

Planning for Learning through Growth

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Making plans

Child-friendly planning

The purpose of planning is to make sure that all children enjoy a broad and balanced experience of learning. Planning should be flexible, useful and child-friendly. It should reflect opportunities available both indoors and outside. Plans form part of a planning cycle in which practitioners make observations, assess and plan.

Children benefit from reflective planning that takes into account the children's current interests and abilities and also allows them to take the next steps in their learning. Plans should make provision for activity that promotes learning and a desire to imagine, observe, communicate, experiment, investigate and create.

Plans should include a variety of types of activity. Some will be adult-initiated or adult-led, that focus on key skills or concepts. These should be balanced with opportunities for child-initiated activity where the children take a key role in the planning. In addition there is a need to plan for the on-going continuous provision areas such as construction, sand and water, malleable materials, small world, listening area, role-play and mark-making. Thought also needs to be given to the enhanced provision whereby an extra resource or change may enable further exploration, development and learning.

The outdoor environment provides valuable opportunities for children's learning. It is vital that plans value the use of outdoor space.

The UK Frameworks

Within the UK a number of frameworks exist to outline the provision that children should be entitled to receive. Whilst a variety of terms and labels are used to describe the Areas of Learning there are key principles which are common to each document. For example they advocate that practitioners' planning should be personal based on observations and knowledge of the specific children within a setting. They acknowledge that young children learn best when there is scope for child-initiated activity. In addition it is accepted that young children's learning is holistic. Although within the documents Areas of Learning are presented separately to ensure that key areas are not over-looked, within settings, children's learning will combine areas. Thus the Areas of Learning are perhaps of most use for planning, assessment and recording.



Focused area plans

The plans you make for each day will outline areas of continuous provision and focused, adult-led activities. Plans for focused-area activities need to include aspects such as:

- resources needed;
- the way in which you might introduce activities;
- individual needs;
- the organisation of adult help;
- size of the group;
- timing;
- safety;
- key vocabulary.

Identify the learning and the Early Learning Goals that each activity is intended to promote. Make a note of any assessments or observations that you are likely to carry out. After carrying out the activities, make notes on your plans to say what was particularly successful, or any changes you would make another time.

A final note

Planning should be seen as flexible. Not all groups meet every day, and not all children attend every day. Any part of the plan can be used independently, stretched over a longer period or condensed to meet the needs of any group. You will almost certainly adapt the activities as children respond to them in different ways and bring their own ideas, interests

Making plans

and enthusiasms. The important thing is to ensure that the children are provided with a varied and enjoyable curriculum that meets their individual developing needs.

Using the book

Read the section which outlines links to the Early Learning Goals (pages 4-6) and explains the rationale for focusing on 'Growth'.

The chart on page 7 gives an example format for weekly planning. It provides opportunity to plan for the on-going continuous provision, as well as more focused activities.

Use pages 8 to 19 to select from a wide range of themed, focused activities that recognise the importance of involving children in practical activities and giving them opportunities to follow their own interests. For each 'Growth' theme, two activities are described in detail as examples to help you in your planning and preparation. Key vocabulary, questions and learning opportunities are identified. Use the activities as a basis to:

- extend current and emerging interests and capabilities
- engage in sustained conversations
- stimulate new interests and skills.

Find out on page 20 how the Growth activities can be brought together with a Garden party.

Use page 21 for ideas of resources to collect or prepare. Remember that the books listed are only suggestions. It is likely that you will already have within your setting a variety of other books that will be equally useful.

The activity overview chart on page 23 can be used either at the planning stage or after each theme has been completed. It will help you to see at a glance which aspects of children's development are being addressed and alert you to the areas which may need greater input in the future.

As children take part in the activities, their learning will progress. 'Collecting evidence' on page 22 explains how you might monitor each child's achievements.

There is additional material to support the working partnership of families and children in the form of a reproducible Family Page found inside the back cover.

It is important to appreciate that the ideas presented in this book will only be a part of your planning. Many activities that will be taking place as routine in your group may not be mentioned. For example, it is assumed that sand, dough, water, puzzles, role-play, floor toys, technology and large scale apparatus are part of the ongoing early years experience. Role-play areas, stories, rhymes, singing, and group discussion times are similarly assumed to be happening in each week although they may not be a focus for described activities.



Using the 'Early Learning Goals'

The principles that are common to each of the United Kingdom curriculum frameworks for the early years are described on page 2. It is vital that, when planning for children within a setting, practitioners are familiar with the relevant framework's content and organisation for areas of learning. Regardless however, of whether a child attends a setting in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales they have a right to provision for all areas of learning. The children should experience activities which encourage them to develop their communication and language; personal, social, emotional, physical, mathematical and creative skills. They should have opportunities within literacy and be encouraged to understand and explore their world.

Within the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2012), Communication and Language; Physical Development and Personal, Social and Emotional Development are described as Prime Areas of Learning that are 'particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive' (page 4, DfE 2012). The Specific Areas of Learning are Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design.

For each Area of Learning the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) describe what children are expected to be able to do by the time they enter Year 1. These goals, detailed on pages 4 to 6, have been used throughout this book to show how activities relating to 'Growth' could link to these expectations. For example, for Personal, Social and Emotional Development, one aim relates to the development of children's 'self-confidence and self-awareness'. Activities suggested which provide the opportunity for children to do this have the reference PSE1. This will enable you to see which parts of the Early Learning Goals are covered for a given theme and to plan for areas to be revisited and developed.

In addition, an activity may be carried out to develop a range of different Early Learning Goals. For example, during this topic the children will work with partners to create mini-gardens. The children will be developing aspects of PD1 as they handle tools carefully to plant seeds and make fences and paths. They will also be gaining Understanding of the World as they look closely at plants and PSE as they cooperate with each other in pairs. Thus, whilst adult-focused activities may have clearly defined goals at the planning stage, it must be remembered that as children

take on ideas and initiate their own learning and activities, goals may change.

The Prime Areas of Learning

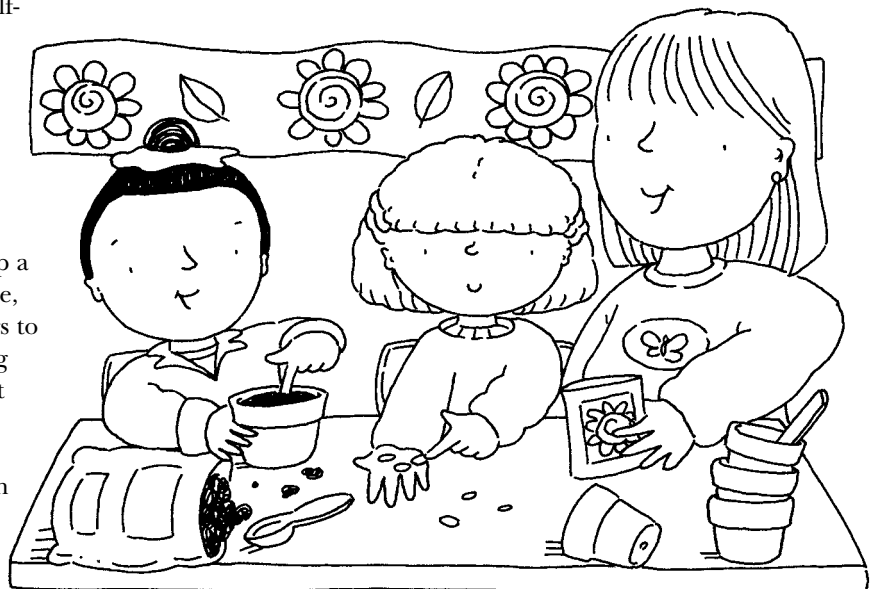
Communication and Language

Listening and attention: children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. They give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity. (CL1)

Understanding: children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events. (CL2)

Speaking: children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs. They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events. (CL3)

The topic of 'Growth' provides many opportunities for children to enjoy listening, understanding and speaking. There are a wide range of books featuring Growth and these can be used to stimulate interest in the chosen themes,



Example chart to aid planning in the EYFS

Week beginning:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
FOCUSED ACTIVITIES					
Focus Activity 1:					
Focus Activity 2:					
Stories and rhymes					
CONTINUOUS PROVISION (Indoor)					
Collage					
Construction (large)					
Construction (small)					
ICT					
Imaginative play					
Listening					
Malleable materials					
Mark making					
Painting					
Role play					
Sand (damp)					
Sand (dry)					
Water					
CONTINUOUS PROVISION (Outdoor)					
Construction					
Creative play					
Exploratory play					
Gross motor					
ENHANCED PROVISION (Indoor)					
ENHANCED PROVISION (Outdoor)					



Theme 1: Babies



Communication and Language

- Invite a parent and new baby to visit. Remind the children to sit quietly, watch and listen as the baby has a bath. Help children to ask questions about what the baby needs. Scribe a list of ways to help at home with a new baby. (CL1, 2)
- Set up a baby clinic in the role-play area, with baby dolls, clothes, bath, nappies, weighing scales, and so on. Encourage children to go into role as nurses, midwives, staff and parents visiting the clinic. (CL3)

Physical Development

- Set up an obstacle course for children to crawl around like babies. Can they crawl through tunnels, along balance bars, up and down slides, and around cones? Ask children to try to push a doll's push chair around the same course. (PD1)
- Hold a keep-fit session to music (see activity opposite). (PD2)

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- At circle time talk about baby brothers and sisters. Read *Rosie's Babies* by Martin Waddell or *Big Brother, Little Brother* by Penny Dale. Pass a baby doll around the circle and ask children to pretend it is their baby sister or brother. What do they like about the baby? (PSE1, 2, 3)
- Ask children to bring in photos of themselves as babies. Display them as a Baby Portrait Gallery. Can they recognise each other as babies? Talk about naming ceremonies in different cultures. (PSE1, 3)

Literacy

- Write record cards for the baby dolls in the baby clinic (see CL). Include names, information on weight, injections, and illnesses. (L2)
- Ask children to write their own names as labels to add to the Baby Portrait Gallery.
- Sing 'Pat a cake, pat a cake, baker's man'. Clap the rhythm of the words. Clap on a partner's hands. Make a collection of words beginning with 'b'. (L1)
- Make thank you cards for the new baby and parent who visited the setting. Help children to write simple sentences and their own names. (L2)

Mathematics

- Mark the heights of the children on a wall chart at the beginning of the topic. Measure them all again at the end to see who has grown the most. Use lots of mathematical language. (M2)

- Cut up cardboard tubes into hoops. Paint them different colours and write the numbers one to ten in black felt pen. Alternatively, use small pringle or hot chocolate tins. Ask children to build tall number towers. Can they use the numbers in the right order? (M1)

Understanding the World

- 'See how I've grown' (see activity opposite). (UW1)
- Talk about babies teething and milk teeth. Cook some peeled apples in a saucepan. Compare eating slices of crisp, raw apple with the soft apple puree. Taste other fruit purees sold as baby foods. Can the children identify the flavours? (UW2)

Expressive Arts and Design

- Paint portraits of the baby who visited having a bath, or pictures from the children's baby photos. (EAD1)
- Sing 'Rock a bye baby'. Ask children to sing the words in a gentle, soothing way while rocking a baby doll or soft toy. Try singing this and other lullabies to the baby visitor. (EAD1)
- Make a baby mobile. Use card templates of teddy bears or moon and stars, and paint both sides with black and white geometrical patterns. Suspend from a hoop or clothes hanger. (EAD2)

Activity: See how I've grown...

Learning opportunity: Observing growth and talking about change.

Early Learning Goal: Understanding the World. People and communities.

Resources: *See How I Grow* by Angela Wilkes or similar book on child's growth; photographs of children when they were babies (see PSE); paper; pencils; crayons.

Organisation: Whole group introduction with small group recording activity.

Key vocabulary: Baby, grow, change, month, when, now.

What to do: Read the book to the whole group. Talk about what the baby learns to do as it grows, such as smile, sit up, play, feed itself, and so on.

Look at the photographs of the children in your group when they were small babies. What can they do now that they could not do then? Make a list of all the changes they have noticed.

In a small group, ask children to record their ideas on a 'then and now' writing frame (see diagram below) to help consolidate their learning. Encourage children to think about what they might be able to do when they are a year older. Can they add this to their picture? Combine pictures and writing into a Baby Book for each child.

Activity: Keep-Fit

Learning opportunity: Listening to instructions and moving to music.

Early Learning Goal: Physical Development. Health and self-care.

Resources: Suitable music with a regular dance beat; CD or access to the Internet, large space.

Organisation: Whole group.

Key vocabulary: Keep-fit, exercise, warm-up, stretch, march, bend, stamp, forwards, backwards, left, right.

What to do: Explain to the children that healthy bodies need exercise to keep fit and grow strong. Ask them to watch carefully, listen to the instructions and copy what you do.

Organise children into rows so that they can all see you clearly. Start with a gentle warm-up such as marching up and down on the spot, swinging arms, and bending elbows and knees in time to the beat of the music. Ask children to stretch up tall and out to the sides to really stretch their muscles.


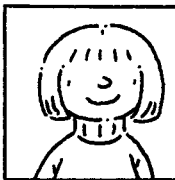
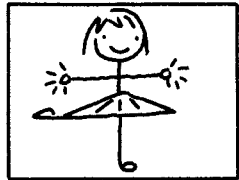
Make up a simple pattern of movement for them to copy such as four steps forwards, four steps back, four to the right, four to the left. If you aim to do four of each action you should keep with the music!

Try some partner work. Children choose a partner and clap each other's hands. End by joining hands in a big circle and walk or skip round. Most important – have fun! Make sure you take some photographs.

After the exercise ask children to put their hands on their chests and feel their hearts beating. Can they identify any other changes in their bodies? Lie down and relax to cool down.

Display

For fun, put up baby photographs of the adults who work in the setting under the heading 'Where are they now?' Can the children or their parents recognise anyone? Display photographs of the children when they were babies with the name labels in the Baby Portrait Gallery and if possible some taken during the keep-fit session. Make a collection of baby books, such as board books, touchy-feely, fabric books and baby toys. Hang the children's baby mobiles above the display.

<p>then I was a baby</p>  <p>I could ...</p>	<p>now I am ...</p>  <p>I can ...</p>	<p>when I am ...</p>  <p>I will ...</p>
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