

Student number: 2505052

ECEY4009

Cover sheet

For this assessment I have submitted the following:

Component 1: Personal development plan

Component 2: Briefing paper

Component 3: Written piece

Statement on the use of AI:

I have asked specific questions to AI to help summarise articles and find relevant sources

COMPONENT 1: PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

What do I know already: I understand how to support children's learning and development through play, observation, and communication. I have strong knowledge of routines, safeguarding, and from my work in the crèche. I also know how to build positive relationships with both children and parents.

What have I learnt so far: I have learnt how theory links to everyday practice and how each child's needs influence their learning. I have developed a better understanding of inclusion and reflective practice, which helps me adapt activities to meet each child's needs.

What do I want to develop: I want to improve my reflective skills and gain more confidence in leading activities. I also want to learn more about curiosity play and how to use it effectively in a childcare setting. Developing these skills will help me develop strongly as a professional practitioner.

Objective	Actions (How will I achieve this objective/ what needs to be done?)	Resources (What support and resources are needed to achieve this objective?)	Target Date for achieving objective	Success criteria (How will I know I have achieved this goal, how will I review this?)
Use reflective practice to develop as a practitioner	Keep a weekly reflection log and review my progress with my supervisor. Identify what went well and what can be improved. Create a reflection plan to have effective tracking of progression.	Reflection template, tutor feedback and manager feedback.	December 2025	I will know when I have achieved this when I can recognise my strengths and confidently make changes to improve my practice.
Learn more about curiosity play	Observe children's interests and research curiosity-based learning ideas. Introduce activities that encourage exploration and creativity. Reflective on how curiosity play supports all areas of learning.	Online research, professional reading, team discussions.	December 2025	I will know I have achieved this when I can plan and deliver curiosity play activities, detailed to what a child may need, and see children engage confidently.
Strengthen safeguarding knowledge	Complete a Level 2 safeguarding course and review the setting's policy. Discuss procedures with the team. Reflect to past scenarios within safeguarding to identify what could have been improved.	Online training, manager support, policy documents and videos.	November 2025	I will know when I have achieved this when I can confidently identify, record, and report any concerns following correct procedures.
Develop teamwork and leadership skills	Take part in planning meetings and lead small group sessions. Request feedback from colleagues to build confidence.	Manager guidance, colleague feedback and notes.	December 2025	I will know when I have achieved this when I can lead group activities effectively and have good team communication.

Component 2: Briefing paper

What is reflection and reflective practise? Reflection is more than describing past or present experiences, it is the action of exploring and explaining the experience to understand why something as well as it leading to the development of a growing mindset and the discovery of strengths and weaknesses (Sherwood, 2024). Reflection is about making judgements and drawing conclusions as it would be required to conclude on what went well or what went wrong to be able to make a change and develop new strategies (Queen Margaret University, 2021). Reflective practise is creating a structure and routine on the reflection of experiences to engage in the process of continuous learning. Reflective practise includes being able to analyse and understand the situation or what/why it has happened and then learn from the experience (Amulya, 2004). Being able to maintain practising of reflection allows for space to gain new skills or develop any current skills (Care Learning, 2024).	Why is reflective practise important to EY practise? Reflective practise is important to early years practise as it allows for a deeper understanding on the development of children and even gain an insight on how children might feel. The understanding gained from the reflection could help implement new and developed methods on creating helpful and happy learning environments (Toole, 2023). Research done by (Naughton, Hughes and Smith, 2007) showed that in settings where early years workers were more aware of the learning styles of each individual child from reflection demonstrated children making better progress than settings which did not have early years workers reflect on their practices. Machost and Stains (2023) mentions that reflective practise not only beneficial for the children but also the individuals reflecting as it can improve understanding and expand knowledge. Children are consistently changing over the years as technology advances and children learn differently so consistent reflection is important as it allows for the ability to adapt new methods to the same principles (Machost and Stains 2023).
The theory of reflective practise: This is a process which outlines how to critically think about actions and feelings to be able to learn from experiences and improve in the future from it (The Open University, 2023). Donald Schon founded modern reflective practise theory, he suggested that there were two types of reflection, reflection in action and reflection on action. Reflection in action is actively reflecting while experiencing the event and acting almost immediately as well as considering the next actions, whilst reflection on action, which is reflecting on the past and taking some time to analyse the situation to understand what to change in the future (Sheryl Third and Ece. C, 2022). Schon's writings deeply influenced early years practise and teaching, especially reflection in action as constant thinking on your feet is required when working early years (Anderson, 2019).	
Gibb's model Gibbs' reflective cycle provides a step-by-step guidance on how to reflect when thinking about past experiences. The reflective cycle includes 6 stages which are description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan (University of Cumbria, 2020).	Kolb's model Kolb's experiential learning cycle is a cycle designed to help people use experiences to learn from them. There are 4 stages within this learning cycle which include, concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualism and active experimentation (McLeod, 2025)
Analysis of Gibb's and Kolb's model The focus of the Gibb's reflective cycle is the action of reflecting on the past to improve in the future while the focus of Kolb's experiential learning cycle is the learning process through experimenting and experiencing. Both are cycles that highlight improving on an individual's skills and knowledge is a continuous process (Sethmini, 2021). Rather than reflection being a simple observation of experiences both cycles emphasise on being involved in the learning process and asking multiple questions to yourself. The focal point of Gibb's cycle is about how the individual feels and consistently prompts to explore emotional reactions to situations and different stages. Gibb's cycles is a more detailed structured process, according to Markkanen et al. (2020) many students have found the cycle to be effective in guiding on how to reflect since it helped with linking professional values and personal experiences. Whilst Kolb's cycle is broader and focuses less on the emotional side of the reflection and rather on the learning process. The pros of the Gibb's reflective cycle are that it provides comprehensible concise guidance with steps on what and how to reflect, it also encourages an individual to be more aware of their emotions and is a practical cycle that's useful for settings especially in education (Sethmini, 2021). However, the cons are that Gibb's reflective cycle is user dependant, it's potentially not an authentic reflection as it is more personal, as well as requiring honesty and does not consider deeper critical thinking, it also does not encourage individuals to consider different perspectives (Dhollande, Barnard and Shephard, 2025). The pros of Kolb's cycle are that it's not only a good tool to help reflect but also help individuals learn from the experience, it also emphasises on different learning styles which are diverging, assimilating, converging and accommodating (McLeod, 2010).	
Conclusion To conclude, it is important to implement reflection using either the Gibb's reflective cycle for detailed reflections and planning or implement Kolb's experiential learning cycle to develop understanding to strengthen skills and knowledge within early years practise to effectively provide safe nurturing environments where children can learn and grow with the support of practitioners. Early years practise requires practitioners to reflect consistently as it is essential to improve the quality of care that is provided as well growing an individual's mindset and professional and personal skills.	

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Component 3: Written piece

Professional practice in early years settings refers to the skills, knowledge, and behaviours that practitioners use to support a child's learning and development. It involves following policies, frameworks, and standards to provide high quality professional care and education (Sheridan et al. 2009). A professional is someone who could demonstrate responsibility, reliability, and reflective practice while keeping up positive relationships with children, families, and colleagues (Fenwick 2016). Professional practice also involves continuous professional development (CPD), where practitioners update their skills and knowledge to improve the quality of their work (PACEY 2025). According to the Department for Education (2024), the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the legal requirements that guide professional practice, making sure that practitioners promote children's safety, learning, and wellbeing. By maintaining professionalism, practitioners' model positive behaviour, initiate and allow growth into consistent routines, and ensure that every child's individual needs are met within an inclusive environment (Badau and Trifan 2022). This helps children to feel safe, valued, and supported in early developmental stages. In general, professionalism is key to creating healthy environments to promote trust, learning, and emotional security for all children (Allen 2020).

Values are the moral principles, beliefs and behaviours that guide practitioner's attitudes and actions into the work they do with children and families (Gamage et al. 2021). The main professional values include respect, equality, honesty, and empathy. According to Early Education (2012), respect and inclusivity are needed in ensuring every child feels valued and supported, no matter the background, ability, or culture. Equality is a key value promoted by the Equality Act 2010, which will save individuals from discrimination and ensure that all children have equal opportunities to learn and develop safely. Empathy allows practitioners to respond to the child's emotions with care and understanding, and honesty builds trust with the family and child. These values are important because they dictate how practitioners interact and maintain good standards in a professional practice (Sultan and Khan 2025). Strong values also support teamwork, communication, and safeguarding in childcare settings,

ensuring consistency and fairness in all aspects of care which is very important in the development of a child (Hawk et al. 2018).

To be able to meet the needs of children communication is vital as consistently having good caring communication can allow children to feel nurtured and trust adults with their feelings and settle in well to new environments. To understand children's needs and desires it's important to have good communication with children to create activities catered to each individual child and be able to plan around their desires and interests from asking questions, having conversations and listening to their needs (Bell and Condren 2016). According to Care Learning (2024) efficient communication is vital in professional practise as it would be required for teamwork, by sharing information and communicating with other workers about children's routines, their progress and what they like or don't like it can help everyone keep up to date with each child to meet their needs. Communication within teamwork is essential as it can build good relationships, which can promote happy positive working environments where no one is stressed, and all focus is on fulfilling children's needs (Braicu et al. 2024). Good relationships are important as it helps build trust with children and makes children feel that they are in a safe environment within the setting. A child may feel more comfortable and settled when foundations for a strong relationship are placed and they can voice any worries they have with no pressure so practitioners can effectively solve any issues or raise any safeguarding concerns (NSPCC 2024).

Being knowledgeable of early years practise and understanding the procedures of safeguarding is important to prevent children from being harmed and keep them protected from abuse and neglect (Dawson 2023). Early years professionals need to have a good understanding the work policies and be up-to date with the best practise standards and any modern improvements to be able to provide safe environments for children that allows them to develop (Spinks 2025). Having deep understanding of the procedures allows professionals to identify safeguarding concerns such as possible signs of abuse or neglect and then appropriately respond by reporting the concern to the correct people and organisations. It also means that the identifying and reporting can be done in a more time efficient manner so concerning situations can be de-escalated quicker or prevent harm from happening with early intervention (Gilbert et al. 2009).

Partnership and multi-agency working is important to professional practice as working as a team with other professionals or services can bring in different types of support, skills and knowledge together to provide the best care possible for children within early years practise. Good communication is required as accurate information needs to be transferred or shared with other agencies and professionals within in a good time frame, so safeguarding issues are resolved quicker (Dixon et al. 2022). Having clear communication is essential so everyone receives the same information and there are no misunderstandings or gaps in the support the individual is receiving so the child can receive consistent care (Kwame and Petrucka 2021). Good partnership skills and teamwork means that professionals are able to learn from each other to strengthen their own professional practise and share responsibilities and workload which is important as it can allow for the best environments for children to be create as well as keeping them safe and helping them develop (Skyberg and Simon 2020).

The observation and planning cycle is a process that helps practitioners have a deeper understating of the development of children and their interests and needs. Observing is the act of watching and listening and keeping a note of what children are doing this can help practitioners take note of what children need and where they need support, which can support practitioner's planning so the delivering of activities can be tailored to each individual child (Giardiello et al. 2013). Consistent observations can allow for practitioners to identify any concerns such as safeguarding issues or any weaknesses children have within development (White et al. 2015). Planning can help ensure practitioners are meeting the needs of children as planning activities beforehand makes practitioners consider all children's weaknesses, interests and where they need support the most. Planning also allows for a routine to be put in paces and allow for a structured session within the setting which can help manage time allowing for children's skills to develop within a time efficient manner (Limited 2023).

UNCRC is the United Nations convention on the rights of a child. Its sets out the rights of children internationally regardless of their race, religion and ability. The UNCRC has 54 articles and 4 general principles, the 4 principles are non-discrimination (article 2), best interest of the child (article 3), right to life survival and development (article 6) and the right to be heard (article 12) (UNICEF, 2019). These

principles are important in professional practise to be able to understand how to implement the articles of the UNCRC into practise. A safe environment I sot be created for children, by including every child regardless of who they are and treating them all with equality allows all the children access to the same learning opportunities (Wilshire, 2023). According to (Nagle, 2024) the core of planning and delivering activities to children should be the UNCRC principles, constantly centring activities and planning around the needs of children within early years practise considers the best interest of children and their development. Practitioners should implement the principle of the right to be heard by listening to what all the children have to say and not dismissing or ignoring them, their opinions and feelings need to be told valued (Lagerlöf, Wallerstedt and Pramling, 2022).

To put it into summary, professional practice in the early years settings is about applying the correct knowledge, values and skills to meet each child's needs individually. Being a professional means following standards such as EYFS and to keep children safe with good safeguarding measures, whilst also putting thought into child development and improving with self-reflection and learning. Core values such as respect, honesty, empathy and equality are important because they are key in building positive relationships and trust with children and their families. Good communication and teamwork are also a key part of making sure everyone works together in the supporting of a child's developmental state. Being knowledgeable and keeping a strong understanding of safeguarding and child development helps practitioners in creating a safe space for children in a caring environment. Collaborating with other agencies and professionals means that children and their families get the right help and support when needed. Also, using resources to make an observation and planning cycle to help staff understand each child better and plan suitable activities for them is a good idea. Finally, the UNCRC principles remind practitioners to always listen to children and use critical and empathetic thinking to make decisions in their best interest.

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