Portfolio

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Use of AI acknowledgment

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generative text as my own. I confirm that all content presented is my own. I have copies of my drafts, notes and other resources.

Personal Development Plan

In this section, I have created a personal development plan describing short- term, mid-term and long-goals that I wish to achieve. The plan identifies the steps I need to take in order to achieve these goals.

No	Improvement and Development Goals	Success Criteria (How I will know when I have made this change)	The actions I will take to achieve the goal	Timelines	What will this help me to achieve?
1	Improve my academic writing skills.	I will know I have achieved this goal when I confidently write academic assignments, structure my work clearly and use appropriate Harvard referencing correctly.	I will improve my academic skills by continuing to practise writing assignments and improving by using the feedback provided by my lecturers. I will also read academic sources to improve my writing skills. I will refer to the Harvard referencing guide to ensure my referencing is correct. I will also continue to attend lectures and take notes,	The timeline that I have set to achieve this goal is 3-6 months.	This will improve my academic writing skills and the ability to complete my university work to a higher standard. It will also help me increase my confidence as a student and develop skills that I can use throughout my course.
2	Develop my practical skills and experience in an early	I will know I have achieved this goal when I have gained experience	I will attend regular placements and observe experienced staff in the early years setting. I will observe and take part in activities. I will absorb	The timeline that I have set to achieve this	This experience will help me develop knowledge, practical skills and confidence needed to work

	year setting.	and confidence supporting children's learning and developmen t needs.	knowledge from practitioners in an early years setting, to increase my confidence working with children. I will also ask for feedback during placement, to improve my skills and identify my strengths and weaknesses.	goal is 1-2 years	effectively with children. It will also help me gain confidence from having experience working with children in the early years.
3	To become a teacher.	I will know I have achieved this goal when I qualify as a teacher.	I will complete my Early Years Education and Care: Practitioner Status course and use my knowledge to continue gaining experience in an early years setting. Afterwards, I will research further education options. I will complete a PGCE course to gain further knowledge and skills in order to qualify.	The timelin e that I have set to achiev e this goal is 2-4 years	This will help me gain knowledge and experience needed in order to achieve my long-term goal of becoming a teacher. This will create a plan that I can follow and allows me to continue gaining further experience and confidence working with children.

Briefing Paper of Reflective Practice in the Early Years

Reflective Practice in the Early Years

What is reflection and reflective practice?

Reflection and reflective practice is the process of looking back on an experience or situation, comparing what went well with what did not work well, and using this knowledge to improve for the future.

Pacey (2016, cited in University of Wales Trinity Saint David, n.d.) suggests that reflective practice should involve questioning, challenging and modifying practice as part of a continuous cycle. This will encourage the practitioner to reflect upon observations, to improve their practice. It is important that practitioners have regular observations and reflective periods to gain a deeper sense of knowledge and understanding within their practice.

Brodie (2024) suggests that diaries, journals and self-evaluation forms can be used as an effective way of evaluating practice and help to create structure.

Reflection also helps practitioners to recognise and predict familiar patterns regarding the children, allowing them to anticipate their needs. Trial and error can help practitioners have a better understanding of what works and what needs to change. Critical thinking is also an important part of the reflection process because it encourages practitioners to develop greater self-awareness and understanding of others.

If a practitioner reflects on the observations taken during activities, they are more likely to create a beneficial change within their practice.

Why is it important for Early Years Practice?

According to Paige-Smith and Craft (2011), reflective practice is important in early years settings because it allows practitioners to question their perceptions on practice, allowing adaption and development. Reflective practice is also important because it allows practitioners to assess the way children respond to different situations and tasks. This helps professionals improve their practice, support children's learning and development and provide high-quality care and education.

Paige-Smith and Craft (2011) also suggests that it is important to observe the way that children interact with one another and with adults in early years settings. Reflecting on these interactions can help practitioners develop a better understanding of children's mindsets and how they perceive the world around them.

Observations help practitioners to identify what engages and interests children. According to Hayes *et al.* (2024) observation is an important part of reflective practice because it provides an insight into children's understanding and progress. This is particularly important during the early years as younger children may find difficulty expressing their emotions clearly.

It is important to reflect with other members of staff to gain different perspectives. This encourages critical thinking in a group setting which contributes to a deeper and more insightful reflection process.

Policy context in Wales

Social Care Wales (2026) suggests the importance of following relevant guidance and legislation when following safeguarding procedures. This includes:

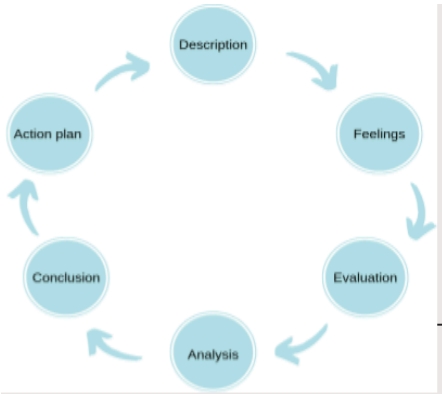
- Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014
- Volume 5 : Handling Individual Cases to Protect Children at Risk (Welsh Government Statutory Guidance)
- Volume 6: Handling Individual Cases to Protect Adults at Risk (Welsh Government Statutory Guidance)

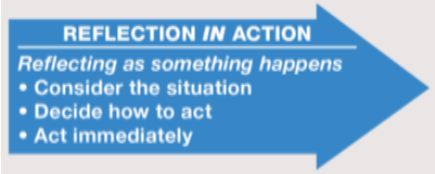
The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 is a legislation that is made up of eleven parts, seven of these are regarding safeguarding.

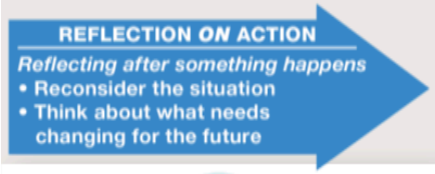
The Welsh Government (2026) provides safeguarding guidance which includes all of the relevant acts and legislations. This can be accessed by anyone working with children, allowing them to gain a better understanding of their responsibilities and appropriate procedures.

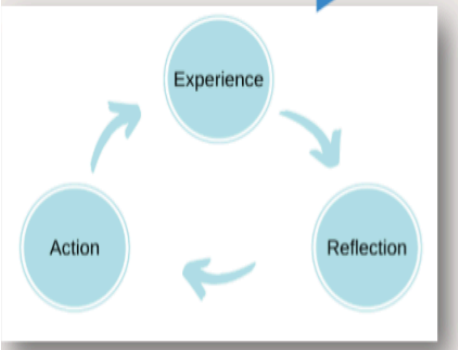
According to Social Care Wales (2026), any concerns regarding a child's safety should be reported to the appropriate LADO/DOS immediately. It is the responsibility of every professional in the workplace to report anything they feel is concerning.

According to the Welsh Government (2018), practitioners must ensure they always put the needs and wellbeing of the children first. They must always remain alert and report any suspicions of harm to a child. It is important that practitioners and staff receive safeguarding training to ensure they are educated on their safeguarding and child protection procedures.









ERA Cycle University of Cambridge (n.d.)
Gibb's Model University of Cambridge (n.d.)
Reflection in action and reflection on action (Al-Armani, 2021, as citied in Third, 2022).

Theory of reflection and analysis of different reflective models

Schons theory of reflection is described as two key concepts: Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflecting in action involves deciding how to act in the moment to a situation while it is happening. Refection on action involves looking back on an experience and considering what needs changing in the future. Continuously using this method will encourage practitioners to act appropriately in situations, meaning they eventually will no longer need to use models due to having experience. The purpose of this is so it becomes a natural way of doing things.

Gibb's reflective module, University of Cambridge (n.d.), shows how to apply this theory to practice. The cycle shows: description , feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan. This is a very good example of a descriptive six-step model practitioners can follow to reflect on practice. It encourages practitioners to reflect on experiences and identify adjustments that need to be made within their practice. It also allows them to follow a cycle, creating structure to their reflection process.

Another example is the ERA cycle, University of Cambridge (n.d.), which consists of three stages: experience, reflection and action. In comparison, the ERA module is shorter and easier to follow whereas Gibb's model has greater structure and gives a more detailed step-by-step process. However, a disadvantage of the ERA model is that it does not encourage practitioners to explore in depth as much as Gibb's model. Furthermore, a disadvantage of Gibb's cycle is that it may be difficult for practitioners to find the time to fit this into their routine.

Practitioners can use theories and models alongside each other. For example, Schons theory can help practitioners reflect while responding to a situation while it occurs, while Gibb's model can be used afterwards to reflect and analyse the experience in greater detail.

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The University of Cambridge (n.d.) suggests that an advantage of using these models are that they provide a structured approach and a useful starting point for reflection. On the other hand, a disadvantages could be that they are time consuming, restricting and complicated to follow. In conclusion, they are a useful guide for practitioners to introduce reflection within their practice.

Overall, reflective practice enables practitioners to evaluate and improve their practice to meet the needs of children. Critically reflecting on experiences helps practitioners gain knowledge, allowing them to create a better understanding of how to support children's learning. Reflection can also help practitioners to create a well-structured routine that benefit both children and staff.

Analysis of the significance of different aspects of professional practice and why these are important in meeting the individual and inclusive needs of children

What is professional practice? What is professionalism?

Professional practice is enabling the wellbeing of children and prioritising their needs and safety to achieve the best outcomes possible. Professionals must understand that they are responsible and liable for the wellbeing of the children under their supervision and care. According to DCSF (2008b, cited in Powell, 2010, pp. 218-219), there are several requirements that need to be met before entering the childcare workforce, such as criminal record checks, identity checks, full employment history, relevant qualifications and more. The result of this is that trustworthy individuals are placed in this position which encourages parents to feel confident in trusting that they are allowing responsible individuals to care for their child.

There are also professional expectations that practitioners must meet when working in childcare settings. According to DCSF (2008b, cited in Powell, 2010, pp. 218-219) , these include that the individual is appropriately trained, regularly engages in cycles of planning, shares knowledge, reflects on practice and communicates closely with other professionals and parents. Practitioners should also prioritise values such as safeguarding, empathy, always remaining professional and always having the child's best interest in mind. By maintaining professional standards this encourages practitioners to create a safe and well organised environment.

According to Hayes *et al.* (2024), professionalism as a practitioner is about constantly challenge, reflecting and improving practice, as well as having a clear understanding of what is expected of the practitioner. As well as this, practitioners may have their own set of values to follow. Pacey (2016, cited in University of Wales Trinity Saint David, n.d.) supports this by suggesting that reflective practice should include questioning, challenging and modifying practice in a continuous cycle to support reflection and improvement. This is important because reflecting on practice allows practitioners to identify areas that require change. It also allows practitioners to identify whether they are meeting children's individual needs and requirements.

Why communication and relationships are important to professional practice and meeting the needs of children

Effective communication and positive relationships are one of the core values to creating a well organised setting and a supportive environment in the workplace. Wilson (2025) supports this by stating that building relationships with parents can build trust and break barriers, helping to create more effective communication. If parents are comfortable to share information and concerns, practitioners can work alongside them to support the child.

Communication plays an important role in safeguarding and ensuring a child's safety. For example, if a child is involved in an incident, it is important that a member of staff contacts and clearly communicates with all relevant individuals, including the child, parents, coworkers, and other appropriate professionals. Communication between colleagues is important, as it helps maintain consistent routines that keep practice running smoothly. Relaying information is particularly important for children with additional needs as communicating with parents and other colleagues help practitioners understand what may trigger the child, as well as, what makes them feel comfortable. This helps the staff provide appropriate support for the children.

Solvason and Webb (2023) suggests that communication with parents is central to supporting children. Conversations with parents can help practitioners gain a better understanding of a child's behaviour by considering their experiences outside of the learning environment. This is important because changes in a child's behaviour may be influenced by circumstances at home. Solvason and Webb (2023) also suggests that empathy and understanding are important aspects of professional practice, as children experiencing difficult circumstances may find learning and making progress challenging in practice. By communicating with parents, practitioners can gain a better understanding of the reasons behind a child facing difficulties with learning and provide appropriate support for a child's individual needs.

Safeguarding and child protection the child's welfare. Protecting children from harm and abuse.

Safeguarding and child protection is a part of professional practice, in which every adult involved is responsible. Practitioners should understand that they are responsible for making important decisions when parents are not present. According to McMahon and Dyer (2019) practitioners have a duty of care when working in a childcare setting and therefore must ensure that they are always updated with the expectations and legislations set. The organisation also has a duty of care to follow a risk assessment when concerns are reported to them. The result of this is to protect children from harm and abuse. It is important that staff are educated on the legislations and safety acts for children set in their region and have knowledge on all different types of abuse. They must have the ability to recognise the signs indicating abuse and neglectful behaviours of parents and report to the appropriate individuals

when concerns are raised regarding a child's safety. This is particularly important in an early years setting, as young children may struggle to communicate. According to Social Care Wales, (n.d.), there is now an app that staff can download, advising them on safeguarding procedures. Failure to act on a concern raised can contribute to a child at risk of harm, in which the members of staff involved and organisation are accountable.

Social Care Wales (2026) suggests that in Wales concerns must be reported to LADO/DOS. They are also advised to follow their own procedures assisted by the ACAS code practice, as well as taking advice from HR. In more extreme cases, they may require working alongside other organisations, such as social services, the police and NSPCC.

Furthermore, having in depth knowledge and understanding of the children in their care is an important aspect of safeguarding, particularly for children with additional learning needs. If practitioners have an in-depth understanding of what may trigger a child with additional learning needs, they can ensure safety for the child, other children, and members of staff.

How does the observation and planning cycle inform professional practice and ensure practitioners are meeting the needs of children?

According to Hayes *et al.* (2024) observation is important during professional practice as it can help practitioners reflect on previous sessions and identify areas for improvement. The Welsh Government (2022) suggests that using a range of observation techniques is extremely insightful and allows practitioners to develop a deeper understanding on how children perceive the world. It is also important that practitioners record and monitor their observations so they can reflect on them later. Brock (2015) suggests that reflections upon observations is a core value for practice in the early years as practitioners are able to plan and create sessions that are more suitable for the children's individual needs by evaluating observations taken during practice.

Practitioners often teach through representations; therefore, it is important that children also learn through real-life experiences so they can link them to representations shown to them in practice.

Observations by practitioners also link to safeguarding. Dobson and Melrose (2020) suggests that it is important for practitioners to always remain professional, including when it can feel uncomfortable to raise concerns. However, Dobson and Melrose (2020) suggest that practitioners must remember their duty of care and be prepared

to have uncomfortable conversations with parents if they have noticed any concerns about a child's safety.

Multi agency working allows a collaborative reflection with different ideas and different perspectives. Wilson (2025) supports that it is important to work with other professionals as they bring diversity in values within practice. This is important because one professional may recognise something that others have not. Collaborative practice leads to deeper levels of critical thinking and opportunities to learn from others. Reed and Walker (2015) suggest that different perspectives can help lead to self-evaluation and in-depth reflection. Poor communication between staff and agencies can contribute to problems in childcare settings.

According to Vygotsky's theory, Dolya (2010) suggests that organising a structured interaction between children and adults is how psychological development enhances. According to Vygotsky's, Dolya (2010) creating a curriculum suitable for children in the early years setting will encourage improvements in development. These topics will include mathematics, logic, development games, exploration, story grammar and many more. It is believed that this will encourage development and teach children a better understanding of the world around them.

How do the principles of the UNCRC inform professional practice and why is this important?

According to UNICEF UK, (n.d.) the principles of UNCRC are important for every early years setting to follow. The UNCRC is the largest human rights treaty in the world. Every child should have access to their rights, regardless of background, financial struggles and difficult circumstances. It is important for practitioners to educate themselves on these rights and ensure they are enforced in their practice. This helps to ensure all children are treated fairly and with respect. Practitioners should also help children understand their rights.

In conclusion, professional practise is essential in every early years setting to meet the individual and inclusive needs of children. Effective communication, observation, planning and reflection help practitioners support children's learning needs. Safeguarding and following the principles of the UNCRC ensure that children's safety and rights are protected. Overall, practitioners should include different aspects of professional practice in their setting to ensure they are creating a safe, and supportive learning environment.

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