

Part 3 -

In this section, it will be discussed what observations are, how important they are, and what the benefits are with different observation tools and how that observation tool can give an insight into a child's holistic development.

According to Scottish Social Services (no date) observations is about paying attention and looking at the child's gestures, actions, behavior, expressions and listening to their interactions and gestures. They state that observation is in place to listen to the children to discover what the child likes, what they dislike, how they develop, and what they are learning through what the enabling adult puts out for activities and experiences. Birth to 5 matters (2021) states that observations are crucial in early years in order for children to keep developing, and to extend their learning. Birth to 5 matters (2021) believes that good observations start with a positive relationship with the child. Observations should always include the child, parents/carers, and any other professional in the child's life. The Welsh Government (2022) states that the purpose of observations and assessments in the curriculum is to support and ensure that all children learn, develop, and progress to the best of their ability. The Welsh Government (2022) believes that it should initiate to develop a holistic picture of the child, show what their strengths are.

An observation tool which is used commonly in the Early Years foundation is Time tracker. According to Brodie (2017), time tracker observations are where practitioners make observations within every five minutes over a period of an hour. Brodie (2017) continues and explains that time tracker observations should be brief and when the child is engaged in an activity. Brodie (2017) believes that this type of observation tool is beneficial in recording how the child plays, what their likes and dislikes are, how the areas of play are helping them develop. According to Surrey County Council (2025), time tracker observations capture the movement of the child and how long they stay in each area of learning. To build on what Brodie (2017) discussed, Surrey County Council (2025) believes that this type of observation is important as it helps identify the child's needs, interests, and dislikes. They explain how to use the observation tool and how having a floor plan for the indoors and outdoors can be beneficial to identify where the child goes the most in that time frame. Surrey County Council (2025) explains that the

practitioner only observes the child for no more than an hour and takes notes where the child likes to go and how long they stay there for. Furthermore, Gowrie New South Wales (2023) believes that time tracker records also can help to record a pattern of the child's behavior. They believe that this observation tool is an effective way of finding out how children engage with other children, objects, and play areas. The Hawthorne effect can be brought into time tracking and could be one of the limitations. According to Nikolopoulou (2022), the Hawthorne effect is where a child tends to behave differently when they are aware they are being watched/observed. It can affect the time tracking tool as the child could begin to act differently, as they are aware of the practitioner observing them. It can affect the observation on the child, and you will not get the information needed out of it.

According to Is it time to play (2022) there are many benefits of time tracking. They state that it helps and ensures that children are moving through the developmental stages of the curriculum; it takes the pressure off practitioners to remember information about each child. Is it time to play (2022) believes that it helps identify how the child is developing in their key milestones. Spreeuwenberg (2022) believes that Time tracking can help identify additional needs, as it can help identify the triggers for the child's dysregulation which could show in the child's behavior in play, it can also identify how a child regulates, tracks their progress and helps puts plans in place to help and support. According to Birth to 5 matters (2009), time tracking can contribute to the child's holistic development and understanding which would be the child's physical, social and emotional, cognitive and communication skills. Brodie (2018) believes that the holistic development of the child can help show patterns in the child's development. This is where time tracking can help and show different patterns that are emerging.

Part 4 -

Lastly, it will be discussed how observing and assessing children are a vital part of a child's play and how it can give an insight into the child's learning and development. How adults have a vital role in supporting the child in an enabling environment.

According to Pedagogy Hub (2020), when a practitioner/educator is observing and assessing children, it is important for them to have the chance to be able to observe

them through play. Pedagogy Hub (2020) states that observing and assessing a child through play gains knowledge of what the child can do, gains knowledge of their likes and dislikes, and understands where they are at their level of development.

To build on this, Smidt (2015) states that practitioners have a duty to ensure that children are developing and making progress on their educational journey. According to Smidt (2015), observing and assessing a child through play is vital in the early years as it shows more of an accurate reflection of the child and their true capabilities.

Furthermore, Smidt (2015) believes that Vygotsky's theory links with observations as he was interested in analyzing and observing how children make progress. He believed that observing them through play shows a child fully engaged; it gives a full insight of what the child can do.

Azilo (2020) states that observations give an important insight on where the children are in their development and how adults can help develop them further. Azilo (2020) believes that observations are a long-term process, where you begin to see positive results over time with the practitioner showing consistency towards the children.

Consistency is to ensure that the practitioners are meeting the child's expected stage of development. According to EYWorks (2023) observing children in play shows where they are in their development and what can be worked on. For example, it can be shown that a child is thriving in one area such as problem solving, but when it comes to observing them in another area such as literacy, they struggle with letters. Therefore, it is important for the practitioner to notice these things and give the child opportunities to develop further in the area. EYWorks (2023) believes that observations build strong relationships with children and their families, creating that bond and supporting the inclusive learning environment where the child can thrive.

Birth to 5 matters (no date) believes that adults can support children's play by developing a trusting relationship with the children. This entails the adult being knowledgeable and knowing when to stand back and observe and knowing when to step in and communicate and interact with the child. Birth to 5 matters (no date) states that a knowledgeable adult can support a child's learning and development more effectively than any resources. Edt (2019) states that when an adult knows the child

well, and becomes aware of their likes and dislikes, it builds a positive relationship between one another. The adult will begin to see an improvement in the child's social, physical, emotional, and social skills. Edt (2019) believes that adults need to ensure that opportunities are given for child-initiated and adult-led play. This shows the knowledge of the adult and how to be aware of the enabling environment. The two support the child's development and build the child's confidence in the different areas of learning and in life.

Howard and McInnes (2013) state that children being able to play contribute positively to their well-being and happiness. They believe that an adult's professional development is vital as they must focus on their own understanding and knowledge of play to ensure the adult can recognize how well the learning through play helps the child's development. According to Howard and McInnes (2013) research has found that some practitioners find it difficult to know what they should be doing when children are playing, often taking that step back and supervising or taking the lead and using open rather than closed questions, this allows the children to lead or start up activities with others and make their choice whether they would like to participate in the activity or take a step back. Howard and McInnes (2013) believe that adults see more of a child's development when children feel like they have taken charge of their play. They argue that play shows an important statement when an adult is observing and assessing a child's development and learning. Lastly, Howard and McInnes (2013) emphasise that the role of the adult is important when a child plays, explaining that adults need to ensure that the play is child-led to be able to see the progress in the child's developmental milestones.