**Children’s Community Occupational Therapy**

**Handwriting – Pencil Pressure**

What is it? The ability to create the right amount of pressure whilst writing.

Why is it important? If pencil pressure is too hard, this can cause pain and fatigue in the hands and can increase the amount of time it takes to write. If pencil pressure is too light it can be difficult to read.

Many children struggle to monitor pressure through their limbs due to what is termed poor proprioception (inner body awareness), therefore we need to help the child

to develop an awareness of the amount of pressure placed through the limbs.

How you can help:

Heavy Pressure:

* Regularly undertake a series of exercises whereby pressure is placed through the upper limbs, ie crawling games, wheelbarrows, ladies press-ups, elephant walks etc. these should ideally be incorporated into a daily schedule.
* Provide a light-up pen which can be bought cheaply from stationery shops. Challenge the child to write so that the light does not come on.
* Play a game of MI5; provide a pad created by placing a layer of paper alternately with carbon paper. Ask the child to write a secret message so that only one agent can read it. Initially the pressure may make the child write so that the message can be seen on 3 or 4 copies, but by encouraging the child to self-monitor, pressure will reduce.
* Use a hard leaded pencil such as HB so that writing is not easily smudged.

Light Pressure:

* Provide an angled board. The angle should be approximately 25°. This will ensure that the wrists are positioned on the writing surface.
* Provide weighted wrist-bands which would provide additional sensory feedback to the wrist area, increasing the child’s awareness of their hand, wrist and arm position.
* Lower the table slightly to that the hips are flexed more than 90°. This enables the child toobtain the assistance of body weight to assist with pressure through the writing instrument.
* Use softer leaded pencils such as 2B so writing
* Do activities such as leaf rubbings with crayons to help a child increase pressure
* Play the MI5 game as above but turn it around and see how many copies the message can be written on