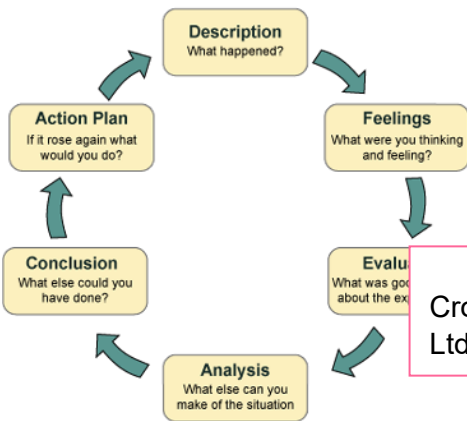


What is reflection and reflective practice?

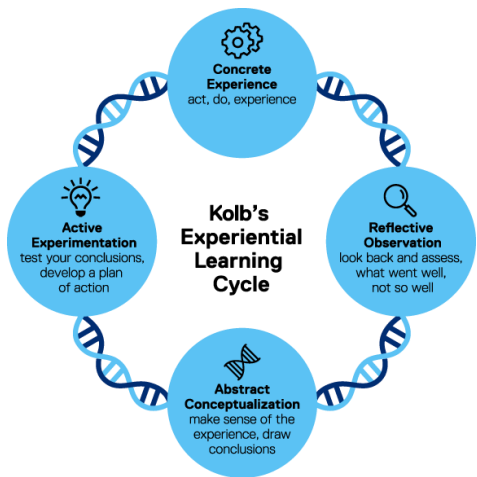
Brock (2015) implies that there is no precise definition of reflection as it can be interpreted from several theoretical perspectives. Similarly, University of Cambridge (no date) states that reflection is a personal concept that is defined differently by different people and that there is no correct way to interpret reflection, as it can depend on individual experiences. However, McGregor and Cartwright (2011) highlight that reflection starts when an individual stops to consider and think about what has transpired after something unexpected or unusual has occurred. Reflection is also about analysing what has happened and consider how to improve next time if the situation arises again in the future. Lindon and Trodd (2016) states that all practitioners need to reflect on what has happened and why it has happened and to demonstrate essential priorities and values. Lindon and Trodd (2016) emphasises that reflective practice is a technique that entails thoughtful consideration and constructive criticism of a practice that results in awareness of strengths and well thought out plans for development that will lead to future improvements. Reflective practice can promote self-awareness, a crucial component of emotional intelligence, and can create a greater understanding of others (Candy, 2020). Being a reflective practitioner entails nurturing the various ways in which an individual can learn through experiences (Candy, 2020).

According to Donald Schon, reflective practice changes a practitioner into a researcher, who can then build new theories from their experiences, demonstrating the genuine nature of practitioner expertise (Candy, 2020). Schon highlights that professionals frequently encounter unique situations, where they can consider prior experiences (Paige-Smith and Craft, 2011). Schon understood the continuing complexity and the value of reflection in practice (Paige-Smith and Craft, 2011). Schon also focuses on the unexpected and the practitioner’s ability to make amends on their practice (Paige-Smith and Craft, 2011). This will lead to them developing skills. He argues that it is intuitive and an automatic reaction which will lead to a better performance in the practitioner in the future (Paige-Smith and Craft, 2011). Schon distinguished two types of reflection which are reflection- in- action and reflection-on- action. Paige- Smith and Craft (2011) states that reflective practice can provide true feedback for growth in practice and that it is critical to construct reflection in a way that it is shared and allows us to examine assumptions that might be taken for granted. Reflection on practice should allow practitioners to see their practise from the perspective of others (Paige- Smith and Craft, 2011).

Gibbs Reflective Cycle



Crowe Associates Ltd (no date)



Toronto Metropolitan University (no date)

The significance of reflection and reflective practice in early year’s settings

The importance of reflection and how reflective practice can improve quality in early years settings.

Paige-Smith and Craft (2011) stated that reflective practice within early years settings will become more ingrained in being a key expectation of all early year’s practitioners. Lindon and Trodd (2016) highlights that all practitioners must reflect and evaluate on how they work with children and families. Lindon and Trodd (2016) highlights that to participate in sustained shared thinking efficiently, practitioners need to reflect and be conscious to role model reflective thinking to children. Reflective practice is significant to establish and maintain early years practices that are dynamic, self-sustaining, and overcoming new obstacles (Lindon and Trodd, 2016). Reflection is an essential component of professional development and is linked to open-mindedness, accepting responsibility, and a lack of complacency (Lindon and Trodd, 2016). Birth to 5 Matters (2021) implies that to be consistent and to enhance the learning environment, practitioners need to reflect their work in practice. Hallet (2013) highlights that a reflective practice aims to improve the quality of experiences for children and their families.

Pacey (2016) states that practitioners can enhance outcomes for children by reflecting their practice. This can involve meeting children’s needs, growing self-esteem, and a suitable, enabling environment with indoor and outdoor experiences (Pacey, 2016). Parents and carers can also benefit from the process as they will be able to perceive improvements in practice procedures and feel certain that the care being delivered is of high quality and is always developing and improving (Pacey, 2016). Reflecting on practice will help practitioners improve their abilities while boosting self-confidence and drive, help recognize individual development needs, and assist practitioners when setting goals (Pacey, 2016). This can result in a more efficient setting which can boost reputation and help practitioners provide clearer evidence of results for inspections (Pacey, 2016). Interacting and effectively communicating with colleagues can be a very effective reflection tool as practitioners can observe each other, exchange ideas, and offer encouragement to one another (Cambridge International, 2020). Reflecting with colleagues can result in positive and trusting relationships (Cambridge International, 2020). It can help practitioners generate new ideas which can result in enhancing their practice (Cambridge International, 2020).

Glyndwr University (2023) states that peer observations are beneficial to reflect on personal practice. Peer observations should be concise, and the observer should give constructive feedback, with an aim to identify strengths and areas for development (Glyndwr University, 2023). The goal of peer observations should be to recognise strengths and areas for improvement (Glyndwr University, 2023). The viewpoints of others can be an important resource for reflective practise (Lindon and Trodd, 2016). By reflecting perspectives of children, parents, carers and other professionals, early year’s practitioners can receive constructive feedback which can improve quality in the early years setting and gives practitioners an opportunity to reflect on their practice, problem solving, and finding solutions (Hallet, 2013). By asking for feedback from parents, they will feel more involved and valued (Lindon and Trodd, 2016). Feedback can be given through conversation with parents or by completing questionnaire forms (Lindon and Trodd, 2016).

How can reflection support a practitioner to develop as a professional?

Brock (2015) states that learning to become a reflective practitioner is like becoming a butterfly, suggesting that the process requires change, growth, and development. Reflective practitioners should have a balanced perspective of their work, acknowledge their accomplishments and qualities while recognizing areas for improvement (Pacey, 2016). When practitioners evaluate and reflect on their practice, it can help them to comprehend their professional development needs and boost their confidence in their practice (Pacey, 2016). Pacey (2016) underlines that early year's practitioners should take into account how their actions may affect children and families who they are caring for, considers alternative methods of working and introduce new methods, and plans strategies for sustaining and enhancing their practice. Tarrant (2013) states that reflection influences professionalism greatly. Practitioners become more aware, more in control, and able to recognise their strengths and areas for improvement by reflecting on their practice (Tarrant, 2013). Practitioners can start to transition from being a novice to an expert through reflecting on their practice (Tarrant, 2013). Dyer (2018) highlights that professional education that promotes self-reflection and critical thinking has been found to be most beneficial to practitioners as it enhances their confidence in their job role and how they apply theory to practice. Birth to 5 Matters (2021) advises practitioners to observe, evaluate, discuss, and communicate with other practitioners regarding children's learning and growth (Birth to 5 Matters, 2021).

Through reflective practice, practitioners can comprehend critical awareness of their own work (Birth to 5 Matters, 2021). This will assist practitioners in acquiring effective skills, methods, approaches, and abilities required to ensure that children make the best possible progress in their learning and development (Birth to 5 Matters, 2021). Additionally, it can help a practitioner to develop confidence and self-esteem, become more proactive, and provide better care and education (Birth to 5 Matters, 2021). Brock (2015) emphasises that practitioners must reflect in the workplace, and it would be advantageous if colleagues serve as role models to children for the reflective process. Engaging in reflective practice with colleagues allows for the restoration of practice which helps to clearly formulate ideas (Brock, 2015). This can be achieved through observation in practice by undertaking case studies, shadowing colleagues, and participating in discussions (Brock, 2015). Practitioners should ensure that their work is responsible and ethical through observation and reasoning by critically reflecting on it (Brock, 2015). Lindon and Trodd (2016) highlights that early year's practitioners that have a sincere interest and commitment to the development of children, are receptive to feedback.

There can be many barriers to reflection in an early year's practice (University of Cambridge, no date). This could be down to lack of time or uncertainty over how to undertake reflective practice. University of Cambridge (no date) states that it is beneficial to take time to reflect. This can help an individual develop healthy habits and experience great benefits by setting aside time each day to focus on their reflection practice (University of Cambridge, no date). Health and Care Learning Wales (2019) states that a reflective diary can serve as a useful strategy for early year's practitioners to start their reflective process. A reflective diary can record experiences, emotions, thoughts, individual developments, and areas of improvement (Health and Care Learning Wales, 2019). Gasper (2015) highlights that writing can be beneficial for reflection as it utilises a variety of mental processes and can open new routes into understanding.

To conclude, if an early year's practitioner adheres to the above methods of reflection, it will lead to a successful reflective process. Reflection is paramount for practitioners in childcare as it can provide the best care and learning for children. Reflection is the means of improving a practitioner's standard of practice. Reflection can increase a practitioner's general knowledge which will allow them to grow into consummate professionals. Reflection also ensures that an early year's practitioner has a full understanding of children's needs and development which includes their likes and dislikes. Therefore, early year's practitioners can incorporate them in future planning.

Reflective models

University of Hull (2022) states that Kolb's Cycle of Reflective Practice helps to assist an individual to learn from their experiences by reflecting. There are four stages of Kolb's model which are: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (University of Hull, 2022). The model starts with a new experience or a reoccurring experience. The next step is to reflect on the experience and record anything new to the individual that they have not experienced before (University of Cambridge, no date). This allows an individual to generate new ideas, for instance, they can analyse to find out why something unexpected occurred (University of Cambridge, no date). In the last stage, an individual put new ideas into practice. This signifies how reflection on experiences can directly affect a person's learning (University of Cambridge, no date). The University of Edinburgh (2020) states that Gibbs Reflective Cycle is one of the most well-known models of reflection. Gibbs Reflective Cycle supports an individual through six phases of reflection by investigating an experience (The University of Edinburgh, 2020). The six stages are: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and plan of action. Gibbs model of reflection starts with a description about the experience that an individual is reflecting on (The University of Edinburgh, 2020). University of Cumbria (2020) states that, unlike other models, the next phase of Gibbs reflective model enables an individual to consider how they felt during and after their experience.

The following phase entails assessing the experience by balancing and evaluating the good and bad points of the experience (University of Cumbria, 2020). By doing this, it allows an individual to comprehend and make sense of what they experienced (The University of Edinburgh, 2020). This will lead to a conclusion, concentrating on how they could have done things differently to achieve another outcome (The University of Edinburgh, 2020). The final step entails creating an action plan of steps that an individual can implement if they encounter a similar situation in the future (University of Edinburgh, 2020). Reflective models can provide a guideline to follow and provide individuals with a place to begin their reflection process (University of Cambridge, no date). However, University of Cambridge (no date) states that reflective models involve following each step in a defined way, to be effective and they may not be suitable for every situation (University of Cambridge, no date). In this circumstance, practitioners would need to modify their reflection method to their experience (University of Cambridge, no date). Another way for practitioners to reflect, is to use a reflective accounts form. This is an effective means of reflection as practitioners can record information regarding their experience by writing down what was successful, what was not successful, and what they can do differently in the future. University of Birmingham, 2015). Practitioners can keep record of their reflection account forms in their reflective folders in their setting to revisit if necessary (University of Birmingham, 2015).

REFLECTIVE ACCOUNTS FORM

You can use this form to reflect on your reflective accounts from your CPD experience and to discuss your reflections with your supervisor. You can use the form to discuss your reflections with your supervisor. You can use the form to discuss your reflections with your supervisor.

You can use this form to reflect on your reflective accounts from your CPD experience and to discuss your reflections with your supervisor. You can use the form to discuss your reflections with your supervisor. You can use the form to discuss your reflections with your supervisor.



Reflective account

What was the nature of the CPD activity and/or practice related feedback and/or event or experience in your practice?

What did you change or improve your practice as a result?

How is this relevant to the Code?

How is this relevant to the Code?

How is this relevant to the Code?

(NHSGGC Practice Education
2020)

Reference list

- Birth to 5 Matters (2021) *Professional reflective practice*. Available at: [PDF-20-Professional-Reflective-Practice-1-1.pdf \(birthto5matters.org.uk\)](#) (Accessed: 9th May 2023).
- Birth to 5 Matters (no date) *Inclusive practice and equalities*. Available at: [Inclusive practice and equalities – Birth To 5 Matters](#) (Accessed: May 15th 2023).
- Birth to 5 Matters (no date) *Non-statutory guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage*. Available at: [Birthto5Matters-download.pdf](#) (Accessed: May 12th 2023).
- Brock, A. (2013) 'Building a model of early years professionalism from practitioners' perspectives', *Journal of early childhood research: ECR*, 11(1), pp. 27–44. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X12456003> (Accessed: May 16th 2023).
- Brock, A. (2015) *The early years reflective practice handbook*. Edited by A. Brock. London: Routledge.
- Cambridge Forest Schools (2018) *What is forest school?* Available at: [forest school ethos - Cambridge Forest Schools](#) (Accessed: May 15th 2023).
- Cambridge International (2020) *Being reflective- the most important Cambridge learner attribute*. Available at: [Being reflective – the most important Cambridge learner attribute \(cambridgeinternational.org\)](#) (Accessed: May 9th 2023).
- Cambridgeshire County Council (2022) *Special Educational Needs Support (Early Years)*. Available at: [SEND Information Hub \(Local Offer\) | Special Educational Needs Support \(Early Years\) \(cambridgeshire.gov.uk\)](#) (Accessed: May 18th 2023).
- Candy, L. (2020) *The creative reflective practitioner research through making and practice*. London: Routledge.
- Crowe Associates Ltd (no date) *Gibbs reflective cycle* [online image] Available at: [Gibbs Reflective cycle | Crowe Associates \(crowe-associates.co.uk\)](#) (Accessed: May 14th 2023).
- Department for Education (2015) *Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education project (EPPSE 3-16+)*. Available at: [Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education project \(EPPSE 3-16+\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) (Accessed: May 16th 2023).
- Department for Education (2021) *Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage*. Available at: [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) (Accessed: May 15th 2023).
- Dyer, M.A. (2018) 'Being a professional or practising professionally', *European early childhood education research journal*, 26(3), pp. 347–361. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2018.1462999>.
- Early Education (2011) *Code of Ethics*. Available at: [Layout 1 \(early-education.org.uk\)](#) (Accessed: May 15th 2023).
- Gaspar, M. (2015) 'Professional Practice and Early Childhood Today', in Reed, M. and Walker, R. *A Critical Companion to Early Childhood*. First Edition. London: SAGE.
- Gaspar, M. (2009). *Multi-agency Working in the Early Years: Challenges and Opportunities*. London: SAGE.
- Glyndwr University (2022) *What is reflective practice?* Available at: [What is reflective practice? - North Wales Management School - Wrexham Glyndwr University](#) (Accessed: May 13th 2023).
- GOV.UK (no date) *Communication and language*. Available at: [Communication and language - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](#) (Accessed: May 15th 2023).
- Hallet, E. (2013) *The reflective early years practitioner*. London: SAGE.
- Health and Care Learning Wales (2019) *The importance of reflection*. Available at: [Importance of reflection | Professional Practice \(uk.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com\)](#) (Accessed: May 12th 2023).
- HM Government (2018) *Working together to safeguard children*. Available at: [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) (Accessed: May 18th 2023).
- Lindon, J. and Trodd, L. (2016) *Reflective Practice and Early Years Professionalism*. Third edition. London, England: Hodder Education.

McGregor, D. and Cartwright, L. (2011) *Developing reflective practice a guide for beginning teachers*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

NHSGGC Practice Education (2020) *Reflective template* [online image] Available at: [flyingstartbooklet-2.pdf \(nhsggc.org.uk\)](https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/flyingstartbooklet-2.pdf) (Accessed: May 13th 2023).

NSPCC (2023) *Multi-agency working*. Available at: [Multi-agency and interdisciplinary working | NSPCC Learning](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/learning/multi-agency-working/) (Accessed: May 15th 2023).

NSPCC (2023) *Safeguarding and child protection in schools*. Available at: [Safeguarding in schools | NSPCC Learning](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/learning/safeguarding-in-schools/) (Accessed: May 16th 2023).

Pacey (2016) *Developing Self Reflective Practice*. Available at: <https://www.pacey.org.uk/Pacey/media/Website-files/PACEY> (Accessed: May 12th 2023).

Pacey (2017) *Working With Other Professionals: A guide to help you think about making the most of your relationships with other professionals you may work with*. Available at: [Fact Sheet title \(pacey.org.uk\)](https://www.pacey.org.uk/fact-sheet-title) (Accessed: May 19th 2023).

Paige-Smith, A. and Craft, A. (2011) *Developing reflective practice in the early years*. 2nd ed. Berkshire, England: McGraw Hill.

Perez, R. (2019) 'What Does It Mean to Be a Professional?' *CMSA Highlights*. Available at: [What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Professional.pdf \(researchgate.net\)](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338888888) (Accessed: May 16th 2023).

Raising Children Network (2020) *Communicating well with babies and children: tips*. Available at: [Good communication with children: tips | Raising Children Network](https://www.raisingchildrennetwork.org.au/good-communication-with-children-tips/) (Accessed: May 14th 2023).

Research in practice (2013) *Communicating effectively with children under five*. Available at: [communicating effectively with children under 5 frontline briefing 2013.pdf \(researchinpractice.org.uk\)](https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/communicating-effectively-with-children-under-5-frontline-briefing-2013.pdf) (Accessed: May 14th 2023).

Tarrant, P. (2013) *Reflective Practice and Professional Development*. London: SAGE Productions Ltd.

The University of Edinburgh (2020) *Gibbs' Reflective Cycle*. Available at: [Gibbs' Reflective Cycle | The University of Edinburgh](https://www.ed.ac.uk/reflective-cycle/) (Accessed: May 9th 2023).

The University of Texas (2023) *How Much of Communication Is Verbal?* Available at: [How Much of Communication Is Nonverbal? | UT Permian Basin Online \(utpb.edu\)](https://www.utpb.edu/how-much-of-communication-is-verbal/) (Accessed: May 15th 2023).

Toronto Metropolitan University (no date) *Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle* [online image] Available at: [Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle - Experiential Learning - Toronto Metropolitan University \(torontomu.ca\)](https://www.torontomu.ca/kolb-experiential-learning-cycle/) (Accessed: May 14th 2023).

UNICEF (no date) *Summary of The UN Convention on The Rights of The Child*. Available at: [Summary-of-the-UNCRC.pdf \(unicef.org.uk\)](https://www.unicef.org/summary-of-the-uncrc.pdf) (Accessed: May 12th 2023).

University of Birmingham (2015) *A short guide to reflective writing*. Available at: [short-guide-reflective-writing.pdf \(birmingham.ac.uk\)](https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/short-guide-reflective-writing.pdf) (Accessed: May 11th 2023).

University of Cambria (2020) *Gibbs' reflective cycle*. Available at: [ReflectiveCycleGibbs.pdf \(cumbria.ac.uk\)](https://www.cumbria.ac.uk/reflectivecyclegibbs.pdf) (Accessed on: May 12th 2023).

University of Cambridge (No date) *Barriers to reflection*. Available at: [Barriers to reflection - Reflective Practice Toolkit - LibGuides at University of Cambridge Subject Libraries](https://www.libguides.org/cambridge-subject-libraries/reflective-practice-toolkit/barriers-to-reflection/) (Accessed: May 9th 2023).

University of Cambridge (No Date) *Models of Reflection*. Available at: [Models of reflection - Reflective Practice Toolkit - LibGuides at University of Cambridge Subject Libraries](https://www.libguides.org/cambridge-subject-libraries/reflective-practice-toolkit/models-of-reflection/) (Accessed: May 10th 2023).

University of Cambridge (No date) *What is reflective practice?* Available at: [What is reflective practice? - Reflective Practice Toolkit - LibGuides at University of Cambridge Subject Libraries](https://www.libguides.org/cambridge-subject-libraries/reflective-practice-toolkit/what-is-reflective-practice/) (Accessed: May 9th 2023).

University of Hull (2022) *Kolb's Cycle of Reflective Practice*. Available at: <https://libguides.hull.ac.uk/reflectivewriting/kolb> (Accessed: May 12th 2023).

University of Kent (2023) *Communication skills*. Available at: [Communication skills - Careers and employability service - University of Kent](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers-and-employability-service/communication-skills/) (Accessed: May 13th 2023).

Welsh Government (2016) *Theme 5: Developing community partnerships and multi-agency working*. Available at: [theme-5-developing-community-partnerships-and-multi-agency-working-resources-1-2.pdf \(gov.wales\)](https://www.gov.wales/theme-5-developing-community-partnerships-and-multi-agency-working-resources-1-2.pdf) (Accessed: May 16th 2023).

Welsh Government (2022) *A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings*. Available at: [A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings \(gov.wales\)](https://www.gov.wales/a-curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings/) (Accessed: 15th May 2023).