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Your Wellness

Special toys that may appeal to the special child in your life

Eleven Irish businesses with a variety of options for those looking for gifts for children with physical and/or mental needs

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A Harvey Wheelchair from littleangelrose.com

Damian Cullen
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Buying Christmas presents for children can be an arduous, stressful task – and it seems to get harder each year as the recipients get older. Choosing gifts for those with special needs . . . well, that can be

even more difficult.

The good news is that there are many Irish businesses who cater for parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts and grandparents looking for something fun for a special child. Buying a present is tricky. So, while some businesses focus entirely on children with extra needs, while for others it's a mix. Either way, there are, hopefully, sufficient businesses out there to satisfy all children. It's worth noting that, while just a short time ago it was very difficult to find specialised toys, today the situation is much better. Most will have products that appeal to your pride and joy.

To give you a little help, and maybe some inspiration, here are a few businesses that caught our eye that may appeal to those looking for toys for children with physical and/or mental needs.

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A non-profit provider of affordable and accessible early intervention services for children with additional needs. Sensational Kids has a really interesting shop that is full of specialised gifts

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(in  er €10).

Big Feelings Pineapple.

The charity – which has a child development centre in each province: Kildare Town; Claremorris, Co Mayo; Clones, Co Monaghan; and Clonakilty, Co Cork – offers many gifts for children with extra needs. The range includes Big Feelings Pineapple (€13), where you use the 26 different pieces to help children learn about how emotions and facial expressions show what people are feeling, and a Scooter Board (€33), ideal for upper extremity strengthening, movement, motor planning and vestibular activities.

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([See sensationalkids.ie](https://sensationalkids.ie)).

Munchy Play



Started in 2020 by Sophia Procter, the mother of a fussy eater, Munchy Play is based on a very simple idea. The plates feature a built-in track for toy trains and cars, which makes mealtimes more fun for the child and, hopefully, less stressful for the parent.

There's a Thomas & Friends train plate collection, and (new for Christmas 2022) the Hot Wheels car plate.

Apart from toddlers, the plates are, apparently, popular with children in the autism and special needs community (and with grown men too probably!).

(See munchyplay.com).

[Aoibheann's Pink Tie](#)

Not a shop, but at this time of year it is worth noting how charities have been central in brightening the lives of children who will not be at home over the Christmas period.



And one certainly deserving of mention is Aoibheann's Pink Tie. Jimmy Norman, whose daughter Aoibheann died from childhood cancer, will as usual hand out presents for the children on St John's Ward in the children's hospital in Crumlin in December.

The presents will include "Survivor Dolls for life". Helped by the "Strip and Dippers" and their [Sea of Change Choir](#), the charity give the bald dolls to the children to help them understand what they are going through because of chemo.

([See aoibheannspinktie.ie](http://aoibheannspinktie.ie)).

Jiminy Eco Toys



Named after Pinocchio's conscience, Jiminy Eco Toys is the brainchild of Dubliner Sharon Keilthy. The site has hundreds of toys and books, including a large number of "Sensory toys".

The collection – all made in Europe and plastic-free to align with the company's eco mission – includes giant bubbles, wooden puzzles and slime.

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n't aimed specifically at children with disabilities or illness, there



Included among the items on offer are a Silicone Stick & Stay Snackplate (€17.95), where foods can be kept separate, and a beautiful wooden music box ferris wheel (€29.99).

(See [pikodo.com](https://www.pikodo.com)).

Discovery Playtime

Is there someone better qualified to choose toys for children with special needs than a primary schoolteacher with a master's in Educational Psychology and a certificate in Therapeutic Play Skills?



Mireia Lopez founded Discovery Playtime in 2017 and the online store offers a big selection of educational, sensory and wooden toys – including LR Sensory Fidget Tubes (€40,95), which offer a
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 so children focus and calm down, and a Trace and Balance Wooden
 Bo improving gross motor skills.

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ds know that buying clothing can be a difficult maze to negotiate –

Sully & Juno – which offers colourful jumpers, leggings, T-shirts and more – opened for business in 2021. The clothing is not specifically aimed at children with autism or sensory processing disorder, but is chosen and designed with sensory needs in mind. For example, there's really useful information included with each item that potential buyers will appreciate – is it soft or rough, light or heavy, etc.



And how small is the clothing tag, or, better still, does it have one at all.

Sometimes it's the little things.

(See [silveradoiuno.ie](https://www.silveradoiuno.ie))

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Another site not specifically for children with extra needs, but with products that suit many children is Cool Food School.

In the online shop, Deirdre Doyle offers safe knives and peelers, which gives children more independence while they make those buns that you're just going to have to eat, no matter how they look.

(See [thecoolfoodschool.ie](https://www.thecoolfoodschool.ie))

Little AngelRose

"Quality, Design, Kindness, Sustainability, Inclusiveness" says the website of Little AngelRose. Whatever about those worthy ambitions, one thing is certain – the products are really beautiful. Among the dolls available for purchase are boys and girls with the facial characteristics of Down syndrome (€37.90), as well as dolls wearing a cochlear implant (€39.90).

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The small Irish company specialises in rattan toys and furniture for dolls, and boho nursery decor, and it promises that the collection is ethically made.

(See littleangelrose.com).

[Cog the Brain Shop](#)

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As the name suggests, the store sells smart and unique toys, puzzles, games and books for all ages – anything to entertain and stimulate the mind. Based at the St Stephen's Green Shopping Centre, Dublin 2, as well as online, it stocks a big selection of sensory toys, such as Crazy Aarons Hide Inside Mixed Emotions Thinking Putty (€15.95).

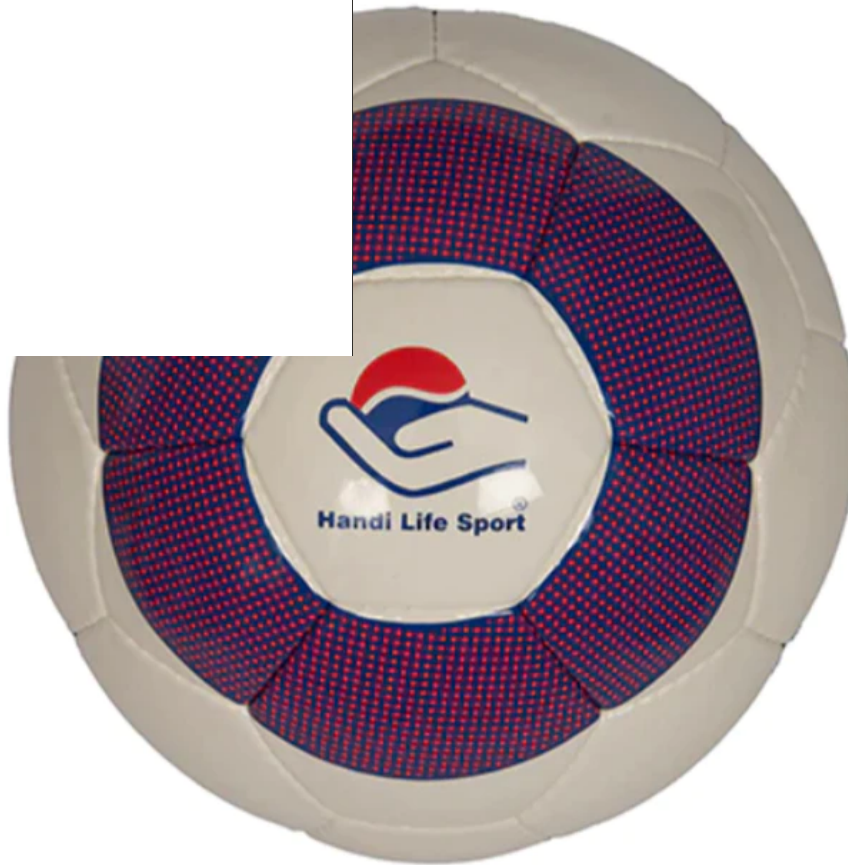
But, in truth, there is much in this store that would appeal to all abilities and needs.

(See cogsthebrainshop.ie).

Thinking Toys

Finally, of course, many of the businesses listed here were founded up by people who have children with special needs. One such Irish company, set up in 2004, is Thinking Toys.

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A soccer ball (€37) with four sound devices inside, which have a distinct rattling sound, particularly useful for someone with impaired vision.

There is, quite simply, an incredible range of products available from the business, which is based in Killaloe, Co Clare – more than 4,000 apparently.

And the category dividers have familiar words to parents of children who have extra needs – sections such as “Suspension”, “Motor Skills”, “Communication”, and “Sitting Aids”.

[. \(See *thinkingtoys.ie*\)](http://thinkingtoys.ie)

Happy shopping.



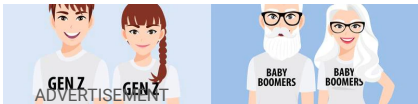
Damian Cullen

Damian Cullen is Health & Family Editor of The Irish Times



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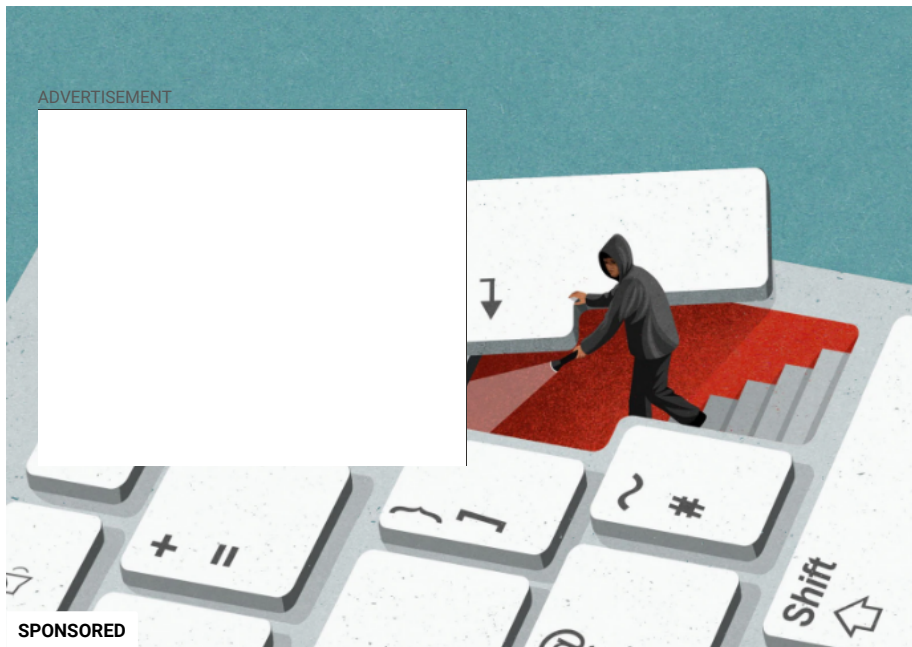


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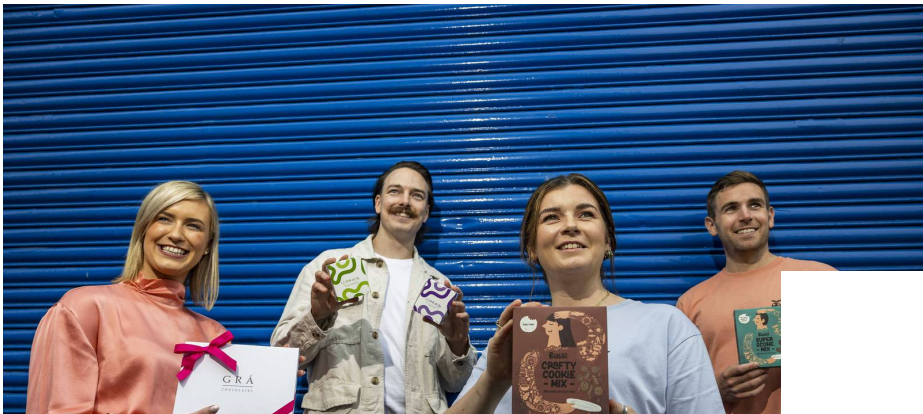


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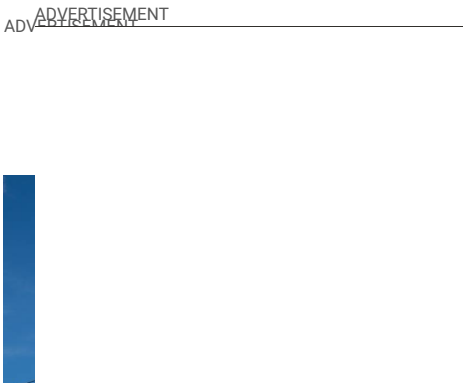
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