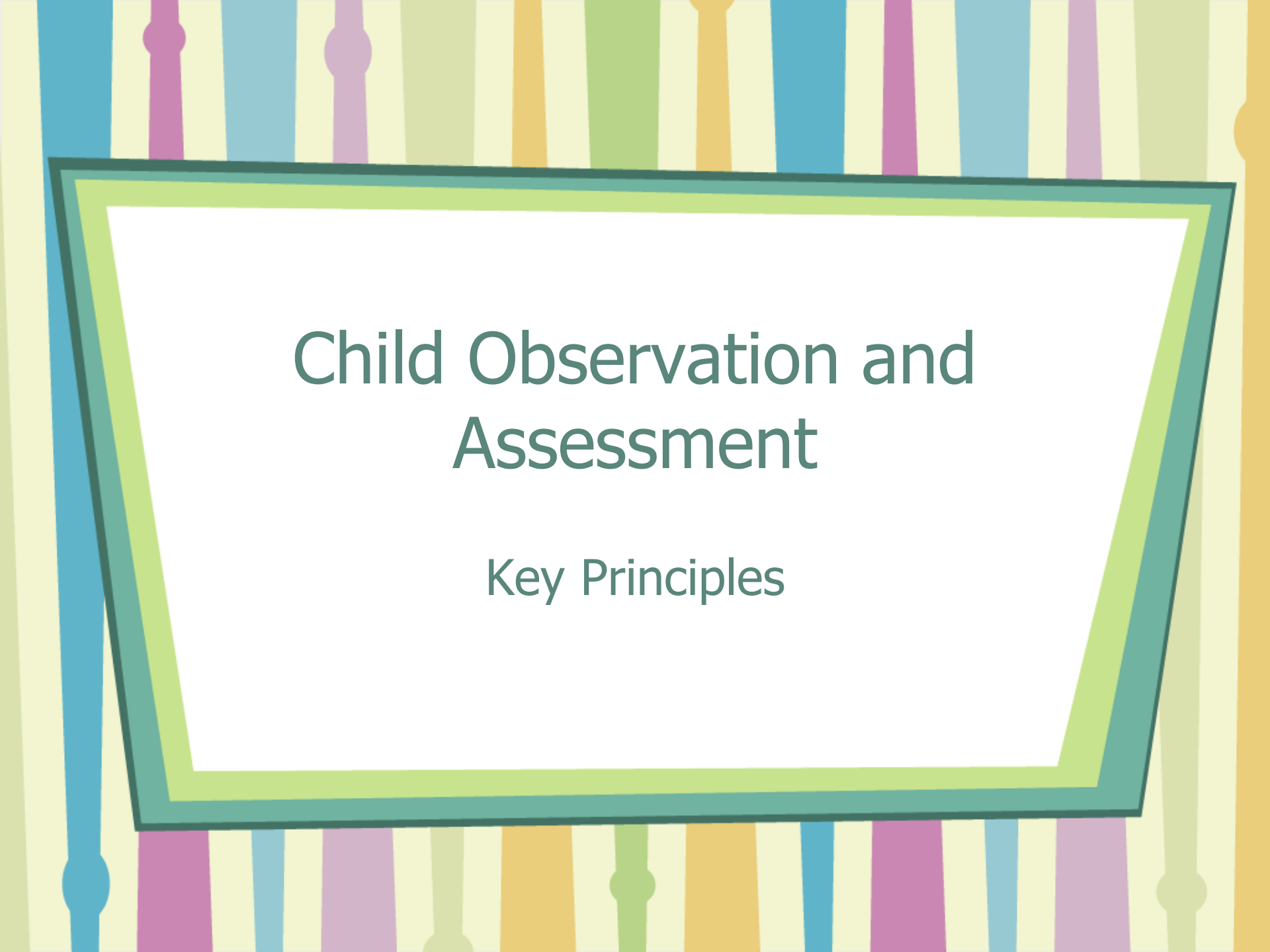




Child Observation and Assessment

Key Principles

Learning outcome

- In this session you will learn about some of the key principles required to enable you to undertake meaningful and objective observations.



Meaningful Observations

- Observations take place naturally during everyday activities and interactions.
- Some observations relate to a general need to find out about children, resources or spaces.
- Other observations may be specifically targeted for particular reasons.
- When making observations, you **MUST** avoid being judgemental or biased.

Meaningful Observations

- You do this by constantly checking that you are documenting an accurate picture of **what you actually see**.
- Your written reflections should reflect actual behaviour or responses
- Knowing when and how to share observations appropriately is a priority for all care professionals
- Your aim is to ensure that the child's needs are the focus of your written detail and recommendations for improvement.

Meaningful Observations

- All members of the team who work directly with children, need to be responsible for observation and assessment.
- There needs to be shared understanding of what good observations and assessments look like.
- It is beneficial to have regularly planned moderation meetings so that judgements across the team can be checked for consistency.

(Murkherji and Dryden, 2014: 70)

Meaningful Observations

- Record keeping can begin even before a child starts at a setting.
- Preliminary visits can provide opportunities to gather some initial information.
- It is good practice to meet with parents to discuss their children's development, preferences and needs.
- It is also important to involve children in the assessment process so that they have a voice.

(Murkherji and Dryden, 2014: 71)

Objectivity in Observations

Definitions of Objectivity:

- Concerned with what you have observed, rather than your feelings about the child/young person observed.
- Without bias or prejudice.
- Relating to the aim of the observation.
- Without influence from another person's opinions or feelings about a child/young person.

Objectivity in Observations

- Click on the link below to watch the video (approximately 3 minutes), then continue with the presentation.
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= MpOVGG75ZY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpOVGG75ZY)

Being Objective

- Being non-judgmental and unbiased.
- Keep an open mind.
- Do not let personal feelings affect your view of what you have observed.
- Focus on the individuality of the child/young person observed.



Top Tips

Outcomes of not being objective

- An incorrect evaluation of the child/young person.
- The wrong recommendations or action plans are made.
- Chances to help the child/young person to develop could be missed.
- Important factors affecting the child/young person's development may not be taken into account.

Outcomes of not being objective

- The child/young person may become labelled.
- The family may become labelled.
- The child/young person may develop a low self-esteem.
- The needs of a child/young person with Additional Needs may not be identified.
- A child/young person may not receive appropriate support to develop.

Activity Case Study – Discussion forum

Access the module on Moodle and click into the session Reasons for Child Observations tile to access the activities for this session.

Complete the Case Study discussion forum activity by adding at least one response to each question.

Compare your responses to those provided by other students. Are they similar or different?

Why do you think this is?



Objectivity in Observations

- Assumptions are often made that most people will interpret what has been observed in the same way, but individuals have a tendency to see what they are looking for or what they know about.

It is important to:

- Keep an open mind
- Avoid preconceptions
- Remain focused
- Record information in a systematic and logical way.

(Riddall–Leech, 2008)



Top Tips

Personal Development

- Reflection on personal assumptions and predictions can raise doubts about our ability to make valid interpretations.
- Remember – children/young people's patterns of behaviour are difficult to predict, but also our own behaviours can be subject to mood, time and other conditions.
- A skilled observer will recognise their own unavoidable bias and make allowances for it.



Top Tips

Learning outcome

- In this session you have learnt about some of the key principles required to enable you to undertake meaningful and objective observations.



References and further reading

- Bradford, H. (2012) *Planning and Observation of Children Under Three*, London: Routledge
- Drummond, M. (1998) Observing Children in Smidt, S. (Ed) *The Early Years: A Reader*, London: Routledge
- Macloed-Brudenell, I (2004), *Advanced Early Years for Foundation Degrees and levels 4/5*, Oxford: Heinemann.



References and further reading

- Mukherji, P. and Dryden, L. (Eds) (2014) *Foundations of Early Childhood: Principles and Practice*. London: Sage
- Palaiologou, I. (2012) *Child Observation for the Early Years*, 2nd Edition, London: Sage
- Riddall-Leech, S (2008) *How to Observe Children*, Harlow: Heinemann
- Welsh Assembly Government (2008) *Observing Children*, Cardiff:WAG

