



**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

**GUIDE FOR**

**EARLY YEARS**

**PRACTITIONERS**



# CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Healthy Tots.....	6
3. Definitions .....	7
4. Physical Activity Guidelines .....	8
4A. Task: Activity Examples	
5. Sedentary Behaviour .....	12
5A. Task: Reducing Sedentary Time	
6. Benefits of Physical Activity .....	14
7. Physical Development .....	16
8. Developing a Local Physical Activity Policy .....	18
9. Enabling Environments .....	22
9A. Task: Enabling Environments	
10. Parental Engagement .....	26
10A. Task: Parental Engagement	
11. Safe Sessions .....	29



# INTRODUCTION

The first five years of life represent an opportune window to lay the foundations for future good health and wellbeing in adulthood. Physical activity secures health benefits such as a healthy cardiovascular system and bone strength which in turn increases life expectancy. Thus, it is essential physical activity habits are established as early as possible to embed life-long health benefits for children and to provide the 'best start to life'.

It is well documented that higher levels of physical activity in childhood can lead to continued participation in later life. It is important to establish high levels of physical activity as early as possible to encourage children to stay active enough to benefit their health and to support continued interest and participation throughout adult life.

Physical development therefore has a key role within Early Years as a prime area on the Early Years Foundation Stage to enable children to participate in positive and rewarding activities that stimulate them to learn new skills and enjoy being active. Physical development is as important to a child's education and development as numeracy and literacy. Children develop at different rates and it's important to recognise the variety of abilities within any group. Each baby and child will develop at their own rate and will learn physical skills when their body is ready. You only need to raise any concerns with a child's parents if they're unable to do several movement skills much later than most of their peers. Naturally you'll need to discuss your concerns sensitively.



The vast majority of early years children do not meet physical activity guidelines and their sedentary behaviour (e.g. prolonged sitting) is exceedingly high which has only exacerbated with the COVID-19 lockdown. These factors are associated with major risk factors for their health and wellbeing as well as inhibiting brain development according to Harvard University, Centre for the Developing Child, 2015. In addition, evidence suggests that there is very little physical activity in children's play (British Heart Foundation National Centre for Physical Activity and Health, BHFNC). Most of the adult population do not reach physical activity guidelines, thus how will they provide their child/children with more opportunities to participate in physical activity despite the various health benefits?

Early years settings have a crucial role to play in encouraging active lifestyles and providing environments that enable participation in positive and rewarding activities that stimulate children to learn new skills and enjoy being active. Adults are by far the biggest influence on a young child's development, so it is important that adults are encouraging and supportive by providing a range of physical activities in daily life. In addition, this will improve children's wellbeing, benefit their wider development as well as finding a love to be active.



## 2

# HEALTHY TOTS

The Healthy Tots programme provides free support around the health and wellbeing of children and staff within early years settings across Leicestershire. Developed and delivered by the Public Health team at Leicestershire County Council the programme uses a whole setting approach with criteria in line with Ofsted and the early years foundation stage statutory framework.

### Healthy Tots focuses on 4 key areas

- Physical Activity
- Healthy Eating
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing
- Oral Health

Settings work through each key area providing evidence and giving examples of how their setting meets each section. If a setting identifies an area, they would like to strengthen our Healthy Tots team can provide bespoke support guiding settings on how to improve health and wellbeing provision.

Once all of the criteria have been successfully met Healthy Tots status will be awarded and settings will be given licensed use of the Healthy Tots branding for two years, receive an award pack and be featured on the website. Gaining the award demonstrates a settings commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of their children and staff.

The Healthy Tots website has a wealth of resources available for professionals and parents/carers on a range of health areas as well as information on accessing free training for Early Years Professionals to improve their knowledge and skills on creating a healthy environment.

**Please visit our website to register your interest and access the resources/ training [www.leicestershirehealthytots.org.uk](http://www.leicestershirehealthytots.org.uk)**



## 3

# DEFINITIONS

**Physical Activity** - any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure. Physical activity refers to all movement including during leisure time, for transport to get to and from places, or as part of a person's work. Both moderate- and vigorous-intensity physical activity improve health [World Health Organization].

**Purposeful Physical Play** - encouraging children to explore positive and meaningful activities in a variety of enabling environments. Children are given the freedom to choose from a wide range of opportunities that suit all interests and capabilities to stimulate their learning.

### Purposeful Physical Play is purposeful because:

- It is intentional and freely chosen
- There are opportunities for exploration and seeing what they can do
- It stimulates further practice
- It stimulates causal curiosity - it leads to something
- There is a lot to learn and there is depth to be uncovered
- There is a wide choice to suit all interests and capabilities
- It can provide meaningful experiences, challenges, and satisfactions
- There is abundant potential to enrich children's lives, widen their perspectives and enhance their capacities.

Facing challenges will help manage risk, develop resilience and behavioural flexibility, widen their perspectives, and further enrich their lives.

**Physical Literacy** - the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for maintaining purposeful physical pursuits throughout the life-course [Margaret Whitehead, 2013].

**Sedentary Behaviour** - any time spent awake with little or no movement e.g. sitting watching TV or sitting at a table.



# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

The recommended daily physical activity will vary for early years depending on the age and developmental stage of the child. The UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines recommend the following:

## UNDER 1s

- 30 minutes of 'Tummy Time' per day - this could consist of floor-based activities that encourage children to move and perform actions such as rolling
- Once children are more confident with moving, activities such as crawling are encouraged

## 1-4 YEARS

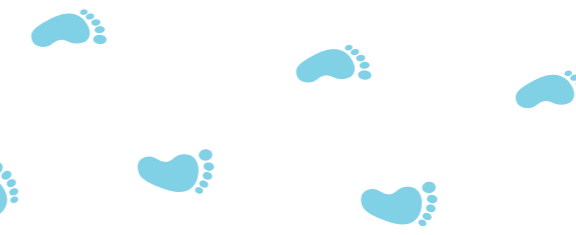
- 180 minutes [3 hours] per day which can include a range of physical activities [e.g. indoor and outdoor play]
- Children aged 3-4 years are recommended to participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate-vigorous physical activity within these 180 minutes

[UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019]

**In promoting physical activity in the early years, settings need to ensure that all children can take part in:**

- Physical activity embedded throughout the day
- Frequent energetic play
- Positive role models modelling high levels of physical activity

By providing more sustained bouts of physically active play together with more energetic activity, settings are making substantial contributions to reducing the obesity problem and helping children build their stamina which is so crucial in their development.



## Examples of how to meet physical activity guidelines

**Physical activity can be:**

- Climbing stairs
- Tidying up
- Walking to the setting
- Crawling, walking, running, jumping, balancing, rolling

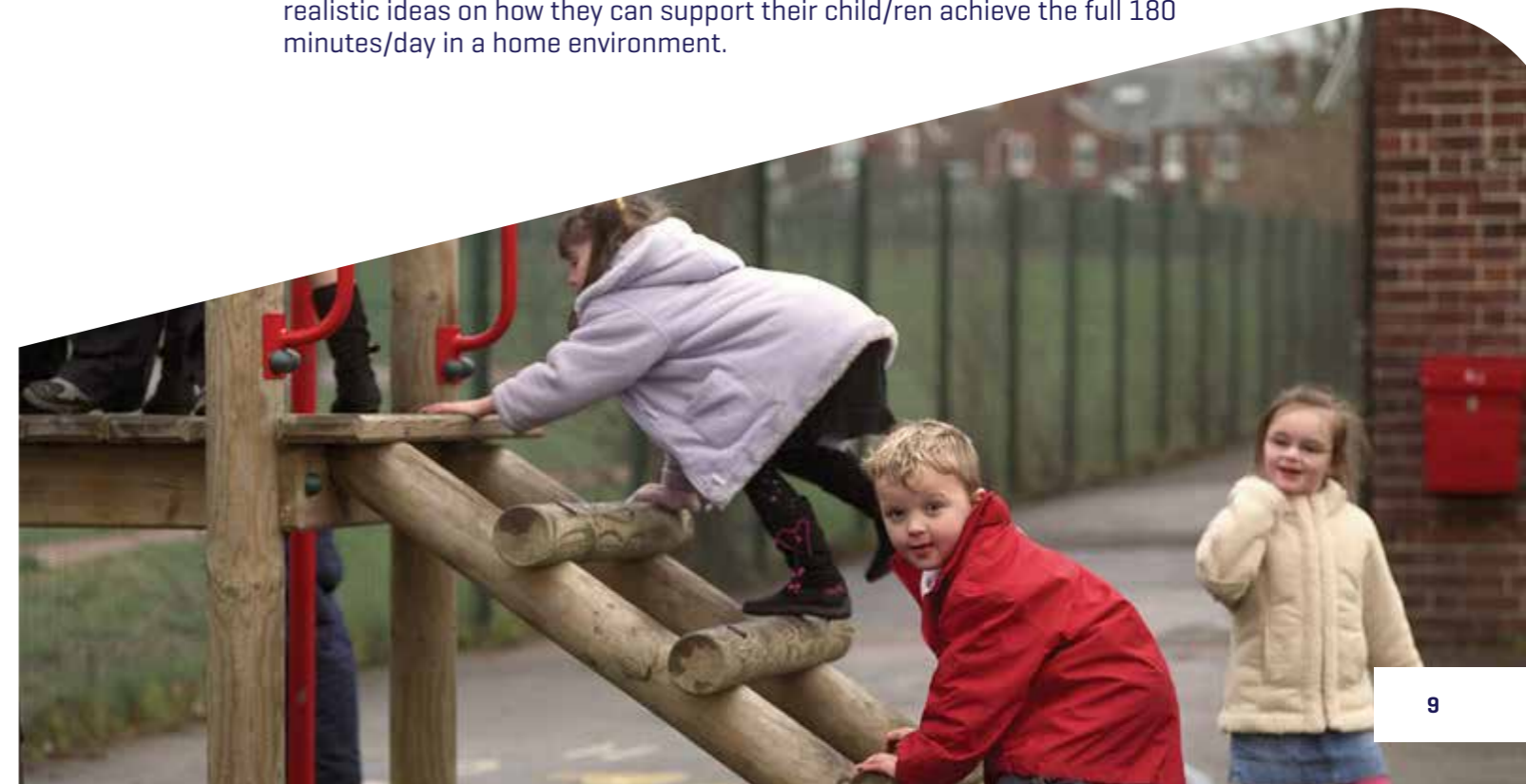
**Physically active play usually uses the whole body and are more energetic activities such as:**

- Running/chasing games climbing
- Lifting boxes and moving them

**Purposeful physical play is intentional, where the child is learning:**

- Hopscotch
- Obstacle course with challenges
- Action rhymes exaggerating whole body movements

An early years practitioner can offer under 5s various opportunities to be active every day and to help each child meet the physical activity guidelines. It is crucial that you build up a close relationship with parents to inform them of what their child has taken part in at the setting and provide them with advice and practical/realistic ideas on how they can support their child/ren achieve the full 180 minutes/day in a home environment.





## 4A. TASK – ACTIVITY EXAMPLES:

### Action Rhymes

Think of 3 Action Rhymes and think of all the movements involved. Take Row Row your Boat – this is often done in circle time and there is a tendency for children just to move their arms forward a little and pull back so there is only a small amount of physical activity.

Now try to exaggerate all the movements and use the whole body so the child is really extending themselves forwards and backwards. Do this slowly first and then speed up the movement. The children are engaged in energetic physical play.

For each of your chosen action rhymes, [1] exaggerate the movements, [2] use the whole body and [3] where possible move around the room. These are the three principles for making Purposeful Physical Play more energetic. Children will enjoy the movements much more.

In the same way, you can use these principles for action stories. Don't be afraid to use your own ideas for movements in the story, you can create a wide range of possibilities.

#### Create a list of Action Rhymes & Stories you could utilise

### Making Wands

For this task, you will need a number of magazines or newspapers. First, remove the two staples in the centre of the magazine and divide the sheets into two.

Fold the first set of pages into half and press them down to make it easier to roll the paper into a long stick. Once it is tight, wind sellotape round and round to cover the whole wand. You will find it very strong. Repeat with the other paper. You have two wands now but what can you do with them?

First, think about all the different opportunities they can provide for purposeful physical play – balancing, striking, running over, picking up and passing to another child, jumping, throwing, mark making and so on.

#### What other resources to support Purposeful Physical Play could you make?

### Obstacle Courses

Obstacle courses can provide numerous opportunities for children to be engaged in a wide variety of movements and in sustained activity as they go round and round. Each item provides a challenge and a learning opportunity. When the children can complete a specific item with ease you can increase the challenge to generate an opportunity for learning and building confidence.

**There are so many specific items that can be included in different combinations. For example:**

- Boxes for climbing on and jumping off
- Hoops for jumping in and out or hopping [single hoop or hoops in a row or in a square]
- Plank/beam to walk along
- Tunnels/boxes to crawl through
- Objects for throwing at a target or into a target [a bucket or box]
- Large ball to bounce and catch
- A tyre [or tyres] to climb through or jump on and off
- Mats for crawling or rolling
- A number of markers to run round
- Six canes or wands to hop over run over or jump over [two feet]
- Scarves for hand eye co-ordination

From the above list practitioners can devise a wide range of different obstacle courses that enable children to master a range of skills and engage in a lot of Purposeful Physical Play. The children could also create their own obstacle course and suggest ways of making it difficult. The obstacle course could also be linked to the theme of the week or a particular book the children are focused on.

#### Plan an obstacle course you could deliver in your setting [think about the activities and equipment you would need]

### Play Bags

Practitioners can put together a number of play bags to either use in the setting or for the children to take home and for the parent to use as a prompt to start to get active.

Below is a list of suggestions of equipment for the play bags and its settings could include activity cards to generate ideas for activities [please see additional resource section for links to downloadable card].

- Balls of different sizes
- Wands
- Bean bags
- Lycra
- Sponge balls for indoors
- Chalk for games
- Scarves and ribbon sticks
- Targets
- Hoops
- Cones
- Seeds for gardening at home
- Skipping ropes
- Action rhyme books
- Cardboard boxes/milk crates for construction

In addition, a setting can include in the bag a feedback booklet so that parents can record what they have done with their child.

# 5

## SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR

Sedentary behaviour is any time spent awake with little or no movement e.g. sitting watching TV or sitting at a table. Children in the early years can spend a large amount of their day being sedentary, i.e. when they are sitting waiting for their meals or lining up for the toilet, or participating in table top activities.

### TOP TIP

Unproductive sitting or waiting can be replaced by more positive activities such as action rhymes and action stories which use whole body movements. Other examples could include involving children in tidying up, for example, cleaning up their toys or helping in the garden such as raking leaves, blowing bubbles, playing with balls, collecting objects, or dressing up.

#### Morning:

Walking to a destination  
[e.g. early years setting] **15 minutes**

Morning at a setting doing various  
activities [e.g. running, chasing games,  
locomotive tasks, tidying up] **45 minutes**

Walking home, stopping off to play  
at the park **30 minutes**

#### Afternoon/Evening:

Swimming **30 minutes**

Fun games in the home and garden [e.g.  
hide and seek, gardening, action rhymes,  
riding a bike] **60 minutes**

**Total 180 minutes**

It is so important that we get children more active and reduce sedentary behaviour as obesity rates are on the rise across England with 3 in 10 children [2-15 years] now classified as overweight or obese. If sedentary behaviour persists, the NHS is estimated to spend nearly £10 billion per year on obesity related admissions by 2050 with this figure only increasing in the future [NHS Digital 2021, Public Health England 2017]. Thus, it is just as important to reduce sedentary behaviour as it is to increase physical activity.

**1**



They don't have to do their 180 minutes all in one go! It can be broken down into smaller bouts of activity, building it up throughout the day

**2**



Keep giving lots of praise to boost their confidence and most importantly be active with the children in your care.

## 5A. TASK - REDUCING SEDENTARY TIME

Examine your daily routines to see how many times [and for how long] children are waiting, queuing, sitting for long spells or are simply wandering around aimlessly doing very little.

Sedentary Time Observations

The following suggestions can be used to replace waiting time with productive physical activities. They can also be used as specific bouts of physical activity anytime during the day because children seem to like these types of energetic activity.

- Jumping jacks
- Frog jumps
- Star jumps
- Alternative knee lifts
- Knee to elbow
- Spotty dogs
- Bunny hops
- Jumping high with arms upwards

Practitioners can devise their own simple routines of several movements [you can construct any contribution and any number of movements that you prefer]. Demonstrate each movement to the children so that they can copy each movement and repeat them a few times. When you feel they are ready, do a routine of different movements. Movements can be done to music.

**Can you construct a series of 5-minute routines using the above suggestions or use your own ideas.**

Activity Routine	
Movement 1	
Movement 2	
Movement 3	
Movement 4	
Movement 5	
Movement 6	
Movement 7	
Movement 8	

How else could you break up sedentary time? [e.g. removing chairs in room, play music during tidying up]

# BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity can have a significant impact on children's health, brain development and their social and emotional development. Also, the context of creating enabling environments and adopting an enabling attitude, generates additional benefits for the all-round optimal development of each child. This is especially important in early years as the most critical period for developing sensory-motor skills is from birth to 3 years old.

## Health:

- Develop strong bones, muscles and heart
- Improve respiratory systems to help combat respiratory illness such as colds and flu
- Good motor skills including balance and coordination [protection from injury]
- Enable the body to function well and energise the body
- Maintain a healthy weight enabling good sleep
- Reduces the risk of obesity and/or being overweight
- Promote positive risk management strategies

## Education and Cognitive:

- Develops the structure and functioning of the brain underpinning all aspects of academic learning
- Support communication skills, literacy and numeracy
- Build attention span, concentration and alertness
- Develop problem solving and decision-making skills

## Emotional and Well-being:

- Build self-confidence, self-reliance and self-acceptance
- Positive body awareness
- Self-control
- Good social and emotional skills - how to interact, listen, learning how to take turns and getting on and caring about others
- Problem solving and decision-making skills
- Enable a child to acquire good habits so that they can continue to be active throughout childhood and beyond
- Improve behaviour
- Improve mental health and emotional well-being
- Enables self-directed learning
- Creates independence
- Enables responsibility





# PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT:

## EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

### (EYFS) FRAMEWORK AND OFSTED

Physical development involves children learning basic movement skills from birth and evolving this throughout their first five years. Physical development is concerned with gross motor skills [large muscle movements] and fine motor control [hand-eye coordination of smaller movements]. Early years children will start with learning gross skills such as crawling before moving onto fine motor control. Fine motor control may include activities such as puzzles or painting, and activities can be varied to be indoors and outdoors. Other skills that are learnt through these experiences include agility, stability, spatial awareness, strength, and balance which are all essential in later childhood.

The EYFS recognises that physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. One of the main changes is that there are only two Early Learning goals and these are split into gross and fine motor development to highlight the importance of;

- Sensory explorations
- Child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults
- Opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility
- Healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being.
- Hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy
- Opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools
- Developing proficiency, control and confidence

Physical development will be part of the inspection process so it is important that settings and their practitioners can highlight all their good work and illustrate what can be achieved. It is important that all settings demonstrate what they have done to meet the UK Physical Activity Guidelines: 'What we do to achieve at least 45 minutes of Purposeful Physical Play' [25% rule].

This could be shown through your planning documents ensuring that there is a daily physical activity session with other opportunities to be physically active. For example, a set time for physical activity such as game play or exploring the outdoors and then other opportunities can be ride on toys, bag of equipment for the children to access.

Also, ensure that they have access to your evidence file with photos, sessions plan, evaluations and reflection so that Ofsted can see how you plan the session, deliver it and evaluate what happened to inform the planning for next time. If an activity does not work or it evolves into something else write it down on your plan, Ofsted like to see a working planning document, this can tell an inspector the journey of the child in relation to what their physical activity patterns.

Inspection teams may not have been informed about the UK Physical Activity Guidelines so be prepared to explain what this is to them. Reinforce the point that you are addressing the need for more physical activity because of the current extremely low levels.



# DEVELOPING A LOCAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY

A successful physical activity policy is one that is written in consultation with parents/carers alongside letting the children have a voice in the process. It is often helpful to establish a group to develop the policy. In the group you can invite parents/carers and appropriate members of staff that have an interest in physical activity.

You may have a lot of unwritten rules around physical activity. By formulating them into a policy ensures that everyone is aware of your settings approach to physical activity and will provide information to parents/ carers and staff about this. Everyone will be working towards the same goals. The policy will also need to refer to other relevant policies you have e.g. Health & Safety and will need monitoring and reviewing regularly in line with your other policies.

## An audit will help you to

- Identify what opportunities children have to be active
- Utilise appropriate equipment to promote being physically active
- Identify sedentary periods during the day, which can be reduced to increase physically active opportunities
- Increase the number of bouts of physical activity each day

Try to look at your setting through the eyes of a child. Walk into a space on your knees and see what inspires and encourages movement and what might restrict it. Try to assess what a child is supported to do within a space and what they are not allowed to do. Think of a wide range of movements and what might encourage a child to make those movements.

Also remember that children change and develop all the time. What may inspire movement and give children an element of challenge when they enter a setting or room may be insufficient 3 months later. The physical challenge in an environment needs to scale with the ability of the children as they grow.



## Physical activity checklist

When planning early years physical activity, the checklist below will be a useful starting point.

This checklist is intended to help you to identify where possible changes can be made in your setting. It is not expected that you will be able to tick yes to all the options straight away.

**1. Place:** Is the environment suitable for physical activity and does the setting have suitable equipment?

**2. People:** Is physical activity promoted and encouraged by all staff and are staff confident and capable in delivering activities?

### Checklist for early years settings to promote physical activity:

#### Do you have the following?

- A person (champion) designated to look after physical activity
- A written policy that guides how your setting implements physical activity
- An understanding of the UK Physical Activity Guidelines for early years from the Chief Medical Officer's Report (2019)
- An audit of current provision to:
  - Identify what opportunities children have for physical activity
  - Utilise appropriate equipment for purposeful physical activity
  - Identify sedentary periods during the day which can be reduced to increase physical activity opportunities
  - Increase the number of bouts of physical activity in each day
- A range of positive environments (indoors and outdoors) for free play that  promote physical activity
- A range of positive activities that stimulate more physical activity
- An active travel policy to encourage children and their parents/carers to add more physical activity into their daily lives
- Good communication and engagements with parents to raise awareness of the importance of children being more active each day



# ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

Enabling environments are essential tools for generating a wide range of positive opportunities for physical activity. There are two aspects to an enabling environment: the physical environment [chairs, tables and resources] and the human environment [adults]. The physical qualities of the room itself, the role models displayed by the carers and the opportunities for developing skills and learning can all offer a wealth of positive experiences to young children. When there are restrictions to the physical environment this can be overcome by a positive human environment with enthusiastic, imaginative early years staff creating innovative opportunities for physical activity.

**Practitioners have a key role to play in generating these enabling environments and it is important that there is a support structure available to stimulate 'thinking about possibilities'. These enabling environments need to be:**

- Attractive
- Safe
- A focus for children's curiosity
- Engaging: it occupies their interest for some time
- Challenging
- Capable of generating positive activities that will stimulate children
- Adaptable: different use of surfaces, spaces, objects, toys and sounds

## Examples of enabling environments include:

- Natural objects (trees, rocks)
- Specific movement patterns (rolling, balance, running, swimming ect)
- Specific equipment (balls, boxes, lycra, hoops etc)
- Music and sounds
- Zones
  - Playground markings for games, challenges and generating creative ideas
  - Wheeled toys
  - Gardens
  - Wild zones
  - Large movement areas
  - Dance area
  - Construction
  - Building shelters

## These spaces can be indoors or outdoors:

### Indoors

Through careful planning, organising of space and timetabling you can make the most of your indoor space to ensure that children have regular opportunities to be physically active. Have different environments for babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers, i.e. baby rooms to have plenty of stimuli, different lighting, comfortable mats to lie on, space for babies to move around, soft cushions to lie on or crawl over. Where space is limited, we need to be as creative as possible to support movement.

#### Create space in toddler/pre-school rooms by

- Moving tables or encourage activities where children can play under tables by making dens
- Encourage free flow between indoor and outdoors areas by setting up activities that link the two
- Indoor activities could include playing with small equipment, moving to music, action rhymes or rolling around/ soft play



### Outdoors

It is well known that being outdoors is hugely beneficial to the physical health and emotional well-being of children. Being outdoors also creates many more opportunities for movement. Increasing the amount of time children spend outdoors is a really simple way to increase physical activity levels as the outdoor space is intrinsically more conducive to movement. Moderate to vigorous physical activity is much easier to achieve outdoors. It is vital that children do "large" movements with their whole body as the development of gross motor skills helps them to develop fine motor skills.

#### Outdoor play should include:

- Providing different textures and natural resources such as sand, shingle, bark chippings and grass
- Have a sheltered space leading to the outdoor area to allow for play in all weather conditions
- Variety of and easy, safe access to equipment
- Ensure children have the right clothing when outside
- If you are limited on outdoor space, you can visit local parks or nearby open spaces [once you have done a risk assessment]
- Create different zones/ areas to encourage a variety of opportunities for physical activity that can be rotated on a weekly basis to enable all children to have a go e.g.
  - Create areas for chasing games, balls, hoops, skittles
  - Create a wheeled toy area for bikes, trikes etc
  - Use natural features such as mounds to run on
  - Create a gardening zone for planting, digging, watering
  - Jumping on and off/over obstacles
  - Rolling up and down a variety of inclines and surfaces



## Types of Play

When you are planning your activities, it is important that you provide a mixture of opportunities including child initiated learning and adult led activities which will enable children to have the best learning outcomes. As children approach starting primary school, you can shift the balance towards more adult led activities to ensure they become prepared for more formal learning within a school environment.

### Unstructured Play (Free Play):

Free play can be seen as:

- Fun
- Motivating - for its own sake
- Pleasurable and positively valued
- Flexible and adaptive
- Unpredictable, spontaneous, innovative and creative
- Sense of free will and control

Examples may be free play in the playground, movement to music, imaginative play.

### Child Initiated Play:

Led by the child with an adult close by to assist if necessary.

You may need to demonstrate something such as tying a shoelace, or how to do a certain activity such as skipping.

You may also need to intervene and suggest a different way for a child to complete a task.

### Focused Learning:

You start and guide an activity and the children take over. There will be lots of interactions between you and the child to ensure the child continues learning. Demonstrating being a positive role model help children in these activities.

### Highly structured:

Activities that are led by adults, take place at set times, have certain rules and may need special equipment.

### TOP TIP

It's a good idea to avoid creating an environment that is too highly structured that prohibits free expression and self-discovery.



## 9A. TASK - ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

Can you identify in your setting what you can realistically achieve and provide enabling environments that stimulate positive activities?

	What can I do in my setting?
Natural objects (trees, rocks)	
Specific movement patterns (rolling, balance, running, swimming etc)	
Specific equipment (balls, boxes, lycra, hoops etc)	
Music and sounds	
Zones <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playground markings for games, challenges and generating creative ideas.</li> <li>• Wheeled toys</li> <li>• Gardens</li> <li>• Wild zones</li> <li>• Large movement areas</li> <li>• Dance area</li> <li>• Construction</li> <li>• Building shelters</li> </ul>	

As you know these enabling environments need to be:

- Attractive
- A focus on children's curiosity
- Engaging - occupies their time
- Challenging

How could you make these enabling environment and positive activities more inviting?

# 10 PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

One of the best places for young children to start being active is at home. Therefore, supporting parents / carers is crucial to enable young children to make the most of being active all day and every day. Now more than ever we need to be pro-active about engaging parents and seeking ways to extend physical activity not just in our settings but also in a child's home.

Parents are possibly unaware of the significance of children being active and they have little knowledge of the national physical activity guidelines for children in the early years. If settings can achieve 45 minutes of daily physical activity in the setting this means that parents have a responsibility to support the achievement of the **remaining 135 minutes on weekdays and 180 minutes at weekends**. When working with families who are currently doing very little activity the main aim is to get them moving more and slowly build up towards the physical activity guidelines.

Also, some children may have disabilities or Special Educational Needs (SEN) and simple steps can ensure that all children can take part and enjoy physical activity. Regular discussions with parents and carers will help to ensure appropriate inclusive activities can be planned. When setting up activities it's useful to consider the ability of the group and to focus on what they can do rather than what they can't do. Being flexible and adapting activities to meet the needs of all children will help to ensure everyone can be involved. The STEP model [Space, Task, Equipment, People] model can be used to adapt and modify activities based on the ability of each child. An example of adapting an activity could be to use music instead of practitioners verbally instructing the children to perform a physical movement. Music has various sensory benefits and is a brilliant way to communicate with children with SEN.

## Early years settings can play a crucial role educating parents around physical activity and things they can do at home with their child. Settings could:

- Put together a large display board promoting physical activity guidelines, activity ideas and photos of what the children are doing in your setting
- Make use of your website or social media pages, posting ideas for the weekends or activities that have been successful in the setting to try at home
- Encourage active travel [walking, cycling, scooting] to the setting. The setting could support this concept by providing some where safe and secure for the children to store their ride on while they are at the setting
- Invite the parents into the setting for a physical activity session with their child. This would allow the parents to also see how active their child is in the setting, it could also provide ideas and activities for the family to do at home
- Provide information of where families can be active in their local area e.g. parks and play spaces
- Provide ideas of how families can be active together – children are more likely to enjoy being active if they can see their parents having fun while being active
- As a setting you could also put together play bags for the children to take home and for the parent to use as a prompt to start to get active
- Organise a special physical activity event to involve families of your setting.
- Go through trackers and learning journeys with parents/carers
- Invite parents/carers to discuss the development of the early years settings physical activity policy so they have input into the settings development

**Additional support and information can be found on our website.**



## 10A. TASK - PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Early Years settings have a crucial role in raising awareness of the importance of physical activity with parents/carers.

List below some key facts that could be shared with parents/carers and what method this could be done in.

Key Facts	Disseminating Information

In order to support the continuation of physical activity at home, early years settings could provide information on where families could be active in their local community.

Investigate the local family physical activity offer and record your findings below;

Activity	Further details e.g. location, time cost

Finally, remember it is important to feedback to parents/carers what physical activities their children are participating via the children's activity tracker/learning journal.



# 11

## SAFE SESSIONS

When planning physical activity in the early years it's important to consider health and safety in terms of the environment and the type of activity being planned. Assessing the risks in your environment is an important part of this; it involves you identifying potential hazards and considering any actions which may need to be taken to minimise the risk that they pose.

Risks within the early years environment will vary in severity and although we may consider each risk, not all will need to be formally written down. The hazard may be a physical object such as a climbing frame, or an activity such as a treasure hunt. When completing risk assessment as part of whole setting health and safety procedures, early years settings could consider including the assessment of physical activity sessions.

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage states that:

“ Outdoor and indoor spaces, furniture, equipment and toys, must be safe and suitable for their purpose. ”

“ The provider must conduct a risk assessment and review it regularly - at least once a year or more frequently where the need arises. ”





**When planning and delivering an early years physical activity session, considering the questions below may help to ensure everyone enjoys a safe and fun session:**

- 1 What activity is being planned and is it appropriate for the age group?
- 2 Who is the session for and do any of the children have medical conditions or disabilities that need to be taken into consideration?
- 3 Where will the activity take place and is the space suitable/ safe for the activity and if appropriate are the weather conditions suitable?
- 4 What equipment will be used, is it in good working order and is it appropriate for the age group?
- 5 Are children wearing appropriate clothing?
- 6 For specialist activities [e.g. dance or gymnastics] does the person leading the activity hold a relevant qualification and are the recommended ratios of coaches to children followed?

Although, overprotecting children damages their development and prevents them from acquiring effective risk management strategies. Children will need to push the boundaries of their physical ability to develop further so we need to be careful about restricting them too much. The Health and Safety Executive recommends that we balance the risk with developmental benefits to a child. Therefore, when risk assessing activities, we need to consider not just the potential danger but also the benefits to the child. This is called a "Risk Benefit Analysis." If the risks outweigh the benefits, then the activity should be stopped but if the benefits outweigh the risk, then children should be allowed to continue. It is important that settings allow children to explore their own limits and take part in challenging physical activity whilst maintaining their safety.







For more information on Early Years physical activity please go to:  
[www.active-together.org/activetotsprofessional](http://www.active-together.org/activetotsprofessional)

---

For your local Physical Activity team contact please go to:  
[www.active-together.org/yourlocalteam](http://www.active-together.org/yourlocalteam)

