

## A guide for Parents and Carers

### Messy Play



For further information about this service contact:

#### Paediatric Occupational Therapy Service

Redgrave Children & Young People's  
Centre  
Redgrave Gardens  
Luton  
LU3 3QN  
Telephone: 01582 708141

#### Paediatric Occupational Therapy Service

Child Development Centre  
Hill Rise  
Kempston  
Bedford  
MK42 7EB  
Telephone: 01234 310278

#### Parking

Disabled parking spaces are available  
near the entrance at both venues and  
there is ample other free parking.

#### Useful Websites:

<https://yourkidstable.com/ultimate-list-of-sensory-bin-ideas/>

<https://littlebinsforlittlehands.com/all-about-sensory-bins-5-things-need-know/>

<http://loveplayandlearn.com/sensory-bin-101/>

If you require this information in a different format such as in large print or on audio  
tape, or in a different language please contact the service on the details above.

If you have any compliments about this service or suggestions for improvements,  
contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 0300 131 1000 (charges may  
apply depending on your network) or email: [ccs-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ccs-tr.pals@nhs.net).

For free, confidential health advice and information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year  
please contact NHS 111.



## Importance of Sensory Play

Sensory play contributes enormously to the development of a child's cognitive and creative abilities.

Toddlers and children process information through their senses and learn through exploring with these.



Sensory play allows the child to explore with their 5 senses, but the sense of touch is often the most frequent.

Sensory play is unstructured, open-ended and not product-oriented; it is the purest sense of exploratory learning allowing children to explore all sorts of possibilities.

Self-esteem: sensory play offers children the opportunity for self-expression because there is no right answer and children feel safe to change or experiment with what they are doing.

Language development- experimenting with language and descriptive words. It is a sociable activity, it allows children to share discoveries in different ways through use of objects and gestures.

Develop social skills: practising negotiation skills, turn taking and sharing. Provides opportunities for working out problems and experimenting with solutions.

Encourages Imagination and creative play. It provides opportunity to try new things and experiment.

Sensory play encourages children to manipulate and mould materials, building up their fine motor skills and coordination.



## Examples of Sensory Bins

- **Dry foods:** rice, beans, lentils, cereals (e.g. cheerio's, shreddies, porridge, cornflakes,) popcorn kernels, dried pasta, seeds, nuts, coffee beans, flour, jelly beans, dried chickpeas,
- **Wet Foods:** custard, yogurts, jelly, ice cubes, sweetcorn, bake beans, spaghetti hoops or letters, whipped cream, cooked rice, pasta, porridge, chick peas, beans, cornflour and water,
- **Coloured rice:** (place dried rice into different bags add food colouring shake until well mix place into containers to let the rice dry)
- **Play materials:** marbles, buttons, feathers, pom poms, cotton wool, beads, duplo, sand, water, shaving foam, mud, compost,
- **Seasonal Sensory Bins:** Autumn (fir cones, pumpkins, leaves, acorns,) Summer (shells, water, sand, seaweed, pebbles) winter (homemade snow made of 1 cup of baking soda and adding shaving foam, tinsel, Christmas ball balls, candy canes, craft snowflakes) Spring (grass, flowers: dried or fresh, easter eggs, bunnies)
- **Themed bins:** forest animals (green lentils, blue coloured stones for water, filled with animals and trees) Farm yard (using hay, straw, sawdust, popcorn kernels and farm animals)

## Sensory Bins

Filling trays / boxes with different textures (wet/dry/smells/colours), incorporating different objects, interests and themes to encourage motivation and exploration. It further encourages imaginative play and tactile stimulation.

Ways to play:

- let the child explore the bin initially without any input from you, allow them to explore and creativity to develop
- Have cups, scoops, bowls, shovels, spoons, bottles, tongs, children's tweezers, for them to use when playing
- Draw or write letters with fingers in the different textures by making a smooth surface on the bottom, this will help reinforce shapes and letter formation within the brain.
- Play hide and seek with various toys, place letters into the bin and have the child find them to spell their name or spelling different words, or pieces of puzzle for them to collect and then build
- Search for toys with their eyes closed
- Encourage them to stand in the bins and bury their feet too.





## Sensory Play at home

- **Arts and Crafts:** handprints, footprints, finger painting (encouraging the child to use their finger to make a picture rather than using the paintbrush), sticking different textures of paper (corrugated cardboard, tissue paper, foil, bubble wrap) different coloured paint in bags getting the child to squish them together to see what colours they make.
- **Playdough:** using playdough, plasticine, - using a rolling pin, cutters, sticking straws or buttons into the play dough to make objects, building objects,
- **Fabric box:** fill the box with different textures of fabric for the child to wrap themselves in or to use within pretend play e.g. blanket for doll (scarves, fleece blankets, velvet, sparkly fabric, faux fur,)
- **Material box:** using an old tissue box or baby wipe packet, place squares of different fabrics for the child to pull out one at a time,
- **Sensory Floor:** using foam mats or old sheets, stick different materials onto the fabric for the child to explore.
- **Sensory Treasure box:** filled with different objects for the child to explore. (textured balls, vibrating toys, musical toys, rollers,)



- **Den Building:** Building dens for children to hide under using different fabric and materials, (blankets, pillows, tunnels, music, lights, making houses out of cardboard boxes)
- **Bath Time:** bubbles, different textures of cloths / sponges / brushes, plastic bottles, cups, spoons, deep cuddles, towel rubs when out of the bath
- **Mealtimes:** exploring different food textures, baking and food preparation, rolling and cutting e.g. making cookies
- **Outside Play:** make piles of leaves in the autumn, mud pies with water and soil, water play, sand pits, make potions with plastic bottles and water - use coloured water with food dye. Playing outside bare foot walking on different textures e.g. grass, paving, woodchip, drawing on walls or pavements with chalk e.g. rainbow, bubbles,
- **Adventure Play:** trampoline, climbing frames, slides, monkey bars, roller skates, running and jumping games, hopscotch, throwing and catching with different textured balls, size and weight.
- **Sand and Water Play:** water exploration, pouring, scooping, building with sand.