



Early Intervention

Introduction

The emphasis placed on early intervention strategies – addressing issues early on in a child’s life when additional support can have its maximum impact – has been a feature of all the government reports leading up to the production of the revised framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Evidence shows that the right kind of intervention in the first three years of a child’s life is particularly important as this is the period when development is most rapid.

Integrated services and multi professional working with shared ideals and objectives are very clearly seen as the way forward, with early years education and childcare provision existing as part of a spectrum of services that families will access while their children are young. For integrated working to be effective, early years practitioners will need to work with professionals from other sectors, building on the foundation of a mutually agreed, aspirational vision of what young children are entitled to.

Recognising and responding to children’s needs

The new EYFS Framework recognises the importance of practitioners:

- feeling confident in recognising when children in their setting may have additional needs
- having the tools to support and address these needs

Although this may appear to be a very daunting and ‘specialist’ area, it is in fact merely an extension of what good practitioners will be doing for all the children that they work with on a daily basis. All good early years practice is based on ‘knowing the child’ and planning opportunities and experiences based on what an individual child is interested in, enjoys, and can do. This message is reinforced in ‘The Unique Child’, one of the four guiding principles named in the new EYFS framework which should shape practice in early years settings:

*every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.*

The role of the early years practitioner in the early intervention process is to:

- observe and be aware of when a child might be experiencing problems
- gather information about the child, including talking with parents, to support the initial observations
- discuss possible strategies with senior colleagues, including the settings Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), and agree the next steps
- provide information for specialist professionals should this be needed.

Professional help is always available from the area SENCo or advisory teacher to support this process.

More guidance

- *Five steps to recognising additional needs in the early years*, Chris Dukes and Maggie Smith (2012) [<http://www.optimus-education.com/five-steps-recognising-additional-needs-early-years>]

Key person system

An effective key person system makes a very significant contribution to how effective a setting will be in identifying and supporting those children who, at different times and for a variety of reasons, could benefit from additional support. The key person develops a unique relationship with the children in their ‘key group’ and their families. As part of their role, the key person will help ensure that every child’s learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs, and they will seek to engage and support parents/carers in guiding their child’s

development at home. The key person will be a point of contact between the family and the setting and, as they spend a significant amount of time with the child every day, will be well placed to observe and monitor his or her development and progress.

More guidance

- *Satisfying the key person role*, Anita Hughes & Veronica Read (2010) [<http://www.optimus-education.com/satisfying-key-person-role>]

Formative assessment

Formative assessment – sometimes known as on-going assessment – plays an important role in helping practitioners to be aware of children’s interests and skills, monitor their progress and plan appropriate experiences for them. This involves observing children as they play and noting their achievements, interests and ways of learning. This information should always be shared with, and supplemented by, information and observations from parents and carers.

Recording this information is not intended to be unduly time-consuming or involve excessive amounts of paperwork. Sharing this information with parents/carers helps to keep them informed of their child’s progress and development and practitioners can use this information to address any learning and development needs in partnership with parents/carers, and any relevant professionals.

Progress check at age two

The new progress check to be scheduled between the ages of two and three has been introduced to give practitioners the opportunity to summarise their observations collected on a child, and crystallise these into a short written report. Parents/carers should be provided with a short written report that summarises their child’s progress in the three prime areas of learning – personal, social and emotional development, physical development, and communication and language.

This progress check is designed to identify the child’s strengths, and highlight any areas where the child’s progress is less than expected. If there are significant emerging concerns, or an identified special educational need or disability, practitioners can then develop a targeted plan to support the child’s future learning and development involving other professionals as appropriate.

Although there is no standard format for the written summary, it should highlight:

- areas in which a child is progressing well
- areas in which some additional support might be needed
- any areas where there is a concern that a child may have a developmental delay
- the activities and strategies the provider intends to adopt to address any issues or concerns.

As part of the process, practitioners should discuss with parents and/or carers how the summary of development can be used to support learning at home, and they should also encourage parents/carers to share information from the progress check with other relevant professionals, such as their health visitor and/or a teacher – if a child moves to school-based provision at age three.

When scheduling the progress check practitioners, should consult with parents/carers to agree when would be the most useful time to provide a summary. This is so that, whenever possible, the information can be used to inform the Healthy Child Programme health and development review at age two. It is anticipated that taking account of information from the progress check, which reflects on-going, regular observation of children’s development, should help ensure that health visitors can identify children’s needs accurately and fully at the health review. Providers must have the consent of parents and/or carers to share information directly with other relevant professionals, if they consider this would be helpful.

More guidance

- *‘Know How’ guide to support practitioners in carrying out the two-year-old progress check*, National Children’s

Bureau [<http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/A-Know-How-Guide.pdf>]

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile

The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) remains the summative assessment to be completed in the final term of the year in which the child reaches age five. However, the new EYFSP is shorter than the previous document, containing only 17 early learning goals rather than the previous 69.

The purpose of the profile is to give parents and carers, practitioners, and teachers a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year One. When completing the profile, an assessment is made of a child's level of development against each of the 17 early learning goals, to indicate whether the child is meeting expected levels of development, exceeding the expected levels, or not yet reaching expected levels. A short commentary is also included on how the child demonstrates the characteristics of learning – playing and exploring, active learning, creating and thinking critically.

The EYFSP should be shared with the child's parents/carers and they should be given the opportunity to discuss it with the teacher who completed it. It is a requirement that the EYFS Profile is completed for all children, including those with special educational needs or disabilities. Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments to the assessment process for children with special educational needs and disabilities can be made and, if required, specialist help should be sought with this process.

Behaviour management

As children progress through different stages of social, emotional, and behavioural development, they will have specific needs to be met. This means that all early years practitioners will, from time to time, experience challenging behaviour from children. Although all children are different, there is a range of 'typical behaviours' that young children demonstrate that practitioners may need to address. These behaviours might include: temper tantrums, biting, fighting, conflict, and problems with sharing.

Having strategies to manage young children's behaviour will be the foundation of many good early intervention strategies. To be effective, these strategies will involve all aspects of the organisation and management of the setting, including:

- adults' expectations of what constitutes 'good behaviour'
- how adults and children talk to one another
- how positive relationships are nurtured
- the organisation and daily routines of the setting
- how well the setting promotes partnerships with parents.

More guidance

Practical advice on how to develop strategies to promote positive behaviour can be found in the following articles:

- *Promoting good early years behaviour*, Juliet Neill-Hall (2008) [<http://www.optimus-education.com/promoting-good-early-years-behaviour>]
- *Creative solutions to early years behaviour*, Anni McTavish (2008) [<http://www.optimus-education.com/creative-solutions-early-years-behaviour>]
- *Practical ways to promote positive behaviour*, Anni McTavish (2012) [<http://www.optimus-education.com/practical-ways-promote-positive-behaviour>]

Relevant documents

- *Early intervention: The next steps* Graham Allen MP (2011) [<http://bit.ly/kdsNV4>]
- *The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults*, Frank Field (2010) [<http://bit.ly/jzQRtS>]
- *A child centred system* Prof. Eileen Munro (2011) [<http://bit.ly/mBq5YA>]
- *Foundations for life, health and learning*, Dame Clare Tickell (2011) [<http://bit.ly/mRyVoW>]
- *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* (2012) [http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/e/eyfs_statutory_framework_march_2012.pdf]
- *Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage* (2012) [<http://www.early-education.org.uk/sites/>]

default/files/Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage -27.3.12 FINAL_1.pdf]

- *Know How Guide: EYFS Progress check at age two* (2012) [<http://bit.ly/KhgcnS>]

EYFS Statutory Framework

1.7 Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all of the areas of learning and development.

Practitioners working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the three prime areas, which are the basis for successful learning in the other four specific areas. The three prime areas reflect the key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively, and become ready for school. It is expected that the balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas.

But throughout the early years, if a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, practitioners must discuss this with the child's parents and/or carers and agree how to support the child. Practitioners must consider whether a child may have a special educational need or disability which requires specialist support. They should link with, and help families to access, relevant services from other agencies as appropriate.

1.8 For children whose home language is not English, providers must take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home. Providers must also ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language during the EYFS, ensuring children are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them when they begin Year One.

When assessing communication, language and literacy skills, practitioners must assess children's skills in English. If a child does not have a strong grasp of English language, practitioners must explore the child's skills in the home language with parents and/or carers, to establish whether there is cause for concern about language delay.

Auditing your provision

Use these questions to review how well the early identification and support process works in your setting. This will be an opportunity to identify key points for action and highlight training requirements in advance of the introduction of the new EYFS Framework.

Recognising and responding to children's needs

- Do we have manageable procedures in place for observing children and recording their progress?
- Do we need to spend time on helping staff to gain a fuller understanding of child development?
- Do we have a good system for flagging up a potential problem that an individual child may be experiencing?
- Is the person taking the role of SENCo fully trained and up-to-date with new developments?
- Do all staff know who the SENCo is and what the role entails?
- Do our staff induction procedures fully cover the key aspects of early intervention?
- How effective are we at implementing and monitoring individual education/play plans?
- Do we have the correct contact details for the special need/inclusion service and other support agencies?
- What more could we do to build up positive relationships with colleagues providing services for the children and families who attend our setting?
- How robust are our procedures for maintaining appropriate levels of confidentiality when dealing with issues concerning individual children and their families?
- Are we confident that our systems for building up partnerships with parents are effective?
- When did we last consult with parents/carers to ask them how we could improve our systems?
- Do we need to review any of our policies in relation to the new EYFS Statutory Framework?

Key person working

- Do all staff understand the role and purpose of the key person?
- How effectively is key person working covered in our induction procedures?
- Do all staff feel comfortable with key person working and do they know where to go for advice if they encounter any difficulties?
- Do our daily routines allow enough time for interaction between parents and their key person?
- Do we have an effective back-up system to cover for absences?
- Could we do more to minimise the number of changes in key person that a family experiences while their child is attending the setting?
- Should we introduce home visits before children join the setting to start the key person-family relationship off on a strong footing?
- What more could we do to help parents/carers understand the key person role?

Formative assessment

- Do all members of staff understand the value and purpose of observing children's play and learning?
- Do we have an effective, manageable record keeping system that can be kept up to date easily?
- How well do we use the information gained through observations to plan for the next stages in a child's learning?
- How do we share information with parents to help them understand more about how young children think and learn?

Progress check at age two

- Does everyone understand the purpose of the two-year-old progress check?
- Have we decided on a format for how we will record the necessary information?
- Are we clear about what information should be included and do we all understand the necessity for respecting the confidentiality of this information?
- Have we agreed when and how the information will be gathered, and by whom?
- Do we know who will share the information with parents/carers and when this will happen?
- What do we need to do to help parents understand more about the purpose of the two-year-old progress check?

EYFS Profile

- Are we comfortable that we understand the format of the new EYFS Profile?
- Are our systems for gathering information for the profile working well?
- How are we going to gather information relating to the characteristics of learning?
- What do we need to do to let parents know more about the new profile?
- Do we need to do more to make sure that the information gathered through the profile is used by colleagues in the rest of the school?
- Do we need to review our procedures for sharing the findings of the profile with parents/carers?
- Are we aware of the latest set of requirements from the local authority regarding information gained through the profile?

Behaviour management

- Do we have a collective view of what constitutes desirable behaviour in children of different ages?
- Are we consistent in the way we treat boys and girls?
- Do we have an effective behaviour management strategy in place and do we always implement it?
- Is behaviour management fully covered during the staff induction process?
- Does the organisation of our setting and its daily routines promote 'good behaviour'?
- How good are we at sharing our strategies for managing children's behaviour with parents?
- Do we know where to go if we feel we need additional support or training?

The Early Intervention Program offers a variety of therapeutic and support services to eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families, including

How to Refer a Child to the Early Intervention Program.

A municipal Early Intervention Official (EIO) designated by the chief elected official of the municipality/county administers the Early Intervention Program locally. Contact your EIO for information about your local program or to refer a child.

Summary Comprehensive early intervention programs can be quite effective for young children with developmental disabilities, as well as for children who are at risk due to biological or environmental factors. There is a need for additional development and evaluation of evidence-based treatments, as well as a further understanding of mediators and moderators of treatment outcome. Early intervention programs provide special services to children from birth through age five who are at-risk or have special needs. The scope of these programs may also include the child's family. Early intervention services and programs focus on the areas of cognition (thinking skills), speech/language, motor skills, self-help skills, and social-emotional development. It is not uncommon to find programs that also include services such as nursing, social work, nutrition, and counseling. Early intervention means identifying and providing effective early support to children and young people who are at risk of poor outcomes.

Effective early intervention works to prevent problems occurring, or to tackle them head-on when they do, before problems get worse. It also helps to foster a whole set of personal strengths and skills that prepare a child for adult life. Early childhood intervention (ECI) is a support and educational system for very young children (aged birth to six years) who have been victims of, or who are at high risk for child abuse and/or neglect as well as children who have developmental delays or disabilities. Some states and regions have chosen to focus these services on children with developmental disabilities or delays, but Early Childhood Intervention is not limited to children with these disabilities.