

## IMAGINATIVE PLAY

Imaginative play is the most important type of play in encouraging children's language development. Children can be creative, develop new skills and practice old ones. It is important in developing verbal comprehension and provides an opportunity to try out other roles, which leads to a greater understanding of others.

### **Activities to encourage early pretend play**

- Imaginative play begins through imitation. Your child will need to observe lots of modelled play before he is able to copy it. Using everyday objects, demonstrate make-believe play e.g. pretend to feed yourself during a pretend tea party.
- Give your child some everyday objects e.g. a brush, cup. If your child does not do anything with them apart from banging them or putting them in his mouth, model what you want them to do e.g. comb his hair. Give the object to your child again and repeat the model if you need to. If your child carries out the action, reward him with lots of praise.

### **Activities to encourage large doll play**

- Using a large doll, carry out different actions such as brushing hair, feeding and cuddling. Give the doll to your child, encouraging him to carry out the actions. If he uses the objects on himself, encourage him to feed himself/yourself and then the doll, saying "now it's dolly's turn". Give him lots of praise when he does.
- Give your child toys that will allow him to copy everyday activities in the home e.g. when mum baths the baby; your child can bath their doll.

### **How to encourage early make-believe play**

- Let your child act out some of his recent experiences using dolls (e.g. trip to the hairdresser)
- Use puppets to play games such as peek-a-boo and hide and seek.
- Use toy telephones and toy cars. Pretend to drive the car learning when to stop and go.
- Pretend to be a giant or a mouse. Use appropriate poses and make appropriate noises.

### **Activities for imaginative play**

- Use old or unused items within home (e.g. cotton reels, toilet rolls) to make animals or objects. Use this in make believe play.
- Use miniature toys/playmobile (e.g. dolls houses, farms) and show your child how to act out different stories.

- Large cardboard pieces can be laid on the floor to represent various backgrounds (e.g. a park view, the seaside). Use miniatures to represent make-believe scenarios.

### **How to encourage role-play**

- Dressing up games – gather some old clothes and accessories. Encourage your child to be mummy, a nurse, a cowboy etc
- Set up a home corner. This can be a place in your home where dressing up clothes, toy kitchen materials etc. are kept for your child to play with.
- Play a shopping game. Take some real or pretend food. Use any other objects you may have such as a toy till and pretend money. Play games at being a shopkeeper and customer.
- Use puppets to act out stories. These are particularly useful if your child is shy or has any verbal difficulties.
- Action stories. Encourage your child to act out what is described in a story or nursery rhyme, mimicking poses etc.