

Choose Play case study



Stories from the hammock

A boy relaxing in a hammock while chatting with a Play Ranger suddenly jumps up. He's a butterfly emerging from a cocoon. He runs around, flapping his arms as wings but it's too soon. He returns to the hammock to swing and chat then repeats this play, running and flapping his arms, returning to the hammock. When he says he is now transformed into a butterfly, the Play Ranger offers some fabric and the boy continues to fly around, playing with the fabric.

The following week, the hammock is a spaceship. As the hammock swings, the straps make a creaking sound. The boy is worried; the spaceship needs a repair! The boy tentatively eases out of the hammock to make the repair. He's also worried about space crocodiles. The Play Ranger hides behind a tree, waiting to be the space crocodile. When chased, the boy laughs and dashes back to the hammock. He stays there for a long time, chatting with the Play Ranger about the planets he's passing, how he has prepared for the journey and finally that he needs to return home as he's missing his family.

Each week, the boy arrives at the play session running gleefully and shouting the names of Play Rangers. He usually heads straight for a hammock and alternates relaxing, active play and chatting, often with a story woven through and developing throughout the session, sometimes over several weeks. At times, the boy shares that he is sad, he's finding things difficult at home but he doesn't want to talk about it - it's nice to be here, playing and chatting.

Observations of play reveal complex narratives, children making sense of the world and building positive, trusting relationships with Play Rangers. Choose Play captures these observations through online monitoring forms after each session and regular staff meetings. This approach supports Play Rangers to develop a reflective practice and respond to children's ideas. It also values the significant and positive impact Play Rangers have in children's lives and supports staff to realise this.

Details have been changed to preserve anonymity.