

StarNews

#03 Autumn/Winter 2021

Our doors are open...

There's a feeling out there that we are getting used to living with a Pandemic and we're regaining our confidence to get back out again. The schools are back, the cafes are open and more people are able to mix and see friends and family again. And, we've been able to open our doors in Star again and run groups as well as go out to see some of you in your homes. We've been delighted to be able to see so many parents and children again and so we hope you'll enjoy reading our newsletter as we've got photos inside from some of our recent activities.

As the days get shorter, the weather gets colder and all the autumn colours start to appear on the trees, it's hard to know what this winter will bring. There are lots of news stories of shortages and everyone's utility bills are going up. All of the uncertainty and pressures can be hard to manage while we are still trying to be the best parents we can be. But Star is still open as we were throughout the lockdowns. We're still providing emotional and practical support to families, either through our services or signposting on to the best support for someone's circumstances. So, even in the darkest of days, remember we're here. Pick up the phone or email and we will try to help or put you in contact with someone else who can.

We hope you will find some information of interest in the pages of our Newsletter as we start to move towards winter. We try to provide a mix, but if there is something you would like to see that we haven't included, drop us an email as we're always interested in feedback.



What's inside?

Check out our update on who's part of the team in Star and what's been happening in our Star News Desk. We have a selection of colourful and informative articles with top tips for parents to help with their child's development whether you have a bump, baby, toddler or pre-schooler at home. And of course, there's a bit of Christmassy feel with a few ideas as we move towards the festive season. Enjoy!!



Star News Desk

- ★ We're waving a farewell to Ellie, our Health Visitor – she was only with us a short time, but we became very fond of her. She's moving jobs a bit closer to home, but she knows she'll struggle to find a better place to work or nicer families than Star. Good luck in the new job, Ellie.
- ★ At Baby Café, we're delighted to welcome input from Banbridge Health visiting team. The Banbridge Breast Feeding Support Group facilitated by the local Health Visitors has relocated and integrated into our Baby Café. Our new version of our Baby Café is on Wednesdays at 10am, facilitated by the lovely Wendy and assisted for the time being by the equally lovely Jennifer. From 10am – 11am, it is a very social occasion for mums, dads and babies under 1 year old with lots of floor time and chat about all things baby related. And then, thanks to the great team of staff in the Health Centre, everyone is joined by one of the Health Visitors for the opportunity for some growth monitoring from 11am – 11.30am. Anyone who wishes to stay on for breastfeeding support and advice can then chat with the Star staff or Health Visitor from 11.30am – 12noon. Breastfeeding parents living outside of the Sure Start catchment area are able to come along for the morning. At present, all places are book in only to support us to manage our numbers attending and for contact tracing purposes. So, please spread the word and we'd love to see you there.
- ★ ETI have been learning about the services in Star. The Education and Training Inspectorate are tasked with inspecting schools and as our funding comes from the Department of Education, they have started to inspect Sure Starts over the past few years. All Sure Starts were asked to complete a questionnaire outlining the impact on services from the Pandemic with a follow up phone interview to a selection of projects. Star took part in all parts of the inspection, explaining how we have been adjusting our services throughout

the Pandemic, what have been the good things we have learnt from this and what have been the challenges. The inspectors have been very positive about the work we have been doing here and we're delighted to have had such lovely feedback. A report has been published that gives a composite picture of the inspection across all of the projects and can be found at **Thematic Report on Sure Starts' planning, delivery and monitoring of services to children and families during COVID-19 (etini.gov.uk)**. **Scan the QR code.**



SCAN ME

- ★ It really has been inspection season in Star. Our Developmental Programme for 2-3 Year Olds received its first inspection in May from the Southern Trust Early Years Social Work Service. Inspections of child care services are an important part of reassuring parents that children are being well cared for when they stay somewhere without a parent present and are a legal requirement. Our inspection highlighted the great work done by staff to make sure our policies and paperwork was up to date, as well as the high quality of play opportunities, activities and resources for the children. The inspectors were full of praise for the staff in how well they interacted with the children, providing a caring and learning experience for them. And a big thank you to the parents who provided written feedback to inform the inspection – we really appreciate your support.



Ann is our new Occupational Therapist

Ann is with Star on Mondays and has been sharing her specialist skills and expertise with the staff and families. If you're interested in speaking to her about any concerns about child, please phone the office – she's lovely.



Jennifer is our new Family Support Worker

Jennifer will be working alongside the whole team. She comes with a wealth of experience and has been a great addition to Star, joining the Sure Start family in July. Some of you will have already met her in Playtime on Friday mornings and have heard her infectious laugh – we're delighted to have her in Star.

Everyday Activities to Develop Your Child's Talking

★ There are lots of things you can do on a daily basis to develop your child's speech, language and communication skills from any age. Below I am going to explore with you how you can make everyday activities into language learning opportunities for your little ones.

Your Baby's First Year

You really don't need much to inspire the development of communication skills with a baby under 12 months. They will love it when you:

Spend time face-to-face. Your baby finds faces fascinating; you can pull funny faces, make silly noises or simply just share a smile. Remember for the first two months their vision is blurry, so get up close. You could try this when changing your little ones nappy.

Talk to them about things that capture their attention, for example if there is a particular toy, household object or even a light fixture that they are looking at you could try naming and talking about it. This helps them connect the words you say with the things they see.

Respond to their babble. Babble is a baby's first attempt to say words and the best thing you can do is respond and chat with them. A baby loves the sound of your voice so they love interacting with you no matter what you are saying. You can do this while bathing them or when out for a walk.

Play peekaboo is a great shared interaction that benefits many parts of their development and they are endlessly amused by peekaboo.



Once They Start Talking

When your toddler has started to talk you can incorporate language learning into just about everything you do together. Why not try some of the following:

Having fun at bath time is a great opportunity to let your toddler hear new words, you can talk about parts of the body, add descriptive words like 'splash' and 'drip' so they can link words and their meaning.

Getting your little one dressed is a great chance to build their vocabulary. Naming items of clothing, talking about its colour, where it goes or how it feels will introduce them to lots of new words.

Dinner time, snack time & breakfast times are all excellent daily opportunities to develop your child's language skills. You can try offering children choices which is a great way to let them practice making decisions and say words they already know. At mealtime you can talk about tastes & textures like 'soft', 'crunchy'. You can also talk about how things smell.

As you can see from above talking to your baby or toddler doesn't have to take extra time out of your busy day. You can build it into your everyday routines, like mealtimes, bath time, trips in the car or when out walking.



With Christmas fast approaching our minds turn to presents, there are lots of presents that encourage important skills needed for the development of language skills. Some ideas include:

- Puzzles to build vocabulary and work on turn-taking.
- Books to expand their imaginations and create uninterrupted time together.
- Toys that follow their interest so they are more likely to spend time playing i.e. cars, dolls, light up or musical toys.
- Bubbles they are great for encouraging eye contact, turn-taking, early language skills and they are great fun for everyone.

Playtime

Our Playtime sessions run on a Friday and offers parents/carers the opportunity to spend some quality time with their little ones in a relaxing play environment.



Daniel and his mum enjoy reading a story together in the quiet corner.



Pheobe enjoys exploring the magnetic trains.



Alise and Oliver had great fun with dad in the water tray outside.



Max enjoyed our water play session in the sun.

Positions for Play

★ Play is one of the most important childhood occupations. It is the perfect opportunity to develop social, perceptual and fine motor skills. But did you know that we can also use play to boost sensory feedback and muscle tone? If you find that your child struggles to concentrate or needs to move, try changing up the position they are playing in. By changing the position, it means your child can keep at the on activity for longer, and build on their attention!

Standing Position

- Colouring in
- Painting
- Jigsaws
- Construction toys
- Picture books
- Play Dough
- Threading/pegging



Top Tip: This is a really good position for learning letters and shapes. When working at an easel, or in any upright position, your shoulder is much more involved. Your child will be able to 'feel' the shape better and build on their visual motor skills i.e. when drawing a circle, their whole arm is being used to go up and around. This is also an excellent way to work on pencil grasp. It is very hard to not hold your pencil in a tripod grasp when working upright!

All Fours Position

- Colouring in
- Picture books
- Toy cars
- Pegboard
- Floor Puzzles



Top Tip: This position and the prone position can also help with hand dominance. Place the pencil/crayon in the middle and allow your child to pick it up with their preferred hand. You might notice that they will lean on their non-dominant hand and do with their dominant hand.

Prone Position

- Colouring in
- T.V
- Picture books
- Puzzles



Kneeling

- Easel board/ Chalk board
- Puzzles or drawing at a small table in Kneeling



Sitting at Table

- Colouring in
- Painting
- Jigsaws
- Construction toys
- Picture books
- Play Dough
- Threading/pegging



Top tip: Ensure feet are touching the ground! If you don't have a smaller table and chair, no problem. Just grab a box and place it under your child's feet. This is really important when it comes to drawing and handwriting as a stable base of support (i.e. feet being on the ground) enables postural stability and steady hands!

If there are some positions your child finds uncomfortable or hard to do, leave them out. Have fun!

Hypnobirthing

★ We were delighted to have completed our Hypnobirthing course for our antenatal families on two separate occasions this year.

The original 'Mongan Method' of Hypnobirthing® was delivered over 5 weeks with a mixture of virtual and face to face sessions.

Hypnobirthing® is as much a philosophy as it is training for birth, it combines self-hypnosis with powerful relaxation, breathing, visualisation techniques and physical preparation to help prepare your body's ability to create a calm and natural birth. By replacing thoughts of pain and fear with comfort and joy we can, quite literally, create our own positive birth experience. The Mongan Method explodes the myth of pain as a natural accompaniment to birth, it is the fear of pain, a fear keeps the body tense and closed during birth, which must be released to allow the experience of a gentle birth. Hypnobirthing® helps to shorten birthing and recovery time, allows better (and earlier) bonding with the baby, which means that babies sleep better and feed more easily in their first weeks. All it takes is a willingness to believe in yourselves, a desire to have the birth of your choice and a commitment to practice and prepare. Severe discomfort does not have to be part of your birth

experience. Hypnobirthing® will teach you how to remain in a state of healing rather than a state of emergency. Embracing a natural birth through Hypnobirthing® allows parents to take control of the most important event of their lives and build stronger connection with the baby in the womb as a conscious little person they can interact with before birth.

Feedback from a parent:

“I couldn't recommend Hypnobirthing® enough as this time I was unsure what kind of birth I was facing as we were aware of complications beforehand. I couldn't fault anything about my birth in fact I had an amazing birth. I was able to zone out even when the room got mad; I was so relaxed. I would recommend Hypnobirthing to everyone, as first I thought it wasn't going to be for me but if I was ever to have another baby I will definitely use hypnobirthing again.”



Summer Play Programme

Our Summer Play Programme was a big hit with our families this year. We made the most of the good weather and really enjoyed the outdoor sessions.



Conor loved the splash mat during our water play session.



Susan and her mum had fun washing the babies in the water tray.



Julieann said 'I like that Cody and Kaley are interacting and experiencing new things'.

Top tips to avoid a Christmas debt hangover this New Year...

★ With the Christmas restrictions last year and Covid still looming, lots of us will want to make this Christmas extra special. But after the Christmas fun is over, many of us could be left facing a hefty bill in the New Year. It can be hard to avoid using credit to pay for the festive season but saving in the run up definitely helps soften the blow in January. Here are some top tips to avoid a debt hangover:

★ **1** Make your money go further: Making a budget is the best way to plan how your money is going to be spent and to find out if you're overspending anywhere. There are several free online budget planners such as the Christmas planner on www.moneymattersweb.co.uk/services/Christmas-planner.

★ **2** Pay your everyday bills first such as you rent or mortgage, utility bills, food bills and other existing debts. Not having enough to cover the priorities may result in difficult circumstances for you and your family.

★ **3** Don't bank on an overdraft: With interest rates quiet high, an overdraft isn't always the best option. An unauthorized overdraft will cost you even more, so if you do need more money, don't just run up an overdraft without first talking to your bank.

★ **4** Keeping life simple: If you can afford to pay for items outright by cash or debit card, don't be persuaded to take credit. It may free up a bit of money now but you'll be paying later!

★ **5** Shop around: With the internet at the tips of our fingers, it is so much easier to price around for the items we want. Also be careful of extended warranties, sometimes the cost of repairs could be less than the total cost of the warranty.

★ **6** Be organised: There is so much to remember at Christmas. If you've borrowed money in the run up to Christmas, remember that the payment will be due soon. To stop additional payments, make sure you pay on time, even if it is the minimum payment.

★ **7** Time to Ban unnecessary presents: Martin Lewis from Money Saving Expert posted a 3 min video on Facebook (Sept 2018) on why we should ban unnecessary presents. If you feel this is a step too far, maybe agree to a secret Santa or a £5/10 price cap.

★ **8** Consider starting some new Christmas traditions: There are many low cost, no cost ways to enjoy the festive season such as movie nights, baking Christmas cookies or taking a drive around the neighbourhood to see the Christmas lights. We need to keep in mind that it's the build-up that's the most fun for our children, with experiences that involve spending more time with parents or carers that create the best memories.

★ **9** Don't be afraid to share your worries: One of the effects of the Covid pandemic has been to make it normal to feel sometimes that things are too much. But if you're often feeling low it could be a sign of poor mental health. Feeling down can make it difficult to manage money and worrying about it can make you feel even worse. If you're struggling with money, there are local services such as Community Advice that can help or if you feel you need a listening ear the family support team would be glad to help.

★ **10** There's always next year: Once Christmas is over, it's worth having a think about what you did well and what you didn't. If you have made mistakes this year, learn from them and start to plan how you want to do things differently. Also it might be a good time to start saving for next Christmas. For example, if you can save £10 every week, that means you have almost £500 by the start of December.



Weaning

Weaning your baby from milk to solid foods can seem very daunting! They're still so small and the worry of them choking can be really overwhelming. Hopefully you find this information useful as you prepare to wean your baby.

Who?

The best time to start feeding your baby solid food is from 6 months old. The guidance has changed and you may have heard family members or friends sharing stories of their children being weaned much earlier. Evidence now shows babies' digestive systems and kidneys are still developing. Waiting until 6 months reduces the risk of asthma, eczema, digestive problems, allergies and obesity in your growing child.

What should you offer your baby?

You can offer your baby almost anything pureed or really well mashed from 6 months! The idea is to introduce your baby to a wide range of foods along with their milk until they are 1 year old. So when they turn 1, your baby will be joining in your family meals. Some babies will be a bit fussier with these new tastes and textures. Don't let this put you off—continue to offer the same foods and your baby will familiarise themselves with the food and may be more open to it. Ideal foods to try from 6 months are: soft cooked vegetables e.g. carrot, parsnip, potato, turnip, broccoli, mashed / stewed fruits e.g. banana, avocado, pear, apple, plain / natural yogurt or plain baby rice made with baby's usual milk.



What should you not offer your baby?

- ★ anything that contains salt —do not add salt to anything that you will be feeding your baby and avoid foods that contain a lot of salt already e.g. packet soups, stock cubes, bacon, smoked meats etc.
- ★ anything that contains sugar as this could encourage a sweet tooth and leads to tooth decay
- ★ honey is not suitable until your child is 1 year old
- ★ whole nuts—these are unsuitable until children are approximately 5 years old due to the risk of choking

What do you need?

- ★ A seat that your baby can safely sit upright in e.g. a highchair with a 5 point harness.
- ★ A bowl and spoon and a free flowing sippy cup.
- ★ Bibs.
- ★ Keep distractions to a minimum e.g. TV off.

What should they have to drink?

- ★ Breast / formula milk.
- ★ Tap water in a free flowing sippy cup.

When should you start spoon feeding your baby?

- ★ From your baby is 6 months old.
- ★ At a time that you are not rushing and a time when you feel baby is ready to eat.
- ★ A great indicator that your baby is ready to begin weaning is when they have good head control, able to sit up well either supported or unsupported and taking a keen interest in foods you are eating! Always stay with your baby when they are eating!

When should I start moving on?

The weaning process happens very quickly! After a couple of weeks you can start to introduce foods of a different textures with some small, soft lumps e.g. mashes / minced meat or chicken, boneless fish e.g. cod, mashed lentils, mashed hard-boiled



egg, breakfast cereals e.g. Ready Brek or Weetabix. By around 7 months, you can use a fork to mash foods and your baby will be ready for 3 solid meals a day!

Where should you store prepared pureed foods?

Because babies take such small amounts in the early days, it might be useful for you to pop some of the left overs in the fridge or even in the freezer to use again another day.

- ★ Cool preheated foods as quickly as possible e.g. spread it across a wide, shallow container, place it in an airtight container and place in cold water / hold under cold running water to allow it to cool quicker.
- ★ Food placed in the fridge should be eaten within 2 days
- ★ Frozen food should be thoroughly defrosted before heating—leave it in the fridge overnight if you know you will be using it the next day.
- ★ When reheating food, heat it through until it is piping hot and then allow it to cool to a safe temperature for your baby
- ★ You might find it helpful to buy some small storage containers so you can store or freeze small portions and just use 1 at a time to save on waste.

Now What?

There is so much information about weaning it can all become so confusing. A member of our team would be more than happy to spend some time going through information on weaning in much more detail and help to find some strategies and tips that would work for your family. Just like parenting, how you choose to wean your baby will be individual to you and your baby —there is no size fits all! We can help you figure what that might look like for your family and support you however we can through out.



Make your very own *Christmas Salt Dough Decorations*

Salt dough decorations are the perfect Christmas craft and activity to do with your kids. Make them to give as gifts or simply to hang on your own Christmas tree. Follow this simple recipe below;

Ingredients

- Flour
- Salt
- Water

1 Preheat the oven to its lowest setting.

2 Mix 1 cup of flour and ½ cup of salt together. Add in ¼ cup of water and stir until it comes together into a ball.

3 Transfer the dough to a floured work surface and shape as you choose. You can roll it out and cut out shapes, numbers, letters etc... Biscuit cutters or playdough cutters work well. Don't forget to use a straw to cut a hole at the top. You will need this to thread your ribbon/string at the end for hanging your decoration.



4 Put the finished items onto a baking tray and bake until solid. Be careful to make sure they don't burn.

5 Leave to cool and paint/decorate as desired.

6 Add chosen ribbon or string to your salt dough decoration. Hang on your own tree or give them as a gift to a loved one.



Was your child born between 2nd July 2018 and 1st July 2019?

If so, they are eligible to apply for a funded pre-school education place, starting in September 2022 and the application process will begin very soon.

We expect more information for pre-school admissions in September 2022 to be available on the Education Authority NI website in December 2021. The application process for admissions is online and

will be accessible by following the link below.

www.eani.org.uk

****Parents are reminded to put down as many options as possible as you may not get your 1st or 2nd choice****

Banbridge Pre-School Open Days for September 2022 are expected to be virtual again this year. We recommend that you check out the local pre-school websites/facebook pages as they will post further details on these in December 2021.

See below for a list of our local pre-schools here in Banbridge:

Downshire Nursery School,
Primrose Gardens, Tel: 028 40625195

Banbridge Nursery School,
Lurgan Road, Tel: 028 40623138

Ballydown Nursery School,
Lisnaree Road, Tel: 028 40662738

St Mary's Nursery School,
Reilly Park, Tel: 028 40662572

Little Friends,
Huntly Road, Tel: 028 40623438

Child's Play Parish Centre,
Scarva Road, Tel: 028 40623362

Ladybird Lane,
Castlewellan Road, Tel: 028 40625701

Cooking with Children

Did you know that cooking with young children boosts their healthy development?

Yes, that's right! The kitchen is a perfect place for learning. Cooking with your children improves their overall development and helps them to grow. Children learn by observing, listening and imitating others. They enjoy touching, tasting, feeling and smelling all different kinds of food. When you invite your children to help you in the kitchen, you are giving them lots of opportunities to learn and develop early cooking skills.

6 Benefits of Cooking With Your Children

Improves Language Development

Cooking provides a great opportunity to introduce new vocabulary to your children. They will learn the meaning of a range of words such as measure, whisk, combine, pinch, grams, hot, cold and many others, connected not only to food but also to science and maths. Talk to your children and describe what you are doing. You can also ask them some simple questions about what they can see, smell or feel.

Supports Physical Skills

Rolling the dough, mixing the ingredients and using cookie cutters are a fun way to strengthen children's hand muscles and enhance their hand to eye co-ordination. This supports development with writing, drawing, colouring and cutting skills.

Develops Simple Mathematics Skills

Children will learn counting, number recognition and weighing. They will become familiar with a range of measurements such as cups, millilitres, grams or teaspoons. Cooking also introduces basic knowledge of fractions such as half cup, half litre and many more. You can also help your child to learn and practice different timings e.g. 5 minutes, one hour and so on.

Increases Focus, Attention and Listening Skills

Your children will quickly learn to listen to step by step recipe instructions given by you. This will help your child

to stay focused and allow them to practice following instructions while cooking.

Introduces Children to Scientific Concepts

Children can observe what happens when certain ingredients are whipped, melted or mixed together. They will learn what to do if the dough is too sticky and what happens when the cookies are kept in the oven for too long. Cooking allows your children to explore many fascinating processes in food preparation.

Promotes Healthy Eating

Bringing children into the kitchen to cook allows them to taste new food and learn about healthy options. Many toddlers are more eager to eat a meal if they are involved in the cooking process. Cooking together can be a culinary adventure and lay the foundation for healthy eating habits.



How to start...

Do not plan anything too long or complicated. Around five minutes is long enough for the very first time. You can ask your children what they would like to do. Pizza or cookies are always a good idea for starting off. Let them try the ingredients and make it fun. For safety reasons do not leave your children in the kitchen alone and remember cooking with the little one requires some patience and additional clean up, but this is an important learning process.

So, bring your children into the kitchen and spend some lovely time together.



Dads Saturdays Making Bird Feeders



Noah and his dad get sticky fingers adding bird seed to their peanut butter tubes.



Max and his dad enjoy tasting the Cheerios while adding them to their pipe cleaners.

Crochet Get Together

Star mum's getting hooked on our new Crochet Programme hosted by Fiona Campbell from Flo's Crafty Crochet



Baby Brain Development

★ When a baby is in the womb important brain development is happening. For example, by the 18th week of pregnancy the baby will have developed between one and two billion basic brain cells. Only a small amount of these cells are connected to each other before birth, such as the baby's hearing. This can be seen in a new-born baby when they recognise the mother's voice.

Immediately after birth the baby's eye sight begins to develop very quickly. Babies like to look at faces, usually of their mother, the person who is their main carer or their father when he talks to the baby. Together the development of hearing and sight allows the babies to quickly match the voice and the face of the main person caring for them. These early experiences of communication give the baby an experience of language and allow them to use and understand words in the right way later when they learn to speak.

In the first year of life the baby's brain will be very much affected by the emotional experiences they have with those caring for them. A baby's brain is receiving information all the time, from how they are being cared for and what they hear, see, smell, feel and taste. Inside the brain lots of connections are being made so these messages and learning can be stored for the future. Just like any new learning this can take time.

To make the best connections from the experiences it receives, the baby's brain needs to shut off the stimulation from the outside world so that it can concentrate on this important task. When a baby is doing this they may look as though they are turning away, closing their eyes or even yawning. This is referred to as "look away". Once the baby's brain has made the connections they will once again return to what is happening around them. Baby might be smiling and cooing with the mum or dad and then the baby may turn their head away or close their eyes for a few seconds. Adults often think that the baby is bored with the interaction but if they were to wait for a few seconds they might find that the baby turns back to look again for more.

How you can help your baby's brain development

Parents and people caring for young babies can do lots of things to help a baby's brain grow. Young babies love to communicate and enjoy interacting most through eye contact, smiling, babbling and touching. Adults have an important part to play by watching and responding to the baby's cues and the messages they are giving out. Simple games of smiling and 'chatting' are helping the baby to start to be part of a two way conversation, where they can take turns and learn to watch and wait for the other person to speak. Adults also have a very important role in recognising how vital the 'look away' phase is to a baby's development and respond sensitively to the baby by watching for signs when the baby is ready to re-engage

When you play and spend time with your baby by singing together, reading books or talking about what you're doing and seeing you help you baby's brain to grow.

Instructions on how to build a baby brain....

Give me lots of gentle touches and cuddles, with special times of bare skin to bare skin. When you are feeding me, please hold me in close, whether I am being breastfed or getting formula in a bottle so that I learn to feel calm and safe. Use a tender voice when you are talking to me; hum or sing softly to me as I love to hear your voice and remember hearing it before I was born. If I'm upset, I don't know what to do. I need your patience and help to sooth and comfort me. I love looking into your face and love it when you look into mine – it lets me know that I am seen and understood. I love it when you play with me, saying rhymes and little games involving my body, such as my feet, hands and tummy – this helps me to build a strong and healthy brain.

SCREEN TIME



What do we mean by screen time? Exactly what it says—anything with a screen....Television, Lap Top, Computer gaming consoles, including hand held devices, Tablets/IPads and phones.

★ A balanced use of screen time can offer children key benefits to help them to learn, explore and interact with the world around them. However, too much time spent on devices can have a negative impact on children and their development.

Screen time can have benefits. Its use provides a range of opportunities for creativity and learning. Screens can be a great tool to allow children to maintain relationships with family and friends. They can help ease the burden when looking to entertain children. But there are challenges too.

Young children might stumble across inappropriate content that may have a negative impact. Too much could have a physical effect on their development (i.e. eyes,

brain), sleep cycle and behaviour.

Younger children may not understand the concept of what the internet is and how it works so could find it hard to differentiate between what is real and what is untrue.

Recommended guidelines for screen time

★ For children younger than 18 months, avoid use of screens other than video-chatting. Parents of children 18 to 24 months of age who want to introduce digital media should watch it with their children to help them understand what they're seeing.

★ For children aged 2 to 5 years, screen use should be limited to 1 hour per day of high-quality programmes. Parents should co-view media with

children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.

★ Children aged 6 years and older no more than 2 hours a day, consistent limits should be placed on the time spent using media, and on the types of media, and to make sure media does not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity and other behaviours essential to health.

★ One size does not fit all when it comes to screen time. It's more about getting it right for your family's needs.

5 Top Tips to Help Create a Healthy Balance of Screen Time

Tip .1 Set rules on the use of screens in and out of the home.

Establish rules for the family together on how screens should be used and why. Set rules to meet the needs of each child based on their age and how much too much screen time might affect them. For younger children, it's important to prioritise face-to-face interactions and encourage active play to support their development of language and other skills. Make sure to stick to the rules and model the behaviour you would like them to follow to make it a success. A good idea is to review the rules as children grow and become more active online.

Tip. 2 Make family time and sleep a priority over screens.

Having a device free zone at meal times and setting limits on when screens can be used can improve family interactions and reduce interruptions to children's bedtime routine. Screen time before bed can impact on sleep. Children struggle to wind down due to blue light from the screen. It is recommended switching off screens at least an hour before bedtime to give young children time to wind down.

Tip.4 Take the lead when choosing what to see and do on screens.

Together find age-appropriate apps, websites and games that will give your child a way to explore their passions, enhance their skills while building their confidence in navigating the online world.

Tip.5 Set a good example with your own screen use.

Children will tend to model their behaviour on you, so if they see you taking breaks when on screen to talk or play they will follow your lead.

When is too much, too much!

Often a sign that a child is spending too much time on screens is when they may feel anxiety or stress if they are disconnected or separated from the device. Lack of sleep and exercise and no willingness to visit friends may be a sign they need to take a break from their device.

Tip.3 Play, watch and discover together.

As young children take their first digital footsteps, play, watch and discover together to stay engaged in what they are doing and create spaces to talk about what they enjoy and how to stay safe. This will help them feel more confident in coming to you if they get stuck or see something that makes them feel uncomfortable.



Stay & Play

Our first Stay & Play session of the year took place in September. Parents and children enjoyed getting creative together, as they made their very own 'All About Me' books.



Star's Developmental Programme For 2-3 Years Old

The children in this years' group have been enjoying their settling in journey so far and exploring a range of outdoor play opportunities.



In June the 2020-21 group graduated from the Programme. There were smiles and tears all round as we celebrated the end of a wonderful year in the Programme.



Check Out Our New Website

Find out more about Star Sure Start and what we have to offer.

Now live at:
www.starsurestart.com

