GENERAL INFORMATION ON DRESSING

By one year your child should be able to help you as you dress them by pushing their arms and legs through items of clothing. By 2 years they should be able to remove an unfastened jacket.

By 2 ½ years they can put on easy clothing such as a jacket or open front shirts without zipping/buttoning.

By the age of 3 they should be able to assist with zipping and unzipping and separating the zip at the bottom of a jacket. Between the ages of 3-4 your child should be able to put their hands through both armholes and down the sleeves in front opening clothing (e.g. jacket). They should also be able to take the same item off completely.

By 4 years old children should be able to get their clothes on and off independently but will not be able to manage fastenings (e.g. zips and buttons) for another year or two.

HINTS AND TIPS

- Involve your child in the un/dressing process as early as possible.
- It is much easier for your child to learn how to undress before dressing. Therefore practice taking clothes off first.
- Loose-fitting clothing is easier to manage than tight fitting clothing. Start with pajamas or clothes that are too big. Try tighter fitting clothing once your child is confident putting on loose fitting clothing.
- Ensure your child is in the right position for the task at hand. Sitting on the floor, on a chair or on the bed can help. Your child will feel well supported and be able to use their hands freely.
- Children learn in different ways so you might need to vary your approach. There are a number of ways in which you can help;
  - Physically assist your child (Use the hand-over-hand technique, take your child’s hand down to their sock, let them grasp the sock then put your hand over theirs while you pull the sock off).
  - Show your child – do the task alongside your child.
  - Tell your child – talk your child through each step of the process.

You can use each of these ways individually or any combination depending on what suits your child. Please be aware that some children cannot look and listen at the same time so limit the amount of information you giving.
• A good way to teach your child how to get dressed is to break down each task into small steps and teach him the last step first. This technique is called backward chaining (more information is available see below). Once they can do the last step of the task, teach them the second-last step, then the third-last step and so on.

• If your child is struggling it can be tempting to take over. Give your child time to work it out for themselves and give loads of encouragement. If necessary, talk them through what to do and only intervene if they get really stuck. It is often better to practice these things when you are not in a rush so weekend mornings are better than when you are rushing out to nursery/work.

• Instead of automatically correcting a mistake (e.g. twisted collar or button incorrectly matched) why not encourage your child to look in the mirror and get them to identify the problem. You may need to ask them some questions to focus their attention.

• Take your time and be consistent. Learning a new skill takes time so persevere with giving support until you feel that the child is making progress.

• Practice, practice, practice! Give your child opportunities for practice every day.