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How to use this book

Throughout the book, the use of the term 'parents' refers to all primary carers, including parents, carers, foster parents and those who have parental responsibility.

Key features of the book

Why it matters

Jenna has finished her qualification and is just starting a new job in a different setting. Although many aspects of what she is doing are the same, she has to adjust to working in an unfamiliar environment with a new team.

By the end of this unit, you should have a clear understanding of the role and responsibilities of the Early Years Practitioner, and what you need to do to carry out your role effectively.

Relates the theme of the chapter to its implications using a real-life example.

Jargon buster

Continuing professional development (CPD) The ongoing process by which people keep up to date with what is happening in their professional area.



Definitions of terms that are used in early years practice.

Think about it

Who are the main colleagues, parents/carers and other professionals with whom you communicate? How regularly do you do this?



A chance for the learner to reflect on their own practice.

Do it

Look at a copy of the Statutory Framework. Find out what information the setting has to make available to parents and carers.

An activity that helps consolidate learning.

Find out about

... how your setting encourages parents to take an active role in their child's learning and development. Could this be improved?



A research activity.

Case study

Nilaya has been to a meeting with a speech therapist and a parent about one of her key children, Becky. The therapist has told Nilaya and Becky's mum that they should work on her speech targets, and that Becky needs regular practice so that over time she will catch up. Nilaya thinks that it is up to the parent to practise with Becky, and does not choose to act on it.

- 1 Why should Nilaya carry out the practice with Becky as well as her mum, if she has been asked to?
- 2 How might her decision affect Becky's speech and language?
- 3 Should she tell anyone about what she has decided to do?

An example of a scenario, with questions for the learner.

Top tip

ALWAYS make sure you give eye contact to the person you are speaking to, and actively listen to what they are saying. This will help to make the communication process as clear as possible.

Advice from an experienced practitioner about working in an early years setting.

Test yourself

- 1 What factors should you consider when thinking about online safety?
- 2 What are your responsibilities regarding confidentiality?
- 3 Name three types of abuse and the action you would take in each case.

Knowledge questions to help learners recap on the previous section.

Check out

- 1 Outline two requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- 2 What health and safety procedures should you undertake before taking children on an off-site visit?
- 3 What should you do if you are first on the scene after an accident in the setting?
- 4 What causes an allergic reaction, and what should you do if you suspect a child is having one?
- 5 What should you do if a child has a nosebleed?
- 6 How can you support children in being able to manage risk?
- 7 Where should you look for advice on receiving, storing, recording, administering and the safe disposal of medicines?

An end of unit check on some of the key points in the chapter.

Unit 1

Roles and responsibilities of the Early Years Practitioner



About this unit

When setting out on a career as an Early Years Practitioner, you will need to know about the requirements of your new job role and how you fit into the early years setting overall as part of a team. This unit explores the main areas which you will need to know about and understand as part of your role. These include the importance of good communication, understanding working relationships and knowing why settings need to have policies and procedures. You should also get into the habit of keeping track of your own professional development, and this unit shows you how to do this.

There are seven learning outcomes for this unit:

- 1 Understand the role of the Early Years Practitioner.
- 2 Be able to locate policies and procedures in an early years setting.

- 3 Be able to communicate with babies, young children and others.
- 4 Understand factors impacting on communication in practice.
- 5 Understand working relationships in early years settings.
- 6 Understand why continuing professional development (CPD) is integral to the role of the Early Years Practitioner.
- 7 Demonstrate continuing professional development.

You will be assessed on your knowledge for each of the learning outcomes, and will also need to show that you have the practical skills needed for learning outcomes 2, 3 and 7, which will be assessed in a real work environment. This unit should be looked at alongside Unit 11: Support the needs of babies and young children with special educational needs and disability, and Unit 13: Partnership working in the early years.

Why it matters

Jenna has finished her qualification and is just starting a new job in a different setting. Although many aspects of what she is doing are the same, she has to adjust to working in an unfamiliar environment with a new team. This unit will support you as you develop the skills you need to be ready to work as a professional team member in an early years setting, skills that would support Jenna in her new role.

By the end of this unit, you should have a clear understanding of the role and responsibilities of the Early Years Practitioner, and what you need to do to carry out your role effectively.

1 Understand the role of the Early Years Practitioner

When exploring the role of the Early Years Practitioner, it is important to look at your duties and responsibilities as well as different aspects of your role, and where these fit in with your own setting. You should also know about other settings which provide early years education and care.

Your role can be divided into three key areas – skills, knowledge and behaviours. Each of these are important as they focus on a different aspect of what you do. The skills and behaviour aspects look at what you will need to be able to show to others through your work and your outlook in the setting, and how you relate to and work with children, colleagues, parents and other professionals. The knowledge aspect looks at what you will need to know.

1.1 Explain the skills, knowledge and behaviours required for the role of the Early Years Practitioner

Skills

The skills listed below will all be covered as part of your qualification. You may need to have a professional discussion with your

mentor or tutor when you have completed the relevant units so that they can verify you have gained the required skills for each area.

Being committed to working with children

You will need to enjoy working with children, and have an understanding and respect for their needs. You should also be able to keep up with high levels of energy in order to carry out the demands of your role!

Good communication skills

This is very important – you will need to be able to communicate effectively with babies, children and their families, as well as the other adults with whom you work. For more detail about different aspects of communication, see Section 3 of this unit.

Being able to work as part of a team

As an Early Years Practitioner you will be working as part of a team. This means knowing when to share information and knowledge which will help others, as well as knowing about and respecting confidentiality when necessary. For more on working as part of a team, see Section 5 of this unit and working in partnerships in Unit 13.

Top tip

When you start working in a setting, ask to see a copy of the organisational chart if it is not displayed, so that you can see where you fit in with the rest of the team.

Good organisational skills

Organisational skills are vital – you will need to be able to carry out your duties in the workplace while also making sure that you can prioritise other parts of your job role when needed. For example, you may have been asked to update a policy or run a meeting within the setting as well as supporting children's learning and development. You should also be able to plan and organise activities which are inspiring and capture children's enthusiasm for learning.

Patience and understanding

Young children are demanding and caring for them on a daily basis can be tiring and challenging. You should be able to remain calm and speak quietly to children so that you can soothe them when they are upset or distressed.



Figure 1.1 How do you remain calm in stressful situations?

Being able to create a positive and inclusive learning environment for children

It will be helpful if you have creative skills, for example in art or music, or are imaginative and resourceful in setting up different learning environments, such as role play areas. The learning environment should be inspiring for children and reflect the wider community, as well as being inclusive for children of all needs, ages and abilities.

Think about it

Have you created displays or set up different areas in the learning environment? How have you shown that these are inclusive and that children from all backgrounds are celebrated in your setting?

Being able to work closely with parents and families

Early years professionals should have positive relationships with parents and families so that they can support children's learning and development more effectively. If you are a key person in particular, you will need to make sure that you communicate regularly with these families.

Jargon buster

Key person A named member of staff in the setting who has responsibility for a group of children and liaises with their parents.

Knowing how to develop children's independence

Children will be learning and developing at different rates, but you will get to know them and their own abilities. It is important to be able to develop their independence as much as you can, particularly around self-care such as toileting, handwashing and starting to dress themselves.

Being able to keep children safe and promote healthy living

You need to be aware of health and safety, safeguarding, healthy food and exercise. You should be able to talk to children about the importance of keeping safe and about keeping their bodies healthy as well as taking account of their emotional well-being and mental health (see also Units 2, 4 and 9).

A sense of humour

This is crucial when working with young children, as you will need to be able to see the funny side in some situations!

Knowledge

To succeed at this course, you will need to:

- have a thorough knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework
- have a good level of literacy and IT skills
- know current relevant legislation, such as the Equality Act

- know how babies and children learn and develop, and how to support this at different stages
- know how to monitor children's progress and to adapt activities accordingly
- know about safeguarding and child protection, and how to promote the welfare of children
- know about and understand the need for confidentiality as part of your role.

Jargon buster

EYFS The EYFS has two separate versions: one is for childminders and the other for groups such as nurseries and school-based providers.

Role model Someone who is looked up to and imitated by others.

Find out about

... current Early Years Practitioner job vacancies. These should list the knowledge and skills which are needed for specific roles. Are these duties the same as your own, or are they different?

Behaviours

One of the key behaviours you will need to have is to be able to act as a positive role model to young children. This means showing them how to behave through your own behaviour, and talking to them about the kinds of expectations which the setting has of them and why. As they grow and develop, they will start to realise that they have control over their behaviour. Children need adults to guide them so that they learn how to behave in an acceptable way alongside others.

Did you know?

A child is more likely to try to do something if they have seen an adult doing it. This can have a positive influence, for example learning to say please and thank you, or wanting to read a book. However, if adults show young children negative behaviour, such as regularly interrupting others or leaving the environment in a mess, the children will be likely to do the same.



Figure 1.2 Why are children likely to look up to and imitate what adults do?

Top tip

When you are doing something which you want a young child to remember to do, such as washing your hands, talk to them about it as you are doing it, so that they also learn why it is important.

Your attitude to your work and role should be positive, and this should be shown through your behaviour in the setting. Be as flexible as you can, and willing to undertake additional duties or out-of-hours activities such as attending staff or parent meetings, joining in on off-site activities, carrying out additional training, and so on. This will show your colleagues that you are able to support them and the wider work of the setting.

Case study

Gemma has been working at a Day Nursery for two months. As part of her professional development, she has been asked to attend a paediatric first aid course which takes place on her afternoon off. She has arranged with her early years supervisor to take other time off instead, but is talking to others about it in a negative way and saying that she isn't happy about attending the course.

- 1 What do you think of Gemma's behaviour?
- 2 Is it important that she attends the course or should she be able to choose whether to do it?
- 3 Do you think that she or her early years supervisor should have done something differently?

Finally, remember that your behaviour as an Early Years Practitioner should always be professional. For more on this, see Section 1.3 of this unit about the responsibilities, limits and boundaries of the Early Years Practitioner.

1.2 Identify settings which provide early years education and care

As an Early Years Practitioner, you might work in a number of different settings and job roles. All registered settings will need to be inspected by Ofsted. Settings include the following:

- day nursery
- nursery class
- registered childminder
- pre-school
- nanny.

Day nursery

A day nursery will typically educate and care for children from the age of three months until they go to school. They are usually open for most of the year, and may be run privately, by employers or community groups.



Figure 1.3 How many different types of early years settings have you visited?

Nursery classes

These may be run by primary schools, if they have the capacity, and are a good

way of introducing children to the school environment and to the other children they will be with when they start Reception. Children attend nursery classes during the academic year before Reception, and these classes usually run during term time only.

Registered childminder

A registered childminder works in their own home and cares for a small number of children. They provide a range of activities for the children, and can look after a maximum of six at one time (which may include their own).

Pre-school or playgroup

A pre-school or playgroup is normally open during term time only, and usually provides sessions for children between the ages of two and five. Sessions may run in the morning or the afternoon.

Nanny

A nanny usually lives in the child's or children's home, and cares for them there. Some nannies may travel to the family home rather than 'live in'. They are likely to care for siblings within a family, although they may be split as a nanny-share and work for other families, too. A nanny cooks and provides care for children.

Find out about

... an early years setting in your local area. What can you find out through looking online or visiting the setting?



1.3 Discuss duties and responsibilities, limits and boundaries of the Early Years Practitioner

The duties and responsibilities of an Early Years Practitioner will vary slightly depending on the setting, but most will be very similar. Your own duties and responsibilities will be listed in your job description, and you should have a copy of this and keep it in your own records. It can be helpful to look at your job description from time to time so that you can

remind yourself of your responsibilities and of the kinds of duties you might be asked to carry out. It is also useful to look at it before any meetings you may have about your own professional development (see Sections 6 and 7 in this unit).

You will have a number of specific duties to carry out, for example:

- meet the needs of individual children through delivering the EYFS Framework
- develop positive relationships with parents and carers
- provide a high-quality learning environment
- keep records of key children's learning and development.

In addition to those outlined in your job description, you should remember that your duties and responsibilities in an early years setting are principally to the babies and children in your care. Their safety and well-being are the most important aspect of your role.

Do it

Find a copy of a job description and look at your duties and responsibilities. Are you clear on what they all mean? Write a reflective account, outlining how you fulfil each of them in your daily practice.

As already mentioned, it is important that your role as an Early Years Practitioner has limits and boundaries, particularly in your relationships with others. You should show that you have professional relationships with others, whether they are colleagues, families or outside professionals that come into the setting to work with children. A professional relationship is different from a personal one because it is based on your role within the setting and on professional support. This kind of relationship is not the same as one you have with a friend, partner or close family member. See also section 5.1 of this unit.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Title: Early Years Practitioner

Post No: Level 2

Summary of responsibilities and duties

- The Early Years Practitioner will contribute a high standard of physical, emotional, social and intellectual care for all children in the nursery and work as part of a team in order to provide an enabling environment in which all individual children can play, learn and develop.
- Build and maintain strong partnerships with parents and work within the requirements set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework – setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five.
- Contribute to your own Personal Development Plan to support the development of skills and career development.
- Be accountable for safeguarding children, being responsible for immediately raising any concerns and following the correct process. Provide support, advice and guidance to any other colleagues, parents and other professionals on an ongoing basis, and on any specific safeguarding issue as required.
- Contribute to a programme of learning experiences that meet the individual needs and interests of children in your area in conjunction with other team members.
- Submit reports as required.
- Engage in good team working and develop your role within the team, especially with regard as a key person.
- Help children become familiar with the setting, offering a settled relationship for the children, building a positive relationship with their parents and any other family members.
- Be involved in any overall nursery activities (including out of working hours activities), e.g. training, monthly staff meetings, parent evenings, fundraising events, volunteering, etc.
- Be flexible within working practices of the nursery. Be prepared to help where needed, including to undertake certain domestic jobs within the nursery, e.g. preparation of snack meals, cleansing of equipment, etc.
- Read, understand and adhere to all policies and procedures and act in accordance with current legislation and good practice.
- Support the children's care and welfare on a daily basis in line with their individual needs.
- Ensure someone known and agreed by the nursery and parent collects the child.
- Respect the confidentiality of all information received.
- Ensure good standards of safety, security, hygiene and cleanliness are maintained at all times.
- Manage children's behaviour positively and communicate with parents to support the children's developmental needs.
- Attend training identified in your performance reviews or one-to-ones and any other training courses that are necessary for you to fulfil your role.
- Work towards the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice to support identified children's needs and ensure the provision of a high-quality environment to meet the needs of individual children regardless of any disabilities, family backgrounds or medical history.

Figure 1.4 An example of an Early Years Practitioner job description

Think about it

Look at the following list and think about whether the situations would be appropriate with a parent or carer whose child goes to the setting:

- being 'friends' on social media
- having a chat with them before or after the setting opens
- inviting them over to your home
- going for a drink with them
- arranging a social gathering for them and other parents at the setting.

There may also be limits to your role if you need to refer something to a more senior member of staff, for example if you have concerns about a baby or child in your care. In this situation, you should not try to deal with it yourself without speaking to others. (For more on safeguarding, see Unit 4.)

You should remember that you are viewed as a member of staff, and should maintain high standards of behaviour and professionalism in all areas concerning the setting. For example, if you bump into a parent at the weekend or after work, you should still remain professional, even though you are outside the setting.

Test yourself

- 1 Name five skills you will need to become an Early Years Practitioner.
- 2 Name three things you will need to know about in order to fulfil your role.
- 3 Why is your behaviour important?
- 4 What is the difference between a personal and a professional relationship?
- 5 Give an example of when you would need to refer to a more experienced member of staff.

2 Be able to locate policies and procedures in an early years setting

All early years settings are required by Ofsted and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Statutory Framework to have policies and procedures in place. These are to make sure that everyone knows what actions to take in different situations and to keep these actions consistent among members of staff. They are also helpful for parents, as they can find out about the setting's guidelines. An important part of your role is to know about and be able to locate policies and procedures in your setting.

This learning outcome is assessed in a real work environment.

2.1 Access policies and procedures within an early years setting

Jargon buster

Policy A document reflecting the requirements of legislation and identifying the setting's principles.

Procedures These provide rules and agreed guidelines, explaining how policies will be carried out in the setting.

Your early years supervisor may show you the location and content of some of your setting's policies and procedures when you first start at the setting. You should know where they are kept, both within your setting and online, in case you need to look them up when you are off-site. You may need to find them quickly, for example when dealing with medicines or managing allergies. Make sure you are aware of and are familiar with these key particular policies:

- health and safety, including risk assessment, online security, accidents, incidents and emergencies
- equality, diversity and inclusion, including SEND provision, graduated approach and partnership working
- safeguarding, including welfare, protection and advocacy
- first aid
- behaviour and self regulation.

Find out about

... your setting's policies. Make sure you know where they are and write a reflective account or have a professional discussion with your tutor, stating where they may be found. You may also be able to show the tutor the location of your policies when they come into your setting.

2.2 Summarise the responsibilities and accountabilities of the Early Years Practitioner in relation to policies and procedures

Policies and procedures are essential for the smooth running of any organisation. They help members of staff to know how to behave and what to do in different situations. As an employee, you will have some responsibilities and accountabilities with regard to policies and procedures. Depending on your role in the setting, you may also be responsible for updating some of them. This should be done regularly so that they do not become out of date. Many settings update these documents as part of a cycle, and give different staff responsibility for named policies which will then be read and approved by others.

Responsibilities

As well as knowing where these policies are kept, you will need to know what is contained in these key policies – safeguarding, health and safety, data protection/confidentiality, special educational needs and disabilities, and equal opportunities. The policy of the setting should always be at the forefront of any decisions you make, and you should always think about whether you need to speak to other staff before acting. You should not wait to be asked whether you have read a particular policy – it is your responsibility to find out where it is and do so yourself. It is also good practice to familiarise yourself with other policies that are relevant to you; for example, if you are a first aider, you should read and understand the first aid policy.

Case study

Matt has been working at a pre-school for six months. One afternoon he is working in the outside area with a group of children when the fire alarm rings. He is not sure what to do.

- 1 What should Matt's priority be in this situation?
- 2 Who should he speak to about what has happened?
- 3 Whose responsibility would it be for him to know the correct procedure?

Accountabilities

Your main area of accountability is acting in accordance with policy at all times. In some settings, you may be asked by your employer to sign a form to say that you have read and acknowledged what is in a policy; this makes it clear that you know what is expected of you, particularly regarding safeguarding and health and safety. As a member of staff, you should know the importance of all policies in your setting, and understand that the safety and welfare of children should always come first.

If you always act in line with policies and procedures, you will be doing what is required by the setting and will have the support of other staff.

Do it

Choose any policy from your setting and list your areas of responsibility and accountability.

Did you know?

If you are a childminder, you will not need to have as many policies written down. However, it is a requirement to have written policies for safeguarding, non-collection of children, complaints, lost children and staff conduct (if you have employees).

3 Be able to communicate with babies, young children and others

Another important part of your role is the ability to be able to communicate effectively with others. This is vital both in your work with babies and children and in your relationships with colleagues and other adults. Communication is at the centre of what you do as an Early Years Practitioner, as it enables you to support babies and children as well as to form relationships with others. You will need to be able to use a range of communication methods so that you can work co-operatively with others, and recognise the importance of working alongside parents.

This learning outcome is assessed in a real work environment.

3.1 Identify reasons why people communicate and different communication methods

Why do we communicate?

Have you ever thought about why people communicate with one another? Communication is a quick and easy way of processing and passing on information as well as expressing thoughts, ideas and feelings. We also communicate so that we can develop our relationships with others, whether these are personal or professional. We need to have positive relationships in our work with children, colleagues and parents, and effective communication will support this (see also Sections 3.3, 3.4 and 3.6 in this unit).

Methods of communication

We can communicate in different ways:

Verbal communication

We generally think of communication as speaking and listening, and this is the method we use most of the time. However there are different types of verbal communication.

- **Intrapersonal** – we use verbal communication when we are thinking or talking to ourselves. This is known as intrapersonal communication. It can help us to process our thoughts, and we sometimes use it to rehearse what we are going to say to another person. We may use it to reflect on what we do, to remind ourselves to do something or to react to an event which has happened.
- **Interpersonal** – we may use verbal communication with another person face to face, or through sign language, phone conversations and digital formats such as Zoom when we are online. This one-to-one conversation with another is known as interpersonal communication. In this form of communication, one person will speak while the other listens, and then the roles will be swapped over.

Find out about

... intrapersonal communication. Can you find some examples of why it is useful?



Verbal communication may be used to talk to small or large groups. Examples may be during meetings or conferences where one person is speaking and passing on information, while others are listening.

Communication may also be written down in any form, for example through emails or letters to others. As with all types of communication, the type of language we use will depend on the situation and the person we are communicating with.

Non-verbal communication

This method is used when we want to back up what we are saying or pass information in a different way. It is the use of visual cues, and can be through the use of gestures, body language, touch, facial expressions or symbols. For more on verbal and non-verbal communication, see Section 4.1 in this unit.



Figure 1.5 How do you use non-verbal communication in the early years environment?

Think about it

Do you think that you are a good communicator? Give reasons for your answer.



Alternative methods of communication

If we are communicating with another person who has communication needs, such as a child who is on the autistic spectrum, we may need to adapt the way in which we communicate with them and use alternative methods, such as signs or pictures. See also Section 3.3 in this unit.

Bear in mind that you may not be aware of the needs of an adult with whom you are communicating; for example, a parent or colleague may have a communication or sensory impairment, or speak English as an additional language. Adults who have communication needs will need you to be very clear about what you are saying to them so that you avoid any confusion or misunderstandings. To avoid this, always make sure that you speak clearly, and check that others have understood at the end of a conversation.

3.2 Communicate with babies and young children in ways that will be understood, including verbal and non-verbal communication

In order to make sure babies and young children learn to understand us and want to communicate with us, we need to know how to make this easier for them. You will need to know how to communicate with babies and children at each stage of their development, using both verbal and non-verbal communication.

See also Section 4.1 in this unit, and Unit 5, Understand how to support children's development.

Do it

Observe experienced members of staff communicating with these different age groups in your setting:

- birth to 12 months
- one to two years
- two to four years.

As you are doing this, make a list of the ways in which they are communicating, so that you can apply this to your own practice.

3.3 Extend children's development and learning through verbal and non-verbal communication

3.4 Encourage babies and young children to use a range of communication methods

Being able to communicate with others is a vital part of children's learning and development, as it will influence many other areas. Children learn communication skills through the way in which adults communicate with them. If we communicate effectively, we will be supporting and extending their development, and giving

them the tools to express what they are thinking and feeling. This will support their emotional as well as their intellectual development, and is particularly important in the earliest stages of language development (see also Unit 5, Understand how to support children's development).

If children are not able to communicate with us, they will become frustrated. This will affect their behaviour and have a long-term impact.

Did you know?

According to The Communication Trust:

- 50–90 per cent of children with persistent speech, language and communication difficulties go on to have reading difficulties
 - at least 60 per cent of young people in young offender institutions have communication difficulties.
- www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

You can support and extend children's speaking and listening skills through the way you communicate with them.

Ask questions to extend learning

Questioning children effectively is one of the best ways in which we can support their learning. We can build on what they know through taking their learning forward and extending their thinking by asking them open questions. Young children are naturally curious, and if we question them carefully we can help to develop their thinking skills. This also gives us more opportunities to assess their learning.

Jargon buster

Closed question A question to which there is only one answer, such as 'How many sides does a triangle have?' This closes down the conversation as soon as it has started.

Open question A question which encourages the other person to talk more about the subject, such as 'What do you know about triangles?'

Case study

Leia is sitting close to Ben, who is painting. He is mixing colours, so she asks him about what he is doing. Look at the following examples of their conversations:

1

Leia: What can you tell me about what you are doing with your paintbrush, Ben?

Ben: I'm twirling the colours together! Look!

Leia: Yes, you are! Twirling – that's a lovely word. Can you tell me about the colours?

Ben: I got red and yellow – they are sunshine colours and they made orange! Twirling, twirling.

Leia: Fantastic! Are you going to try more colours? What would you like to do next?

2

Leia: What are you doing, Ben?

Ben: I'm painting! Look!

Leia: That's lovely! What are those two colours?

Ben: I got red and yellow.

- 1 What do you think about the two conversations?
- 2 In which example does Leia extend Ben's learning?
- 3 Why is this important?

Give them thinking time

Young children need time to process what you are saying to them and think about how

they are going to respond. If you ask them a question, give them some thinking time so that they can do this.

Avoid 'telling them the answer'

When young children ask us questions, it can sometimes be quicker and easier for adults to just tell them the answer. However, this will stop them thinking for themselves and make them more reliant on adults. This is true in practical situations as well as learning situations. For example, if a young child asks us if it is almost time to go home, we can guide them in their thinking:

Child: Is it nearly time for my mummy to come?

Adult: She is coming soon. But what happens in the afternoon before we go home?

Child: We have to tidy up.

Adult: What happens after that?

Child: Oh yes. We have a story and some singing. Then we go home.

Use simple language and avoid overloading with information or instructions

Make sure the vocabulary you use is appropriate for the age of the child, and try not to give them too much information at once. For example, if you say, 'We need to tidy away the bikes and put everything away, and then we are going to sweep up the sand by the sand tray and go in for our snack and a story', children will not be able to take it all in and will not know what to do next.

Make it easy for them to talk

Give young children the space to speak to you, and make it easy for them to do so. Dummies should not be used at the setting unless they help the child to sleep, as they will make it much more difficult for children to develop the muscles in their face and mouth which they need to use for speech. They are also less likely to try to speak if they have something in their mouth.

Repeat back what they say correctly

If children make an error with their speech (which is highly likely when they are still in the early stages of language development), try not to correct what they are saying as this may make

them less confident or willing to try. Instead, repeat back what they have said in the correct way. For example, if a child says 'I bringed this for you,' you should reply, 'Oh you brought it for me? That's lovely', so that you are modelling the correct use of the word.

Make it easier for them to listen by removing distractions

Sometimes we need children's attention but they may be distracted by something that is happening, such as a loud noise outside. If possible, remove the distraction (in this case by closing the window) so that they find it easier to listen to what is being said.

Playing alongside young children

This is also an effective way of communicating with children, particularly if they lack confidence, have special educational needs, or are unwilling to speak to adults. If you can find an activity that they enjoy and can do this with them, this may encourage them to communicate with you.



Figure 1.6 How will finding out about a child's interests support your communication with them?

Alternative communication methods

One of these methods is known as Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) which enables us to communicate through simple pictures. This simplifies what is being said so that it is more straightforward to process and understand. If you are asked to use this system with children, you would need to be trained in how to use it.

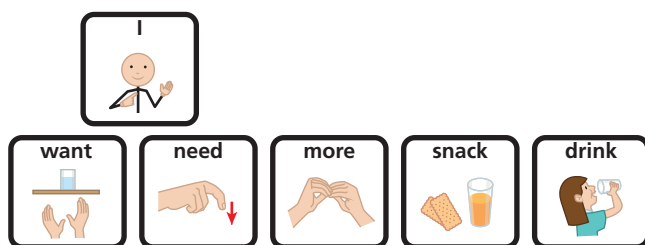


Figure 1.7 How can alternative methods of communication enhance our work with children who have speech, communication and language needs?

3.5 Use a range of communication methods to exchange information with young children and adults

See also Sections 3.2, 3.4 and 3.6 of this unit.

You may need to use different methods to exchange information with young children and adults. This will vary according to the context of the communication and whether there are communication differences between you. The methods you use may be written, verbal or non-verbal.

The context of the communication means both the situation which you are in and what it is about. For example, the context of a team meeting may mean that you use different communication methods from the context of an informal chat with a parent, or working with a small group of children on an activity.

Think about it

How would you communicate the following, and why?

- informing a group of colleagues about some changes in the setting's rota
- letting others know that a member of staff has had a baby
- telling parents about a meeting to support their child's transition to school
- reading a book with a child
- telling a parent that their child has had an 'accident' at nursery and that you are sending them home in different clothes.

What method of communication would you use in each situation, and why?

You may also need to adapt the way in which you communicate depending on the needs of the person you are communicating with. There may be barriers to communication which will affect the method you use.

Sensory needs

In this situation, either you or the person you are communicating with may have an impairment with their vision or hearing. This can mean that it is harder to pick up some of the subtleties of communication such as body language or facial expressions as you or the child will be concentrating on what is being said. Aids to communication such as a hearing loop or hearing aid might be required. Support with communication such as signing might also be necessary.

If this situation arises, you will need to be prepared and have the required aids with you.

Top tip

ALWAYS make sure you give eye contact to the person you are speaking to, and actively listen to what they are saying. This will help to make the communication process as clear as possible.

Speech, language and communication needs

You may not know if a child or adult has a communication or speech and language difficulty – a child may not be diagnosed when still very young, and an adult may not tell you. This can mean that there are misunderstandings, particularly if information is only partially understood. If you find that it is a problem, always ensure that the other person has understood by asking them to repeat back what you have said. If an impairment has been diagnosed, support should be available to help you when working with others.

Do it

How might you communicate the following using just body language and gestures:

- 'Well done!'
- 'You shouldn't be talking now.'
- 'I'm not sure.'
- 'We are all going outside.'
- 'It's time to tidy up.'
- 'Can you help me with this?'

3.6 Communicate effectively with colleagues, parents/carers and other professionals

As part of an early years team, you will need to be able to communicate effectively with other adults so that you can support children in your setting through successful professional relationships and mutual trust. This may be verbally with colleagues, parents and carers on a daily basis, as well as other professionals who may come into the setting. Remember that communication may also be via emails, websites and newsletters.

Think about it

Who are the main colleagues, parents and other professionals with whom you communicate? How regularly do you do this?

Being aware of confidentiality is an important part of communication and information sharing. According to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislation, you should only share information with others when it is necessary. For example, you may need to share information about children with other professionals in order to support them in their role. However, you should not gossip or pass on information about children and their families, and you should always make sure that information and records are stored securely.

For more guidance on this, see Unit 13, Section 5.3. Your setting will have a confidentiality policy which you should have read and understood.

Find out about

... the GDPR 2018. Why do settings need to know about it? How does it influence your confidentiality policy?

Colleagues

You may be part of different teams of colleagues in your setting, if, for example, you mainly work with babies, or are supporting children with special educational needs. You are likely to be closer to these teams as you will spend more time with them and get to know them better. You can communicate effectively with them by making sure that information is passed on quickly and ensuring that you look for opportunities to help others, whether this is practical or in other ways. See also Section 3.7 in this unit.

Parents/carers

As already discussed, you need to communicate regularly with the parents and carers of your key children. In this way you will develop a more effective relationship that will benefit them. Remember that although you may develop friendships with parents or carers, your relationship with them should always remain a professional one. See also Section 3.8 in this unit.

Other professionals

You may need to communicate with other professionals who come into the setting, for example those who work with you to support children who have special educational needs and disabilities. You may also have other professionals and visitors to the setting, such as students or those working with them. See also Sections 3.7 and 5.3 in this unit.

Do it

Write a reflective account of the people you need to communicate with as part of your role, and give examples of how you might communicate with them. If any of these methods are paper-based, you could use them as work product-based evidence.

3.7 Work co-operatively with colleagues, other professionals and agencies to meet the needs of babies and young children and enable them to progress

Communicating effectively with others will also lead to working more co-operatively with them. This is because there will be closer relationships and more respect and understanding between you. As well as communicating effectively, working co-operatively means being organised in your role so that you can support the needs of babies and children.

To work co-operatively with others and meet the needs of children you should:

- attend any meetings which you are invited to
- carry out any action points and answer emails promptly
- be open to others' opinions and address any disagreements.

Attend any meetings which you are invited to

Meetings between different professionals and agencies are an opportunity to share information about babies and children. They are likely to include information about any assessments which have taken place, and give all those who work with the child an opportunity to discuss their needs and act on them.

Carry out any action points and answer emails promptly

If you are asked to do something by a colleague, you should do it as soon as you can. This shows them that you view it as important, but it also helps to act on things quickly and while you can remember the context, before the next thing comes along. If you do not respond to an email, or take a long time to act, it will not be clear to others whether you have remembered what you have been asked to do.

Case study

Nilaya has been to a meeting with a speech therapist and a parent about one of her key children, Becky. The therapist has told Nilaya and Becky's mum that they should work on her speech targets, and that Becky needs regular practice so that over time she will catch up. Nilaya thinks that it is up to the parent to practise with Becky, and does not choose to act on it.

- 1 Why should Nilaya carry out the practice with Becky as well as her mum, if she has been asked to?
- 2 How might her decision affect Becky's speech and language?
- 3 Should she tell anyone about what she has decided to do?

Be open to others' opinions and address any disagreements

It is important to listen to the views and opinions of others so that you take different ideas on board. In some cases you may not agree with what they are saying, but if this happens you should speak to them respectfully and bear in mind that you both have the best interests of the child at heart.

See also Section 5.3 of this unit for examples of the agencies or professionals you may come into contact with.

3.8 Work alongside parents and/or carers and recognise their role in the baby's/child's health, well-being, learning and development

The content for Sections 3.7 and 3.8 of this unit appear again in Unit 11, Sections 6.2 and 6.3; and Section 3.8 also appears in Unit 13, Sections 2.2 and 3.3. You may refer to the evidence used below in those units too.

All key persons in early years settings need to work closely with parents and carers so that they can support their children more

effectively at home. At the time of writing, the EYFS requires that parents and the setting work closely together and exchange information regularly. This is important to build up familiarity, mutual respect and trust, so that positive relationships are created which will benefit the child.

Communication between parents and the setting may be verbal or written, and should take place as much as possible. Although the main opportunities will be when parents take and collect children from the setting, there are

also other opportunities to communicate and develop positive relationships so that parents can take an active role in their child's learning and development.

Parents and carers should also be encouraged to pass on information about children's learning at home, so that staff are aware of the kinds of things which they have been doing. Regular contact with parents is also very important when you are working with babies and children who have special educational needs and disabilities.

Communication between the setting and parents/carers

Type of communication between setting and parents/carers	Function and reason
Noticeboard	This is a useful way of passing information to parents and carers which may be less formal, for example if there is a social event or an activity being run outside normal setting hours. It may also give information about local events and organisations, or photos of things which have been happening in the setting.
Newsletter	This may be a regular email or message to parents and carers, giving up-to-date information about what has been happening.
Suggestion box	This is an opportunity for parents and carers to communicate ideas to the setting about activities that children or parents might like to do.
Parent workshops	These may be run by setting staff to inform parents and carers about how they can support their child's development at home – for example, supporting early reading or number, or the importance of developing independence skills.
Wow wall/Proud cloud	In some settings, parents and carers will contribute to a 'Wow wall' or equivalent, which is in a shared area so that they can display children's notable achievements that have happened at home. For example, a parent might contribute: 'Alyssa learnt to do up her coat at the weekend', or 'Bobby can tell me the names of eight different dinosaurs'.
Information about the setting	According to the EYFS, the setting must make some key information available to parents and carers.
Emails, messages and texts	These are useful for speed of communication when parents or carers do not collect children from the setting. They can also be used to send messages and photos to parents and carers about what their child is doing in the moment.

Do it

Look at a copy of the EYFS. Find out what information the setting has to make available to parents and carers.

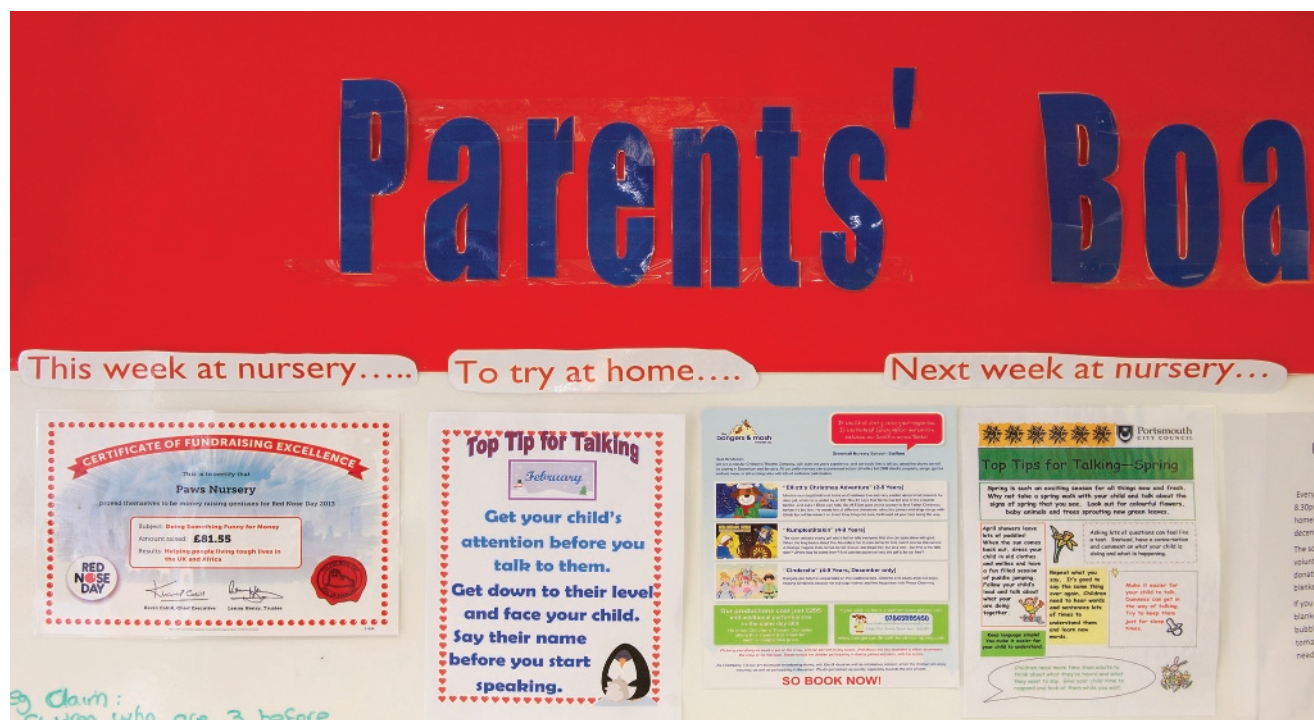


Figure 1.8 How do you encourage parents to celebrate children's home learning with the setting?

Health and well-being

Communication about the child's health and well-being is important for many reasons, and parents and carers will have a key role in this. They will have the greatest knowledge and understanding of their child's health as well as knowing in detail about any allergies or intolerances, and know about any medical conditions and how these may be managed. If key persons have good relationships with parents, they are also more likely to remember to pass on any new information to staff about changes to their child's health or well-being. However, parents may also need support from the setting in managing different childhood issues as they arise, and the setting should be able to give this.

For more on how the setting can support parents, see Unit 13, Section 4.3.



Figure 1.9 Why do we need to work closely with parents and carers to support their child's health and well-being?

Learning and development

Parents and carers play a huge role in their child's learning and development as they will spend much of their home life together. While some parents may be aware of the importance of regular and positive opportunities for communication and building relationships with their child, such as spending time talking to them or reading with them, others may be less confident. The setting may run workshops or information evenings to support them in doing this.

Find out about

... how your setting encourages parents and carers to take an active role in their child's learning and development. Can you think of other ideas for involving parents?

4 Understand factors impacting on communication in practice

As we have already discussed, in your role you will need to be able to communicate effectively with babies, children, their families as well as your colleagues, as this affects all aspects of your practice. You will always need to think about factors which may impact on this, including their stage of development, or whether they speak English as an additional language or have delayed speech.

4.1 Explain ways to communicate with all children appropriate for all their stages of development, including communication with those children for whom English is an additional language (EAL) or who have delayed speech

See also Unit 5, Section 1.4 for stages of language development.

Communication with children at different stages of development

When thinking about babies and young children, you will need to consider their age

and stage of development so that you can adapt the way in which you communicate.

Birth to 12 months

We start to communicate with babies from the earliest stages in ways that they understand. For new parents, holding their baby and soothing them communicates physical safety and security as well as love and emotional support. Non-verbal communication such as facial expressions and physical reassurances such as touch will all support the development of communication. Although we may not realise it, even before babies learn to communicate with us through speech, we are communicating with them in many of the small things we do.



Figure 1.10 How many examples can you give of ways in which we communicate with babies?

Twelve months to two years

At this stage, young children will be listening to the language around them and gradually

starting to use a few simple words. Activities such as sharing simple books and teaching young children nursery rhymes and songs will help them to develop their vocabulary and have fun with words. For young children, non-verbal communication such as holding their hand and smiling at them reassures them, and helps to give them confidence.

Two to three years

At this stage, a child's vocabulary will be expanding very quickly. It will help them if you talk to them about what you are doing (this is sometimes called *commentary* or *narration*) and why you are doing it, so that they can develop their vocabulary; for example, 'I am putting the dishes into the dishwasher so that they can get clean.'

Songs and rhymes which are familiar are also important with young children, as the words start to become predictable and they will soon be able to join in. This helps to develop children's confidence.

Did you know?

As the adult, you are acting as a role model for babies and young children when you are communicating with them. If you do not communicate regularly, or ignore them when they are trying to communicate with you, they will be less likely to try to do it themselves. The reverse is also true, so the more you communicate with babies and young children, the more they will communicate with you.

Three to four years

Children of this age have lots of questions, and this is a great opportunity for you to support the development of their language by having regular conversations with them.

- Make time to talk to them, and ensure that you listen to what they are saying to you.
- If you use words which may be new to them, make sure they know what you mean.

- Continue to play games as well as sharing lots of books with them, so that you can talk about the characters and the stories with them.

You may communicate slightly differently with babies and with children who are older, but the main principle of conversation will remain the same, which is that there is a sender and a receiver, and the communication may be verbal or non-verbal. For example, if you smile at or sing to a baby, he or she will start to respond, which will make you respond, and so on. This is a very important stage, as in this way children will learn about the principles of conversation. They will also start to understand what we mean through the way we use our tone of voice alongside non-verbal communication.

As children grow older, you should also think about the speed you talk at and the vocabulary you use to communicate with them, and not make assumptions about what they know. This is particularly important if children have communication needs or speak English as an additional language (EAL).

Jargon buster

EAL English as an additional language.



Communication with children who speak English as an additional language

If you are working with young children whose first language is not English, you may find that they are slower to develop language skills in English as they are learning more than one language. When communicating with them, you should use the same strategies that you would use with younger children, so give them thinking time and build on the vocabulary that they know, while using lots of visual prompts and praise to help them.

You may also need support from translators or other outside agencies if their parents do not speak English, as it will be even more important for you to develop relationships with them.

It is also important to find out about children's skills in their home language, in case there is a cause for concern about language delay.

Communication with children who have delayed speech

In this situation, children may have difficulties in different areas of speaking and listening. You would need to take advice from your Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-Ordinator (SENDCO) or the child's speech and language therapist (SALT), so that you know that you are supporting them effectively. The child may need to have hearing and other checks to rule out any other reasons for their speech delay. In many cases children who have delayed speech will also find it difficult to understand the speech of others.

Top tips

Follow these guidelines when communicating with children:

- Make sure you make eye contact when talking to them.
- Find out about any individual communication needs, and ask for advice.
- Be at their level – don't 'talk down' to them.
- Acknowledge how they are feeling where needed.
- Give children thinking time so that they can find the right word, and don't interrupt them.
- Model correct language rather than correcting them.
- Be clear when you are speaking to them.
- Show them that you are listening.
- Use resources such as puppets to encourage reluctant speakers.
- If you have a cause for concern about a child's communication, speak to your early years SENDCO.

4.2 Explain how communication affects all aspects of own practice

See also Section 3.6 of this unit.

Being able to communicate effectively with others affects many of the skills, knowledge and behaviours which were discussed as part of your role in Section 1.1 of this unit.

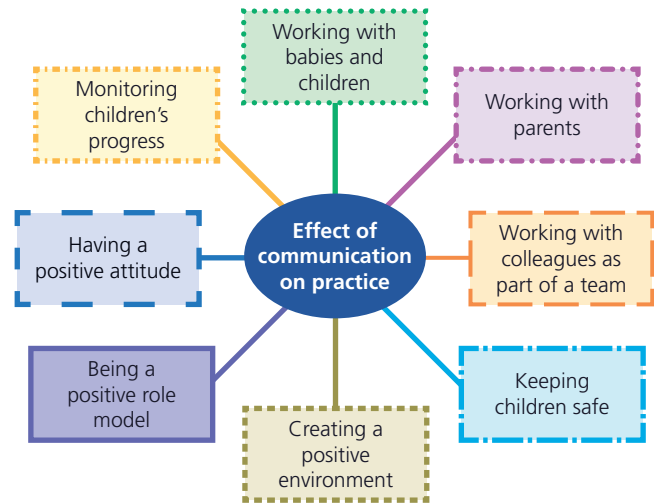


Figure 1.11 The importance of communication

Do it

Looking at the list of skills, knowledge and behaviours in the diagram, explain how communication will affect each aspect.

5 Understand working relationships in early years settings

A working relationship is one which you have in the workplace. In an early years setting, you will not be working in isolation from others, and will need to be able to work effectively with those around you. Working relationships may be with your early years supervisor, a colleague who does the same job as you, or someone who has another role in your setting, as well as parents, carers and those in other professions who come into the setting.

5.1 Identify different working relationships for effective team practice in early years settings

5.2 Explain how a working relationship is different from a personal relationship

For your work with babies and children to be effective, you will have a good working relationship with colleagues, parents and carers, and external professionals who come into the setting (see Section 5.3 of this unit). It is important to have positive working relationships with all of those with whom you work so that you are able to communicate with them and work together for the benefit of children.

A working relationship is different from a personal relationship because it will be based on your professional environment and your support for others in the workplace (see section 1.3 of this unit).

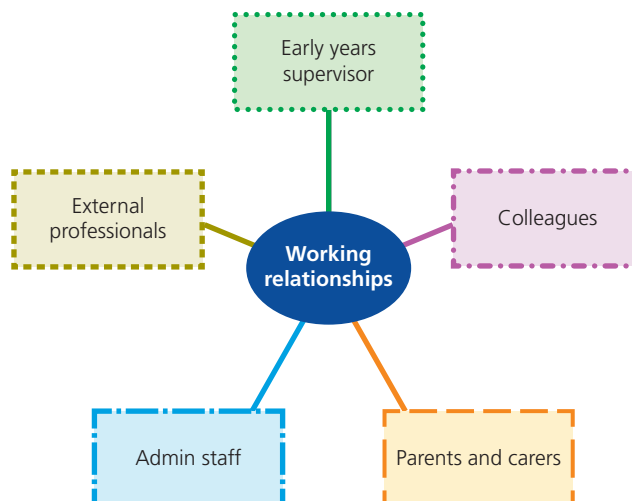


Figure 1.12 Working relationships

Do it

Make a list of all those with whom you have a working relationship in your setting. How many different roles do these people have? What is your relationship with each?

See Section 1.3 in this unit for advice on setting boundaries to your professional relationships.



Figure 1.13 How many different working relationships do you have in your setting?

5.3 Explain the roles and responsibilities of other agencies and professionals that work with and support early years settings, both statutory and non-statutory

Other professionals and agencies all have different parts to play in supporting early years settings. Some of them are a requirement of the EYFS, while others may be called upon for the support of specific children, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Statutory public services must be provided by law: local or national government must ensure they exist and are funded. Statutory public services include the National Health Service (NHS) and local authority service provision, which also includes children's services, education and social services.

National Health Service (NHS)

As an early years practitioner, there are many kinds of professionals you will come into contact with through the NHS.

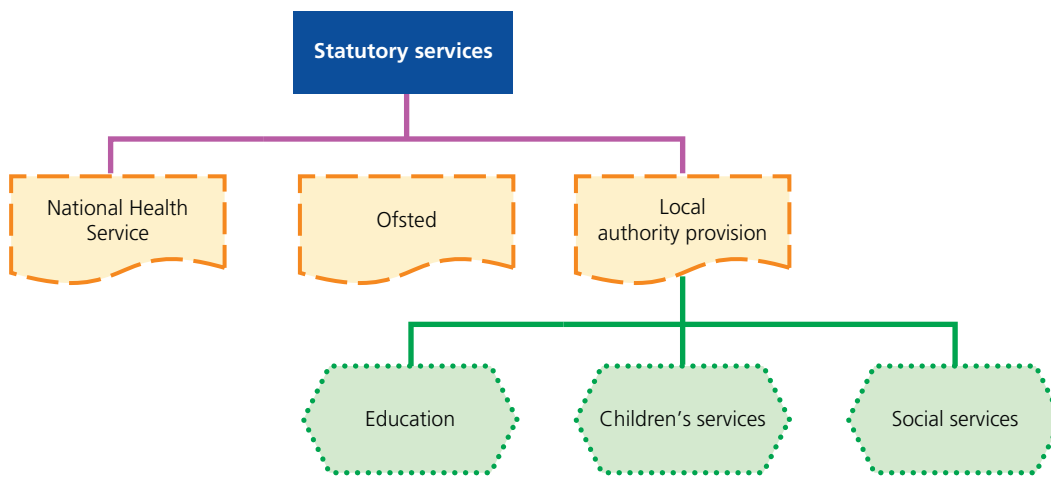


Figure 1.14 Statutory public services

NHS professionals and their roles

NHS professional	What is their role?
GP (General Practitioner or doctor)	A GP is a qualified medical doctor working in health centres or surgeries within the local community. They work with others as part of multidisciplinary teams to support the holistic care needs of individuals. They also have a vital role in safeguarding and child protection, working with other professionals to keep children and families safe.
Health visitor	A health visitor is a qualified nurse or midwife who has undertaken additional relevant training for this specialist role. The health visitor works within the community and will support babies, young children and their families. Health visitors often hold clinics in a GP surgery or health centre but will also make home visits. Health visitors may become a key partner within early years settings as they will often have a relationship with families.

NHS professional	What is their role?
Educational psychologist	Children may be referred to an educational psychologist if they are in need of assessment and support, perhaps due to learning difficulties or emotional needs.
Nurse	Nurses are responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● monitoring children's health ● carrying out health assessments and immunisations ● supporting families where children have specific health needs ● advising families on making lifestyle choices.
Speech and language therapist	Speech and language therapists work to support the development of children's speech or language when difficulties have been identified.
Occupational therapist	Occupational therapists develop care routines, and identify strengths and difficulties that children and young people experience in everyday life; for example, a child with an identified need in fine and gross motor skills.
Paediatrician	A paediatrician is a specialist doctor in children's health. They specialise in the treatment and medical care of children's health conditions and work with early years settings to co-ordinate and manage the treatment of children with specific health needs.
Psychological therapists	This may include child psychotherapists, family psychotherapists, play therapists and creative art therapists. These talking therapies support those who are dealing with emotional, social or mental health issues.
Physiotherapist	A physiotherapist supports children with a physical disability or who requires ongoing support and routine care considerations.

Ofsted

Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) is responsible for inspecting and regulating all registered early years settings, including childminders. Ofsted inspectors make sure that the settings are suitable, and report on how effective they are.

Local authority provision

Education

Children's education services are provided through local education authorities (LEAs, part

of local government). Services include schools and colleges and their SEND provision.

There are many different types of education and childcare provision. The local authority funds schools and special needs provision such as education, health and care plans (EHCPs). Early years managers will work with their SENDCo or area SENDCo to make sure that these plans are reviewed as appropriate, to ensure the strategies shared are being effective.

You might be in contact with professionals working in education services.

Professionals working in education services

Professional	What is their role?
Education welfare officers (EWOs)	EWOs chiefly work with schools to monitor attendance and liaise with parents and carers. However, they can also support childcare settings in a similar way, by working with early years leaders to support them in looking at children's attendance and punctuality.
Childminder agencies	Childminder agencies exist to give advice and training to childminders, as well as supporting parents in finding a childminder. They are registered and inspected by Ofsted, but childminders do not have to join them as they will already have their individual Ofsted registration.

Children's services and social services

Each local authority provides children's services, including social services, with a number of professionals that you might come into contact with.

The local authority also provides advice and guidance around child protection, including the action to take if a child discloses information or if harm or abuse is suspected. A child protection agency will support local early years settings with procedures that must be followed if children are at risk of harm or actually experiencing harm.

Your setting will have a policy with procedures that must be followed if a child requires protection, and each setting will have a Designated Safeguarding Lead. Ensuring that services are coordinated around a child is absolutely essential.

Children's social services provide specialist staff to support families with babies, children

and young people in need of additional help, guidance and intervention as appropriate. The types of circumstance when social services may be accessed include:

- when there is a risk of harm or abuse to a baby, child or young person
- when a family is caring for a baby, child or young person with a disability
- when caring for looked after children, and where fostering and adoption services are required; looked after children include those living with foster parents, in a residential children's home, a hostel or secure accommodation.

Jargon buster

Looked after child (LAC) A child who has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours; sometimes also referred to as children in care.

Professionals working in social services

Professional	What is their role?
Local safeguarding partners (LSPs)	<p>The LSP is set up by each local authority to co-ordinate and promote the safeguarding of children in the local area.</p> <p>It is made up from a dedicated team of key professionals from three sectors in the local area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the local authority • the chief police officer for the area • the clinical commissioning group for the local authority.

Professional	What is their role?
Local authority designated officer (LADO)	All information regarding potential or actual harm to children and young people must be reported in accordance with the setting's policy and procedures, which must be in line with statutory guidelines identified through Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024).
Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH)	A MASH is a local service which gives a single point of access for support services working with children and young people who are vulnerable or at risk. It is a multi-agency team made up of professionals from a wide range of services, providing information, advice and support to those in need.
Social worker	<p>Social workers provide support for children, young people and families who need additional help. This additional support can be required to safeguard and protect babies, children and young people at times of need.</p> <p>Social workers also work with families and other professionals to ensure best outcomes for children and young people with disabilities, as well as those who are looked after children.</p>
Family support worker	<p>A family support worker acts as a link between a family in need and the different services which will support them. Examples of these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● helping with parenting skills ● supporting financial or housing problems.

Professional	What is their role?
Child and adolescent mental health services/ Children and young people's mental health services (CAMHS/CYPMHS)*	<p>Mental health services provided by the NHS include dedicated services for children and young people. Specialist CYPMHS are NHS mental health services that focus on the needs of children and young people.</p> <p>CAMHS is a specialist service which supports the mental health of children and young people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In early years settings, they may offer advice and support to staff and parents or carers. ● They will help with the early detection, assessment and treatment of any mental health concerns which will support children's healthy development. <p>* The term CAMHS is an older term for the main specialist NHS community service within the wider CYPMHS that may be available locally.</p>

Non-statutory agencies

There are a range of charitable, voluntary or not-for-profit organisations that provide services for children, young people and their families.

- Not-for-profit organisations may also receive some funding from a local authority that values and requires the services that the organisation is able to provide within its region.
- Charitable organisations rely on donations to some extent, but are also able to provide services for children and young people as part of local authority provision. This involves a

service-level agreement (a type of contract) between a local authority and a charitable organisation, which allows the authority to fund the voluntary setting so that children and young people can benefit from the specialist support offered by the voluntary service.

There are many examples of charitable and voluntary organisations, and it may be useful to think about any such organisations

that operate in your local area. As an early years practitioner it is useful to know about organisations that can support children, young people and families in particular circumstances. Staff in education and childcare may work as part of a professional team with staff from other organisations, including those listed here, in order to share information about the child, young person or family and work towards improved outcomes.

Organisations which help to support children, young people and their families

Organisation and website	What is their purpose?
Family Action www.family-action.org.uk	Family Action aims to provide 'practical, emotional and financial support to families and to individuals who are experiencing poverty, disadvantage and social isolation'.
Family Rights Group	Family Rights Group aims to support parents, carers and families by providing advice, guidance and advocacy, particularly regarding at-risk children and the care system. This organisation will offer advice to individuals requiring support about their rights and any potential options that may be available to them in particular circumstances – for example, when social workers or courts make decisions about their child's or children's welfare.
Barnardo's	An organisation which provides advice and practical support for children and parents.
Action for Children www.actionforchildren.org.uk	This organisation provides support to children and young people through practical and emotional care, including advocacy services to ensure children's and young people's voices are heard when they feel unable to do so themselves or if they find themselves in situations requiring specialist support. Action for Children supports children, young people and families in crisis – for example, children and families living in abusive situations, homelessness or in danger of eviction – and offers advice and practical help.
NSPCC www.nspcc.org.uk	A charity working to safeguard and protect children and young people from abuse. It provides many services, including national helplines, advice for children and families, therapeutic services, research and insight, as well as offering advice and training in schools and colleges.
Save the Children www.savethechildren.org.uk	This organisation works in the UK and across the world to provide services to children, young people and their families, keeping them safe and healthy. Save the Children's aim is to: work with schools to support families with children's learning and literacy

5.4 Explain the importance of the voice of the child and parent/carer engagement for the home learning environment and their roles in early learning

The voice of the child

It is very important that professionals working with children take account of the voice of the child. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), published by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in agreement with many countries, is a human rights treaty which aims to protect and promote the rights of children.

The UNCRC was ratified by the UK in 1992, and all government policies and practices must comply with it. It contains 54 articles of equal importance, ranging from all children having a right to education to all children having a right to develop to their full potential. Article 12 concerns the importance of the voice of the child:

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

According to government guidelines, this means that 'the voices of children and young people should be heard when decisions are made which affect them'. In early

years settings, this is likely to be through conversations and discussions with them.

Role in early learning

By involving children in decisions which affect them, we are developing their confidence and sense of responsibility. We also listen to young children and consider their interests and needs when planning learning activities with them, so that we can make learning enjoyable for them.

Find out about

... the UNCRC. How many countries have adopted it, and what impact has it had?



Parent/carer engagement

Parents should be involved as much as possible in their child's early learning in the home environment. Many parents do this automatically, although some may need support in knowing how they can best support their child at home.

Early years settings should engage with parents in different ways, showing them the kinds of activities which are taking place in the setting and exploring ways for sharing information and developing partnerships.

Role in early learning

The role of parents in supporting their child's early learning in the home environment can take different forms; see the table below.

Supporting early learning at home

Supporting early learning at home	How this supports early learning
Asking their child about their day and valuing what they do in the setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This supports children by developing their confidence as well as speaking and listening skills. ● It develops their vocabulary and creates links between home and the setting.
Asking their child about their day and valuing what they do in the setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This supports children by developing their confidence as well as speaking and listening skills. ● It develops their vocabulary and creates links between home and the setting.

Supporting early learning at home	How this supports early learning
Sharing books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This helps to develop vocabulary and language skills, and supports social and emotional development. ● It familiarises children with different sounds and words, as well as providing a base for talking about different life experiences and developing imagination.
Encouraging a range of social experiences and developing positive relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Different social experiences and meeting a range of people will teach children about interacting with others and developing positive relationships. ● This will also strengthen their communication skills and help develop their own self-esteem.
Discussing well-being and a healthy lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children need to learn about the importance of looking after their bodies through a good diet and exercise. ● The setting should work with parents and carers so that both sides reinforce its importance.
Encouraging children to 'have a go'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The EYFS promotes 'playing and exploring', or encouraging young children to investigate and experience different things and to try new ones. ● This helps to develop their confidence and ability to explore new things.
Effective questioning by adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Effective questioning is an important way of developing children's learning. ● Through asking children what they think and using open questions, we can encourage their curiosity and thinking skills. (See also Section 3.4 in this unit.)
Developing independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Young children will be developing their independence in different ways, from starting to build relationships with others and managing emotions to physical independence such as dressing and feeding themselves. ● Adults should try to encourage them to do this as they learn and develop, rather than do too much for them.

See also Section 3.8 in this unit for more information on this subject.

6 Understand why continuing professional development is integral to the role of the Early Years Practitioner

You will need to know about the importance of continuing professional development (CPD) and how it should be used as an integral part of your role. We should always be thinking of

ways in which we can reflect on our practice and improve our own skills in the workplace so that we continue to evolve in our role and can support children and colleagues more effectively. See also Section 7 of this unit.

Jargon buster

Continuing professional development (CPD)

The ongoing process by which people keep up to date with what is happening in their professional area.

6.1 Define the term 'reflective practice' for professional development

6.2 Explain the importance of reflective practice and CPD to improve your own skills and early years practice

Reflective practice or self-evaluation for professional development is the process of thinking about and understanding what you do, so that you can improve and develop your professional practice. It should be evidence based and encourage you to think about your own skills, practice and subject knowledge. This means:

- reflecting on how you support children in the setting
- thinking about your own professional practice, your work with colleagues and others, and your own training needs.

You may think about and evaluate things which have gone well or not so well, and how you might change things next time in order to help children's outcomes. In this way you will learn from your experiences.

Reflecting on your practice also helps you to plan how you will move forward in your own career through planning your next steps more closely, and it gives you control over how you might do this. You will need to reflect on your practice regularly as part of this qualification.

Do it

Think about an activity you have done in the past day or two.

- What went well?
- What do you think you might have done differently?
- Would you make any changes if you repeated the activity?



Figure 1.15 How does reflection help you to improve your practice?

7 Demonstrate continuing professional development

As a professional working in an early years environment, you will need to be able to engage in CPD. This means keeping up to date with any changes in the sector and with your own role in the setting, through training and regular reflection on your own practice. You should also make sure that you keep a record of your CPD and any professional courses or qualifications which you do.

This learning objective is assessed in a real work environment.

7.1 Engage in CPD and reflective practice to improve own skills, practice and subject knowledge

One of the ways you may reflect on your practice is through a professional appraisal or performance management with your early years supervisor. This is a regular process which enables you to evaluate what you are doing and discuss areas which you may want to develop.

Self-evaluation

Is your job description up to date and does it reflect your role?

What have you enjoyed since your last appraisal?

What has not gone so well?

What are your areas of strength?

Are there any areas that you would like to develop?
What support would you need to do this?

Figure 1.16 A self-evaluation form**Did you know?**

Many early years settings also complete a self-evaluation form at least once a year, to help them to look at their strengths and areas for improvement.

To assist your qualification, ask your early years supervisor to carry out an appraisal with you (if this does not already happen). As part of this process you may be asked to complete a self-evaluation form before your initial meeting. You should also look closely at your job description, to make sure it is still up to date.

Do it

Answer the questions in the self-evaluation form, so that you are ready for your next review meeting.

Top tip

Always keep a record of any training or meetings you attend which have helped your professional development. You will then be able to use these for your CPD folder.

7.2 Use feedback, mentoring and/or supervision to identify and support areas for development, goals and career opportunities

As well as your tutor, your early years supervisor or mentor may observe you working with children as part of the appraisal process, and give you feedback on your practice. You should not be anxious about this, as the process is designed to support you and give you suggestions for development. This feedback should enable you to plan next steps for your own career development.

You should use your appraisal forms from the setting as well as feedback and action points from tutors as evidence for this unit, to show how you have used them to identify areas for development and worked on these.

Do it

Write a reflective account about how reflecting on your practice has helped you to develop your own role in the setting.

Check out

- 1 Why do you need to have good organisational skills to work as an Early Years Practitioner?
- 2 Why is it important for you to know the limits and boundaries of your role?
- 3 Where would you go to look for your setting's policies and procedures?
- 4 Identify four different communication methods.
- 5 Give examples of how other professionals enhance the work that an Early Years Practitioner does with babies and children.
- 6 Why is it important for an Early Years Practitioner to work closely with parents?
- 7 Explain the term 'Continuing Professional Development'. How can reflective practice help you in your role as an Early Years Practitioner?