



A Report on the Review of the “My Place to Play” for families living in International Protection Accommodation Project

November 2020

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Executive Summary

About the report

This report details the findings of a review of the “*My Place to Play*” for families living in International Protection Accommodation Project, in the Summer of 2020. The review was commissioned by the National CYPSC Office, Tusla Child and Family Agency on behalf of the Project Oversight Group.

Background

The “*My Place to Play*” for families living in International Protection Accommodation Project, is a collaboration between Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSC) and the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) at the Department of Justice and Equality¹ with support from the Children’s Rights Alliance, the Katharine Howard Foundation and with funding from Oakfield Trust and CYPSC and skilled expertise from the Early Learning Initiative. It builds on the seminal work of Dublin City North CYPSC from 2018-2019 with the Early Learning Initiative, a local Area Based Childhood project in Dublin Docklands and East Inner City. At that time “*My Place to Play*” was designed and successfully implemented to promote the development and well-being of very young children living in homeless accommodation that had a limited amount of space available for free movement and play.

“*My Place to Play*” aims to promote the importance of play; increase developmental activities for babies including tummy time and sensory development; and encourage parent-child bonding. It was awarded a “Child Health and Wellbeing Award” at the 2019 Irish Healthcare Centre Awards.

About the Project Review

The Project Review methodology included consultation with key stakeholders involved in the Project, an online survey of practitioners and an online survey of parents/guardians who participated in the Project. There were a total of 36 responses from practitioners and 52 responses from the parents/guardians to the online surveys.

Key statistics

In relation to the implementation of the My Place to Play Project:

- 248 babies/families participated in the Project
- 248 play mats and resources were distributed as part of the Project
- 47 International Protection Accommodation Centres (IPAC) participated in the Project
- Three briefing sessions for local IPAC staff and other local service practitioners were provided
- 52 practitioners registered to attend the briefing sessions
- Total expenditure was €19,285²
- Five organisations collaborated in the project nationally.

¹ Since the initiation of this project IPAS has been re-located from the Department of Justice and Equality and now sits within the remit of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

² Includes expenditure on My Place to Play materials, resources and Project review. Does not calculate staffing costs in terms of time and expertise allocated from the 5 stakeholder organisations and participating centres.

Findings of consultations with Project key stakeholders

Key findings from the consultations with Project stakeholders included:

- The importance of interagency co-operation for the success of the Project;
- The benefits of collaboration via CYPSC;
- The Project was a positive response that supported families during the Covid-19 pandemic;
- The Project was a positive response to families living in international protection accommodation with limited space;
- Positive outcomes for babies, parents/guardians and families;
- Positive outcomes for practitioners and Project stakeholders;
- My Place to Play Project should continue for families in international protection accommodation;
- My Place to Play Project merits continuation and adoption by relevant agencies and to be placed on a sustainable footing with funding from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and / or other relevant departments such as Health or their designates.

Findings of survey of practitioners

Key findings from the survey of practitioners who participated in My Place to Play Project included:

- 97.1% of practitioners found the “My Place to Play” briefing for practitioners useful
- 94.4% of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed the Project provided valuable learning opportunities for parents/guardians
- 97.3% of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed the Project provided more opportunities for parents/guardians to play with their children
- 88.9% of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed the Project increased parents’/guardians’ awareness of the importance of play
- 94.7% of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed the Project provided parents/guardians with increased awareness of the importance of tummy time
- 85.7% of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed the Project provided parents/guardians with increased awareness of the prevalence of flat head
- Practitioners generally reported receiving very positive feedback from parents/guardians in relation to My Place to Play Project
- 94.4% of practitioners said they would recommend My Place to Play Project to other parents/guardians
- 68.6% of practitioners agreed the project supported their practice with parents/guardians
- What practitioners thought worked well about the Project was:
 - encouraging play and tummy time for babies and promoting development;
 - creating a dedicated space for babies to play in accommodation centres with limited space;
 - encouraging interactive play between parents/guardians and their babies.
- The main challenges related to the Project highlighted by practitioners were:
 - encouraging parents/guardians to use the play mat on a regular basis;
 - engaging parents/guardians initially to take part in the project;
 - a lack of floor space to use the play mat for some parents/guardians;
 - implementation of the Project during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Findings of Survey of Parents/Guardians

The key findings of the survey of parents/guardians that participated in My Place to Play Project included:

- 50% of parents/guardians reported using the mat every day and 26% used the mat 1 – 3 times per week
- 94.1% of parents/guardians agreed that the play mat made it easier for them to play with their baby
- The most common way the play mat makes it easier for parents/guardians to play with their babies was by providing a clean, comfortable, safe, large space for them to play
- Parents/guardians found the information they received on tummy time and the importance of play helpful, easy to read and liked the images used in the information materials
- The most important aspect of the play mat for parents was it creates a clean, safe and healthy space for babies to play
- 96% of parents/guardians said they would recommend the play mat to other parents/guardians
- The majority of parents/guardians said there was nothing they would change about the play mat.

Overall, the review found that the *“My Place to Play”* for families living in *International Protection Accommodation Project* worked very well, had many positive impacts on babies, parents/guardians, practitioners and organisations involved in the project. It should be continued into the future on a sustainable footing for families living in international protection accommodation, adopted by relevant agencies and funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and / or other relevant departments such as the Department of Health and it's designates.



Introduction

About the report

This report details the findings of a review of the “My Place to Play” for families living in International Protection Accommodation Project. The review was commissioned by the National CYPSC Office, Tusla Child and Family Agency on behalf of the Project Oversight Group.

Background

The “My Place to Play” for families living in International Protection Accommodation Project is a collaboration between Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSC) and the International Protection Accommodation Service at the Department of Justice and Equality³ with support from the Children’s Rights Alliance and the Katharine Howard Foundation, with funding from Oakfield Trust and from CYPSC and skilled expertise from the Early Learning Initiative. International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) is responsible for the procurement and overall administration of State provided accommodation and ancillary services for applicants for international protection and suspected victims of human trafficking. International Protection Accommodation is commonly known as Direct Provision.

A confluence of circumstances and contexts for each of the project stakeholders resulted in the project partners joining together to provide the “My Place to Play” family support project over the Summer of 2020 particularly for families living in international protection accommodation. The Children’s Rights Alliance (CRA) and the Katharine Howard Foundation (KHF) had been working to activate responses for children impacted by the Covid-19 public health restrictions; recognised “My Place to Play” as a suitable response to support families living in very cramped conditions and secured funding from Oakfield Trust for implementation. The National CYPSC Office and the IPAS Child and Family Services were liaising to enhance access to supports and services for children and young people living in international protection accommodation. A meeting was convened by CRA and a Project Oversight Group for My Place to Play over Summer 2020 was established.

This Summer 2020 iteration of “My Place to Play” builds on the seminal work of Dublin City North CYPSC from 2018-2019 with the Early Learning Initiative, a local Area Based Childhood project in Dublin Docklands and East Inner City. At that time “My Place to Play” was designed and successfully implemented to promote the development and well-being of very young children living in homeless accommodation that had a limited amount of space available for free movement and play. That formative project received Healthy Ireland funding. “My Place to Play” aims to promote the importance of play; increase developmental activities for babies including tummy time and sensory development; and encourage parent-child bonding. It was awarded a “Child Health and Wellbeing Award” at the 2019 Irish Healthcare Centre Awards.

It is recognised that international protection accommodation is not providing optimum conditions for the healthy growth and development of children and young people. This national project aimed to provide a model of support to families with very young babies living in international protection accommodation.

³ Ibid. p. 3.

The “My Place to Play” family support project comprises 3 key elements:

- An interactive briefing session for nominated staff that includes an overview of the project, an introduction to the “My Place to Play” resources and equipment and information on the key messages related to supporting families to use the “My Place to Play” resources.
- A play mat, that doubles up as a fold-away storage bag that includes developmentally stimulating toys such as a mirror, soft ball, maracas, and rattle rings and a tip sheet for parents/guardians.
- Monitoring and review to evaluate the short term impact of the “My Place to Play” Project for families and staff.

Specific to this iteration of “My Place to Play” the Parent Tip Sheet was translated into 15 different languages, and a Practitioner Guidance note was provided to all practitioners. These resources and a recording of the Briefing session, that had to be delivered online due to Covid-19 public health restrictions at the time of implementation, were made available online on WWW.CYPSC.IE. Additionally, the Project evaluation surveys were translated into 7 languages other than English. Total Project expenditure was €19,285.4



⁴ Ibid p. 3.

Project Oversight Group

The My Place to Play Project Oversight Group comprised members from the following organisations:

- National CYPSC Office at Tusla Child and Family Agency
- Dublin City North Children and Young People’s Services Committee (CYPSC)
- Child and Family Services Unit, International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS), Department of Justice and Equality
- Children’s Rights Alliance (CRA)
- Katharine Howard Foundation (KHF)

Project Review Advisory Group

My Place to Play Project Review Advisory Group comprised members of the following organisations:

- National CYPSC Office at Tusla Child and Family Agency
- Dublin City North Children and Young People’s Services Committee (CYPSC)
- Child and Family Services Unit, International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS), Department of Justice and Equality
- Children’s Rights Alliance (CRA)
- Katharine Howard Foundation (KHF)
- Early Learning Initiative, National College of Ireland (ELI)

Organisation roles

The organisations involved in the My Place to Play project had varying roles in the implementation of the project:

- The National Co-ordinator for CYPSC was the project lead which included planning the project, managing the project review and working and leading in a collaborative way reflecting the CYPSC model of interagency working.
- The Manager of the Child and Family Services Unit at Department of Justice and Equality, who is responsible for child and family services in International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS), provided the gateway to families living in international protection accommodation, recruited practitioners who recruited families to participate in the Project, oversaw distribution of the play mats and resources and the dissemination of evaluation surveys to practitioners and parents/guardians.
- The Co-ordinator of Dublin City North CYPSC brought the experience of previous design and implementation of the “My Place to Play” project locally, and acted as a connector with the Early Learning Initiative (ELI) and led on purchasing of materials.
- The Early Learning Initiative (ELI) was key to the initial design of “My Place to Play” was involved in the development of the project and delivered expert input for the practitioner briefing sessions.
- The Children’s Right’s Alliance brought expertise in the area of children’s rights and helped secure funding for the project.
- The Katharine Howard Foundation secured funding for the project from the Oakfield Trust.

About the review

This review aimed to describe the “My Place to Play” for families living in International Protection Accommodation as well as review the implementation and impact of the Project. Monitoring and evaluation is core to the My Place to Play Project model and this was integrated into an overall Project Review.

Research methodology

The key research methods used in this review were:

- Telephone interviews with key stakeholders involved in the Project
- An online survey of practitioners who participated in the My Place to Play Project
- An online survey of parents/guardians who participated in the My Place to Play Project

A total of six key stakeholders from the following organisations were interviewed:

- National CYPSC Office at Tusla Child and Family Agency
- Dublin City North Children and Young People’s Services Committee (CYPSC)
- Child and Family Services Unit, International Protection Accommodation Service, Department of Justice and Equality⁵
- Early Learning Initiative, National College of Ireland
- Children’s Rights Alliance
- Katharine Howard Foundation

The online survey aimed at parents/guardians was translated into seven different languages other than English to ensure it was accessible to as many parents/guardians as possible. However, only two respondents used languages other than English to complete the survey.

Participation in My Place to Play Project

A total of 47 international protection accommodation centres participated in the My Place to Play Project. The total number of families who participated in the Project and therefore received the play mat and resources and supports was 248. 52 practitioners registered to attend one of the 3 “My Place to Play” Briefing Sessions that were provided.

Review response rate

In total, there were 52 responses to the parent’s/guardians survey. This represents a response rate of 21% of all parents/guardians who participated in the Project. There were 36 responses to the practitioners’ survey. The total number of parents/guardians reached by practitioners who completed the survey and correspondingly the total number of mats distributed by these practitioners was 182; this encompasses 73.4% of all parents/guardians who participated in the Project.

There were a number of challenges related to the survey response rate including the impact of Covid-19 restricting face-to-face interaction between practitioners and parents/guardians and the lack of technology in some international protection accommodation to complete the survey.

⁵ Ibid. p.3 and p. 9

Findings of Consultations with Key Stakeholders

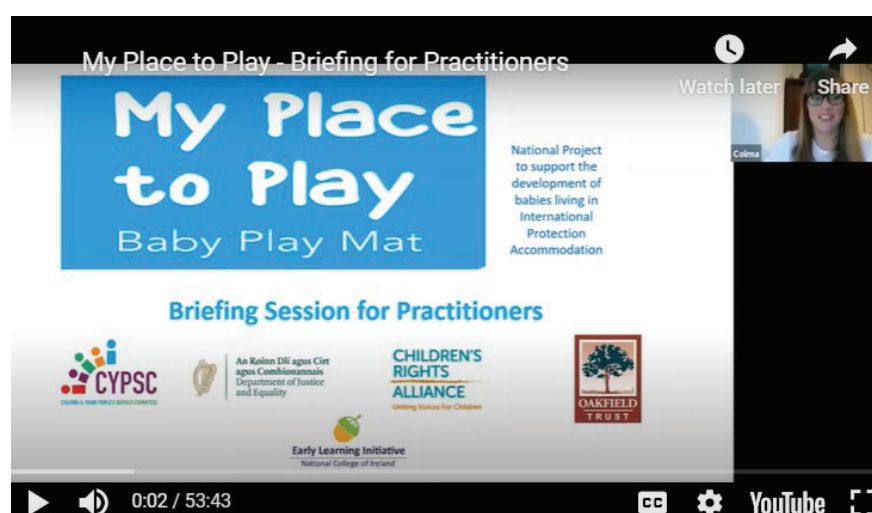
Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings of consultations with key stakeholders involved with the My Place to Play Project. Key stakeholders from the following organisations were interviewed:

- National CYPSC Office at Tusla Child and Family Agency
- Dublin City North Children and Young People’s Services Committee (CYPSC)
- Child and Family Services Unit, International Protection Accommodation Service, Department of Justice and Equality (IPAS has since been re-located to the Department of Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth)
- Early Learning Initiative (ELI), National College of Ireland
- Children’s Rights Alliance (CRA)
- Katharine Howard Foundation (KHF).

See Appendix A for schedule of interview questions.

Online briefing session



As part of the My Place to Play, an interactive online briefing session for nominated staff from International Protection Accommodation Centres was conducted. In order to ensure adequate opportunity for all to attend and in light of Covid-19 public health restrictions that prevented in-person participation, three briefing sessions were provided using an online format. This briefing was co-ordinated by

IPAS on behalf of the Project Oversight Group with inputs from Oversight Group members and expert child development content input from The Early Learning Initiative (ELI). Overall, the online briefing was judged by key stakeholders to have worked well. The Briefing was recorded and made available for practitioners on the national CYPSC website.

What worked well about the briefing session included:

- Interagency collaboration between Project Oversight Group members and ELI in developing the online briefing session, e.g. refining the key messages of the briefing session, sequencing the briefing session and ensuring the good quality of content and information provided.
- Co-ordination by IPAS of online set up, communications to International Protection Accommodation Centres (IPAC), registration and dissemination of information on the briefing sessions.

- The experience, knowledge and skillset of the ELI personnel delivering the child development content of the briefing session.
- High levels of attendance by IPAC staff at the briefing sessions.
- Describing it as a briefing session rather than a training session which was a learning from a previous iteration of the project.

The briefing session was previously conducted face-to-face; however, it was delivered online as a necessary response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This brought with it challenges such as practitioners not being able to have tactile engagement with the project materials. Another key challenge related to the briefing session was the varying levels of experience of family support and early childhood development amongst practitioners. There was also an assumption among some practitioners that they may already have some of the knowledge about the project. For the Project Oversight Group however, it was important to ensure that practitioners were able to pass on quality information and messages to parents/guardians who were receiving the play mats and resources.

“We have been challenged with the varying level of knowledge of early childhood development among people. You could be very lucky with peoples’ experience but someone could have gone from hotel manager to accommodation manager.”

Interagency cooperation

According to all stakeholders consulted, the interagency aspect of the project worked very well. Some of the stakeholders involved had previously worked together. For example, Dublin City North CYPSC had worked with the Early Learning Initiative on the original locally delivered My Place to Play Project with families living in homeless accommodation in Dublin City North (DCN).

There was a wide range of knowledge and skillsets among the stakeholders who were involved with the project. For example, the Children’s Rights Alliance is a strong advocate for children’s rights; the Katharine Howard Foundation is an independent Foundation focusing on improving the lives of young children and their families and the Department of Justice and Equality at the time of implementation held responsibility for international protection accommodation.

There was a willingness for all organisations to work together on the project and use their organisational resources when needed. For example, the Department of Justice and Equality was able to use its access to translation services to translate the My Place to Play materials which worked well.

“We had a willingness of all parties to work together. It isn’t part of a programme with funding but we are testing innovation and building up evidence to see if it works... The willingness of people to come together and give their expertise and focus on 0-12 months olds really helped.”

Collaboration on the project via CYPSC

The value of collaboration on the project via CYPSC was also highlighted in the review. The experience of CYPSC in running the project in the past as well as the importance of the “brand of CYPSC” was highlighted.

CYPSC’s strategic role of innovating, learning from and replicating successful projects and initiatives was evident in this project.

“Because My Place to Play had been replicated by other CYPSC already and another factor was we need and want to become more strategic and learn from what is happening in other areas and spread what works nationally.”

Response to Covid-19

This My Place to Play Project worked well as a response for families during the Covid-19 pandemic. While the original intent of My Place to Play is not specifically as a response to Covid-19, it became a suitable response under the prevailing Covid conditions and a real positive for families living in international protection accommodation during the pandemic public health restrictions. For example, the Project helped babies living in international protection accommodation to continue to play and develop despite the impact of Covid-19, which in some cases resulted in communal play and recreational areas closing. Although the Project may have been a response to Covid-19 for some Oversight Group members, for others the benefit of the Project was to begin to develop greater links between IPACs and services for children, young people and families in local communities.

“Everyone was very concerned about babies’ development, ability to play, growth and what it (Covid-19) would do to them such as regress socially; which is happening to children at all levels with Covid.”

Response to living conditions in international protection accommodation

Stakeholders observed that the Project addresses the fact that international protection accommodation often does not have adequate space, facilities or resources for babies to play and develop. They also noted that parents/guardians generally don’t have the financial resources to provide play based materials for their children. The project helped parents/guardians to use the space they have to play and interact with their baby.

“We are recognising that children have limited space and parents don’t have a lot of money so investing in the mat and the toys... they wouldn’t have the capacity and resources.”

“It’s (the project) so simple and so tangible. It’s helpful to bring this into cramped accommodation and it is something we can give to them. When we say they can play anywhere the penny doesn’t drop but the mat puts those concepts into reality for them.”

Supports proposed National Standards for Direct Provision Centres

This My Place to Play Project was also found to have the potential to support realisation of the draft National Standards for Direct Provision Centres in particular Standard 4.5: “The accommodation centre has adequate and accessible facilities, including dedicated child friendly, play and recreation facilities.”

“Some centres do meet the standards and have made great efforts. One of the problems has been that in the middle of the pandemic the HSE has instructed us to close play areas because of Covid-19. Therefore, the play mat supported the standards requirement for a place for babies to play.”

Positive outcomes for babies

The stakeholders envisaged a number of positive outcomes for babies who participated in the Project. As the Project is evidenced-informed, they felt confident it would support the healthy development of babies living in international protection accommodation. The key benefits of the Project highlighted for babies included the creation of a space to play, engagement with evidenced-informed child development materials, development of babies social, emotional and motor skills and positive interaction with parents/guardians and other family members. A number of stakeholders mentioned the importance of the project in terms of getting babies out of buggies and prams to help prevent flat head syndrome.⁶

“From previous iterations of it (Project), for example in Dublin City North, in supporting families to support their babies it works well. The materials are evidence-informed.”

“Babies can spend a lot of time in buggies and prams so in terms of flat head syndrome it’s important to get them out more.”

Another benefit identified was the project alignment with Aistear, the curriculum framework for children from birth to 6 years in Ireland. The Project is also aligned with the five national outcomes for children and young people outlined in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2014 – 2020) in Ireland.

“For babies, there is a real opportunity for babies to have their own space and play area and have engagement with child development materials and their growth development, stimulation. The pieces we have included are evidence based and linked it to the Aistear programme which adds to it.”

“From a social emotional well-being perspective it is tied into Aistear and space and mirrors and self-identity. It’s good for the physical and social and emotional development of the child.”

Positive outcomes for parents/guardians and families

A number of positive outcomes of the My Place to Play Project for parents/guardians and families were also discussed. The key benefits highlighted for parents/guardians included positive engagement with their baby, development of play time with their baby and increasing the bond between parents/guardians and their babies. One respondent described how the older siblings of a baby participating in the Project was interacting and playing with the baby more as a result of the play materials.



⁶ Flat head syndrome is usually developed as a result of babies spending a lot of time lying on their back.

“Parents have different levels of stress and other children (to care for). It’s an opportunity to engage more with their child and get down and do face to face contact with their mum or dad and a time set aside for them which is hugely important and the evidence supports that.”

“One practitioner said an older child was using the maracas and interacting with the baby.”

Positive outcomes for practitioners/stakeholders

The Project helped practitioners working with parents/guardians living in international protection accommodation to introduce early years’ development messages, for example about the importance of tummy time, in a gentle and non-judgemental manner. According to a stakeholder involved in a previous My Place to Play Project with families living in homeless accommodation, the Project can help support a positive relationship between families and practitioners. Another benefit of the Project for stakeholders was a greater understanding of the needs of children living in international protection accommodation. Many of the stakeholders said it also increased the likelihood of them working together on similar projects in the future.

“It is introducing fun and things we value and it is quite a powerful symbol. Its saying that we need to spend time with children but not in a finger-wagging way; in a gentle way.”

“It (the Project) lends itself to positive relationships with the key workers. This was the feedback from the homeless services too. It’s a ‘win-win’ for everyone.”

Key challenges related to My Place to Play

Challenges related to the development of the Project

In terms of the development of the Project, the main challenges were additional personnel resources, e.g. time and capacity needed from the key stakeholders and organisations involved, consistent communication between stakeholders, visibility on communication with international protection centres/practitioners and the impact of Covid-19, e.g. stakeholders meeting online instead of in person.

“The operation of a project is time consuming and people are doing it on top of their job.”

Challenges related to the implementation of the project

The main challenge identified in relation to the implementation of the Project was the varying levels of expertise in child development among practitioners. As a result, the briefing sessions were designed for practitioners with basic levels of child development knowledge. The level of training, knowledge and confidence among practitioners was considered to be crucial in terms of engaging parents/guardians, introducing them to the play mat and following up with them.

“Some Direct Provision staff might not have child development backgrounds... I know the system is in transition and they are talking about recruiting someone with social care and child development background into the centres.”

“The engagement is the most important part of disseminating the mat. People have to come to the training (briefing) and some think they know it already. We are trying to engage the practitioners so they feel confident in engaging the parent. You don't just hand out the mat, you need to explain it and then follow up on it.”

Challenges related to Covid-19

Another key challenge related to the running of the Project was the impact of Covid-19. This impacted the manner in which Oversight Group members were able to meet, plan and operationalise. Practitioners' direct interaction and communication with parents/guardians was affected by the pandemic; a number of families moved accommodation centres as a result of Covid-19 and one practitioner contracted Covid-19. The delivery of play mats was also affected by Covid-19.

“Coronavirus meant I was unable to spend as much time/be in as close contact with families as I would have liked. I believe everything went well given the circumstances.”

Other challenges

Other challenges discussed included difficulties for practitioners engaging parents/guardians to take part in the Project and encouraging parents/guardians to use the play mat on a regular basis and language barriers for parents/guardians for whom English is not their first language. Finally, getting parents/guardians to complete project evaluation forms was highlighted as another challenge. The Project relies heavily on the practitioner to engage with parents/guardians to complete evaluations. As well as language barriers relating to completing evaluations, some accommodation centres and parents/guardians may not have access to technology to complete evaluations online and Covid-19 predated against providing hard copy surveys.

“Other challenges were the language barrier. Getting complicated messages across to families.”

“Data collection is like pulling teeth after the fact. It was easier with the key workers if the manager made it easier. We are a step removed so it can be harder if the manager isn't engaged.”

The future of My Place to Play Project

There was overall agreement that the My Place to Play Project should continue as a core part of service delivery into the future in international protection accommodation. As babies are being born into international protection accommodation on an ongoing basis, the need for this type of family support response to the development needs of babies to continue into the future to support the needs of these babies was



emphasised. The fact that the Project package of the briefing session, resources, materials and evaluation have already been developed was considered important to its successful roll out in the future. All resources have been made available online on www.cypsc.ie.

“I would like the Project to be run again. There are babies being born into centres all the time so we would like them to get the play mats too.”

“We have set up a very good standardised package for the Project including the leaflets, design and evaluation so that is there and ready to go and there is a model/pack.”

Who should run the project in the future?

Most stakeholders felt CYPSC should take the lead in running My Place to Play Project in the future. The reasoning for this was their lead role in this Project has worked very well, it is a good fit for their remit and they have national coverage to engage with the Project on a local level. However, it was noted that the role of CYPSC in the Project was not sustainable into the future without a fund stream and a dedicated Project resource. CYPSC is about collaboration, evidence, innovation, design, testing, and adoption as a sustainable practice by “the system”.

“CYPSC have taken the lead and it has worked very well. They know the infrastructure and the knowledge and they are on the line between policy design and service delivery so it works well and there is a CYPSC in every area in the country.”

As the Project is resource intensive other suggestions were made including CYPSC having a more strategic leadership role in the running of the programme and other organisations and agencies collaborating with them to roll out the Project on the ground, for example, Tusla’s Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and Public Health Nurses. Finally, it was noted that IPACs should be supported to take into account the development needs of their residents as part of their remit.

Who should fund the Project in the future

This iteration of the My Place to Play Project was funded by Oakfield Trust via the Children’s Rights Alliance and with benefit in kind terms of terms of expertise and resource-sharing by all stakeholders and with CYPSC funding to conduct this Project Review. The majority of stakeholders suggested the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, now The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, should fund the Project in the future. The Project is aligned with the five national outcomes of Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People which takes a whole of government and cross-departmental approach. In addition, the remit for international protection accommodation has, during the course of this project, transferred to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (formerly DCYA). Some stakeholders suggested a cross-funding model or a joint-commissioning approach across a number of agencies, e.g. the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, the Department of Health, Tusla Child and Family Agency and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

“The Department of Justice IPAS are on their way to the DCYA and I would like to see them funding it directly to Direct Provision centres.”

Development of a follow-on project

The development of a follow on Project aimed at children older than 12 months was discussed by stakeholders. As the My Place to Play Project is aimed at babies under 12 months, the play mat is only suited to their developmental needs. A continuation of the Project for babies who are older than 12 months was judged to be beneficial and would ideally continue to be aligned with the Aistear curriculum framework. It was suggested CYPSC could be involved in the development of a follow-on project.

“It has crossed my mind that we could do something for the toddlers. A limitation of the project is the age limit and beyond 12 months’ babies may have outgrown it developmentally.”

“There needs to be something else for every age group like toddlers, school-aged children. Infants can be forgotten and I would love to see the next step up of the programme aimed at them. It would be linked up with the Aistear programme when they got to preschool.”

Continuation of the Project

Continuation of My Place to Play Project for families living in settings other than international protection accommodation was recommended by stakeholders. The benefits of continuing the Project for families living in homeless accommodation/hubs or accommodation with limited space was also particularly highlighted.



Findings of Survey of Practitioners

Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings of a survey conducted with practitioners who participated in the My Place to Play Project. Practitioners in this context refers to staff working in international protection accommodation centres. A total of 36 practitioners from 36 different IPAC completed the online survey. See appendix B for the schedule of practitioner survey questions.

Geographical distribution of play mats

The geographical location of international protection accommodation centres where respondents to the survey distributed My Place to Play mats is set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Geographical location of distribution of play mats by survey respondents

County where play mats were distributed	Number of play mats
Cork	28
Clare	28
Donegal	4
Galway	7
Kerry	9
Kildare	7
Laois	2
Leitrim	2
Mayo	8
Meath	26
Monaghan	19
Offaly	5
Roscommon	4
Sligo	2
Tipperary	3
Waterford	7
Westmeath	9
Wicklow	12
Total	182

Number of mats distributed and parents/guardians reached

The total number of parents/guardians reached and of mats distributed by practitioners who completed the survey was 182. This encompasses 73.4% of the total number of parents/guardians (248) who participated in the Project.

Briefing session

Almost all (97.1%) practitioners found the briefing session useful. The majority of respondents said there was nothing they would change about the briefing session, describing it as informative, clear, helpful and enjoyable.

However, some respondents made suggestions as to how the briefing session could be improved. Suggestions included:

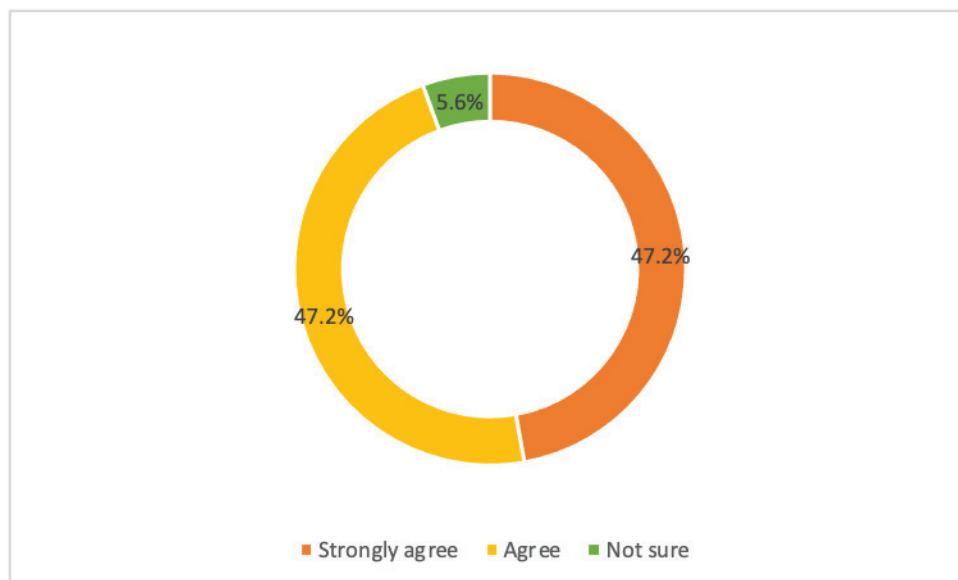
- Practitioners to be given the mat and other materials in advance of the briefing session so they could familiarise themselves with the mats and have them on hand during sessions.
- Giving more advice to practitioners on how to introduce the mat to parents/guardians.
- Practitioners having the opportunity to introduce themselves and the organisation they are working for in the briefing session.

“It might make sense to deliver the items and then we’d have one set on hand for us to look at while explaining.”

Valuable learning opportunities for parents/guardians

Practitioners were asked if they agreed or disagreed that the My Place to Play Project provided parents/guardians with valuable learning opportunities. As can be seen from Figure 1 below, a total of 47.2% of practitioners strongly agreed that the Project provided parents/guardians with valuable learning opportunities, 47.2% agreed, 5.6% were not sure and no practitioners disagreed.

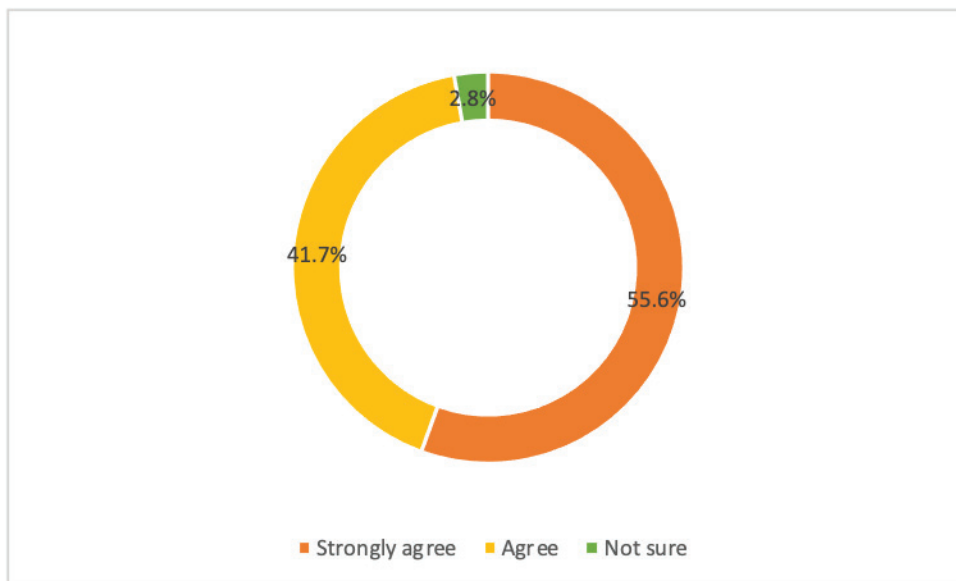
Figure 1: My Place to Play provided parents/guardians with valuable learning opportunities



More opportunities for parents/guardians to play with children

Over half (55.6%) of practitioners strongly agreed My Place to Play Project provided parents/guardians with more opportunities to play with their children, 41.7% agreed, 2.8% were not sure and no practitioners disagreed (see figure 2 below).

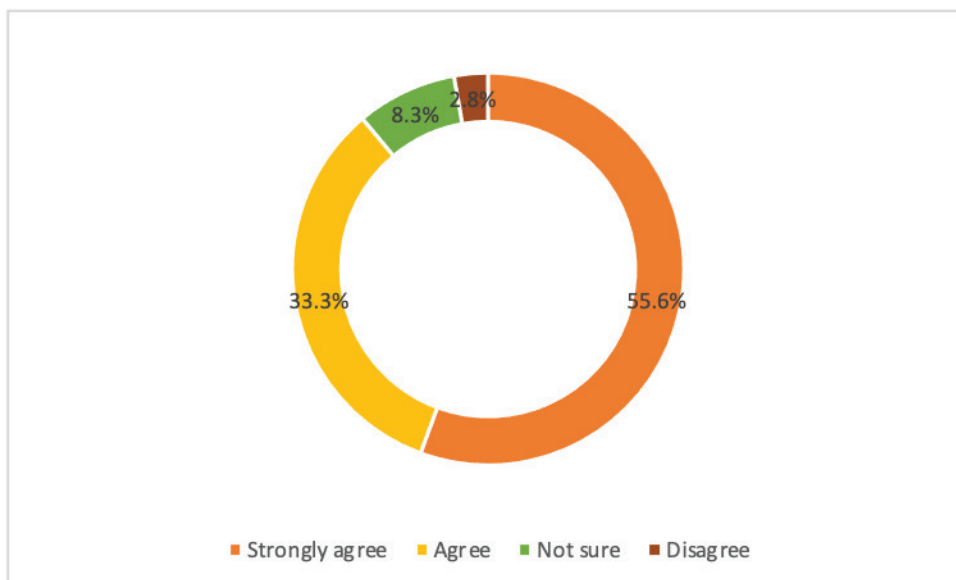
Figure 2: My Place to Play provided parents/guardians with more opportunities to play with their children



Increased parent’s/guardians awareness of the importance of play

Overall, 55.6% of practitioners strongly agreed My Place to Play Project provided parents/guardians with increased awareness of the importance of play, one third (33.3%) agreed, 8.3% were not sure and 2.8% disagreed (see Figure 3 below).

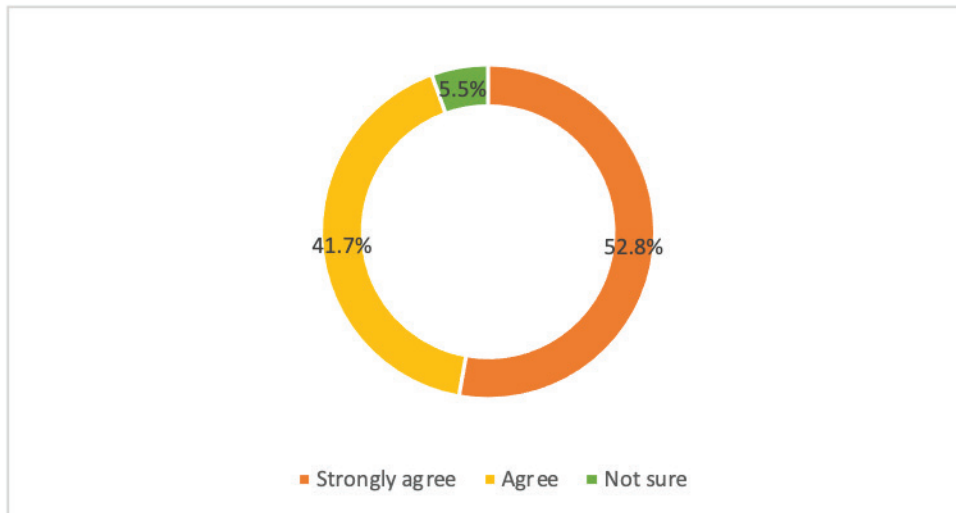
Figure 3: My Place to Play provided parents/guardians with increased awareness of the importance of play



Increased parent’s/guardians awareness of the importance of tummy time

Over half (52.8%) of practitioners strongly agreed My Place to Play Project provided parents/guardians with increased awareness of the importance of tummy time, 41.7% agreed, 5.5% were not sure and no practitioners disagreed (see Figure 4 below).

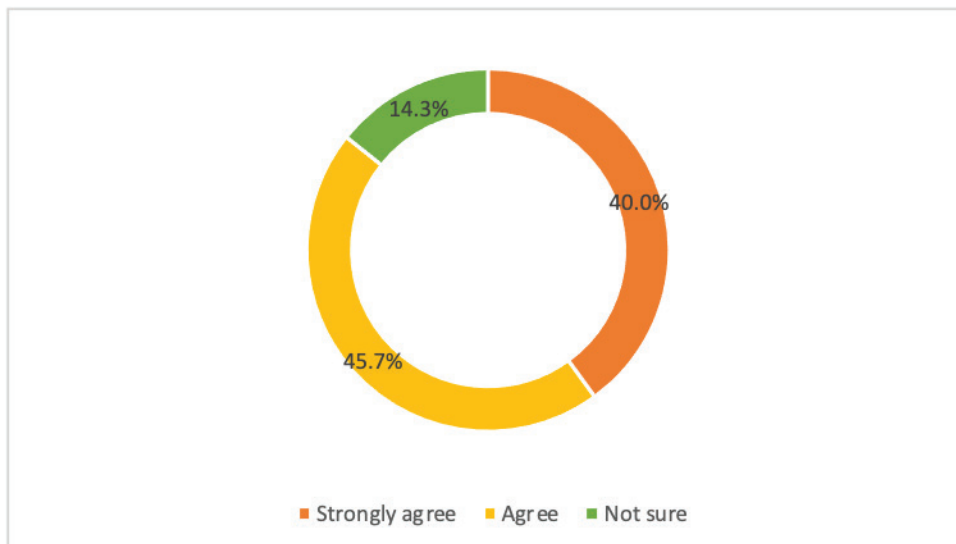
Figure 4: My Place to Play provided parents/guardians with increased awareness of the importance of tummy time



Increased parent’s/guardians awareness of the prevalence of flat head

Four out of ten (40%) practitioners strongly agreed My Place to Play Project provided parents/guardians with increased awareness of the prevalence of flat head, 45.7% agreed, 14.3% were not sure and no practitioners disagreed.

Figure 5: My Place to Play Project provided parents/guardians with increased awareness of the prevalence of flat head



Other impacts on parents/guardians

Practitioners were asked if they thought My Place to Play Project had any other impacts on parents/guardians. Six out of ten respondents (60%) felt the Project had no other impacts while 40% felt the Project did have other impacts on parents/guardians.

The most commonly mentioned impact of My Place to Play Project for parents/guardians identified by practitioners was encouraging parents to play with their babies more regularly. Practitioners felt the Project provided parents/guardians with more opportunities to play with their babies and gave some parents/guardians more confidence to play with their children.

“It got them in a routine of playing with the child on a daily basis which was great for both parents and child.”

The next most frequently identified impact of My Place to Play Project on parents/guardians was increasing the bond between parents/guardians and their babies. Some practitioners also said My Place to Play Project helped increase the bond between babies, siblings and parents/guardians.

“It strengthens the bond between babies, siblings and parents.”

Other impacts of My Place to Play Project on parents/guardians highlighted by practitioners included:

- Educates parents/guardians on the importance of play in babies’ development
- Educates parents/guardians on the importance of tummy time
- Increases parents/guardians and babies’ levels of happiness
- Provides parents/guardians with new toys for their baby which they might not have afforded otherwise
- Provides a safe and familiar space for babies to play
- Keeps babies active and engaged
- Encourages peer education and support among parents/guardians
- Helps relieve stress among parents/guardians

“A little lift, something new and clean and in its original packaging especially for their precious baby. Usually they depend on second hand items.”

“In one family, a Mum said that she would look forward to playing with the two maracas with her baby as it was the first time she heard him laugh.”

“Parents reported that their babies felt happy there, which made the parents happy.”

“I think it really encouraged the parent to forget about their worries and to be present in the moment with their baby.”

“Some of the parents who received the Play Mat showed it to some of the other parents onsite.”

Feedback from parents/guardians

Practitioners were asked what feedback they have received from parents/guardians about the My Place to Play mat and the information provided with it. Overall, practitioners reported receiving very positive feedback from parents/guardians in relation to the My Place to Play Project.

Positive feedback about the Project included:

- It helped parents/guardians to encourage babies to play more
- It provided useful information on the importance and benefits of play and tummy time, especially for young parents
- It helped with babies' development
- It provided a much needed space for babies to play in accommodation centres
- It was a fun resource for babies
- Parents/guardians generally used the play mat on a regular basis
- Parents/guardians were grateful to staff for explaining the play mat and toys
- It helped increase babies' levels of contentment and alertness
- Siblings of babies also enjoyed the play mat and toys
- It encouraged some parents/guardians to play with their babies' outdoors

“Parents were very grateful for the MPTP Mat and toys. Some parents informed me that they learned new ways of playing with their children that they had not thought of before. e.g. explaining colours, textures and materials to their babies. Some parents thought that this was not necessary until their children were older and had more understanding.”

“That the mats were very helpful, especially with so many people living in one house it was nice for their kids to have their own space to play.”

“Two of our residents enjoyed bringing the mat to the local park when it was nice and letting their child play outside.”



In terms of negative feedback, some parents/guardians told practitioners that felt they did not have enough floor space in accommodation centres to use the play mats. The Covid-19 pandemic also had a negative impact on practitioners engaging with parents/guardians in relation to the Project.

“Parents felt that they did not have enough room in their accommodation for the mats.”

Recommend My Place to Play Project to other parents/guardians

Practitioners were asked if they would recommend My Place to Play Project to other parents/guardians in the future. 94.4% of practitioners said they would recommend My Place to Play Project to other parents/guardians. Only 5.6% of practitioners said they would not recommend it to other parents/guardians.

Supporting practice with parents/guardians with children

Practitioners were asked if My Place to Play Project supported their practice with parents/guardians of young children in any way. Over two thirds (68.6%) of practitioners agreed the Project supported their practice with parents/guardians, whereas 31.4% of practitioners did not agree.

According to practitioners, the main way in which the My Place to Play Project supported their practice with parents of young children was by increasing interactions with parents/guardians, helping develop relationships with parents/guardians and imparting knowledge on the importance and benefits of play and tummy time. The Project gave practitioners the opportunity to get to know parents/guardians, learn more about the needs of parents/guardians and their children and to discuss important child developmental issues with parents/guardians in an informal and non-judgmental manner. It also allowed parents/guardians to discuss issues they may have concerns about in relation to their children and to ask questions and seek information in an informal way. Some practitioners said it made them more confident to discuss issues such as tummy time and flat head syndrome with parents/guardians.

“The programme helps me to get to know, reach out and connect with the participants, especially the mothers and the babies.”

“It allowed me to easily open the conversation about the importance of play and tummy time with parents in a positive way. I believe parents did not feel as though I was judging their parenting.”

What works well about My Place to Play Project

According to practitioners, what works well about My Place to Play Project, from the most to the least commonly identified were:

- It encourages play and tummy time for babies and promotes development
- It creates a dedicated space for babies to play in accommodation centres with limited space
- It encourages interactive play between parents/guardians and their babies
- The mat and toys are colourful, enjoyable and encourage babies to play
- It is practical, easy to fold away, store and move around
- It helps create a bond between parents/guardians and babies
- It works well for new parents/guardians
- The materials used in the mat and toys are of good quality
- The information leaflets can be used by parents/guardians as a reference tool
- It works well across different cultures and backgrounds
- It is free to parents/guardians.

“It’s such a nice way to encourage tummy time, play time and a very positive way to engage parents with these issues.”

“Parents found it very useful to have somewhere they could lay their babies for tummy time that is familiar to them and easily cleaned with nice colours.”

“I feel that it works brilliantly as it is an early intervention that can be used with any parent regardless of culture or background.”

Main challenges related to My Place to Play Project

Practitioners were asked what they considered to be the main challenges related to My Place to Play Project. The main challenge highlighted by practitioners was encouraging parents/guardians to use the play mat on

a regular basis. The next most identified challenge was engaging parents/guardians initially to take part in the Project. The next most discussed challenge was a lack of floor space to use the play mat for some parents/guardians. Some practitioners also identified Covid-19 as a challenge related to My Place to Play Project. Challenges related to Covid-19 included restrictions on close contact and communication with parents/guardians.

Other challenges identified by practitioners included:

- Siblings using the toys instead of babies
- Older siblings sometimes playing a role in minding babies
- Cultural differences, e.g. lack of emphasis on the importance of play in some cultures.

“Some parents are too busy and don’t want to hear reminders about babies’ tummy time.”

“Getting the residents in the Direct Provision Centre to engage, one parent out of seven showed up.”

“At this time, Coronavirus meant I was unable to spend as much time/be in close contact with families as I would have liked.”

Suggestions and improvements

The most common suggestions and improvements identified by practitioners related to the play mat. Improvements to the play mat included making it brighter, softer, more padded, including cross bars to hang toys off and a plastic cover under the mat.

“I would like to have seen the mats made in bright cheery rainbow colours and made in a soft fabric and not the plain beige and a hard fabric that could irritate soft skin and would be easily stained. I would also like to see the addition of cross bars that toys could be dangled from to encourage baby to reach for toys etc.”

Other suggestions made by practitioners related to the Project included:

- Including more toys in the play mat
- More advice on how to introduce the Project to parents/guardians
- Consider developing a follow on Project for toddlers
- Ensure the Project continues into the future
- Paper based evaluation surveys for parents/guardians.

“I think the Project is fantastic, perhaps an older step up programme could be added for toddlers.”

“I feel that the agencies involved have really achieved a great programme with My Place to Play and my only hope is that this programme will continue to run as I feel the benefits to parents and their children will be amazing.”

Findings of Survey of Parents/Guardians

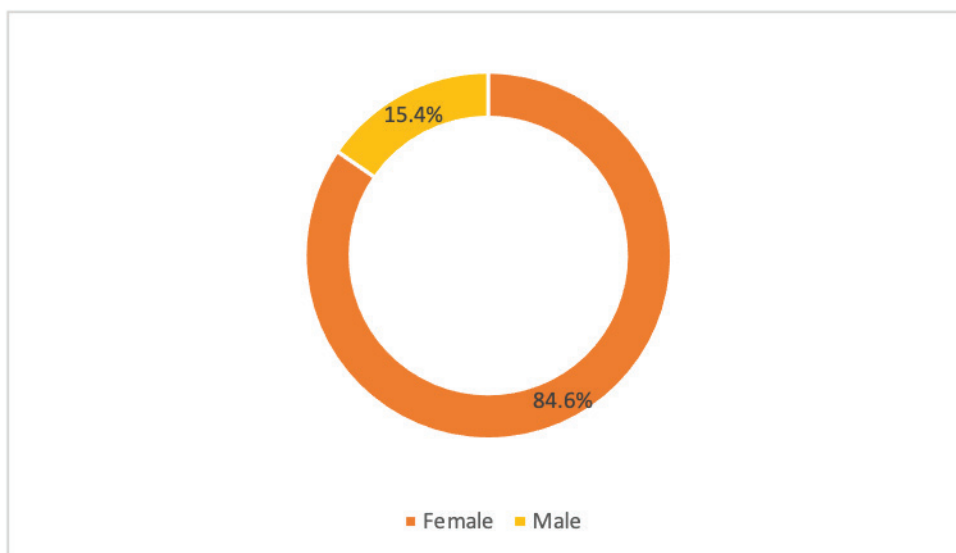
Introduction

This chapter details the findings of an online survey conducted with parents/guardians who participated in the My Place to Play Project.

Respondent profiles

A total of 52 parents/guardians completed the online survey. This represents 21% of all parents/guardians who participated in the Project. In terms of gender, 84.6% of parents/guardians were female and 15.4% were male (see Figure 6 below).

Figure 6: Gender of parents/guardians who completed the survey



Respondents from international protection accommodation centres based in the following counties completed the survey:

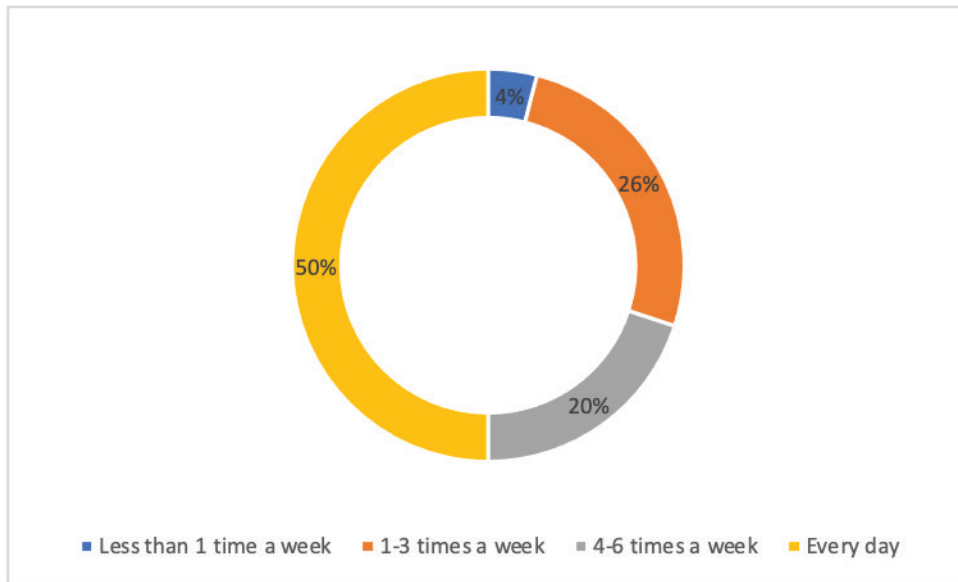
- Cork
- Donegal
- Kerry
- Kildare
- Limerick
- Louth
- Meath
- Offaly
- Waterford
- Westmeath
- Wicklow



Frequency of use of play mat

Parents/guardians were asked how many times a week they used the My Place to Play mat. As can be seen from Figure 7 below, half (50%) of parents/guardians reported using the mat every day, 26% used it 1 – 3 times per week, 20% used it 4 – 6 times a week and 4% used it less than once a week.

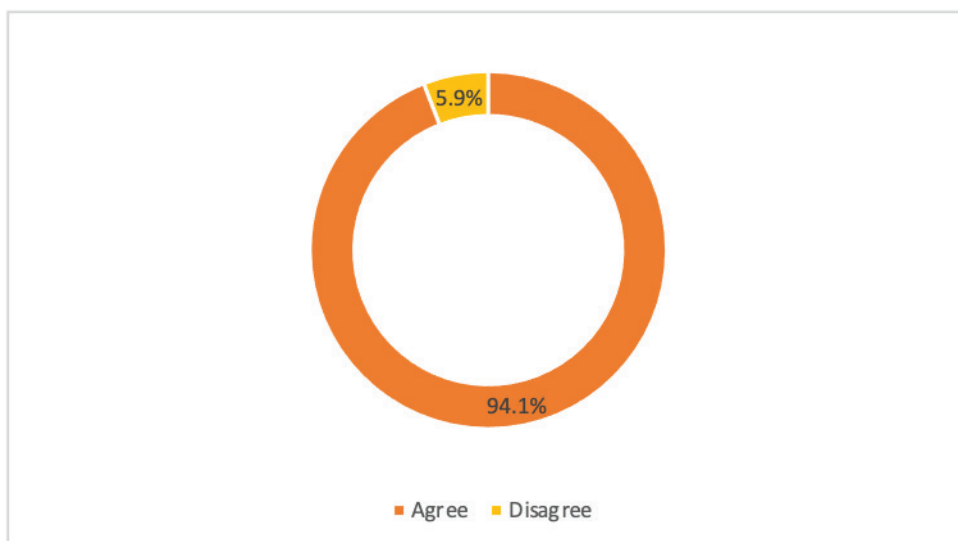
Figure 7: Frequency of use of play mat



Does the play mat help parents/guardians play with their baby?

Parents/guardians were asked if they thought the play mat made it easier for them to play with their baby. Overall, 94.1% of parents/guardians agreed that the play mat made it easier for them to play with their baby, while 5.9% disagreed (see Figure 8 below).

Figure 8: Do you think the play mat makes it easier to play with your baby?



How does the play mat help parents/guardians play with their baby?

Parents/guardians who agreed the play mat makes it easier to play with their baby were asked to explain how it helped.

Clean, comfortable and safe space for babies

According to parents/guardians, the most common way the play mat makes it easier for them to play with their babies is by providing a clean, comfortable, safe large space for them to play. Some parents/guardians also commented that the play mat creates a space for babies which is their own and gives them a sense of ownership.

“Carpet is not always clean therefore, the mat provides a cleaner space for my baby to play and sit.”

“Play mat is comfort for a baby to lie, sit or crawl.”

“This (play mat) gives them (babies) their own space to enjoy.”

Encourages baby’s development

The next most common way in which the play mat helps parents/guardians play with their babies was encouraging the baby’s development. Parents/guardians talked about the play mat and toys helping their babies in relation to fine and gross motor skills such as crawling and sitting as well as social and emotional skills. Respondents also said the play mat helped babies to enjoy tummy time more which helps their development.

“It helps him (baby) to be more focused on things he wants and push him to move to get them.”

“My baby looks at himself in the mirror and he laughs, he sings with the maracas, he looks at the drawings on the mat while talking sometimes he shouts.”

“The toys in the mat help to know their face, to reach, stretch and start crawling. Baby enjoys tummy time on it.”

Keeps babies active and entertained

The next most frequently mentioned way in which the play mat makes it easier for parents/guardians to play with babies was that the play mat keeps babies active, entertained and engaged for long periods of time. Parents/guardians talked about their babies being “fascinated” with the play mat and toys and “loving” spending time playing on it.

“She (baby) is fascinated by the toys and the play mat they come with.”

“Baby spend time playing. Keep baby active.”

Encourages play and bonding between parents/guardians and babies

Parents/guardians also highlighted the way in which the play mat encourages parents/guardians to get down on the mat and play with their baby, have fun with their baby and also helps create a bond with their baby.

"I can get down on the floor and play with her (baby) we have great fun."

"Helps my child to stay focused and improves our bond."

Other ways in which the play mat makes it easier for parents/guardians to play with their babies included:

- The play mat is handy, practical, easy to pack and store and keeps toys in the one place
- The wide range of colourful and interesting toys keeps babies curious in terms of exploring new items
- Parents/guardians can use toys to soothe their babies, e.g. the rattle.

"All the toys are being contained within the mat and not dispersed in the room."

"Because it (play mat) collects a lot of games and opening them every day gives curiosity about the games that are inside."

"When he (baby) is crying I give him the rattle."

Information on tummy time and the importance of play

Two thirds (69.4%) of parents/guardians received information on tummy time and 30.6% received information on the importance and benefits of play.

Parents/guardians were asked what did they find most helpful about the information they received on tummy time and the importance and benefits of play. Overall, parents/guardians found the information they received helpful, easy to read and liked the images that were used in the information materials. Some parents/guardians said the information helped them learn things they did not already know. One parent/guardian said the information helped them understand how important their baby's happiness is while living in international protection accommodation.

"It told me stuff I did not know."

"The importance of the child's happiness inside the centre."

Tummy time

Parents/guardians found the following information on the importance of tummy time to be helpful:

- How tummy time helps babies develop their muscles, e.g. neck, back, arm and leg muscles
- How tummy time helps develop balance, coordination and core strength in babies
- How tummy time can help babies develop motor skills
- How long and how frequently to do tummy time with babies

- How tummy time can be a fun playtime for babies
- How tummy time is better for babies than always lying down

“Tummy time helps with baby’s motor skills and prepare her to sit and crawl.”

“I need to make sure that my baby lay down on her tummy at least 15 minutes a day in a different times.”

Importance and benefits of play

Parents/guardians highlighted the following aspects of information on the importance and benefits of play as being helpful:

- How play can help parents/guardians bond with their babies
- How play can help babies develop their cognitive skills
- How play can help babies develop their motor skills
- How play can be a fun way for babies to develop

“Playtime is important because it helps them (babies) develop their skills and brain.”

“It helped me because I get time to bond with my baby.”

Most helpful part of the play mat

Parents/guardians were asked what they think has been the most helpful part of the play mat. According to the majority of parents/guardians, all parts of the play mat are helpful. The most to the least commonly mentioned individual aspects of the play mat that parents/guardians find helpful were:

- It creates a clean, safe and healthy space for babies to play
- It is easy to pack up, store and use in different spaces
- It helps babies’ development including tummy time
- The toys, e.g. rattle (maracas) and mirror
- It keeps babies engaged, active and encourages independent play
- The toys and design of the mat are colourful and appealing to babies
- It helps parents/guardians bond with their babies
- It encourages siblings to play with babies
- It helps parents/guardians by keeping babies occupied.

“It’s a good deal healthier and safer for my baby to lie on a play mat rather than the floor.”

“I liked that it can be folded and also used as a bag. My baby recognises the mat and he knows he will get toys and its play time... very happy.”

“The toys inside it helped him for sound and mirror to recognise their faces which they enjoy most.”

“Encourage my baby to reach and grasp toys nearby; encourages fast crawling helping the child learn.”

“Playing with my baby and bonding with him.”

Would parents/guardians recommend the play mat

Almost all parents/guardians (96%) said they would recommend the play mat to other parents/guardians. The main reasons parents/guardians would recommend the play mat, from the most to the least frequently mentioned were:

- The play mat helps babies' development, e.g. motor skills, crawling
- The play mat creates a comfortable, clean and safe space to play for babies which is their own
- The play mats support tummy time for babies
- It encourages parents/guardians to play with their babies
- The play mat helps parents/guardians bond with their babies
- The play mat is easy to pack up, store and move around
- It is a helpful resource when living in accommodation centres with little space
- The play mat is free
- The play mat reminds parents/guardians of the importance of tummy time and play
- The play mat encourages parents/guardians to put babies on the floor to play more often.

“The play mat is your baby's first place to learn and discover and also help develop their neck muscles in preparation for crawling and eventually walking.”

“Play mat with toys helps the baby to have own space to play.”

“Whenever you see the mat and the toys it will remind you that the baby needs tummy time and play time.”

“That it has been helpful while playing with the kids in this environment.”

What would parents/guardians change about the play mat

Parents/guardians were asked if there was anything they would change about the play mat. The vast majority of parents/guardians said there was nothing they would change about the play mat, with some describing it as “perfect.” However, the most common change suggested by parents/guardians was to make the size of the play mat bigger. Some parents/guardians also highlighted their need for a bigger space in accommodation centres to use the play mat.

“Only the size of it. Can be a little bit bigger as they grow.”

“A bigger space only for me to put the mat.”

Other changes to the play mat suggested by parents/guardians included:

- To make the play mat softer
- To include more toys, e.g. musical toys
- To make the borders of the play mat higher, e.g. to support babies who are sitting
- To make the play mat thicker so it stays in place and babies can't grab it
- To include a head support on the play mat
- To change how the play mat closes.

Other comments

Parents/guardians were asked if they had any other comments about the play mat. The majority of parents/guardians were very grateful for the play mat and the information provided with it. Respondents described the play mat as “a great idea”, “a great accessory” and “a nice surprise.” Many parents/guardians talked about how much their babies enjoyed playing on the play mat and how it helped their development. Parents/guardians also found the information given with the play mat “very helpful” and informative, particularly in relation to tummy time.

“I am very, very happy with the mat, the mat is very helpful, thanks a million.”

“I wish to thank you. One of the toys became my son’s favourite because he can chew on it. He always goes to sleep with it in his hand.”

Finally, respondents emphasised how it was important they feel it is for other parents/guardians living in international protection accommodation to receive the play mat and information in the future.

“Just to continue to give the parents the play mat, because it’s helpful for the babies to learn and develop.”

“I am thankful for getting it and I hope more of the mothers can have it and learn about tummy time.”



Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Overall, this review found that the My Place to Play Project worked very well and had many positive impacts on babies, families, practitioners and organisations involved in the Project. While the aim of the Project is to promote the importance of play, increase developmental activities for babies, and encourage parent-child bonding, the impacts of the Project were more far-reaching.

One of the key aspects of the Project that worked well was the creation of a safe, clean, comfortable space for babies to play while living in international protection accommodation with limited space. The creation of a familiar space for babies to play not only encouraged play and development, it also created a space for babies which was their own, reassured parents/guardians their baby was playing and developing in a safe and healthy way, helped parents/guardians interact and bond with their babies, helped parents/guardians occupy their babies and helped relieve stress.

While My Place to Play Project helped practitioners engage with parents/guardians about the importance of play and tummy time in an informal and non-judgmental way, it also helped practitioners in other aspects of their work with families with small children living in international protection accommodation. The Project facilitated the development of positive relationships between practitioners and parents/guardians. This enabled parents/guardians to seek information and advice on other child development and family related issues and supported practitioners to address relevant issues. The Project was also found to be particularly beneficial for young parents/guardians.

The review found the interagency aspect of this Project and the collaboration of the Project via CYPSC was very important in relation to its development, implementation and success. The Project demonstrated the evolving role of CYPSC to innovate locally, learn and spread good practice nationally. Some of the key stakeholders had worked together in the past, built up trust and showed a real willingness to work together to advance the Project. The wide range of knowledge and various important skillsets which the Project Oversight Group brought to the Project was essential to its success. The Project highlighted the importance of organisations engaging with children and families living in international protection accommodation and created positive links between organisations which will also be useful in terms of future engagement.

Finally, the review shows that the My Place to Play Project is an impactful project model that could offer sustainable mainstream family support to families living in accommodation with limited space; for example, for families living in homeless hubs or temporary accommodation such as refuges. The Project could be adopted by services supporting the development of babies in their crucial formative years and by other services that provide accommodation to families with babies. As the My Place to Play Project is aligned with the national outcomes outlined in “Better Outcomes Brighter Futures the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People” and in the Aistear curriculum framework it has the capacity to positively impact on child development in the general population.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn from the research findings:

Future of the Project

- My Place to Play Project should be continued into the future for families living in international protection accommodation to support realisation of the draft National Standards for Direct Provision Centres, i.e. Standard 4.5: The accommodation centre has adequate and accessible facilities, including dedicated child friendly, play and recreation facilities.
- My Place to Play Project should continue to be replicated for other families living in accommodation with limited space such as families living in homeless hubs and emergency accommodation.

Follow-on project for toddlers

- A follow-on project to My Place to Play Project should be developed for toddlers if possible.

Future running of the Project

- Identify a lead agency/department to support sustainability.
- CYPSC should have a strategic role in the future running of the Project.
- Other relevant organisations for example but not exclusively, IPAS, HSE, Tusla should work in collaboration with CYPSC in the future running of the Project at a local level.

Future funding of the Project

- The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the Department of Health or its designates should consider funding the Project for sustainability.

Briefing session

- Where a briefing session must be delivered online an example play mat and materials should be delivered to practitioners before the briefing session if possible so they can familiarise themselves with them and have them on hand during the session.
- The briefing session should emphasise the availability of support materials for practitioners and how and where to access them.
- Consideration should be given to the sustainability of the model for delivery of briefings, via a nominated department / service adequately funded to provide project oversight. This might include:
 - Capacity building – Utilise a nominated agency with suitable child development expertise to implement a My Place to Play train-the-trainer programme across the country in order to expand the local availability and accessibility of the MPTP briefing sessions. For example, this training could be provided by the Early Learning Initiative who could potentially provide biannual update days for the trainers.
 - Blended learning – provide an online training platform/standardised recorded version of the briefing session to include background and introduction to the My Place to Play

materials combined with one live briefing session (online or in-person) accommodating the opportunity for practitioners to engage in a real-time Questions and Answers session with child development experts.

- Establish a central My Place to Play database of trained practitioners in order to maximise the investment in upskilling practitioners and to support the iterative and continued roll out of My Place to Play.
- Ensure and secure a supply of My Place to Play resources by regularly monitoring resource stocks centrally. Ideally the nominated lead organisation would oversee this process as a complimentary responsibility to MPTP capacity building.

Peer support

- The Project should consider engaging parents/guardians who have previously participated in the Project in international protection accommodation to offer peer support and help introduce the Project to other parents/guardians living in the same centre.
- Peer support could be offered by parents/guardians to help other parents/guardians use the play mat on a regular basis, overcome language barriers, complete evaluation forms and generally nurture a self-sustaining support environment.

Play mat and materials

- The following suggestions were made to improve the play mat: make it bigger, brighter, softer, more padded and have a plastic cover on the bottom side.
- More toys should be included in the play mat, e.g. musical toys.
- Translated materials should be used and emphasised more by practitioners.

Evaluation forms

- Evaluation forms for the project should be made available to parents/guardians in hard copies.



Appendix A

My Place to Play Project Review: Questions for key stakeholders

1. What is your role/the role of your organisation in the Project?
2. How did you/your organisation get involved in the Project?
3. What do you think works well about the Project?
4. What are the key benefits of the Project for babies and parents?
5. What are the key challenges related to the Project?
6. What are the key challenges in relation to practitioner’s/project workers?
7. What could be improved about the Project?
8. In relation to the briefing session, what do you think worked well and what could be improved about it?
9. What works well and what could be improved about the post-implementation survey for practitioners?
10. What works well and what could be improved about the post-implementation survey for parents?
11. How well does the interagency aspect of the Project work?
12. What does interagency aspect add to the overall Project?
13. How does the Project support the National Standards on Refugee Accommodation for providers, e.g. Standard 4.5: The accommodation centre has adequate and accessible facilities, including dedicated child friendly, play and recreation facilities?
14. How could the Project be further developed to support Standard 4.5 in the future?
15. What would the Project look like in the future if it was to be run again?
16. What resources, e.g. time/staffing/funding, would be needed to run the Project efficiently in the future?
17. What organisation should lead the Project in the future?
18. What organisation should fund the Project in the future?
19. Do you have any other comments or suggestions in relation to the Project?

Appendix B

1. My Place to Play Project Review: Practitioner's Survey

1. Name of your organisation: _____

2. Name of IPAS Accommodation where you have distributed mats: _____

3. Number of mats distributed by you: _____

4. Number of parents you reached: _____

5. Did you find the briefing session about My Place to Play Mat useful?

Yes

No

6. Is there anything you would change to improve the briefing session? _____

Please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

7. My Place to Play provided parents with valuable learning opportunities.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Not Sure

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

8. My Place to Play provided parents with more opportunities to play with their children.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Not Sure

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

9. My Place to Play provided parents with increased awareness of the importance of play.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Not Sure

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

10. My Place to Play provided parents with increased awareness of the importance of tummy time.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Not Sure

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

11. My Place to Play provided parents with increased awareness of the prevalence of flat head.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Not Sure

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

12. Did My Place to Play have any other impacts on the parents?

Yes

No

13. If you answered yes, please specify. _____

14. What feedback have you received from parents about the My Place to Play mat and the information provided with it?

15. Would you recommend the My Place to Play mat for other parents?

Yes

No

16. Did My Place to Play support your practice with parents of young children in any way?

Yes

No



17. If you answered yes, please specify. _____

18. In your opinion, what about My Place to Play works well?

19. What are the main challenges related to My Place to Play?

20. Are there any suggestions or improvements you think should be made?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Appendix C

My Place to Play Project Review: Parent's/Guardian's Survey

1. Are you:

Male Female

2. What Centre do you live in? _____

3. How many times a week do/did you use the My Place to Play mat?

Less than 1 time a week

1-3 times a week

4-6 times a week

Everyday

4. Do you think the play mat makes it easier to play with your baby?

Yes No

5. If you answered yes, how? _____

6. Did you receive information on:

Tummy time

The importance and benefits of play

7. What did you find most helpful about the information you received? _____

8. What do you think has been the most helpful part of the My Place to Play mat? _____

9. Would you recommend the play mat to other parents?

Yes No

10. If you answered yes, what would you say to the other parents? _____

11. Is there anything you would change about the play mat? _____

12. Do you have any other comments or suggestions about the My Place to Play mat?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey

Sandra Roe
Research



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

**CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS
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Uniting Voices For Children



CYPSC
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEES
Dublin City North

Early Learning Initiative
National College of Ireland

KHF KATHARINE
HOWARD
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TÚSLA
An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency