

AI Cover Sheet

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Cover Sheet

Component 1 – PDP

Component 2 – Briefing paper

Component 3- Essay

Professional development plan

Overall performance

What is working	What could be better
Identifying reasons for behaviour for staff and putting effective strategies in place to support children readiness for learning.	Staff to gain knowledge to identify the cause of behaviour and implement support strategies promptly, saving time.
Starting a degree in early years education and care.	Develop academic writing and study skills
Communication support for children has been established through the Picture Exchange communication System.	Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices are provided for non-verbal children.

Professional Review Objectives

Objectives	Objective 1 Collaborate with others to create a toolkit to help staff identify and respond to behaviour appropriately.	Objective 2 To improve academic writing skills and study habits.	Objective 3 Enhance communication for non-verbal children using AAC devices.
Planning	I will book and attend refresher training for Team Teach. https://www.teamteach.com/reaccreditation/ Research sensory and emotional challenges and support strategies to manage them. Work collaboratively with others and draw on their expertise in areas such as attachment, communication and ASD challenges. Create a user- friendly toolkit based on the information to help staff effectively manage behaviour.	I will book and attend study skills sessions to develop academic writing skills and effective study habits to improve my work. https://digitallearning.uwtsd.ac.uk/study-skills-resources.html	I will participate in training focused on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices to better support non-verbal children. https://www.theeducationpeople.org/products/professional-development/augmentative-and-alternative-communication-aac-little-and-often/ This will involve exploring various AAC options, including speech-generating devices and apps. The training will include hands-on practice in customizing these tools to fit each child's unique needs.

Time scale	<u>2024-2025</u>	<u>2024-2026</u>	<u>2024-2025</u>
Monitoring	Progress on this objective will be tracked through classroom observations and feedback from class staff. Staff will be asked to log observed behaviours and reflect on possible causes and triggers on Behaviour Watch https://login.eduspot.co.uk/. Staff will use the toolkit to help identify root cause and apply strategies to reduce behavioural response. Data from behaviour logs and staff reports will help assess how well staff are applying the knowledge in real situations.	Progress will be monitored by sharing samples of my work with lecturer and study skills mentor to receive feedback. This will help identify areas for improvements and further develop my current skills. Logs for study habit will be shared with mentor to see how they are working and if anything requires amending to keep on track for submitting on time.	To track progress, I will observe how children use their AAC devices during sessions and gather evidence through observations. I will keep a log of communication attempts and improvements, aiming to identify patterns and areas for further support.
Reviewing	Staff will discuss whether they have been more successful in identifying the root causes of behaviours and highlight any further support they may need. A staff audit will assess staff confidence and gather input on how the toolkit could be improved.	I will submit work on time and feedback from lecturer will show improvement over time.	Working with the wider team I will discuss what's working well and what challenges we face with AAC implementation. Reviewing communication logs will help evaluate how effectively children are expressing themselves with AAC.

Reflective Practice for Early Years Professional Development

Reflection and Reflective Practice

According to Brock (2015), reflection involves analysing and questioning one's thoughts and has been around since the time of the Greek philosophers, who used reflection in their debates. Brock (2015) emphasises the importance of reflective practise for professionals, describing it as a continuous cycle of self-assessment and improvement. However, Thompson and Thompson (2023) discuss challenges to reflective practise, such as the lack of reflective skills, the inability to identify issues. They mention that when people are first introduced to reflective practise, they tend to respond by sharing their perspective. Adding to this HCPC (2021) point out that by simply having a discussion during team briefing is not considered reflection. Although, if those discussions involve critical thinking and assessment, to produce innovative ideas, they would be considered as reflection. Furthermore, London and Trodd (2016) argue that reflective practice can feel tough and lonely, instead of a team effort, in workplaces that have a negative or controlling environment where practitioners are not allowed to question or challenge authority or the ways things are done.

Why is reflective practice important in Early Years

According to Gunning (2022) reflective practise is essential for professionals to enable them to improve their practise and develop a deeper understanding of their work. Brock (2015) supports this view, explaining the importance of reflective practise for professionals. She highlights reasons such as meeting professional standards, providing the best learning experiences by improving one's practice, gathering data for education or care inspectors, and advancing one's career.

Welsh Government (2019) encourages ongoing reflective practise to help practitioners identify areas for improvement, leading to their professional development and meeting professional standards. Martland (2020) adds that successful continual professional development includes recognising areas where knowledge and abilities are lacking, reflecting on their experiences, seeking opportunities to improve, and considering how these changes affect both their work and the children that they care for. By consistently reflecting on their practise and participating in continual professional development, they can advance their development and work towards achieving their career goals. However, Potter and Hudson (2007) cited in Brock (2015) say that training programmes do not focus enough on building critical thinking skills for practitioners. As a result, practitioners find it hard to use problem solving approach.

Toole (2023) states that when practitioners reflect on their engagement with children, they can better understand how children learn and grow. This enables practitioners to create and deliver more impactful learning activities. Toole (2023) adds that practitioner's confidence is boosted when they recognise their ability to be effective, as they see the positive impact of their actions on children learning. This may be useful since visits conducted by Estyn (2023) involve gathering different information by talking to learners to hear their opinions and review learners works to assess the quality of teaching and learning. However, PACEY (2016) notes that there are often obstacles to reflective practise, such as lack of time or uncertainty about how to implement it. While making time to reflect is considered crucial, it is equally important to find the right method that suits practitioners.

Schon's theory of reflection

Schon (1983) developed the theory of reflection in action, which refers to the process of reflecting while engaged in an activity. Schon (1983) states in this process individuals become investigators of their own practice, using existing knowledge and experience to develop new ideas and solutions tailored to specific situation. Thompson and Thompson (2023) add that Schon accepted that while scientific knowledge is important, practical creativity is also needed to effectively apply it in real life situation. Lindon and Trodd (2016) states two key elements of Schon's theory: reflection in action and reflection on action. The first refers to quick thinking used to make decisions for best practise as situation arise. The latter involves reflecting after a situation has occurred, focusing on discussing what happened, what could be changed and why. In previous experiences, reflection in action was applied during safeguarding situation where student A displayed behaviours that posed risks to others. This involve quickly assessing the situation and using available Team Teach approach knowledge to maintain safety. Following this, reflection on action was applied through team discussions, focusing on what worked, what could have been improved and how the situation might have been prevented.

Image 1 (own image) Kolb's model of reflection

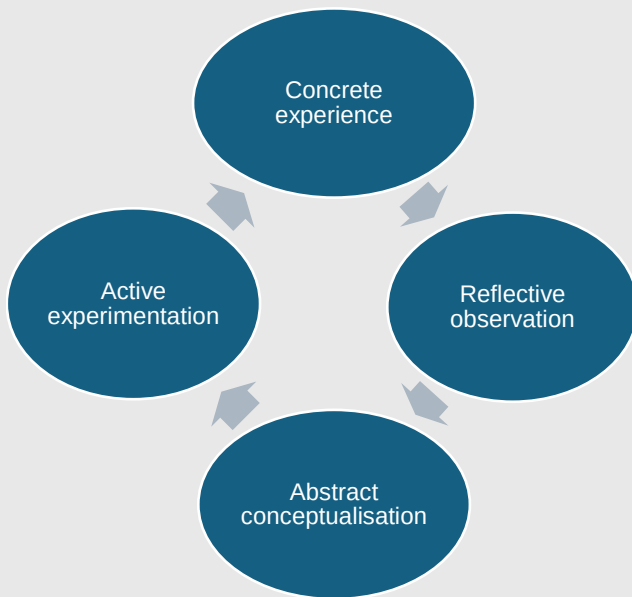


Image 2 (own image) Gibbs's reflection model



Models of reflection

According to Lindon and Trodd (2016) Kolb's model involves four parts. First engage in a specific experience, next, reflect on it using critical thinking. Then develop and adapt ideas based on knowledge gained and finally, test those ideas by putting them into practice enabling the learning cycle to progress.

According to Thompson (2022) Gibbs reflection model approach is about learning through repetition. Professionals reflect on an experience, try new strategies, and adjust as needed until it works well.

Both Kolb's and Gibbs's models of reflection involve a cycle of experiencing, applying critical thinking, developing new ideas and putting them into action. However, University of Cambridge (2024) state that Gibb's model is more complicated, as it involves more stages. For example, describing the situation, reflecting on feelings, evaluating and analysing the experience to make sense of it, coming up with a conclusion and then acting.

Kolb's model can be applied in early years when children have sharing difficulties. For example, a child with autism became dysregulated when their turn on the swing ended. Upon reflection, the professional recognised that the child struggles with sharing is related to their autism spectrum disorder, which contributed to their emotional response. To address this, the professional came up with idea to use a sand timer as a visual cue to help the child anticipate when their swing time would end. The professional actioned this strategy by setting a sand time for 10 minutes for each time the child was on the swing. The visual timer helped the child understand when their turn was coming to an end, reducing anxiety and strong emotional outburst. Applying Gibbs model would add two additional layers to the reflection, the positive and the negative aspects to the experience, and the professional's feelings, therefore making it more complicated.

Conclusion

Research suggests that reflective practice in early years is an important part of professional development. While challenges such as lack of time and limited reflective skills may make this process difficult, the benefit include more effective decision making and improved professional practice. The theory and models of reflection provide clear ways for professionals to reflect and adjust their methods; by using these reflective these, professionals can continuously improve the practice in early years.

Professionals and professional practice in early years

The definition of a professional can have various meaning and must be understood in the context of education. According to Corke (2014) in the past nannies and nursery maids, who took care of or educated children, were not treated as professionals. Corke (2014) adds, today professional involves having specialised knowledge backed by science. However, Reed and Walker (2015) argue in Early Years, a professional is defined not only by their education or knowledge but also their personal qualities and values. Gasper (2015) agrees that while professionals typically refer to someone with recognised qualification and knowledge, in early years education, being a professional also includes qualities that support children, regardless of qualifications. Gasper (2015) adds that the best professionals integrate both knowledge and values to frequently improve their practice.

Department for Education (2023) states, organisations are responsible for making sure practitioners responsible for children's care are qualified for the role.

Practitioners should have the necessary qualification and training, and organisations must take steps to confirm these qualifications. Rudoe (2020) states, studies have highlighted that there is a connection between qualification of practitioners and the effectiveness of the quality of practice they implement in early childhood settings. However, while qualifications are important to maintain standards, it is questionable if they alone are sufficient in high quality teaching and care. According to Campbell-Barr and Leeson (2015) having a qualification alone might not make as much of a difference to the actual quality of work being done with children. Mathers et al. (2012) cited in Campbell-Barr and Leeson (2016) points out the quality of early years education is influenced by two main ideas: Interaction, which refers to the relationship and experiences between professional and children. The organisation factor, referring to the group size and adult to child ratios. In current specialist setting, there is a higher staff to child ratio. The higher number of adults allows for more attention and interaction. More staff means each child gets more individualised and focussed support to meet their needs, resulting in better outcomes.

According to Dobson (2020) values are important since they guide our decisions and provide direction in our professional practice. It is a belief that values should be

recognised within specific situation and put into practice. PACEY (2015) outlines several important professional values when working with children. One of the key values highlighted is the importance of valuing and celebrating differences and diversity. Entrust (2020) states that early year's practitioners play an essential role in having a positive view of diversity and differences. Their responsibilities go beyond just making sure every child is included; they also need to help children learn and appreciate diversity and differences from an early age. In early years education setting, diversity is celebrated by planning lessons throughout the year that explores different cultures and religion. However, while planning and exploring different cultures may be considered important, a lack of professional understanding can lead to children from diverse background being treated differently. Devarakonda (2020) highlights practitioners might treat children from diverse background differently because of their biases. Van hook (2002) cited in Devarakonda (2020) believes that some educators may find it hard to teach children from different backgrounds since they feel afraid, unsure, or uncomfortable. These feeling can get in the way of teaching effectively. This suggests that training and education on different cultures should be provided to professionals to help better understand diversity and meet the needs of children.

Gasper (2015) writes about a range of key attributes that early year practitioners need to be effective in their professional practice. Among these essential attributes is the ability to identify and meet the needs of children and their families. According to Department of Education (2022) Early years practitioner assess children's progress and development, therefore, it is crucial to accurately identify children's needs and provide support quickly to help them reach their full potential. In early years education setting, professionals may notice developmental delays and can create a school based IDP to support the child's needs. If more intensive support is required, the school can refer to local authority for a more detailed IDP to ensure the child receives the best possible support. However, this may not be an easy task when professionals may not have the required knowledge. Jacobs (2020) states that research shows the difficulty in identifying additional learning needs in early childhood. This is due to the lack of staff training and the limited resources to aid with identifying additional needs early on. As a result, this can delay the implementation

of early measures. This suggest, additional training is needed for professionals to identify early signs of additional needs. From experience, autism spectrum disorder training has helped identify signs to implement the appropriate interventions.

Additional Gasper (2015) writes about recognising individual expertise and using them effectively. According to EYC (2017) having a team with varying levels of expertise is beneficial since it supports everyone to develop their skills. Each practitioner brings their own skills and when they collaborate, it will enhance the abilities of others. In current experience, having a team with varied expertise is invaluable when dealing with complicated situation. Professional expertise is shared to explore ideas and come up with a plan. However, while collaboration may be beneficial, it may be challenging if professionals do not get along, making it harder to work towards a shared goal. Eleza (2019) states that conflicts are a natural part of teamwork, arising when colleagues disagree or struggle to collaborate due to differences. If these conflicts are unresolved, they can create negativity and affect working relationships resulting decline in effectiveness. This suggests that conflict should be resolved to improve practice as a team. In previous experience, where professionals did not get along, they held one on one discussions to better understand each other perspectives, often leading to resolution. Although, in some cases where it was harder to find a solution, the issue had to be escalated to a senior member of staff.

Department for Education (2023b) sets several standards for professional in early years setting. Among these standards is the importance of ensuring children feel safe and secure while meeting their basic individualised needs. This approach supports optimal learning outcomes for children. Department for Education (2023b) adds, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, early years setting must adhere to safeguarding protocols. Professionals working with children must be suitably trained and possess an up-to-date Criminal Records Bureaux check. Settings are required to conduct risk assessments to minimise hazards, keep records of injuries and report concerns if a child is suspected to be at risk. If a professional suspects a child is in danger, they must contact the local authority or police. Additionally regular check on sleeping children must be carried out, and professionals should follow safe

sleep guidance. In current profession, all professionals have an up-to-date dbs. Every professional receives safeguarding training with policies and procedures for safe practice. Risk assessments are conducted with these being available for all professionals to access. However, despite statutory guidelines being in place for settings, issues can arise when these guidelines are not following. Crown (2024) highlights a failure in safeguarding, explaining babies are normally placed on their backs to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome. In one instance, a baby under one was fastened face down on a beanbag, covered with a blanket for over 90 minutes, which resulted in death. This shows the implication of failing to follow guidelines created to protect children.

Children's Commissioner for Wales (2019) outlines 42 rights that children have as stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. One of these rights is that children with disabilities have a right to a good life with respect, be independent, and take part in their community. They should receive special care and be provided with available resources that are tailored to their needs and circumstances. This right means that early year's professionals should ensure children have access to necessary resources and special care such as medical support. Additionally, they should make sure that children are included in the community in a safe and inclusive way. For example, professionals should ensure facilities for wheelchair users are considered when planning community visit ensuring all children can participate.

It is recognised that collaboration among professionals require skills. According to Cambell (2011) and Royston and Rodriques (2013) cited in Cambell-Barr and Leeson (2015) collaboration with others requires specific skills and measures for accessibility, engagement and regular communication. In early years education setting, professionals address accessibility by providing interpreters for meetings. Engagement is action by arranging stay and play session where parent can ask questions and see their children learning. Various communication strategies are applied, such as seesaw app, allowing two-way written communication, phone call to discuss sensitive matters and face to face meeting. However, Wilson (2016) points out some barriers to collaboration, like poverty making it hard to reach early years setting. A lack of time for effective communication or how peoples background can make them feel like they do not belong or are not being listened to. This suggests

that professionals may need to be aware that parents might have barriers to communication and engagement, and they need to address these issues accordingly. In previous experience, when parents were unable to attend a training session in person, the training was delivered through Teams, ensuring that barriers to engagement was addressed.

To conclude in early years education, research suggests that being a professional requires more than just qualification. It is about having the right values, skills and qualities, to improve professional practice. While qualification matter, the care and interaction are considered just as important. Research suggest that professionals need to understand and respect diversity, meet each child's unique needs, work well with others, follow safeguarding procedures and create an inclusive environment that ensures safety and supports every child's needs.

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