

## Observation, assessment and planning

**Observation, assessment and planning all support children's learning and development.**

All early years providers working with young children have some type of observation, assessment and planning process in place. However, because there are no set forms or procedures in place to do this, the process can differ across settings and nations.

The principles of the process include:

1. **Observation:** The starting point (look, listen and note), describing what the child is doing
2. **Assessment:** Analysing observations and deciding what they tell us about children
3. **Planning:** What's next? Experiences and opportunities, learning environment, resources, routines and the practitioner's role
4. Return to step one and so on.



### Observation

Observation describes the process of watching children in your care, listening to them and noting what you see and hear. To find out about a child, observations need to be meaningful and valuable, making the best use of your time.

Top tips when observing children:

- Look – understand what you are looking for and be objective
- Listen – pay attention to the interactions of the individual child with different adults and children
- Record – accurately note important features of a child's responses, behaviour, learning and development. Do this as soon as possible following your observation
- Think – what have you seen that will inform your assessing and planning? Discuss with parents and other practitioners to help clarify your thoughts
- Question – ask questions in order to clarify, confirm or reject ideas about what you have observed. Where appropriate ask the child and their parents relevant questions to support your thinking.

### Assessment

Assessment is the process of analysing and reviewing what we know about children's learning and development. There are two types of assessment:

- Formative assessment – these are ongoing assessments that you do on a daily basis
- Summative assessment – these are assessments carried out at set times of the year.

### Assessment tips:

- What does your observation tell you about a child's learning and development? Have you found out something new? Does it imply the child is making progress?
- Regular assessments provide evidence of children's learning over time
- Assessments must be effective so you can make an evaluation or decision about a child's learning and development, which will help to inform planning for them.



## Planning

There are different types of planning:

- Long term – aiming to meet the overall guidance for children under your nation's relevant curriculum
- Medium term – generally covers from two to six weeks at a time and plans how to provide opportunities, experiences and enhancements to teach specific knowledge, understanding or skills
- Short term – considers individual children's needs and allows for flexibility and change in the direction
- In the moment planning – while you may have the overarching national guidance in mind, you are guided by the children's interests and fascinations and support their learning and development according to what you notice and teach 'in the moment'.

## Important considerations when planning

- Consult with children – find out what they want, feel, like
- Balance child-initiated and adult-led activities – some knowledge and skills require direct teaching from adults which children can then go on to explore in the continuous provision; ensure any adult-led activity is appropriate for each individual child
- Consider possible lines of development (PLODS) to support individual interests and needs
- Gather information from parents and any other professionals, working together to support the child
- Carefully plan the resources, activities and experiences you provide to support learning and development.

## Find out more

Contact our training team on 01484 407070 or email [training@ndna.org.uk](mailto:training@ndna.org.uk)