

Aistear

Creatchuraclam na Luath-Óige
The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework



**Learning experiences
for childminding settings**

Learning experience 1: Jack's New Zealand roots**Theme: *Exploring and Thinking*, Aim 1 and Learning goal 5****Age group: Babies and young children****Setting: Home and childminding**

Every evening Luke reads a bedtime story to his son Jack (5½ years) and his baby daughter Kate (16 months). As they snuggle up to their Daddy, Kate helps to turn the pages and points to her favourite characters. She loves 'lift the flap' books and Luke told Kate's childminder, Mags, about this when she was starting with Mags a few months ago. Mags has a number of these books and Kate loves to sit on her knee on the garden seat looking at them.

Luke also told Mags about Jack's interest in books, especially books about sport. Luke is originally from New Zealand and he and Jack love to read about rugby. Jack has taught the other children at Mags' to play rugby, and a few weeks ago Luke arranged for Mags and the four children she minds to go to a local school rugby match. She also purchased two books about New Zealand as Jack and his family are planning a trip there during the summer to visit his grandparents. The children and Mags are learning a lot about New Zealand. They are finding out about the weather, the sports people play, the food they eat, and the types of farms they have. They are also comparing these with the village in Co. Tipperary where they live. The children are really excited about Jack and his family flying on a huge aeroplane. They are even building one just like it in Mags' playroom. It's massive!



Reflection: How can I build on children's interests to enhance their learning and development, and to strengthen their sense of identity?

Learning experience 7: Showing empathy**Theme: Identity and Belonging, Aim 4 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Young children****Setting: Home, childminding and infant class (primary school)**

Mike, a widower visits his daughter Saoirse's school today to hear how she is getting on in senior infants. The school has a policy of giving parents a written mid-year report in February at the parent/teacher meetings and again towards the end of June. This is Mike's first face-to-face meeting with Saoirse's teacher. His wife Mary used to look after all contacts with the school. Saoirse's childminder, Niamh, drops and collects Saoirse from school every day while Mike is at work and she fills Mike in about how things are going at school. She knows Saoirse's teacher well and has an informal chat with her regularly, especially since Mike asked her to do this for him. The school has been very good about supporting Saoirse since her Mammy died five months ago. Miss Buckley, Saoirse's teacher, has been in regular phone contact with Mike since then. However, Mike is still a bit nervous about the meeting.

Miss Buckley immediately puts Mike at ease and reassures him that Saoirse is doing very well. She goes through the report card in detail with him and regularly asks him if he has any questions. She also shows him samples of Saoirse's work on display on the walls, in her books, and in her portfolio. She shares some photographs with him. Two of these show Saoirse minding two babies while playing with a friend. The caption beside the photographs reads, *Don't worry Lucy. I'll look after you.* Miss Buckley explains that Saoirse and her friend were pretending that Lucy's mammy was sick and died. She asks Mike how Saoirse is getting on at home and he tells her about the things she enjoys and the things that she finds hard, now that her Mammy is gone. Miss Buckley gives Mike the report card to take home and tells him to call or to send in a note if he wants to talk to her about Saoirse. She reassures him that she will continue to keep a close eye on Saoirse and that she will give him a call in a few weeks to give him an update. She re-emphasises that Saoirse is doing well in her learning and is coping well at school after losing her Mammy.



Reflection: Do I give enough thought to the events and circumstances in families' lives which can impact on children's learning and development?

Learning experience 8: Dan the music man**Theme: *Communicating, Aim 4 and Learning goal 3*****Age group: Babies, toddlers and young children****Setting: Home and childminding**

Dan is a musician. His own children love music, and he has sung with them at home since they were babies. Now he comes to their childminding setting once a fortnight on one of his days off work to play his guitar and sing songs with the children. They are fascinated by his guitar. They want to know how heavy it is, what it is made from, and how strings make music. Dan shows them how it works. One day he brings along his drums and introduces them to drumming. He uses spoken rhythms to help them tap out the beat: *An-nie Lou-ber* (names with the younger children) and *Do you want a cup of tea?* (sentences with the older children). The children look forward to his visits. They practise almost every day so they can show Dan how good their clapping is when he returns. Before his next visit Noeleen the minder and the children make guitars and drums from junk materials. They can't wait to show Dan their band!



Reflection: What special talents do the parents have that I could tap into and share with the children I mind?

Learning experience 12: A big move**Theme: *Well-being*, Aim 1 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Babies****Setting: Home and childminding**

John has been a stay at home Dad for the past six months. He and his partner Bernice are now looking for a setting to look after their baby, Eimear (1 year) three days per week, as John is returning to work part-time. They would like to find a childminder as they are keen for Eimear to experience a setting similar to her own home. John and Bernice contact the local Health Service Executive for a list of notified childminders in their area. They have short-listed three and have made arrangements to visit them. They prepare a number of questions they want to ask. Each childminder describes her training and qualifications. All three have first-aid training. Through the childminding grant from the local County Childcare Committee all three have bought a range of toys and safety equipment. Each childminder has access to an outdoor area.

When they get home John and Bernice go through their notes and they agree that Liz's home would suit Eimear the best. It is a bungalow with easy access to a garden with lots of grass and a plant area. Liz minds two other pre-school aged children which John and Bernice think is important for helping Eimear to learn to interact with other children. Liz interacted very well with Eimear, and Eimear seemed to like being with her. Liz made John and Bernice feel welcome and at ease. She gave them a booklet with information about her childminding service, including the types of activities she organises and the routines she follows with the children. She also explained to them that she uses a little notebook each day to record basic care provision and the child's activities, expressions and achievements. She takes regular photographs and gives these to the parents. John and Bernice appreciate these as a way of sharing information. They ask Liz for references from other parents. After checking these out they contact Liz. Together they fill out an application form and discuss Eimear's preferences, medical conditions, allergies, vaccinations, comfort items, games she likes to play, routines, and general contact information. Eimear spends a short time each day with Liz over the coming two weeks. Liz uses the information from John and Bernice to help Eimear settle in and feel happy and content in her new setting.



Reflection: What information should I gather from parents to help children settle in my setting?

Learning experience 18: Apple, jam and mud tarts**Theme: *Exploring and Thinking*, Aim 3 and Learning goal 4****Age group: Toddlers and young children****Setting: Childminding**

Margaret looks after two children in her own home while their parents are at work. Today she and the children are baking. They start by washing their hands and putting on aprons. John (2 years and 2 months), Orla (5 years) and Margaret are making apple tarts. Orla helps slice up some apples and John sprinkles on the sugar. When the apple tarts are in the oven John and Orla use leftover pastry to make jam tarts. They have great fun rolling out the pastry just as Margaret did, and put jam in the middle before brushing on milk to seal the edges. John has great fun sprinkling on the flour so the pastry doesn't stick to the table. When they are finished they help Margaret to tidy up. Orla sweeps the floor while John uses the dustpan and brush.

Later Orla and John go outside to play. Outside they make mud tarts and Orla gives John a stone and instructs him, *Roll out the pastry John 'cos we need a tart for dinner. A yummy tart. Here you can do this bit. Good job, that's great baking John.* She asks John to help her to tidy up when they are finished just as Margaret did. He readily agrees. When the mud tart is baked the children share it with teddy and Orla's baby doll, Babs, just as they did earlier in the day with Margaret.



Reflection: What are the children learning through watching and copying my actions?

Learning experience 35: A mat with a difference**Theme: *Communicating*, Aim 1 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Toddlers****Setting: Childminding**

Zoe (20 months) can't do her zip so Emma, her childminder, asks Conor (nearly 3 years) to help her to do it. She observes from nearby to make sure that Conor is able to do up the zip and thanks him for his help. She asks Zoe and Conor if they would like to hold hands on the way out to the garden and supports them in playing together outside with the clothes pegs, which they give her as she hangs the clothes on the washing-line. Spotting the doormat at the entrance to the utility room, Conor begins to attach the pegs making a decorative edge for the mat. Intrigued by what he is doing, Zoe joins him and together they empty Emma's clothes peg basket. Though Zoe has few words, her big smile and her body language show she is clearly delighted to be playing with Conor.



Reflection: Do children have lots of opportunities to spend and enjoy time with each other?

Learning experience 36: A problem solved**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 3 and Learning goal 6****Age group: Toddlers****Setting: Childminding**

Jean, a childminder, works four days a week looking after four children, two of school going age and two pre-school age. She is playing in the garden with two sisters, Aoife (2 years and 9 months) and Siobhán (nearly 4 years). Jean steps in to help the sisters sort out their problem about sharing the dolls' clothes, as Aoife is becoming very frustrated. She asks the girls what the problem is and then asks for suggestions on how to deal with it. After some discussion the girls agree to divide the clothes between them. Jean stays with the girls and talks to them about what they are doing. She encourages them to help each other and she asks Siobhán to help Aoife to put the socks on her baby doll. Jean suggests that they might pack the clothes and take the dolls on a holiday in the lovely sunny weather. Jean brings out the baby bath and the girls pretend it's a swimming pool for the dolls in sunny Spain. She encourages and acknowledges their efforts at playing together and they have great fun, ending up having a water fight between themselves and Jean!



Reflection: How can I help children to work together in solving problems and resolving conflicts?



Learning experience 41: Playful routines

Theme: *Well-being*, Aim 1 and Learning goal 1

Age group: Babies

Setting: Home and childminding

Charlie (10 months) has a special relationship with his daddy, Luca. During care routines Daddy interacts and plays with him. Charlie loves it when Daddy says and plays *This little piggy* with his toes when he is changing his nappy. He also loves to play *peek-a-boo* with him when Daddy hides behind the door and pops his head in and out, much to Charlie's delight. Charlie also likes it when Daddy pretends his spoon is an aeroplane when he is feeding him. Charlie especially loves when Daddy flies him up into the air pretending he is the aeroplane. His childminder Linda also interacts with Charlie in a playful way. Luca has told Linda about the games he plays at home with Charlie. Linda plays these games with him too, making the transitions between his home and her home a happy experience for Charlie. Linda gradually introduces new games and other playful routines to Charlie and she in turn shares these with Luca when he collects Charlie in the evenings.



Reflection: Do I know what playful routines children enjoy at home, and how can I use these to make their transitions between settings easier?

Learning experience 45: Not quite yet please!**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 1 and Learning goal 6****Age group: Babies****Setting: Childminding**

Tess (14 months) is a shy little girl who is very sensitive to noise. She becomes upset easily and doesn't like to play with toys that pop up or that make music. She is also very apprehensive about being around other children. Her childminder, Anna, is aware of this and has made a cosy corner for Tess that is away from noise and bustle where she can play happily with books, blocks and soft toys. Gradually Anna introduces Tess to new, more interactive toys. If this upsets Tess Anna puts them away and reassures her. She also supports her in interacting with the other baby she looks after, 15-month old Amy. Sometimes Anna sits with Tess and Amy in the cosy corner. Anna introduces a teapot and cups to the girls and they pretend to have a tea party together. The girls pretend to drink from the cups and Anna gives Teddy some tea too. Tess imitates her and then offers her cup to Amy. Anna pours some more tea for the girls and she talks softly about what is happening. Sometimes Tess shows her enjoyment by smiling and displaying positive body language; at other times she begins to cry and indicates that she wants to play on her own.



Reflection: How can I help children who are shy or quiet to engage and play with others?

Learning experience 60: Number chats**Theme: Exploring and Thinking, Aim 3 and Learning goal 2****Age group: Babies, toddlers and young children****Setting: Childminding**

Bernie, a childminder, looks after Jack (16 months), Sorcha (3 years) and Rhiannon (5 years) in her home. Bernie plans lots of activities for the week to build on some of what Sorcha has been doing in playgroup, and Rhiannon in school.

On Monday they all go for a walk to the shops. On the way they count the red cars parked along the street; Rhiannon and Sorcha look for 1, 2 and 3 on car number plates (Rhiannon does this for 4, 5 and 6 too). Rhiannon spots numbers on houses and shop doors. They identify these and Bernie explains their purpose. They reach the post box. Sorcha and Rhiannon each take a letter for posting and Rhiannon notices a 5 on the stamp. They ask Bernie what the number is and she explains about the cost of the stamp. Bernie makes sure Jack is included by drawing his attention to things. From time to time she kneels beside Jack in his pushchair and points to and describes things around him.

On Wednesday Bernie bakes with the children. Jack sits at the table in his highchair and the girls sit on chairs in their aprons. They are making top hats. Bernie gives Jack a dish of softened fruit and a spoon for him to mix and eat while she and the girls count out bun cases, making sure there is one for each person and their mam, dad and siblings. *How do we make these buns, Bernie?*, enquires Rhiannon. Bernie explains. She adds the melted chocolate and the girls put a marshmallow in each case followed by a small strawberry, which they picked in Bernie's garden that morning.

On other days they look for numbers in the kitchen, for example on the washing machine dials, on food packets, and in story books. *2! What that for?*, asks Sorcha as she and Rhiannon help Bernie load clothes in the washing machine and set the correct cycle. Bernie describes these experiences to Jack and involves him in the conversations. The children also help Bernie in her day-to-day activities in caring for the house and Bernie talks to them about how and what they are learning through these hands-on experiences.



Reflection: Do I encourage children to ask me questions as part of their conversations with me?

Learning experience 68: What's inside the feely bag?

Theme: Exploring and Thinking, Aim 4 and Learning goal 1**Age group: Babies and young children****Setting: Childminding**

Mary looks after Chris (14 months), who has Down syndrome, and his sister Tamzin (nearly 4 years) in her own home. Chris is sitting on the carpet in the living room propped up by cushions. Mary sits on the floor beside him and invites Tamzin to join them. Mary has a *Feely Bag* with lots of items inside which she collected around the house.

Mary: *Chris and Tamzin look*, (giving the bag a shake), *what do you think is inside?*

Tamzin: *Let me see Mary.*

Mary: *Okay, now eyes closed as you pop your hand in and feel something. Can you think what it is?*

Tamzin: (Shuts her eyes and feels inside the bag.) *OOOH! I feel something fluffy and furry. Is it a cat?*

Mary: *I'm not sure. Could it be a cat?*

Tamzin: *I don't know.* (Takes the object out of the bag.) *It's a glove. Silly me.* (Hands the glove to Chris.)

Chris stretches forward excitedly and takes the glove with the soft fur trim from Tamzin. He touches the fur tentatively, gurgles noisily, and hands the glove to Mary as he turns his attention back to Tamzin and the bag.

Mary: *Let's give Chris a go now shall we?*

Chris eagerly dips his hand into the bag and takes out the lid of a biscuit tin. Turning the lid over he catches his reflection and stares at it before handing the lid back to Mary.

Mary: *Who is that?* (Offers the lid back to Chris and holds it so he can see himself.)

Tamzin: *Let me see too. Look it's you Chris, look. And it's me.* (Leans in close to Chris so they can both see themselves in the lid.)

Tamzin then hits the lid with her hand making a loud noise. Chris looks startled and whimpers. Mary takes the lid and taps it again slightly quieter and explains to Chris what she is doing. Chris shows he is not interested in the lid. Instead, he returns to the bag and takes out a sealed plastic cup containing dried pasta. He gives the cup a shake and, hearing the noise that the pasta makes, he smiles and does it again and again. This continues until Chris and Tamzin have removed all the items from the *Feely Bag*. Tamzin then proceeds to put each item back in the bag, and begins the activity again.

In Chris' daily record Mary notes.

- *Excited and curious about the Feely Bag.*
- *Sat up well with support from the cushions.*
- *Was apprehensive of loud noise.*

Mary sends the daily record home, and also refers to the experience with the Feely Bag when she talks to Chris' dad on Friday about what Chris and Tamzin have been doing that week when he collects the children. Chris' dad uses this information to update the physiotherapist on Chris' progress.



Reflection: Do I use objects and activities that interest children and capture their curiosity when setting tasks to gather information about how well they are getting on?