



Cymru
National Day Nurseries Association

Factsheet

An introduction to reflective practice in the early years

Curriculum for Wales



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Reflective practice has begun to appear more frequently in communications, guidance and professional learning across the early years sector.

It is recognised and encouraged via the use of 'reflective questions' in the following guidance documents:

- Curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings
- Assessment arrangements for funded non-maintained nursery settings
- Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care.

This factsheet aims to give you a brief introduction to reflective practice in the early years. For further information and support see the links at the end of this factsheet.



What is reflective practice?

The term 'reflective practice' derives from the work of theorists John Dewey and Donald Schön. The term has grown in popularity and there are many definitions.

Reflective practice is defined by the Welsh Government as:

"Assessing and evaluating the ways of working, either individually or as a team."

A Quality Framework for Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales

Reflective practice is the process of thinking about your practice and analysing it, with the aim of questioning, adapting, developing and improving it. It should be a continuous cycle.

Why should we reflect?

Reflective practice is an important part of effective early years practice and will benefit; the children in your setting, parents and carers, your own individual progression (both personally and professionally) and the setting as a whole.

Reflecting on practice and provision is important: it improves our knowledge, understanding, skills and is also fundamental in supporting the care and development of children.



When is the best time to reflect?

Reflective practice can happen anywhere and anytime, both informally and formally. It can be extremely useful to capture reflective practice, whether that is in conversation, in writing or something completely different.

How to engage in reflective practice?

How do you actually go about doing it? There is no one magic formula to follow and you will find that what works for others, might not work for you. Reflective practice can be done individually or with others (with a friend/manager, as a team or as a whole setting). Working with others can help to keep you motivated to reflect on your own practice.

There are a range of tools for reflective practice within the early years. Prioritising and making the time to reflect is important, but it is also essential to find the tools that work best for you as an individual or within your setting to make reflective practice successful.

Examples of commonly used reflective practice tools include:

- Lists, bullet points and tables
- Learning journals, logs and personal blogs
- Visual representations
- Audio visual recordings
- Appraisals and meetings with your mentor, manager or qualification tutor
- Practice observations
- Quality improvement/assurance schemes and toolkits.

You can find links to further information on useful tools at the end of this factsheet.





What are reflective questions?

You may have noticed the use of reflective questions within resources and training from NDNA, Welsh Government, Estyn and CIW. These reflective questions are written to provide practitioners and leaders with simple prompts for reflection and self-evaluation. It is important to note, that although they are extremely useful for including within processes of reflective practice, the questions should not be seen as prescriptive or as a tick list to be completed. Reflective questions can encourage development of practice and provision, they may also help practitioners and leaders to plan for professional learning and development of individuals and of teams.

What does effective reflective practice look like?

Effective reflective practitioners are able to take a balanced view of their practice. They can recognise and celebrate their strengths and what works well but also acknowledge areas for improvement.

Reflective practice should help us to identify what we do well, where we may need further support, where we need to strengthen our knowledge to support our practice and where we can share our professional expertise with others.

Reflective practice is an ongoing and continuous process. Being an effective early years practitioner requires you to continue learning throughout your career; to adapt to the latest curriculum requirements, changes in pedagogy or responding to a new sector initiative. Therefore it is important to see developing your reflective practice as establishing routines that will support you well throughout your career and help you to be the best version of yourself.

Training from NDNA Cymru

For a more in depth look at reflective practice, you can complete NDNA Cymru's free Reflective Practice online course.

The course will enable practitioners to understand reflective processes and the benefits of reflective practice. As well as identify; the barriers and challenges in regards to reflective practice and how to address them; tools to support reflective practice and understand how to select suitable tools; next steps in looking to embed reflective practice (both personally and within your setting). www.ndna.org.uk/ReflectivePracticeWales

Reflective practice is an integral aspect of quality practice. Engaging in continuous reflection and self-evaluation for improvement is vital in order to deliver high-quality provision for children.

Further resources and support:

- Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care: Reflective Practice Toolkit, Welsh Government: www.rebrand.ly/ECPLC
- Quality Counts: NDNA's childcare quality improvement scheme: www.ndna.org.uk/QualityCounts





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for early years

Factsheet

Our factsheets are written by early years experts for the early years workforce. Most NDNA factsheets are free to our members.

NDNA is the national charity and membership association representing children's nurseries across the UK. We are a charity that believes in quality and sustainability, so we put our members' businesses at the very heart of ours.

We are the voice of the 21,000-strong nursery sector, an integral part of the lives of more than a million young children and their families. We provide information, training and advice to support nurseries and the 250,000 people who work in them to deliver world-class early learning and childcare.

See the full range of NDNA factsheets at www.ndna.org.uk/factsheets

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