



Together We Can and We Will

Guidance for practitioners working with children 0 – 5 years





Foreword

Welcome to **Together We Can and We Will** – our guidance for practitioners working with children in all Early Learning and Childcare settings.

This strategy demonstrates a strong commitment to improving learning opportunities for all of our children and recognises the importance of a high quality early learning experience as an essential ingredient in contributing to and enriching the lives of children and families.

It builds on the many examples of excellent practice that exist within our early years' settings and is designed as a tool to support practitioners as we strive for the best outcomes for our children.

Together We Can and We Will provides clear direction for leaders and practitioners and as is based around three key aspects of learning. I have no doubt that it has the potential to provide an excellent foundation for learning and to help our children meet key developmental milestones. The focus on health and wellbeing, communication and creativity is vital to enable our children to flourish

The strategy also recognises that successful implementation requires ongoing professional learning and provides staff with the opportunity to reflect, discuss and improve their own practice.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all involved in developing the strategy and commend it as an essential tool to ensure that our children have the best possible start to life.

Tony McDaid

Executive Director of Education Resources



Welcome to Together We Can and We Will

“Together We Can and We Will” provides South Lanarkshire Council’s curriculum for Early Learning and Childcare and pedagogical guidance. Curriculum is defined as the totality of experiences delivered within an education setting. This document provides a curriculum alongside guidance which supports the development of pedagogical practice. It reflects Curriculum for Excellence, Pre-Birth to Three, Building the Ambition and current theory/thinking to support practitioners’* confidence in their role and delivery of the curriculum. This document will support our children to become successful learners, effective contributors, confident individuals and responsible citizens.

Together We Can and We Will provides the opportunity to design and deliver a curriculum, where children will lead their learning and practitioners will provide meaningful experiences which reflect children’s interests within stimulating spaces and environments. It considers children’s developmental stages and focuses on the developing baby, toddler and young child and focuses on key aspects of learning. These are identified as **Health and wellbeing, Communication and Creativity**.

- **Health and wellbeing** focuses on children’s emotional, personal, social and physical development.
- **Communication** focuses on children’s language and literacy skills.
- **Creativity** focuses on the development of critical thinking, open-mindedness, curiosity, problem solving and imagination.

Together We Can and We Will identifies learning goals which reflect children’s developmental milestones. These learning goals should be used to plan for children’s learning and should support progression in learning and should be actively promoted to children and families.

In developing this guidance, we aim to clarify specific aspects of practice and to provide a reference and reflective tool for all practitioners. Focus for reflection sections provide opportunities for professional dialogue which should assist settings to develop pedagogy.

The information contained within this document is designed to assist and support all early learning and childcare settings, including local authority, private and the voluntary sector, playgroups, child minders and students to become establishments of distinction who deliver a high quality, flexible curriculum which supports children to reach their full potential. It will also assist improvement, by creating opportunities for discussion and reflective practice. We hope that you find this guidance helpful in assisting you in your journey towards excellence and to get it right for every child by delivering a curriculum of distinction.

** The term practitioner will be used throughout this document and refers to all staff working with children.*



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Section one: Developing pedagogy



Focus on quality

What does a high quality curriculum in early learning and childcare look like?

“Education is always about developing the child. The curriculum is a means of achieving that. We wish to transform each child through a relevant, challenging, meaningful experience. That will require a curriculum that goes beyond knowledge and skills; it will also include values, aspirations and the whole human experience. When we get this right we will provide a curriculum of distinction, which raises each child to distinction.”

Bart McGettrick (August, 2017)

A curriculum of distinction will be firmly based on play and active learning and will ensure equality and equity of opportunity for all. It will be stimulating, innovative and creative, offering rich learning experiences and opportunities for all children. Our children are capable, competent learners; the curriculum we deliver should support them to make very good progress. A high quality curriculum requires practitioners to consider how best to respond to the individual needs of children and families through the use of:

- The learning environment
- Learning experiences and opportunities
- Relationships
- Resources

An effective curriculum reflects children’s interests and is evidenced by their engagement in the experiences offered. Rich, exciting play and learning opportunities must be offered across the setting, taking account of the child, the family and the local community. Practitioners should have high expectations of all children and can ensure progression in learning by using skilful observation and planning appropriate next steps in learning. Learning experiences should provide children with opportunities to practise their skills and explore their environment, both indoors and outdoors. They must consider children’s prior learning, both within and out with the setting, their interests, needs and stage of development.

High quality learning and teaching; and positive outcomes for children and families are the result of having a clear vision, values and aims and a shared pedagogy within the setting. Practitioners should have a clear understanding of the importance of play and how children learn. Building the Ambition clearly tells us “the most effective pedagogy combines both “teaching” (in its widest sense) and providing freely chosen potentially instructive play activities”. Practitioners require a very good knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and should ensure its relevance by responding to children’s interests.

Together We Can and We Will is based on the following principles; The whole child, Secure attachments and positive relationships with children, families and communities, The power of play and Reflective, motivated practitioners. It focuses on three key aspects of learning – **Health and wellbeing**, **Communication** and **Creativity** and identifies learning goals. Practitioners should focus on these when planning for children’s learning. Practitioners should have high expectations for all children and should create stimulating and challenging learning opportunities to ensure progression in learning.

Practitioners should skilfully interact with children to deepen learning, extend thinking and promote their individual creativity. This will allow children to widen their knowledge and skills and will help to consolidate their learning through play. Priority should be given to the development of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This will enable children to develop the skills required for life and learning. All achievements should be celebrated.

Parental engagement in children’s learning and curriculum development should be encouraged and supported. Where additional support needs are identified, practitioners should work closely with all relevant agencies to ensure that learning experiences and opportunities meet the individual needs of children.

Principles of Together We Can and We Will

The four principles of Together We Can and We Will are based on values, beliefs and evidence from current research concerning early childhood pedagogy. They will support practitioners to ensure that every child’s unique circumstances are considered and their learning journey is meaningful, supported and enhanced.

These principles provide the foundations of a high quality curriculum and underpin practice which focuses on supporting children to make progress in relation to the learning goals.

The four overarching principles are:

1. The whole child.
2. Secure attachments and positive relationships.
3. The power of play.
4. Reflective, motivated practitioners.

The whole child

Children's learning and development begins in the home and is influenced by the relationships they have with family, friends and the community in which they live. As children grow they develop their identity and interests and begin to understand the world around them. The curriculum which settings design and deliver should focus on the holistic development of the child. Child development can be thought of as physical, emotional, cognitive and social but when planning for children's learning, these aspects should not be focused on individually. Holistic means looking at the range of qualities a child possesses. Viewing and understanding the child's holistic development allows practitioners to see the child as a unique individual who is keen to learn. Practitioners should value and respect children and recognise and promote their rights and wellbeing.

Children need a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum which reflects their interests and stage of development. Practitioners are required to have an excellent knowledge of children's patterns of development and how children learn. Each child is equipped with a different set of home experiences and personal circumstances, knowledge and skills - practitioners should seek to gather information about the child's life and prior learning and use this to create appropriate learning experiences which support the child's development in all aspects of their life. They should also consider how the vision and values of the setting impact on children's development whilst providing equitable opportunities for learning. Children should be given equal opportunities to succeed (equality). Practitioners should consider social factors such as deprivation, poverty, individual family circumstances and other additional support needs as it is likely that children who experience these factors will require extra help to succeed (equity).



Secure attachments and positive relationships

Developing secure attachments and positive relationships is essential for children to reach their full potential. Children learn best when they are secure in their surroundings; the family home, their community and their early years setting. When they have secure attachments and have developed positive relationships with practitioners, children will confidently try new things, naturally enhancing their learning journey.

All settings are part of a local community and should ensure that they are actively involved in this community. Practitioners should value families as children's first educators and should strive to develop positive working relationships. They should value the information shared by families regarding personal circumstances and children's learning at home and use this information when planning for children.



The power of play

Children learn best when they learn through play. Play provides the opportunity for children to develop skills, knowledge and relationships and allows them to make sense of the world around them. It provides an opportunity for children to practice their skills and to try new things. During play children explore and experiment and test their ideas. When play opportunities reflect children's interests they are more likely to engage meaningfully and become competent and confident in their learning.

Settings should design and provide a play based curriculum which reflects the children's interests and stage of development and allows for uninterrupted play. Practitioners should reflect on children's interests and needs and should develop a rich learning environment, using high quality resources. Spaces and resources should be monitored and adapted to meet the needs of all children. Practitioners should skilfully interact with children during learning opportunities and experiences to develop thinking and enhance learning.



Reflective, motivated practitioners

Reflecting on practice is essential to secure improvement and to ensure that practitioners are meeting the needs of all children. Settings should promote reflective practice on all aspects of the service. Practitioners should reflect on all aspects of their practice and should focus on their interactions with children; considering if they enhanced or interrupted a valuable learning experience or opportunity and what they would do differently in the future.

Reflecting on practice provides practitioners with the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills. Early learning and childcare is ever changing and all practitioners have the responsibility to keep their knowledge and practice up to date. Practitioners who are self motivated, keep up to date with current thinking and research and use what they have learned in practice are the key drivers of high quality settings.

As well as practitioners reflecting on their individual practice, settings should create opportunities for groups of practitioners to reflect together.



Developing pedagogy

Building the Ambition (2014) describes pedagogy as “the interactions and experiences which support the curriculum and the process of how children learn”. Pedagogy is about professional practice and is developed from the values and beliefs held by practitioners. It is enhanced by keeping abreast of current thinking and expectations. Professional judgement is central to the practitioner’s role of effectively meeting children’s learning needs. By reflecting on their practice individually or in teams, practitioners can further develop their pedagogy.

The focus for reflection sections within this document will support practitioners and settings to develop their pedagogy.

Settings should aim to develop pedagogy where respectful relationships are created with children and their families. Working together and sharing and valuing information to design the curriculum will lead to relevant, meaningful learning experiences and opportunities for children. Practitioners should be aware how their personal values and beliefs can impact on children’s learning. Settings should create a shared vision which encompasses its values and aims.

Children require a range of skills, knowledge and understanding to be able to engage in the world around them. They gain this by interacting with their environment and the adults who surround them. Children are active and busy as they explore and try to make sense of what is happening around them. They create their own learning opportunities and essentially create their own curriculum – therefore, should we consider that children are the curriculum who require adults to facilitate opportunities for progression?

Often the curriculum we provide can be what we want children to learn when it should be a reflection and progression of the children’s interests and needs. When practitioners truly respond to children’s interests they can create a meaningful curriculum where children learn effectively and make excellent progress.

The curriculum should be firmly based on play and active learning. Learning experiences and opportunities should be flexible, stimulating, engaging and challenging. This will allow children to practise their skills, explore their world and develop knowledge and understanding. Individual establishments should develop a shared understanding of pedagogy. Practitioners should skilfully interact and question children to develop their thinking, widen their knowledge and consolidate their skills.

By developing their pedagogical practice practitioners can enhance learning for children.

Child development:

How do young children develop and learn?

There are many theories on child development. Jean Piaget considered the child as an active learner who experiments and problem solves, Lev Vygotsky added to this theory by considering the impact of social relationships on development. He identified the ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ where a child can do more with support and through practice achieves new learning. Current research and thinking shows that children’s development and learning is strongly influenced by factors within their environment; relationships within and out with the family, the community in which they live and daily experiences. The diversity of families results in different experiences for each child. Children’s early learning experiences influence their life chances and disposition to learning. As children participate in play and everyday experiences they construct their understanding of the world and their identity.



Current research shows that learning begins in the womb.

“It is estimated that, at birth, a baby’s brain contains thousands of millions of brain cells and some of these are already connected and communicating. Babies start to learn in the womb, particularly in the last trimester. They are born able to recognise familiar sounds and they have already developed some taste preferences. Research has also shown that external influences such as the mother’s emotional experiences during pregnancy can affect the development of the baby’s brain”
O’Donnell, O’Connor and Glover, cited in Pre-Birth To Three, 2010.

Learning through play

“Play is the universal language of childhood, it is an activity which exists for its own sake but also has a fundamental role. All children and young people should have the opportunity to play every day.”

Scottish Government, Play Strategy, 2013.

Young children learn best when they are having fun through play. According to Albert Einstein “Play is the highest form of research”. During play children learn and develop the skills required for learning and living. It provides an opportunity for them to make sense of their world, interact with others, manage their feelings and develop confidence in their abilities as they interact with others, resources and representations. Learning through play assists children to develop a positive disposition to learning by following their interests, exploring and experimenting, being creative and inventive, problem solving and knowing when to ask for help. When children are actively involved in experiences which interest them, opportunities for learning are enhanced. They will learn more effectively, concentrate for longer and meet their own needs. Play helps children to explore their world. It opens up new possibilities in thinking and helps to develop the emotional intelligence that makes their feelings manageable. Play provides meaningful purpose for the child; they understand and see the point of what they are doing and what they are thinking about. It provides children with the opportunity to explore, create, formulate conclusions and stretch themselves to the limit of their capabilities. It allows children to create a sense of self and assists them to develop relationships and communication. Through play children develop empathy and they begin to work out why and how people think differently from themselves and are able to try different ways of doing things. Children are naturally creative in their play; uninterrupted play allows creative skills to develop through exploration, problem-solving, curiosity and open-mindedness.

During play, practitioners take on many different roles and should use a variety of strategies to support learning. They should provide a balance between child led and adult initiated learning and create learning environments where children can explore, create and construct. Practitioners can scaffold children’s learning by using skilful observation and knowing when to interact to enhance learning; allowing children time to explore, problem solve and take risks. They should be given the opportunity to practice their skills and apply them to new situations. They should note children’s interests and abilities and develop these through the creation of exciting learning opportunities. Learning is not only about ‘new’ things; it is also about what children already know and how we can deepen their prior knowledge or skills. Children should be allowed to explore freely to develop their knowledge and skills.

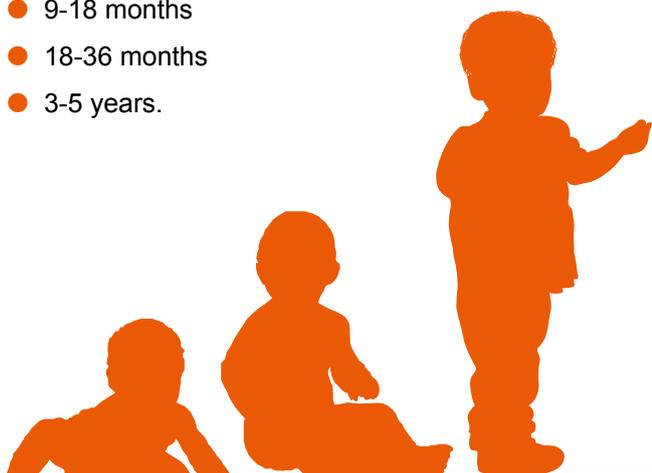
Patterns of development

Child development is complex. Children develop holistically and individually, however they typically develop skills in a particular pattern. Each child is unique and will progress in their own time and in their own way. It is normal for progression to be uneven across different areas of development. Practitioners must take account of the stage of development of each individual child, not just their age.

Practitioners have a key role in creating learning opportunities which will help children to progress in their learning and development. An extensive knowledge and understanding of typical patterns of development is essential to assist them to plan to meet the needs of individual children and to ensure progression. Children typically sit before they walk, babble before talking and scribble before drawing. New learning is built upon previous knowledge and skills. When practitioners fully understand how children learn and patterns of development they can successfully plan, differentiate and provide stimulating spaces and appropriate learning experiences and opportunities which will challenge the child’s emerging skills.

For the purposes of planning for children’s learning it is advised that practitioners consider children who are around:

- 0-9 months
- 9-18 months
- 18-36 months
- 3-5 years.





10 characteristics of play

1. Children have the right to play (UNCRC Article 31) and be active.
2. Children learn through play and can support others learning.
3. Children can play alone, alongside others, cooperatively with others and with adults.
4. Children recreate real life experiences in play, representing their thoughts and feelings.
5. Children practice and develop the skills required for life and learning through play.
6. Children are creative in their play, making and adapting resources to meet their needs and interests.
7. Children pretend during play and make up rules during play to help them keep control they test ideas, challenge each other and develop and understanding of their world.
8. Children become deeply absorbed in play which is meaningful.
9. Children have a personal agenda during play.
10. Children develop their communication, ideas, feelings and relationships through play. They explore and try new experiences.

Focus for reflection

- How well do you understand how children learn and develop?
- How well do you understand typical patterns of development?
- Do you consider, on a daily basis, what children have experienced before arriving in your setting and how this impacts on their learning?
- What opportunities are available, within your setting, for professional dialogue around pedagogy?
- How well does the curriculum you provide reflect children's interests and needs? How do you know this?
- How do you ensure flexible, stimulating and challenging learning experiences and opportunities are available for children within your establishment?
- How well do you understand the impact of play on learning?
- In what ways do you motivate and engage all children to play?
- What examples can you give of the practitioners in your setting playing like children with children?
- What different roles can the adult take to support children's learning through play?
- How often do you capitalise on the immediate imaginative world the children are presenting to you in the moment?

Quality of interactions

“We have warm, responsive relationships with babies, toddlers and young children, creating a positive climate for achievement. We use skilled questioning and interact in a sensitive, responsive and stimulating way to promote curiosity, independence and confidence.”

How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare, Scottish Government, 2016.

Practitioners should be enthusiastic at all times and have a warm and encouraging voice. They should have smiling eyes, a sense of humour, play with children and have fun. Practitioners should always use positive language, both verbal and non-verbal and should make good eye contact with children, at their level. They must allow children thinking time; adjust their language to meet individual children's understanding whilst using open questions to develop children's thinking. Practitioners must take account of children's cultural and social differences and value and act upon their ideas and suggestions. This reflects the ten characteristics of high quality interactions.

High quality interactions are at the heart of everything we do in Early Learning and Childcare and are the key driver for success in developing the child socially, emotionally and fostering a positive disposition to learning. In this way, early years practitioners can create a supportive environment which gives children the very best start in life.

A key feature for high quality interactions is for practitioners to join the child in their play. No matter the stage of the child, the adult should comment about what the child is doing e.g. “oh you've moved the red train across to the track, I think I'll move the blue one to the bridge now”. This is a highly effective method of encouraging language development in young children. In addition, practitioners should smile and have fun with children during interactions. Being silly and imaginative creates high levels of engagement in young children and leads to fantastic learning opportunities. Practitioners need to use open ended questions to encourage the child to think and talk. This means using sentence openers such as “**what would happen, why does, I wonder if, how can we...**” This will open up a new level to the interaction – with practitioner and child as co-creators of new learning. This can sometimes be referred to as sustained shared thinking.

In addition, practitioners must sometimes stand back and observe what the child's non-verbal communication is telling them: body language, choice of resources, are they playing together or alone, what interests them, do they become absorbed in activities or do they flit? This can help the practitioner modify their interactions with the child e.g. providing more challenge, support or focus as necessary. It is important for practitioners to encourage eye contact from children when giving instructions.

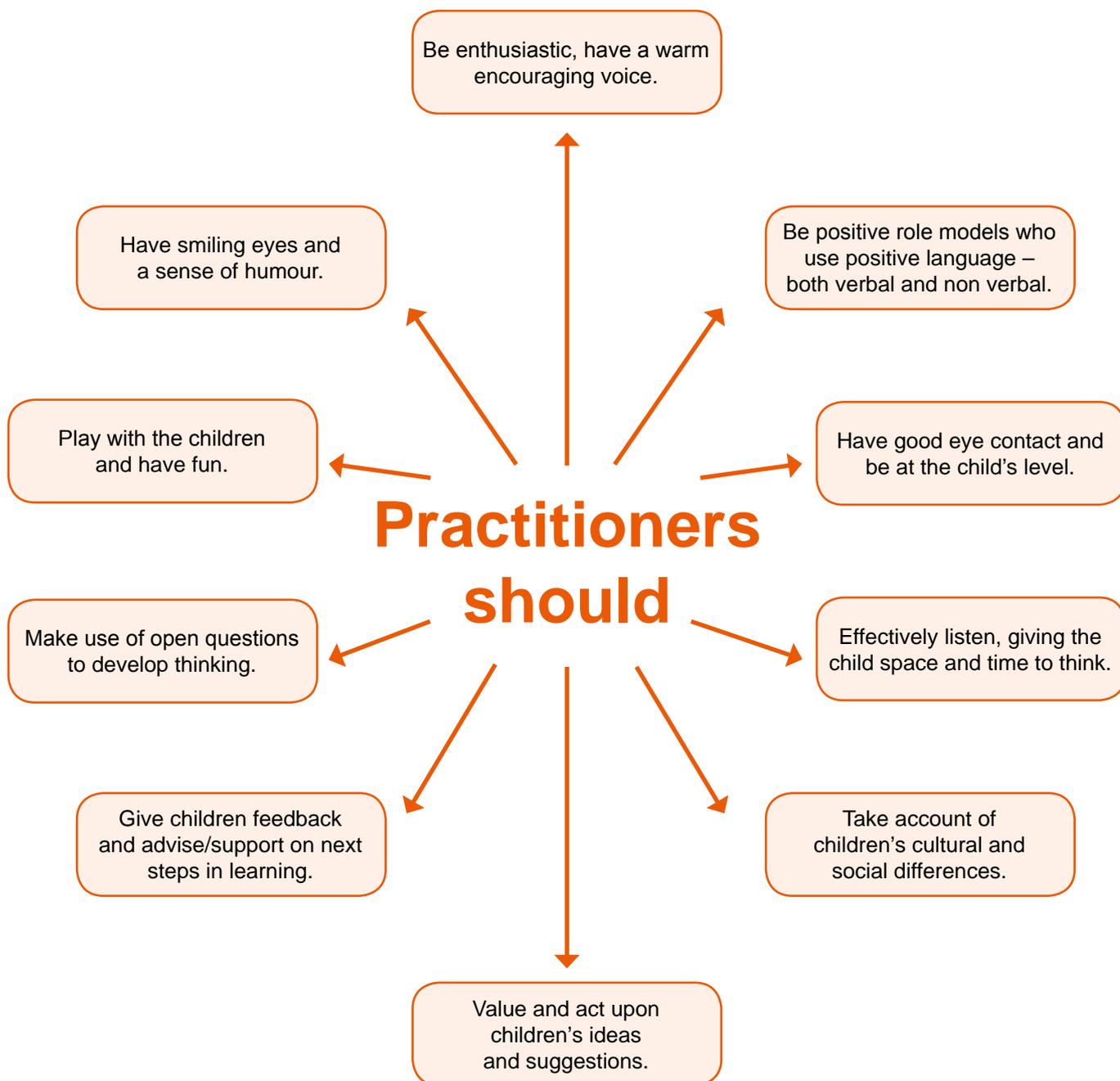
A key aspect of high quality interactions is for practitioners to find out how the child was when they arrived at nursery. How were they before they attended? This involves ensuring a lovely warm welcome to parents on arrival and enquiring about how the child is today. The staff member must be responsible for sharing that information with their colleagues. This will allow staff to attune their responses and attention to the child accordingly during interactions.

The upcoming move towards 1140 hours means that high quality interactions must be provided throughout the child's whole day at nursery. Practitioners must ensure that all children are given access to high quality interactions every day. Some children gravitate towards adults and others need encouragement. Some children are very social and others prefer solitary play. Practitioners must be aware of the wide range of children's personalities and behaviours and ensure that all children have equity to a range of interactive opportunities throughout the day. Practitioners need to build quality social interaction time into each day, for example during snack time, lunch time or playing in small groups. Practitioners need to model good conversation skills and teach the children how to listen to each other and respond accordingly. Children with additional support needs will need support to interact with others. This may involve a one to one with a practitioner, buddying with another child, encouraging partner games or modelling how to play, share and take turns. In order for the quality interactions to continue at home, it is essential for practitioners to feed back every day to each parent about the child's day, their learning, their interests and how they have been. This will allow the parent to talk to the child about their nursery day, extending the opportunities for rich language development. For children who have language delays or communication issues, practitioners must investigate other ways of feeding back, for example daily diaries, home links or phone calls.



Ten characteristics of high quality interactions

High quality interactions between practitioners and children require practitioners to:



The learning environment

The learning environment, which includes outdoors, should be welcoming, stimulating and exciting for children and should reflect their stages of development. Children should be consulted with and their ideas and opinions should be valued and auctioned. They should be given opportunities to contribute ideas and be involved in making decisions about their day. They should be able to choose where they want to play and what they want to play with. Practitioners should create flexible, exciting spaces and learning opportunities by using a range of stage appropriate, challenging, resources which reflect children's interests. Children should not be discouraged from transporting resources around the learning environment as this is meaningful to their play. A highly effective learning environment will allow for free flow play between the outdoors and indoors.

The high quality learning environment should include:

- A variety of interesting, challenging and interactive resources available at the child's level.
- A selection of resources that can be used for loose parts play.
- Opportunities for children to self-select from the resources available.
- Uninterrupted opportunities for children to explore resources and inquire and be creative.
- Opportunities for children to revisit experiences.
- Spaces to be active and spaces to rest.
- Readily available access to outdoor play.

Focus for reflection

- How often do you review the learning environment to meet the needs and environment of the children?
- How do you ensure the children are given a voice and consulted about resources and choices within your learning environment?
- How do you ensure children have the opportunities to freely explore resources, to inquire and be creative?
- To what extent are literacy and numeracy embedded throughout your learning environment?

Pace of the day

The routine within settings should be flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of individual children. All settings are unique and will have a different approach.

Children should be given daily opportunities for uninterrupted or free play (currently a minimum of an hour and a half). Uninterrupted play allows children the time to be completely immersed in what they are doing, gives them control of their play and allows for risk taking. Children learn best when their play is uninterrupted and where adults skilfully interact to scaffold learning. There will be times throughout the session where small groups come together for a short group or together time, however some children may struggle with this and should be given an alternative option. For older children, these times should include an opportunity to discuss what the children have learned or what they'd like to learn next. Consideration should be given to patterns of attendance, particularly for children who attend full days. The routine should be adapted to ensure breadth of opportunity throughout the day.



Observation

Why should we observe?

“Observation helps us to become more informed about play. It should deepen our respect, admiration and enjoyment of the way babies, toddlers and young children learn. It should open up our thinking, and never be used to control children’s play and learning”

Bruce 2010.

During everyday activities high quality observations should naturally take place. Observation is about actively listening to children and looking at what their play tells us about their learning and development. When children’s learning is skilfully observed practitioners gain valuable information which will assist them in the planning process. Practitioners should gain parental consent prior to recording information about children and should be mindful of children’s rights. Observations of children’s learning should be non-biased, non-judgemental and factual. This is known as ethical observation.

The purpose of observation is to:

- Consider new knowledge gained about the child – What can the child do? What has changed for the child? What may the child wish to know? How are they doing this?
- Inform intervention and assist planning of future learning.

“Children approach their learning with wide eyes and open minds, so their educators too need wide eyes and open minds to see clearly and to understand what they see. If educators are blinkered, having tunnel vision, they may not have the full picture – so it’s not simply a case of understanding what is seen but it is first crucial to see what is really happening and not what adults sometimes suppose to be happening.”

Nutbrown, 1996

Practitioners should strive to develop their observation skills and should use their professional judgement to make decisions about children’s learning. When observing children they should consider **what the child is actually doing, how they are doing it and why they are doing it**. Observations should be discussed with children and they should understand why practitioners are taking notes or photographs of them. Practitioners should share and discuss observations with colleagues or other relevant stakeholders and use the information gained to plan children’s next steps in learning.

When observing children practitioners should ask themselves the “So what?” question:

- Does it tell me something about this child or group of children that I didn’t know before?
- Does it show me that something has changed for this child or group of children?
- Does it show me that this child is interested in learning something?
- Does it show me that this child is worried about something or having difficulty?
- Do I have all of the information necessary to progress the child or group of children’s learning?

Focus for reflection

- Throughout your day, how often do you consider what children are actually learning and how you can support and develop this?
- How confident are you that your observation is dependable? What happens to your observations when complete?
- How good is your knowledge and understanding of how children learn and develop?
- What did you consider when noting your observation? Why did you consider this?
- What impact do your observations have on future learning and development?
- How often do you discuss your observations with children and other staff?
- How well do you engage children in conversations about your observations?
- How do you know your observation skills are effective? How could you improve your observation skills?
- How can you show that your observations are having an impact on children’s learning?

Transitions

All transitions require careful consideration and planning and should meet the needs of individual children and families. Without this, transitions can bring uncertainty and challenge and can impact on children's learning and development. Establishments should devise clear procedures for transitions. All transitions should be handled sensitively and should include all partners involved with the child.

Some examples of transition where children and families will need support are

- Home to nursery
- Room to room
- Nursery to school or nursery to nursery

Transitions should be paced to meet the needs of the individual child and should not be rushed. Enhanced transition should be made available wherever necessary. Settings must consider carefully how they will support transition times and should collaboratively plan their approach. Blended childcare (where a child's care is shared amongst a variety of providers) is becoming increasingly more common. Parents, carers and relevant partners should be actively involved in planning children's transitions to ensure their learning and emotional needs are considered. Information should be shared sensitively including information about children's care routines as well as learning and developmental achievements and next steps in learning. This will assist continuity in learning and care for the child. Care plans should be used to record transition information.

As well as these significant transitions, other transitions occur, daily, throughout the session, e.g. snack time or together time. Practitioners should be aware of individual children's needs at these times and should implement appropriate support strategies to offer support children.

Best practice would include:

- Effective consultation with parents/carers and relevant colleagues who support the child to ensure effective planning.
- Planning meetings to share information between current and new key worker.
- Visits to the new setting.
- Home visits, where possible, prior to children attending your setting.
- Photographs of new people and places for children to use at home.

Focus for reflection

- How well do you support children to adapt to change?
- What strategies do you use to ensure progression in learning at transition times?



Getting to know the developing baby

The birth of a new baby represents a new beginning. Practitioners working with babies and families should understand that learning takes place initially in the womb and appreciate that babies arrive into the world with individual personalities. Babies are ready to adapt and be influenced by their environment. In all settings, there should be warmth and commitment from all practitioners.

In the first year of life, babies develop more rapidly and learn more than at any other time of their lives. They are naturally curious about the world around them and especially the people who engage with them. Practitioners working with babies must be knowledgeable about child development and should create an environment that will stimulate a baby's senses, allowing them to explore freely and actively learn. Babies require positive role models and consistent relationships as well as social experiences. They are beginning to make active choices. Babies use their senses to explore their surroundings in order to make sense of the world around them. Practitioners need to be nurturing and be responsive to every baby and treat them in a caring, gentle and respectful way.

The developing baby should be provided with a wide variety of enjoyable experiences with other babies, adults and children. They should have familiar routines to help them feel safe, secure and confident. Transition times in the baby's day should be talked about with the baby, before and while they are happening.

The role of the practitioner

It is essential that practitioners working with babies build relationships with not only the baby but their family. They must take time to get to know every baby as an individual and work closely with the main caregiver to ensure that children's routines from home are consistent within the setting. Practitioners must spend quality time on an individual basis with each baby. They should record significant achievements and share these readily with families, continually praising the babies in their care.

Practitioners should:

- Take time to form and build positive relationships and work in partnership with families to meet their varying needs.
- Respond to the baby in a gentle, caring manner.
- Create familiar and comforting routines for the baby.
- Adapt the environment as necessary to meet the varying needs of the babies attending.

- Treat the baby as a person with unique needs and preferences for eating, sleeping and playing.
- Understand their individual stage of development.
- Notice the baby's interests and facilitate opportunities to reflect these.
- Encourage social interactions and support the development of physical skills.
- Use your imagination to create sensory bags, visuals etc. for the babies to explore.
- Use mirrors to create different viewpoints for the babies and to allow them to simply look at themselves.

Space

The space provided for babies should be welcoming and calm yet stimulating and attractive. There are a number of aspects to take into consideration when planning an appropriate environment for our babies. Practitioners should consider the emotional environment, the outdoor environment and the indoor environment. Babies need to feel emotionally safe, relaxed, warm and secure in their environment with the people responsible for caring for them. Babies use their senses to explore their surroundings in order to make sense of the world around them. We must keep this in mind when looking at the physical environments we provide. The environment must reflect babies' changing needs. Remember that babies will naturally put things into their mouths and that we must keep the environment clean, uncluttered and well maintained at all times.

A high quality space for babies will include:

- Neutral colours to create a calm environment – soft rugs and some soft calming music.
- Photographs on walls, doors and in albums for the children to feel secure in their environment.
- A limited number of tables and chairs in the room as this will have an impact on the babies' ability to move around.
- Multi-sensory experiences.
- Sufficient items for the children to explore – natural wooden resources are perfect. These should be attractively displayed and easily accessible for the babies.
- Cosy spaces with soft furnishings for them to cuddle in and socially constructed spaces to encourage social interaction.
- Opportunities to practice physical skills.
- A warm, safe, calm place for the baby to sleep and rest if needed. Remember it is no longer good practice to put babies into prams, car seats or buggies to sleep.

Opportunities and resources

We already know that babies learn through their senses and through their movements. They also learn by being included in day to day routines and play opportunities. Developing responsive relationships with significant adults assists their emotional development. The curriculum delivered to babies should offer a variety of experiences and opportunities which are enriched by the skilful interactions of practitioners and stage appropriate resources.

Best practice discourages the use of plastic toys and equipment. It focuses on the need for resources to be natural or multi-sensory and at the child's level e.g. a low sand tray.

With this in mind babies need opportunities to:

- Express their emotions.
- Build relationships.
- Explore their own bodies and their environment.
- Be involved in conversations and language rich experiences, e.g. rhyme time, sharing books and photographs and singing.
- Sensory experiences, e.g. treasure baskets, heuristic play, natural resources, hands on exploration.
- Practice physical skills – e.g. a small climbing centre with a chute, or have a low level construction tray on the floor that the babies can crawl into, and ensure there is enough space to practice walking, rolling and shuffling.

Typical resources will include:

- Black and white objects and areas.
- Cosy, home-like areas filled with natural resources or coloured themed resources including sensory tactile resources and soft furnishings.
- Places to pull themselves up and cruise.
- Sensory spaces.
- Books – wide variety of tactile and sound books.
- Heuristic resources.
- Treasure baskets.
- Song/rhyme time boxes.
- Cause and effect toys.
- Photographs of familiar people.
- Interactive experiences e.g. peek a boo.

Focus for reflection

- How do we use information from home to ensure individual babies and parents feel included and valued?
- How do we ensure that babies are making progress and are being continually challenged?
- In what ways do we share information about babies with their care givers?
- How do we use information to improve outcomes for the babies in our care?
- How could you improve your relationship with the babies in your care? When the baby opens their eyes do they see smiling, happy adults? Are there interesting objects close by for them to reach for and touch?
- How could you improve the learning environment for babies?



Heuristic play

What is heuristic play?

From the moment babies start to walk and become more independent they need an environment of investigation and discovery. Heuristic play is rooted in young children's natural curiosity. It is at this time in a baby's life where they could spend thirty minutes or more concentrating on random play. They like to fill, empty, pour, put on, take off, hide, put in and put under, to name but a few. When young children discover something they like to do they will often repeat the action, e.g. when one container fits into another. Whilst doing this they are testing the result, which links to cognitive development as well as assisting the development of hand/eye coordination and fine muscle control.

As practitioners we need to provide the both the spaces and materials for children to be able to do this. Heuristic play "consists of offering a group of children, for a defined period of time in a controlled environment, a large number of different kinds of objects and receptacles with which they play freely without adult intervention". Goldschmied and Jackson.

A clear space should be created, with all other toys and distractions put away. About an hour is needed (including putting out and clearing away). At least one practitioner should be fully dedicated to looking after this group of children. This is a good opportunity to take photographs and make observations. This time should be clear of distractions for adults as well. There should be very little talking from the adult throughout this experience; this allows the child uninterrupted time to explore the resources in their own way. Your body language will show that you are interested in what the child is experiencing. Heuristic play provides practitioners with an excellent opportunity to observe children's learning. For younger babies the opportunity for heuristic play can be created by using a treasure basket.



Treasure baskets

Treasure baskets can be used to create opportunities for heuristic play on a smaller scale. Baskets should be sturdy enough for the baby to lean on without tipping over and should be deep enough to contain several resources.

When babies learn to sit they view their environment from a different perspective. This is an ideal time to introduce treasure baskets.

Practitioners role in heuristic play

Practitioners should:

- Ensure safe, clean, age appropriate, items are available. Resources should stimulate interest, curiosity, exploration and discovery. Risk assess all resources before and after giving them to children.
- Display the resources in an attractive, appropriate manner.
- Supervise children at all times.
- Observe the children's learning. The information gained should be used to inform future planning.
- Recognise when the children have had enough and are losing interest.
- Distract inappropriate behaviours, e.g. if a toddler throws something they should be given objects to throw into a container.
- Not interfere in heuristic play, they should sit back and be unobtrusive, only interacting when a child invites them too.
- Allow time for the children to explore at their own pace. This will provide them with a richer, more stimulating experience.



Resources

The resources don't need to cost a great deal of money. You may have most of the items already in the nursery or setting. The resources should be kept in draw string bags with wide openings so children can easily help to put the resources away. They should be kept in a special place and only brought out a few times each week. The resources are limitless and may include: woollen pompoms, small bags, range of boxes that will fit into each other, strips of material, items with slots or holes, jar tops, shells, pegs, chains, corks, rollers and tins. Plastic items should be avoided as they do not provide much sensory stimulation. Items should be arranged on the floor in an organised fashion i.e. you could drape the chains over one of the tins or put all the pegs in an open bag which is clear for the children to see. It is important that you do not initially mix all resources together and that you have sufficient resources for each child to explore.

The items should be selected for their sensory properties, so natural materials are preferable. Smooth plastic, which gives very little sensory feedback should be avoided.

Focus for reflection

The following question provide a focus for practitioners to consider during/following a heuristic play session.

- What feelings or emotions have you observed?
- How are the babies/toddlers exploring schemas in their play?
- Do they explore more than one object? Are there particular resources which they explore more readily than others?
- How do they explore the resources? What movements are they using – pincer, grasp, one hand or two, are they mouthing resources?
- What skills are they developing? Consider hand/eye coordination, concentration levels, confidence, etc.
- What have they learned from the experience?
- Are they repeating actions deliberately?

Getting to know the developing toddler

Toddlers are curious and impulsive explorers of their environment, who like to investigate and be creative individuals both indoors and outdoors. They are beginning to play independently at times and explore their new found physical abilities.

This is a time of continual change, where toddlers are dependent on adults to support their complex emotional needs. These intense emotions can quickly escalate out of control. Practitioners must understand that toddlers find it difficult to regulate their emotions; for a two year old being 'out of control' can be a scary place. These toddlers need support from caring adults to regain control. The way they feel about themselves is learned – they all have the right to feel good about themselves. Practitioners must help the toddler develop a sense of worth as early as possible.

Practitioners must be aware that everything that happens to a toddler changes them – this makes it vital that adults provide sensitive, challenging, exciting, stimulating and most importantly fun experiences for toddlers. All of this will be provided through quality play experiences in an enriched learning environment.

The curriculum we provide for toddlers should be challenging, and reflective of their needs. Every child in Scotland is entitled to play and to experience meaningful relationships with people who really understand their holistic needs – thus providing opportunities to close the attainment gap even in these early years. As Boyle (1992) states 'challenge is particularly important at a time in children's education when learning is fresh, enthusiasm is heightened and the pace of learning is rapid. If learning lacks challenge then motivation wanes, learning itself becomes stale and opportunities to progress are missed'.

The role of the adult

Practitioners have a direct impact on children's learning and development. It is essential that practitioners assist the development of their health and wellbeing and fully understand what toddlers need when planning to meet their needs.

Practitioners should:

- Respect their ideas, interests, efforts and suggestions.
- Want to be with toddlers and share in the joy of their achievements.
- Ensure interactions are relevant and responsive to their individual needs.

- Create a link between home and nursery by encouraging them to bring meaningful toys, books, etc from home.
- Communicate in an unhurried way, allowing toddlers time to process information.
- Respect toddlers, listen to them and give them plenty of time to respond.
- Support and encourage friendships by helping them manage emotions and conflicts
- Understand patterns of development and schemas.
- Promote learning and development through play based experiences which reflect their interests.
- Observe toddlers carefully and know when to stand back, allowing them to take the lead.
- Help them to develop language skills, including the ability to express their feelings.
- Build on toddlers' experiences from home by close collaboration with parents and carers.
- Provide them with many choices while at the same time creating boundaries to help them feel secure and to start to making decisions about their learning.
- Create opportunities for 'Risky Play'.

Space

The ideal space for a toddler will have a calm atmosphere, which presents choice to children without over stimulation.

A high quality space for toddlers will include:

- A place for personal important items.
- Flexible use of the environment, both indoors and outdoors to give the toddler some control over what they do.
- Areas where play can be quiet or active.
- Resources arranged at an appropriate level where toddlers can self select.
- Opportunities to play together or independently.
- Opportunities for active exploration.



Opportunities and resources

Resources should be exciting, open ended and relevant to the toddler's interest and stage of development. They should be largely sensory, natural and attractive. They should be accessible to allow choice, challenge and flexibility.

Best practice would provide opportunities for the toddler to practice their physical skills and resources should provide challenge and enjoyment.

Resources should provide or allow for:

- Opportunities to explore and find how things work, how objects can be constructed and de-constructed, how they stack, balance and combine.
- Opportunities for toddlers to act out schemas.
- Physical competence to be developed.
- Sensory exploration.
- Support communication.
- Opportunities to be creative and inquisitive, using a wide variety of paint, collage and model making resources.
- Musical experiences – access to a wide variety of music styles and musical experiences to allow them to express their feelings through movement, voice and dance.
- Opportunities to have regular outings within the local environment.
- Opportunities for role play, mark making and movement .
- Reflect real life experiences.
- Support inquiry learning.

Focus for reflection

- How do you ensure that the developing toddler is motivated and engaged in learning?
- What opportunities have you created to ensure the familiarity of home for the toddler?
- Consider the learning environment which you create. To what extent does this environment support different types of play?
- How do you ensure that toddlers can self-select and make choices from high quality resources?
- How do you ensure the space and experiences you provide to promote inquiry, curiosity and investigation in toddlers?
- How do you promote schemas on a daily basis within your learning environment?
- How well do you support the toddler to manage their emotions in a variety of situations, including when they become upset or when they don't want to do something you want them to do?

Schematic play

What are schemas?

Schema is another word for repeated patterns of behaviour. It reflects the need for children to repeatedly do the same thing over and over again. Schemas can be identified by observing how children do things.

Schemas in young children's play are an important concept when it comes to practitioners considering how young children learn. Practitioners must understand these patterns of behaviour and consider how they can be facilitated within the establishment. Practitioners who understand schemas can understand why children can be determined to do things in a particular way and should find ways to facilitate these interests. We should share our knowledge of schemas with children's parents and carers.

The most common schemas are:

- **Enclosing** – The urge to fill up cups with water, climb into boxes or kitchen drawers, washing machines or putting all toys into a container.
- **Rotation** – Anything that goes around, wheels, turning lids, watching the washing machine on spin cycle, drawing circles, spinning around on the spot, being swung around.

- **Positioning** – Positioning things neatly into alignment on the floor, ordering books on the shelf, sorting tins in a line etc. You may see the children lining up their cars or turning all the cups upside down.
- **Connection** – Joining train tracks, clicking together pieces of Lego, running a string from one thing to another... the urge for connection. This can mean disconnecting too, building followed by deconstruction.
- **Orientation** – The urge to hang upside down or to see things from a different perspective. You may see children under the table or on top of the chair.
- **Enveloping** – Enveloping is the urge to cover things up; children may cover themselves with blankets, lie under a rug or wrap things in paper.
- **Transporting** – Transporting is the urge to carry numerous things in your hands at one time, in jars, in buckets and baskets, or containers with wheels. You will see children carrying items from one area to another – this should not be discouraged.
- **Trajectory** – The urge to throw, drop and other similar actions are all part of the trajectory schema. Some other trajectory actions include; climbing up and jumping off, putting your hand under running water (interacting with things that are already moving) and throwing and dropping.



<p>Enclosing</p> <p>What will I see?</p> <p>Children will create structures using a variety of resources and materials to form an enclosure. They may build fences around things or draw borders round their artwork. When we observe children demonstrating this schema we can confidently say that they are learning about size, shape, measure and volume. Through exploration and repetition children are discovering how to contain resources using enclosures and borders.</p> <p>Practitioners should be aware that children may hide under blankets, rugs, in cupboards and in boxes.</p>	<p>Experiences which support this schema could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wrapping boxes or presents ● Planting ● Large cardboard boxes for children to hide ● Parachute games (create domes) ● Role play materials for dressing up ● Construction – building fences, boundaries and frames ● Large blankets, etc, to make dens ● Sensory experiences – making burrows, holes etc from sand and clay ● Small boxes to make enclosures for small world materials
<p>Rotation</p> <p>What will I see?</p> <p>Children will be fascinated by things that go round. They will spin or run around in circles. They will also spin, roll and twirl objects. When we observe children demonstrating this schema we know that they are learning about how things move.</p> <p>Practitioners should be aware that children may play with dials on electrical equipment, turn on taps or try to get into a washing machine.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Selection of wheels or wheeled toys ● Spinning tops ● Play dough to make round objects ● Spin painting/mixing/stirring ● Making/using windmills ● Ball/hoops/quoits ● Baking – stirring/whisking ● Treasure baskets with reels, bracelets etc
<p>Positioning</p> <p>What will I see?</p> <p>Children will place objects in lines, they will order and arrange them, often in order of colour, shape or size. They may want to place objects in a specific place. It is important to be aware of this schema at mealtimes, as the child may want food placed on their plate in a particular way, e.g. not touching.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Setting the table at meal times ● Positional games, e.g. hide and seek ● Stacking toys ● Sorting objects ● Shape and sequence puzzles ● Small world play with blocks, tunnels, etc ● Bee bots to talk about direction and location
<p>Connection</p> <p>What will I see?</p> <p>Children will join things together using string, tape, rope, etc. They will be observed tying toys together and suspending things from tables, chairs or trees. It is worth noting that this can lead to the Disconnection schema – child will deconstruct or demolish what has been created by untying knots.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thread pasta, reels, etc ● Making paper chains ● Woodwork ● Puzzles ● Collage ● Making and flying kites ● Train track ● Various construction resources

<p>Orientation</p> <p>What will I see?</p> <p>Children will want to look at the world from different viewpoints. They will often hang upside down, look through their legs, walk backwards or create situations where they can see things from high up or low down. They may also place objects at different levels and positions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Risky play situations – hanging upside down or coming down a chute backwards ● Positional games, i.e. can you stand in front of/ behind a... ● Spaces where they can lie on their backs, etc ● Ball games – rolling between legs ● Opportunities to be high up ● Climbing frame ● Swings – rope swings or ready made ● Walking or running backwards
<p>Enveloping</p> <p>Children will cover things up using a variety of materials – they may also cover themselves up. They may make dens, fill bags or boxes with resources, paint their hands or totally paint over their paintings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make nesting boxes/Russian dolls ● Sock/glove puppets ● Provide wrapping paper or blankets and boxes for role play or wrapping ● Role play hospital – provide bandages, beds with sheets, etc ● Paper, pens and envelopes ● Water play – bottles, buckets and pots for filling or emptying ● Treasure baskets with purses, tins, bags, glass cases with materials to fill
<p>Transporting</p> <p>What will I see?</p> <p>Children will move objects from one place to another. They may carry them in their hands, pockets or containers. Children will want to move dinosaurs, cars, etc, into the sand or water. This should not be discouraged.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Outdoor or indoor pulleys ● Small world construction ● Role play – baskets, trolley, prams, bags, etc ● Journey sticks in the outdoor area ● Writing and posting letters ● Map work – looking at and making maps
<p>Trajectory</p> <p>What will I see?</p> <p>Children are naturally curious as to how things are moved and respond to being dropped, kicked, pushed and thrown. You may also see children putting items into containers – this is called vertical trajectory. Trajectory schema develops the exploration of straight lines. Babies can be observed bouncing up and down, waving their arms from side to side, rocking and pulling.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Skittles ● Splash/splatter painting ● Ribbons on a stick to twirl and spin ● Play dough, clay, plasticise for children to bash ● Water play – use pumps and funnels to move water ● Throwing lightweight scarves and tissue paper at targets ● Bubbles – chase and catch them ● Box of balls – different sizes to roll, throw and squeeze

Getting to know the developing young child

As the developing toddler becomes the young child they become more independent and sociable and are keen to make new friends, try new things and share their interests. Their sense of humour is developing and they enjoy having fun. They are improving their concentration skills and are beginning to persevere in tasks for longer periods of time. The developing young child requires to be challenged both physically and cognitively.

Young children need access to an increasingly wide range of high quality active experiences and interactions within a stimulating environment. Learning experiences and opportunities should promote wellbeing, communication, curiosity, inquiry and creativity.

The developing young child enjoys conversation and has a rapidly growing vocabulary which should be encouraged and developed. They are beginning to use language for a variety of purposes and are interested in what is happening around them. The young child is keen to try new experiences which are meaningful and they are beginning to notice patterns in the world around them. They notice changes and will question what is different, new or unusual.

The role of the practitioner

Practitioners should support the developing young child to make choices about their learning. They should include them in planning and evaluating and in identifying their next steps. Practitioners should be knowledgeable about children's prior learning and plan for this.

Practitioners should:

- Understand how children learn and challenge them in their learning, supporting attempts, ideas and mistakes.
- Celebrate their achievements.
- Encourage sharing, turn taking and cooperative play.
- Question them to extend their thinking and deepen their learning, using open questions e.g. "I wonder what happens if...?", "Why does...?", "How could we..?"
- Allow time and opportunity for the young child to persevere in learning opportunities.
- Support the young child to express their interests, needs and feelings and to recognise the interests.
- Make time to talk and listen and extend their conversations.
- Understand the importance of the child's home language and encourage its use where possible.
- Create contexts for play and inquiry.

- Respond to their interests and skilfully scaffold their learning.
- Encourage exploration, curiosity and inquiry.
- Appreciate the value of playing together with the young child, exploring situations and acting things out.
- Realise quantity of resources does not necessarily mean quality learning. High quality is paramount for achieving positive outcomes.
- Suggest they try things out and explore, fostering curiosity.
- Take the lead from the child.
- Carefully select resources which capture interest and spark children's imagination.
- Build relationships with families and feedback regularly about children's progress.
- Be able to identify clear next steps in children's learning.
- Skilfully interact – know when to step into conversations and play and know when to stand back to allow children to find out for themselves.
- Support children to test thinking and test theories over several days by revisiting learning.
- Reflect on what learning has taken place and share this information with others.

Space

Practitioners should establish a safe secure and inspiring learning environment, with spaces for children to play together and to be alone or with others. Materials and resources which support creativity and learning should be in place to enhance the environment.

A high quality space for the developing young children should include:

- A space to keep personal belongings.
- Organised resources which allow children to self-select.
- Exciting, imaginative use of space and resources to create opportunities for children to work both independently and collaboratively.
- Flexibility; allowing children the opportunity to explore and investigate.
- Cosy, comfortable, quiet areas for talk and sharing ideas.
- A wide variety of signs and symbols for children to use and explore.
- The opportunity for risky play.
- An outdoor area which is an extension of your playroom.
- Spaces to relax and chat with friends.

Opportunities and resources

Best practice would include opportunities for children to lead their learning using high quality resources, both indoors and outdoors.

Opportunities should:

- Stimulate curiosity, inquiry and new learning.
- Develop cognitive skills.
- Build upon prior learning, including time to revisit familiar experiences.
- Reflect children's individual learning styles.
- Include children's own ideas.
- Reflect the importance of focusing on numeracy and literacy learning experiences.
- Include daily access to outdoor play.
- Allow children to express ideas and responses through role play, small world, movement, painting, modelling, mark making.
- Create a sense of wonder, encouraging children to be curious and ask questions.
- Allow children to set their own goals and plans.

Resources should provide or allow for:

- Open ended play to develop creativity in thinking.
- Differentiation to support individual learning needs.
- Children's current interests.
- Challenge, breadth and depth.

Focus for reflection

- How well do we motivate and engage all young children? How can this be consistent for children every day?
- How well does the environment encourage the young child to self-select and learn independently?
- To what extent does the learning environment support different types of play and learning?
- How often are resources updated and refreshed to maintain young children's excitement and interests?
- How often are young children consulted about space, opportunities and resources?
- How well are natural materials and open-ended resources used to support sensory play, exploratory play and creativity?
- What can we do to ensure we are enhancing learning through the use of digital technologies?



Section two: Curricular guidance



Key aspects of learning

The key aspects of learning in this document focus on:

- **Health and wellbeing**
- **Communication**
- **Creativity**

This will assist practitioners to design and deliver a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum. Learning goals will inform planning and will support the assessment of children's progress. The identified learning goals are broad statements, which can be used, either in part or as a whole. Learning goals have taken account of patterns of children's development and the experiences, outcomes and benchmarks from the Curriculum for Excellence.

Learning begins at home for every child and this learning will be unique to them. Our aim should be to extend the knowledge, understanding and skills that children bring to settings and to support them to be able to participate and enjoy the world in which they live.

Children will need different things at different stages of their development. As practitioners, we can support learning by focusing on what children already know and by creating and providing the relevant spaces, resources, experiences and opportunities that children need to make progress. These should reflect the principles of the curriculum and aim to develop the four capacities in all children. They should support children to develop a positive disposition to learning and to reach their full potential by being confident, sociable and competent learners.

By understanding each individual child as a learner, practitioners can identify their next steps in learning and can offer experiences and opportunities to broaden and deepen their learning. In order to do this the practitioner needs to:

- **Observe children playing and learning**
- **Take part in and talk about children's experiences**
- **Talk with parents/carers about children's learning and development**

Practitioners must be aware that some children have additional support needs and this requires careful planning and collaboration with parents and relevant agencies who are involved with the child.

Outlining specific curricular areas assists practitioners to identify, plan and assess key aspects of learning, however, they must be mindful that experiences should be:

- **Integrated**
- **Set within meaningful contexts**
- **Developmentally appropriate**

Children's development and learning is continuous and progressive and their needs must be supported by a curriculum which delivers continuity and progression.



Health and wellbeing

"If children feel safe, they can take risks, ask questions, make mistakes, learn to trust, share their feelings, and grow". Alfie Kohn.

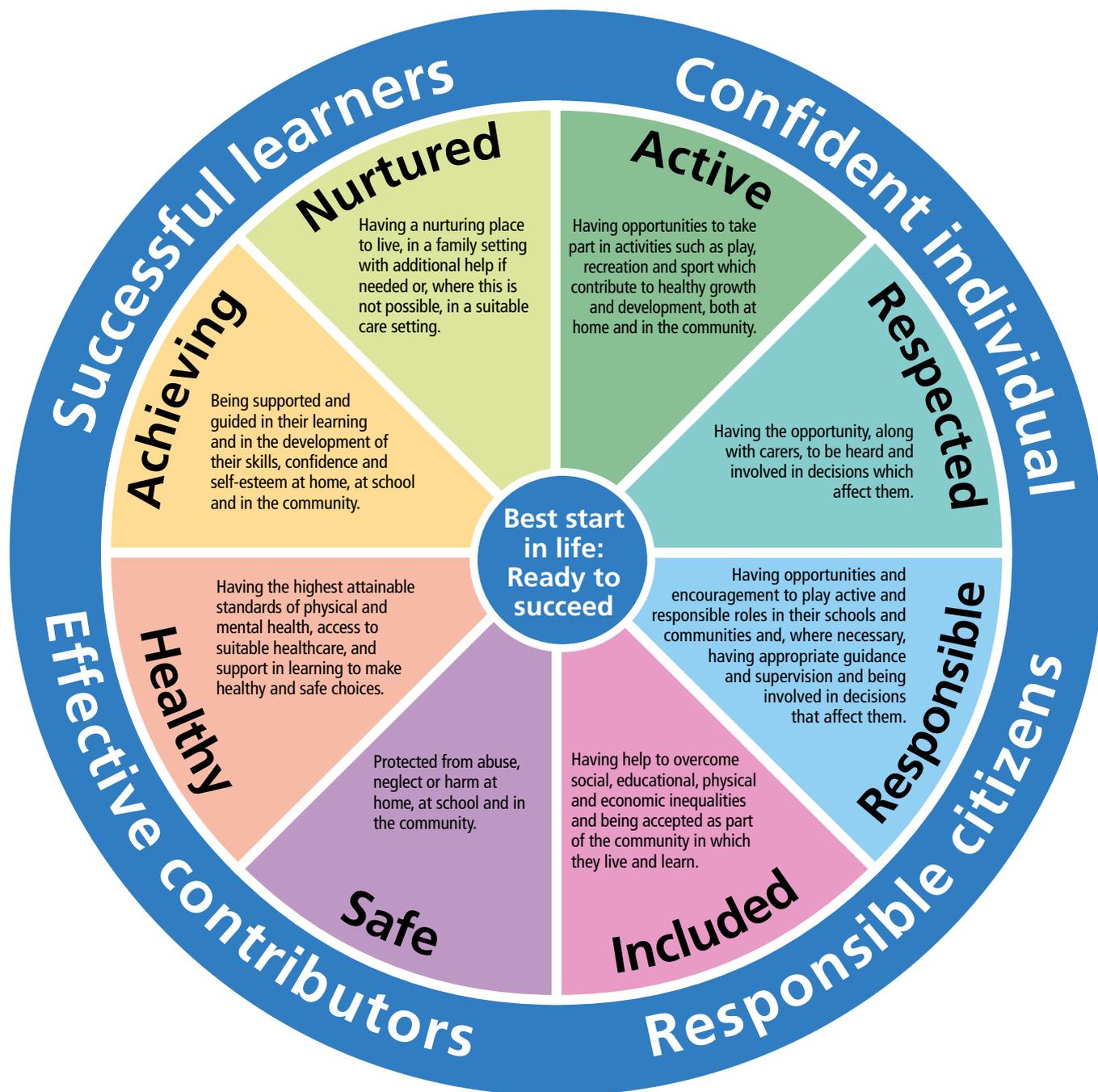
Health and wellbeing is the main driving force behind growth and learning from babyhood onwards. Children's early learning impacts on their future life chances; wellbeing and strong attachments and relationships can enable children to develop a positive attitude to learning. The principles of Getting it Right for Every Child underpin everything we do to safeguard the wellbeing of children and their families. By actively promoting wellbeing we are able to demonstrate children's ability to achieve success and show that they are being supported to feel safe, happy, achieving, nurtured, active, respectful, responsible and included. In terms of emotional, social and physical wellbeing, it is vital that practitioners understand their role in assisting children in the management and understanding of their emotions and self-regulating their behaviour. Parents and practitioners have an important role to play in developing children's concept of self-regulation by modelling behaviours and helping children to take turns.

The UN Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that every child has the right to a healthy diet and regular physical exercise. In light of this we must fully embed health and wellbeing into the daily life of the setting.

As well as this, developing children's wellbeing includes assisting children to create a positive view of themselves as confident, independent people and learners who feel good about themselves physically, emotionally and socially.



Practitioners should use the SHANARRI indicators described within the GIRFEC Wellbeing Wheel below when assessing/considering children's health and wellbeing.



The importance of attachment theory

The early relationship between a child and their main care giver is known as attachment. It is one of the most important factors which influences child development. The theory has particular implications for brain development in the early years and social relationships.

Attachment theory describes attachment as the quality of the relationship from the child's perspective, i.e. the lasting or continuing relationship which develops between the child and the main care giver during the pre-natal period and the first two years of life in particular. Bonding tends to describe the parent's relationship to the child. Bowlby's attachment theory argues that a child's emotional bond to their main caregiver is a biological response that ensures survival. Patterns of attachment, from secure to insecure, can be passed from one generation to the next. Parents may do things the way their parents did. When this has a negative impact on children's development early intervention is essential.

How does attachment impact on development?

Children are born with a predisposition to learn. They are naturally curious about the world around them and need positive, consistent relationships to help them along their learning journey. Each and every one of us is born with attachment seeking behaviours such as crying or clinging. Babies cry when they are hungry or uncomfortable and toddlers may cling to their main caregiver on arrival at nursery. Children who have had negative attachment experiences are more likely to have insecure or disorganised attachments which impacts on their development and life chances. These children are more vulnerable and can find it difficult to build relationships and cope with challenging future life events.

Some research shows the significant impact of early trauma and insecure attachment on brain development. A positive, secure emotional attachment from the main caregiver, who is sensitive or attuned to the child's needs or fears, creates neurological pathways in the brain which assist the child to regulate their emotions and stresses. An insecure attachment can create an unhealthy emotional state and behavioural patterns where children can view their environment and the world as unsafe and a place of high risk. This impacts on how children develop relationships, predict others' behaviour and how they respond to everyday life situations. Insecure attachment behaviours can develop, such as the continual need for reassurance, being hyper vigilant and easily destabilised by changes in routine.

These behaviours create disadvantages for children and can create significant barriers to learning. Children's experience of attachment in their early years may influence their closest relationships throughout their life. They may assume that adults are untrustworthy, unpredictable or don't care what happens to them and may find critical thinking difficult.

Resilience and attachment are correlated, although other factors can affect how resilient the child, and later the adult, becomes. Genetics does seem to play a part, as well as family and community, but early life experiences can have an enormous impact. Resilience is therefore not simply an isolated individual characteristic; it is the result of the interaction of internal and environmental risk and protective factors. Internal protective factors are unlikely to develop in a child without a relationship with at least one adult where they feel loveable and valued.

“Studies have concluded that despite risk factors in the wider community, children can show resilience if they have developed significant relationships with caring adults”.

FAIAR – Framework of Assessment and Intervention for Attachment and Resilience.

Focus for reflection

- How well do you understand attachment theory and the impact of attachment on development and learning?
- How would you promote secure attachments and relationships in your establishment? What do you do already that promotes secure attachment and secure relationships? What could you do more of?
- What approaches would you put in place if you notice a profile of behaviours which indicate there may be insecure attachment?

The role of the adult in facilitating positive attachments

Not all relationships between practitioners and children will be attachment relationships but all relationships should be positive. All practitioners and managers should be able to notice these patterns of behaviour in order to identify strategies to support children in their learning. They must recognise secure attachment as a foundation for families to achieve their full potential and contribute to the community as responsible citizens.

Establishments which value and fully understand the importance of children's attachments are likely to promote strong home links and relationships with caregivers which are engaging and meaningful. Research shows the positive impact on children's development and engagement when they see parents participating within the establishment. The Wellbeing indicators (SHANARRI) can assist staff to assess children's development. Early Years FAIAR, developed by SLC Psychological Services can also assist practitioners and managers to support children and families as it aims to:

- Increase parental sensitivity and responsiveness.
- Increase parents' capacity for reflection on their own and their children's behaviours, thoughts and feelings regarding attachment and care giving.
- Increase parents' capacity to; promote resilience through attachment informed parenting approaches.
- Increase the child's sense of safety, trust and being understood.

In order to support children with insecure attachments and develop resilience practitioners must:

- Have a sound knowledge of child development and respond to individual children's developmental stage not age.
- Develop a caring, sensitive approach which creates experiences that can shape, reshape and transform a child's developmental journey.
- Understand that all behaviours are a means of communication.
- Spend time and show interest and value in the child.
- Avoid escalating a situation. They can do this by considering the child's emotional state or the strength of their feelings, reassuring the child.
- Create emotional and social learning experiences for children to help them to explore their world and feelings.
- Create safe, secure and trusting learning environments with adults who are consistent in their approach.
- Create routines, rules and boundaries which are clear and consistent and allow time for children to engage in deep, meaningful learning experiences.
- Prepare children for changes to routine in advance.
- Plan transitions effectively and fully understand the impact of these transitions.
- Work closely with parents to develop specific strategies for individual children to assist their development.



A variety of approaches are available to assist the development of positive attachments and relationships including the nurture approach, which has been strongly influenced by Attachment Theory. Nurture groups or activities should provide carefully planned sessions where there is a balance of learning, teaching, affection and structure within a home like environment. Establishments can create areas which reflect these requirements. The nurture approach aims to foster and contribute towards children's development of self-esteem, self-awareness and to their wellbeing. This is reflected in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, where it is suggested that lower order needs take precedence over higher order needs. If the lower order needs are not met a barrier to learning is created and the child will not achieve the higher order needs.

Practitioners must be attuned to the child, developing trusting relationships and should provide direct learning and teaching opportunities through sensory play, songs and games. They should consider their own attachment history and reflect on how this may impact on how they support children. Practitioners must be positive role models; the child must feel safe and have trust in their environment in order to develop new modes of behaviour and to develop their full potential. There should be a focus on compensating the missed early learning opportunities and experiences which promote language development, concentration, turn-taking, following instructions, sharing, empathy, appropriate behaviours, success, confidence and enjoyment.

Key messages

- Children have the right to feel safe, secure and included within all settings.
- Knowledge of the GIRFEC indicators should underpin how we plan for children's care and welfare.
- Practitioners have a crucial role in ensuring positive outcomes for all children across all areas of development.
- Parents and carers should be consulted with and included in planning for their child's care and learning from the start of their placement.
- All children must have access to the outdoors and exercise every day.
- Practitioners must understand typical patterns of development to be aware of how they impact on children's emotions and behaviour.

What does the developing baby need to support their health and wellbeing?

Practitioners who:

- Know them well and respond to their unique needs and interests.
- Respond sensitively to separation from their parent or carer.
- Develop nurturing relationships.
- Encourage the baby to try things out.
- Give them time to respond.
- Use their name.
- Understand relevant typical patterns of development.
- Identify and celebrate their efforts, development and progress.
- Ensure personal care routines, including feeding, etc, are unhurried and are carried out in a calm, relaxed, encouraging manner.
- Reassure the baby, by talking quietly, as babies are quick to pick up on negative actions.

Spaces which:

- Are safe, comfortable and predictable, and are open to allow practitioners to always be in view of the child.
- Are like home, with soft furnishings and places to rest.
- Are personalised with favourite blankets, comforters and preferred toys.
- Allow time for the baby to be with other babies and children.
- Allow them to practice physical movements.

Opportunities to:

- Play indoors and outdoors and explore their environment.
- Express their emotions.
- Be in the company of caring practitioners, other babies and children.
- Explore their own body and image.
- Relax, listening to reassuring familiar voices.
- Play fun games.
- Participate in familiar routines from home.
- Have things to cuddle, mirrors for the baby to look at themselves and others.
- Look at and talk about photos of the baby and her family.

The baby's experiences and achievements both at home and within the setting should be recorded and celebrated by the practitioner, baby and family, in an unhurried way as often as possible.

The developing baby – health and wellbeing learning goals

The developing baby should:

- Develop a sense of security and confidence.
- Respond to affection from a familiar adult.
- Form positive relationships with other children and adults.
- Develop self-reliance and independence, e.g. feeding themselves.
- Explore their environment.
- Make and express feelings, needs, preferences, choices and decisions.
- Develop their physical competences (fine and gross) – hand-eye coordination, rolling, sitting, crawling, cruising, walking, grasping and holding objects, pincer control.
- Explore what their bodies can do.
- Become aware of routines (caring).
- Become aware of daily transitions.
- Play alone for short periods of time.
- Begin to play alongside or with others.
- Develop an awareness of the needs, feelings and preferences of others.
- Develop an awareness of taking turns and sharing resources.
- Participate in celebrations.

What does the developing toddler need to support their health and wellbeing?

Practitioners who:

- Respect their needs, interests and preferences.
- Develop positive relationships with the family and value the information that they are given by parents/carers about the toddler's learning within the home and their wider world.
- Understand their schemas.
- Appreciate their efforts, recognising their intentions rather than how well they achieve.
- Support them to make decisions and to nurture friendships.
- Share in the toddler's world at home, welcoming the toddler's personal possessions from home.
- Understand the toddler's emotions.
- Support them to understand their emotions in a calm, caring manner.
- Help them feel secure and settled and understand when they need time alone.
- Sit with children, at their level, during snack and meal times.
- Support the toddler at all transition times.

Spaces which:

- Have a place for personal, important items from home.
- Toys and resources arranged so that the toddler can access them easily.
- Allow them to be active or rest.
- Allow them to be together or apart.
- Provide access to readily available outdoor play and outings in the local community.
- Are clean, comfortable and uncluttered learning environments to allow the toddler to freely move around.
- Have privacy and dignity for personal care routines.
- Have familiar places to be, e.g. home corner.



Opportunities to:

- Enjoy themselves and have fun.
- Make choices about what they do, when they do it, who they do it with, when they want to be with others and when they want to be alone.
- Engage in new experiences to challenge and test themselves.
- Repeat familiar experiences which they are interested in, where they can practice and refine their skills.
- Use their name and join in with naming games and routines.
- Practice turn taking and sharing.
- Walk, jump, run and climb with increasing challenge.
- Engage in social experiences with others.
- Be active or rest.

The developing toddler – health and wellbeing learning goals

The developing toddler should:

- Develop confidence, self esteem and a sense of security.
- Find out about themselves and their developing capabilities.
- Form positive relationships with other children and adults and begin to make particular friendships.
- Play alone, play alongside others and begin to play cooperatively.
- Persevere in tasks that at first present difficulties.
- Express needs and preferences.
- Develop independence – feeding, dressing, personal hygiene.
- Express emotions or feelings.
- Develop an awareness of and begin to respect the needs, feelings and preferences of others.
- Develop an understanding of rules and boundaries.
- Develop awareness of personal safety.
- Have an awareness of what their bodies can physically do
- Develop physical competences – walking, balancing, climbing, running.
- Develop co-ordination in their movements – hand-eye coordination, throwing, catching, etc.
- Develop manipulative skills.
- Develop understanding of the body and improve health and wellbeing.
- Be aware of the growing body and name parts.
- Make and express choices or decisions and begin to develop skills to allow them to plan their day.
- Develop awareness of turn taking and sharing.
- Care for their environment and others.
- Develop an awareness of the importance of festivals and special events.

What does the developing young child need to support their health and wellbeing?

Practitioners who:

- Support young children make choices about their learning and involve them in planning and evaluating their own experiences.
- Recognise young children's prior learning and build on it.
- Respond to young children's questions.
- Extend children's thinking by using open questions.
- Skilfully differentiate experiences for individual children.
- Celebrate their efforts and achievements.
- Support them to express their needs, interests and preferences and help them to recognise the needs, feelings and preferences of others.
- Develop positive relationships with the family and value the information that they are given by parents/carers about the child's learning within the home and their wider world.
- Welcome parents/carers and support them to participate in their child's learning.

Spaces which:

- Have somewhere to keep important personal objects.
- Allow them to display important items.
- Allow them to self select resources, make choices and join in others choices.
- Provides readily available access to outdoor play.
- Allow them to relax alone or with friends.

Opportunities to:

- Try new things, which stimulate imagination, curiosity, communication and a sense of belonging.
- Revisit familiar experiences to practice and consolidate skills and knowledge.
- Explore and use resources in their own way.
- Share their thoughts, feelings and ideas and to be involved in decisions about their day.
- Build on experiences from home, the community and their wider world.
- Talk about home and wider world experiences.
- Learn and play together, to reconcile differences and begin to develop a sense of fairness and open-mindedness.
- Develop an understanding of the emotions of others, manage conflict and understand rules and boundaries.

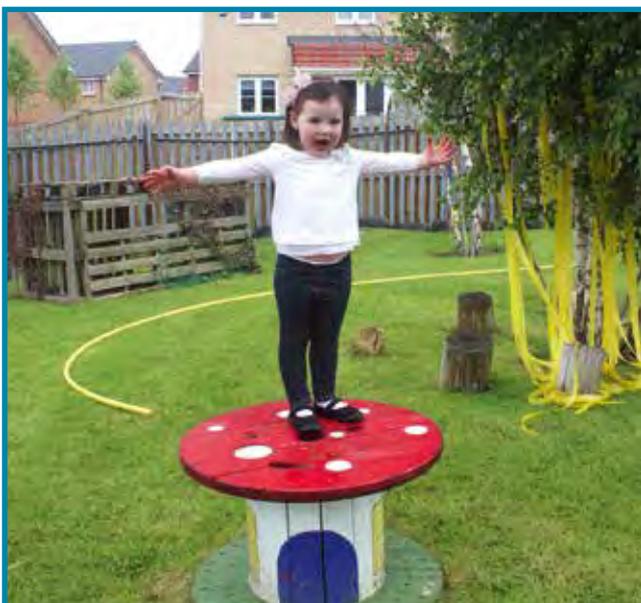
- Learn about their rights.
- Engage in daily energetic play where they can practise their large physical skills.
- Use a variety of real tools and equipment e.g. preparing snacks, using cameras, etc.

The developing young child – health and wellbeing learning goals

The developing young child should

- Demonstrate good self esteem, confidence and a sense of security.
- Care for themselves and their personal safety.
- Be independent in feeding, dressing and hygiene.
- Begin to become aware of how cleanliness, hygiene and safety impact on health and wellbeing.
- Persevere in tasks that at first present difficulties.
- Make and express appropriately feelings, needs, preferences, choices, plans and decisions.
- Understand and manage their emotions and feelings.
- Form positive relationships with other children and adults and make particular friendships.
- Be respectful and supportive of the needs, feelings and preferences of others.
- Understand and follow rules and boundaries.
- Understand the importance of mental wellbeing and that there people around who can help me.
- Develop resilience in a range of situations, including personal change and loss.
- Make choices about where, with who and how to work.
- Know that they and others have rights and what they are.
- Begin to lead their learning and encourage peers to do so too.
- Play cooperatively, take turns and share resources.
- Be aware of the importance of festivals, special events and celebrations in people's lives.
- Develop positive attitudes to others in terms of gender, language, religion and culture.
- Recognise that we have similarities and differences, but are all unique.
- Understand the importance of being active and fit.

- Prepare, handle, taste, learn and talk about a diversity of foods in a variety of social situations.
- Be aware that we need different foods to keep healthy.
- Become aware of space.
- Participate and enjoy energetic opportunities indoors and out.
- Learn how to assess and manage risk and keep themselves safe.
- Develop and explore ways they physically use their bodies.
- Develop understanding and knowledge of the body, and improve and maintain health and wellbeing.
- Be aware of changes that occur in the body.
- Learn how to respect their body and what behaviour is right and wrong.
- Participate with increasing competences – jumping, climbing, balancing, throwing and catching.
- Be safe in movement and when using resources, equipment and tools.
- Begin to learn about the differences between safe and unsafe substances.
- Care for the environment and other people within the community.
- Explore places in the local community and environment.
- Develop a sense of community.
- Understand that families are diverse.
- Know where living things come from and how to look after them.



Focus for reflection

- How well do you understand the wellbeing indicators and how these impact positively on children and families?
- In what ways do you use information about children's wellbeing to support their care and learning needs?
- In what ways do you share information with parents and carers about children's wellbeing? How often do you do this?
- Describe how you ensure that families are included in decision making about their child?
- How well do you focus on children's rights within the setting?
- How well do you ensure children are treated with dignity, respect, compassion and privacy within the setting? What changes would you make following your discussions?
- What do you do to support children to develop a positive attitude to themselves, others and to learning?
- How do you ensure that all families are included and feel welcome and valued as individuals?
- How well do you support children to make choices about their care and learning?
- In what ways do you work in partnership with others to improve outcomes for children?
- What procedures do you follow to support you to identify children's additional support needs?
- What opportunities do you create to support and develop children's wellbeing?
- How well do you ensure that children who require support receive it at the right time?



We should create a communication friendly environment to make communication as fun, easy and effective as possible. This will provide opportunities for everyone to talk, listen, understand and take part. We must ensure the environment is rich in opportunities for children to engage in conversations and experience print in a variety of contexts and embrace technologies to enhance this.

Communication

Communication is an essential life skill, underpinning all learning and wellbeing. It is central to forming relationships, developing self identity and accessing opportunities in the wider world. Evidence tells us that it is not only a child's genes that determine communication development, their experiences and environments are also critical. By communication we mean all the ways in which children interact with others: looking and pointing, body language and facial expression, understanding the communication messages of others, talking and being engaged in conversations, playing and acting out, drawing and mark making, learning about and using written language.

Communication starts before birth and research shows that it is the foundation of secure attachments with babies. Learning a language is the most important thing a child will ever do. As practitioners we must be responsive to signals and all forms of communication not only conversation. Babies and children need to learn how to:

- Understand what people are saying
- Use words and sentences properly
- Speak clearly
- Look, listen and take turns

Children use language for a variety of purposes including getting to know their peers and building relationships with others. As responsible adults we must talk with, sing with and listen to children as often as possible. All of this helps them develop and form close relationships with a significant adult. This attachment underpins learning and development. As language is a vehicle for learning, children with speech and language or communication difficulties are more likely to have a barrier to learning and this must be facilitated by a staged intervention approach.

Key messages

- Practitioners must be aware of the variety of ways in which children communicate and the stages of normal development.
- Communication is the basis of positive attachments, relationships and learning.
- Practitioners must identify strategies which enable all children to communicate.
- The learning environment should be communication friendly and facilitate the development of speech, language and communication.
- Talking and playing in a responsive, child-led way, should be at the heart of all adult/child interactions.

What does the developing baby need to support their communication?

Practitioners who:

- Understand how babies communicate their needs and preferences e.g. facial expression, body movement, gesture, touch, and by giving or receiving objects.
- Engage in regular conversation with the baby, allowing time for them to respond.
- Talk during play and caring interactions with the baby, describing what is happening and why.
- Provide babies with opportunities to communicate with each other.
- Play social games e.g. rolling a ball.
- Interpret meanings from clues the baby gives out using their body language and respond verbally and non-verbally.
- Model language, repeating new vocabulary.

Spaces which:

- Have interesting things happen in play and real life.
- Are arranged in ways which encourage babies to see, touch, explore and play with others.
- Allow adults to sit with babies comfortably, sharing and talking about experiences.

Opportunities to:

- Frequently engage in conversations, during play, in real life situations and routines.
- Frequently listen and join in with stories, songs and rhymes using picture books, personal stories and puppets.
- Engage in sensory experiences with objects, materials and people.
- Play with toys and books that make sounds and are tactile.
- Engage in stories and conversation using familiar photographs from home.
- Enable babies to listen to conversations without the distraction of constant background noise.

The developing baby should be provided with a wide variety of enjoyable experiences with other babies, adults and children.

The developing baby – communication learning goals

The developing baby should:

- Begin to communicate by babbling, cooing and gestures.
- Be aware of familiar voices/faces, and others around them.
- Initiate and respond to others – looking, touching and babbling.
- Know and respond to own name.
- Begin to express their needs, wants and preferences through vocalizations and gestures.
- Respond to peek-a-boo games.
- Listen to stories, rhymes and songs.
- Listen and respond to sounds.
- Develop an understanding of some words.
- Develop vocabulary – use single words



What does the developing toddler need to support their communication?

Practitioners who:

- Understand how toddlers communicate, considering their gestures, facial and body language and mark making and words.
- Listen and respond to what the toddler is trying to say, allowing sufficient time for them to find the words or gestures to explain their meaning.
- Encourage the toddler to initiate or join in with conversations.
- Encourage the toddler to ask questions about what they are interested in.
- Model language and new words and phrases just enough to take the toddler forward.
- Create opportunities for the toddler to play with and talk to other babies, toddlers, young children and adults.
- Take account of the toddler's home language and use it wherever possible.
- Take account of the toddler's life out with the setting and use this information in conversation with them.
- Use writing in a variety of ways and take time to explain what they are doing.

Spaces which have:

- Quality story books, magazines and real life resources with environmental print.
- Resources which encourage communication and questioning.
- Readily available opportunities for drawing and mark making.

Opportunities to:

- Have fun with words, play verbal games and participate in songs, rhymes and stories.
- Communicate and have conversations which are rich and valued throughout the day, within play and real life experiences.
- Engage with a variety of books and stories.
- Engage with a wide range of materials and tools for communicating, drawing, painting, modelling, music, movement and dressing up.
- Listen to and understand others and what is happening around them with the help of visual clues, gesture and active involvement.
- Explore objects which encourage questions and language.
- Participate in role play with objects from real life.

The developing toddler – communication learning goals

The developing toddler should:

- Understand more than can be said.
- Begin to use recognisable words.
- Increase vocabulary and use 2-3 word sentences.
- Use simple questioning and respond to questions.
- Have fun with language.
- Initiate conversations and respond to others.
- Use words, gestures and facial expressions to articulate emotions, wants, needs, and preferences.
- Begin to share their personal experiences.
- Use words and non-verbal language to represent ideas and thoughts.
- Respond to simple instructions.
- Explore a wide range of sounds within their environment.
- Listen and respond to stories.
- Begin to describe stories and what they see in pictures.
- Listen and respond to music, rhymes and stories.
- Participate in action games and singing.
- Make marks and draw.
- Become aware of print.



What does the young child need to support their communication?

Practitioners who:

- Make time to talk, listen and build upon what the young child understands by asking open ended questions.
- Model language in a variety of ways.
- Reply in a way the individual child is likely to understand.
- Encourage conversation with other children and adults in small groups.
- Understand and value the child's home language and encourage them to use it wherever possible.
- Play with and support children during learning opportunities and experiences, using effective questioning, encouraging the child to express their ideas and responses in music, movement, modelling, mark making and role play.

Spaces which:

- Have a wide range of interesting objects and resources for the young child to talk about.
- Allow children to relax and have conversations with their friends and other adults.
- Have a variety of signs, symbols and written words that are evident for children to explore.
- Have a wide range of books (fiction and non-fiction), puppets, small world, mark making and modelling resources to encourage them to express their thoughts and ideas.
- Allow the young child to participate in role play, dance and musical experiences.
- Use technologies to support the development of the young child's communication.

Opportunities to:

- Participate in a range of experiences which stimulate all kinds of conversations.
- Play and have fun with words including rhyme and rhythm.
- Participate in role play, storytelling and story writing, rhymes, singing, drawing and making music.
- Explore print during play and real life experiences.
- Talk and listen about their interests and ideas with adults and other children.
- Listen to stories in small groups.
- Make their own stories.
- Play with sounds.

The developing young child – communication learning goals

Listening and Talking

- Explore and use patterns, sounds and rhythm of language.
- Use speech and non-verbal language to express needs, feelings, thoughts and ideas.
- Listen effectively to others during play and interactions and take turns in conversations
- Listen and respond to stories, rhymes, songs, music.
- Participate in short and extended conversations.
- Share personal experiences and feelings and information with others.
- Use language for various purposes - describing, explaining, questioning and developing ideas.
- Use meaningful conversations during imaginative play. Listen to and observe interesting and useful information to make choices or learn new things.
- Follow instructions and information from adults.
- Have an awareness of when to talk and when to listen during different situations.
- Listen and participate in conversations/ discussions, and discover new words and phrases.
- Ask questions to help develop understanding and comprehension, linking to what I know and what I am learning.

Reading

- Explore interesting materials for writings for different purposes.
- Explore books, stories and texts with interest and curiosity and share my thoughts about them in a variety of ways.
- Have an awareness of the link between written and spoken word.
- Explore sounds, rhythms and patterns in words, discovering how they work together.
- Explore events and characters in stories.
- Ask questions to assist understanding of stories or texts.
- Create my own stories and characters in a range of ways.
- Recognise some familiar words and initial letters.

Reading (continued)

- Use signs, books and other media to find useful information and use this to plan, make choices or learn new things.

Writing

- Experiment and explore with symbols, letters and words.
- Express their ideas and feelings through a variety of media.
- Learn to mark make and understand that writing has meaning and purpose.
- Record experiences, feelings, ideas and preferences using a wide variety of media and techniques.

Focus for reflection

- What examples can you give to show that you understand how children communicate at different stages of their development?
- How would you consider changing the space and experiences offered to better support children's communication?
- What strategies would you employ to support a child whose communication and language is delayed?
- What barriers do children face when communication is delayed and what steps can you take to address these?
- How do you support the development of communication for the children in your care? What improvements could you make?

Creativity

"Creativity is intelligence having fun."

Albert Einstein

Education Scotland describes creativity as *"a process which generates ideas that have value to the individual. It involves looking at familiar things with a fresh eye, examining problems with an open mind, making connections, learning from mistakes and using imagination to explore new possibilities"*. **Sept 2013.**

Creativity skills are essential for learning and life, assisting children to understand the world around them and to participate in it. By promoting creativity we develop children's curiosity, open-mindedness, imagination and problem solving skills. Creativity does not focus on expressive arts. It is about wonder and appreciation, imagining, responding to interesting experiences, expressing thoughts, feelings and ideas, constructing, creating and taking apart, problem solving and finding alternative ways of doing things. By developing these skills children develop resilience and confidence. *"Creativity is now as important in education as literacy"*. **Ken Robinson, Ted Talk. 2010**

Opportunities to develop creativity should be at the heart of our curriculum and our learning and teaching. Loose parts play provides many benefits for children to develop their creativity. Practitioners should develop creative teaching approaches and create innovative, exciting open-ended, innovative learning opportunities, which encourage children to inquire, use their imaginations, take risks and develop critical thinking and questioning skills. Learning opportunities can focus on imaginative play, musical experiences, science, numeracy and mathematics and outdoor play. Play and high quality experiences and opportunities will ensure that children participate in creative learning and will assist the development of their creativity skills. Practitioners should skilfully question and interact with children to support them to develop thinking and develop deeper learning. Hyndman, Benson, Ullah and Telford 2014 suggest that *"curriculum outcomes occur through informal play with loose parts"*.

In order to support children to develop their creativity practitioners should focus on developing curiosity and inquiry, open-mindedness, imagination and problem solving skills. They should question children... "What if...", "How can..." etc, to extend thinking and learning.

Curiosity and inquiry

Children are naturally curious, creative and playful and are capable of thinking and reflecting, questioning and finding answers, therefore the curriculum delivered should respond to these qualities. Their curiosity should be nurtured by allowing them to use their senses to explore and experience new things and giving them time to process new information to form ideas and make sense of the world.

Inquiry learning provides opportunities for children to imagine and dream, invent, create and express their findings. It encourages them to source their own learning and provides an opportunity to connect with other people, places, technologies and materials. It is about being curious and persistent, wanting to find the how and why and being able to pursue these questions to reach a self-satisfying answer. It is about recognising when something has been learned and what this is in the child's own terms. Inquiry offers opportunity for transferring skills and knowledge to other areas of learning and helps the development of critical thinking. Inquiry learning contributes to children's wellbeing, helping to develop their sense of identity and sense of belonging.

Practitioners should create a learning environment which nurtures children's curiosity to develop their creative skills and their disposition to learning. By encouraging children's curiosity practitioners can encourage them to use and build upon their prior knowledge, develop questioning skills and inquire, explore and investigate.



Open-mindedness, imagination and problem solving

Developing children's open-mindedness can assist the development of a 'can do' attitude. If children are open-minded they will be open to new ideas and to new ways of doing things and will be able to explore other people's viewpoints. This will allow them to work confidently and play cooperatively with their peers and will assist the development of critical thinking.

When observing and interacting with children practitioners should always be aware of opportunities to develop children's open-mindedness by encouraging them to think, hypothesise and explore other methods or viewpoints.

By using their imagination and problem solving skills children explore, practice, invent and create and refine their ideas. They will practice and develop the skills required for life and learning.

Through the curriculum we deliver children must be afforded opportunities to problem solve. By using open ended resources and having sufficient uninterrupted time children have opportunities to make connections and to learn from their mistakes and explore new possibilities.



Key messages

- Creativity focuses on developing curiosity, problem solving, open mindedness and imagination.
- Creativity is about teasing out depth of learning from a simple starting point.
- Practitioners should nurture children's curiosity to develop their creative skills and their disposition to learning.
- A creative learning environment will adapt and change regularly to reflect children's needs and interests.
- Practitioners should strive to use innovative approaches to encourage children to be inquisitive, imaginative and to take risks in their learning.

Outdoor learning

"The best kept classroom and the richest cupboard are roofed only by the sky."

Margaret McMillan, 1925.

Outdoor learning should be firmly embedded in the curriculum delivered within all settings and should receive equal consideration when planning for children's learning. It provides a vast array of learning opportunities not available indoors. The outdoor environment should not be viewed as additional but as one integrated environment, with indoor and outdoor learning opportunities readily available at all times. Children should have freedom of choice to move between the indoor and outdoor environments, whenever practicable. Children who attend for a full day should be encouraged to spend part of it outdoors.

Outdoor learning promotes a sense of exploration and discovery in children. It supports them to develop their natural sense of wonder and curiosity by exploring their natural environment. Some children will learn more readily outdoors, making it crucial to create daily opportunities for them to be outside, in an environment which reflects their needs and interests. The outdoor environment creates endless opportunities for interdisciplinary learning.

Best practice includes children having access to high-quality outdoor learning throughout the year. Establishments should ensure they have appropriate clothing available to accommodate all weathers and readily available resources to support learning and development.

Where the grounds of the setting provided limited access for outdoor learning practitioners should consider what is available within the local community.



Outdoor learning provides children with the opportunity to:

- Participate in a wide range of activities that will support a healthy lifestyle.
- Develop the skills to access and manage risk.
- Experience personal achievement and build confidence.
- Explore and make choices.
- Develop physical skills through movement and energetic play.
- Reflect learner's needs and interests.

Further relevant guidance can be found in Together We Can and We Will support materials, SLC Outdoor Learning Curriculum Guidance and My World Outdoors.

My World Outdoors

www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/3091/My_world_outdoors_-_early_years_good_practice_2016.pdf



What does the developing toddler need to support their creativity?

Practitioners who:

- Encourage the toddler's curiosity by ensuring the learning environment is stimulating and safe.
- Can see the rich learning potential within simple experiences.
- Discuss and describe what is happening with the toddler, encouraging them to join in the conversation; what they are doing, seeing or wondering.
- Respond to the toddlers questions.
- Stand back and support the toddler's explorations without interfering or over directing but know the moment to interact to support and scaffold learning.
- Celebrate the toddler's achievements in a variety of ways.
- Provide just enough challenge in learning experiences and opportunities.

Spaces which:

- Allow the toddler to freely explore and inquire at their own level.
- Have furniture that is organised so that the toddler can move around safely.
- Allow the toddler to be active or settle to play.
- Have readily available access to outdoor play, walks and outings within the local community.
- Allow the toddler to explore a range of interesting, curious things including natural materials.
- Enable the toddler to revisit familiar experiences and resources.
- Allow the toddler to participate in musical experiences, to listen, dance and sing.

Opportunities to:

- Investigate properties of natural materials and the outdoors.
- Explore how things change – wet and dry, full and empty, solid and liquid.
- Find out how things work – to take things apart and put them back together, to stack, balance and combine.
- Follow their schemas.
- Use materials in a flexible way.
- Collect resources in boxes, bags, etc, to empty and fill, scatter and sort.
- Make marks with a variety of tools and have a selection of paper and materials readily available.
- Mix messy materials.
- Explore their world outdoors in all weathers.

The developing toddler – creativity learning goals

Curiosity and inquiry

The developing young child should:

- Explore their environment and world around them.
- Develop an awareness and appreciation of beautiful, interesting and curious things around them.
- Investigate their natural world – puddles, snow, ice, shadow.
- Participate with in sensory experiences.
- Investigate a variety of common materials with interest and curiosity.
- Develop an awareness of, and explore moving objects – rolling, sliding, over, under, slopes.

Problem solving and imagination

The developing young child should:

- Investigate how things work.
- Investigate how things are constructed and taken apart.
- Develop skills in using media, tools and techniques.
- Listen to and explore various musical experiences.
- Explore objects, resources and opportunities through sight, smell, touch, taste and sound.
- Use their bodies to express feelings and emotions by jumping, twirling and dancing.
- Participate freely in music and movement.
- Listen and respond to music, rhymes and stories by clapping hands/dancing.
- Start questioning.
- Show an awareness of shape, colour, texture and size.
- Explore and respond to movement, music, emotions.
- Develop an awareness of numbers 0 to 10.
- Develop an awareness of mathematical concepts.

What does the developing young child need to support creativity?

Practitioners who:

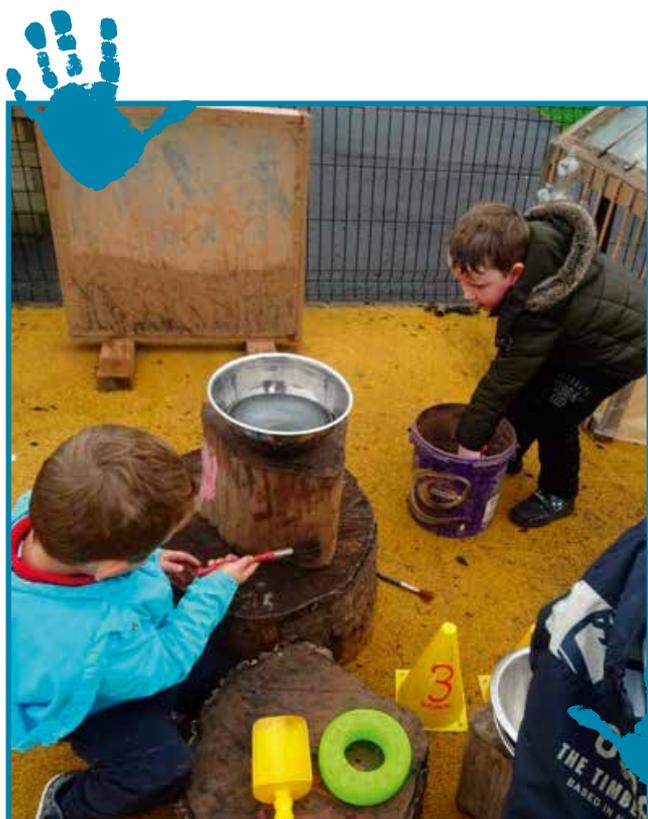
- Are happy to change their plans to take the lead from the child.
- Are willing to admit they don't know and offer to find out together.
- Are responsive to children's spontaneous discoveries and interests and take delight in sharing those experiences.
- Celebrate the rich learning opportunities created when children make mistakes.
- Appreciate the importance of acting out role play situations together.
- Observe and skilfully interact to scaffold learning.
- Model inquiry language and question children to encourage and extend thinking, using open questioning.
- Allow children appropriate thinking time to respond to questions and encourage them to find their own answers.
- Encourage children to try things out, allow them to make mistakes, offering support and praising their efforts.
- Create interesting situations and experiences to inspire curiosity using a range of high quality resources.
- Ask children "I wonder what happens if...?"
- Keep resources refreshed regularly to encourage children's curiosity and inquiry.

Spaces which:

- Stimulate children's imagination, problem solving skills, curiosity and inquiry.
- Are flexible and which can be adapted and changed regularly to reflect children's interests along with daily access to outdoors.
- Provide rich sensory experiences.
- Provide a range of mainly natural quality resources which children can select and explore in a variety of ways to represent their ideas and emotions.
- Allow the young child to move around and spaces to settle which encourage exploration and discussion.
- Provide a widening range of tools and instruments to design, test and modify their creation and models.
- Have well organised resources and material, where they can self select and also accommodate the choices of others.

Opportunities to:

- Revisit or continue experiences over several days.
- Ask questions and engage in open ended experiences.
- Explore and respond to the local and natural environment.
- Set their own goals and form their own plans in their own time.
- Use past experiences to help cope with new challenges.
- Explore how things behave and change in flexible and innovative ways.
- Develop and share their own inquiries and discoveries which create a sense of wonder.
- Discuss and record how they inquired and what they found out.
- Celebrate their efforts and achievements.
- Use technologies in their learning.
- Explore the work of artists and create their own music, drama, etc.



The developing young child – creativity learning goals

Curiosity and inquiry

The developing young child should:

- Investigate the use of materials.
- Investigate and use various techniques/opportunities – painting, printing, modelling and drawing.
- Create pictures and patterns with a variety of media.
- Discover and appreciate the natural beauty of the world around them.
- Explore how things work.
- Use simple directions and begin to describe positioning through play.
- Develop an understanding of how things work.
- Recognise objects by sight, touch, smell, taste and sound.
- Explore and respond to sounds, songs, rhymes, rhythms and a variety of music.
- Explore how things are constructed and taken apart.
- Question, experiment, design, make and solve problems.
- Be aware of and use everyday technologies and the role of electricity – fridges, ipads, scissors, cameras, etc.
- Search for and find information using technologies and use these to communicate with others.
- Investigate artists and designers work.
- Find out about the past by exploring items and images.
- Learn about and experience different types of weather.
- Begin to care for the environment by recycling resources.
- Learn how to problem solve by sharing ideas with others and working together.

Open mindedness/problem solving and imagination

The developing young child should:

- Participate in imaginative play to create/recreate situations/scenarios.
- Develop verbal and non verbal language in imaginative play.
- Use a range of stimuli to express thoughts, feelings and ideas through drama.
- Use puppets or visual aids to create/recreate situations or scenarios.
- Make music through singing, playing instruments through clapping.
- Participate in dances and singing games.
- Express themselves, through body movements in response to music and imaginative play.
- Create their own stories, poems, rhymes and songs.
- Create pictures and patterns with various medium.
- Participate in imaginative play to create/recreate situations/scenarios.
- Use puppets or visual aids to create/recreate situations/scenarios.
- Develop verbal and non-verbal language in imaginative play.
- Use a range of stimuli to express thoughts, feelings and ideas in drama.
- Participate in performances.
- Explore and respond to sounds, songs, rhythms and a variety of music.
- Make music through singing, playing instruments and clapping.
- Demonstrate rhythm and expression through music.
- Participate in dances and singing/ action games.
- Use a range of stimuli, and express thoughts, feelings and ideas in creative dance.
- Discover and appreciate the natural beauty of the world around them.
- Develop an understanding about how things grow.
- Question, experiment, design, make and solve problems, using technologies if appropriate.
- Design and construct models.

- Be aware of and recognise simple forces and describe their effects.
- Sort and categorise into specific groups.
- Investigate and understand properties of materials – hard, soft, rough, smooth, etc.
- Become aware of and use everyday technologies – fridge, iPad, scissors, camera.
- Search and find information using technologies.
- Recognise objects by sight, smell, taste, touch and sound.
- Explore how things are constructed and taken apart.
- Investigate artists and designers work.
- Learn about symmetry using a range of media and resources.

The following goals focus on number and number processes, fractions, money, time and measure. They consider pattern, shape, direction and data analysis.

The developing young child should:

- Recognise, match, sort and use objects, patterns, shapes, symmetry and colour creatively.
- Develop a sense of size and amount by observing, exploring and creating.
- Explore numbers, understand that they represent quantities and begin to use them to count, create sequences and describe order.
- Use resources to count forwards and backwards.
- Develop ways of sharing items out into smaller groups.
- Investigate, describe and sort a variety of objects and use them in creative ways.
- Use money appropriately in free play and recognize a range of coins.
- Be aware of how routines and events in their world link with times and seasons.
- Experiment with everyday items as units of measure to investigate and compare sizes and amounts.
- Understand and use mathematical language – above, below, under, full, empty.
- Explore ways to record and display information.
- Use technology to describe positions and directions.
- Gather information, by asking questions about a variety of objects; sharing this information with others.
- Use signs and charts to gain information to help them plan and make choices about their day.



Outdoor learning

“The best kept classroom and the richest cupboard are roofed only by the sky.”

Margaret McMillan, 1925.

Outdoor learning should be firmly embedded in the curriculum delivered within all settings and should receive equal consideration when planning for children’s learning. It provides a vast array of learning opportunities not available indoors. The outdoor environment should not be viewed as additional but as one integrated environment, with indoor and outdoor learning opportunities readily available at all times. Children should have freedom of choice to move between the indoor and outdoor environments, whenever practicable. Children who attend for a full day should be encouraged to spend part of it outdoors.

Outdoor learning promotes a sense of exploration and discovery in children. It supports them to develop their natural sense of wonder and curiosity by exploring their natural environment. Some children will learn more readily outdoors, making it crucial to create daily opportunities for them to be outside, in an environment which reflects their needs and interests. The outdoor environment creates endless opportunities for interdisciplinary learning.

Best practice includes children having access to high-quality outdoor learning throughout the year. Establishments should ensure they have appropriate clothing available to accommodate all weathers and readily available resources to support learning and development.

Where the grounds of the setting provided limited access for outdoor learning practitioners should consider what is available within the local community.



Outdoor learning provides children with the opportunity to:

- Participate in a wide range of activities that will support a healthy lifestyle.
- Develop the skills to access and manage risk.
- Experience personal achievement and build confidence.
- Explore and make choices.
- Develop physical skills through movement and energetic play.
- Reflect learner’s needs and interests.

Further relevant guidance can be found in Together We Can and We Will support materials, SLC Outdoor Learning Curriculum Guidance and My World Outdoors.

My World Outdoors

www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/3091/My_world_outdoors_-_early_years_good_practice_2016.pdf



Family learning

'Family learning is a powerful method of engagement and learning which can foster positive attitudes towards life-long learning, promote socio-economic resilience and challenge educational disadvantage.'

Family Learning Network, 2016.

Families should be at the heart of service delivery. Research has shown that when families contribute to aspects of the service there is a positive impact on children's development, attainment and disposition to learning. True family engagement is not just about parent helpers, although these are invaluable.

Families should be encouraged to be involved in their child's learning, as well as in self evaluation and the improvement agenda. Prior learning and information shared by parents/carers must be valued and should inform children's next steps in learning. Establishments must strive to create opportunities for all families to engage. Families are key partners in developing children's learning. Partnership working has benefits for both families and practitioners.

Best practice would include:

- Opportunities for parents/carers and children to learn together.
- Sharing the purpose of the curriculum with parents.
- Parents / carers who share skills, ideas and talents within the setting.
- Sharing information and celebrating children's progress regularly.
- Planning for children's learning together.
- Consultation with families to ensure needs in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing are being met.
- Actively promoting lifelong learning for the family as a whole, and for individuals within the family.
- Recording and celebrating achievements.



Focus for reflection

- How do you challenge and support creativity and problem solving?
- In what ways does the learning environment support creativity and promote curiosity and inquiry?
- How could you increase the opportunities for children to explore and use all of their senses both indoors and outdoors?
- What changes could you make to the daily routine to ensure that children have enough opportunity for uninterrupted play (minimum of 1.5 hours)?
- How do you ensure an appropriate balance between child initiated and adult led experiences and opportunities? How can you improve this?
- What improvements could you make to the learning environment to allow for more challenge?
- How can you increase the availability of open-ended resources? Can they be moved, used and combined in different ways?
- How could you make resources more reflective of children's interests?
- Consider the different ways that you respond to children's ideas, choices and decisions. What improvements could you make to this process?
- How well do you understand the importance of extending children's thinking and learning by effective questioning?
- In what ways do you use digital technologies to support the development of creativity? How can you improve this?

Planning for children's learning

"We plan appropriately over different timescales to meet the needs of babies, toddlers and young children across all areas of learning. Planned experiences are developmentally appropriate and tailored to meet all children's individual learning needs. Practitioners use imaginative and appropriate ways to involve children in planning learning." HGIOELC. P. 29 2016.

Planning should focus on enhancing the learner's journey and should reflect children's interests and prior learning. Effective planning means monitoring and evaluating progress across the curriculum to improve opportunities for children's learning. It includes reflecting on the use of spaces and resources. Planning should take account of both long and short term aims/goals/targets and should include relevant partners and parents/carers. When designing your curriculum practitioners should consider:

- The stage of the child.
- Any specific learning needs of individual children.
- Cultural differences.
- Patterns of attendance.
- Opportunities within the local community.
- Opportunities for parental engagement/ family learning.

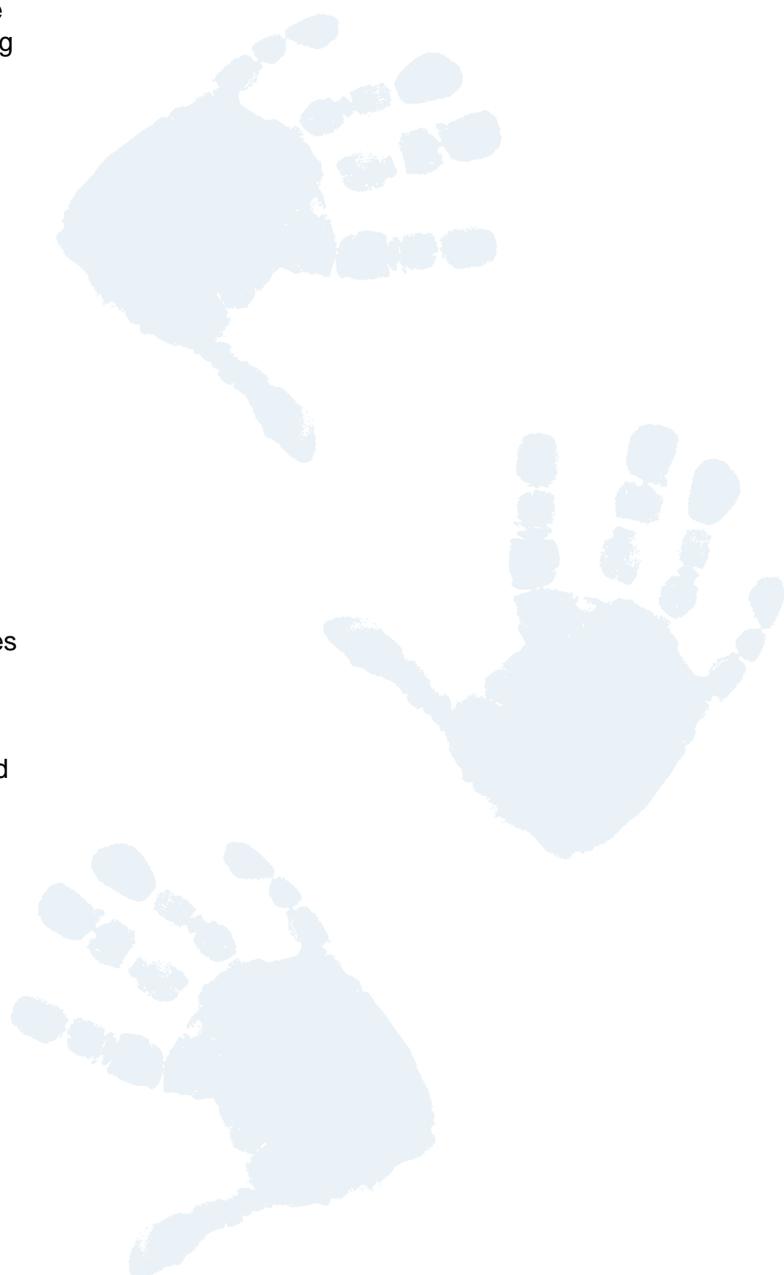
By using the knowledge gained from their observations and through consultation with children, practitioners should plan a range of learning experiences. This will lead to practitioners planning intentional learning opportunities for children. Alongside this, practitioners should be responsive to children's interests and facilitate learning opportunities which reflect these on a daily basis. Each child should have individual targets for learning. Children and parents/carers should be consulted when identifying learning targets. Planning meetings should be recorded.

Planning for children with additional support needs

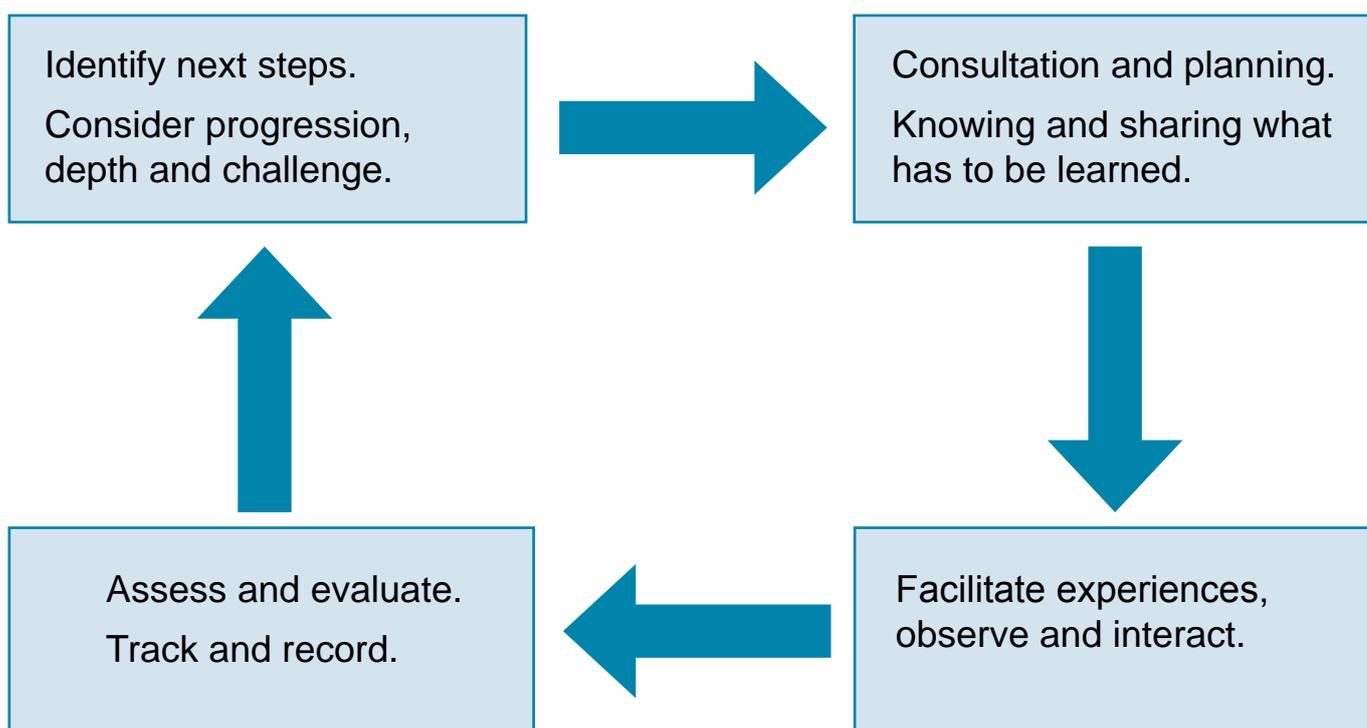
The guidelines for planning are applicable for all children, including those with additional support needs. Practitioners should make use of South Lanarkshire's differentiated curriculum for severe and profound needs. The link is below:

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/9818/framework_for_supporting_pupils_with_severe_and_profound_learning_needs

Please note this is extremely helpful for target setting in Additional Support Plans (ASPs) and Individual Learning Plans (ILPs).



An effective planning cycle would consider:



Practitioners should have a clear focus about what children need to take their learning forward (the learning goal or intention) and have a moderated approach to success criteria. Please see the section on moderation for further explanation. Learning intentions and success criteria should be shared with children at the start of the learning opportunity, or children could be involved in setting their own success criteria. Practitioners should be aware that there may be a variety of learning intentions at any experience. Planning should not focus on individual learning goals, goals should be bundled to ensure breadth and depth in learning experiences. Practitioners should consider individual children's stage of development and ensure that during experiences they differentiate the learning intentions and success criteria accordingly for individual learners.

Effective planning should:

- Consider short term, mid term and long term.
- Actively involve and consult with children, parents, staff and other agencies/services who regularly visit the setting.
- Be responsive to children's needs, interests and development stages. It should meet the physical, social, emotional and cognitive needs of individual children.
- Build on children's prior learning – from home or within the setting.
- Be flexible and allow for spontaneity.
- Consider children's pattern of attendance.

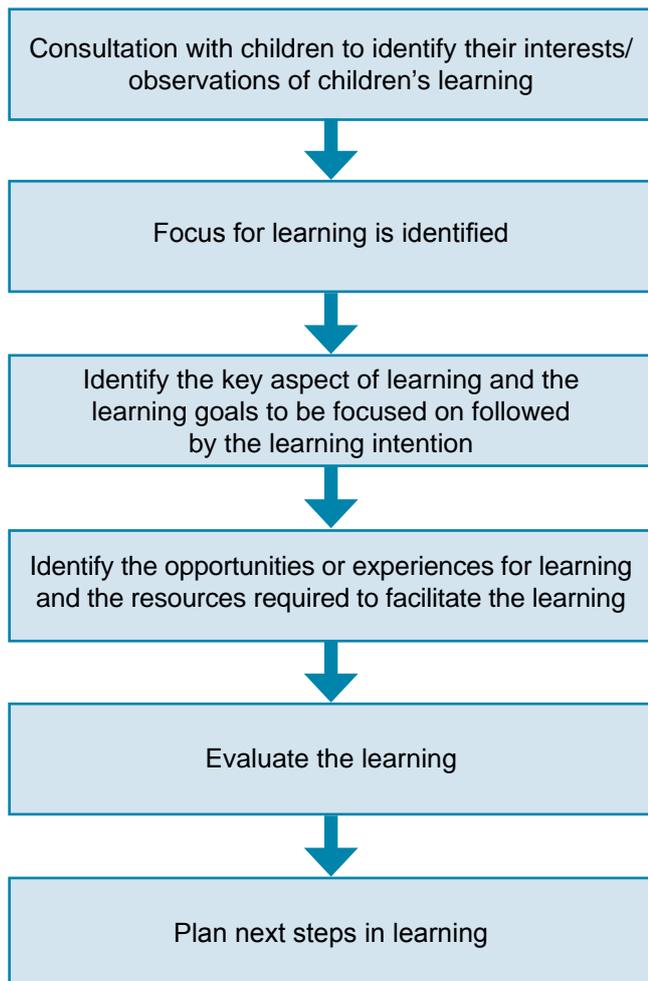
- Establish clear goals for learning and success criteria.
- Make use of observation, assessment and evaluations to identify next steps for learning.
- Lead to a rich learning environment.
- Consider transitions.

Priority in planning should be given to Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing. Practitioners need to consider ways of embedding these subjects in all areas of the curriculum.

Things to avoid:

- Planning should not involve masses of paperwork or be too time consuming for staff to complete.
- It should not be overly complicated.
- It should not be contrived or too structured.
- Do not cover too many areas in your planning, it is better to do less things but in more depth. Children need time to assimilate and revisit learning.
- Do not plan for individual learning goals, but consider ways to group them effectively.
- Avoid gathering large portfolios of evidence. Consider what is significant.
- Be aware of benchmarks but remember that children are working towards these. Do not assess benchmarks individually.

When planning for children's learning, practitioners should ensure the following aspects are evident:



Key messages

- Children learn best when their play is uninterrupted.
- Practitioners should consider what the child is trying to achieve and how they can assist this.
- Practitioners should consult with children about their environment and should ensure resources reflect children's interests and preferences.
- Practitioners should interact skilfully and be mindful that they are not interrupting valuable learning.
- Keep times when gathering larger groups, or all, children together to a minimum.
- Have a soft start to the session where possible.
- Snack should occur free-flow during the session to avoid disrupting learning.



Example of a floor book page

Useful contacts and web links

Building the Ambition

www.gov.scot/Resource/0045/00458455.pdf

Building the Ambition Support Materials

<https://earlyyearsscotland.org/Media/Docs/Conference/Presentations/MM.pdf>

HGIOELC

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/How%20good%20is%20our%20early%20learning%20and%20childcare?>

Pre Birth to Three Introduction

https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/ELC/ELC2_PreBirthToThree/ELC2_PreBirthToThreeBooklet.pdf

Pre Birth to Three Guidance

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/108777/lts-pre-birth-to-three-guidance.pdf>

Building the Curriculum 2 Active Learning in the Early Years

[https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/Building%20the%20Curriculum](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/Building%20the%20Curriculum)

Building the Curriculum 3 A Framework for Learning and Teaching

[https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/Building%20the%20Curriculum](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/Building%20the%20Curriculum)

Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment – Reporting

[https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/Building%20the%20Curriculum](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/Building%20the%20Curriculum)

Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment – Understanding, Applying and Sharing Standards

[https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/Building%20the%20Curriculum](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/Building%20the%20Curriculum)

Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment – Recognising Achievement, Recording and Reporting

[https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/Building%20the%20Curriculum](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/Building%20the%20Curriculum)

Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment – Quality Assurance and Moderation

www.education.gov.scot/Documents/btc5-qa-moderation.pdf

Curriculum for Excellence – Experiences and Outcomes

[https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/Experiences%20and%20outcomes](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/Experiences%20and%20outcomes)

Curriculum For Excellence Briefings Papers

[https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/CfE%20Briefings](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/CfE%20Briefings)

Curriculum for Excellence: Principles and Practice Papers

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2009/10/16155220/13>

Statement from the Chief Inspector

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/cfestatement.pdf>

Education Scotland – Early Learning and Childcare Inspections

<https://education.gov.scot/what-we-do/inspection-and-review/about-inspections-and-reviews/Early%20learning%20and%20childcare%20inspections>

Early Learning and Childcare Glow Share Point

www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/7/contents

The Early Years Framework

www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/257007/0076309.pdf

Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009

www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/7/contents

Engaging with Families

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/research/Engaging%20with%20families>

National Care Standards

www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/37432/0010250.pdf

Curriculum for Excellence Through Outdoor Learning

<https://education.gov.scot/Documents/cfe-through-outdoor-learning.pdf>

What are Creativity Skills?

https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/Creativity/CRE24_Infographics/cre24-what-are-creativity-skills.pdf

Pedagogical Leadership in Early Learning and Childcare

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/Pedagogical%20Leadership%20in%20Early%20Learning%20and%20Childcare>

Early Learning and Childcare and the Scottish Attainment Challenge

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/Early%20Learning%20and%20Childcare%20and%20the%20Scottish%20Attainment%20Challenge>

Early Learning and Childcare: Scottish Attainment Challenge – Supporting Children’s Vocabulary

www.education.gov.scot/improvement/elc38elc-and-sac

Play Strategy for Scotland

www.gov.scot/Resource/0042/00425722.pdf

My World Outdoors

www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/3091/My_world_outdoors_-_early_years_good_practice_2016.pdf

Ready to read: Closing the gap in early language skills so that every child in Scotland can read well

http://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/460505/ready_to_read_scotland1.pdf

Getting Ready to Read

<http://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/455096/ready-to-read-booklet-low-res.pdf>

GIRFEC Practice Guide

www.girfecinlanarkshire.co.uk/practice-guide/

Risky Play

www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childrens-play-july-2012.pdf

Outdoor Play – Let our children take a risk

www.hse.gov.uk/news/judith-risk-assessment/kidsoutdoors070612.htm

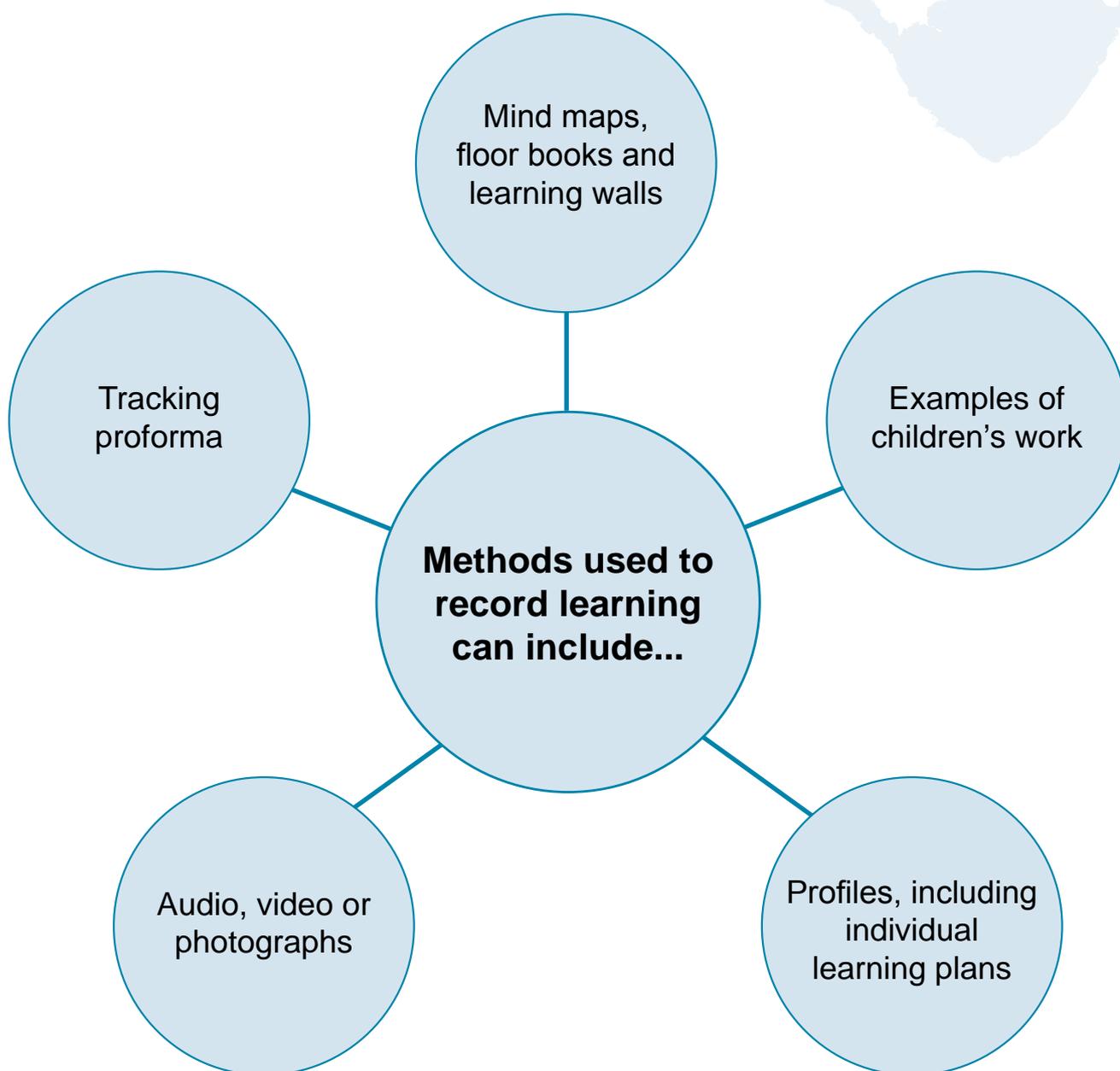
Speech/Language and Communication

<http://talkingpoint.org.uk/>

Recording and tracking children's learning

A variety of methods are available for recording children's learning. Practitioners should utilise a range of methods to record learning.

Approaches to tracking should be manageable and practicable within day-to-day learning and teaching. Information recorded should be relevant and focused on significant features of learning or progress. Tracking should be useful, simple and easy to follow and should be discussed regularly with other practitioners to inform planning children's next steps in learning.



Reporting

Reporting should provide clear, positive and constructive feedback about children's learning and progress, reflecting on what has been achieved against moderated standards, expectations and success criteria. The process needs to be streamlined so that it is manageable and proportionate while still providing the necessary information. Reporting to parents/carers should be clearly focused on evidence of children's achievements and next steps in learning.

Practitioners should:

- Focus on children's achievements, ensuring that the description of learning provides a clear, concise and recognisable picture of what the child can do.
- Be constructive, fair and minimise the use of jargon.
- Provide opportunities for parents to give their views on their child's progress, including their responses to written reports.
- Identify next steps in children's learning.
- Wherever possible, feed-back to parents on a daily basis.
- Ensure they have all relevant information required to report effectively.

Key messages

Tracking should not focus on individual learning goals and should not use developing, consolidating or secure as terms of reference.

Effective assessment enables practitioners to:

- Know each child well as a learner.
- Make accurate judgements about an individual child's progress and informs planning.
- Use profiles to help parents and children reflect on learning.
- Assist children to self-assess and reflect on their learning.
- Play an active role in the planning and direction of their learning and setting goals or targets for learning.
- Identify clear learning intentions.
- Use benchmarks to inform progress particularly in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.
- Work collaboratively with other agencies to harmonise next steps.

Focus for reflection

- How well do you ensure children are involved in the planning process?
- In what ways is knowledge of children's prior learning used to inform your planning process?
- How well does the information we gather about children impact on our planning?
- How effective are your approaches to assessment, tracking, recording and moderation? Are they manageable? How can you improve them?
- What improvements could you make to ensure planning is reflective and responsive?
- How do you ensure the planning within your establishment reflects individual children's needs?
- Could you improve the planning process to meet individual children's needs?
- How well and how often do you engage children in conversations to evaluate their learning?
- How do you monitor the use of spaces and resources?

Final focus for reflection

Reflecting on the information contained within this document, practitioners should consider:

- How relevant and current is the curriculum you deliver to children?
- How can you improve the curriculum delivered within your setting to truly reflect children's interests and needs?
- How well do you develop positive relationships with parents, carers and other agencies or professionals to assist children's learning and progression and curriculum delivery?
- How well do you understand your roles and responsibilities in terms of interacting with children and leading their learning?
- Do all practitioners within the setting have a clear understanding of what they are trying to achieve through the curriculum they design and deliver for children?



Useful contacts and web links

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Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment – Reporting

[https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/Building%20the%20Curriculum](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/Building%20the%20Curriculum)

Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment – Understanding, Applying and Sharing Standards

[https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/Building%20the%20Curriculum](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/Building%20the%20Curriculum)

Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment – Recognising Achievement, Recording and Reporting

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www.education.gov.scot/Documents/btc5-qa-moderation.pdf

Curriculum for Excellence – Experiences and Outcomes

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Education Scotland – Early Learning and Childcare Inspections

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Early Learning and Childcare Glow Share Point

www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/7/contents

The Early Years Framework

www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/257007/0076309.pdf

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Engaging with Families

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/research/Engaging%20with%20families>

National Care Standards

www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/37432/0010250.pdf

Curriculum for Excellence Through Outdoor Learning

<https://education.gov.scot/Documents/cfe-through-outdoor-learning.pdf>

What are Creativity Skills?

https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/Creativity/CRE24_Infographics/cre24-what-are-creativity-skills.pdf

Pedagogical Leadership in Early Learning and Childcare

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/Pedagogical%20Leadership%20in%20Early%20Learning%20and%20Childcare>

Early Learning and Childcare and the Scottish Attainment Challenge

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/Early%20Learning%20and%20Childcare%20and%20the%20Scottish%20Attainment%20Challenge>

Early Learning and Childcare: Scottish Attainment Challenge – Supporting Children’s Vocabulary

www.education.gov.scot/improvement/elc38elc-and-sac

Play Strategy for Scotland

www.gov.scot/Resource/0042/00425722.pdf

My World Outdoors

www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/3091/My_world_outdoors_-_early_years_good_practice_2016.pdf

Ready to read: Closing the gap in early language skills so that every child in Scotland can read well

http://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/460505/ready_to_read_scotland1.pdf

Getting Ready to Read

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Section three:
Support materials
Practitioner audit tool



Together We Can and We Will

Practitioner audit tool

Practitioners can use this tool to reflect on their practice, either individually or within teams. It is designed to be an ongoing resource. When used effectively, this tool will support practitioners to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement in their practice.

Area of practice	Focus for reflection	How good am I now?	Evidence	How can I improve?
Child development	How well do I understand children's typical patterns of development?			
	How often do I consider this when planning for children's learning?			
Attachment theory	How well do I understand the impact of attachment on children's learning?			
How children learn	How well do I understand the impact of play on children's learning?			
	How well do I respond to children's new interests?			
The developing baby	How well do I form and build positive relationships with families?			
	How well do I maintain the baby's routine from home?			
	How well do I value the information shared from home about the developing baby's interests and learning?			
	How well do the spaces and opportunities I create for babies reflect their developmental needs and interests?			
The developing toddler	How well do I understand the toddlers developing emotions?			
	How well do I support toddlers to understand their emotions?			
	How well do I create a link between home and nursery by encouraging the toddler to bring meaningful or special items from home?			
	How well do I create opportunities for toddlers to practice their new found skills?			
	How well do I encourage toddlers to actively explore the spaces created within the learning environment?			
	How well do I understand schemas?			

Area of practice	Focus for reflection	How good am I now?	Evidence	How can I improve?
The developing young child	How well do I support the young child in their learning when they make mistakes, attempt new things or share their ideas?			
	How well do I question the young child to extend their thinking?			
	How well do I scaffold the young child's learning?			
	How well do I create spaces and learning opportunities which reflect the young child's needs and interests?			
Health and wellbeing	How well do I understand the importance of health and wellbeing and the impact it has on children's learning?			
	How well do I understand the principles of GIRFEC?			
	How well do I engage in conversations with parents/carers and other practitioners about children's wellbeing?			
	How well do I encourage children to make choices?			
Communication	How well do I understand how children develop communication skills?			
	How well do I understand the stages of language development?			
	How well do I create opportunities for children to develop their communication?			
	How well do I identify difficulties within this developmental area?			
Creativity	How well do I understand creativity?			
	How well do I actively promote the development of curiosity and inquiry?			
	How well do I actively promote the development of children's open-mindedness, imagination and problem solving skills?			
	How well do I adapt the learning environment to reflect children's needs and interests?			

Area of practice	Focus for reflection	How good am I now?	Evidence	How can I improve?
Creativity (continued)	How well do I use innovative approaches which encourage children to be inquisitive, imaginative and take risks in their learning?			
	How well do I ensure the availability of open ended resources? Can they be moved, used and combined in a variety of ways?			
Quality of interaction	How often do I reflect on your interactions with children?			
	How well do I interact with children? Do your interactions scaffold learning or stop learning?			
	How enthusiastic am I when interacting with children? Do you have smiling eyes and a smiling face?			
	How well do I make eye contact with children and get down to their level?			
	How well do I give children feedback, advice and support on their next steps in learning?			
Planning for children's learning	How well do I understand the planning process?			
	How well do I actively contribute to the planning process?			
	How well does my planning truly reflect children's interests?			
	How well do I consider the use of space and resources when planning for children's learning?			
	How well do I ensure that the pace of the day does not interrupt children's learning?			
	How well do I include children in the planning process?			
	How well do I consider children's prior learning when planning next steps?			
Observation	How often do I actually consider what children are learning throughout your day?			
	How well do I observe children's learning? What do you consider when observing?			

Area of practice	Focus for reflection	How good am I now?	Evidence	How can I improve?
Observation (continued)	How well do I consider the following when observing children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What new knowledge or skills the child has gained ● What the child can do ● What has changed for the child ● What the child may wish to know ● What the child is actually doing 			
	How well do I use the information gained from observations to inform planning for children's learning			
	How often do I discuss your observations with other practitioners?			
Assessment and evaluation	How well do I use assessment information to inform individual learning needs?			
	How often do I include information from parents/carers in your assessment records?			
	How well do you keep children's records up to date?			
	How do you I assessment information to assist effective transitions for children?			
	How well do I consider the ways in which children engaged in learning opportunities when evaluating their learning?			
	How well do I focus on learning rather than enjoyment when evaluating children's learning?			
	How often do I discuss assessment information with other practitioners?			
Moderation	How well do I engage in moderation activities with other practitioners, either within your own playroom or establishment or within Learning Communities or even wider?			
Blooms taxonomy	How well do I understand Blooms?			
	How well do I question children to extend their thinking and learning?			

Area of practice	Focus for reflection	How good am I now?	Evidence	How can I improve?
Tracking	How well do I track children's learning?			
	How often do I discuss tracking records with children, other practitioners and parents/carers?			
Reporting	How accurate is my reporting on individual children?			
	How well do I report to children, parents and others?			
	How often do I create opportunities to report to parents and for parents to report on children's learning at home?			
Outdoor learning	How well do I create opportunities for children to develop in all areas within the outdoor environment? How evident is the curriculum outdoors?			
	How often do I spend time with children outdoors?			
	How integrated are the indoor and outdoor spaces within my setting?			
	How often are opportunities for learning outdoors available within my setting?			
	How well do I ensure that children have opportunities to explore outdoors?			
Transitions	How well do I plan for children's transitions?			
	What transitions do I plan for?			
	How well do I consider the impact of daily transitions on individual children?			
	How effective are the strategies I employ to support individual children at transition times?			
	How well do I involve parents/carers in planning for smooth transitions?			
Final focus for reflection	How well do I understand your role and responsibilities?			
	How good is my understanding of the curriculum?			
	What skills and attributes make a highly skilled practitioner?			

Section three: Support materials

Planning for Children's Learning



Planning for Children's Learning

A play based curriculum requires skilled, flexible planning. Planning for children's learning brings together the cycle of observation, assessment and evaluation. Settings may choose to use a planning proforma or use a floor book to record planning and learning. Some use a combination of both. Floor books provide an excellent opportunity for children to be involved in planning and lead their learning and are also easy to share with parents. Some settings will record their planning individually and others in teams. There is no right or wrong way, however, all settings must ensure that the method they use focuses on enhancing the learner's journey and should reflect children's interests and prior learning. Parents/carers should be included in this process. Information shared by parents, particularly for the developing baby and toddler, is invaluable when devising targets or next steps for individual children. Whichever method used should include information on:

- **The reason behind the planning** – “Inspired by....” Why are you providing the experience or opportunity?
- **The key aspect of learning** – Communication, Creativity or Health and Wellbeing. It may include one or more of these.
- **The learning goals and skills** – What do we want the children to learn? (The Learning Intention) Goals should be planned for in bundles, not individually. Practitioners working with children ages 3 – 5 may wish to include a reference to the E's and O's in Curriculum for Excellence. (Links between the Learning Goals in Together We Can and We Will and Curriculum for Excellence are provided.)
- **Space / Resources** – What areas are being specifically used? What resources are required?
- **The success criteria** – What do the children need to be able to do to achieve the learning intention or goal?
- **Evaluation** – This should focus on the learning intention. Did all children who participated achieve it? How did they show this? The evaluation should also reflect the space and resources used – did they challenge the children? Would any other resources have enhanced the learning opportunity? Was the space appropriate? Could the experience have been enhanced if something was different?

- **Next steps** – How can the learning be deepened? What would challenge the child? Do I need a next step?
- **Evaluation of a specific focus for learning** – Some settings may choose to focus on a particular focus for learning for several weeks. This should be planned for and delivered in an inter-disciplinary manner. On completion of this, establishments should consider if the focus provided breadth, challenge and enjoyment, depth, progression, personalisation and choice, coherence and relevance.

Settings may choose to have some practitioners planning adult led experiences and some responding to children's interests. With any method what is important is how the practitioner interacts with and observes the child. Highly skilled practitioners will question children effectively and will know when to interact to provide challenge or support.

Practitioners working with children under three should continue to plan for learning using the goals for the developing baby and the developing toddler. Goals should not be planned for individually but should be grouped or bundled together.

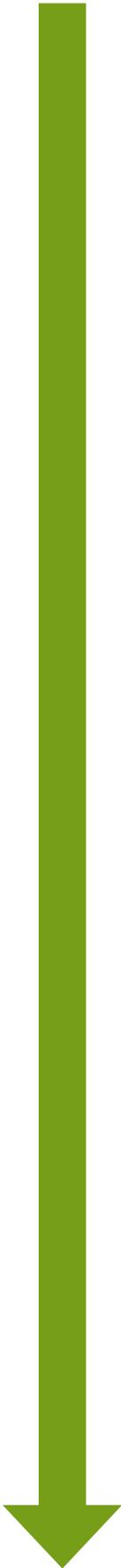
Children should be involved in planning for and evaluating their learning. Practitioners should create meaningful ways of doing this e.g. direct dialogue or thumbs up/thumbs down. They should create opportunities for older children to begin to assess each other's work. Practitioners should engage in professional dialogue with colleagues during planning meetings, sharing their observations of children's learning and interests. They should consider the spaces within the learning environment (both indoors and outdoors) as well as resources, ensuring they reflect children's interests and provide challenge. Appropriate next steps should then be planned. It is important to remember that a next step will not always be required and should not be devised just to fill a box. Whilst it is important that children have fun and enjoyment observations, evaluations and planning meetings should focus on children's learning. Practitioners should be clear on what the learning intention is and should focus on this when interacting with children and when evaluating experiences and opportunities. They should also be mindful that children may take the learning in a different direction, where the learning intention may change and should be skilled in differentiating adult led experiences to meet the needs and abilities of individual children. This should be reflected within their planning.



Staff member

Planning Format Date

Observations / Consultation / Inspired by / Interests / Parent suggestions:
Key aspect of learning – Communication, Creativity or Health and Wellbeing:
Learning goals and skills – what do you want the children to learn?
Experiences offered / Resources:
Success criteria:
CFE Experiences / Outcomes:





Evaluation:

Next steps:

Spaces Used:

House / Imaginative	Snack
Construction	Sand and Water
Book Corner	Small World
Puzzles	Music Room / Special Den
ICT	Outdoors
Numeracy	Writing Table
Art	Other (Please specify)

Manager's comment:

Section three:

Support materials

Health and Wellbeing



Health and Wellbeing

“Playing outdoors has a positive impact on children’s physical, mental and emotional development” (Knight 2006)

GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child 2008) is the Scottish Government’s approach to improving outcomes and support the wellbeing of children by offering services through collaborative working which gives the right help at the right time from the right people.

In order to improve children’s Health and Wellbeing the document highlights eight wellbeing indicators which are, Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included. (SHANARRI)

Using these Wellbeing Indicators we can demonstrate how Health and Wellbeing can be supported/improved in the outdoor environment.



Safe

If you remove all hazards from the environment then the challenges are also removed, being safe is about enabling things to happen, not removing all opportunities.

Children who are supported in supervised risky play (age/stage appropriate) will gain the knowledge required to assess and manage their own risks.



They will have further opportunity to:

- Take a risk- benefit approach/ setting boundaries
- Use real tools in real contexts, applying/ understanding rules and regulations.
- Develop resilience and self esteem.



Healthy

“Every child has the right to the best possible health”. **UNCRC Article 24**

Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

Outdoor experiences promote mental and physical wellbeing. They can form lifelong habits and dispositions, engaging children with natural places. Growing their own food products can promote children’s sense of wonder and understanding of healthy eating. It can also encourage independence and promote emotional well-being/emotional literacy.



Achieving

Through leading their own outdoor learning children are following their own interests and achieving accomplishments personal/relevant to them, for some children they will achieve more outdoors rather than the confines of indoors.



They will have further opportunity to:

- Use their imagination/be creative.
- Make choices and problem solve.
- Learn about the world around them, how things grow, lifecycles etc.
- Work in groups, sharing, negotiating, using tools etc.
- Gain transferable skills and make connections in their learning.
- Dress independently to develop an awareness of appropriate clothing for different weathers/seasons.



Nurtured

Children who experience the outdoors with supportive, appropriately trained adults who have positive attitudes towards outdoor play and who role model respect will develop empathy and thoughtfulness for the environment and others.



They will have further opportunity to:

- Form attachments with practitioners,
- Learn to care for the environment and living things within the environment.
- Build confidence, self-esteem and resilience through small achievable tasks.

Active

Children who learn about the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle e.g. having daily opportunities for outdoor play and energetic experiences.



They will have further opportunity to:

- Be physically active e.g. balancing, developing coordination and spatial awareness through a challenging environment e.g. uneven terrain, large logs to climb and jump from, tyres for balancing on etc.
- Become aware of their own physical capabilities and be supported to overcome any challenges they may face.
- Explore equipment which supports their innate desires to swing, move fast, spin and hang upside down.
- Develop gross/fine motor skills, spatial awareness, balance (on uneven terrain), coordination, climbing, jumping, running, locomotion and manipulative skills.



Respected

Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities. (UNCRC) Article 31

Children who are cared for by adults who understand and respect them as individuals, respecting their individuality and preferred learning styles, listening to their views and ideas and building upon them



They will have further opportunity to:

- Learn that their interests and contributions are valued
- Learn that they have time to reflect, repeat and revisit experiences
- Learn how to respect and look after their environment (local community)
- Learn to take the lead in their own play.
- Learn that they will be consulted with.

Responsible

Children who are given responsibilities for their outdoor/wider environment and who are involved in the planning process, choosing their own resources etc;



They will have further opportunity to:

- Learn how to care for the environment
- Take ownership and individual responsibility for looking after the world around them.
- Be supported in recognising risk benefits and hazards allowing them to be responsible for their safety and the safety of others.
- Set their own boundaries.
- Be responsible when using tools and equipment.



Included

Outdoor play is an entitlement for all children. It promotes inclusive practice and identifies barriers. It should include children of all ages, stages and abilities and create an anti-discriminatory ethos.

Through regular outdoor play in attractive, engaging environments children form emotional and meaningful bonds with place, which in turn has positive effects on self-identity and esteem. (Lester and Maudsley 2006 cited in Children's Play in Natural Environments NCB)



They will have further opportunity to:

- Make choices and decisions, who and what they play with.
- Be dressed in appropriate clothing in order to take part fully in all activities.
- Be part of small or large groups, in a variety of situations/experiences. Developing their social skills through negotiation, conversation and co-operation.
- Learn to care for their outdoor environment, developing a sense of belonging and highlighting their place in the world.



Creativity

By creating we think, by living we learn (Sir Patrick Geddes cited in Dirty Teaching 2014)

Outdoor play should encourage children to try new experiences, building and nurturing their confidence and a sense of wonder of the outdoor environment and nature. Those who are given the scope to engage in risky play and build up their own understanding of their capabilities.



They will have further opportunity to:

- Be free to explore movements, run, skip, hop, roll, spin, dance, sing, use voice, climb, build, balance, splash, crawl, slide and spin.
- Move spontaneously.
- Develop their senses through smell, hear, touch, look, taste.
- Engage in imaginative play – using loose part materials e.g. materials, sticks, stones, leaves and materials that can bend or break; den building, mud kitchen, mixing, filling, exploring, adding, cooking, washing, collecting, digging etc; Using music to complement role play/self expression, making a sound garden e.g. using pots and pans with wooden spoons to make sounds.
- Exploration and inquiry of a variety of resources e.g. water, wood, metal, sand, mud, grass etc.
- Problem solve and learn effective questioning, giving children time to extend their own thinking and time to revisit, repeat and adapt experiences to come to different conclusions/solutions.
- Make patterns, design, experiment and create, mark making e.g. paintbrushes with water, charcoal, transient art and making patterns onto washable items e.g. hung up shower curtain with paint/clay, creating murals on walls/fences.
- Use real tools and utensils to make learning more meaningful and relevant e.g. to create, model and make objects, using potato peelers to whittle sticks to represent their ideas e.g. magic wand.
- Investigate the natural world and living things within it e.g. searching for mini beasts, building a bug hotel which can be made from old palettes, natural materials, bricks, bamboo sticks etc; Uncovering worms, snails and woodlice.

Communication

Outdoor play should offer children the opportunity to explore language, point, look, take part in conversation, follow instructions, question and describe. It will support the development of listening skills, hearing and the ability to identify a wide variety of sounds in the environment. Children, who are encouraged to ask questions in order to extend their own thinking and to learn new words or phrases, identify trees, plants, flowers, animals, insects etc



They will have further opportunity to:

- Develop language through physical movement, songs, games, rhymes and exploring forces. Enjoying language games such as 'What's the Time Mr Wolf?'
- Experiment with tone and pitch and finding their voice e.g. loud voices.
- Share thoughts and ideas with others, developing social skills.
- Communicate with each other, negotiate, compromise, resolve conflict.
- Experiment with loud speakers, megaphones and microphones, using materials such as plastic bottles with the bottoms cut off and cones/cylinders made with card. These in turn could be used to listen to and identify sounds within their environment.
- Engage in sensory play which caters to all senses will enhance communication and descriptive language.
- Create enriched story telling spaces, encouraging children to use their imagination to create their own stories/role play e.g. a 'magic carpet' on which children's imagination can fly away with them.
- Create small world play opportunities e.g. tyres can be transformed into jungles with dinosaurs etc and fairy glades. Large cable reels can be used for small world play which will provide endless opportunities to extend vocabulary, transportation into other worlds.
- Mark make, draw, write and create and express own ideas e.g. handmade chalkboards. Be aware of notices, signs and warnings within their environment and encourage them to create their own e.g. 'mind the step'.

- Use descriptive and scientific language e.g. when talking about the weather and seasons and help children to learn about and identify changes in the elements, seasons, environment.
- Lead their own play and negotiate plans, activities and use of resources and space.
- Observe one another's play, acting as spectators, narrating, and commentating and promoting peer assessment.

The less children play outdoors, the less they learn to cope with the risks and challenges they will go on to face as adults..... Nothing can replace what children gain from the freedom and independence of thought they will have when trying new things out in the open (Byron, Tanya 2009 cited in Natural Childhood 2012)

Further Reading

Documents

Outdoor Learning and Play Strategy 2015
My World Outdoors, Care Inspectorate 2016
Building the Ambition 2014
Getting It Right for Every Child, Education Scotland

Books

Dirty Teaching: A beginners Guide to Learning Outdoors. Juliet Robertson 2014
Forest School and Outdoor Learning in the Early Years. Sara Knight 2012
Exercising Muscles and Minds: Outdoor Play and the Early Years Curriculum, Marjorie Ouvry 2000.

Websites

[Muddy Faces](#)
[Education Scotland – Play Strategy](#)
[Grounds for Learning](#)
[Forest Schools](#)

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Byron, Tanya 2009 cited in Natural Childhood 2012)
Dirty Teaching: A beginners Guide to Learning Outdoors. Juliet Robertson 2014
Forest School and Outdoor Learning in the Early Years. Sara Knight 2012
Getting It Right for Every Child, Education Scotland
Maudsley and Lester Play in the Natural Environment 2007 NCB
My World Outdoors, Care Inspectorate 2016

Outdoor Learning

Outdoor learning and experiences are important for the holistic development of every child. Play and learning experiences outdoors provide an opportunity for children to connect with nature and foster a positive disposition to the outdoors.

Access to nature and outdoor play is positively associated with improved self-esteem, physical health, development of language skills and disposition to learning'. (My World Outdoors – Care Inspectorate 2016).

Every child has the right to play under the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. Article 31 states that every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts

Learning outdoors supports and promotes development in Health and Wellbeing, Creativity and Communication. It is central to all children's learning and possibly more so for some specific children. It can become a lifelong learning skill.

The outdoor learning environment should be given equal consideration as indoors. Practitioners and settings should view outdoors and indoors as a combined, integrated environment. This should be reflected through planning, use of resources, management, evaluation and reflection. When engaged, supportive practitioners show enthusiasm for the outdoors opportunities are endless. As with the indoor environment, learning opportunities should be cross-curricular to allow for interdisciplinary learning.



Children who are engaged in the outdoors:

- Learn within a real context and through first hand experiences.
- Learn about the world around them, the challenges in that world and their own abilities/capabilities.
- Engage with their world and understand their place within it.
- Learn to respect their environment and community, developing a sense of citizenship.
- Develop confidence and self-esteem through leading their own play and learning to assess/ manage risk.
- Develop social skills and relationships.
- Develop inquiry, problem solving and physical skills,
- Engage in risky and energetic play.
- Foster positive dispositions to learning.
- Develop emotions such as wonder, joy and excitement.



Practitioners should:

- Value the learning opportunities which can be created outdoors.
- Have a pedagogical approach, supporting children's development and learning outdoors.
- Take responsibility to assess risk, before, during and after all outdoor experiences.
- Be enthusiastic with a positive attitude towards outdoor learning and play; be committed to developing children's experiences with the awareness of the endless possibilities of the outdoor environment.
- Encourage and foster a positive attitude and interest towards the natural environment and develop a connection with the natural world.
- Be furnished with the appropriate knowledge and training to develop specific approaches.
- Plan and facilitate learning opportunities: be led by children, supporting and encouraging them in their own personal interests, using these to plan, observe, evaluate learning and reflect.
- Consider when is appropriate to intervene – in order not to stifle or interrupt learning. Interaction or interference?
- Encourage creativity by giving children time to explore, investigate and problem solve.
- Risk assess V risk benefit, identifying and overcoming barriers, this is when the adult considers the risk and the benefit of the experience. If the risk outweighs the benefit then it should be reconsidered. Alternatively if the benefit outweighs the risk then the experience should continue.
- Respect and understand children's preferred learning styles and varying abilities in order for children to reach their full potential.
- Share good practice and knowledge.
- Help children to overcome fears/anxieties.
- Praise and recognise efforts.
- Create an ethos which supports inquiry and curiosity.
- Ensure all children's needs are met e.g. suitably dressed/safe in the sun.
- Reflect on practice and pedagogical approaches.
- Be flexible and willing to adapt your own delivery/ environment.
- Foster a "can do" approach supporting children's development of trial/error/perseverance and resilience.
- Promote learning in real and meaningful contexts.
- Deliver activities in small manageable steps, in order to develop self-esteem.



Stages of speech and language development

Age	Listening and attention	Comprehension	Speech sounds and language	Social skills
0-3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turns towards familiar sounds • Startled by loud noises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises main carers voice • Often calmed by familiar voices/sounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently cries, especially when uncomfortable or unhappy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gazes at faces and attempts to copy facial movements, e.g. sticks tongue out • Makes eye contact for longer periods
3-6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watches a person's face when they are talking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows excitement at the sound of approaching voices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes sounds to get attention • Makes sounds back when spoke to • Laughs during play • Babbles to self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senses different emotions in main carers voice and may respond differently • Cries in different ways to express different needs
6-12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locates source of voice with accuracy • Focuses on different sounds, e.g. telephone, doorbell, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands common words, e.g. bye bye, all gone and no 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses speech sounds (babbling) to communicate with others • Stops babbling when hears familiar adult voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys action rhymes and songs • Tries to imitate adult speech • Takes 'turns' in conversations
12-15 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens to music and singing • Enjoys sound toys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands familiar words, e.g. cup, mummy, daddy • Understand more words than they can say • Understands simple instructions, e.g. kiss mummy, give to gran 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Says about 10 single words • Reaches or points to something they want 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likes the company of familiar adults
15-18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens and responds to simple information/instructions e.g. put shoes on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands a wider range of single words and some two-part phrases • Recognises and points to familiar things in books • Gives names to familiar objects, e.g. car, milk, book 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still babbles in conversation but uses about 20 words correctly, although pronunciation may not be clear • Uses intonation and pitch in conversation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins to engage in simple pretend play • Plays alone
18-24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on an activity of own choice and can find it difficult to be directed by an adult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of single words develops rapidly at this stage (between 200-500 words are known) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses up to 50 words • Begins to put simple phrases/sentences together (2-3 word) • Begins to ask questions, "what's that" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pretend play develops, e.g. feeding a doll or teddy • Becomes frustrated when unable to be understood • Follows adult body language, including pointing, gesture and facial expression

Age	Listening and attention	Comprehension	Speech sounds and language	Social skills
2-3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning to listen and talk with interest • Easily distracted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands more simple instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses 300 words, including descriptive language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds a conversation but can jump from subject to subject • Interested in others play and begins to join in • Expresses emotions towards adults and peers using words
3-4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys listening to stories • Finds it difficult to attend to more than one thing at a time, easily distracted and has to switch attention between speaker and task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands questions or instructions with two parts, e.g. get your jumper • Understands why questions • Awareness of time is developing – today, yesterday and tomorrow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses sentences with between four and six words • Uses future and past tense • May continue to have problems with tenses e.g. runned instead of ran • Able to remember and enjoys telling long stories or singing songs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands turn taking as well as sharing with adults and peers • Initiates conversations • Enjoys playing with peers • Able to argue a point if they disagree using words, not just actions
4-5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention is more flexible – the child is able to focus on activity and listen to conversation at the same time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to follow simple story without pictures • Understands instructions containing sequencing words, e.g. first, last • Understands adjectives, e.g. soft, hard • Aware of more complex humour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses well formed sentences • Easily understood by peers and adults • Frequently asked the meaning of unfamiliar words and may use them randomly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chooses own friends • Generally co-operatives with peers • Takes turns in longer conversations • Uses language to gain information, negotiate, discuss feelings and give opinions



Section three: Support materials

Communication



Communication Support Materials

Communication

Introduction



The ability to communicate effectively is crucial for developing positive relationships and impacts on all areas of life – on education, employment and health. Learning through play is fundamental to children's education, helping them develop the skills necessary to survive and thrive in modern society. Early Learning and Childcare settings have a vital role to play in children's communication and literacy development. All children arrive in our settings with varied communication and language experiences, therefore it is important that practitioners observe young children, listen to children empathetically and build upon children's existing communication and language skills. Children need to hear, experience and use language from an early age.



Section 1

The Developing Baby



Developing Listening and Talking Skills



Communication with babies is the foundation of attachment. Babies are born potentially able to produce sounds and sound combinations. Evidence suggests that babies who are exposed to plenty of language will develop more vocabulary as they grow and they will communicate with gestures, babbles and sounds. Babies respond well when adults are communicating with them. As practitioners we must remember that seventy per cent of communication is non-verbal and although gestures are an important aspect of early communication and form part of the babies' body language, we must be careful not to send the wrong message with inappropriate gestures or expressions. Before babies can speak, they will use gestures to communicate their needs and wants.

For example:

Requests: From the age of approximately five months, babies use hand gestures to indicate wants and needs. This may include the stretching out to reach the adult for a specific thing.

Refusals: Babies use a variety of limb and full body gestures to indicate when they do not want something. This may be a firm head shake to indicate “No!” or they may cry to let you know that they are not happy.

Opportunities and experiences that can help to promote listening and talking/babbling

- Adults sitting beside the baby at their eye level, looking at the baby, smiling, laughing with them, using lots of welcoming and positive body language and encouraging the baby to respond.
- Songs and rhymes with actions. Ideas may include: The wheels on the bus, head, shoulders, knees and toes, Tommy Thumb and Incy Wincy Spider.
- Monitor the learning environment for factors that may impact on communication e.g. ensure the room is not too loud, too cold or hot, overly cluttered or too brightly coloured. Over stimulation can have a negative effect on all forms of communication.
- Interactive books, such as lift the flap, popup books, musical/feely books which can be used to engage the baby’s attention.
- Talk and sing to the baby and encourage them to sing and babble back to you.
- Daily routines, for example; interactions at snack times between adults and children. One to one time during nappy changing times for the adult to talk and sing to the baby.
- Creative experiences such as painting, mark making, sensory play, where the baby can explore the materials using their senses.
- Musical Instruments and Treasure Baskets, if utilised correctly, can promote talking and listening in a meaningful way.

Developing Early Reading Skills



Reading and telling stories to children is something that Early Learning and Childcare Practitioner’s do every day. This can be one of the most rewarding experiences as the stories involve and capture the child’s imagination. Story telling provides a context for literacy learning and should be carefully planned. The story teller should be enthusiastic, animated and be able to speak clearly and concisely. Reading is a bedrock of future learning and a gateway to opportunity and enjoyment and as practitioners we should inspire a love of reading from as early an age as possible.

Initially the baby won’t understand the words in the book but hearing the adult’s voice stimulates an interest in sounds and helps them to develop listening skills. Reading to the baby is also a great opportunity for ‘cuddling in’, ‘getting close’ to the baby in a safe, secure and nurturing environment.

Opportunities and experiences that can help develop early reading skills are:

- Introducing stimulating books - babies are fascinated by sounds, colours and patterns. Young babies may not know what the pictures in the book mean but they can focus on them, touch and interact with them.
- Various types of books should be introduced, such as sensory books – with different sounds, textures, smells, lift the flap books – with a surprise on every page, cloth books – they can mould and manipulate it, put it in their mouths, vinyl books – make books part of water play and bath time, mirrored books – all children like to see themselves in the middle of a story book.
- When reading or telling stories, practitioners should be aware of their body language, add sounds and adapt your tone of voice, e.g. add sounds to suit the topic or perform the actions.
- Encourage the baby to look, point, touch, and imitate. Babies love to learn through repetition, so read the story over and over.



Developing Early Writing Skills



From birth to around six months of age babies are learning to use their hands. They are learning to reach out and grasp objects, often putting them in their mouths for exploration. This is the first Pre-writing skill they will develop.

Between six months and a year babies gain more control over their hands. They will be able to pick up objects between their thumb and forefinger, pass them from hand to hand, exploring them as they go. Their ability to manipulate smaller objects is becoming much more precise. You will observe babies successfully feeding themselves with finger food, putting shapes into posting boxes and manipulating stacking toys – all skills necessary for early-writing.

By a year to eighteen months' babies will have developed the hand skills necessary for grasping writing utensils. They will be able to grasp a chunky paint brush or piece of chalk to make marks on a piece of paper. Although at this stage babies have no interest in writing, they will enjoy using brushes, crayons and chalks to mark make and make patterns in the sand, water, play-dough etc. Let the baby explore and experiment by scribbling and skiddling.

Opportunities and experiences that can help develop early writing skills are:

- Encourage the baby to feed themselves with finger foods.
- Provide chunky paint brushes / utensils to mark make.
- Paint Surfing / or Body Painting – wherever appropriate.
- Provide materials like gloop, play-dough, custard, paint –babies can make patterns.
- Experiences to strengthen the hand muscles – pulling, rolling, squeezing and stretching games.
- Experiences to improve hand and eye co-ordination – putting shapes in a shape sorter or stacking rings.



Section 2

The Developing Toddler



Developing Listening and Talking



As practitioners working with toddlers we have to learn to talk to them in a meaningful way that encourages them to listen. Patience and understanding are required at this time where children are 'finding their voices' and would much rather talk than to listen. The adult has an important role in helping to develop the toddler's listening and talking skills. From the age of two to three years of age more and more words begin to be integrated into young children's play. Both verbal and non-verbal language is used at this age. Conversations with toddlers should support their learning of new words and boost their motivation to make them understood. The adult's role is to provide interesting, stimulating and enjoyable ways for children to recognise and practice listening and talking.

Opportunities and experiences that can help develop the toddler's listening and talking skills are:

- Talking to and involving the child in regular conversations within small and large groups.
- Look at the child as you speak to him/her and model good body language and eye contact.
- Model phrases and words to help children to develop new vocabulary and build on existing language.
- Role modelling good listening skills with the child and helping them to develop an awareness of when to listen.
- Listening to the child attentively, giving them time to express their own needs and wants.
- Singing and reciting nursery rhymes/songs every day and encouraging children to join in with the actions.
- Reading stories together, encouraging children to become familiar with the story telling routine.
- Role play, puppets and props should be used to encourage children to interact with others during play. Using puppets boosts children's confidence in reading and speaking resulting in our children being less inhibited.
- Action and ring games to help develop children's concentration and listening skills.
- Drawing/painting experiences which encourage children to express themselves verbally and non-verbally.
- Opportunities during snack time for children to sit with their peers. Adults should model good use of language and provide opportunities for children to have conversations together.
- Use microphones and walkie talkies to encourage vocalisation.



Developing Early Reading Skills



Being a toddler is all about action, excitement and discovery. Everyday experiences should be rich in opportunities to engage in and develop language skills. It is important to look for books that are short and simple with props that can be used as a springboard for developing talking, reading, writing and listening skills. Books featuring animals or machines invite movement and making sounds. Books with flaps or different textures will keep the toddler interested and engaged them for longer periods of time helping to develop their concentration span, enjoyment and interest.

Opportunities and experiences that help develop the toddler's early reading skills are:

- Books about everyday experiences and feelings.
- Encouraging the child to identify with the characters as they dress, eat, visit, nap and play. Listen carefully to their response as he or she wants to be listened to. This will help to build their vocabulary.
- Reading the child's favourite story repeatedly. Add props and extensions wherever possible to take the learning forward.
- Introduce props to go alongside the chosen story, for example: "The Three Little Pigs." Introduce puppets and act out the story. Always show enthusiasm and adapt your tone of voice and facial expressions. This will help to capture their imagination and encourage creativity with reading.
- Provide opportunities to extend the story further e.g. "The Hungry Caterpillar." This story can be incorporated into the house corner or snack by introducing the various foods and giving the child real life experiences. Bring the story to life!
- Provide stimulating outdoor experiences for the child to develop a love for reading. Create cosy seating areas where children can read outdoor books – laminated poems and rhymes, or take part in drama by acting out familiar stories.

- Buddy children up with their peers, children love to "read" to each other.
- Visits to the local library to look for interesting books or ask the librarian to visit the nursery and read a selection of age appropriate stories to the children. Children love it when new people visit and read to them.
- Book Bug sessions within the establishment or in local library.

Developing Early Writing Skills



How many times have you heard a child asking "what does that say?" This is a sign that the child understands that letters represent words. At this stage toddlers should be subject to a wide variety of experiences designed to develop co-ordination, strength and sensory processing – all skills necessary for writing.

Experiences that could encourage early writing include;

- Provide copious opportunities to mark-make – use shorter pencils, chinks, brushes etc. and ensure they are broad enough for the children get a good grip.
- Read different types of books with the children every day. Talk about different aspects of the book, author, script, illustrations, page numbers etc.
- Ensure there is lots of exposure to print – on the walls, tables and chairs labelled, letter and number magnets, letters in the sand or water.
- Create opportunities to mark make and write in the sand, in the mud, outdoors with chalk and water.
- Provide experiences to develop fine motor skills and hand / eye co-ordination.
- Ensure there are opportunities to write in all areas e.g. put a note pad beside the phone in the home corner for shopping lists or take away order.

Together We Can and We Will

The Young Child Communication Support Materials

Section 1

Introduction

Communication is fundamental to all areas of learning and is necessary for all aspects of life and work. Early Learning and Childcare settings have a vital role to play in children's communication development. Curriculum for Excellence focuses on three strands – Listening and Talking, Reading and Writing. However, often learning within communication cannot be seen as fitting an individual strand. This should be reflected in planning when curriculum goals are bundled together.

Children arrive at nursery with varied early communication and literacy experiences. It is important therefore that practitioners in early years settings build upon the experiences that children bring to nursery and provide opportunities for learning that are responsive to the individual child's interests and developmental needs. These opportunities must be firmly embedded in play in order to help children understand the purposes of talking and listening, reading and writing.

The use of home link programmes, such as lending libraries, story sacks and rhyme bags help to support children's communication development at home and build partnership working with parents.

These guidelines look at the aspects of listening and talking, reading and writing and explore ideas for developing an environment that is rich in opportunities and experiences which encourage and support children in their early literacy development.



“Our ability to use language lies at the centre of the development and expression of our emotions, our thinking, our learning and our sense of personal identity.”

Literacy and English Principles and Practice Paper (p1)



Section 2

Developing Listening and Talking Skills

Listening and Talking

The experiences, outcomes and benchmarks referenced in this section are:

Learning Goals	Experiences and Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Listen to and observe interesting and useful information to make choices or learn new things● Explore and use patterns, sounds and rhythm of language● Use speech and non-verbal language to express needs, feelings, thoughts and ideas	Enjoyment and Choice: LIT 0-01a, LIT 0-11a, LIT 0-20a, LIT 0-01b, LIT 0-11b, LIT 0-1c
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Explore and use patterns, sounds and rhythm of language● Listen effectively to others during play and interactions● Listen and respond to stories, rhymes, songs, music● Participate in short and extended conversations● Share personal experiences with others● Use language for various purposes – describing, explaining, questioning and developing ideas● Use meaningful conversations during imaginative play● Listen and participate in conversations/discussions and discover new words and phrases● Listen to and observe interesting and useful information to make choices or learn new things● Follow instructions and information from adults● Have an awareness of when to talk and when to listen during different situations	Tools for listening and talking: LIT 0-02a, ENG 0-03a
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Follow instructions and information from adults● Explore books, stories and texts with interest and curiosity	Finding and using information: LIT 0-04a
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ask questions to help develop understanding and comprehension, linking to what I know and what I am learning	Understanding, analysing and evaluating: LIT 0-07a, LIT 0-16a, ENG 0-17a
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Create my own stories in a range of ways	Creating texts: LIT 0-09a, LIT 0-09b, LIT 0-10a, LIT 0-31a

Children need to develop listening and talking skills to assist them in building relationships and expressing themselves. The adult has an important role to play, modelling language and developing children's understanding of turn-taking in conversations and learning when to talk and when to listen.

Being able to communicate influences everything we do. Children need real opportunities to express their own ideas and feelings and to understand and to respond to other people. Children are inquisitive and find out about the world they live in by asking questions, talking about their ideas, describing what they see and thinking and wondering out loud.

- The learning environment should provide children with opportunities which promote curiosity and encourage inquiry and creativity. When asking children questions practitioners need to give children time to think about the questions and form their answers.
- Involve children in discussions and conversations to develop their vocabulary and understanding of words. Vocabulary development significantly impacts on reading - better vocabulary development leads to better reading comprehension. It is easier for a child to learn new words when you already have a store of words as they can use their existing knowledge to make associated links.
- Children need to hear words, discuss words and be given feedback on their use of words to develop their vocabulary. New words and sounds should be practiced through experiences that offer opportunities for children to talk and listen.

***Materials from the Literacy Training Programme, Session 1, will provide additional guidance in terms of developing children's vocabulary.**

Phonological Awareness



Talking to children about their daily routines, the signs they see in the street, sounds they hear in and out the home are all beneficial for building talking and listening skills.

Stories, songs and rhymes are fun for children to explore sounds and words. Everyday experiences and conversations enhance a child's ability to hear and express the sounds in words. This promotes children's phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is important in promoting early literacy development. Children need to be aware that:

- Sentences are made from a series of words
- Words are made from a series of syllables
- Syllables are made up of individual sounds.

These individual sounds are known as phonemes. Knowledge of phonemic awareness (knowledge of individual sounds in words) is a very strong indicator of reading success. Practitioners, therefore, need to be able to identify children who experience difficulty distinguishing and manipulating the different sounds in words. The earlier support can be put in place for these children the more positive the outcome.

Aspects of phonological awareness



Sound Awareness: Children should be encouraged to hear and say patterns in words.

Word Awareness: Can children identify words within a sentence? e.g. My name is Lily

Syllable identification: Can children identify the number of beats in a word? e.g. cro-co-dile, Pe-ter, eat-ing, ba-na-na

Rhyme Awareness: Can children recognise words that end in the same sound? e.g. hat and bat. Encourage children to make a rhyme from a given word.

Phonemic Awareness

- Can children hear and say the first sound in a word? e.g. What is the first sound in cat? Can you think of one the same?
- Can children identify the same sound at the beginning of a list of words? e.g. pat, pen
- What is the same in ball, bin and bat?
- Which doesn't belong – bus/bun/rug?

Listening and Talking with others

- Children should be encouraged to take turns when listening and talking in a variety of contexts.
- Practitioners should help children to use appropriate body language when listening to others, for example, eye contact.
- When children asks questions and practitioners should encourage other children to respond relevantly.
- Practitioners should provide opportunities for children to follow and give simple instructions.
- Children should share ideas with a wider audience, for example, group or class.

Further guidance is available within the support materials from the Literacy Training Programme, Session 2.



Supporting children with communication issues

In practice, all playrooms across Scotland will have a number of children who struggle to communicate. Practitioners must be aware of the crucial role they play in helping these children to communicate:

- Practitioners need to see themselves as responsive partners – this means using eye contact, body language, gesture and simplified language.
- Practitioners must be attuned to the unique characteristics of their children, especially those who are non verbal. They must look for the ways in which the child does communicate.

Please use the following link to access the severe and profound differentiated curriculum:

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/9818/framework_for_supporting_pupils_with_severe_and_profound_learning_needs



Model talking and listening, to develop children's awareness of when to talk and when to listen

Model phrases, words and sounds to help children build on and extend their vocabulary

Ask open-ended questions about children's play, feelings, likes, dislikes, drawings and writing

Consultation for learning

Answer children's questions about stories they have heard and other texts

Provide familiar routines

Give children time to think about questions and form an answer

Value eye contact, non verbal communication and body language

To support and encourage children in the development of talking and listening skills practitioners should.....

Provide quiet areas are available for talking and listening

Facilitate role play, puppets and props which enable children to communicate during play

Involve children in conversations to foster turn-taking skills

Provide resources to encourage children's phonological awareness

Read stories on a 1:1 basis and in small and large groups

Talk and interact with children as they talk about their feelings and emotions

Sing and recite songs and rhymes

Facilitate listening to stories through listening units and storyphones

Section 3

Developing Early Reading Skills

Reading

The experiences, outcomes and benchmarks from the Curriculum for Excellence referenced here are:

Learning Goals	Experiences and Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Explore books, stories and texts with interest and curiosity and share my thoughts about them in a variety of ways● Explore events and characters in stories	Enjoyment and choice: LIT 0-01a, LIT 0-011a, LIT 0-20a, LIT 0-01b, LIT 0-11b
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Have an awareness of the link between written and spoken word● Explore sounds, rhythms and patterns in words, discovering how they work together	Tools for reading: ENG 12a, LIT 13a, LIT 21-a
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Use signs, books and other media to find useful information and use this to plan, make choices or learn new things● Ask questions to assist understanding of stories or texts● Create my own stories and characters in a range of ways	Finding and using information: LIT 0-14a
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Use signs, books and other media to find useful information and use this to plan, make choices or learn new things	Understanding, analysing and evaluating: LIT 0-7a, LIT 0-16a, LIT 0-19a, ENG 17a

The Development of Reading Skills

Reading and telling stories to children are something that happens every day in Early Learning and Childcare settings. Stories involve and absorb children, develop their imaginations and help them to explore and understand the world they live in. Story reading needs to be planned. Practitioners need to be familiar with the stories and ensure that children are exposed to a wide range of literature. Children who experience adults who are enthusiastic and read with expression are more likely to develop a positive attitude to reading and be encouraged to become readers themselves.

Sharing stories with children involves more than just reading the book to them. Through skilful questioning and discussion practitioners can explore the story with the children helping them to gain meaning and make links to real life situations. 'Has someone ever broken one of your favourite things?' 'How did it make you feel?' 'How do you think Baby Bear felt when he discovered that his favourite chair was broken?'

The more opportunities children have to discuss and explore stories the more they will recognise and understand the framework of stories – stories have a setting, characters and a plot.



'Who' is in the story? (characters)

'What' is the problem? (plot)

'What' is happening? (actions)

'How' are the characters feeling? (characters)

'What' are the characters thinking? (characters)

'Where' the story is set? (setting)

'When' the story is set? (setting)

This helps children develop their narrative skills and transfers into their own imaginative stories.

When reading stories to children, practitioners need to consider the size of the audience. One to one and small groups are best. Practitioners should see reading stories as a basis for an interactive conversation, where children respond to open questions during the reading.

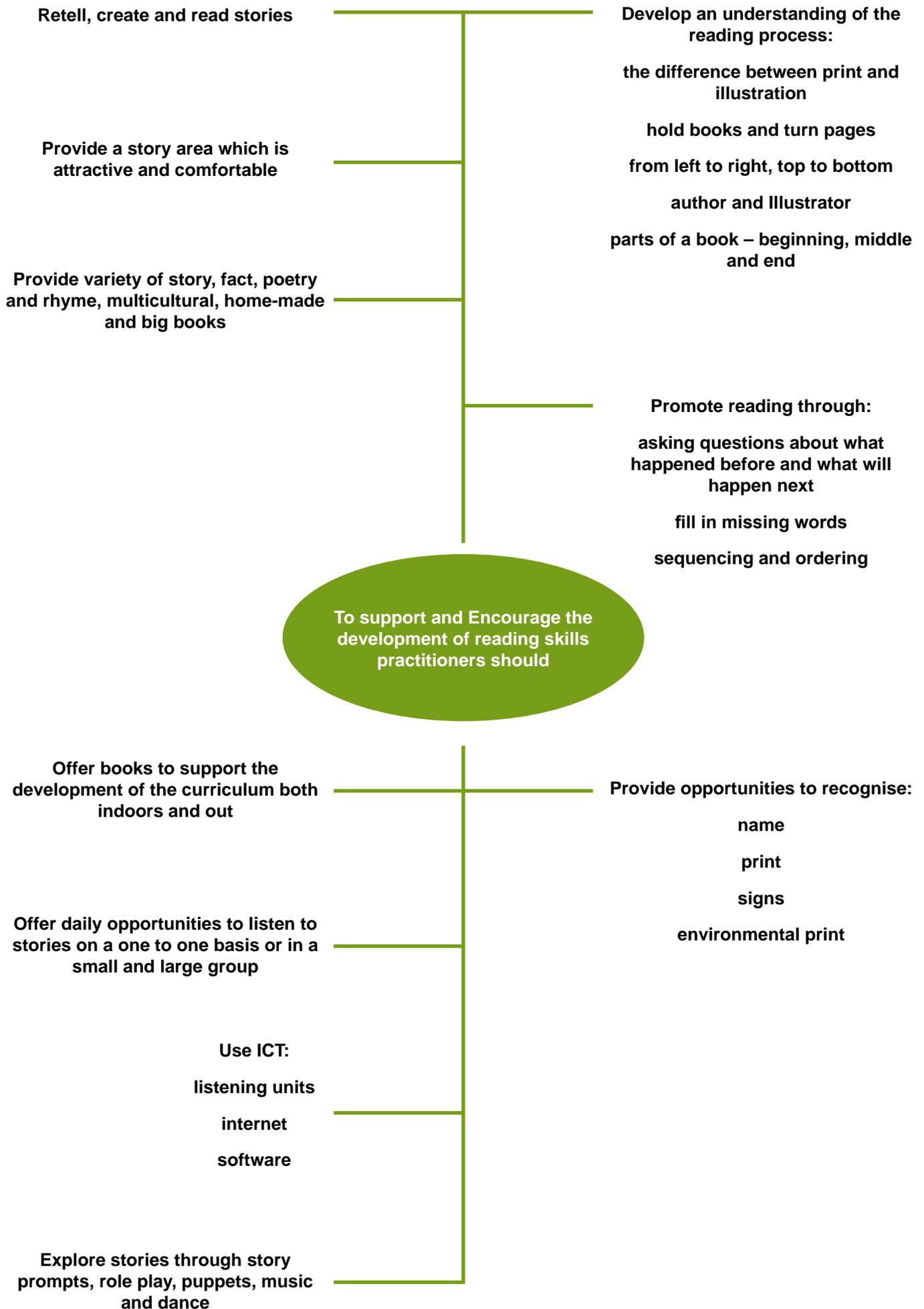
Sharing stories with children will also develop an understanding of books and the conventions of texts:

- holding books correctly and turning pages
- becoming aware that print goes from top to bottom and left to right
- using books and other texts to find information
- predicting what will happen next in a story
- recognising the link between the written and spoken word
- recognising the difference between text and pictures
- re-telling the main points of familiar stories
- understanding terms such as author, illustrator and title
- sharing likes and dislikes about stories, songs and rhymes
- awareness of letters, words and numerals being different
- using pictures to explain what is happening.
- begin to develop understanding of the difference between fiction and non fiction.

A learning environment rich in print will help children to gain an understanding of what we use reading and writing for and an awareness that words are made from a series of letters and what these letters look like. Print can include books, magazines, signs and labels. Care must be taken to ensure that signs and labels have a purpose and are meaningful. Too much print can be overwhelming for children. Labelling trays and boxes of resources allow children to identify what is available and help them as they make choices in their play. However if practitioners were to label pieces of furniture within the playroom e.g. 'chair', 'table' and 'sink' would this really be meaningful for children?

Further guidance can be found in the Literacy Training Programme, Section 3, Support materials "Making Picture Books Sparkle".





Section 4

Developing Early Writing Skills

Writing

The experiences, outcomes and benchmarks referenced in this section are:

Learning Goals	Experiences and Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Experiment and explore with symbols, letters and words.	Enjoyment and choice: LIT 0-01a, LIT 0-11a, LIT 0-20a
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Explore interesting materials for writing for different purposes● Learn to mark make and understand that writing has meaning and purpose.	Tools for writing: ENG 0-12a, LIT 0-13a, LIT 0-21a, LIT 0-21b
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Express their ideas and feelings through a variety of media.	Organising and using information: LIT 0-26a
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Record experiences, feelings, ideas and preferences using a wide variety of media and techniques	Creating texts: LIT 0-09b, LIT 0-31a



Developing Early Writing Skills

Writing is an important part of our daily lives. However the complexity of it can seem overwhelming.

Early writing encompasses:

- The physical act of making marks on paper
- An understanding that these marks have meanings
- An understanding of how written language works

As children's writing skills develop they begin to understand that print runs from left to right; that speech can be represented by individual sounds and these sounds can be written down using letters. Children move through a series of stages as they are learning to write. It is important to remember that there will be variations in the way each child learns to write and the stages they move through. It will not happen in the same way or at the same time for each child.

A learning environment rich in literacy opportunities will help support children's early writing development. However this will only happen if there are adults to facilitate and create engaging and purposeful opportunities which encourage children to write both indoors and outdoors. Children need to see adults writing for a variety of purposes; they need adults who discuss their writing with them and most importantly they need adults who create an ethos where children's writing is valued and children feel comfortable at 'having a go' without fear of 'getting it wrong'. Having their early writing valued will give children the confidence to progress in their learning.

There should be many different types of materials for mark-making throughout the playroom. Materials should be appropriate to children's stage of development.



Stages of Early Writing

"Scribble" writing can start at a young age. For some children this can be from three years of age and continue in play situations until the child is perhaps into primary 2.

In scribble writing children have noticed and understood that people write and this writing means something. This demonstrates that the children understand about writing and why people write.

However most children do not go through every stage of early writing and some children never scribble write.

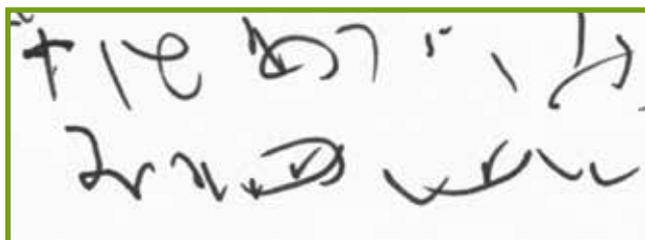
Scribble lines

The child has noticed that people write and they try and copy the writing. They know that this looks different from drawings.



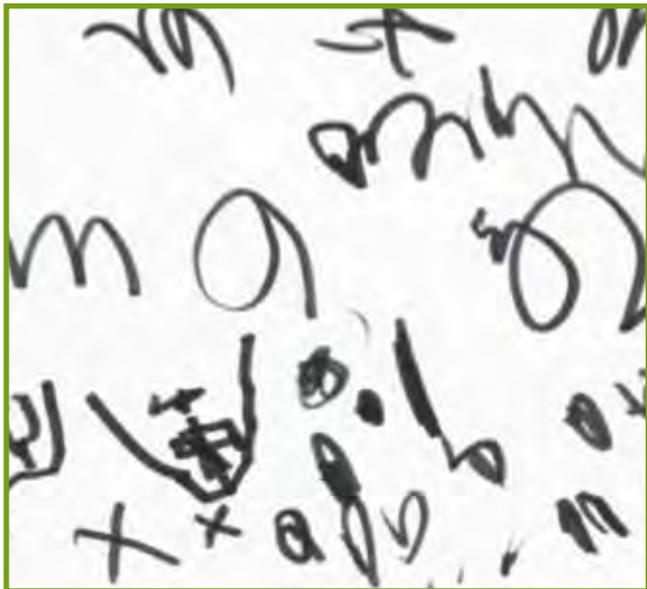
Pretend writing

The child is becoming more aware of what writing looks like and notices that there are spaces between words



Letter-like scribbles

The child is beginning to realise that writing is made up of individual symbols.

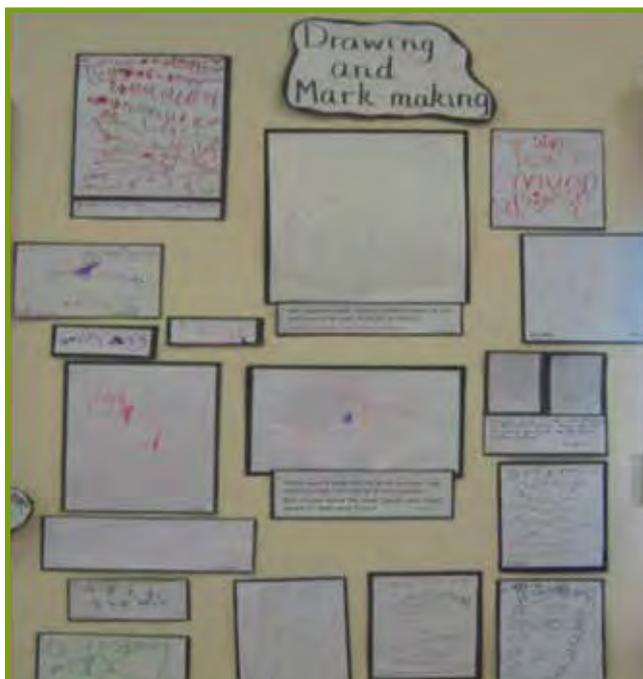
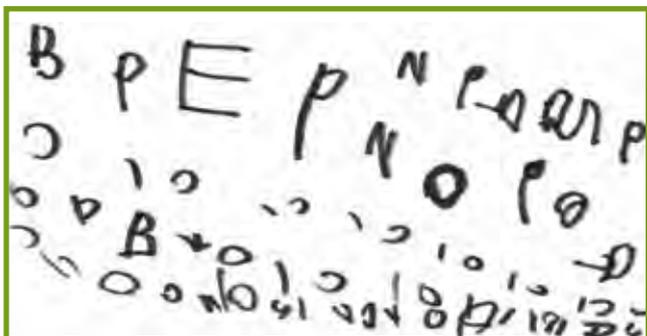


REMEMBER - These are examples of the stages of writing that some children may go through.



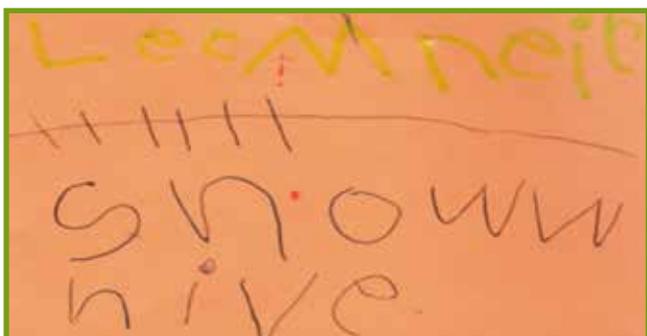
Letter-like scribbles with some real letters

The child will include some letters that have been copied from print, often the first letter of their name.



Copying letters

The child shows interest in copying letters from environmental print. Most children at this stage enjoy trying to write their own name. At this stage they should be included in helping to write signs etc for the nursery.



Section 5

Literacy in play

The learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, is crucial to children's literacy development. A literacy rich environment does more than just provide visual exposure to print. It also provides opportunities for meaningful interaction with it. It will encourage talking, listening, reading and writing.

Opportunities to encourage children to talk and listen occur naturally in all areas of play. Use their skills to talk to and question children to challenge and extend their learning developing their vocabulary and encouraging them to describe, explain, predict and ask questions.

Embedding literacy opportunities within children's play will enable their learning to be more relevant and meaningful. Through play children begin to understand how different aspects of literacy are used in real life situations. These opportunities need to be carefully planned, facilitated and supported by practitioners. They can occur in all areas of the playroom however practitioners need to be careful not to contrive the learning.

The importance of a literacy rich learning environment is reflected in Together We Can and We Will as well as the Scottish Government's National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare - Building the Ambition (2014)



A focus on the young child – what do they need?

An environment which:

- Provides areas for children to engage in conversations, small cosy spaces, occasional large groups to talk, listen and share their ideas.
- Is rich in opportunities for children to engage in conversations, imagine and create, find out and reason answers.
- Encourages conversation about the here and now, the past and future and discussions about the world around them.
- Has appropriate resources; for example, dark coloured felt-tip pens which make a clear mark on paper, a selection of paper organised in different sizes, shapes and colours, cards and stickers which are relevant for children to use.
- Has a library rich in books, favourite stories, fiction and non-fiction books, books children have made themselves, recordings of experiences and stories they want to share and tell.
- Provides for oral storytelling and books with more limited illustrations when a child is ready to enjoy these.
- Uses environmental print recognisable to children to help a growing understanding that print has meaning.
- Uses technologies to widen children's experiences of different methods of communication.

Within this section some ideas will be given for how literacy can be embedded naturally within various playroom areas. Many of these ideas will already occur daily in Early Learning and Childcare settings.

Book Area

The story area should be a comfortable and attractive place where children can relax and enjoy the wonder of books. The resources within this area should take into account the ages and stages of the children.

Books should be of a high quality and in a good state of repair. It is also important to ensure that books are evident throughout the playroom and not solely within the book area.

Suggested resources include:

- Traditional stories and rhymes
- A variety of storybooks
- Big story books
- Multicultural books
- Poetry and rhymes books
- Fact books
- Reference books e.g. atlas, children's dictionary
- Comics and magazines
- Dual language books and resources
- Listening Centre with tapes/CDs etc
- Puppets and props to match stories



Writing Area

The writing area should be equipped with resources that offer children many options for writing and mark-making. It should be well organised, maintained on a daily basis and modified/enhanced regularly to maintain children's interest. It is also important that adults spend time in the area, talking to children and modelling writing. Writing opportunities should be evident throughout the playroom. Writing bags or cases can be created so that children can be taken to any area of the playroom.

Suggested resources include:

- A selection of paper
- Card
- Envelopes
- Post-its
- Notepads
- Blank forms
- A variety of writing implements – pens, pencils, crayons, felt pens etc.
- Rulers, rubbers and sharpeners
- Staplers, sellotape, scissors and hole punch
- Stampers, stickers and labels
- Environmental print
- Children's name labels



Role Play

Role play helps support many aspects of children's literacy development:

- Social skills
- Communicative and language skills
- Imaginative skills
- Reading skills
- Writing skills

Through role play children can explore real life contexts to develop their own knowledge and understanding of the world. They can learn about different aspects of life and work.



When developing a new role play area children should be fully involved. Through discussion children can talk about what should be in the area and the different roles that they can take on, building on children's existing knowledge. Sometimes it may be necessary to visit places in the community to gain ideas or have people from the community to support and develop children's knowledge and understanding. For example before setting up a shop in the nursery some children may visit a local shop or supermarket to gain ideas. The adult plays a crucial role. Adults need to spend time in the role play area not only developing it with them but joining in their play and modelling roles etc. Children cannot take on different roles if they don't understand what they are. Many children may have been to a restaurant to eat. They may be aware that someone finds them a table and asks them what they would like to eat. What happens after that? How does the food appear on the table a little while later? Is the food free? How do we know how much to pay?

Ideas for embedding literacy:

Role play areas can have many themes. Each theme will allow for literacy to be embedded in different ways.

- Notepads and pens
- Diaries, calendars, address books, telephone directories
- Books, magazines and comics
- Menus, take away menus, recipe books
- Writing paper, greeting cards, envelopes
- Junk mail, leaflets, forms
- Food packaging with familiar labels - e.g. tins, boxes, plastic bottles
- Holiday brochures, catalogues
- Signs and labels – e.g. open/closed, opening hours, name of shop/service, special offers



Construction

In the world of work, skills within literacy are necessary in the construction industry. In the simple form -plans are discussed and drawn, measurements recorded, instructions followed, changes discussed and negotiated. All these require different literacy skills. The opportunities for construction within the Early Learning and Childcare setting can therefore provide children with experiences to develop these skills in real-life contexts.



Ideas for embedding literacy:

- Photographs to provide children with stimuli for their constructions e.g. photographs of different types of bridges, towers. Children can talk about them and discuss their own ideas
- Writing/drawing materials – paper, pens, rulers etc. for children to record/draw their plans
- Area for the children to display their models, name labels, writing materials for children to write their own name. Practitioners could scribe children's descriptions of what they have built
- Books - fact books e.g. books about construction equipment – diggers etc.- story books e.g. Bob the Builder
- Resource boxes labelled with both words and pictures

Malleable

Ideas for embedding literacy:

- Shaving foam - making marks, letters and words
- Playdough/soft clay – forming letters and words, letter and number cutters



Art

Ideas for embedding literacy:

- Sticky labels for children to recognise their name and label their work. Folders can be created with a polypocket for each child with their photograph and sticky name labels. Once the child can recognise their name their photograph can be removed. Children can be encouraged to write their own name.
- Printing with letters
- Mark making, letters and words with paint – finger paints, using brushes
- Books – creative ideas, books about artists, paint charts



Music

Ideas for embedding literacy:

- Song and rhyme books (both commercially produced and home-made)
- Name labels for musical instruments
- Opportunities to sing and recite songs and rhymes
- Opportunities to make up their own songs and rhymes
- Writing materials for children to 'compose' their own songs and rhymes
- Rhyming games
- Tapes and CDs with songs and rhymes
- Using unturned percussion instruments (e.g. claves) to tap out syllables in names and words



Small World

Small world play promotes children's literacy development in a number of ways. It allows children to:

- use and increase their imagination
- develop their language
- take on the 'voice' of different characters
- develop their story telling skills
- role play and talk through real life situations helping them to make connections and develop their understanding

Small world play and construction often sit well together. Children can use the construction materials to build things for their imaginative play and they can use the people/animals etc to add into their constructions etc.

Ideas for embedding literacy:

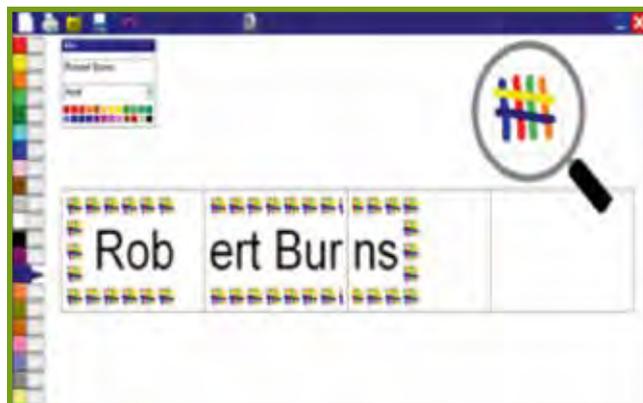
- Practitioners work with children to develop and enhance the small world area, consulting with children and taking forward their ideas.
- Books related to what is available in the area e.g. if the dinosaurs are available then fact and story book about dinosaurs could be included to help support and children's play and develop their knowledge.
- Resource boxes labelled with both words and pictures.



ICT

Ideas for embedding literacy:

- Laptops and computers can support children to develop letter and number recognition and experimenting with typing words e.g. their name
- Practitioners consult and involve children when making signs and labels using word processing. Software packages can support this e.g. 2Simple Infant Video Toolkit, 2Simple 2Publish+



- Literacy software packages e.g. Sherston's Tizzy's First Tools, Inclusive Education's Choose and Tell range, 2 Simple 2CreateaStory
- Listening centres/Storyphones for children to listen to stories, rhymes and songs both homemade and commercially produced.
- Microphones and equipment so that children recording their own stories, songs and rhymes
- Smartboard
- Accessing children's websites e.g. CBeebies
- Using the internet to carry out research
- Leap Pads and Interactive Storybooks

www.2simple.com

www.inclusiveeducation.co.uk

www.sherston.com



Outdoors

Ideas for embedding literacy:

- Opportunities to mark-make and write – Notepads, pens/pencils, chinks and chalkboards, playground chinks, slate pencil and slate board, clipboards and paper, brushes with water. Writing bags can be created for children to access in different areas of the outdoors
- Story-telling
- Role Play e.g. Mud Kitchen
- Signs and labels



Science and Investigation

Ideas for embedding literacy:

Fact books related to the resources available e.g. If the children are exploring forces then factual books could be included.

Writing materials – children to record information e.g. objects that sink and float.



Interest Areas/Interactive Displays

Interest areas and displays provide many opportunities to embed literacy. They provide children with a visual tool to help them learn. Displays and interest areas that children don't connect with become just like wallpaper. Involving children in setting up interest areas and creating displays helps to make them more meaningful and relevant to children as well as giving them a sense of ownership.

Ideas for embedding literacy:

Involve children in making signs and labels

Include books (both fact and story) relevant to the focus of the display

Talking products (e.g. tins, post cards, photograph albums) enable information, thoughts and ideas to be recorded. Recordings can be from both adults and children



Section 6

Environmental Print

Environmental print is print that we see all around us in everyday life. Environmental print can provide rich opportunities for developing children's early reading skills. Although environmental print will not teach children to read, it will show them what we use reading and writing for and it will help them to start to notice that words are made from letters and what letters look like.

Below are some examples of how environmental print can be used to support children's literacy development.

Environmental Print Walk

When out for walks in the local area, look for and take photographs of signs in the environment. Children could also be given photographs of signs etc that they have to hunt for when out for a walk e.g. road signs, street signs, shop signs.

Environmental Print in Role Play

This can vary depending on the theme of the role play area. For example

- House corner - real food packaging e.g. cereal boxes, small tins, newspapers, magazines
- Travel agents – holiday brochures, logos for airlines
- Shop – real food packaging, bags for life, supermarket logo, posters/signs with adverts special offers etc.
- Table Top Games Using Print from the Environment
- Environmental print can be used to create games e.g. snap, lotto, Kim's game, sorting activities.

Environmental Print Jigsaws

Use photographs of signs or words from packaging. Make two copies of each one. Cut one copy to make a jigsaw puzzle. Children can assemble this to match the original.

Junk Modelling

Discuss print on boxes and packaging.



Section 7

Sounds and Rhymes

As discussed in section 2, the ability to recognise and produce rhyming words is an important phonological awareness skill. Children at a young age can recognise words that rhyme – for example ‘cat’ rhymes with ‘mat’. By making this connection children are detecting the segment of the word ‘at’. Often words that have sounds in common also share the same spelling sequences when written. Awareness of rhyme can therefore support children later on in their reading development. Learning to read one new word can then lead to being able to read several more – for example ‘cat’, ‘mat’, ‘hat’, ‘fat’.



Here are some ideas for introducing children to rhyme.

- Provide opportunities for children to listen to and recite traditional rhymes and number rhymes.
- Miss out rhyming words and ask children to put them in.
- Substitute a word that does not rhyme and ask children to find the deliberate mistake, for example, “Humpty Dumpty sat on a gate.”
- Encourage children to act out rhymes.
- Make a game of rhyming lotto (commercially produced rhyming lotto can be too difficult).
- Put some pairs of objects that rhyme into a bag. Children dip into the bag and match the pairs of objects that rhyme.
- Use story tapes and CDs with rhyme.
- Record children saying rhymes and let them listen to themselves and each other.
- Make displays of children’s work that relate to rhyme.
- Make books of rhymes that children can illustrate.
- Make rhyming books/story tapes that parents can take home.
- Read story books that make good use of rhyme.



Supporting children with Speech, Language and Communication issues.

All settings will have children who experience difficulties with speech, language and communication. These children require practitioners to be sensitive to their needs. Practitioners should have a range of strategies available to help and may work closely with colleagues from Speech and Language Therapy, Learning Support or Psychological Services to devise appropriate strategies.

When interacting with a child with speech, language or communication issues you should:

- Speak slowly and clearly, ensuring you have made eye contact and have shared attention.
- Emphasise the important words.
- Keep what you say quite short so that there's not too much for the child to take in.
- Use pointing and other gestures as you speak to help the child to understand.
- Make what you say as clear and specific as possible.
- Talk about what happens as it happens – try to stay with the here and now rather than yesterday and tomorrow.
- Make language learning interesting by using varied and motivating play materials.
- Develop the children's ability to understand instructions by playing games which include taking turns to follow and give spoken instructions. Begin with short instructions then gradually make them longer over time. For example:
 - 1) "Find the ball"
 - 2) "Put the ball in the box"
 - 3) "Put teddy in the little bag"
 - 4) "Put the red ball in the big box"

Expressive language difficulties

Children with expressive language difficulties find it hard to express their needs, their choices, their likes and dislikes and their opinions. This can limit their opportunities for learning through conversation.

Things to try:

- Be aware that the child may have a restricted vocabulary (not know as many words as other children) and encourage them to make choices.
- Avoid imitating any immature words that the child uses. It's important that the child gets to hear the words said correctly.
- Help the child to expand on what they say by repeating back what they said and adding a little more. E.g. Child: "car". Adult: "yes it's a big car".
- Correct the child's errors in a positive way e.g. Child: "brush him hair". Adult: "He's brushing his hair".
- Create opportunities for learning language in the everyday play situation. It is essential that new language is used in natural situations and does not remain in 1-to-1 or small group situations.
- Identify new vocabulary in storybooks, draw attention to it, explain it and revisit the story over a week, reinforcing the vocabulary each time.
- Be repetitive in your teaching of new vocabulary. Children with expressive language difficulties need even more opportunities to hear and learn new words before they will be able to use them.



Speech sound difficulties

Some children have delayed speech development. This means that the child's speech sounds are immature and/or unclear. Sounds may be missed off the ends of words or other sounds substituted. Delayed speech development can occur on its own or alongside delayed/disordered language development. It can also occur alongside sensory, physical or learning difficulties. Often children will grow out of minor speech sound immaturities. Children with significant speech delays/disorders will need a referral to a Speech and Language therapist.

Things to try:

- Once you have "tuned in" to a child, you may understand the child in context, but find it more difficult when they are telling you new information. Try asking simple questions to narrow the options down to make it easier for you to understand.
- Don't avoid speaking with the child because you are uncertain that you will understand, instead find even more opportunities to include them in conversation. Join them in their play and play alongside, talking as you do so, "I'm picking up the red bucket and I'm going to fill it with sand, etc"
- Model clear speech without overtly correcting the child. E.g. If child draws sun and says "dun", you say "that's a lovely sun" with extra emphasis upon the 's'.
- If the child is attending speech therapy, ask the parents what strategies have been recommended on and use this in the playroom. The Speech and Language Therapist will be happy to share information and activities.



Social and communication difficulties and children with asd:

Some children can find it difficult to make sense of the subtleties of social communication. Some children learn language by copying the language they hear, thus you will hear them "echo" what others have said. Other children have good memories for facts or words which reflect their interests but this can lead people to over-estimate how much they are able to understand. Following group instructions can be an area of difficulty. Others find it difficult to see other children's point of view and not realise how they might feel. Some children may be completely non verbal.

Things to try:

- Being aware of the child's difficulties and seeing situations from his/her point of view is always the best starting point. Visual symbols should be used to help the child navigate the playroom, make choices and understand that one activity can follow the next.
- Be ready to interpret and explain situations to the child. They may not understand non-verbal clues such as tone of voice and facial expression. The situation may need explaining clearly at a level that the child can follow.
- Establish consistent daily routines within the nursery. These will give the child security as they will gradually learn the order of things.
- If the child is tending to "echo" or repeat the same words over and over try to respond only when it is appropriate within context. If the language is used "out of context" then respond to the child's attempt to communicate with you rather than the actual words he/she has said.
- Try to give the child a warning when activities are coming to an end rather than stopping abruptly.
- Some group instructions may need repeating/ simplifying on a 1-1 basis, using visual/pictorial support where possible.
- Help the child to develop turn-taking, playing and sharing skills. Adults will need to facilitate this by explaining who's turn it is.
- Begin with activities which have very "short turns" then gradually build up the length of the "turn time".

Differentiated Curriculum

South Lanarkshire have a differentiated curriculum for children with severe and profound learning needs. This offers practitioner advice along with experiences and outcomes which have been simplified. This is a useful tool for any practitioners with Additional Support Needs and children with communication issues. It is available on the intranet.

Please use the following link to access the severe and profound differentiated curriculum:

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/9818/framework_for_supporting_pupils_with_severe_and_profound_learning_needs



Numeracy and Mathematics

Support Materials

Section 1

Introduction



These numeracy support materials have been created in line with the experiences and outcomes and benchmarks of the Curriculum for Excellence as well as the learning goals within Together We Can and We Will.

Numeracy and mathematical skills are embedded in the Curriculum and cannot be taught in isolation. These skills can be developed through careful planning of learning activities, questions and interactions. These should encourage learners to think about the concepts, going beyond the recall of knowledge and encouraging them to explain their thinking. As learners progress through Curriculum for Excellence levels, they should demonstrate increasing sophistication and independence in their ability to demonstrate, link, transfer and apply the following skills in a range of increasingly more challenging contexts:

- understand questions;
- select and communicate answers and solutions;
- explain strategies used;
- link mathematical concepts;
- use mathematical vocabulary and notation;
- use mental agility;
- reason
- predict and review.

Developing a sound understanding of mathematical and numerical concepts is essential for children if they are to make sense of their world. Curiosity, inquiry and creativity are key mathematical skills. It is crucial that children learn these mathematical concepts through play and exploration. Children must be taught how to develop effective problem-solving skills. Maths and numeracy opportunities should be embedded across all areas of the playroom. Good maths experiences for children will include elements of challenge, depth and application.

Challenge: This means practitioners must see where the child is at and take steps to extend the child's thinking. This will most effectively be done by using open questions and encouraging the child to try things out. Practitioners should value the learning opportunities which arise from helping children to use trial and error.

Depth: This means practitioners must give children time to revisit concepts and provide a variety of ways of investigating things. This could mean providing a range of resources, spending time over a few days to revisit a concept, refreshing areas and taking learning outdoors.

Application: This means children will show you their learning spontaneously through free play or during an activity. The child is applying what they have learned to their real life context. Practitioners must be attuned to the child in order to firstly recognise this significant learning as an achievement and also to identify a next step in that child's mathematical learning journey.



Section 2

Developing awareness of mathematics and numeracy

The experiences, outcomes and benchmarks referenced in section link to learning goals within the young child creativity section as follows:

TWCAWW Learning Goals	CfE Experiences and Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Explore numbers, understand that they represent quantities and begin to use them to count, create sequences and describe order.	Estimation and Rounding: MNU 0-01a
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Explore numbers, understand that they represent quantities and begin to use them to count, create sequences and describe order.● Use resources to count forwards and backwards.	Number and Number Processes: MNU 0-02a, MNU 0-03a
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Develop ways of sharing items out into smaller groups.	Fractions, Decimals and Percentages: MNU 0-07a
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Use money appropriately in free play and recognize a range of coins.	Money: MNU 0-09a
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Be aware of how routines and events in their world link with times and seasons.	Time: MNU 0-10a

Children should have a stimulating environment with a variety of resources and objects available to explore. As they explore, practitioners will be able to join them in their play and will be able to extend and challenge their thinking in the following ways:

- Practitioners should put resources out for children to freely explore e.g. Dominoes, dice, abacus, counting cubes, skittles, bean bags, cups, plates, pens, pencils, heuristic play materials, pebbles, shells, stones, beads and laces. Practitioners should model good counting practice as often as possible, remembering that every interaction is a learning opportunity. Children should be encouraged to make guesses and estimates about numbers of items and taught ways of checking them. Loose parts materials are great for sorting and classifying in a range of ways.
- Children can be asked to count at various points during the day – count out 4 plates for snack, how many children in the line, ring games and songs. An important skill at this stage is for children to count out loud and touch each object or person as they say the number. Children must be encouraged to take their time. Children must learn to stop on the last number of the count and recognise that this gives the total. This is a skill which can be reinforced daily in a number of ways.
- Staff should look for opportunities to use ordinal numbers e.g. First, second and third throughout the day.



- Using a number track on the floor which children can walk on is a great way for them to develop number sense. Practitioners should utilise number lines, different questions and use a range of language – “what is the number before or after, what happens when we go forwards / backwards, what happens when we add on 1 or take away 1, what is the missing number?”
- Once children can count objects they can touch or hold, they can be asked to count more abstractly – eg. How many handclaps / drumbeats, how many jumps? They will begin to see that anything can be counted.

- Children should group items and be taught that the appearance of the group has no effect on the overall total. This is known as conservation of number. For example, 4 Lego bricks can be stacked, built into a square or lined up but the actual number has not changed.
- Look for numeracy and mathematical examples within the play opportunities, for example wheels on a car, building blocks, setting out items in the house corner, making cakes.
- Playroom rules can be helpful – for example, only four children at a time in the sand tray. This will encourage children to connect counting to real life experiences.



- Counting rhymes and songs should be part of daily practice. Practitioners must spend time learning a wide range of counting songs and rhymes to share with the children. In addition, music and maths fit very well together, for example counting beats using percussion instruments.
- Number symbols should be displayed around the playroom. Practitioners should note that children should really have an understanding of counting before trying to link that number with its symbol. Number symbols should be a natural progression for children who have acquired the skill of counting. Number symbols can be used in a variety of imaginative and free play contexts e.g. A café, a shop, numbers for resources, how many of each item at snack. Children should be taught how to count on and back from any given number.
- Children should be encouraged to count and use money during free play. Staff should provide a range of coins and talk about their similarities and differences.
- Children should be provided with games and equipment that offer opportunities for developing numeracy skills e.g. skittles.
- Practitioners must teach children that zero has a value. This can easily be incorporated into any activity involving maths and is a foundation of learning about place value.
- Children need opportunities to share out items as this is the foundation of division, eg. plates, bits of cake, pizza, etc. Practitioners must use language such as whole, halves, equal amounts, some left over.
- Books should be available in the story corner and throughout the playroom which have stories and rhymes which include counting and other maths concepts.
- Daily routines are a good way of introducing the concept of time. Clocks, watches and timers are great for exploring in free play. Visual timetables help children develop an understanding of the abstract nature of time. Practitioners should encourage the use of language such as “today, yesterday and tomorrow”.
- ICT and computer games involving mathematics should be available, but practitioners must always remember to interact properly with the child, using conversation and questioning to ensure learning is effectively taking place.

Section 3

Exploring shape, pattern, space and measure

The experiences, outcomes and benchmarks referenced in section link to learning goals within the young child creativity section as follows:

TWCAWW Learning Goals	CfE Experiences and Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Recognise, match, sort and use objects, patterns, shapes, symmetry and colour creatively.● Develop a sense of size and amount by observing, exploring and creating● Experiment with everyday items as units of measure to investigate and compare sizes and amounts.● Understand and use mathematical language – above, below, under, full, empty.● Use technology to describe positions and directions	Measurement : 0-11a
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Recognise, match, sort and use objects, patterns, shapes, symmetry and colour creatively.● Understand and use mathematical language – above, below, under, full, empty.	Patterns and Relationships: 0-13a
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Recognise, match, sort and use objects, patterns, shapes, symmetry and colour creatively.	Properties of 2d shapes and 3d objects: 0-16a
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Recognise, match, sort and use objects, patterns, shapes, symmetry and colour creatively.	Angle, symmetry and transformation: 0-17a, 0-19a
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Gather information, by asking questions about a variety of objects; sharing this information with others● Use signs and charts to gain information to help them plan and make choices about their day	Data and Analysis: 0-20a, 0-20b, 0-20c



As children explore their learning environment, they are beginning to find out for themselves about the world. The following tips will help learning opportunities to be maximised:

- Practitioners should provide different sizes and shapes of containers in the water and sand trays so that children can explore. Practitioners must remember to use effective language during these interactions, “filling, emptying, how many cups, that’s a big bottle, where’s the smallest one, etc”. In a situation like this, the role of the adult is to give children the necessary language to explain what they are exploring and investigating.
- Effective and interesting measuring resources should be provided eg. a sand timer, weights or balances, scales, measuring tapes, rulers, metre sticks and a wide range of natural materials.
- Children should be given lots of practical experience in measuring using non-standard units e.g. shoes, blocks, bricks, etc.



- There must be both small and large construction materials for children to measure and build with. Having a variety of wooden blocks in different sizes constantly available will encourage children to develop skills such as balance, weight, shape and problem solving. Please refer to the block play PowerPoint currently available on the Education Scotland website for further information (<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/elc27-block-play>). Practitioners should always challenge children to build more complicated models, no matter the materials on hand. Please also see the loose parts PowerPoint: <https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Loose-Parts-Play-web.pdf>
- When involved in measuring activities, appropriate language must be modelled and reinforced constantly, “longer, taller, shorter, wider, about the same” and children should be challenged, “find me something that is longer than....”.
- Resources should be provided which use a variety of 2d and 3d objects. Practitioners should encourage children to recognise similarities and differences between shapes. Look for real shapes in the learning environment, both outdoors and in.
- Children should be encouraged to talk about and explore different ways of making lines e.g. straight, zig zag, curves, loops, thick, thin, wide and narrow. This will help children begin to understand the properties of 2d shapes.
- Children need hands on experiences involving shape and symmetry. This can be done in a variety of ways e.g. using mirrors or by creating pictures.
- Encourage children to use everyday words to describe position e.g. when following pathways or playing with outdoor apparatus. Children should be encouraged to give simple directions during games and play.
- Find real life ways of exploring colour e.g. colour of leaves outside, jackets, toys, choosing pens, paper and paint.
- Colours and shapes make excellent contexts for sorting items and practitioners should provide a range of such activities.



- Explore patterns in lots of ways: pegs, stamps, stickers, seeds, stones, wallpaper, pebbles, writing, drawing, music and games.
- Children should be encouraged to make simple tally charts, pictographs, bar graphs and sets. Children need to be taught how to analyse the results – this means practitioners using language “less than, more than, greater, most and least”.
- Children should be encouraged to sort items using a variety of criteria such as shape, colour, size, volume and weight.
- Practitioners should think of ways of using charts to involve children in planning, choices and decision making, e.g. Planning for snack.
- Children should be encouraged to record findings in all sorts of different ways.



Section 4

Problem Solving

Developing good problem-solving skills is essential for children if they are to develop a confident attitude when faced with mathematical problems.

There are three main stages appropriate for developing problem-solving in early years:

- 1) Getting started: This will involve the practitioner asking lots of open questions eg. "what is the problem here? How can we make? How could we fix? What would happen if? ". We are encouraging children to come up with solutions which can then be tested, reviewed, discussed and modified and tried again.
- 2) Trial and error: Children must be encouraged to test things out and make mistakes. Mistakes must be celebrated as unique learning opportunities. This will instil mathematical confidence in young children as they see that the focus is really on trying things out. Again, practitioners must use skilful questioning to encourage children to come up with their own solutions. Children may come up with very imaginative solutions and these need to be capitalised on effectively. Practitioners must make sure children are given the freedom to use resources from across the playroom and outdoors. Children should be encouraged to investigate a variety of options.
- 3) Reviewing: Children should be asked to look back and see what was successful and why and what did not work and why. Practitioners should look for ways of revisiting concepts explored and think of ways to set new challenges. If appropriate, children could demonstrate their learning or record the process by mark making, drawing a picture or creating a model.



Section 5

Mathematical Learning Outdoors

The outdoor learning environment is rich with opportunities for developing mathematical thinking. Hands on experiences such as building with real materials or planting will provide practitioners with a variety of ways of helping children to problem solve and extend thinking. All of the concepts explored in these support materials such as counting, measure, shape, space and pattern can easily be transferred to the outdoor environment – use your imagination and watch the possibilities unfold. Please refer to the Loose Parts Document (Scottish Government, 2016) for amazing guidance for your outdoor area.

www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Loose-Parts-Play-web.pdf



The outdoors offers children and young people an ideal environment for active, open-ended learning, exploration, investigation and creativity.

- From an early age, children are inspired by their experiences of the world around them and they love being outside! The possibilities for developing mathematical thinking when outdoors is endless. Some examples include:
- Using stones and other natural materials for constructing will give children a real understanding of the properties of materials, including weight and size. Children can be encouraged to sort and classify, to collect, to inspect and to compare similarities and differences.
- Encourage the children to see the natural world: watching flowers growing, the leaves on trees changing colour and feeling the weather getting colder are meaningful experiences of the seasons.
- Children experience satisfaction and learning from planting, growing and tending vegetables and fruit and eating the produce. Lots of counting, sharing, dividing and volume and capacity learning can take place during such experiences.
- As children develop, their play becomes more symbolic and imaginative. Natural and open-ended materials and loose parts offer countless possibilities; for construction and den-building and this is an ideal way to involve children in various problem solving tasks.
- The outdoors is a perfect environment for pattern-making and transitory art. What patterns are available in your garden?
- You could develop maths walls and maths zones with resources which can be used outside like jugs, watering cans, bowls, stones, rulers, large chalks, etc. Ask yourself what opportunities there are for children to record their findings and processes whilst outside. Having resources available encourages children to make choices and decisions.



Section 6

Maths Resources

Having resources like the following freely available will increase the mathematical learning opportunities for your children exponentially.



Measuring tapes

Children can use tape measures to support their play in all different kinds of ways. Many will become fascinated with measuring anything in sight and make the link between earlier non-standard measures (e.g. hand spans or strides) and standard measures such as centimetres.

Real coins

Real pennies are cheaper to provide than plastic replicas and children get so much more from the experience. They can sort, count, stack them in piles and use them in role play alongside purses, wallets, piggy banks and shopping bags.

Balances

Children need experiences with spring balances and real kitchen balances as well as scales. There are countless learning opportunities, for example an accurate balance between items such as three potatoes and a quantity of pebbles. Model the use of a metal kitchen balance in real life cooking experiences, sometimes using recipes with eggs to balance.

Scales – kitchen and bathroom

Many children only see digital scales at home. It is great if they can use mechanical bathroom scales to weigh themselves and 'heavy' objects, watching the dial hand move. They will become very proficient at weighing lighter items on mechanical kitchen scales too, adding a little at a time to reach the correct weight.

Sand timers, kitchen timers and stopwatches

Children can become fascinated with the passing of time – 'how long is a minute?'. Model the use of kitchen timers in real life cooking and baking experiences and support children as they explore the use of egg timers and stop watches. If they set off a stop watch and mechanical timer as a three minute sand timer starts, does the timer 'ping' at the same time the sand finishes and does the stop watch read '3 minutes'?

Clocks and watches

Many children only see digital clocks and watches in everyday life and increasingly adults use mobile phones and tablets instead of watches.

The opportunities to explore old analogue clocks and watches, and move the hands around to set times that are important to them are important. A working analogue clock that can be seen on the wall is helpful too.

Measuring jugs, spoons and kitchen equipment

Real metal and plastic measuring jugs, measuring spoons and assorted spoons, ladles and serving equipment can enhance water and sand play which can replicate real life cooking and baking experiences. Real pots and pans and kitchen equipment in the home corner will offer lots more mathematical opportunities than child sized plastic kettles and tea pots.

Spirit levels and plumb lines

Older children interested in construction and building will become fascinated with plumb lines and spirit levels. Is the table level? Are the posters on the wall really horizontal? Children can use these in construction play too – is the wall they are building with hollow wooden blocks straight?

Address books, calendars, diaries, recipe books and phones

Many adults don't remember phone numbers or use address and phone books anymore as all their information is stored on phones. But it is useful for children to experience the use of real life resources with written numerals and to experiment with mathematical mark making too.

Tinned foods, empty food cartons and real vegetables

Children will find out more about 'heavy' and 'light' and 'full' and 'empty' if they have time to explore real food packaging and real food. How heavy is a shopping bag filled with real potatoes? How many parsnips fit into the box? Identical cartons can be stacked, similar cartons can be compared. What is the same, and what is different?

Natural objects – pebbles, shells, conkers, twigs

Children can explore a variety of natural objects, making regular and irregular arrangements, filling and emptying boxes and bags and sorting in a variety of ways.

Number rhyme props

Many settings buy sets of 5 identical 'ducks' or 'frogs' to support favourite number rhymes. But a collection of very different ducks – of different sizes, materials, colours, patterns and styles, including wood, fabric, plastic, metal toys, puppets and ornaments is of greater value. Children can explore, compare and talk about the fascinating collections.

Boxes

Many children love filling and emptying containers, and this offers a chance to explore 2D and 3D shapes. Sets of stacking boxes, alongside tiny empty boxes, huge cardboard boxes and assorted wooden and metal boxes can delight children. Children love to flatten boxes, and empty card boxes can be cut and flattened so that children can reconstruct them with tape. Give children chances to cover boxes too, by completely wrapping them in paper like parcels.

Buttons, beads or badges

Many adults remember playing with their granny's button tin and young children today will enjoy the experience. Ensure there are lots of different sizes, colours, patterns and materials. Watch as children explore, sort, organize and talk together. Empty biscuit boxes, chocolate boxes and egg boxes with divided trays can enhance the experience with collections of small objects.

Socks and gloves

Socks, gloves, shoes and boots give children the opportunity to think about pairs of objects. Stretchy gloves and mittens filled with damp sand stretch and stimulate discussions about size. Odd socks promote talk about 'the same as' and 'different from'. Shoes and shoe boxes encourage talk about things that are 'too big' and 'too small' and ordering by size.

Bottles

A collection of bottles of different sizes, shapes and colours, some with lids, will give children different opportunities to investigate materials and 'full' and 'empty'. Water and dry sand can be poured into bottles through funnels and children can predict which bottles are the same or similar sizes. Try making some holes in some bottles too and see what happens as the water is poured in.

Balls and spheres

All children love to play with balls and this collection can include spherical objects that roll but don't bounce. The collection can be played with generally and also used to roll through water or thin paint to show the tracks made. Why do spherical objects make straight tracks?

Den making resources

Many children like to hide in dens and these children often like to make their own dens too. Den making materials can include fabric strips, sheets, shower curtains, huge boxes, clips to fix fabric, cushions, rugs, carpets square and something to make a frame. Very simple dens can be made by hanging fabric over a table.

Treasure, including bangles, necklaces and beads

Children generally like shiny and glittery things, including 'treasure'. Make a collection of junk jewellery, 'gold nuggets', 'gems', shiny stones, coins, bangles, beads and chunky fake rings in a treasure chest. Try hiding some treasure in dry sand with sieves, tongs and large tweezers to search for 'buried treasure'.

Blocks

Children should have daily access to sets of hollow and solid wooden blocks, interconnecting large and small construction kits and empty cardboard boxes to build with and knock down. They need enough of each set to build meaningful constructions and explore 3D shapes.

Climbing equipment

Children need things to climb over, under, around and through. In general, moveable resources that can be used in different ways are more useful than fixed equipment. Provide steps, ladders, slopes and climbing resources that offer appropriate challenge.

Water and sand resources

Open ended materials such as water and dry, damp and wet sand, mud and gravel give children the chance to move heavy things – buckets filled with mud, or wheelbarrows filled with sand and explore on small and large scales. A range of resources that can be used to mould, pour, fill, empty, sieve, transport, float, bury, hide and gather will include buckets, spades, sieves, jugs, tubes, bottles, containers, brooms, moulds, rakes, forks, shovels, spades, watering cans, boats, sea life creatures, diggers and dumpers, natural objects and lots more.

Malleable and manipulative play

Children can explore shape and space through hands on play with materials that can be spread, rolled, squeezed, stretched or cut out. This will include clay, play dough, plasticine, finger paints, cornflour, dough made with baby oil, sensitive shaving foam and so much more.

Home corner and role play

Make sure that the home corner offers children opportunities to explore numbers and shape, space and measures through the provision of real life objects. If a child wants to bake a 'cake', are the tools there? Mixing bowl, balance, spoon, cake tin, egg box, apron, oven gloves, washing up bowl, timer, tea cloth. Think about the mathematical content of role play situations too – if you develop a shop with children, have you thought about the whole process of pricing goods, writing shopping lists, paying for purchases, collecting receipts and carrying the shopping home.

Baking

Children need regular opportunities to cook and bake real food. Some of the best recipes use eggs to balance other ingredients. For cakes, put one egg on one side of the scales and balance with sugar. Then balance the egg with butter or other fat and finally balance the egg with self raising flour. Mix together well and spoon into small cake cases, one by one.

Make sure children do the measuring, mixing and spooning into cases themselves.

Mark making

Even the youngest child needs opportunities to explore mark making. This could start with non permanent marks, with brushes and water, twigs in mud, fingers in paint or foam or tools in damp sand. Small hands need chubby markers and chunky chinks. All children need the chance to make mark on a large scale too – with playground chinks on the floor, or huge decorators' brushes on rolls of lining paper.

Recycled materials

Children love to build things. Recycle old packaging, add glue and fixing tape, paints, markers, patterned paper, shiny and sparkly decorations and leave children to explore and go wherever their imagination takes them. As they do, they will be finding out more about the shapes they are using and problem solving as things fit together.

Mud kitchens and mud laboratories

Create a kitchen or laboratory outdoors. Areas with a fence or wall offer more opportunities for real life utensils to be hung on hooks. A mud kitchen should not be a replica of an indoor home corner. Old wooden home corner cookers or cupboards could be used, but some solid planters with wooden planks as work surfaces and a bowl as a sink, with a hob made from a couple of tree trunk slabs on a board will work too. Provide durable metal or plastic jugs, bowls, plates, mugs, spoons, kitchen utensils alongside twigs, leaves, pebbles and other natural objects. Access to water is important and sensory plants with smelly leaves such as mint and lemon balm will add to the experience. Then leave the children to mix soups, stews, potions and much more.

