The National Strategies
Early Years

Progress Matters

Reviewing and enhancing young children's development

department for
children, schools and families

Progress Matters

Reviewing and enhancing young children's development

First published in 2009

Ref: 00217-2009BKT-EN

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Progress Matters

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Introduction

This handbook is part of a package of materials designed to promote the development of good practice among leaders and managers in ensuring that all children make good progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It is intended as guidance for leaders and managers to reflect on how best to review children's learning and development in line with the principles of the EYFS framework. The intended audience includes headteachers, EYFS coordinators, assessment coordinators, and leaders and managers in all early years settings.

'Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. The welfare requirements are designed to support providers in creating settings which are welcoming, safe and stimulating, and where children are able to enjoy learning through play, to grow in confidence and to fulfil their potential.'

EYFS Statutory Framework, page 19

Reviewing the progress of individual children throughout the EYFS, and using those reviews to inform how best to support children's further development, is a key priority for all local authorities, schools and early years settings. Local authorities have a duty to improve the outcomes for all young children and at the same time to close the gap between the most disadvantaged and the rest. To do this – particularly in terms of closing the achievement gap – local authorities need to support schools and other settings to ensure that early learning and care is of the highest quality. We hope that the ideas proposed in this suite of materials will provide a useful starting point for developing and refining good practice. Alongside guidance material, this document presents current effective practice from across the country in tracking children's progress and using this information to improve outcomes for children.

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Alongside this handbook, the following materials have also been published:

1. A CD-ROM that includes a practical tool for tracking children's progress and links to other example tools for tracking children's progress; and
2. An e-learning module exemplifying how to use the tool provided on the CD-ROM.

These materials can all be downloaded from www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies

Hard copies can be ordered from:

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Email: dcsf@prolog.uk.com

This handbook and the accompanying materials have been developed in light of the work of a group of local authorities which began to develop a robust and systematic approach to early assessment. In 2007–08, Making a Big Difference local authorities worked together with the National Strategies to determine basic principles for early assessment, and agreed the following core elements:

1. The themes and commitments of the EYFS as a basis of all assessment activity.
2. Good early years observational assessment promoted by appropriate local authority training and support.
3. A local early years quality-improvement strategy based on the EYFS that allows the local authority to identify settings in need of support and to focus early years consultants' work.

Some of the Making a Big Difference local authorities have developed their own assessment materials. Some of these local authority materials are available on the accompanying CD-ROM.

All approaches to early assessment must conform to the statutory requirements of the EYFS.

Headteachers and leaders of schools and settings which include children in their final year of the EYFS should refer to the *Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook* for exemplification of the scale points. Further information on the Early Years Foundation Stage profile (EYFSP) and its support materials is available here: www.naa.org.uk/eyfsp; additional information on assessment and the EYFS is available at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk.

Headteachers and managers in schools may also find it useful to refer to the guidance and tools in *Continuing the Learning Journey* (www.naa.org.uk/eyfsp) and the links to the assessment process in Assessing Pupils' Progress for later key stages.

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Children's earliest experiences have a profound influence on their learning and development, and later achievement. Effective implementation of the EYFS encourages practitioners in early years settings to understand and support children's learning and development on a moment-to-moment and day-by-day basis. Through observing each child's achievements and interests, as well as observing groups of children, practitioners can respond, through their interactions, with new activities or changes to the environment, in ways that help children to learn.

Ongoing assessment is an integral part of this process, and should be used by practitioners to support every child to make progress. Alongside short-term assessment and planning for learning, it is also critical to maintain an overview of children's progress over time. Only by stepping back to look at the bigger picture of progress can a setting make sure whether daily practice is supporting all children to reach their full potential across all areas of learning.

Leaders and managers have a key role to play in improving quality through assessment by establishing systems, supporting staff, and analysing information to:

- track progress for individual children, and use that progress summary to identify next steps and communicate with others
- involve parents and partner professionals in understanding and supporting children's progress
- ensure the accuracy of evaluations of children's progress
- use progress information to support transitions as children move on into other settings, whether nursery, school or Key Stage 1
- compile progress summaries for groups of children, and identify any gaps in learning for individuals or groups
- plan and implement changes to meet identified needs.

This handbook provides guidance for leaders and managers on:

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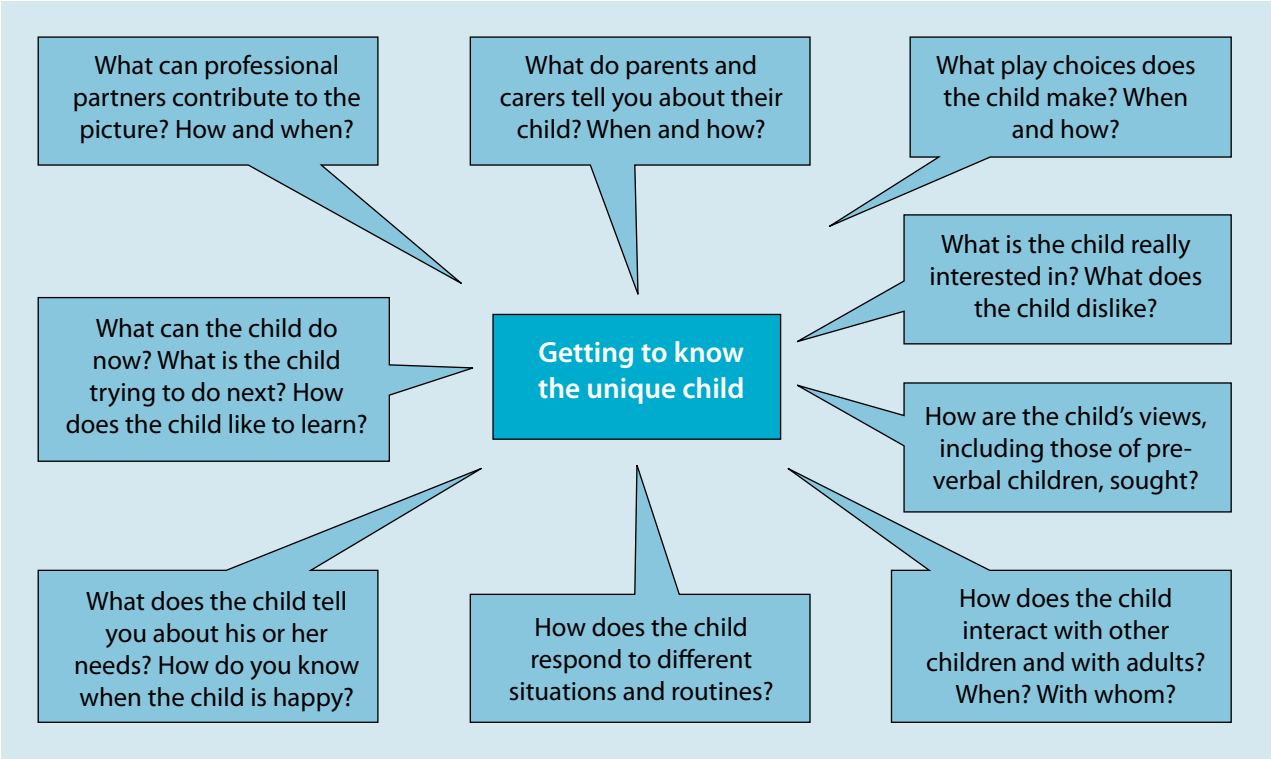
1. Gathering information on children's learning and development

The EYFS makes clear the importance of knowing and understanding each child as a unique individual in order to provide the best possible experience in their early years. Everybody involved in supporting a child's development should strive to learn as much about the child as possible.

To know and understand each child properly, leaders and managers in settings will need to ensure that appropriate guidance and support on assessment is available for all practitioners. Many local authorities will already have useful materials and training opportunities available for leaders and managers to call upon. The best examples support practitioners to look at each child as a whole, building up a broad picture of children's well-being, interests, characteristics and learning and development across all areas, emphasising the need to take into account the views of parents, carers and other key professionals, as well as the views of the child.

Areas for leaders and managers to include in gathering information from practitioners and other partners

This knowledge about a child should come from a mix of observing and communicating with the child in day-to-day interactions, and information from other sources such as discussions with parents, family and other settings that a child may attend across a week.



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Observations

Observing individual children

Observation is an integral part of professional interactions with children, and is identified in the EYFS as a key to effective practice. Early years practitioners need to know their children well and record, where appropriate, their observations in quick notes or lively narratives. Some practitioners may need support in:

- learning how to make effective planned and spontaneous observations
- deciding which of these observations to record, and how
- using these observations to make sure that children continue to make good progress at their own pace.

Guidance to help leaders and managers in supporting staff can be found in the EYFS *Principles into Practice* Section 3.1 (EYFS card) and in the further resources on the EYFS CD-ROM *Environments: Observation, Assessment and Planning*.

Observing groups of children

As well as observing individual children, leaders and managers should ensure that practitioners are also aware of the needs of groups of children. Children's experiences – and their learning and development – occur in the midst of social interaction with others, and can be better understood and supported by taking the wider context into account.

Leaders and managers can support practitioners by being aware of the particular community of children in a setting. Each group has its own characteristics, and as children interact with each other they will develop patterns of activity, discover common interests and create common themes in their play.

Leaders and managers can encourage practitioners to observe and reflect on:

- how the children are using different areas of the environment
- what activities particular groups of children choose
- the patterns of group and solitary activity
- how different children or groups of children respond to routines and practice in the setting.

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Talking with parents

In a busy early years setting it is often challenging to find time to build up effective partnerships with parents – but evidence tells us that it is crucial for children's well-being, learning and development. Parents are children's first and most enduring educators. When parents and practitioners work together in early years settings, the results have a positive impact on children's development and learning. It is crucial that any system for helping practitioners get to know and understand children includes, and values, contributions from parents and carers.

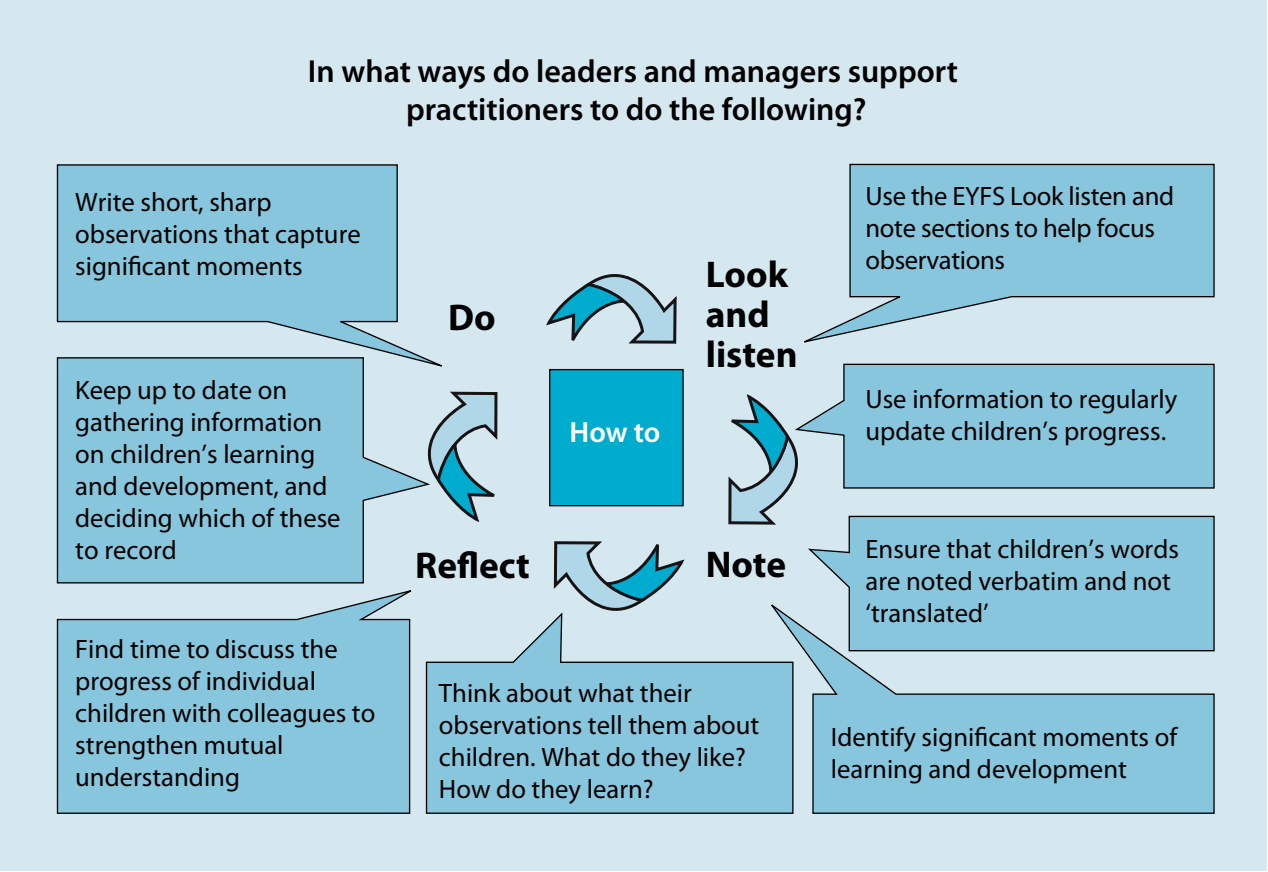
Effective practice includes:

- effective methods for including and welcoming **all** parents. In this context, 'all parents' means, for example, parents who may speak more than one language at home, fathers and mothers with busy working schedules and/or unsocial hours, same-sex parents, traveller parents and single parents, and should include, where appropriate, parents who live separately from their child
- time for the key person to talk to parents before a child joins a setting
- regular opportunities, both informal and formal, where information is shared and parental contributions are sought.

Professional partners

Managers and leaders of early years settings and their practitioners have a key role to play in working with professional partners from a range of agencies, such as local and community health and social services, to identify needs and provide the best learning opportunities for children. Partnership working is particularly important for children with disabilities and looked-after children. Guidance on partnership working is available on the Together for Children website: www.Togetherforchildren.co.uk.

The leader or manager's role in gathering information on children's learning and development



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2. Using information to support children's learning and development

Simply gathering information about a child is not enough. It is how the information is used to affect children's opportunities and experiences which makes a difference to their learning and development.

Leaders and managers should ensure practitioners reflect on what they know about children and use this knowledge to:

- plan to meet the child's needs, perhaps through adjusting styles of interaction, introducing new experiences, changing routines, or rearranging the environment
- plan to support learning, through offering linked opportunities to practise and consolidate, following up on identified interests, or extending observed learning in a specific area
- share insights with parents, enabling them to work together with practitioners to support the child's learning
- share information with other settings the child may attend, so both partners can better meet the child's needs and support learning.

Just as knowing how best to support individual children comes from observing and reflecting on what is noticed, so making the best provision for a group depends on observing the group and the interactions between the individuals. Practices that suited one group of children in the past may need adjustment as a new group of children develop their own social interaction and preferences. For a group of children, a setting may:

- adjust resources, arrangement of space or routines
- identify and plan to support specific areas of learning that are relevant to a group of children
- share information to support continuity with settings that share a number of children during the day or week, for example settings sharing a site.

Case study – an example of a child observe–assess–plan cycle

Thomas, aged 20 months, brought a toy digger to show his key person. The front of the digger could be raised and lowered with a lever on the side, and Thomas said 'Up-and-Down' as he moved it repeatedly. He laughed when it banged down, and repeated the action several times. Other staff in the room, shared observations of Thomas painting on paper attached to a door, with large up and down movements, and using the gloop by raising his hands high and watching the mixture fall. The staff thought that Thomas was showing particular interest in exploring vertical movements, and decided to plan further opportunities for him to explore up-and-down movements through building tall towers of boxes which could be knocked down, and through jumping off soft play shapes onto a mat.

Case study – an example of a group observe–assess–plan cycle

After a few minutes when parents came into the nursery and engaged with their children in activities that had been set out, staff in a nursery session for three-and four-year-olds gathered the children into a whole-group welcome. This had been a relaxed occasion to share news and briefly outline activities to come, with high-quality language use. Following the intake of a new group of children, however, staff noticed that several children were very restless in this session and not interested in the group talk. They discussed the situation, and thought that the children might have felt physically constrained and had a need to move. So the room was rearranged to leave a large open space across the centre for free movement, a movement corner was introduced, and access to outdoors was offered from the beginning of the session. The whole-group gathering was moved to later in the session, and staff observed that the children were then participating more readily.

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The leader and manager's role in using information to support children's learning and development

Leaders and managers should ask themselves how they support practitioners to:

- Use the information gathered about individual children to inform planning of their next steps in learning
- Respond to what has been observed to extend learning and development
- Interact purposefully with children to extend their thinking
- Use the information gathered about groups of children to inform planning of their next steps in learning.
- **Think and discuss**
- Extend children's language through planned interactions
- Discuss the implications of their observations
- Plan the learning environments, responding to the information gathered

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3. Summarising information to track children's progress

An important aspect of gathering and using information is having a clear oversight of the progress made by children in a setting. Leaders and managers need to step back from the detailed day-to-day focus on individual observation and assessment and undertake periodic, systematic reviews to see how well children are learning and developing across all areas of the EYFS.

Identifying stages of learning and development

In order to track children's progress, settings need a system for channelling the wealth of information gathered about individual children into a manageable summary. Detailed individual observations of self-initiated activity in a particular context, photos and special moments contained in a child's portfolio all document the child's unique learning journey. More information on documenting children's learning can be found in the EYFS *Enabling Environments: Observation, Assessment and Planning* and in the related attachments and resources found on the EYFS CD-ROM and at the early years section of www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies. Understanding this level of detail should support the practitioner's daily planning to meet a child's needs. At management level, a leader needs summary information based on this rich tapestry to ensure that children are making appropriate progress and staff are planning effectively to meet the needs of the children.

In order to capture progress information, a robust system is needed for identifying the stages children are at and showing the progress they make over time across all six areas of learning and development. There is no prescribed format for this system but it should be:

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- grounded in the principles of the EYFS
- derived from observational assessment as described in the EYFS (Commitment 3.1: Observation, Assessment and Planning)
- based on a quality-improvement strategy.

Examples of systems meeting these criteria can be found on the CD-ROM that accompanies this publication.

Development matters and *look, listen and note*

'The sections in *Development matters* and *look, listen and note* also support the continuous assessment that practitioners must undertake. Of course, these sections are not intended to be exhaustive – different children will do different things at different times – and they should not be used as checklists.'

EYFS Practice Guidance, Section 1: Implementing the EYFS, Paragraph 1.2

Children should be supported to pursue their unique paths in their learning and development toward the early-learning goals. Assessment of their progress should take account of the developmental bands described in the EYFS framework. Practitioners should be aware of the content of these developmental bands so they can position the child within these to inform their judgements about the child's next learning steps. Children may be in different developmental bands for different areas of learning. *Development matters* contains examples which indicate possibilities in children's learning and development, but because of the unique path that each individual child takes, it is not recommended that practitioners use the *Development matters* statements as a tick-list of assessment criteria.

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Case study – Ali's learning and development path

Through watching Ali in a range of situations over several weeks, his key person can confidently say that Ali likes to make arrangements with objects, shows awareness of similarities of shapes in the environment, uses positional language and is beginning to understand 'bigger than' and 'enough'. These are all examples listed in Development matters *at 30–50 months in, 'Shape, Space and Measures'. But Ali does not enjoy jigsaws and so has never been observed 'Attempting, sometimes successfully, to fit shapes into spaces on inset boards or jigsaw puzzles' (16–20 months). There is no need for Ali to demonstrate that particular example of development, and he is working securely within the 30–50 months age/stage band.*

The leader or manager's role in summarising information to track children's progress

Leaders and managers should:

- **ensure robust systems are in place which are in line with the EYFS principles and guidance and which provide summary information about children's progress across all areas of learning and development, and throughout their time in a setting**

Leaders and managers need to establish a summary assessment system that will be used across the setting to describe a child's stage of development. Staff should be supported in capturing where children might be at the start of their learning journey in the setting. The summary (a simple on-entry profile) should be completed for each child within a few weeks of beginning at the setting, and updated periodically while the child is in the setting to see how the child's learning and development is progressing.

Some practical examples of ways to record progress summaries are set out in the Leicestershire materials available on: www.leics.gov.uk/index/education/childcare/early_years_service/lgfl_foundation/transitionsandprofiles/pfts.htm

An example of how a progress summary might work in a setting can be found in the e-learning module that is part of these materials. An additional example of a successfully trialled practical system can be found on the CD-ROM. There is guidance on how to use the tool in the e-learning module available at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/earlyyears

- **support staff to understand and use the summary framework (see e-learning module and CD-ROM)**

Leaders and managers will need to ensure that staff can match their knowledge of children to the example progress summary on the CD-ROM, interpreting the detail of children's activities and learning in terms of the EYFS areas of learning. For the progress information to be useful, leaders must be confident that all staff have had training and support to understand the EYFS framework and the progress summary the setting is using.

- **establish systems to involve parents in reviews of children's progress, and support staff in this**

Parents are key partners in reviewing a child's progress. Parents hold vital parts of the jigsaw of understanding the whole child, and are also important links to other experiences the child may have outside the setting. Leaders and managers need to consider how to involve parents and take their views into account in periodic reviews, and how to ensure that practitioners share with parents accurate and honest information about progress. Staff may need support in sharing information with parents, particularly where a child may be making slow progress.

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- **establish proactive ways to gather information on children's progress when they join or transfer to the setting, and pass on progress information when children move on**

The Data Protection Act requires a setting to obtain permission from parents in order for information to be shared with other settings. Settings need to be aware that they should consider the security of electronic information and data when using a computer. Local authorities are well placed to advise settings in this area.

- **ensure the accuracy of the evaluations practitioners make about a child's stage of learning and development**

The only useful summaries are those that accurately reflect where a child is in his or her development, and staff need support to develop accuracy and a common understanding of making and recording the summaries. Effective approaches include discussions among staff about how their detailed knowledge of particular children could best be mapped onto the summary, and working in partnership with another setting at transition points to meet and share records and summaries of learning and development.

- **transfer periodic summative information from individual children onto a central system, and organise this information to give an overview of the progress of all the children in the setting.**

Leaders and managers will need to know how well overall the setting supports children to move on, and how well the setting is meeting the needs of particular subgroups of children (e.g. boys/girls, children with additional needs, children with English as an additional language (EAL)*, different ethnic groups). This requires a way of mapping the individual progress summaries onto a cohort tracker which shows progress for all children, so that it can then be considered in a systematic way. There are examples of cohort overviews on the CD-ROM and in the e-learning materials that form part of this package.*

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Case study – recording children's progress

In this setting, the staff meet regularly to discuss current achievements and learning needs for individual children and record them onto a simple summary sheet like this one for Roza. At Roza's next summary, practitioners may well be drawing on EYFS Development Matters 8–20 months for some aspects of her development, as well as the information for 0–11 months. The progress summary discussed by the nursery might read as follows:

		Overview of early development for Roza Robbins (DOB 090608)		
Contextual information – including languages, nationality, other care provided, heath	Some significant steps in development to note from EYFS *Development matters* 0–11 months How is this baby: • developing a sense of self? • making relationships? • communicating? • exploring movement? • using the five senses to investigate the world?	*Practitioner evaluations drawn from discussions with parents, observational assessments and other professionals – including development points special to this baby:*		
Started in setting 01.08.08 two days a week		First summary: 12.08.08	Second summary: 03.10.08	Third summary: 10.01.09
Both parents share care for Roza and take turns to bring her to nursery. She is their first child. Mother is Polish. Roza is allergic to cow's milk (21.09.08) and now has a formula prescribed by her GP Mother has taught staff some Polish songs and rhymes and recorded them on our MP3 player for us – Roza loves them and they also help when she is unsettled.		Roza has settled well at nursery. She kicks her legs when she is happy and clenches her fists when she is upset – needs a lot of reassurance at nappy changing time. Her mother has told us she is starting to smile at home and that she loves to lie outside under the tree. We have taken her to the park and she seems fascinated by the changes in shadow and light and moves her head and reaches out.	Roza has not been well. She has an allergy to cow's milk, has lost weight and is not the happy little girl of a couple of months ago. She cries easily and needs to be carried closely by her key worker for much of the day. She still smiles when her mum and dad come and has started to respond to some of our music tapes – going quiet and turning her head. At home she enjoys her mother singing Polish nursery rhymes – we are learning some at nursery.	Roza has made really good progress in CLLD and PSED this last month– everyone in nursery has noticed the difference in her ability to communicate what she wants and her confidence at trying new experiences. With support, she now enjoys lying on the mat and reaching out for the toys. She has a strong bond with her key worker, but also lifts up her arms for a cuddle with our midwife.

Using information from this summary, the manager of the setting can map Roza's progress onto a central system which provides an overview of all children in the setting. Please refer to the e-learning module for further explanation.

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4. Using summary information to support children's progress

When information is organised in a systematic way, it helps leaders and managers ask pertinent questions and gives starting points for discussing and understanding progress, and evaluating quality and impact. Leaders and managers should be clear about:

- **what data is collected**
- **how data is collected**
- **what it is used for.**

Data by itself cannot support children's progress or identify the next steps in learning. It should be analysed to discover issues that can point the way to further thinking, resulting in improved practice and outcomes. Effective analysis of children's progress will enable leaders to:

- spot trends and patterns in development
- understand what is working well in the setting
- identify any gaps in learning
- identify any particular groups of children whose needs may not be met
- ask questions about gaps that can lead to improvements in practice and provision
- ensure children are offered the right environment and opportunities to reach their potential and enjoy learning through their play and planned activities.

Creating the picture (www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) provides additional information on how this information can be managed. *Creating the Picture* defines the principles, process and purpose of assessment in the early years. It is based on EYFS principles, the EYFSP and associated publications. The guidance was developed in partnership with local authorities and the National Assessment Agency (NAA now the QCA). These materials address issues of evidencing judgements, developing approaches to manageable record-keeping, appropriate use of data, and demonstrating progress that have emerged as key challenges for practitioners, headteachers, managers and local authorities. The materials also emphasise that all practitioners should be assessing throughout the EYFS, as explained in the EYFS materials.

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The leader or manager's role in using summary information to support children's progress

Leaders and managers should:

- **involve parents in considering how a child's progress summary can inform support at home and at the setting**

Reviewing a child's progress with parents provides an ideal opportunity to build a joint approach to supporting children's learning. Significant next steps can be identified and practitioners and parents can share ideas about how best to support the learning at home and at the setting. A progress review is an important opportunity to engage parents – particularly fathers – and other close family members who may have a significant relationship with the child but have little daily contact with the setting, and to learn from and support parents' understanding of how everyone concerned can best help their child to learn.

- **use the summary data to reflect on and track the progress of the cohort, group or child**

In analysing the data the leader may find a pattern of limited progress for individuals or a group of children in one or more areas. It may be that gaps are evident for the group as a whole in particular areas of learning, or that strong progress is seen in some areas which could indicate good practice in the setting.

- **identify the needs of individual children**

Summarising the information about all children's progress allows setting leaders to identify children who may be falling behind the group as a whole, and to work with the child's key person to plan appropriately for that child. By providing an at-a-glance view of progress across all areas of learning, the summary demonstrates patterns for a child that may indicate important next steps to be supported – these may be gaps where progress is slow, or it may be that a child is making rapid progress which raises the need for stimulating challenges. Progress-tracking can support the early identification of special educational needs (SEN) *and trigger early support.*

- **know whether groups of children are on track for their age and making progress over time**

Analysing summary data allows the leader or manager to see how much progress is being made. The analysis can determine whether the setting is being successful in supporting children's learning so that, for example, over time a greater proportion of the children are reaching levels of development that are appropriate for their age. It can also show whether there are subgroups of children who are progressing slower or faster than others.

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Case study – group next steps and response

When the leader and staff considered the progress summary for the current group, they noticed that development in self-care was lagging behind other areas for many of the children. They decided a next step for the group was to increase independence in managing their own clothing. They used a puppet story to raise the issue with the children, and discussed how important it is to try, and how good it feels to do things for yourself. They spoke with parents about how they were encouraging self-care, and modelled supporting children to be independent as they hung up their coats and put them on.

- **consider why it might be that different progress is made by different groups or cohorts**

Is there something in common for these children that might be a factor? Perhaps gender, ethnicity or language might be in common for a group.

- **use the information to plan and implement improvements to practice, provision, the environment, staff skills and knowledge through continuing professional development (CPD) so that children's progress is improved**

It is not enough to identify a child or group which is making slower progress. The important step is to then use observations of those individual children, along with sound knowledge of early learning, to inform improvements to the provision – routines, environment, interactions, activities – in order to address the needs of that child or group of children. Looking more closely at the data in this way and responding to the picture that emerges helps to ensure that all children make good progress in the setting.

An example of this use of data is available in the e-learning module www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies. *For example, it could be that the area of Language for Thinking shows relatively slow progress for a large group of children. In that case, the leader might work with staff to plan changes to routines, environment, interactions or activities that would better support the children's development in this area. Staff may require support in this area through CPD. Identifying a clear next step for the group as a whole can be useful in focusing improvements of the provision to support this learning.*

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Case study – individual next steps example from a progress overview

Peter, a confident and outgoing four-year-old was generally thought to be making excellent progress at his pre-school. However, when she looked at his progress summary, the manager noticed that KUW appeared to be an area where he needed additional support. She helped his key worker facilitate a longer observation of Peter during his self-initiated play. The practitioner observed Peter in the garden digging and finding a worm which he then observed closely for five minutes. Later, in a different part of the playground, Peter drew wiggly lines and wormlike shapes with a piece of chalk. On reflection, the practitioner decided that she had underestimated Peter's achievements for KUW as she tended to focus her observations inside – and Peter's explorations were mostly in the outdoor environment. As a result, the pre-school planned more observations outside for all children and identified a number of areas, especially for boys, where they agreed they had previously underestimated children's achievements.

- **use the information to support transitions to later settings as children move on**

As a child moves into and on from a setting, sharing progress-tracking between settings supports a more appropriate experience for the child. It takes time for a practitioner to observe and get to know a child, and there can be a period when a child does not demonstrate the extent of his or her learning and development while getting to know people, routines and places in the new environment. Along with individual information such as the child's likes and dislikes, ways of learning and being with others, summary information about the child's progress in learning and development will help practitioners to provide the right level of challenge to support continued learning. At all stages – into and moving on from a nursery group to reception class, and into Key Stage 1 – accurate summaries based on good observations of children will provide a head start in meeting the child's needs and planning for the next steps in learning.

Sharing cohort summaries at transition points with a receiving setting can usefully support the children's further progress. A receiving practitioner could respond through appropriate planning if informed of strengths and weaknesses of a group as a whole.

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- **use progress summaries to support children's progress through quality development.**

Having a quality vision is one of the fundamental markers of successful leadership. Through continually reflecting on what the setting does well and what can be improved, a leader is able to instigate purposeful change that enables children to progress well. Progress data supports the reflection that leads to effective action planning and quality improvements.

As well as looking for patterns within the setting's data, comparisons can be made more widely. How does progress compare with neighbouring settings, at local authority level, and at national level? It can be useful if later settings pass back information about the pattern of children's later progress, as it may be the grounding children received earlier which does or does not support them well in particular areas. Leaders and managers can reflect on this information to plan improvements.

Issues identified through progress data may lead to improvement planning targeted at specific areas of learning or for specific groups of children. In the holistic way that children learn, however, these improvements often contribute to an overall improvement in setting quality.

Case study – an example of quality development

Progress data for a setting indicated that Creative Development was an area where children's progress was relatively slow. The setting discussed the situation with its early years consultant, and decided to make improving its provision for children's creativity a priority in their setting action plan. Actions identified included CPD for the staff on supporting children's creativity, as well as developing a workshop area where children would have free access to a wide range of materials.

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5. Leading for quality – conclusion

The full measure of effectiveness of early years provision lies in how well a setting meets children's needs for the present and supports each child's learning to prepare for a successful future. Developing leadership skills in tracking children's progress and using progress data is an important strand in quality development.

As well as promoting individual children's learning, effective tracking helps leaders and managers to have the evidence to include objective statements in settings' self-evaluation and raise aspirations of improvement. There are various ways leaders and managers can assess how well they are meeting children's needs. Knowing how well children are progressing in their learning, and using that information to support each child and to develop overall quality in the setting, are essential elements of the effective leader or manager's role.

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Appendix 1: Prompts for leaders in using data effectively

PROMPTS TO DEVELOP THE LEADER'S ROLE

Gathering Information

How do you ensure observations of day-to-day activity in a range of situations?

How do you involve parents, children and other professionals?

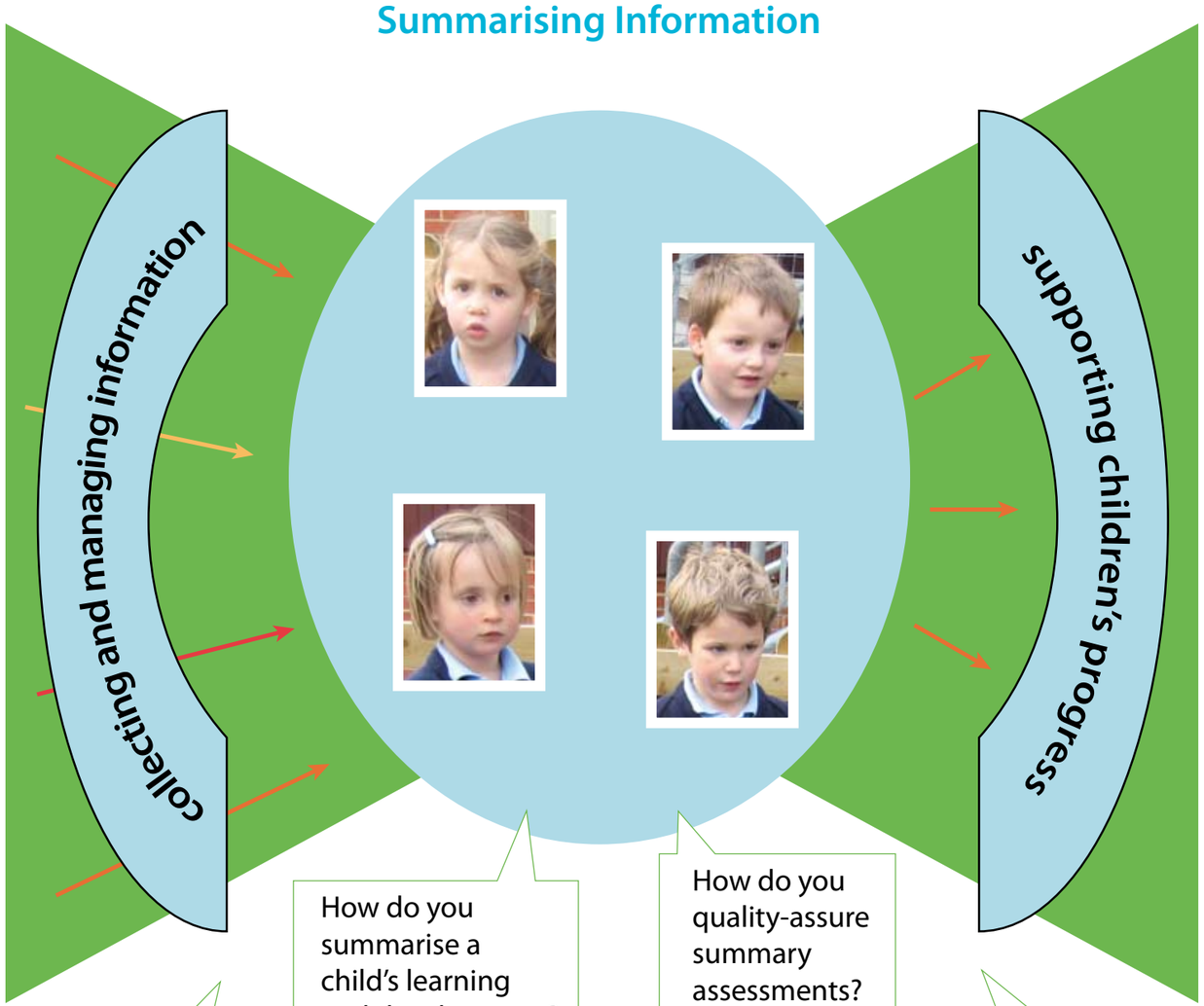
What information is important, and shows the unique child?

How do you ensure recording systems are manageable?

How do you support staff to reflect on observations to understand individual children?

How is understanding the child's needs and development used to support progress?

Summarising Information



How do you record summaries?

How do you summarise a child's learning and development?

Who will you track?

How do you ensure summaries show a holistic view of all areas of learning and development?

How do you quality-assure summary assessments?

How do you show progress?

How do you identify next steps?

What is the starting point?

How do you share progress summaries with parents?

Using Information

How do you organise the information?

How do you analyse progress for specific groups of children?

How do you analyse progress in all areas of learning?

What other information about the children might you need to consider in order to understand their progress and needs?

How do you identify and act on any gaps in your provision – practice, resources, organisation, environment?

How do you use the information to support transitions?

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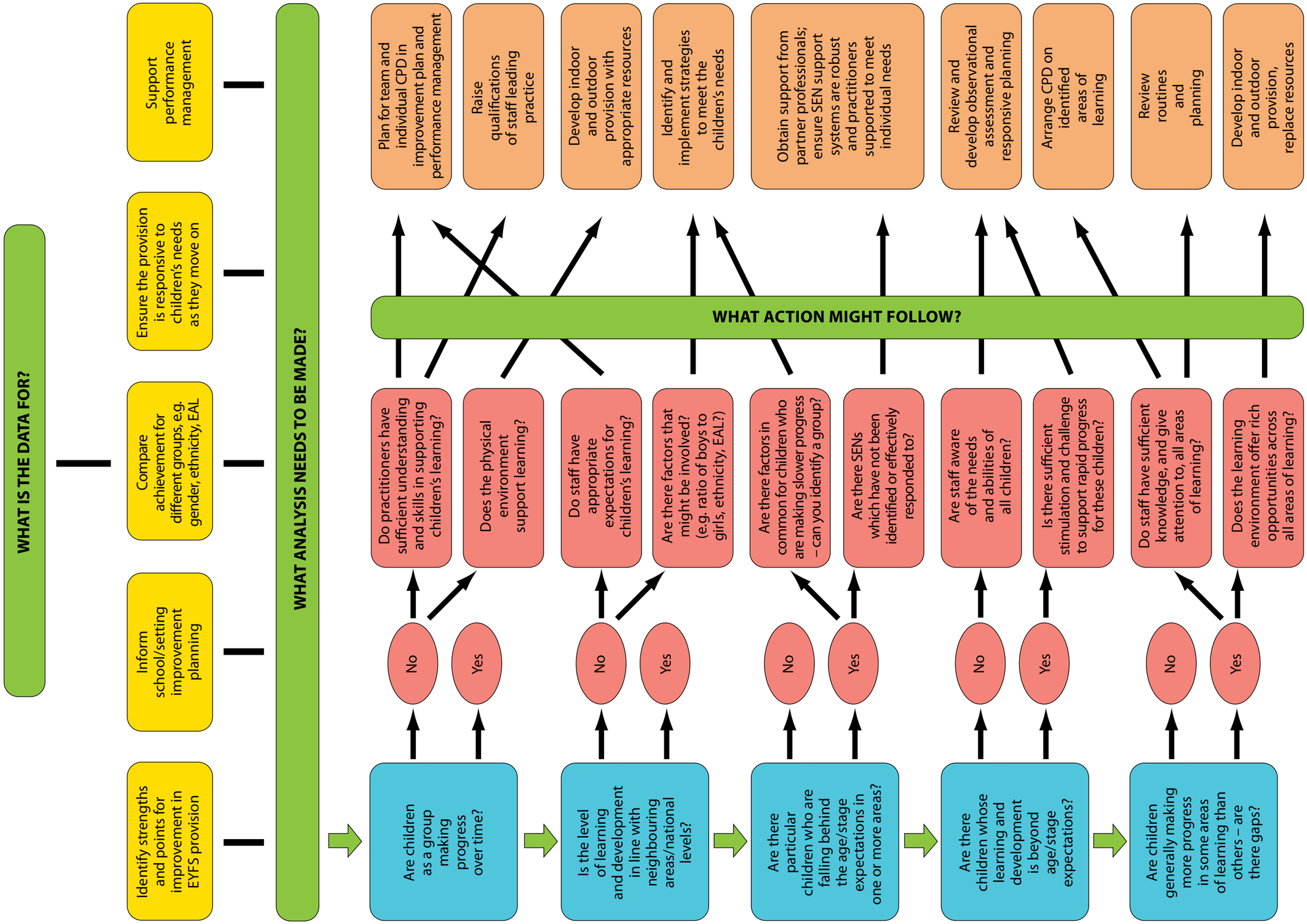
Appendix 2: Prompts to develop the leader's role

PROMPTS FOR LEADERS IN USING DATA EFFECTIVELY



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Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the support of the following local authorities, Hertfordshire, Leicestershire, Luton, Nottingham City, Southwark, Staffordshire and Tower Hamlets.

We would like to acknowledge the importance of the following document: Bertram T, Pascal C and Saunders M (2009) Accounting Early for Life Long Learning (AcE) Programme, Amber Publications and Training: Birmingham.

We would like to acknowledge the joint working with QCA that lies behind this document, starting with our liaison over *Creating the Picture*.

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Audience: Leaders and managers of all settings and schools with an EYFS, EYFS co-ordinators, assessment co-ordinators, subject leaders, Year 1 co-ordinators, Early Years consultants and strategic leads, local authority assessment leads, SIP managers and SIPs.
Date of issue: 03-2009
Ref: **00217-2009BKT-EN**

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