Supporting Young Children’s Emotional Well-being
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Introduction

During summer 2013 training for early years practitioners on supporting young children’s emotional Well-being took place across Cumbria. As part of the training practitioners were given high quality resources to support their work with young children. The training was followed up in the autumn term with smaller cluster group meetings where practitioners shared the impact of the training and resources on children’s emotional Well-being and began to create case studies of their work.

Case studies based around using Movement Play or an Empathy Doll to support children’s emotional Well-being were completed.

The project enabled practitioners to understand the importance of developing high levels of Well-being in young children.

This pack contains selected case studies and a guidance booklet of ideas to further support the development of practice and professional development of staff in this area.

The training was part of a wider project within the Local Authority aimed at improving children’s emotional Well-being and has been funded through Health Gain funding overseen by the Children’s Joint Commissioning Board.

‘If I had my child to raise over again’
Dianne Loomans

If I had my child to raise all over again
I’d build self esteem first, and the house later.
I’d finger paint more, and point the finger less.
I would do less correcting and more connecting.
I’d take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes.
I would care to know less and know to care more.
I’d take more hikes and fly more kites.
I’d stop playing serious, and seriously play.
I would run through more fields and gaze at more stars.
I’d do more hugging and less tugging.
I’d see the oak tree in the acorn more often.
I would be firm less often. And affirm much more.
I’d model less about the love of power,
And more about the power of love.
The Leuven definition of Well-being

Well-being is a particular state or feeling that can be recognised by satisfaction enjoyment and pleasure. The person is relaxed and expresses inner rest, feels the energy flow and radiates vitality, is open to the surroundings, accessible and flexible.

What are the signs of Well-being?

When children….

• feel at ease
• act spontaneously
• are open to ideas
• feel relaxed
• show confidence and self-esteem
• are in touch with own feelings
• and emotions
• enjoy life and show vitality

...we know their mental health is secured

What does the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) say about Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)?

Four guiding principles should shape practice in early years settings.

These are:

• Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
• Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships
• Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers
• Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities

(Statutory Framework for the EYFS p.6)

Personal, social and emotional development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

(Statutory Framework for the EYFS p.8)
Brain Development

Young brains develop rapidly and are affected by things that are positive or negative. Relationships, security, understanding and responsiveness of parent/carer are essential to the healthy cognitive, physical, emotional and social development of the child. This early development has a massive impact on the nature and extent of their adult capacities.

Babies and young children can themselves become stressed if their parent/carer lack responsiveness to their emotional and physical needs. Their bodies will release cortisol at times of stress, affecting the brain by impeding the development of connections between brain cells. These connections are needed for successful development and learning.

The plasticity of the brain – effects of extreme deprivation

Image courtesy of Harry Chugani MD, Children’s Hospital of Michigan, Wayne State University.
The Leuven Scales

The Leuven Scales were developed by Ferre Laevers as a way of identifying and measuring levels of Well-being. Use of these promotes a consistent approach between practitioners.

The scale for Well-being in children

Level 1: extremely low level of Well-being

These children look ‘low’ and unhappy. They often look tense & are not very lively. There are no, or only a few, moments of real enjoyment. These children display a great deal of symptomatic behaviour, such as crying, looking dejected, destroying things, shouting, being listless, showing fear of failure, sucking their thumbs, wetting their trousers or bed. They possess little openness or flexibility. They find it difficult to be assertive or to cultivate a fighting spirit: they tend to react aggressively or let themselves be walked over. Relations with their environment are predominantly negative.

This often seems to indicate that these children are threatened in one or more of their basic needs. Their overall development is in danger of coming to a standstill.

Level 2: low level of Well-being

These children do not have a feeling of Well-being. About half the time they display signs of emotional discomfort. These moments alternate with neutral & positive signals of Well-being. These children are often tense. They rarely radiate vitality. Sometimes they take pleasure in the ‘wrong’ things, or they enjoy themselves in a distorted way, e.g. by hurting or annoying other people, by needing excessive mothering. Sometimes the feeling of discomfort is concentrated in one area (e.g. the relationship with the teacher), but then this problem carries too much weight, that it casts a dark shadow over other areas of their life.

Variation: this can be seen in children who generally have a (relatively) high level of WB, but who show extreme moments of discomfort e.g. when saying goodbye to parents or when an unknown person enters the room. If these occurrences are frequent the child is placed on level 2, if they are rare the child is placed on level 3.

Level 3: a fluctuating or neutral state of Well-being

These children seem ‘quite’ happy. They occasionally show signs of emotional discomfort, but these do not (excessively) colour their functioning. There are also times when they look relaxed and relatively vigorous. They display a fair amount of self confidence & at times seem to fully enjoy themselves.

Variation: Level 3 is also attributed to children who rarely or never or thoroughly enjoy themselves. Their relationships with the world are not ideal. They regularly shut themselves off & show only moments of openness. Their relations are lacking in intensity.

Level 4: high level of Well-being

These children look generally happy. The moments of Well-being clearly out number the moments of discomfort. For the greater part of the observation period these children feel fine. They only show occasional signs of emotional discomfort. The relations with the immediate surrounding are good. Occasionally, however, friction shows (quite openly), e.g. they may be upset when an unknown person enters the room. They are able to satisfy their basic needs.

Level 5: extremely high level of Well-being

These children are like ‘fish in water’ & obviously feel very comfortable. They radiate vitality, relaxation & inner peace, and show self confidence & self esteem. They are in close contact with their inner selves, needs, wishes & thoughts. They will not push a disagreeable experience aside, but will admit it and readily deal with it. They take pleasure in their activities & experiences, & thoroughly enjoy themselves. They adopt an open & receptive attitude towards their environment. They display flexibility, e.g. by readily adapting to new or strange situations or people. These children dare to be assertive, showing they wish to be both respected & taken into account. This great amount of positive interactions with their surroundings allows them to satisfy their basis needs. They manage temporary frustrations independently.

The scale for Well-being in babies and toddlers

**Level 1: very low**

During the episode of observation the child clearly shows signals of discomfort:

- Whining, sobbing, crying, screaming, etc
- Looking dejected / sad or frightened, panicky
- Looking angry or furious
- Bodily tension: waving arms and / or stamping feet, wriggling, breaking things, hurting others
- Thumb sucking, rubbing one’s eyes
- No reaction to the environment, avoiding contact, withdrawing
- Hurting oneself: banging one’s head, deliberately falling down on the floor, etc

**Level 2: low**

The posture, facial expression and actions indicate that the child does not feel at ease. However, the signals are less explicit than level 1, or the sense of discomfort is not expressed the whole time.

**Level 3: moderate**

The child gives a ‘motionless’ impression, has a neutral posture. There are no signs indicating sadness or pleasure, comfort or discomfort. Facial expressions and posture show little or no emotion.

**Level 4: high**

The child shows signals of satisfaction (see level 5). However, the signals indicating pleasure are not constantly present in the same degree of intensity.

**Level 5: very high**

During the entire observation period there are clear signals indicating comfort, feeling great, enjoying life to the full:

- Feeling happy and cheerful: smiling, beaming, crying out of fun, etc
- Being spontaneous, being oneself, being expressive
- Talking to oneself, playing with sounds, humming, singing, etc
- Being relaxed, not showing any signals of stress
- Being open, approachable for the environment
- Being lively, radiating, reacting energetically, etc
- Expressing self-confidence and self-assurance
10 Top tips to promote children’s Well-being

**Top tip 1**
Rearrange the space into an appealing area
- How cosy is it?
- How inviting is it?
- How simulating is it?

**Top tip 2**
Enrich the areas
- Do they attract children?
- How rich are they?
- Are there enough materials to make them worthwhile?

**Top tip 3**
Introduce new and unconventional materials and activities
- What fascinates children?
- What challenges them?

**Top tip 4**
Find activities to meet children’s interests. Observe
- What speaks to them?
- What interests them?
- Offer appropriate materials
- Develop great projects

**Top tip 5**
Supporting activities with impulses. Make activities more intense by
- Invitation to talk
- Materials
- Suggestions
- Information
- Thought provoking questions

**Top tip 6**
Encourage child initiative
- Open organisation
- Opportunity to choose
- Initiative and autonomy
- Structure
- Supporting rules

**Top tip 7**
Work at the climate and atmosphere
- Children and adults
- Children and children
- Togetherness

**Top tip 8**
Explore feelings, behaviour and values
- In harmony with others
- In touch with oneself

**Top tip 9**
Support children with emotional problems. Help them by:
- Attention
- Talk
- Materials
- Stories
- Expression

**Top tip 10**
Support children with developmental needs. Which children?
- Level of development
- Interest
- Success
Section 4. The contribution of the early years provision to children’s Well-being

You may find it helpful to refer to the sections of Early Years Outcomes referring to children’s personal, social and emotional development and pages 11–14 of the evaluation schedule. This section is about how your care practices help children feel emotionally secure and ensure they are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy.

You should evaluate how well you help children:

- form appropriate bonds and secure emotional attachments with their carers
- learn to behave well and develop good relationships with their peers
- develop the characteristics of effective learning.

Do not just list what you do but consider the impact of your care on children’s healthy development by considering whether:

- practice ensures each child forms appropriate bonds and secure emotional attachments with carers
- care practices ensure children are happy and enjoy what they are doing
- children are learning how to behave well, play cooperatively and develop their independence
- care practices and routines such as nappy changing are used to support children’s all-round development and Well-being
- practitioners encourage children to explore their surroundings and use their imagination
- practitioners help children to talk and play with each other and the adults that care for them
- practice helping children to develop an understanding of the importance of physical exercise and a healthy diet
- children are prepared for their transition within the setting, into other early years settings and into maintained nursery provision and/or reception class.
Increased access to spontaneous movement play has substantial benefits for children’s Well-being. Children who are supported to learn on the move are more involved in their learning, communicate more, are more confident and more in touch with themselves.

Children show higher levels of Well-being in all areas when they are involved in movement play. Specifically:

- In movement play, there is a substantial increase in level 4 and 5 scores, ‘high’ and ‘extremely high’ (Leuvens 5 point Well-being scale)
- The atmosphere in the classroom/setting is calmer when children have access to a free choice movement area for at least some of the time
- There are fewer accidents when children have expanded opportunities for child led movement play from an early age

Five types of movement play

Floor play

As babies and children play on the floor on their backs they:
- Begin to uncurl from the curled up letter C shape they had in the womb
- Begin to find their ‘ends’ as they grab their toes with their hands Develop a sense of interest in the world around
- Develop a felt sense of their upper body and their centre (important for writing later on)

Belly crawling

This helps babies and children to:
- Gain an accurate sense of hunger and fullness, heat and cold
- Build an accurate pain threshold which helps them to stay safe
- Develop open hands (important for fine motor skills later on)

Crawling

This helps babies and children to:
- Develop a sense of balance
- Stabilise hip and shoulders ready for standing
- Develop eye tracking they need to look smoothly up and down (which helps them later to read lines in a book)
- Develop the ability to sort and sift information
Push, pull, stretch and hang

These help babies and children to:

• Build a strong sense of their body
• Coordinate their movement
• Take safe risks and build their confidence
• Learn to take care of themselves and others

Spinning, tipping, rolling and falling

These help babies and children to:

• Build a strong sense of their body
• Coordinate their movement
• Take safe risks and build their confidence
• Learn to take care of themselves and others
• Develop balance - physical and emotional. Ensure their eyes can focus well. Sort and organise information and be ready to learn

Activities to promote movement play

Using Giant Elastics:

• Stretch the elastic out into a big circle by standing inside with elastic around middles and walking backwards or forwards or by standing outside the ring and pulling with hands while moving backwards
• Can we make a small circle, a big circle, 2 circles, a long thin shape etc
• Pass the rope / ribbon - Very loosely tie a piece of rope or ribbon to form a circular loop around the elastic. Children move the elastic up and down to try to get the rope / ribbon to travel all the way around the circle of elastic

• Fling the ring - Stand in a big circle and explain that you will count slowly, ‘1…2…3…FLING!’ On the word ‘fling’ the children let go of the elastic. Explain that if the children have really good ‘listening skills’ and ‘follow instructions’ really well that the ring will land in the centre of the circle! Show children how to hold the ring with their pointer fingers and thumbs only as little children have trouble uncurling their hands from a grasping position in time to fling and may get hit by the ring instead
• Tie a yellow ribbon - Tie a coloured ribbon quite tightly onto the elastic. Play music and pass the elastic around the circle from hand to hand. When the music stops the child holding the piece of elastic with the coloured ribbon on it has to make up an action for everyone to follow
• Frog Game - Imagine the elastic is a pond. All children to hold onto the elastic in a circle crouching down. One child is to be the frog in the middle- they can either wear a frog hat- band with a laminated frog stuck to it or hold a toy frog in hand;

Sing the song below to the first few lines of Twinkle Twinkle

Frog jumps up and frog jumps down
Frog does a little dance all around
Movement for children holding the band - all children raise band up, lift band back down
Frog- jumps up, jumps back down, then jigs around inside the circle
Repeat with new verse
Frog points up and frog points down
Frog points to his friends all around.
Movement for children holding the band - all children raise band up, lift band back down
Frog- jumps up and points upward, jumps down and points down, then points to his friends inside the circle
• Colours ring - Tie different coloured ribbons (1 per child) at intervals along the elastic. Sing song “Pass the ribbons round and round, round and round, round and round, pass the ribbons round and round, until I say STOP!” whilst passing the elastic hand to hand around the circle of children. On the word stop, the children should hold the ribbon nearest themselves. Then adult chants a rhyme such as:

If you have yellow shake one shoulder,
If you have green march in place,
If you have orange wriggle one thumb,
Everybody bend at your waist,
If you have blue wave your hand,
If you have red pat your head,
Then wriggle the ring, wriggle it, wriggle it, wriggle it
Pass it round again

Movement to music:

• Put on slow music eg. Saint Saens –The Elephant from Carnival of the Animals and encourage the children to walk around slowly holding on with both hands- move clockwise then anticlockwise
• As above but children can sit and either rock from side to side or forwards and backwards- adult to make it explicit as to what is going to happen and needs to model to ensure there are no bumped heads
• Movement to songs - Row, Row, Row your Boat - children sit on the floor with legs outstretched in circle holding elastic. Sing the song and rock backwards and forwards
• Children to hold onto the elastic in each hand and gently rock forward and backwards whilst singing See-Saw Marjorie Daw
• Children crouch down holding onto the elastic - sing the nursery rhyme Half a Pound of Tupenny Rye - bob up and down in time to the rhyme, all stay down until somebody shouts - Pop, goes the weasel - all the children jump up
• Ring a Ring O Roses - Stand in a big circle holding the elastic. Walk or skip around. All fall down at the end and then get up and go in the other direction for the second verse
• Hokey Cokey - Use the elastic to hold instead of holding hands
• Grand Old Duke of York - All stand outside the ring and hold the elastic, march around in a circle to the speed of the lyrics. When the lyrics say “top”, “down”, “up”, or “halfway” put the ring at the appropriate level
• In and Out the Dusty Bluebells - Children to hold onto the ring, lift hands up, sing song and one children weave in and out

Using Lycra sheets:

• Children to hold all corners and sides, move it up and down whilst trying to keep a ball or soft toy on top of it. A photograph of the child can also be placed of a child, family member etc
• How big can we make the lycra?
• Child to hide underneath the lycra sheet. Children and practitioners to hold it down and sing a simple song- make up a tune- child under the lycra to wriggle about and make shapes
Where is Hannah hiding, hiding, hiding?
Where is Hannah hiding?
Let’s have a look!
After last line is sung, the lycra sheet is raised and all children are to jump up to reveal the hidden child
• Place the lycra on the floor and ask a child to lie in the middle- practitioners to hold the corners and encourage the child to roll from side to side
• Children to hold onto the sides and gently all pull back after saying 1, 2, 3, GO!
• Children to hold the corners of the lycra and let it gently swing backwards and forwards with a toy doll, soft toy etc in it
• Place the lycra on the floor, child lies on top on their stomach pretending to swim, whilst the children waft the material up and down
• Using five soft toy monkeys- bounce monkeys on the Lycra sheet held by the children whilst singing - 5 little monkeys bouncing on the bed - Monkeys to be knocked off one at a time.
• Collect leaves during autumn - sing the song below to the tune of London Bridge

**Using Scarves and Streamers:**
• Provide slow calm music for children to move to and swirl scarves about
• Take streamers outside on a windy day
• Use one streamer or two, make circles moving arms forwards and backward
• Encourage children to move the scarves up/down/to the side/snake like on the floor/swirl above their heads
• Scarves can be held in the child’s hand or attached by loosely tying them to the child’s wrist

Home made streamers - Attach two or three lengths of colourful ribbon roughly one meter long to hair scrunches

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**See the leaves are tumbling down**
_Tumbling Down, Tumbling Down_  
See the leaves are tumbling down  
Now it’s Autumn

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**Five Little Birdies**
*Five bird finger puppets or bird soft toy puppets needed*

**One little birdie flew and flew**  
_shake Lycra with one bird_

**Along came another one and that made two**  
One… Two…  
_lift Lycra up high together twice, while counting_

**Two little birdies, busy as could be**  
_shake lycra with two birds_

**Along came another one and that made three**  
One… Two… Three…  
_lift Lycra up high together three times, while counting_

**Three little birdies wanted one more**  
Along came another one and that made four etc

**Four little birdies glad to be alive**  
Along came another one and that made five etc

**Five little birdies flying very high**

**Flapping wings and soaring, up in the sky**  
_shake lycra madly and watch those birds fly off!_
Empathy Dolls

Introducing the Empathy Doll in the setting

This process needs to be planned, the doll needs to become an integral member of the setting and participate in all the activities the children do such as snack time, outdoor play and toileting.

- Introduce the doll by a series of short visits so the doll can settle in
- At each visit give the children a little more information about the doll
- Make sure the doll has everything the children have e.g. coat peg, basket, self registration photo
- Make the doll a visible and prominent member of the setting

Showing Empathy

- To show empathy is to identify with another’s feelings
- It is to emotionally put yourself in the place of another
- The ability to empathise is directly dependent on your ability to feel your own feelings and identify them
Developing Your Empathy Doll’s Story

Your empathy doll is a unique member of your group and so should have their own story. This should be recorded and shared with all adults who have contact with the setting; it should be added to and kept up to date.

Things to decide prior to introducing to the setting.

**Name:**

**Birthday:**

**Family Background:**
Consider parents/carers information
Do they have any siblings, Grandparents and extended family?
Where do they live, who lives with them and what sort of house do they live in?
What do the family members spend time doing?
Do they have a job or any hobbies that would be good to include?

**Likes and Dislikes:**
To create a rounded person everyone has some things that they like and don’t like and we need to acknowledge this.

**Things we are good at and things we are not so good at:**
Think about how this is phrased, everyone has strengths and things they find difficult so instead of saying ‘He’s good at playing on the bike but not so good at sharing’ you could say ‘He’s good at playing on the bikes and is trying really hard to share his toys with the other children’
Supporting Young Children’s Emotional Well-being

The adult that promotes high Well-being:

• Shares thoughts and experiences
• Makes eye contact
• Is affectionate
• Builds trusting relationships with families
• Develops a positive emotional and physical environment

Ideas to develop your practice to further support young children’s emotional Well-being

Some ideas for you to develop in your setting:

• Develop a movement play area
• Plan a focused movement play activity each week
• Develop the use of specific and positive praise
• Use an Empathy Doll as a member of your setting
• Run a parent workshop on supporting children’s emotional development
• Change an area of your provision or your routine of the day

A people place........

If this is not the place where tears are understood, where do I go to cry?
If this is not a place where my spirits can take wing, where do I go to fly?
If this is not a place where my questions can be asked, where do I go to seek?
If this is not a place where my feelings can be heard, where do I go to speak?
If this is not a place where you’ll accept me as I am, where can I go to be?
If this is not a place where I can try to and learn to grow, where can I just be me?

William J. Crocker
A Motivational Story with Wisdom: The Professor and the Jar
By Author Unknown

A Professor stood before his philosophy class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly, he picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with golf balls. He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

So the Professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles rolled into the open areas between the golf balls. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The Professor next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. He asked once more if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous “yes.”

The Professor then produced two cups of coffee from under the table and poured the entire contents into the jar, effectively filling the space between the grains of sand.

“Now,” said the professor, as the laughter subsided, “I want you to recognise that this jar represents your life. The golf balls are the important things - your family, your children, your health, your friends, and your favourite passions - things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full.

The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house, and your car. The sand is everything else - the small stuff.

“If you put the sand into the jar first,” he continued, “there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls. The same goes for life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you. Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take time to get medical checkups. Take your partner out to dinner. Play another 18. There will always be time to clean the house and fix the disposal. “Take care of the golf balls first, the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand.”

One of the students raised her hand and inquired what the coffee represented. The Professor smiled. “I’m glad you asked. It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there’s always room for a couple of cups of coffee with a friend.”
Further Documentation
Summary of Assessment Documentation

Getting to know me – and ‘Building a picture’ for Assessment

- Tape recordings
- Post Its
- Transcripts of Conversations
- Significant comments from spontaneous observations
- Significant comments from planned observations
- Written reports on the practitioners knowledge of the child
- Photographs
- Video recording
- Significant comments from planned observations
- Written reports on the practitioners knowledge of the child
- Samples of children’s work
- Learning Stories
- Child initiated activities e.g. role play
- Portfolios
- Previous records from other settings
# CUMBRIA EARLY YEARS PROGRESS CHECK

**BIRTH-36 MONTHS**

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<th>Personal, Social and Emotional Development</th>
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<td>Self confidence and self-awareness; Making relationships; managing feelings and behaviour</td>
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Next steps to support learning and development

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# Cumbria Early Years Progress Check

## 36 + Months

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### Communication and Language

*Listening and attention; understanding; speaking*

### Personal, Social and Emotional Development

*Self confidence and self-awareness; Making relationships; managing feelings and behaviour*

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### Physical Development

*Moving and handling; Health and self-care*

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### Next steps to support learning and development

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<td><strong>Exploring and using media and materials; Being imaginative</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Next steps to support learning and development</strong></td>
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<td>Parent(s)/Carer(s) signature/comment</td>
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</table>
# Incidental Observations

This sheet may be used to record the following types of observation:

- **Participant observation** – carried out while you are playing and working with children.
- **Incidental or spontaneous observation** – things you noticed happening which you felt were significant and should be noted down.
- **Planned observation** – where you stand back to watch a child. These planned observations usually last for anything from between three and 10 minutes. **You may want to use a focused/long observation sheet for a planned observation.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Child:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Time:</th>
<th>Name of Observer:</th>
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**It is useful to gather observations from a range of staff, not just a key person.**

- Child-initiated activity
- Adult-focused activity
- Group time (circle/highlight one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solitary</th>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Small group (3-5)</th>
<th>Larger group (circle/highlight one)</th>
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<tr>
<th>Indoors</th>
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<th>(circle/highlight one)</th>
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**Area:** Role play, maths, writing, small world, home corner, computer/ICT, listening, book, construction, malleable, creative, water, sand, snack, bathroom, climbing

**Other:** Observations need to be made over time, in different situations and different times of the day to capture a breadth of learning and development.

**Observation notes:**

- If you normally record your short observations on post-it notes or stickers this is where to place it.

  - Observation describes the process of watching children in our care, listening to them and taking note of what we see and hear.
  - Be careful to record what you actually saw and/or heard. Do not write assumptions into your observation and do not allow preconceptions to influence what you have observed.
  - Note significant and/or unusual observations. They should be about what a child can do, brief, precise and valuable to those who will use them to inform planning.
  - Photos and recordings could be linked to an observation. This can be a good way of sharing observations with children and their parents.

**Observation links – characteristics of effective learning**

Reflect on the learning characteristics shown by a child. It is important to reflect upon how a child learns, and not just what they learn.

**Playing and exploring – engagement**
- Finding out and exploring
- Playing with what they know
- Being willing to ‘have a go’

**Active learning – motivation**
- Being involved and concentrating
- Keeping trying
- Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

**Observation links – areas of learning and development**

Prime Areas: PSED  PD  CL
Specific Areas: L  M  UTW  EAD

**Aspect/s:**
Remember, stage not age – children will not be in one age band across all the areas of learning and development. This is also the same when we consider the aspects within a single area of learning and development.
| Creating and thinking critically – thinking |  
| Having their own ideas |  
| Making links |  
| Choosing ways to do things |  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Involvement:</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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Involvement is a quality of human activity that can be recognised by concentration and persistence. It is characterised by motivation, interest and fascination, openness to stimuli and intense mental activity, deep satisfaction and a strong flow of energy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Well-being:</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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Each child’s Well-being has a very strong influence on the way the child develops, including their ability to learn, to communicate, their behaviour, their curiosity and their ability to cope with new experiences.

**Assessment**

- What does this show us about a child’s learning and development?
- Analysing observations is vitally important otherwise there is no point in doing them.
- It is important to make thorough observations, taking time to think about what you have seen and heard, because the decisions that you then make affect the planning to meet individual and/or group needs and have a very real impact on the Well-being of the child.
- A child’s response during a single activity is not always an accurate or reliable guide to competence. There needs to be caution about conclusions drawn on the basis of one activity alone.
- Are children involved in discussing their achievements?

**Implications for future planning/Next steps:**

- If practitioners are going to plan effectively for children’s next steps in learning, they need to know exactly what children have already learnt and how they like to learn. Observation is the key to this.
- Build upon a child’s interests.
**Name of Child:**
Rebecca  
1 year, 7 months

**Date:**
5th September 2012

**Time:**
9.20am

**Name of Observer:**
CAC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child-initiated activity</th>
<th>Adult-focused activity</th>
<th>Group time</th>
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**Area:** Role play, maths, writing, small world, home corner, computer/ICT, listening, book, construction, malleable, creative, water, sand, snack, bathroom, climbing  
**Other:** Cosy Corner

**Observation notes:**
Matched the pieces of an animal inset puzzle to the picture by placing the animals on top of the right pictures. Self-corrected a couple of times.

**Observation links – characteristics of effective learning**
- Playing and exploring – engagement
- Finding out and exploring
- Playing with what they know
- Being willing to ‘have a go’

**Observation links – areas of learning and development**
- **Prime Areas:** PSED  PD  CL
- **Specific Areas:** L  M  UTW  EAD

**Aspect/s:**
Shape, space and measure (16-26) – attempt to fit shapes into spaces on an inset board.

**Level of Involvement:** 1  2  3  4  5
**Level of Well-being:** 1  2  3  4  5

**Assessment (what does this show us about a child’s learning and development?)**
Interested in matching independently with no adult prompting and was able to correct herself.

**Implications for future planning/Next steps:**
Develop her interest in matching.
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<tr>
<th>Name of Child:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Time:</th>
<th>Name of Observer:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Billy</td>
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<tr>
<th>Activity Type</th>
<th>Circle Highlight One</th>
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<tr>
<td>Child-initiated activity</td>
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Area: Role play, maths, writing, small world, home corner, computer/ICT, listening, book, construction, malleable, creative, water, sand, snack, bathroom, climbing
Other: 

Observation notes:

In the role of waiter Billy said, “They need chapadums” while holding up two chopsticks.
Adult: “Do you mean chopsticks?”
“Yeah” said Billy, “Silly me! Chopsticks!”

Observation links – characteristics of effective learning

Playing and exploring – engagement
Finding out and exploring
Playing with what they know
Being willing to ‘have a go’

Active learning – motivation
Being involved and concentrating
Keeping trying
Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

Creating and thinking critically – thinking
Having their own ideas
Making links
Choosing ways to do things

Observation links – areas of learning and development

Prime Areas: PSED  PD  CL
Specific Areas: L  M  UTW  EAD

Aspect/s:

Speaking (40-60+) – begin to use talk to pretend imaginary situations.
People and communities (30-50) – enjoy role play with peers.

Level of Involvement: 1  2  3  4  5
Level of Well-being: 1  2  3  4  5

Assessment (what does this show us about a child’s learning and development?)

Really grasping well at the new vocabulary here, although got into a bit of a muddle with the right new words; saw the funny side of it!

Implications for future planning/Next steps:

Introduce proper names for familiar Chinese foods and other kitchen/eating tools.
**Name of Child:** Samuel  
2 year, 8 months  

**Date:** 5th September 2012  
**Time:** 9.20am  
**Name of Observer:** KM

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**Area:** Role play, maths, writing, small world, home corner, computer/ICT, listening, book, construction, malleable, creative, water, sand, snack, bathroom, climbing  
**Other:** Cooking activity

**Observation notes:**

Joined in a planned cooking activity. Interested in cutting courgettes, initially supported by staff then independently. Sustained this activity for much longer than usual.

**Observation links – characteristics of effective learning**

- Playing and exploring – engagement
  - Finding out and exploring
  - Playing with what they know
  - Being willing to ‘have a go’

- Active learning – motivation
  - Being involved and concentrating
  - Keeping trying
  - Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

- Creating and thinking critically – thinking
  - Having their own ideas
  - Making links
  - Choosing ways to do things

**Observation links – areas of learning and development**

**Prime Areas:** PSED, PD, CL  
**Specific Areas:** L, M, UTW, EAD

**Aspect/s:** Moving and handling (30-50) – engaged in activities requiring hand-eye coordination; use one-handed tools and equipment.

**Level of Involvement:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5  
**Level of Well-being:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

**Assessment (what does this show us about a child’s learning and development?)**

This seems a very good choice of activity to build up his sustained concentration – he was obviously involved at a deep level. Maybe using tools is the important aspect to sustain interest or build skills? Or is it the link with home?

**Implications for future planning/Next steps:**

Provide tools such as play knives and scissors with other materials such as clay, playdough and more cooking. Ask Mum about his involvement in cooking at home.
Name of Child: Jasmine

Date: 5th October 2011

Time: 11.15am

Name of Observer: SG

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Area: Role play, maths, writing, small world, home corner, computer/ICT, listening, book, construction, malleable, creative, water, sand, snack, bathroom, climbing

Other: Cosy Corner

Observation notes:

Sat in front of the mirror smiling at her image and showing signs of excitement, waving her arms.

Observation links – characteristics of effective learning

- Playing and exploring – engagement
  - Finding out and exploring
  - Playing with what they know
  - Being willing to 'have a go'

- Active learning – motivation
  - Being involved and concentrating
  - Keeping trying
  - Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

- Creating and thinking critically – thinking
  - Having their own ideas
  - Making links
  - Choosing ways to do things

Observation links – areas of learning and development

Prime Areas: PSED  PD  CL
Specific Areas: L  M  UTW  EAD

Aspect/s:
- Understanding (8-20)
- Speaking (8-20)

Level of Involvement: 1 2 3 4 5

Level of Well-being: 1 2 3 4 5

Assessment (what does this show us about a child’s learning and development?)

Excited by and responding to reflection.

Implications for future planning/Next steps:

More play with mirrors of different dimensions and peep-a-boo games.
## Guidance for Focused Activity Plan

### Activity:
The name of the activity

### Date(s):

### Adult(s) leading:

### Groupings:

### What we want the children to learn linked to the EYFS:
Write a short description of what the children will learn and note the main area(s) of learning it covers e.g. PSED/CL

### What the activity or experience will look like:
Write a detailed step by step description of the activity.

- Think about an interesting stimulus to introduce your activity;
- Think about giving the children time to explore the resources;
- Make sure your activity is interactive and playful;
- How will you round off the activity?
- Will children have opportunities to practise and develop their learning?

### Resources we will use:
List all the resources you will need.

### How we will adapt the activity for different children:
Write the initials of the child(ren) who may need extra support or may need their learning extending. Write next to the initials what you will do to meet the child(ren)'s needs.

### What we will do to support the children’s learning:
Think about what the adult can do to support the children. This could include:

- Showing them how to use the resources;
- Talking about the experiences;
- Asking questions;
- Introducing new vocabulary;
- Introducing a challenge.

### How the activity went / next possibilities:
This could include:

- What did the children learn?
- Which children need more experiences like this?
- Which children need to move on in their learning?
- Did the adult support the children effectively?
- How did the children respond to the activity?
- Were the children interested in the activity?
- Did the children enjoy it?
- Are there any activities that you can include in your provision next week to give children opportunities to practise their learning?
## 2-4 year old example

### Focused Activity Plan

**Activity:** Build a zoo and sort the animals

**Date(s):**

**Adult(s) leading:** SH MC MC

**Groupings:** 4 children per group

### What we want the children to learn linked to the EYFS:

- To use the vocabulary of size (M)
- To sort the animals by their type and size (M/UW)
- To talk about how and why they have sorted their animals (CL/M)

### What the activity or experience will look like:

- Remind the children about SP’s photograph she brought in of the lemur from the zoo and have the copy of the story we shared ‘Dear Zoo’.
- Get a piece of paper and write a label- ‘The Zoo’ and ask a child to help stick it to the tray.
- Ask the children to build enclosures for the animals and add them to the zoo.
- Get the animal box and encourage the children to sort the animals by their type, putting them into separate enclosures.
- Talk about the different sizes and reasons for sorting the animals whilst playing with them.
- Encourage the children to add natural materials to their enclosures. Talk about their choices with them.

### Resources we will use:

- SP Photograph and Dear Zoo book.
- Duplo
- Zoo animals
- Builders tray
- Natural materials- leaves, twigs, leaves, sand

### How we will adapt the activity for different children:

- **P.J** – individual support to help build the enclosure.
- **L.G/H.M** – use of gestures to accompany the vocabulary big and small.
- **M.C**- encourage her to explore the concept/vocabulary medium/middle sized.

### What we will do to support the children’s learning:

- Pay alongside the children using the names of the animals
- Introduce and model the mathematical language of comparing size
- Encourage the children to talk about size whilst playing with them
- Ask questions - How have you sorted your animals?
  - Tell me why you have put that one there?
  - Are your animals all the same?
- Key vocabulary we will use -big, small, large, tiny, huge, the same as, different, sort.

### How the activity went / next possibilities:

All children except RS, MT, LG showed understanding of big and small and used the correct vocabulary for this. Ready to move onto middle sized next time.

Next week- treasure hunt outdoors collecting objects which can be sorted into buckets of big, middle sized and small.

Adults to join RS, MT, LG in their self chosen play and reinforce the concepts of big and small.

MC understands middle sized—to move onto ordering by size.

Talk to MC’s parents about activities they could support MC with at home.

Plan for the zoo to be in the small world area next week.
## Well-being – enriching the environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How currently used?</th>
<th>Changes made?</th>
<th>Observe again</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area –</td>
<td>Date-</td>
<td>Date-</td>
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</table>

What did the children say about the changes?
If you require this document in another format (eg CD, audio cassette, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone 01768 812612.