

Part 1-

Specific	• what do I want to accomplish? • Why do want to accomplish this? • What are the requirements?	I would like to develop my skills and knowledge as an early years professional practioner by improving my communication, planning and ability to meet the needs of every child. The reason I want to accomplish this is because it will help improve my professional skills and will help me support a child's learning. In order to accomplish this I need to have a good understanding of a child's development, I will need to complete accurate observations and planning to suit the child's development and ways to improve it.
Measurable	• How will I measure my progress? • How will I know the goal is accomplished?	I will measure my progress by completing weekly reviews of my observations and planning, ask my manager and other staff members for feedback on how I'm doing or if there's anything I can do better. In order to know the goal is accomplished I will be able to able to demonstrate to new staff members who join how to meet children's needs and how to support their learning, development and wellbeing.

Achievable	• How can the goal be accomplished? • What are the logical steps I should take?	I will achieve this goal of mine by attending training that is relevant to what I would like to achieve. I will ask my manager or members of staff for feedback, I will also review my progress regularly to make sure I am developing my skills and knowledge of being a professional practitioner.
Relevant	• Is this a worthwhile goal? • Is this the right time? • Is this goal in line with my long-term objectives?	This is a worthwhile goal of mine as it will help me improve my knowledge and confidence as a professional practitioner. It will help me provide the high quality care and support a child requires. This is the perfect time for me as I want to continue developing my professional skills so I can improve my practice and meet the needs of the children in my care. This goal will support my long-term objective as it will help me become more confident in being professional in other workplaces if I would like to move on in jobs.
Time- bound	• How long will it take to accomplish this goal? • When am I going to work on this goal?	I aim to achieve this goal of mine in 3 months as it gives me enough time to develop my skills, develop more knowledge and time to reflect on improvements that can be made. I will work on this goal every week by reflecting on improvements that need to be improved and keep asking for feedback from my manager on what I have improved on and what I need to improve on. I will keep reviewing my

		progress every end of the month and keep notes on how well it's going.
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Part 2-

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION

WHAT IS REFLECTIVE PRACTICE?

Reflective practice is the disciplined, ongoing process of thinking about experience, examining the choices behind it, and using what is learned to improve future action. In early years education, practitioners reflect on relationships, environments, play, routines, observations and decisions so that practice remains intentional rather than automatic. Reflection is not simply remembering what happened; it asks what children communicated, whose perspective was heard, what assumptions shaped the response, and what evidence should guide the next step.

WHY, INCLUSION AND PURPOSE

WHY IT MATTERS

Young children learn through relationships, play, language, movement and repeated experiences. Reflection helps adults notice the meaning in these experiences rather than judging behaviour too quickly. It supports responsive interactions, purposeful environments and planning that follows children's interests, strengths and working theories.

REFLECTION AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Reflection may be a single event after an event. Reflective practice is broader: it is a habit, shared process and ethical commitment that connects observation, interpretation, action and review. It draws on evidence such as learning stories, conversations, family knowledge, team dialogue and children's responses. It should lead to a small, testable change—not only a private opinion.

BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN AND INCLUSION

A reflective team asks whose voices are visible and whose are missing. Practitioners can examine whether routines, resources, language or opportunities advantage some children over others. Reflection can prompt accessible materials, quieter spaces, visual supports, culturally sustaining leads, flexible participation and communication with families. It helps adults recognise equality, challenge deficit assumptions and adult support while protecting each child's dignity.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Ask: What did the child communicate through words, action or silence? What did the adult notice first, and what might have been overlooked? Which environmental factors might participate? What evidence supports the interpretation? How will the child and family know that the change helped? Writing brief answers makes reflection concrete and creates a record for future planning.

Reflection is strongest when it is regular, specific and connected to action. A short team conversation after a routine can be more useful than a long form completed weeks later.

MODELS FOR LEARNING

SHÖN'S REFLECTIVE CYCLE

Shön describes reflection through his linked questions: description—what happened, feelings—what were people thinking and feeling, evaluation—what was helpful or difficult, analysis—what sense can be made using knowledge and evidence, conclusion—what else could have been done, and action plan—what will change next time? The cycle is useful after a challenging interaction because it slows judgement and makes next steps visible.

KOLB'S EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

Kolb describes learning as a movement between concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. An educator might observe a child repeatedly avoiding a group experience, review what happened, correct the pattern to allow about belonging and sensory load, then trial a creative group with a predictable entry routine. The next observation tests and refines the idea.

SCHÖN IN PRACTICE

Schön distinguishes reflection-in-action from reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action is the quick professional judgement made while an event unfolds: changing tone, pausing a question or rearranging a space in response to a child's cues. Reflection-on-action happens afterwards, when the practitioner recalls decisions and considers alternatives. Both forms rely on attentiveness, experience and willingness to revise practice.

COMBINING THE MODELS

The cycles overlap rather than compete. A practitioner may use Schön in the moment to adjust an interaction. Only afterwards to examine the event in detail, and Kolb to test a revised approach over time. The purpose is not to complete every stage mechanically. The purpose is to notice, interpret, decide, act and check again. Different situations call for different depths of reflection: a quick adjustment during play, a team review after an incident, or a sustained inquiry into curriculum and inclusion.

APPLICATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

SAFEGUARDING, LEARNING AND TEAMWORK

Reflection strengthens safeguarding when it is grounded in policy, accurate records and consultation. Teams can ask whether a concern was noticed, documented and escalated appropriately, while avoiding speculation or blame. Reflection never replaces mandatory reporting, supervisor or professional advice. It also supports professional learning: colleagues can share dilemmas, compare interpretations, identify learning needs and build a culture where questions are safer than silence.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

After a conflict over a popular resource, an educator records the context, listens to the children, reviews the room layout and introduces duplicate materials as a turn-taking tool. When a child rarely joins outdoor play, the team observes time, noise, weather, peers and adult invitations before changing the environment. Following a family conversation, practitioners check whether their communication is accessible and whether home knowledge is shaping planning. These examples turn reflection into observable action and review.

LIMITATIONS AND RESPONSIBLE USE

Models are prompts, not recipes. A neat sequence can oversimplify complex events, encourage thoughtless tick or make reflection feel like paperwork. Personal reflection can also reproduce assumptions if it is not rooted against children's voices, family perspectives, colleagues, evidence and research theory. Use models flexibly, protect confidentiality, separate fact from interpretation, and allow time for emotion. Reflective practice should be curious and accountable, never a substitute for safeguarding procedures or evidence-informed decision-making.

CONCLUSION

Reflective practice keeps early years education responsive, inclusive and purposeful. By noticing, questioning, learning and trying again, professionals improve everyday experiences while safeguarding children, families and one another. Good reflection combines humility with responsibility. It makes visible what is often invisible, names experiences, makes harder responses visible and records decisions clearly. It does not promise to remove all challenges and always improve on the next occasion. When reflection shows a concern, the next step is consultation and action—not waiting for the perfect next occasion.

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Part 3-**Introduction**

Professional practice is very important in early years settings because it helps practitioners provide safe, supportive and inclusive care for every child. Every child is different and has their own needs, interests, abilities and background. Practitioners must understand these differences and make sure all children have opportunities to learn, play and develop. The Welsh Government's National Minimum Standards explain that childcare settings must meet children's individual needs, support their well-being and provide equal opportunities (Welsh Government, 2026). This assignment will discuss professional values, communication, multi-agency working, observations, planning and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Professional Values

Professional values are the beliefs and standards that guide how practitioners behave at work. These include respect, patience, honesty, fairness, confidentiality and treating every child equally. Practitioners should respect children and their families, regardless of their culture, language, religion, disability or family circumstances.

The Education Workforce Council (EWC, 2025) explains that education professionals should take responsibility for their actions, act with integrity, work with others and continue learning. These values help practitioners make suitable decisions and maintain professional standards.

For example, if a child is finding it difficult to join in with an activity, a practitioner should be patient and encourage them rather than make them feel embarrassed. This supports the child's confidence and emotional well-being. Professional values also mean following safeguarding procedures and sharing concerns with the appropriate person when a child may be at risk. The Welsh Government (2026) identifies safeguarding as an important standard for regulated childcare.

Professional values are important because children need to feel safe, respected and accepted. However, practitioners must do more than simply treat every child in exactly the same way. Some children may need additional support to have the same opportunities as others. This is why fairness and inclusion are important parts of professional practice.

Communication

Good communication is essential in early years settings because it helps practitioners understand children's needs and build positive relationships with families and colleagues. Communication can include speaking, listening, using facial expressions, observing body language, sharing written information and using pictures or visual aids.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to express their views on matters that affect them (United Nations, 1989, Article 12). Practitioners should therefore listen to children and consider their wishes when making decisions that affect their daily experiences.

Communication with parents and carers is equally important. Families know their children well and can share information about their routines, interests, culture, health and development. The Welsh Government (2026) highlights the importance of working in partnership with parents. For example, a parent might explain that their child has difficulty settling in the morning. The practitioner and parent can discuss ways to make drop-off more comfortable.

Multi-Agency Working

Multi-agency working means different professionals working together to meet a child's needs. These professionals may include nursery practitioners, health visitors, speech and language therapists, doctors, social workers, educational psychologists and additional learning needs (ALN) specialists.

Some children may need support from more than one professional. For example, a child who has difficulty communicating may benefit from support from a speech and language therapist. The therapist may suggest activities that practitioners can use during play to encourage the child's communication skills.

The Welsh Government's Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales promotes person-centred practice, which means placing the child and their needs at the centre of decisions (Welsh Government, 2021). Working together can help professionals and families share relevant knowledge and agree on suitable support.

Multi-agency working can help identify needs earlier and make sure that support is consistent. However, it requires good communication, clear responsibilities and appropriate information sharing. Practitioners should follow safeguarding and data protection procedures and only share information when there is a proper reason to do so (Welsh Government, 2019).

If professionals do not communicate effectively, a child's needs may be missed or support may be delayed. Therefore, working together is important for promoting children's safety, development and well-being.

Observations

Observations involve watching, listening to and recording information about children's learning, behaviour, interests and development. They help practitioners understand what children can do, what they enjoy and whether they may need extra support.

For example, a practitioner may observe a child playing with building blocks. The child may be able to build a tall tower but find it difficult to share the blocks with other children. This observation can help the practitioner recognise the child's physical skills and identify an opportunity to support turn-taking and social development.

Observations are important because they help practitioners recognise children's progress and identify possible concerns. The Welsh Government's National Minimum Standards include assessment and meeting individual needs as important parts of childcare practice (Welsh Government, 2026).

However, one observation may not give a complete picture of a child. A child may behave differently depending on their mood, surroundings or who they are playing with. Practitioners should therefore gather information over time and discuss concerns with colleagues and families when appropriate.

Planning

Planning means preparing activities and experiences that support children's learning, development and well-being. Effective planning should be based on children's ages, abilities, interests, observations and individual needs.

For example, if several children show an interest in animals, a practitioner could plan a story, animal matching game or creative activity. This can support language, communication, problem-solving and physical development. If a child has additional learning needs, the activity may need to be adapted by using visual prompts, larger resources or extra time.

The Curriculum for Wales promotes learning that supports children's development and helps them build knowledge and skills (Welsh Government, 2022). The National Minimum Standards also highlight opportunities for play and learning, equal opportunities and meeting individual needs (Welsh Government, 2026).

Planning should be flexible because children may develop new interests or need different levels of support. Practitioners should review activities to see whether children are benefiting from them. If an activity is too difficult, it may need to be simplified. If children complete it easily, it could be made more challenging.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The UNCRC is an international agreement that sets out the rights of children. It is important in early years practice because it reminds practitioners that children should be safe, respected, listened to and given opportunities to develop.

Article 2 states that children should not experience discrimination. This means practitioners should make sure all children are welcomed and included, regardless of their background or ability (United Nations, 1989, Article 2).

These rights are important because they encourage practitioners to put children at the centre of their practice. They support inclusion, respect and participation and remind practitioners that every child deserves opportunities to learn and develop.

Inclusion and Meeting Individual Needs

Inclusion means making sure every child can take part in activities and feels that they belong. Practitioners should recognise that children have different abilities,

needs, interests, cultures, languages and experiences. They should remove barriers that may prevent children from participating.

For example, a child with a physical disability may need accessible equipment, while a child who speaks a different home language may benefit from pictures, gestures and familiar words. A child who finds noisy environments difficult may need a quieter area to help them feel comfortable.

The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales encourages person-centred practice and involving children and their families in decisions about support (Welsh Government, 2021). This helps practitioners understand what support is suitable for each child rather than making assumptions about what they need.

Inclusive practice also means challenging unfair treatment and using resources that reflect different cultures, families and abilities. The UNCRC supports children's rights to non-discrimination and participation (United Nations, 1989, Articles 2 and 12).

Inclusion benefits all children because it encourages kindness, understanding and respect for differences. Practitioners should regularly reflect on their practice to identify barriers and consider how activities or the environment could be improved.

Conclusion

In conclusion, professional practice is essential for meeting the individual and inclusive needs of children in early years settings. Professional values help practitioners behave responsibly, while effective communication builds positive relationships with children and families. Multi-agency working supports children who need help from different professionals. Observations help practitioners understand children's development, and planning provides suitable learning experiences. The UNCRC reminds practitioners to respect children's rights, listen to their views and treat them fairly. By following professional guidance and continually reviewing their practice, practitioners can help every child feel safe, included and supported to reach their potential.

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