

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

The Professional Practitioner Portfolio

Contents

Section 1- Personal Development Plan (Word count- 527)

Section 2- Briefing paper (Word count- 995)

Section 2- Written Essay (Word count -1582)

Personal Development Plan

Initial Goal - Learn speaking, reading, listening, and writing the Welsh Language.

What do you want to accomplish? Who needs to be included? Why is this a goal?	How can you measure progress and know if you have successfully met your goal?	Do you have the skills required to achieve the goal? Is the amount of effort required on par with what the goal will achieve?	Why am I setting this goal now? Is it aligned with overall objectives?	What is the deadline and is it realistic?
I would like to improve my knowledge of the Welsh language and be able to use and understand basic phrases. I would like to be able to have a simple conversation in Welsh. I am aiming to complete the entry level course for Welsh through Dysgu Cymraeg. The Welsh language is becoming more favourable on job applications, and I would like to look more competitive.	To complete the fourteen units within the Dysgu Cymraeg course. I will also receive a certificate to show that I have completed the course.	I have the skills to learn Welsh having learnt a few numbers and words in school. I am also enrolled onto a Welsh course that did not require any previous knowledge of the language. The course is independent learning so I can access the modules and work through the course around my university degree and placement.	This goal has become more important to me since working in primary schools. I have noticed it is used in the classrooms to provide the children with a basic knowledge of the Welsh language.	The deadline to complete the units for the course is the end of August. This is realistic as I have already completed 7 out of the 14 units. With finishing university in May, I will also be able to allocate myself more time to complete the Welsh language course.

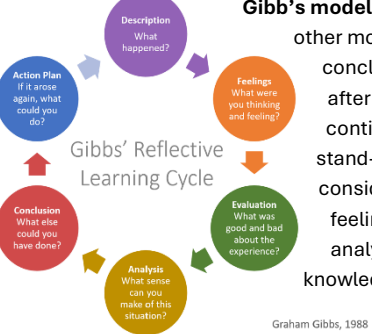
S.M.A.R.T Goal - After completing this goal, I would like to continue developing my Welsh language skills and complete the next level of Welsh. If I were unable to achieve this, I would restart the course in September.

Initial Goal- To complete level 3 safeguarding training.

What do you want to accomplish? Who needs to be included? Why is this a goal?	How can you measure progress and know if you have successfully met your goal?	Do you have the skills required to achieve the goal? Is the amount of effort required on par with what the goal will achieve?	Why am I setting this goal now? Is it aligned with overall objectives?	What is the deadline and is it realistic?
I would like to complete my level 3 safeguarding training to better my knowledge and understanding. This will help improve my work ethic and would support me to work in the children's best interest and to fulfil my duty of care. I am able to access the online course through my teaching assistant agency.	Once I have completed all the questions, I will receive a percentage as a mark that shows if I have passed. I will then receive an email to say I have completed the course, and my agency will also receive an email to acknowledge I have completed the course.	I have already completed level one and two of safeguarding so I can complete level three. The course is stated to take approximately 4.5 hours so I will be able to find the time to complete this.	With working with children, I feel like it will improve my work ethic and enable me to become a better advocate for children by recognising signs of abuse. It will also support me with safe practice and keeping children safe.	I hope to complete this before September 2025. I know I will be able to as I finish University for the academic year in May so will have more unallocated time to complete necessary training.

S.M.A.R.T Goal- To implement the knowledge I have gained into my work practice. To research other important training needs there may be to best support children.

Section 2

What is reflection and reflective practise? Health and Care Professions Council (2024) describe reflection as a process that allows you to gain a deeper understanding of your professional practice by critically analysing all aspects of it. Fook (2022) recognises that reflection is an important part to most professions and it vital for good practice. Brock (2015) states reflection and reflective practice are fundamental principles for professionals and play a crucial role in their training to help identify areas of improvement. Reflection is encouraged across various careers, especially in education, healthcare, and social care. In reflective practice, individuals should regularly observe and assess their own behaviour to gain insight into their actions and how they affect others (UCD, no date). Reflective practice is important to prevent people becoming complacent in their workplace. This can be seen within The Four Stages of Learning (Crosbie, 2005).	Why is reflective practise important to the early years? Brodie (no date); Care Learning, 2024 argue that reflective practice is a useful tool that helps Early Years professionals assess their work, learn from their experiences, and improve their skills. It allows practitioners to identify what they already do well, the needs of others, and acknowledge where improvements can be made. Reflective practice also allows for practitioners to continuously improve the quality of care and education they provide in the early year's settings. By reflecting on their actions, and how they interact with children, practitioners can identify what works well and what needs to be improved (Brodie, no date). This will lead to more effective teaching and caregiving. Reflective practice helps practitioners better understand individual children's needs, interests, and development, allowing them to work in a child centred approach.
The theory of reflective practise- York St John University (no date) suggests that by thinking reflectively, it allows to make connections between practice and theory. For Dewey, reflection is a deliberate, active, and careful process of thinking through experiences. Brock (2015) states that Dewey acknowledged reflection as an added dimension to a person's thinking. Not only is it important to learn how to think effectively, but also to develop the habit of doing reflection and understanding the reason for it. Dewey (1933) states that engaged, ongoing, and thoughtful attention of any belief or supposed knowledge, given the evidence and how that can support future decisions. He identified two types of actions which he classified as routine and reflective. Dewey acknowledged the importance of the difference between routine meaning doing something without thinking, and reflective practice which is thinking about why the action is being done.	
Driscoll's model- Driscoll's 'what model' looks at what? So what? Now what? A simple model developed in the mid 1990's that looks at what happened, setting out the experience and providing context. It is sectioned into seven It then looks at the experience to think what was learnt from it. Given the simplicity of the model, it is easily understood and applied to experiences, however, being such a simple model, it may not provide enough depth for complex reflection. The University of Edinburgh (2015) state in this stage the question should explore what knowledge the practitioner and others had in the situation, as well as what knowledge or theories could assist in understanding the situation better. The final stage is to decide what can be done in future as a result of the experience. Will a different approach be taken, what can be done to improve on future practice. Organisations may be more inclined to use a shorter reflection model as Early Years TV (no date) recognises that Early Years professionals often struggle to find time for reflection.	 Source: https://www.assignmentdesk.co.uk/blog/driscoll-reflective-model  Source: https://helendenheld.com/tag/gibbs-reflective-learning-cycle/ Gibb's model- University of Cambridge (no date) describe Gibb's reflective cycle as more complex than other models. It contains six stages consisting of, description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, action plan. Unlike other models, Gibbs encourages to look at emotions, during and after the event. University of Cumbria (2020) note that Gibbs' model was designed as a continuous cycle of improvement for a repeated experience. However, it can also be used for stand-alone experiences. Firstly, the situation will be analysed, then feelings will be taken into consideration, how a person was feeling, what was being felt at the time, how were others feeling. Then it is to be assessed what went well and what did not go well. The next part is analysing the situation in more detail. This is where practitioners can look at theory and their knowledge and try to make sense of why something happened and what could be done differently. The conclusion phase involves summarising what was learnt from the experience. Thinking about what could be done differently next time based on the reflections. It is an opportunity to identify alternative strategies or approaches for handling similar situations in the future. The final stage focuses on planning for future situations. Based on the conclusions that have been drawn, create a plan to improve for future situations. As Gibb's model considers feelings, this could be favoured more in the early years professions as it is a person-centred job and often are dealing with more complex situations.
Analysis of the two models - While Gibbs' model offers more depth and emotional insight, Driscoll's model is more concise and action oriented and although Gibb's model is seen as more complex than others, University of Hull (2024) draw attention to the fact that it can be argued that this model could still provide a shallow reflection as it does not involve critical thinking or analysis. Both support continuous improvement, but practitioners may choose between them based on the complexity of the situation and the level of reflection needed. In early years settings, both models promote better understanding of practice and support children's development through improved professional awareness. Both models will allow individuals to think deeply about the significance of their experiences and the broader implications and both models are adaptable and are able to be used in different scenarios. On comparison of the models, Gibb's is based on an earlier theoretical model; David Kolb's 4 stage experiential learning cycle (1984) (Lia,2016), whilst Driscoll's model does not reference theories of learning or development.	

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Section 3

Perez (2019) holds the view that all professions possess their own set of specialised skills, knowledge that help people know what they need to do and how to do it the right way. Gasper (2015) acknowledges that this is the case in most situations, however in the early years education there is a stronger focus on the personal qualities people show in their work, whether they have formal training or not. Miller (2008) recognises that professional practice within the early years setting is complex and has diverse responsibilities. She notes some to be leadership, organisation, strong professional knowledge, effective communication, support for others, accountability, and being consistently present and approachable.

Johansson and Einarsdottir (2018) describe values as fundamental beliefs that influence how people behave and decide whether actions are appropriate or acceptable. The British Association of Early Childhood Education (2011) state that values are qualities and principles that people consider valuable or important and hold in high regard for themselves. Values are important within the Early Years as practitioners highly influence the children they work with and will impart their values onto the children as Theobald (2019) acknowledges they are extremely sensitive to their surroundings. Carr, Kendal, and Flynn (2015) state that children are excellent at imitation, even without knowing the reason behind why it is important. The values one demonstrates within a setting and the way one communicates will have an influence on the children in one's care (Johnston *et al.*, 2018). Powell (2010) notes some values that are needed within the early years workforce to be a genuine interest in child development, strong communication and teamwork skills, patience, professionalism, a caring and inclusive attitude, confidence, and a fun, understanding nature when working with both children and their stakeholders.

Practitioners need to have in depth knowledge of the importance of to professional practice. Welsh Government (2024) state that practitioners should have a thorough knowledge and understanding of child development and apply this within their day-to-day work. Providers must train all staff to understand the importance of safeguarding and the role and responsibilities for them to promote the welfare of children and

respond in a timely and appropriate way (Department of Education, 2024). Practitioners should be familiar with their organisations policies and procedures of safeguarding and know who their child protection officer is (Welsh Government, 2020). They need to be aware and able to identify all forms of abuse and have up to date training to safeguard effectively. Practitioners will also need knowledge of acts and legislations to support professional practice. The *children act 1989* which supersedes the *Children Act 1948*, was the first legislation that included neglect and children coming to harm. Highlighting section seventeen where local authorities are to provide services to children in need in their area, and section forty-seven that states to carry out enquiries if one believes a child has suffered or is likely to suffer substantial harm, shows essences of safeguarding and relates to the seven core aims for children and young people. Practitioners also need to be aware of services around them to recommend and point parents in the right direction of help and support they may need. According to Gingerbread, 88% of single parents are now experiencing mental health challenges linked to the rising cost of living. For children to be prepared to learn effectively, they need a stable home environment—something many are currently lacking, which negatively impacts their overall outcomes (Children’s Alliance, 2023).

Effective communication is sharing information from one person to another in such a way that it can be understood (Hayati and Rofik, 2023). They also mention that effective communication is a two- way process that requires active listening, collaboration, and respect. Welsh Government (no date) say participating and engaging in effective communication is fundamental to the work of a practitioner. Effective communication is thought to support teachers in creating strong interactions with children. When teachers understand the children, they can better support them in reaching their full potential (Nurani *et al.*, 2019). Coughlin (2023) points out the importance of communication stating the survival of humans depends on the ability to be able to communicate and be able to explain needs. She continues to explain that is why it is part of a practitioner’s role to support parents and carers to develop communication skills with their child at home. Uzun (2020) states there are four main types of communication. Non- verbal communication includes body language, facial expressions, and gestures to show how one is feeling. Practitioners should be aware of

how their body language can be portrayed by others and not to appear unapproachable (City and Guilds, 2023).

Creating relationships with the children in the setting will benefit how the children learn. Little Learners (2022) appreciate that children need to feel secure around the practitioners. Bowlby (1971) also recognised the importance of attachment and described it as the instinctive behaviour of young children that turn to familiar caregivers for comfort and reassurance when they feel scared or anxious. Freud (2022) discusses when talking about attachment figures, one should look at who is best placed and who is most important rather than who one may have an association with and think who that person might be. If the child does not feel safe and secure, they may find it more difficult to engage in activities. Settings can encourage these attachments by providing key workers to build a strong, trusting relationship. Routines, predictable environments, and familiar faces can also help children to feel secure. Department of Education (2024) states 'children learn best when they are healthy, safe, secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the people caring for them'.

Oberhuemer (2005) (cited in Dyer, 2018) argues that creating and maintaining relationships in and outside the setting is key part of professionalism for early years practitioners. Welsh Government (2024) advocate that practitioners have the responsibility to create relationships with the child's home and community.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory offers a framework for exploring and understanding the various factors that influences a child's development (Crawford, 2020). Bronfenbrenner's theory included several layers, with the innermost layer being microsystem. In this are people who interact with a person on a daily, face-to-face basis, such as family members or others living in the same household. By creating relationships and working in partnership with parents and other multi-agency workers, it allows for everyone to work in the child's best interests with having open communication and creating consistency. Strong communication and cooperation between practitioners and parents help provide consistent care and reinforce attachment. Working with parents will allow for practitioners to find out more information about the child and will help how to support them best and provide a

holistic view of the child. Mayat (2024) documents that successful early intervention strategies acknowledge the importance of providing comprehensive, holistic support to families. Armstrong, 2021; Morton & Forsey, 2013 (cited in Tongue, Qualter, Bond, 2025) declare multi-agency approaches can address the challenges children and families face through creative and meaningful ways.

Early Years Careers (no date) note that observations support to ensure all children are meeting their personal developmental goals and achieving their highest potential. Welsh Government (2024) suggest observations should happen often as they provide information on how to engage children better and allow practitioners to be able to respond in a way to better the child's progress. Little Learners (2022) advocate for in the moment planning, following the child's interest and planning a topic or an activity in that very moment which provides a learning opportunity. The planning cycle allows for practitioners to make a conscious effort to plan for the present and to keep evolving their teaching by observing, assessing then planning. Birthto5matters (no date) maintains this is part of professional practice.

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a legally binding agreement signed by one hundred and ninety-six countries that sets out the basic rights of all children, regardless of their race, faith, or abilities (UNICEF, no date). Wales were the first country in the United Kingdom to implement the principles of the UNCRC into legislation (Welsh Government, 2016). Article 3 states 'the rights of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children'. This can be seen in practice with settings creating child centred plans and working with multi-agency workers to try and work towards the child's best interests. It could be said that Maslow's hierarchy of needs can be seen within the UNCRC, ensuring that children are receiving Maslow's physiological needs such as, food, water, shelter, warmth, and sleep. However, even though experts have advocated for incorporating rights-based approaches into children's everyday experiences, Theobald (2010) states there are currently no structured framework to consistently support and incorporate young children's rights within early years education. In conclusion, early years practitioners have a complex role which include many different aspects to support a child

holistically. It requires achieving high standards, having ethical values and is important to have continuous training to keep knowledge up to date. Collaborative working with other agencies and families enhances this support, offering a more holistic approach to meeting the individual needs of the child. Additionally, the observation and planning cycle is key to create meaningful experiences, tracking progress, and ensuring every child reaches their full potential. Underpinning all of this are the principles of the UNCRC, which advocates the rights of the children. Altogether, these elements form the foundation of professional practice.

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