This learning experience is an example of how one service supports one of the learning goals in Aistear's theme of Communicating.

The topic of babies is an on-going one in our service. Last November, one of the pre-school staff had a baby boy. Naturally, we all discussed this event which led to some great role play based on ‘mummies, daddies and babies.’

Then one of the moms had a baby boy during the Christmas holidays. On arrival back in pre-school, the little girl was only too delighted to tell us all about her new baby brother.

Following on from this, one day at Circle Time we introduced baby-related objects to the children. We asked if they knew what these were and what they were used for. These objects included a nappy, a soother, a bottle, a nappy bag, a changing bag. We spoke about the importance of looking after babies as they are too small to look after themselves.
We discussed what parents feed their babies and the fact that milk is a whole food for them. We talked about differences between newborns and older babies and this led on to the development of babies. Most children had younger siblings and could understand all of this. We also spoke about travelling with a baby and the things that are needed such as car-seats, buggies and blinds for the car windows. Throughout this work there were many opportunities to introduce and use new vocabulary with the children such as vaccinations, teething, babysitting, breast-feeding and bottle-feeding.

The children role-played ‘babies’ during free play for several days. They really got into the excitement of it all. They pretended to feed their dolls and took them for walks as well as changing their nappies and clothes.

We obtained story books on the topic of babies from the mobile library. One entitled *The New Baby* was ideally suited to the little girl whose mom had had the baby.

In early January the children were really excited when our colleague brought her baby into pre-school for the first time. They gathered around and were fascinated by his every little movement. It was such a treat to see to see a real baby after all our play and talk about one!
Ideas to extend the children’s learning

- Add props to the pretend area to enable children to make a shop selling baby items – clothes, nappies, toys, blankets. Think about including a cash register, pretend money, pens and paper for making shopping lists.

- Organise a small group activity where children can make ‘All about me’ books. Ask parents to provide photos of when the children were babies. Provide current photos of the children along with magazines/catalogues of toys, clothes, baby equipment, paper, pencils, crayons, ribbon.

This experience also links to:
Well-being, Aim 1, Learning goal 1
Identity and Belonging, Aim 1, Learning goals 1, 2, Aim 2, Learning goal 3
The play leader’s reflections

We felt that the baby topic went very well and that the children learned a lot. They all loved telling us stories of personal experiences within their families which involved their younger siblings.

The children really picked up on the new vocabulary that we introduced to them. We heard them using these words frequently during free play.