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Abstract: Every day learning in every day environments for Children under three

Children learn through play: through doing and being in their environments. However, these environments have been changing and evolving in recent years due to a range of factors including the increase in parental involvement in the work-force, the issues relating to safety in homes and communities, and the increase in organised or structured play for children. For example, there is evidence related to young babies and the effects of positioning: babies environments are controlled by adults primarily until they can sit independently at 6 months or so, and begin to crawl. Studies have shown that for many babies, their experiences of free movement on the floor has been restricted~ often due to safety concerns related to sudden infant death syndrome. Parents choose not to put them on their tummies on the floor resulting in delays in developmental milestone of rolling over which precedes crawling. While these delays do seem to sort themselves out by the time the child reaches 1 year, it is nonetheless a sign of the importance of environmental experiences influencing development.

The notion of everyday activity settings/ environments as a key aspect of child development has been an area of study in recent years. In this field, researchers value the context of a child's daily life: the 'everyday activities that provide the context for learning culturally meaningful behaviour' p. 3 (Dunst, Bruder, Trivette & Hamby 2006). Such research has found evidence that children learn most effectively when child development is considered with the environment as a key aspect - that family routines and contexts bears a significant influence on the child's learning. So how do we use this knowledge to guide our work? How do we use environments to help our children learn?

Creating indoor and outdoor learning environments for children is a challenge for all those who live with and work with children. This paper presents initial research that explores Irish childrens indoor and outdoor learning environments in the context of

the social environment (family, carers, community) and the physical environment (place, space and objects) and in relation to how it supports learning. It will consider what natural environments are, look at the advantages of working in natural environments and how to identify resources in such environments especially in relation to children from birth to three (babies and toddlers).

The implications for researching learning environments of children are that emphasis needs to be on the natural environments and every-day activities children experience as a place to start.

Dunst, C. J., Bruder, M. B., Trivette, C. M., & Hamby, D. W. (2006). Everyday Activity Settings, Natural Learning Environments, and Early Intervention Practices. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, 3(1), 3-10.