**Importance of textures during exploration and play**

Different textures can sometimes be tricky during messy play, especially if your child is sensitive to how things look, smell or feel. Their reaction to a texture might change from day to day- something they enjoy one day might upset them the next. With gentle and regular exposure, children can slowly learn to feel more comfortable.

We can think about textures in a few different ways:

* Dry, firm textures are often easier for children because they are predictable.
* Soft, dry materials vary greatly in texture. For example, a car sponge, cloud dough, soft bread buns, or a squeezed blueberry all feel different and unpredictable.
* Powdery materials like pavement chalk, fine play sand, flour, and icing sugar can leave a residue on hands, which some children find difficult.
* Slippery items such as cold sliced meats, cut fruits and vegetables, oiled pasta, and objects in soapy water are often harder to control and can leave a film on the skin.
* Tacky materials like bread dough, softer biscuit mix, mashed potato, softer play dough, and air-dry clay feel sticky and can be hard to remove from hands.
* Purées and smooth wet substances like yoghurt, custard, tomato sauce, and very wet fine play sand are more challenging than dry textures for many children.
* Sticky and gooey substances such as honey, chocolate spread, cheese spread, icing, glue, and mud are often challenging due to the sensation on the skin and the effort needed to clean it off.
* Slimy semi-liquids like chopped jelly, play slime, mud and water, and finger paint may be perceived as disgusting.
* Mixed textures, such as thicker liquids or purées with lumps or bits, are often more difficult for children than single textures.
* Textures that change when interacted with, like a mashed banana, melted chocolate button, or crumbling biscuit, can be confusing as they look and feel completely different after interaction.

Understanding these texture categories can help in planning activities that gradually introduce children to a variety of textures.