

Part 1 – Personal Development Plan

What do I want to develop? I would like to develop my own self-confidence and become more confident to take presentations, to stand up and be confident to talk in front of people and classes. I would also like to achieve more training in my line of work to develop my knowledge and be confident to become a class teaching assistant and finish my degree.

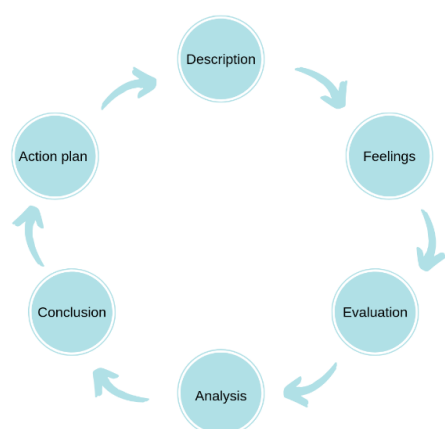
Improvement and Development Goals	Actions How will I achieve this?	Resources & Support	Target Date	Success Criteria How will I know I have achieved this?
Build my overall confidence.	I will set manageable goals and challenges and build a network of people that will positively support me. I will also keep active and healthy to boost my self-esteem.	I will need support from family, friends and work colleagues. I will use the gym to keep fit and active.	This target will be ongoing. I will aim to improve myself gradually and look to see a bit of improvement every 4 months.	I will feel more confident in myself and able to do things I find hard to do now. I will review how I feel every 4 months to see if there has been improvement.
Complete training courses to further my knowledge: Early Years Language Development,	Put my name forward for training courses through work. Attend the training courses.	I will need support from my head and deputy head teachers to gain access to the courses.	The target date for the three courses to be completed is July 2024.	Once I have completed the courses, if successful, I will receive certificates to show I

Signalong and Attention Autism.		Resources will be provided through the course.		have completed and passed the courses.
Finish my Early Years Education and Care Degree with practitioner status.	I will attend the lectures provided by the university, study often and use all resources available to me and submit all assignments on their deadline due dates. Gain the practitioner status by completing my 700 hours of work.	I will need support from lecturers, other students, family and work colleagues. I will use the resources available to me from the university and purchase any other material I may need.	The target date for me to complete my degree is July 2025.	Once I have completed the degree, if successful, I will receive my BA honours degree.
Become a class teaching assistant at the school I am currently a teaching assistant in.	Complete my degree and training courses to further my knowledge in early	I can ask for support from my current class teacher and class teaching assistant for support in learning	The target date for becoming a class teaching assistant would be September 2026.	I will know I have achieved this as I will be in a new job role as a class teaching

	years education and care. When the opportunity arises within my school, I will apply for the new job role.	about the job role and for opportunities for me to gain more experience and confidence.		assistant at my current school.
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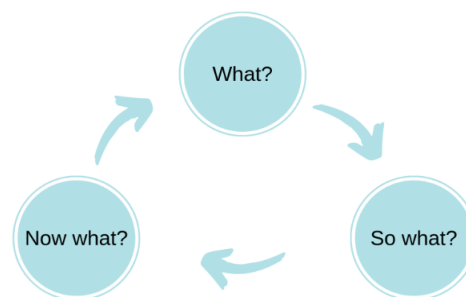
Part 2 – Briefing Paper

What is reflection and reflective practice?	Why is reflective practice important to Early Years practice?
Reflection and reflective practice are the process of acknowledging past experiences and thinking about what did not go to plan and, if anything, what can be done to prevent the same thing happening again in the future (University of Cambridge, no date). Reflective practice is a tool used by many professionals and academics, as it allows them to reflect on various aspects of their profession or academic study. By using these tools, they can learn from any mistakes they may have made. Lindon and Trodd (2016) state that reflective practice is the process of self-evaluation and self-assessment. It is the process of looking at what your intentions were and what really happened. It is also said that you need to be honest when self-evaluating to ensure your self-assessment will lead to clear action on your mistakes. Knowing what your practice can improve on will help benefit the children that you are working with.	Pacey (2016) proposes that reflective practice will aid you in improving yourself professionally and personally, which will then benefit the children that are in your setting. This will ultimately improve your practice and therefore the children that you are working with will have better outcomes. By regularly reflecting on your practice, you will be able to enhance your skills and confidence in the work that you are doing. This will have a great positive impact on the setting you are working in, and so benefit the children within the setting and their parents and carers. Birth To Five Matters (no date) agrees that reflective practice enables you to improve yourself by developing your skills and knowledge and improving your confidence. It is said that by improving on your practice you will provide the children in your setting with better learning opportunities and therefore better development.
The Theory of Reflection	
EdShare Southampton (no date) states that the founder of reflection, in relation to personal development, is perceived to be John Dewey. John Dewey stated that reflection is an active process to recall events and learn from them to be able to better yourself. It was John Dewey's belief that by reflecting on your actions you are able to make sense of difficult situations and change outcomes in the future. According to EdShare Southampton (no date) Schon also has his own theories on reflection, although he did frame these from John Dewey's work. Schon's theory of reflection proposes two different ways of reflective practice, these are: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. The University of Hull (2023) also explains that Schon's theory identifies two ways of reflecting. Reflecting-in-action is reflecting on an event as it happens, and reflection-on-action is reflecting on an event after it has happened. When you reflect on an event as it is happening you are able to think about what is happening as it happens and are then able to act on it immediately and change the outcome straight away. When you reflect on an event after it has happened you are able to reflect on what happened, what was the outcome and what can you do differently to change that outcome in the future. As you have more time to reflect you are able to think in more depth and are able to discuss outcomes with others.	



Gibbs' Reflective Cycle
Driscoll's Model

(Source: University of Cambridge, no date)
(Source: University of Cambridge, no date)



Analysis of Models

The Open University (no date) suggests that Gibbs' reflective cycle takes your personal feelings into consideration and how it can influence the situation you are reflecting on. This model has more stages to it than some other models, giving you more details so you can evaluate, analysis and conclude on the experience, so you can then create an action plan for the future.

Even though this model does break down more steps, it does not bring in critical thinking to it nor that you need to view the experience from different perspectives.

Driscoll's reflective model is simple and easy to remember, as stated by The University of Edinburgh (2020). It is stated that it can also be used by many professions, as it only as three questions these questions can be incorporated into most experiences.

However, as it is quite simple and only asks three questions it can limit how much reflection you can give an experience, meaning that you would be unable to gain much critical thinking and meaning to your reflection.

Conclusion

To conclude from this paper, reflective practice is a great tool used by many professionals and it enables you to be able to look at experiences either as they happen or after they have happened and analysis them to evaluate whether things can be done differently in the future to ensure mistakes do not happen again and that the settings that you work in are able to run more efficiently. It also enables you to evaluate yourself and what you may need to work on, which will help build your confidence and knowledge. Reflective practice not only benefits yourself and your setting but also the children that you are working with. When you actively reflect and change how things work the children that you are working with will have more learning opportunities and therefore better development. There are many different models of reflection that can be used to aid you in your reflective practice. These models are different in what they offer to be able to reflect but all have the same aim and outcome. Some are simple and only have three questions, while others are more in depth and include more areas for you to evaluate. By using these models, you can effectively use reflective practice to better yourself, your setting and the children you work with.

Part 3 – Written Essay

According to Higgs and Trede (2016) professional practice is considered to be the nature in the way a professional contributes to their setting and therefore society. Professional practice is believed to be based around social aspects, although it is also built upon by professional practitioners as they gain experience within their setting. Higgs and Trede (2016) also identify that professional practice also stems from what is expected from different settings and professions. Some professions and settings are defined by certain aspects, so the professional in that setting would be expected to have certain knowledge, skills, or qualifications.

Furthermore, to be viewed as a professional, practitioners must hold an elevated level of education and training (McGillivray, 2008). It is stated that being a professional is highly influenced by four factors. McGillivray (2008) suggests that the key components for building and holding professional identity are ongoing training of new curriculum, compelling tension between lower and higher roles within a setting, the use of social policy to encourage subjective thinking around how children should be treated and a link between current thinking and new practices and ideas.

In addition, West Sussex County Council (2021) states that professional practice in early years education and care consists of being an effective practitioner and ensuring they are meeting the needs of the children's development in the setting that they are working in. Practitioners must be able to aid all children's learning and development, they do this by observing, assessing, and planning.

Observation of a child is one of the most important aspects of a practitioner's practice, it enables them to see each child as an individual and then be able to work out the individual needs of that child. When observing children, practitioners should use both planned and spontaneous approaches to ensure that they are putting the children at the centre of what they do (West Sussex County Council, 2021). This relates to article 3 of

the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UNICEF, no date). Article 3 states that “adults should always do what is best for the child”.

West Sussex County Council (2021) also states that once practitioners have observed the children in their setting, they are then required to assess what they know about the children's learning and development. Practitioners need to analyse marking, photographs they have taken, information from parents and any recordings they have made to ensure they are assessing all information available to them. If they do this on a regular basis they will, over time, have progress evidence and a good understanding of the children's learning, development, and needs. With this information practitioners can effectively plan the next steps for learning for each child, this will ensure all the child's learning and development needs are being fulfilled.

Powel (2010) discusses the Early Years Foundation Stage Practice Guidance, which indicates important values believed to be required by practitioners working in Early Years Education and Care settings. These values include respect for diversity and independence, recognising and respecting individuality, loving and caring relationships and a holistic perspective. These values underpin the four main purposes attributed to the Early Years Foundation Stage framework, these purposes are “a unique child, positive relationships, enabling environments, and learning and development”. As stated by Powel (2010), these values also link to the six learning and development areas necessary to the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework. The framework which sets the target most children should reach by five years old. Therefore, the above values are important in helping children to learn and develop to their best ability.

GOV.UK (no date) states that communication with children from birth forms the basis of children's language and cognitive development and that a language-rich environment is vital for children and their development. It is beneficial to children to be with responsive adults who are enthusiastic when interacting with them, as it helps children build positive relationships which will support their development to form friendships and empathy towards others. Positive interactions and communication can help children

develop confidence, independence, listening skills and skills in sharing and waiting their turn.

Additionally, GOV.UK (no date) proposes that practitioners must ensure that they provide good interactions with the children that they are working with, these interactions include spoken words, body language, facial expressions, actions, and songs. If a child is nonverbal practitioners can support them by using visual cues, pictures, and objects.

Furthermore, Cross (2011) identifies that children who have difficulties in learning language and communication quite often develop difficulties with their social and emotional development and therefore can develop behavioural difficulties.

Communication difficulties can be a delay in language development or can be associated with other conditions, such as a hearing impairment, dyspraxia, autism, to name a few. It is vital that practitioners can recognise communication difficulties in children from an early age to ensure they are supported and have interventions put in place, this is extremely important for their social development.

Practitioners are required to have an in-depth knowledge of the relevant curriculum and how children develop and learn during the early years (Foundation Years, no date).

According to Foundation Years (no date), early years practitioners must understand child development from birth to six years. Practitioners must have the knowledge of how children learn to ensure they reach their early learning goals before they reach the end of the foundation stage. By having this knowledge practitioners can be more aware of the children that may require additional support to meet these goals.

Early years practitioners developing and maintaining knowledge, based around children's learning and development, supports the rights of the child that is summarised by UNICEF (no date). Article 28 of The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that "every child has the right to education" and article 29 states that "every child has the right to goals of education". It is important that practitioners are

knowledgeable of all aspects that involve children's learning, development, and their rights.

In addition, practitioners also must keep children safe and protected from harm. Article 19 of the UNCRC states that “children have the right to be protected from violence, abuse, and neglect” (UNICEF, no date). NSPCC (2023) advises that all adults that work with children should have and follow safeguarding policies and procedures, by following these policies and procedures practitioners are ensuring that all children are protected from harm. Therefore, it is essential that practitioners are knowledgeable about all safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that the children in their setting are safe from adults and other children and if they believe that a child is enduring any form of abuse or neglect then they know what they must do to keep that child safe.

Grasper (2010) suggests that partnership working is important to early years practitioners as it meets families' needs by meeting general and individual needs. Partnership working supports families by helping them identify what their needs are, what help is available to them and to build their confidence by helping them to develop their skills and education, which will support families to be in control of their own lives.

Furthermore, Cheminais (2009) agrees that partnership working is beneficial to improving children's learning and wellbeing. Collaborative multi-agency working in practice supports practitioners understanding of multi-agencies and what they can offer the children they are working with. It also promotes support within different settings allowing staff to share their knowledge and resources to help children further. Which leads to better outcomes for children and their families.

The convention on the Rights of the Child sets standards and obligations, these standards are non-negotiable, and it is essential that they are valued by all governments. The convention holds four core principles, which are: “non-discrimination, devotion to the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development and respect for the views of the child” (Advocate for Children and Young People, no date). According to

Advocate for Children and Young People (no date), these core principles are used to help mold the rights of the child that are used to protect children. They are extremely important in keeping children's rights at the centre of what all adults working with children do by setting standards in settings such as education, health care and civil and social services.

In conclusion, professional practice consists of social aspects in society and how each role is perceived by others and what experience and qualifications you may have.

Although, to be a professional effective practitioner, a practitioner must be knowledgeable and understanding of child development and their rights. Practitioners must be able to understand how children learn and develop, so they are able to observe, assess and then plan based around the needs of the children, as it is vital that practitioners always have the child's best interests at the centre of what they do. Practitioners should also ensure that they are following the principles and values of the setting they are working in, as the values give a standard to how the setting is managed.

Practitioners must also ensure that they have an in-depth knowledge of current curriculum, child development, policies, and procedures. Without this knowledge practitioners would be unable to support children in learning, neither would they be able to protect children and keep them from harm. Practitioners can gain further knowledge and resources by partnership working with parents and care givers and multi-agencies. This will provide a further support network for the children and their families.

In everything that practitioners do they must keep in mind the UNCRC and the principles it follows. The articles stated in the UNCRC are there to ensure all governing bodies and therefore all children's services and settings are following the same principles and ensuring the children's rights are the most important part of their day-to-day working.

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