

The Professional Practitioner

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Contents

- Component 1 – Personal Development Plan
- Component 2 – Models of Reflection
- Component 3 - Essay

(The use of AI was not used in this assignment)

What do I know already:

- How to support children's learning and development through play and interaction
- What time management is and how it can help
- Basic Welsh words and phrases

What have I learnt so far:

- How to reflect on activities and why reflection is important
- Different methods of time management
- How to connect my sentences using conjunctions in Welsh

What do I want to develop:

- Academic writing and working towards achieving my Early Years Education and Care degree
- Using my time effectively
- Extending my Welsh vocabulary

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?)
<i>To achieve Early Years Education and Care degree</i>	I will attend lectures, practical sessions, take notes and actively participate in discussions. I will complete assignments on time and check feedback to improve my academic writing and understanding. I will also complete my placement, and hours required to gain Practitioner Status. Regular reading and organising study materials will help me to stay on track with my learning.	I will use the universities online library to help deepen my understanding and increase my knowledge, read the assessment guidance to stay on tasks, ask peers and lecturers for advice to support my learning. I will also look at feedback on assignment and take advice given on board.	End of academic year (2027)	I will know I have achieved this when I successfully pass all modules, complete placement hours and achieve my degree.
<i>Practise and enhance my time management skills</i>	I will create a realistic weekly timetable to stay on track with assignments, reading, lectures and placement hours. I will set clear deadlines and prioritise tasks using my phone calendar and diary. Updating and reviewing my schedule will help me stay organised in education and personal life. I will avoid procrastination by breaking up large tasks I find	I will use tools such as a calendar that sends me reminders, notebooks and a diary to write important dates and notes. I will also consider seeking help from the university and using their sessions to help me with specific time management issues if needed.	Ongoing, with noticeable improvement by September 2026	I know I have improved when I am able to meet deadlines without last minute stress and worry as well as maintain a good balance between studies, work and personal life.

	overwhelming and rewarding myself for staying on track.			
<i>Increase my Welsh vocabulary</i>	I will attend inset days and work towards our Welsh language target as a school. I will also seek out Welsh courses online through UWTSD. I will practise using incidental Welsh in work with colleagues and children and use it where possible to build confidence and fluency.	I will use helpful tips and a range of course materials from our inset day, make flashcards and posters as reminders around the classroom and seek support from fluent Welsh speakers like peers and tutors who are able to help.	The end of the current academic year (July 2026)	I will know I have achieved my goal when I am able to say words, sentences and converse in Welsh confidently. Feedback from Welsh speakers and wanting to progress my skills more will demonstrate success.

What is reflection and reflective practise?

Reflection is about thinking carefully about what you've done, why you done it, and how it went. Thompson (2021) explains that it helps teachers understand their work better by looking at their thoughts, actions, and decisions. It is a way to learn from experience and improve how you do things in the future. Hallet (2013) focuses on early years practice and says reflection is key to being a thoughtful and responsive practitioner. It's not just about remembering what happened, it's about asking deeper questions like "Did that work well?" or "What could I do differently next time?". Using models like Kolb and Gibbs can help to guide you, giving you steps to follow so the thinking stays focused and useful.

Both authors agree that reflective practice helps you grow professionally. It makes you more confident, helps you make better choices, and keeps your work centred on the children you support. Whether you are in a classroom or a nursery, reflection helps you stay aware, keep learning, and do your job with care and purpose (Hallet 2023).

Why is reflective practise important to EY practise?

Gaspar (2015) says, reflective practise helps professionals gain a clear understanding of the issues they face and develop ways to support others or improve situations. It also allows them to recognise their skills, abilities and resources, identifying their strengths and weaknesses and when extra guidance or support is needed. By reflecting, professionals regularly think about what they see and experience and talk about what they've learned with others. This helps them question their own ideas, look for deeper meanings and think about what has been said, not been said and consider why this may be so.

In the Early Years, by reflecting on your interactions with the children, you can gain a deeper understanding on how children learn and develop. This will allow you to plan and implement better learning experiences to tailor to each individual child that really support their development. Reflecting also helps you make smarter choices in your day-to-day practice. By looking back at what's worked and what hasn't, you can spot areas that need improving and make changes that help.

Reflective practise is integral in the early years, not only does it benefit professionals and their growth, it is also significant to young children's development and learning experiences (Toole 2023).

The theory of reflective practise:

There are many models of reflective practise, and each model of reflection is used to make links between the "doing" and the "thinking". Kolbs (1984) uses 4 stages: Concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. First, practitioners should have a real experience, like teaching a lesson. This should be used to try a range of ideas and teaching methods. Then, practitioners think about what happened, what went well and what did not. Next, practitioners need to make sense of what happened by thinking about previous experiences, existing knowledge and skills needed to develop. Finally, practitioners use what they have learned and put it into practise. The ideas become more practical as they are implemented in future lessons creating new experiences. This cycle helps us to keep improving by learning from what we do.

Gibbs reflective cycle (1988) is broken down further and based on a six-stage approach. Description – thinking about what happened. Feelings – focussing on our thoughts and feelings. Evaluation – thinking about good and bad parts of the experience. Analysis – making sense of the situation. Conclusions – draw conclusions about what we have learned and make a plan for what to do next time. Action Plan – forward thinking about a similar situation in the future and how we would approach it. (Cambridge International Education n.d).

Gibbs' model**Kolb's model****Analysis of models – compare/contrast/pros/cons:**

Both Kolb (1984) and Gibbs (1988) created reflective models that help practitioners learn from experience and improve their practise. While they are similar in being a continuous process, there are also some important differences in how they approach reflection. Kolb's model includes 4 stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. It views learning as an ongoing process where practitioners test ideas, reflect on outcomes and apply new understanding to future practise. In early years settings, this helps practitioners adapt their approach to meet children's individual needs. A strength of Kolb's model is that all 4 stages are important to effective learning and promotes authentic experiences, reflection and active experimentation. A weakness of the Kolb's model is that it suggests "learners need to experience all 4 stages of the cycle to be able to learn effectively" (Cardiff Metropolitan University Library, 2025). All children are different, and they do not all learn at the same pace. Instead, learners may skip stages, move back and forth through the stages or be at one stage for a long period of time (Cardiff Metropolitan University Library, 2025). Built on Kolb's work, the Gibbs model includes 6 stages: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan (Gibbs, 1988). It guides practitioners step-by-step, encouraging reflection on thoughts and emotions. A strength is its focus on emotions, learning by doing, repetition and be used to reflect on individual experiences and situations (York St John University, 2025). The Open University says a weakness of the Gibbs model is that "this model could still result in fairly superficial reflection as it doesn't refer to critical thinking/analysis or reflection" (Open University 2014).

Conclusion

To conclude, both Kolb's and Gibbs models provide a valuable framework that is continuously used by professionals to support reflective practise and professional development. Kolb focusses on learning as a continuous cycle of experience, reflection and experimentation. Gibbs provides a more structured, step-by-step process that helps gain a deeper understanding of emotions and outcomes. Each one has its strengths and weakness which makes them suitable for different contexts. The choice of model to use is based on the practitioners' needs and the specific learning situation.

Introduction – What is professional practise?

Professional practice means using your skills, knowledge and values to do your job well and responsibly. There are three features that characterise a profession and professional values which involves having training, following agreed standards and putting others needs ahead of your own (Perez, 2019). These things help define what it means to be professional.

Being professional is not just about qualifications, it is also about attitude. You learn how to act professionally through education and by having role models. Even though some workplaces do not support staff growth, it is up to each person to keep learning and improving (Perez, 2019)

Joining professional organisations and staying up to date with new ideas helps you to grow. When you take pride in your work and aim to do your best, it leads to better job satisfaction and better outcomes for the people you support (Perez, 2019).

Values in Professional Practise and why they are important?

Values are core beliefs and principles that guide how a person thinks, feels and behaves.

They represent what someone considers most important and should reflect our values.

Some common values for professional practitioners are working together, putting others first, empathy, transparency, being respectful, curious and promoting autonomy (Social Care Wales 2025). These values shape how practitioners build trust with families, children and colleagues.

“These values are reflected in the ‘Social services and well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The Act aims to improve the well-being of people by giving them a voice, choice and control”. (Social Care Wales 2025).

Values are important for professional practitioners because they guide decision making, relationships, and ensure care is delivered with respect, fairness, and consistency. When professionals understand and demonstrate core values, they provide safe, person-centred support regardless of background or need (Care Learning 2025).

Communication and Relationships

It is important build relationships and give parents and carers different ways of communication and to get involved in their child's learning. Practitioners should think about how to overcome barriers that may make partnership working difficult, such as, parents own

experiences of nursery and school, language, culture and different values (Department of Education, 2024). Trust plays a vital role in building strong relationships with parents in early years settings. Regular communication is key to building that foundation of trust. Regular interactions give practitioners the chance to show a warm, welcoming, and professional attitude, which helps build initial trust with parents and puts them at ease. This foundation is especially valuable when sensitive subjects like a child's behaviour or development need to be addressed, as it encourages open and honest conversations (Harman, 2025).

Ways to encourage parents may include:

- Actively listen and pay close attention to others.
- Be aware of how your words and body language affect people.
- Show understanding and compassion.
- Avoid making judgments about others.
- Be mindful of others' emotions and states of mind.
- Tailor your communication style to suit the person and situation.
- Communicate sincerely and authentically.
- Take a genuine interest in others.
- Respect confidentiality and privacy.
- Maintain a warm and approachable demeanour.
- Uphold professionalism in all interactions.
- Treat everyone with respect.
- Refrain from making assumptions based on age, gender, ethnicity, etc.
- Allow others to speak and take turns in conversation.
- Value and honour others' beliefs, customs, and viewpoints.
- Be truthful and transparent.
- Be sensitive to cultural and language differences, such as when English or Welsh isn't someone's first language (WJEC, 2018).

How knowledge and understanding is important to safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone's business. When there are concerns about abuse or neglect, they must be dealt with promptly, effectively and in proportion to the level of risk. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 explains clearly that the child, young person or adult must be at the centre of any safeguarding response. Practitioners should ensure that

their voice is heard as it is a fundamental right and a vital part of safeguarding practice. This can only be achieved when professionals understand their safeguarding duties and provide tailored support that enables the individual to actively participate and express their views (Social Care Wales, 2023). As well as this, practitioners should also be familiar with the Safeguarding Policy for their place of work which is sometimes called 'Child Protection Policy' and should know of who the Designated Safeguarding Officers are (Welsh Government, 2020).

Practitioners should also understand the importance of legislation to ensure they can act lawfully and ethically in their roles. This includes the Children Act 1989, the Equality Act 2010 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Welsh Government, 2020).

Partner and Multi-Agency Working

Partner and multi-agency working is important to professional practise as it is a chance for professionals, organisations and services to work together to support families, children and young people (Welsh Government, 2022). Working together improves outcomes by encouraging shared problem solving and collaboration so that professionals can fully understand any risks a child may be exposed to and take appropriate action to keep children safe (NSPCC, 2023).

There are many organisations that can come in to contact with children for a lot of different reasons. Key partners include, but are not limited to: Police, Social Services, Behaviour Support, ALNCO, Speech and Language Therapist, GP and many more (Welsh Government, 2022). The NSPCC says, "Everyone who works with children has a responsibility to share any information that has a bearing on a child's welfare as early as possible" (NSPCC, 2023). It is also important to follow your organisations child protection policies and procedures which will help you understand how and who to share information with. The Data Protection Act 2018 provides a legal framework for handling personal data, ensuring that professionals share information lawfully, fairly and transparently.

Observation and Planning

Observing children during activities means professionals can assess progress, interests and skills. These observations help shape future planning and highlight strengths or areas needing support, including identifying special educational needs.

Not all observations are planned, and most observations happen naturally during play, indoors or outdoors. Observation is vital to: get to know the individual and their strengths, weaknesses, interests and needs, plan for progression, highlight development across all areas of learning, provide evidence for those who may be on the continuum of special educational needs (SEN Code of Practice for Wales), produce next steps and building a report that can be shared with parents and carers.

Using observations, practitioners plan activities and environments to extend children's learning and development. Planning is flexible and is based on what the child is ready for next instead of following a structure. This reflects the Curriculum for Wales Areas of Learning and Experience (AOLE's) where progression is supported through meaningful experiences. Planning also ensures inclusion and differentiation giving every child access to learning that meets their individual needs.

The planning observation cycle ensures that professional practice is child centred, reflective and evidence based, aligned with the CfW and working towards the 4 purposes and it is inclusive and supportive (Welsh Government, 2022).

UNCRC Principles in Practise

"The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an important, legally binding agreement signed by 196 countries (as of 12 July 2022) which outlines the fundamental rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities" (UNICEF UK, 2025). The convention on the Rights of the Child has 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child's life and came into force in the UK in 1992. It sets out key rights like civil, political, economic, social and cultural that apply to all children, and every child has the right to claim them.

There are 4 articles in the Convention which are considered 'special' and they are known as the General Principles. These 4 General Principles help to interpret all other articles. They are, Non-Discrimination (Article 1), Best interest of the child (Article 3), Right to life survival and development (Article 6) and right to be heard (Article 12). Children should enjoy their rights, to do this, adults and governments must work together. All the rights in the Convention are connected and equally important (UNICEF UK, 2022).

Every child has the right to:

- Play and relax (Article 31)
- Express themselves freely (Article 13)
- Be protected from violence (Article 19)
- Get an education (Article 28)
- Have their identity respected (Article 8)
- Live in safe and healthy conditions (Article 27)
- Learn about their rights (Article 42)
- Access healthcare (Article 24) (UNICEF UK, 2022).

Conclusion – Summary

In conclusion, this essay has explored the importance of professional practice in supporting the individual needs of children. It has highlighted how core values such as empathy, respect and transparency help develop meaningful relationships with children and families. These relationships are strengthened with effective communication allowing you to build trust and encourages parents to be involved in the child's learning. Knowledge of safeguarding ensures practitioners can appropriately attend to concerns and place the child at the centre of all decisions. Partner and multi-agency working supports collaboration to work closely with children, young people and families to improve outcomes for all children and take appropriate action to keep them safe. Observation and planning further supports inclusion by tailoring each child's learning and development to their individual needs ensuring progression and differentiation in all learning. This aligns with the Curriculum for Wales and reflects the principles of the UNCRC giving every child the right regardless of their race, religion and ability.

Professional practice is the foundation of inclusive education. By recognising and refining these aspects, professionals can create an environment where every child feels valued, supported and given the opportunity to thrive.

Word count – 3,131

The use of AI was not used in this assignment.

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