Learning Experience: 
A trip to the hospital

**Setting:** Happy Days Childcare Centre, Ballyporeen, Co Tipperary

**Setting type:** Full and part-time daycare

**Age group:** Young children

**Theme:** Well-being

**Aim 1:** Children will be strong psychologically and socially.

**Learning goal 1:** In partnership with the adult, children will make strong attachments and develop warm and supportive relationships with family, peers and adults in out-of-home settings and in the community.

Over the weekend one of the children visited the accident and emergency room with her brother who had been injured in a football match. After hearing about this experience the children wanted to make a hospital of their own and complained to us about the lack of props as they wanted beds and a waiting area! We had to really think on our feet and quickly realised that there were beds in toddler rooms that we could use so we brought these out with the help of the children and set them up in the wards. We also worked with the children to put the chairs in rows to make a waiting area and added books and magazines for people to read while they were waiting to be seen by the doctor.

**Time for your medicine**
As practitioners, we were also involved either helping surgeons with their gloves or taking on the role of patients who were badly in need of assistance with fractured elbows!

Over the days we added new props as the public health nurse was able to give us some masks, surgical gloves and bandages which really added to the play. We read stories that were related to hospital play and provided clipboards and pens to record patient histories. We also added play thermometers and syringes. These new props led to a great fascination with numbers as patients’ temperatures were recorded with some having very high temperatures indeed!
Ideas to extend the children’s learning

- Provide materials for children to make appointment cards for patients to come back for check-ups. Make sure there is a clock and a calendar available for children to use.
- Invite the local public health nurse or an ambulance driver to visit to talk to the children.
- Provide props so that a pharmacy can be set up so that patients can collect their medicine after they are discharged from the hospital.

This experience also links to:
Identity and Belonging, Aim 2, Learning goals 5 and 6
Communicating, Aim 2, Learning goals 1 and 4

This resource was developed through the Aistear in Action initiative.
The play leader’s reflections

This experience helped children understand why doctors and nurses are important members of our community and how they help us to get well again when we are sick.

One of the mums told me that this hospital play experience was really helpful for her little boy when he had to be admitted to hospital one weekend with a high temperature.

Watching children take on the different roles was really interesting. You could literally see the children become more unwell as they waited for their spoon of medicine and the doctors and nurses were so kind and considerate to the sick patients and their worried parents.