

# StarNews

#04 Spring/Summer 2022

## Summer is Coming!

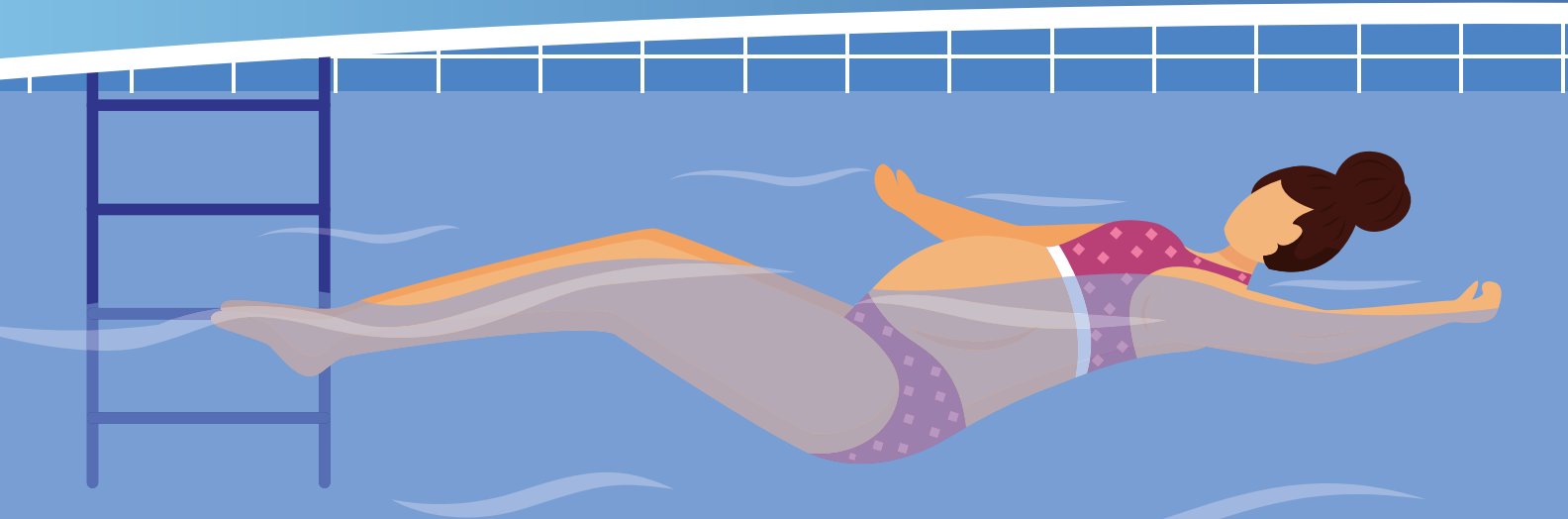
As the days get longer, the weather gets warmer and we start to see the flowers blossom and come to life, it gives us something positive to look towards. Although a lot of changes have occurred over the last few months with huge price hikes in our food, electricity and heating bills, the stress and worry of this on top of trying to be a good enough parent is hard. But Star is here to help, providing emotional and practical support to families, either through our services or signposting onto the best support for someone's circumstances. So, pick up the phone or email the team today for more information.

A big Thank You to all the parents who completed our Parent Survey.

We were delighted with the feedback we received and have taken on board your suggestions and ideas on how we can improve the service. Your opinion really does matter to us and by completing the survey you are playing a huge role in shaping the future of Star. If you didn't get the opportunity to complete the Survey don't worry, there are many ways in which you can still give us some feedback. You can send us an email or phone into the office, our contact details are at the bottom of this page. We also have our Comments and Suggestions box located in the entrance hall of the main building if you would prefer to leave feedback anonymously.

We hope you enjoy reading all the articles in this edition of our Spring/Summer Newsletter. We try to provide a mix of helpful information, but if there is something you would like to see that we haven't included, please let us know. Enjoy!





# AquaNatal Yoga for Mums to Be!

Three members of our team, Jennifer, Leanne and Wendy, completed their Birthlight AquaNatal Yoga training in March of this year and are thoroughly looking forward to offering this to all of our antenatal families.

★ Star Sure Start already offer 'Little Baby Yoga', which is for pre-mobile babies and includes gentle moves for mums as well, to aid postnatal recovery, so we are delighted to be taking this one step backwards and enabling pregnant ladies to enjoy the effects of Yoga in water. All Yoga provides a holistic approach to body, mind and emotions. By practicing Yoga in the swimming pool, AquaNatal Yoga incorporates fitness, breathing & relaxation too! The mind, body and spirit become united through yoga using poses, breathing and relaxation allowing the physical body to feel strengthened whilst being supported within the water. Movements and stretches in the water help to align the body and prepare for the birth of baby. Due to the properties of water, pregnant ladies will experience a feeling of 'weightlessness' which can be extremely relieving, especially when experiencing pain!

There are too many benefits of AquaNatal Yoga to list, just some of them include:

- **The ability to participate in exercise with low impact stress due to the supporting properties of the water**
- **Improved blood flow to the pelvic area**

- **Opportunity to practice breathing techniques useful for birthing**
- **Gaining control of the pelvic floor muscles so helping relax them for birthing**
- **Promoting hormonal balance**
- **Increasing oxygen supply**
- **Strengthening muscles**
- **Helping keep the spine straight and supple**
- **Maintaining flexibility of joints**
- **Helping mums' bond with their baby**
- **Offering a cooling and comforting environment**
- **Releasing tension**
- **Relaxation**
- **Offering a social opportunity with other antenatal mum's.**

Women can enjoy AquaNatal Yoga for the entire duration of pregnancy – right up until the uterine seal dislodges!

AquaNatal Yoga is suitable for all antenatal women with all levels of swimming abilities. Buoyancy aids i.e. 'noodles' or 'woggles', are routinely included in every session, to whatever extent you feel comfortable in providing reassurance, confidence

and stability while in the water. During our AquaNatal Yoga sessions, two trained staff members will be in the pool with you and a lifeguard will also be present.

Every AquaNatal Yoga session will be different but will loosely cover all of the following:

- Warm ups
- Exercises at the wall focusing on opening the chest and hips
- Classic Yoga poses
- Aqua Yoga walks
- Glides
- Breathing exercise
- AquaNatal pelvic floor toning
- Aqua Yoga adapted swim strokes
- Relaxation.

Every session will finish with an opportunity for relaxation and could well be the only time heavily pregnant ladies are able to relax lying on their front! Water is a favourable environment for relaxing in. Not only do we have that buoyancy and weightlessness feeling, but floating in water offers a unique experience of unity, as the baby is suspended in water (amniotic fluid) in the womb, so the mother can

share this experience in water and strengthen that connection with baby. The techniques that we use in AquaNatal Yoga can be used in the birthing pool while in labour therefore, helping you feel prepared and empowered during your birthing journey with strategies that will assist your baby's arrival.

Each person participating in AquaNatal Yoga will be asked to complete a medical form before the sessions begin. This gives you the opportunity to make us aware of any medical conditions, long standing or pregnancy related, so we can factor any considerations into the planning of our sessions. AquaNatal Yoga can help

relieve the symptoms of:

- Lower back pain
- Sciatica
- Pelvic Girdle Pain.

Banbridge Leisure Centre will be the venue for AquaNatal Yoga and dates and times will be listed within the programme listings that will be both emailed to you and sent via post as well. If this is something you are interested in, please keep an eye out on our listings and thereafter express an interest. In the meantime, feel free to make contact with the office where Jennifer, Leanne or Wendy will be happy to tell you a bit more about it!

## Star News Desk

★ Well done to Jennifer Porter our Family Support Worker, who successfully completed her Level 3 Diploma in Health & Social Care Skills in February. The team are constantly engaging in various training courses throughout the year which enhances their skills and knowledge and better equips them to carry out their role.

★ We are delighted for Nicole, our Speech & Language Therapist on the birth of her beautiful baby boy in October last year. Both mummy and baby are keeping well. Nicole will be on Maternity Leave until the summer.

★ We said a sad farewell to Shirley, our Project Manager who left Star in January to take up a new post leading the Training Unit within the Southern Trust Social Work Team. We wish her all the best in

her new role. We also said goodbye to Dorota, the Early Years Deputy Leader. We wish her well in her future employment.

★ In January we welcomed Star's new Health Visitor Caroline, who has been settling into her new role in the Project and has already visited some of our Star families. Caroline is the lead staff member for Star Babies and Baby Café and is very knowledgeable on all things connected to children's health and development.



**Caroline**  
Health Visitor

## Little Baby Yoga

These little ones, along with their mum's, enjoyed Little Baby Yoga. We practiced lots of gentle movements and stretches, ideal for mums post-natal recovery. Gentle stretches and holds with baby are accompanied with songs and rhymes for an interactive experience with mum.



## Incredible Babies

We had six babies along with their mums and one with their nanny, participate in our first ever Incredible Babies programme in Star Sure Start. During the nine weeks we shared lots of knowledge, relating to babies development right up until one year old and lots of laughs too!





## Stars Christmas Journey

Our Christmas Event was very popular again this year with 33 families in total attending throughout the day. Our families enjoyed getting into the festive spirit and making the most of a range of photo opportunities on the day.



# Creating a Good Sleep Routine

★ As a parent, most of us know the nightly challenge to get our little ones to go to bed and stay there. It's definitely not easy, but a good night's sleep is one of the best things we can do for them. Creating a good sleep routine can help our children get a good night's sleep and function at their best. The problem with routines are that they take commitment and consistency so when thinking about a bed time routine, do what works for your family and keep it simple. Things to consider are the following:



### Timing is everything

It is important that your child has the same bed time each night and has the same wake up time each morning. Children up to four years old need an average of 10-13 hours' sleep at night so when thinking about timing take into account the amount of sleep needed.

### Wind-down Time

Help your child to quieten their busy brain an hour before bed by encouraging your child to do calming, quiet activities such as a jigsaw or an art activity.

### Exercise

Children may struggle to sleep if they haven't been active during the day. Make opportunities for your little one to exercise each day for at least 30 minutes. This can be playing in the garden, taking a trip to the park or going for a walk. But it takes a good 2 hours for muscles to cool down so not too close to bedtime.

### Screen Time

Turn off screens at least an hour before bed. Studies have found that the blue/green light emitted by phone, tablet or TV screens prevents the production of the sleep hormone melatonin.

## Food and Drink

To avoid indigestion and early morning soiled nappies, give your child their last meal 2 hours before bedtime. If milk is part of your child's bedtime routine, try offering this in their wind down time with a cuddle before you start your bedtime routine. If your child needs a snack, avoid sugary foods or anything with caffeine.



## Darkness

Before the bath or dressing for bed, pre-dim the bedroom light, so that your child returns to a darkened room. If they need a night light, use one with warm orange or red tones so that it won't interfere with their sleep.

## Straight to Bed

Keep the bed time routine between the bathroom and bedroom. Avoid going back to your kitchen or living room so you don't interrupt that calming and settling down for bed phase.



## Bath-time

If a bath is part of your bedtime routine, only bathe your child for 5 minutes in a warm bath and go straight from there to their dimly lit bedroom. Not only does this keep bath-time calmer, but the drop in body temperature and the darkened room will send messages to their brain that it is time for sleep, triggering the production of melatonin.

## Massage, Story, Cuddles, and Goodnight

Massages, cuddles, stories, and songs are all good and enjoyable cues to calm your child and help them recognise sleep is coming. Follow with a cuddle and a kiss goodnight.

## Creative Kids

During this Creative Kids programme we had a range of sensory experiences on offer for the children and their parents to explore. We had some lovely feedback from our parents and when asked to sum up the programme in one word, collectively they said it was; 'fun fantastic and interactive'.



# Getting Ready for Your Baby's Arrival

★ **At Star we are delighted to offer one to one sessions with our antenatal families to help you prepare for the arrival of your baby.**

Pregnancy can be an exciting time but, it can be an anxious time too! Every pregnancy is different and we are all so individual with unique concerns, medical conditions and questions. During pregnancy, we hear lots of stories of different experiences from well-meaning others around us. Very often, we use these experiences that we hear to imagine what our own experience might look like – this might not always lead to the most positive outlook! The antenatal information that we share is all evidenced based and delivered by our midwife, Maria. Maria can share knowledge on all things pregnancy, birth and support for the early postnatal days. Each one to one session will be customised and personalised to your individual family. It can be in your home, here in Star or even while enjoying a walk around the park!

We offer two antenatal programmes to our families in Star Sure Start: The Marie Mongan Method of HypnoBirthing and The Real Birth

Company's 'Getting Ready for Baby'. These are offered in a group setting with other families (which you will see advertised in our programme listings), as well as a one-to-one basis also. Both of these programmes aim to give confidence to families by sharing knowledge with you to help you feel informed about your pregnancy, bond with your baby in the womb and feel more at ease with birth. The use of visuals, videos, relaxation and breathing techniques can help to prepare the mind and body for a positive birthing experience.

## **An example of some of the topics that are covered include:**

- ★ Helping you through your birthing experience
- ★ Stages of labour
- ★ Positive attitudes in pregnancy
- ★ The role of the birth companion
- ★ Hormones during pregnancy and birth
- ★ Positions for birthing
- ★ Water in labour
- ★ Massage for birth
- ★ Understanding your pelvis
- ★ Skin to skin with your baby

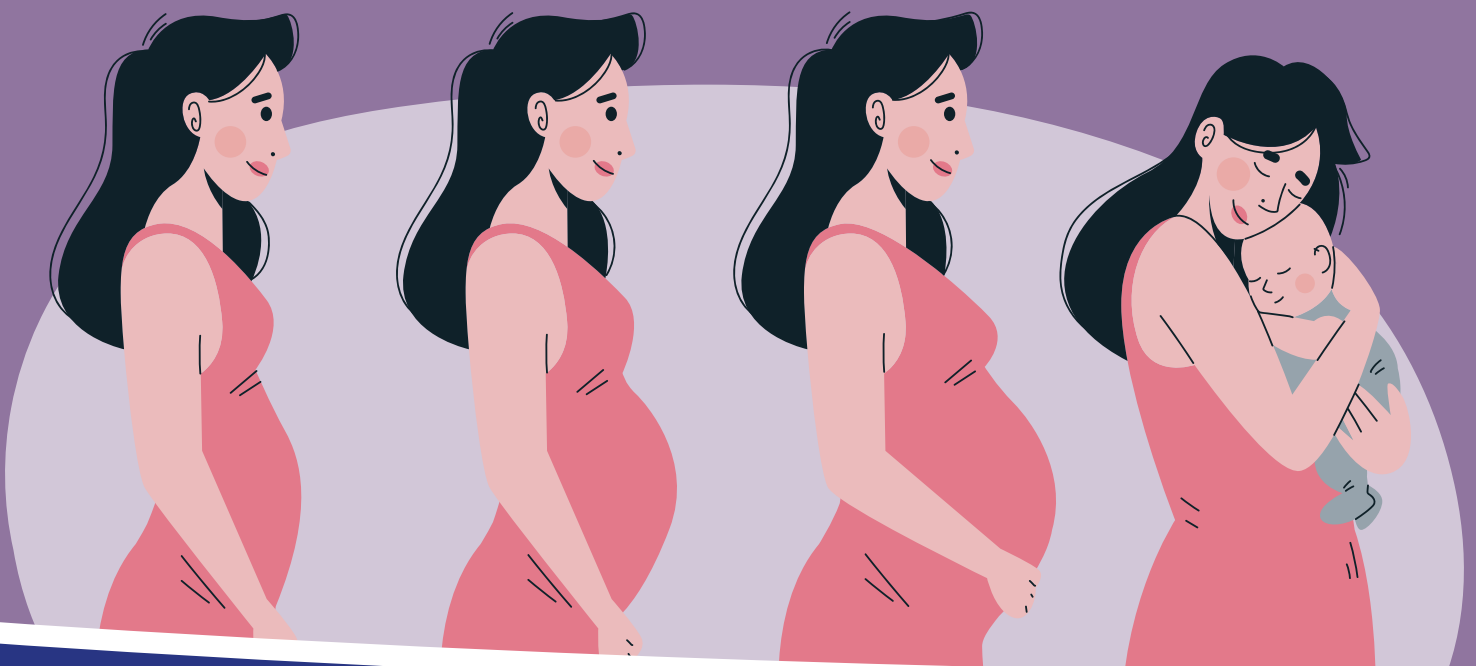
- ★ Reducing stress
- ★ Baby's adjustment to the new world in the early postnatal period
- ★ Information around feeding and caring for your baby.

**If you would like any more information on how Star can support you to prepare for the arrival of your baby, feel free to contact the office via phone or email.**

**Knowledge – Confidence – Empower**

## **Feedback from Parent**

"I completed my Hypnobirthing online course a few weeks before my little baby was born. I found it great and loved the positive outlook on giving birth. The best part for me was the one to one session with Maria. She explained everything in such detail that it all just clicked and I truly had the most beautiful experience when I gave birth. I stayed in my zone and done my breath work throughout. I highly recommend the course and the one to one session just before you are due. Thanks to Wendy and Maria."





# Keeping Active

★ Keeping active is so important for us all, both for our bodies and our minds. Active children are happy, healthy, school ready and sleep better. For our very small ones getting active is great for helping along all of their development. As adults we all know how important being physically active is for our bodies – but did you know that it can improve your mental wellbeing too? Being active has been shown to raise self-esteem and release feel good hormones in the brain that can help positively change your mood.

By encouraging and giving your children the chance to be active, not only are you helping their physical development and fitness now, but you are also starting good habits that will help them grow into healthy adults. Young children love to be active and are often playing at the same time as they are running about, so they are learning and having fun too. All the activity that your children do throughout the day counts towards their total activity time, so without having to think too much about it there's already plenty of activity built into your family's daily routine.

## For Pre-walkers

For our babies any movement they have is physical activity for them and there are many ways for them to do it. Letting them lie down on the floor and kick their legs while pulling, pushing and grasping during play means they are practising lots of different movements and building their strength.

Tummy time is especially important for babies as it builds the upper body muscles they need to go on to learn to sit, crawl and stand. With a new-born, start by lying them on your chest while you are both awake. As babies get bigger, build up to tummy time on the floor. If they don't seem to like it try singing and interacting with them, putting some toys in easy



reach, or propping them up a bit with a rolled blanket or towel under their arms. Doing tummy time for short periods, but often throughout the day is a good way to help them get used to it.

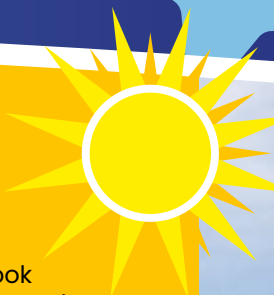
## For Walkers

Toddlers and Pre-schoolers should be active for 180 minutes a day, but remember, all the activity they do during their day counts towards this.

If you are at home then have a game of hide and seek, or hide a teddy and go on a bear hunt. Dancing is a great way to get moving, whether its disco tunes or you twirl around to some classical music. Kick a ball around the garden, throw and catch, scooters, bikes and trikes, swings and slides, hopscotch, skipping – there are plenty of ways to keep little ones on their feet.

Going out for a walk or getting to the park are great ways for adults and children to be active together. If you have the time then letting children walk instead of always using the buggy is a great way to increase activity time and using reins can be a reassuring safety net. Playgrounds are just fantastic for keeping children entertained and active in so many different ways. Swimming is another great family activity that everyone can enjoy together. Babies can be taken swimming whenever you are ready, you don't have to wait until they have been immunised. And don't forget we have great programmes here in Star for you to enjoy some active time with your little ones.

# Sun Safety



As we enjoy the longer days and look forward to summer and hopefully some sunshine it's a good time to remember our sun safety. Sunshine not only makes us feel good but it is a source of Vitamin D, which is important for healthy bones teeth and muscles. However, children can burn easily and too much sun can increase their risk of cancer in later life.

**The tips below will help you let your children enjoy the sun as safely as we can.**

- ★ Babies under six months should be kept out of direct sunlight.
- ★ Keep children out of the sun between 11am and 3pm when the sun is at its highest.
- ★ Encourage children to play in the shade.
- ★ Cover exposed skin with Sunscreen of at least factor (SPF) 15 or above with UVA and UVB protection. Use sunscreen even on cloudy days and reapply often.
- ★ When swimming use waterproof sunscreen (SPF 15 at least) and reapply after towelling. Don't let children run around in swimwear all day or without clothes.
- ★ Encourage your children to play in the shade.
- ★ Don't let children get sunburnt and be especially careful with their shoulders and back of the neck as these areas are the most common to get sunburnt.
- ★ Sunglasses can be used to protect little ones eyes.
- ★ Cover up with loose fitting cotton clothes and a floppy hat that can also cover their neck.

# Big Steps For Little Feet Transitioning Into PreSchool

★ Starting school is an exciting time for young children and their parents. Although, it can be a daunting time too. But with a little preparation and encouragement, most children will settle in easily at school.

Your child doesn't need to be able to read, write or do sums before they start school. Children start school with a wide range of abilities and their teacher will be skilled at helping children progress at their own level. What's most important is that you and your child have fun together in those preschool months and years – sharing stories, singing songs, playing games and talking about anything and everything.

## ★ Some Things to Try

Look at the school's brochure, prospectus or website together and talk about the pictures.

Find photos of you and other family members at school and chat about happy memories from your own school days.

If possible, visit the school with your child before they start.

Read books together about starting school.

Chat with your child about starting school. What do they think it will be like? What are they most looking forward to? Is there anything they're unsure or worried about?

Practise the school run so that you are both prepared for the school morning journey.

Practise the school morning routine, including getting dressed and eating breakfast in time to leave.

If your child has a particular worry – perhaps about wetting themselves, not liking the food, or feeling ill – talk about these concerns with your child and with the class teacher. Provide reassurance by discussing what to do and who to tell in these situations.

If your child seems anxious about school, try focusing on the things they'll like best – maybe the sandpit, playhouse or new friends. Perhaps they have some friends from other early years' settings who will be starting Pre-school at the same time.

If you have arranged childcare before or after school, talk this through with your child. If the childcare arrangement is new, try a settling-in period for this before the school term starts.

Try putting together a picture chart of the week to help your child know what to expect.

If your child has a favourite security toy or blanket, try to get them used to being without it during the day. Talk to the class teacher to find out if your child is allowed to bring their toy or blanket and leave it in a tray or on their peg.

## ★ Some Things to Try and Avoid

It's natural to feel nervous about your child starting school, but remember that your child can easily pick up on your emotions. Try to be relaxed and positive, rather than showing your own nerves.

Try not to make comments such as 'I hated school' or 'I was rubbish at school', which might give your child a negative attitude.

Try not to bombard your child with endless talk about school – treating it in a matter-of-fact way rather than focusing on the 'big step ahead' will help soothe an anxious child.

Don't over-hype school, as your little one may feel let down or mistrustful if it doesn't live up to their expectations!

## ★ Your Feelings Count Too

Starting school is a big step for a child, but sometimes it can also be more emotional for parents.

Parents want their children to be independent, but that doesn't mean you will not feel saddened by the fact that they seem to need you less.

Parenting is a constant 'letting go', and this starts from when your son or daughter is just a baby.

Remember that you will not be the only parent feeling anxious.

Your emotions are perfectly justifiable.

Keep busy while your child is at school.

Chat with your child's teacher for reassurance.





# 10 WAYS TO ADD LANGUAGE



There are lots of fun and easy ways to encourage language in young children using a variety of simple techniques when talking with them.

With Summer approaching there are lots of activities we can do to encourage language:

Trip to the beach. "Let's get our bucket and spade" or "splash the water".

Bicycle ride. "We are riding our bike" or "we are going fast..."

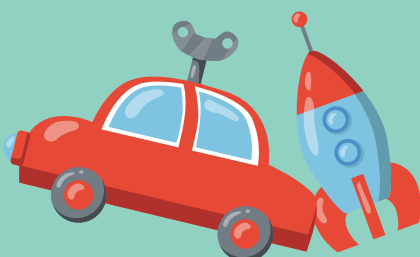
Flying our kite. "The kite is flying high", "it's going higher and higher" or "it's up high in the sky".

You can do this by being:

Face to face! Remember the eye-contact! Get physically and emotionally close to your child!

Follow your child's lead! You will get more language when your child is interested in what they are doing!

Interpreting and commenting! "you are digging sand".



1. Name it! "A car"

2. Imitate or add a word or action. "Big car!" "Fast car!"

3. Support with gesture and imitation.

4. Add a new idea. "The car is broken".

5. Emphasise the important words. "The car has wheels"

6. Describe what is happening. "Oh no...crash!", "fall down", "The car fell".

7. Talk about feelings. "You love playing with cars".

8. Explain what is happening. "It's broken. The wheel is broken".

9. Pretend. "Let's pretend we are taking the car to the garage".

10. Talk about the future. "Tomorrow we will go in the car to grannies".

## Playtime

Our Friday Playtime sessions continue to be very popular with all of our families. These relaxing and friendly sessions are a great opportunity for parents to get to know each other while enjoying some quality play opportunities with their little ones.'



## Dads Saturdays

Our Dads Saturdays run once a month here in Star. It is a great opportunity for dads to come along and enjoy some fun play opportunities with their little ones in a relaxed environment.



Noah makes his dad some yummy breakfast in the kitchen.



Daniel and Sarah are taking great pride in showing mum and dad what they made with the play dough.



Avery and his dad are having lots of fun playing with the zoo animals.



## Playdough Recipe

Playdough is a simple product which can be easily made at home with a few small basic ingredients. Playdough can be any colour, size, shape, texture and smell. Adding simple household items like buttons, pasta, candles and baking cutters can further extend play for your child.

Benefits of Playdough:

### Physical Development

Investigation and exploration of playdough builds up strength in your child's tiny hand muscles, making them ready for pencil and scissor control later on.

### Emotional Development

Children find playing with playdough a great way to express their emotions. Little children can struggle to express their emotions and using dough while talking and singing can really help the process. It can also be calming for them to squeeze, roll and pull the dough.

### Imagination and Creativity

**Development** - Playdough is an open ended play item. This simply means that the dough can be anything your child wants it to be.

### Exploring and Thinking

**Development** - Early science, literacy and numeracy development can be supported

through playdough. This can be through introducing colour, thickness and different lengths of dough.

How to Make Playdough:

### Ingredients

- One cup of flour
- Half a cup of salt
- Half a cup of warm water
- One teaspoon of oil
- One teaspoon of food colouring (to add colour)

### Method

- 1 Add the oil and warm water together, mixing well. Then add food colouring to the oil/water mixture.
- 2 In a separate bowl, mix in the flour and salt.
- 3 Add the water/oil mixture in gradually to the dry ingredients, mixing until dough starts to form.
- 4 Knead the dough well with your hands, adding additional flour/oil as needed to get the right texture.

\*Keep the dough in an airtight container/bag when it is not being used, as this will help it last longer\*



# Being 'just right'

During the day we all try to remain alert and respond appropriately to the various situations that we experience. We do this in many different ways, sometimes so automatically that we are not even aware that we are doing it.

## For example;

- If we have to listen to a boring speaker, we may shuffle around in our seat or chew on our pen.
- When driving, we may keep the window open to help stay alert.

- If we are upset, a hug may calm us down.

Children can find it difficult to maintain a calm and alert state and they may require some strategies to help them stay in a calm and alert state.

Many of the strategies that we as adults use to calm ourselves down or waken ourselves up can be adapted for children.

Now the weather is on the turn, get outdoors and give some of these a go!

## To Calm

## To Alert



### Vision

Try using sunglasses if it is a really bright day, or a hat with a peak.

Pick up some leaves and hold them up to the light to see through them. Try make hand puppets by placing your hand close to a light or the sun. Make some sensory bottles; Pinterest have loads of ideas!



### Sound

Listen to the birds singing. Get out to the beach and listen to the waves. Rivers and streams are great too! Play soft or chilled music on your phone.

Play music with a varied pitch or fast beat; dance your socks off! Go on a rock hunt and bang some together or off other objects.



### Touch

Pat or stroke rhythmically on child's back. Increase tog of duvet or add blankets on bed.

Get outside and don't be afraid to get messy! Fill up buckets or tubs with soil and tip them out. Plant some seeds and watch them grow. Make mud pies! Have a muddy treasure hunt; hide small toys (but big enough to avoid choking) in the soil and have your child pick them out.



### Oral Motor

Use a straw to blow balloons, leaves, tissue paper etc. Bubbles are great too; see how far they can fly away! Suck mild flavours through a straw.

Allow breaks to get a drink of water. Pack a picnic with some crunchy, strong flavoured foods



### Movement

Movement breaks can be calming or alerting. Allow frequent movement breaks throughout the day e.g. time outside in the garden, park or walking the dog.





## Stay & Play

During our February Stay & Play we went to Banbridge Riverwalk for a Nature Trail followed by some fun in the play park.



## Developmental Programme For 2-3 Years Old

The boys and girls in this years' group have been enjoying a range of activities both indoors and outdoors.

Inside we enjoyed using water and brushes to make some great pictures with water colour paints, we enjoyed playing inside cardboard boxes and we had great fun exploring shredded paper with our whole bodies.



Outside we have been developing our balance and coordination on the balance bikes, exploring large loose parts and what we can do with them and making pictures using felt tip pens on cardboard.'



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

[www.starsurestart.com](http://www.starsurestart.com)

