies developmental needs and can respond appropriately. The fact that the baby moves to the young toddler room does not mean that s/he is forced to do activities way beyond their stage of development.

OPTION 3: SHARED, SUBDIVIDED SPACE WITH LOOPING

One 3-person team, shared space with separate areas for 3 different ages, 3-year looping



Adapted from Post and Hohmann (2000, p. 299) with permission

This service has one large space that is subdivided into three areas, each adapted for a different age group. (Additional kitchen and nappy changing/bathroom facilities are available to be shared by all three age groups. Also, the age-adapted play areas are situated so children may see and even at times interact with those in other age-groups.) A team of three key workers rotates in using the three age-adapted areas. One cares for her three babies in the "baby area"; another cares for her three young toddlers in the "young toddler area"; and another cares for her three older toddlers in the "older toddler area." Each key worker moves along to the "next-stage" area with her children as they reach that stage. The key worker whose children move on to pre-school loops back to begin with an incoming group of babies in the area adapted for babies.

APPENDIX 2 Outdoors for babies and toddlers

The following are some ideas for the outdoors for babies and toddlers' play by Greenman (1985) and endorsed by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation (2001c). Ideally, outdoor spaces for babies would have a variety of:

- *Surfaces*: Grass, sand, wood. There should be gentle inclines to roll down and toddle up, grassy hills to feel secluded in and flat surfaces to strut and wobble upon.
- *Textures*: Smooth round boulders, coarse bark and smooth sensual wood, soft and not so soft pine needles, and other vegetation to feel and rub up against.
- *Colour and scent as seasons change*: Trees and shrubs that complement each other and transform themselves as seasons change with falling leaves, cones and blossoms, and peeling bark.
- *Places to be:* A pathway not only structures traffic patterns but in itself can be a central site for learning and exploration. Changing surfaces from sand to cobblestone, wobbly planks, half logs, wood rounds, patterned rock, coloured brick, and so on provides motor challenges and sensory exploration for babies as they crawl, toddle, push, or haul. Varying railings to include poles, chain, rope, and iron again changes the experience. Pathways are exciting because they go somewhere; meandering pathways invite stopping along the way.
- *Barriers:* Barriers, like pathways, direct the traffic flow and enclose activity areas. A creative use of barriers restricting children to developmentally appropriate areas by requiring certain skills to surmount them, allows self-regulation. Tiny retaining walls of rock or wood that babies can lean against, scale, and explore with fingers and tummies and gates that open and close combine learning and crowd control.

Structures would include:

- *Canopies and umbrellas:* Shade is essential; and without trees, canopies, lawn umbrellas, and awnings become prime alternatives.
- *Swings*: Opportunities to move in space, alone or with a trusted adult, are provided by swings with baby seats, swing seats, hammocks, and cradles.
- *Skeletal structures:* Set in the ground ladders, hurdles, and bench-like structures are in themselves motor structures for climbing on, over, under. Skeletons can become even more by adding planks, ladders, fabric, and so on.
- *Decks or platforms:* Wooden flooring outside offers a flat surface that drains easily, providing a good place for water play and outdoor play when the ground is wet. Raised, a platform offers a baby a chance to get high and see the world from a new vantage point.
- *Slides:* A slide inset in a hill eliminates most of the risk and leaves the thrills and spills.
- *Half-buried tyres:* Tyres provide mini-tunnels, places to sit or lean on, and pathway railings. They can be painted to reduce surface heat.
- *Lean-tos, houses:* Anything with a roof is a playhouse.
- *Young baby area:* An enclosed area that encourages reaching, grasping, kicking, and so on as well as a variety of visual, auditory, and other sensory experiences (using fabric, branches, falling water, and so on).
- *Sound structures:* Miniature chimes with materials that react to wind or touch with sound and motion.
- *Elevated waterways:* Wooden, metal, or stone troughs off the ground that provide water in motion.
- *Nappy changing tables:* In warm climates, outdoor nappy changing will maximise outdoor play.
- *Climbers, dead trees*: Anything to pull up on, straddle, climb.
- *Wobbly structures*: Boards on springs or tyres, logs or planks barely off the ground fastened to a frame with chains; anything with a slight wobble.
- *Logs, benches*: Places for practitioners to sit on or up against while observing or nurturing babies.
- *Stored equipment and materials*: Planks, ladders, parachutes and other fabric, wagons, wheel toys, wheelbarrows, pillows, balls, sand/water toys and creative junk.

The success of baby-toddler outdoor time ultimately depends on the practitioners in the setting. Practitioners who recognise and encourage the scientist and explorer in each baby, accept the ups and literal downs that ensue, and at the same time maintain a watchful eye and nurturing presence for long periods of relatively uneventful action. A good playground design can make the outdoor experience a delight for practitioners and babies and toddlers.

APPENDIX 3 Relating child observations to key experiences

OBSERVATIONS	RELATED KEY EXPERIENCES	FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT
10/5 At choice time, Rebecca (baby) cooed while lying in Barbara's arms. When Barbara cooed in response, Rebecca returned the sound again. They both repeated this interaction several times.	Music – exploring and imitating sounds, exploring vocal pitch sounds. Communication and language – participating in communication give and take	• Observe and listen to Rebecca's vocal sounds and facial expressions. • Repeat Rebecca's sounds to her and listen for her responses. • Talk to Rebecca while changing her nappy. Sing 'I see you, you see me.'
13/4 At outside time, Glen (younger toddler) gave Jake a kiss and a hug when Jake hurt himself in the garden.	Social Relations – building relationships with peers, showing empathy toward the feelings and needs of others.	• Take photos of Jake and Glen as they play together and display in house area. • Read Laura's Star by Klaus Baumgart at group time and observe and listen to Glen's responses. • Observe Glen's interactions with peers and support him to spend time with emerging friends.
11/4 At choice time, Melvin (older toddler) filled the cup with rice using a scooper. He emptied the rice into the scooper and then poured it into the cup again.	Exploring objects – exploring objects with the hands, feet, mouth, eyes, ears and nose. Space – filling and emptying.	• Ensure rice and scooper continues to be available. • Play alongside Melvin and observe his actions and listen for comments. • Place a bowl of lentils with a scooper in the sand and water area.

APPENDIX 3 Relating child observations to key experiences

OBSERVATIONS	RELATED KEY EXPERIENCES	FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT
10/6 At bodily care time, Victoria (baby) watched the mobile with ten sheep hanging from it.	Early quantity and number – experiencing more.	• Observe Victoria's gaze as she watches objects and describe what she sees. • Hold Victoria up to see the sheep on the mobile after she is changed. • Support Victoria to touch and hold objects.
4/6 At group time, Travis (younger toddler) jumped off the floor with both feet.	Movement – moving the whole body.	• Join in with Travis and jump with him when he chooses to jump. • Acknowledge and describe his actions 'You jumped Travis. You can jump' • At group time, provide hollow blocks for Travis to walk on or jump from if he chooses.
28/5 At outside time, Glen (older toddler) said 'I did it myself' after he put on the bicycle helmet.	Sense of self- doing things for themselves. Communication and language – communicating verbally.	• Acknowledge and describe Glen's achievements e.g. 'You washed your hands', 'Thank you for putting the blocks away'. • Observe which tasks he chooses to do for himself and support his intention.

APPENDIX 4 Daily planning sheet

Date:

Arrivals

Choice time(s)

Group time (s)

Outside time(s)

Bodily care

Meals

Naps

Departures

To remember

APPENDIX 5 High/Scope pre-school key experiences

Creative Representation

- Recognising objects by sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell
- Imitating actions and sounds
- Relating models, pictures, and photographs to real places and things
- Pretending and role playing
- Making models out of clay, blocks, and other materials
- Drawing and painting

Language and Literacy

- Talking with others about personally meaningful experiences
- Describing objects, events, and relations
- Having fun with language: listening to stories and poems, making up stories and rhymes Writing in various ways: drawing, scribbling, letterlike forms, invented spelling, conventional forms
- Reading in various ways: reading storybooks, signs and symbols, one's own writing
- Dictating stories

Initiative and Social Relations

- Making and expressing choices, plans, and decisions
- Solving problems encountered in play
- Taking care of one's own needs
- Expressing feelings in words
- Participating in group routines
- Being sensitive to the feelings, interests, and needs of others
- Building relationships with children and adults
- Creating and experiencing collaborative play
- Dealing with social conflict

Movement

- Moving in non-locomotor ways (anchored movement: bending, twisting, rocking, swinging one's arms)
- Moving in locomotor ways (non-anchored movement: running, jumping, hopping, skipping, marching, climbing)
- Moving with objects
- Expressing creativity in movement
- Describing movement
- Acting upon movement directions
- Feeling and expressing steady beat
- Moving in sequences to a common beat

Music

- Moving to music
- Exploring and identifying sounds
- Exploring the singing voice
- Developing melody
- Singing songs
- Playing simple musical instruments

Classification

- Exploring and describing similarities, differences, and the attributes of things
- Distinguishing and describing shapes
- Sorting and matching
- Using and describing something in several ways
- Holding more than one attribute in mind at a time
- Distinguishing between "some" and "all"
- Describing characteristics something does not possess or what class it does not belong to

Seriation

- Comparing attributes (longer/shorter, bigger/smaller)
- Arranging several things one after another in a series or pattern and describing the relationships (big/bigger/biggest, red/blue/red/blue)
- Fitting one ordered set of objects to another through trial and error (small cup-small saucer/medium cup-medium saucer/big cup-big saucer)

Number

- Comparing the numbers of things in two sets to determine "more," "fewer," "same number"
- Arranging two sets of objects in one-to-one correspondence
- Counting objects

Space

- Filling and emptying
- Fitting things together and taking them apart
- Changing the shape and arrangement of objects (wrapping, twisting, stretching, stacking, enclosing)
- Observing people, places, and things from different spatial viewpoints
- Experiencing and describing positions directions, and distances in the play space, building, and neighbourhood
- Interpreting spatial relations in drawings pictures, and photographs

Time

- Starting and stopping an action on signal
- Experiencing and describing rates of movement
- Experiencing and comparing time intervals
- Anticipating, remembering and describing sequences of events

(Hohmann and Weikart, 1995)

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Fax: 01 6610411
www.adm.ie

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E info@barnardos.ie
www.barnardos.ie

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E: ncrc@cork.barnardos.ie

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M-TEK Building
Knockaconny
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Katharine Howard Foundation
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E: khf@eircom.net

L'Organisation Mondiale Pour L'Education Préscholaire (OMEP)
c/o Department of Education
University College Cork
Tel: 021 490 2259
E: aridgway@education.ucc.ie

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
PO Box 97156
Washington DC
20090-7156
Tel: 001 202 232 8777
E: naeyc@naeyc.org
www.naeyc.org

National Children's Bureau
8 Wakely Street
London EC1V 7QE
Tel: 00 44 207 843 6000
E: library@ncb.org.uk
www.ncb.org.uk

National Children's Office
First Floor
St. Martin's House
Waterloo Road
Tel: 01 242000
E: nco@health.gov.ie
www.nco.ie

National Children's Nurseries Association (NCNA)
12C Bluebell Business Park
Old Naas Road
Bluebell
Dublin 12
Tel: 01 460 1138
E: info@ncna.net
www.ncna.net

Ombudsman for Children
Millennium House
52-56 Great Strand Street
Dublin 1
Tel: 01 865 6800
E: oco@oco.ie
www.oco.ie

St. Nicholas Montessori Society of Ireland
Ground Floor
29 Patrick Street
Dun Laoghaire
Co. Dublin
Tel: 01 280 6064
E: snmci@snmci.ie
www.snmci.ie

Save the Children
17 Grove Lane
London
SE5 8RD
Tel: 00 44 207 012 6400
E: publications@scfuk.org.uk
www.savethechildren.org.uk

VIDEOS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS

The following videos are available to buy from High/Scope Ireland and to borrow from Barnardos National Children's Resource Centres and are related to High/Scope:

- Setting Up the Learning Environment
- The Daily Routine
- Daily Team Planning
- Counting with Bears
- Plan-do-review
- Working with Staplers
- Representing With Sticks and Balls
- How Adults Support Children at – Work Time
- How Adults Support Children at – Recall Time
- How Adults Support Children at – Planning Time
- Supporting Children in Resolving Conflict
- The High/Scope Approach for Children Under Threes
- Adult-Child Interactions: Forming Partnerships with Children
- High/Scope for Children with Special Needs

Other videos relating to heuristic play available to buy from the National Children's Bureau and to borrow from Barnardos National Children's Resource Centres are:

- Infants at Work: Babies 0-9 months exploring everyday objects
- Heuristic Play with Objects: Children of 12-20 months exploring everyday objects

WEBSITES

Child Development

Sure Start, UK
www.surestart.gov.uk

Zero To Three, USA
www.zerotothree.org

Early Child Development, World Bank
www.worldbank.org

Childcare

Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, Canada
www.ccsc-cssge.ca

National Network for Child Care, USA
www.nncc.org

The Childcare Directory
www.childcare.ie

International Youth and Child Care
www.cyc-net.org

Childcare Organisations International
Barnardo's UK
www.barnardos.org.uk

Bernard Van Leer Foundation
www.bernardvanleer.org

Pre-school Learning Alliance, UK
www.pre-school.org.uk

High/Scope Educational Research Foundation
www.highscope.org

Northern Ireland
NIPPA, the Early Years Organisation
www.nippa.org

Northern Childcare Partnership
www.northernchildcare.com

Playboard, Northern Ireland
www.playboard.org

Children's Rights
Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care, Ireland
www.childrens-charterofrights.com

Children's Rights Alliance
www.childrensrights.ie

Child Rights Information Network
www.crin.org

Ombudsman for Children (Ireland)
www.oco.ie

Children's Welfare documents
Child Protection, Guidelines and Procedures, DES 2001
www.education.ie

Children First
www.doh.ie

Our Duty to Care
www.doh.ie

Diversity
The Steering Group of the National Action Plan Against Racism announces Grant Scheme for Sport, Recreation and the Arts
www.justice.ie

Éist Project
www.paveepoint.ie

Electronic Journals
Education Matters
www.educationmatters.ie

Society for Research in Child Development, Archive of summaries of articles from Child Development
www.srcd.org

Zero To Three
www.zerotothree.org

Electronic Newsletters
4 Nations Child Policy Network
www.childpolicy.org.uk

Activelink: Community Exchange
www.activelink.ie

National Children's Resource Centre
Contact ncrc@barnardos.ie

Irish Childcare Information Network
Contact peadar.cassidy@spd.dcu.ie

Practice Links
Contact Kenneth Burns at K.Burns@ucc.ie

Training
Further Education Training Authority Council
www.fetac.ie

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
www.nqai.ie

Barnardos

EVERY CHILDHOOD LASTS A LIFETIME

National Children's Resource Centres

Athlone
River Court
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Tel: 090 6479584
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E: ncrc@athlone.barnardos.ie

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