This learning experience is an example of how one service supports one of the learning goals in Aistear’s theme of Exploring and Thinking.

One day during Circle Time, two of the children told us that they had been to the pool at the weekend. They are cousins and both families went on the trip together. They loved the water and they told us they stayed in the little pool and didn’t venture into the big pool! The other children chimed in with stories of their adventures in swimming pools and of going into the water while at the beach. There was even a discussion on baths! There was such a fascination with water that we absolutely had to explore this topic further!

The following day, we brought a container into the classroom and filled it with water. We put some washing-up liquid into a cup and gave the children eye-droppers so that they could add it drop by drop to the water. We then gave the children straws and encouraged them to blow through the straws. The children were fascinated as bubbles formed when they blew! Some of them sucked a little and drank the water but quickly learned to blow rather than suck! It also didn’t take them long to realise that the more washing-up liquid they added, the greater the amount of bubbles produced and the bigger the bubbles!
The following day, we filled the water-tray and added some Infacare. The children put on their aprons and began to wash their dolls. They loved creating suds and washing the dolls with the sponges.

We also introduced a jug and cup into the water tray. The children experimented by filling, pouring and measuring! One child explained to another that she needed to fill the cup with water first and then pour it into the jug as it was difficult to fill the jug first from the water tray. The children quickly figured out that it took three cupfuls of water to fill the jug. Through this, the concept of capacity was explored.

We revisited our water play topic a few weeks later when the snow arrived. At the beginning of our pre-school session, we brought a basin of snow inside. The children felt it and noted how cold it was. We left the snow in the basin and went to check on it before going home only to discover it had melted! This led to a whole other discussion!
Ideas to extend the children’s learning

- Fill water balloons and put them in the freezer or leave them outside overnight when it is freezing. The following day, remove the balloons to reveal balloon-shaped ice cubes! Add food colouring to the water to create different coloured balloons.
- Blow bubbles outdoors.
- Make books using magazines and pictures from the internet about water and water-related activities.

This experience also links to:

*Communicating*, Aim 2, Learning goals 1 and 4
*Exploring and Thinking*, Aim 1, Learning goal 6
The play leader’s reflections

The water play activities were a resounding success. The children loved making bubbles and washing the dolls. They also learned a lot through the pouring activity and we plan to do lots of different maths activities that involve measuring and capacity over the coming weeks.

The children really enjoyed the snow activity and although very few children took part in it as they were absent because of the weather, those who did were fascinated by the melting process and showed a strong scientific interest.