

## Children's Occupational Therapy Service

# Early Years Pathway



Early Years Children's occupational therapists and physiotherapists work with children who are having difficulties with participation in everyday activities, as a result of disability or delays in their development. This includes their gross and fine motor skills, visual perception and functional daily living skills.

### Developmental Stages

Gross motor skills develop through using the large muscles of the body in a controlled and coordinated way. They are important to enable children to perform every day functions such as walking, running and sitting. Gross motor control needs to be well developed in order for a child to perform effective fine motor skills. This refers to a child's ability to use their hands to grasp, release and manipulate objects in order to complete activities such as fastening buttons, drawing and using cutlery.

Babies require opportunities to play in a variety of positions, including floor play and tummy time, to help them develop their muscles and learn to move on their own. They need toys and activities which are age appropriate and motivating to encourage them to move around and explore their environment.

Young children also require opportunities to develop their motor skills through activity and play. Activities such as soft play, playgrounds, outdoor activities and swimming help children to develop their balance, core stability and upper limb strength. These help build the essential foundations required for children to develop the fine motor skills needed for activities such as handwriting.

Children benefit from opportunities to practice activities such as feeding and dressing from an early age. This can be incorporated into play activities and daily routines to increase their understanding and maximise their development. Though this may seem timely or messy at first this is how children learn the skills necessary to participate in daily activities, ready for them to start school.

Activities work best when the child is motivated, enjoys taking part and has fun!

If you are worried about your child's development or feel they are not meeting their gross or fine motor milestones please liaise with your health visitor or GP. They can provide advice regarding their development and complete a referral to OT or physiotherapy if required.

Please refer to Move and play, and Let me try leaflets on our website.