



The Professional Practitioner (ECEY4009/C)

Part 1 Reflective personal development plan (PDP)

Part 2 Briefing Paper

Part 3 Writing Piece

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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 I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Part 1

Personal Development Plan

The thinking, knowledge, skills and behaviours that I will change and develop in order to achieve my vision and goals, adhere to my values and become as resilient as possible

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?	Achievements (3 monthly review)
1	Strengthen my reflective practice, academic writing, and time management skills to succeed in my Early Years Education course.	I meet all deadlines, produce well-structured assignments, and demonstrate improved use of reflective models. Tutor feedback shows progress in academic writing and self-reflection.	- Attend university workshops on academic skills and reflection. - Read key module texts (e.g., Lindon & Trodd, Hallet). - Use a weekly planner for tasks and deadlines. - Apply Gibbs' and Kolb's reflective models when reviewing feedback.	Sept–Dec 2025	Improved academic confidence, stronger reflection, and effective workload management.	(To be completed later)
2	Develop my communication, confidence, and teamwork skills for	I actively contribute to group discussions and tasks. Peer and tutor feedback reflects	- Participate in seminars and group projects. - Observe communication styles	Oct 2025–Jan 2026	Improved interpersonal skills and readiness for	(To be completed later)

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?	Achievements (3 monthly review)
	collaborative Early Years practice.	confidence and professionalism.	in Early Years settings and volunteering settings. • Seek feedback and reflect on performance. • Practice clear, professional communication in written and verbal tasks.		professional teamwork.	
3	Build confidence using digital tools (Moodle, Turnitin, MS Word, referencing tools) to complete coursework effectively.	I can independently upload assignments, format documents correctly, and reference sources using Harvard style.	• Practice uploading draft work on Moodle. • Use referencing generators responsibly and double-check accuracy. • Ask for IT support when needed.	Sept–Nov 2025	Greater independence and confidence in completing and submitting digital coursework.	(To be completed later)

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?	Achievements (3 monthly review)
4	Improve understanding of professional values and ethics in Early Years practice.	My written and verbal work shows understanding of professional conduct, inclusion, and safeguarding principles.	- Engage with readings on professionalism (McMahon & Dyer, 2018; Lindon & Trodd, 2016). - Reflect on values through case studies and class discussions. - Relate theories to practice observed during volunteering	Oct–Dec 2025	Stronger foundation in Early Years ethics and reflective professionalism.	(To be completed later)
5	Develop resilience and adaptability in managing study alongside family commitments.	I maintain consistent study habits, meet deadlines, and balance personal and volunteer responsibilities effectively.	- Create realistic weekly schedules. - Use family support during intensive study periods. - Practice stress-management techniques (breaks, mindfulness). - Reflect on challenges faced balancing	Ongoing 2025–2026	Improved personal resilience, motivation, and balance between home, study, and volunteering.	(To be completed later)

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?	Achievements (3 monthly review)
			coursework and school volunteering.			
6	Enhance observation and reflective recording skills to prepare for Early Years placements.	I can complete observations accurately and reflectively, linking findings to theory and child development frameworks.	• Practice observations using case studies. • Review examples of professional observation notes. • Apply reflective models (Gibbs, Driscoll) when writing reflections. • Seek tutor feedback on observation exercises.	Jan–Apr 2026	Stronger preparation for future placement and improved analytical skills.	(To be completed later)
7	Explore career pathways and professional development opportunities within Early Years education.	I can identify potential career routes and skills needed for each. I feel more confident about my professional direction.	• Research Early Years roles and professional standards. • Update CV and LinkedIn profile to include volunteering experience. • Reflect on long-term goals in PDP review.	Feb–June 2026	Clearer career direction and readiness for professional progression.	(To be completed later)

References

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Welsh Government (2017) *Early Years Workforce Plan*. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

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Johansson, E. and Einarsdottir, J. (2018) *Values in Early Childhood Education*. Oxon: Routledge.

United Nations (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Geneva: United Nations.

University of Wales Trinity Saint David (2025) Personal Development Plan (PDP) Template

Part 2

Briefing Paper: The Importance of Reflective Practice in Early Years Education

What is Reflection and Reflective Practice?

Reflection is the process of thinking critically about one's actions to improve future practice. Dewey (1933) viewed reflection as “active, persistent and careful consideration,” while Schön (1983) developed it into *reflective practice*, distinguishing between “reflection-in-action” (thinking while doing) and “reflection-on-action” (thinking afterwards).

In Early Years (EY) settings, reflection enables practitioners to connect theory to practice and respond to individual needs. Lindon and Trodd (2016) highlight that reflection transforms daily experiences into learning, while McMahon and Dyer (2018) stress that it improves the quality of provision and professional growth.

Why Reflective Practice is Important in Early Years Education

Reflective practice underpins professional standards and continuous improvement. Hallet (2013) notes that it allows practitioners to question their approaches, address bias, and adapt to diverse learner needs. The Welsh Government (2017) identifies reflection as essential for quality, accountability, and ethical practice. Reflection also supports emotional resilience, helping practitioners process challenges and recognise progress (Lindon and Trodd, 2016).

Theoretical Background

Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983) form the foundation of reflective theory, viewing learning as an ongoing process of experience and evaluation. Their ideas inform models widely used in EY practice those by Gibbs (1988), Kolb (1984), and Driscoll (1994) which guide structured reflection.

Comparing Reflective Models

Gibbs' Cycle (1988) uses six stages description, to action plan, to analyse experience and emotion. It encourages deep reflection but can be repetitive (McMahon and Dyer, 2018).

Kolb's Cycle (1984) focuses on experiential learning, moving from experience to reflection, theory, and application. It links learning with practice but gives limited attention to emotions.

Driscoll's Model (1994) simplifies reflection into *What? So What? Now What?* —ideal for quick, action-based reflection though less detailed (Hallet, 2013).

Application and Comparison

Each model supports reflective thinking in different ways. Gibbs' model offers depth, Kolb's connects reflection with professional development, and Driscoll's suits fast-paced decision-making. McMahon and Dyer (2018) suggest using models flexibly according to context. Reflection guided by these models aligns with the Welsh Government (2017) focus on self-evaluation, inclusivity, and child-centred practice.

Conclusion

Reflective practice is central to professionalism in Early Years education. Grounded in the theories of Dewey and Schön, it enables practitioners to evaluate their work, strengthen values, and improve outcomes for children. Using models such as Gibbs, Kolb, or Driscoll helps structure this process, supporting continuous learning, ethical awareness, and responsive, high-quality provision.

References

- Dewey, J. (1933) *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process*. Boston: D.C. Heath.
- Schon, D.A. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*. Oxford: Oxford Polytechnic.
- Kolb, D.A. (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Driscoll, J. (1994) 'Reflective practice for practice', *Senior Nurse*, 14(1), pp. 47–50.
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Part 3

Recognizing and Analyzing the Significance of Different Aspects of Professional Practice in Meeting the Individual and Inclusive Needs of Children

Introduction

Professional practice within Early Years education refers to the knowledge, values, and behaviours that enable practitioners to provide high-quality care and learning experiences for young children. It encompasses professional ethics, reflective thinking, communication, safeguarding, and collaboration. A professional is not only someone qualified through education or training but also one who upholds ethical standards, acts with integrity, and continuously develops their practice (Perez, 2019). In the Early Years context, professionalism involves applying theory to practice, respecting children's rights, and fostering inclusive environments that support every child's development. This essay explores key aspects of professional practice are values, communication, safeguarding, multi-agency work, observation and planning, and adherence to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) and analyses their importance in meeting the individual and inclusive needs of children.

Professional Values in Early Years Practice

Professional values form the foundation of effective practice. They include respect, empathy, equality, integrity, and commitment to continuous improvement (McMahon and Dyer, 2018). Upholding these values ensures that practitioners treat all children fairly, promote inclusion, and foster environments that respect diversity. Johansson and Einarsdottir (2018) emphasise that professional values guide decision-making, particularly when working with children from different cultural or social backgrounds. Practitioners who act with ethical awareness can identify and challenge bias, ensuring that no child is disadvantaged.

The Welsh Government's *Early Years Workforce Plan* (2017) highlights professionalism as an essential quality within the Early Years sector. It links values directly to the standards expected of practitioners, namely safeguarding, respect for children's rights, and collaboration. McGillivray (2008) argues that professional identity in Early Years work is built not only on qualifications but also on reflective engagement with values and ethics. Thus, a strong professional identity requires practitioners to act responsibly, demonstrate compassion, and adapt to meet children's evolving needs.

Communication and Relationships

Effective communication underpins all aspects of professional practice. In Early Years settings, communication enables practitioners to build trust, support learning, and engage families in the child's development. Miller (2008) notes that daily interactions with children, parents, and colleagues rely on verbal and non-verbal communication that conveys care, empathy, and understanding. Positive communication fosters secure attachments, which are fundamental to children's emotional wellbeing.

The Welsh Government (2017) also recognises communication as a core competency for Early Years practitioners. Open dialogue with parents and carers allows professionals to share observations, discuss progress, and address concerns collaboratively. Strong professional relationships among staff also promote consistency and teamwork. According to McMahon and Dyer (2018), communication and collaboration enable practitioners to share expertise and provide more holistic support to children, particularly those with additional learning needs. Therefore, effective communication contributes to both inclusive practice and the broader ethos of professionalism.

Knowledge, Understanding, and Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a fundamental responsibility for all Early Years professionals. It ensures that children are protected from harm, neglect, and abuse, while promoting their overall wellbeing. The Welsh Government's safeguarding framework (*Keeping Children and Young People Safe*, 2023) outlines the steps practitioners must follow when they suspect a child may be at risk. These include recognising signs of abuse, recording concerns accurately, and reporting them through the appropriate safeguarding channels. Practitioners have a *duty of care* to act promptly and in accordance with statutory guidance.

McMahon and Dyer (2018) emphasise that safeguarding is not limited to preventing harm it involves creating a safe, nurturing environment where children feel valued and protected. Knowledge of safeguarding procedures, confidentiality, and information-sharing protocols is therefore vital to professional practice. The *Early Years Workforce Plan* (Welsh Government, 2017) also stresses that safeguarding requires continuous professional learning to ensure practitioners remain aware of policy updates and best practice standards.

Furthermore, professional knowledge extends beyond safeguarding to include understanding of child development, observation, and planning. Practitioners must apply this knowledge to design developmentally appropriate activities that meet individual learning needs (Nutbrown, 2012). Ethical and informed decision-making ensures that every child has equal access to high-quality education and care.

Partnership and Multi-agency Working

Multi-agency collaboration is another key aspect of professional practice in Early Years education. It involves professionals from different disciplines such as health visitors, speech therapists, and social workers working together to support children's holistic development. The Welsh Government (2017) highlights partnership working as a cornerstone of effective Early Years provision, enabling coordinated support for children and families.

McMahon and Dyer (2018) explain that multi-agency practice ensures that interventions are consistent, timely, and based on shared information. For example, a practitioner may work alongside healthcare professionals to create an individual plan for a child with speech delays. Effective communication and respect between professionals are essential to prevent duplication of efforts and ensure continuity of care. According to McGillivray (2008), collaboration also enhances professional learning by exposing practitioners to different perspectives and expertise. Therefore, multi-agency works not only benefits children and families but also contributes to practitioners' professional growth and reflective capacity.

Observation, Planning, and Reflection

Observation and planning are integral to professional practice, as they allow practitioners to understand each child's needs and provide targeted support. Lindon and Trodd (2016) describe the observation assessment–planning cycle as a continuous process that underpins quality practice in Early Years settings. Observation enables practitioners to gather evidence about a child's development, which is then analysed to inform planning and provision.

Reflection plays a vital role in this process. McMahon and Dyer (2018) suggest that reflective practitioners critically evaluate their observations and actions to improve future practice. Reflection encourages self-awareness, helping professionals recognise both strengths and areas for development. This aligns with Schön's (1983) concept of "reflection-on-action," where practitioners learn from past experiences, and "reflection-in-action," which involves thinking adaptively during practice.

Moreover, reflective practice contributes to safeguarding and inclusion by allowing practitioners to consider how their decisions affect each child's learning environment. When practitioners engage in reflective thinking, they are better equipped to adapt their approaches, ensure equality of opportunity, and provide responsive care.

The UNCRC and Rights-Based Practice

Professional practice in Early Years is strongly informed by the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). The UNCRC establishes children's rights to protection, participation, and provision, and Wales was the first UK nation to embed these rights into law. The Welsh Government (2017) requires all Early Years practitioners to uphold these principles in their work.

Applying a rights-based approach means recognising children as active participants in their learning rather than passive recipients of care. This involves listening to their views, respecting their individuality, and ensuring inclusive practice that supports their physical, emotional, and

cognitive development (Kanyal, 2014). By valuing children's voices, professionals demonstrate ethical awareness and respect for autonomy both of which are central to professionalism.

The UNCRC also reinforces the importance of safeguarding by ensuring that every child has the right to feel safe and protected. As the Welsh Government (2023) outlines, safeguarding and rights are inseparable: promoting children's wellbeing requires a proactive commitment to their safety and inclusion. Thus, rights-based practice provides the moral and ethical foundation for all other aspects of professionalism in Early Years.

Conclusion

Professional practice in Early Years education is multifaceted and deeply rooted in ethical, reflective, and collaborative principles. Upholding professional values such as respect, integrity, and inclusivity ensures that practitioners act in the best interests of every child. Effective communication and relationships foster trust and enable practitioners to work closely with families and colleagues. Safeguarding, as defined by the Welsh Government (2023), is both a moral and professional duty that underpins all other areas of practice. Multi-agency collaboration extends this responsibility across sectors, ensuring that children receive comprehensive and consistent support. Through observation, planning, and reflection, practitioners continuously improve their practice and adapt to children's individual needs. Finally, adherence to the UNCRC ensures that all practice is guided by a rights-based, child-centred approach. Collectively, these aspects define what it means to be a professional in the Early Years sector an individual who is reflective, ethical, knowledgeable, and committed to promoting the wellbeing and inclusion of every child.

References (Harvard Style)

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