



What is play?

Children learn through play.

Play allows children to develop repeated patterns of behaviour to explore their environment.

It is fascinating to observe our children and see what they enjoy doing.

From these observations we can help children to develop their play in the areas they get pleasure from.

Benefits of Play ...

- **Having fun together!** When children are relaxed and having fun, their bodies produce chemicals that help their brains to develop
- **Children learn through play**, developing their emotional, physical, social, intellectual and communication skills
- **Parent and child relationship will be strengthened** through playing together and a child will be happier to play alone for increasing lengths of time, as they feel secure
- Playing with your child then allowing them time to play alone **supports the learning of separation and develops independence**



Some parents find it hard to play....

- We all have busy lives and often other children to care for
- Sometimes we can just feel 'out of our comfort zone'!
- Remember, you don't need to be playing with your child all day, every day, just 15/20 minutes most days is ok
- No-one will judge you for not playing 'right'. Your child will just be happy to have you sharing their fun!

How to Play

- Babies love to play games like peek-a-boo and hide and seek
- Children love make-believe play
- Older children like board games, team games and computer games
- Children do not necessarily need expensive toys to play with – pots & pans from the kitchen, a cardboard box, a sheet over some chairs can all provide opportunities for play
- Set aside time each day to play with your child, 1 to 1, & use Child Led Play when you can



Children learn best when they lead the way – “Child led play” ...

- Child-led play **is not** directed by the adult
- Set boundaries before you start and limit the time to 15-20 minutes
- Child leads, makes decisions and shapes the direction of how they play
- Your child is learning in this time, even though you are not teaching
- Use descriptive commenting, rather than directing your child - avoid questions
- Give your child a warning before the ending and count them down

For further information about the parenting support available in Solihull, please contact the Parenting Team via email to bsmhft.parenting@nhs.net