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

The Cork to Dublin train passes our play school every day and because of this trains are of great interest to the children. They play a lot of train games and so one day we asked the children if they would like to make a train. They were thrilled with the idea. We decided to use cardboard boxes to make the train and we painted it blue because Thomas the Tank Engine is a blue train.

We left the train to dry overnight and the next day we talked about the things that happen on the train. People need tickets, said Lilly so the children made tickets and used toy money to board the train. The conductor collects the tickets and the waiter delivers tea to the passengers on board! said Leanne. My mom bought a sandwich on a train once, said Cathal. The train driver drives the train on the railway tracks, said Maurice.
One morning we went outside to look at the train as it passed during school time. We talked about the flashing red lights that are at the level crossing and how important it is to always follow the rules of the road to keep ourselves safe.

We wondered about the people on the train and where they might be going and why. We talked to the children about passenger trains and freight trains and what these terms meant.

The children acted out things the passengers do while on board the train like reading and talking on their phones.

Another day we talked to the children about the trains that pass outside the playschool. We decided to check the train times on the internet timetable and made a note of each time the train passes the playschool.
We continue to provide the children with train puzzles, music and books to enhance their knowledge of trains.

**Ideas to extend the children’s learning**

- Plan a trip on a real train with parents.
- Provide picture and factual books on trains.
- Organise small group activities where children get the opportunity to use the new train-related vocabulary again, for example train art, train games, small world play.
- Learn a new song or nursery rhyme about trains.

This experience also links to:
*Identity and Belonging*, Aim 2, Learning goals 5 and 6
*Communicating*, Aim 3, Learning goals 2 and 5

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

We felt this was a really worthwhile learning experience. The children showed great interest in trains and enjoyed imaginative play with their cardboard train for several weeks after it was made.

The children’s vocabulary around the topic of trains increased, for example timetable, passenger train, freight train, passenger, conductor. Some children were very familiar with these words while others were not so we had to make a special effort to use them until everyone was familiar with them.

We are now very tuned in to the times that the train passes and often go out to wave.