



Reflection Toolkit

Welcome to the Reflection Toolkit – a resource which encourages practitioners to consider areas where provision may need adjustment, in order to support children with learning differences. The Toolkit aims to ensure all children have the best possible chance of making progress and to provide a holistic picture of a child's learning.

Context –

The Reflection Toolkit was devised following the new Early Years Foundation Stage Reforms and research showing increasing overlaps between social disadvantage and SEND. A number of key messages from the Early Years Foundation Stage Reforms led to its development, notably:

- Reducing recorded evidence and paperwork and an emphasis on increasing time spent with children learning about their individuality and learning strengths brought welcome considerations about how we assess children with SEND.
- An emphasis on understanding child development and that children do not develop on a linear pathway but in different directions at different rates.
- A greater understanding of the importance of developing an increased dialogue with families, valuing their input and their unique story and background.
- An emphasis on recognising the individual child's strengths and a commitment to reducing barriers to children's access to good early years education.

Child's Name:

DOB:

Basic Needs

Children need to feel safe and secure before they can learn. This includes meeting their basic physical, emotional, and social needs. Children's basic needs will differ depending on their developmental profile, and through our observations, discussions and attachments with children we can begin to identify what they need to thrive. Make notes in the spaces below.

Love and belonging

Love and belonging are to do with others, the social side of feeling that you belong, are connected, loved and included.

Safety

Safety needs are about security and feeling safe – physically and emotionally, the need to have shelter/a home and to have stability in one's life.

Physiological

Physiological needs are about having the right nutrition and water, having a healthy bowel and bladder (for toileting advice see ERIC.org.uk), access to fresh air, enough rest and exercise.

Actions

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Child's Name:



Well-being and Involvement Guidance

Children's level of well-being and involvement can be indicators for how much they will achieve. The higher the levels of the child's well-being and involvement, the more the child has the capacity to learn. When there are high levels of well-being and involvement, we know that deep level learning is taking place and that the child has self-confidence, self-esteem and resilience. Knowing the unique character of each child is the most important aspect when reflecting on their well-being. Children who have neurodivergent traits, have a diagnosis or a disability may experience well-being and involvement in different ways. It is important to spend time tuning in to children's individual motivations so that we can cultivate their well-being and involvement.



Family's views:

Setting/School's views:

Actions

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Inclusive Practice

In order to promote and value diversity, we need to consider ways of sharing and celebrating children's lived experiences. It is important that we are considerate of each child's varied circumstances. The following comes from the 'Birth to 5 Matters' Guidance:

Ensure children can see themselves and their families in the environment. Sometimes the environment, both physical and emotional, speaks more loudly than the policies, so it is important to consider how the environment in the setting enables the children and their families to view diversity positively.

Children need to see representation of someone who "looks like me", or "has a family structure like mine", or "lives somewhere like where I live", etc. Children absorb and develop ideas of what is possible for themselves from the images and materials around them, such as:

- photographs of the children themselves (where acceptable to the families)
- books, posters, small world play materials that depict and enable acting out a range of identities which actively challenge stereotypical representations and avoid tokenism
- representation of different races, disabilities, ages, types of families including single parents, same-sex parents, grandparents raising children
- role-play clothing that allows children to play in gender-flexible ways and reflects diverse cultures, and household items reflecting various cultures and communities
- areas where children can relax and "just be", perhaps with pictures and cultural mementos
- practitioners who have some of the same identity features as children and families – race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, language.

Use the space below to reflect on whether you are providing this child with what they need.

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Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning

The characteristics of effective teaching and learning describe factors that play a central role in a child becoming an effective learner. The CoEL empower us to understand how children learn, and for children with 'SEND', this is often much more useful than relying on developmental milestones. It is important to reflect on how the child demonstrates the characteristics of effective learning to be able to guide our actions and next steps.

Playing and exploring

Aspects to consider – Does the child have special or intense interests? Does the child engage in any repeated forms of play? Which areas of the environment is the child drawn to?

Active learning

Aspects to consider – What is the child's motivation, how do they persist when faced with challenge? Do they show satisfaction at meeting their own goals? How do they show concentration and engagement?

Creating and thinking critically

Aspects to consider – How does the child make choices and decisions? How do they approach tasks? Explore ways of solving problems? Link concepts? Finds meaning in sequences and show an understanding of cause and effect?

Actions

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Communication

Communication skills are critical to children's development. Children may develop communication in different ways and following a range of pathways. All communication needs to be valued, e.g. non-speaking. Considering communication differences instead of difficulties can lead us to removing barriers for children and opening up the freedom to develop children's communication skills in whichever direction they demonstrate development. Neurodivergent children may develop their communication skills in different ways - it is important to celebrate and reflect upon the individual child's communication journey and notice the steps of progression each individual child is making on their own pathway.

Having good relationships with children and tuning into their movements and behaviours can present an in depth insight into how a child communicates. We should always value any methods of communication and encourage interaction to continue and develop.

Consider the following areas when reflecting on how you can support a child to develop and extend their communication skills.

When is the child motivated to communicate?

What skills do they demonstrate in communicating confidently?

When and how does the child show attention and listening? Is this around a particular interest or play fascination? How do we honour and extend this interest?

When/how does the child show interaction? How do they respond when spoken to/shown a symbol or object? Consider which areas/times they are more likely to engage in serve and return?

How does the child make requests? E.g. pointing, movement towards object/area?

What gestures and body language does the child use to communicate (and what might they indicate)?

Does the child demonstrate different communication skills at home/with their primary caregiver? Parents can often interpret subtle actions as a child communicates.

Consider your relationship with a child do you know them well enough to be in tune with all aspects of their communication?

Schematic Play

Schematic play is when a child repeats a certain action or behaviour because they are exploring an idea that interests them. Observation is a powerful tool to develop your knowledge of the child and what truly interests them for you to be able to provide resources or provision to extend their learning and build on their knowledge and skills.

Neurodivergent children sometimes develop their play in different ways and it is important to tune into the individual child's play skills and routines to be able to offer further resources or provocations to increase their engagement and further their learning.

A child revisiting a play pattern or repeating a play sequence should never be dismissed as participating in play without value. All play and exploration should be valued and is intrinsic to a child's individual learning profile. Observe, wait and listen – are there any schemas or play routines the child is developing? How will you build on these and what experiences will you offer?

Trajectory Schema: enjoy movement. They like to move themselves and to be moved. They're drawn to watching movement and making movement happen.

Transporting Schema: An interest in moving objects back and forth, often in different containers. They might use small objects and enjoy putting things into piles or enjoy filling containers to the top with objects.

Containing Schema: children may enjoy being in an enclosed space, or enjoy placing things inside other things to contain them. Some children like closing themselves in dens or boxes.

Enveloping Schema: It might be that the child loves to envelop themselves in blankets or enjoy wrapping things in paper or they might like covering every inch of a piece of paper in paint.

Rotating Schema: Children enjoy objects that rotate or like to watch spinning tops or turning wheels. They may also enjoy spinning their own bodies or riding bikes around a track.

More information on schemas and schematic play is detailed in this [Pen Green document](#).

Executive Function

The cognitive aspect of self-regulation is called executive function. It is a set of mental skills that include working memory and flexible thinking (e.g. being able to tolerate a change in routine). We use these skills every day to learn, work, and manage daily life.

Difficulties with executive function can make it hard to focus, follow directions, and handle emotions, among other things. Neurodivergent children develop executive function skills in different ways, which may be more difficult to interpret. It is important to consider the individual characteristics of the unique child to reflect upon their executive function skills.

What behaviours does the individual child exhibit that enables them to plan and achieve goals?

Executive Function skills are important to a child's growth and learning ability, and though development begins in early childhood, these skills continue to progress well into adulthood.

The following skills prompts are taken from 'Supporting the Wellbeing of Children with SEND' by Kerry Murphy:

Can the child hold information in mind and are they able to retain, recall and act upon that information? (working memory)

Can the child tolerate and adapt to change and transitions? (flexible thinking)

Is the child able to think things through before acting and have control over physical and emotional actions? (impulse control)

Is the child motivated, engaged and working towards goals in their play? (self-direction)

Is the child able to engage in play and sustain attention? (planning and prioritising)

Is the child able to initiate an activity or play in their own way and know how things work? (task initiation)

Actions

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Child's Name:



Sensory Reflection

Each individual is unique in their sensory profile. It is important to understand a child's unique profile to discover the types of resources or activities that will best captivate them. Appropriate sensory stimulation can increase children's concentration and focus and find a calm enabling state for them to learn and develop. Many children with learning differences benefit from being in an environment state, where they are neither over nor under-stimulated. Reflecting on a child's sensory sensitivities can help with planning appropriate sensory-soothing play and adapting provision to meet individual children's needs. Below are some considerations to make when reflecting on how to adapt an environment taking into account a child's sensory profile. It is important to consider whether the children may have an over responsiveness or an under responsiveness to help with planning the right environment for a child.

Reflect upon children's sensitivities and responsiveness in the following areas and **add actions where appropriate.**

Visual (sight)

Auditory (hearing)

Tactile (touch)

Gustatory (taste)

Olfactory (smell)

Vestibular (balance)

Proprioceptor (position of body in space)

Interoception (internal state)

Child's Name:



Child's Voice

Where possible, this space should be completed in conjunction with the child.

Consider alternative communication approaches to enable the child to contribute as fully as possible. The adult completing this page should know the child very well.

What I love to do:

What I dislike:

My aspirations:

Child's Name:



Parent's Views and Aspirations

The Principles of the SEND Code of Practice state:

1. The views, wishes and feelings of the children, young people and their families are important.
2. It is important for a child, young person and their parents to participate as fully as possible in decisions and be provided with information and support to enable their participation.
3. Children, young people and their parents need to be supported to help them develop and achieve the best possible outcomes that effectively prepare them for adulthood.

Providers should talk to parents and families about their aspirations for their child to empower them to play a central role in making decisions about their child's education and care.

These partnerships are the key to a successful early years experience for children and for them to gain the most out of their early education and reach their potential.

Parents and providers should plan support and interventions together that will recognise parent's aspirations through long term targets, objectives for the next phase of education and targets for the next half or full term.

Life aspirations for my child:

Long term aspirations (2 years):

Short term next steps (this year):

Child's Name:

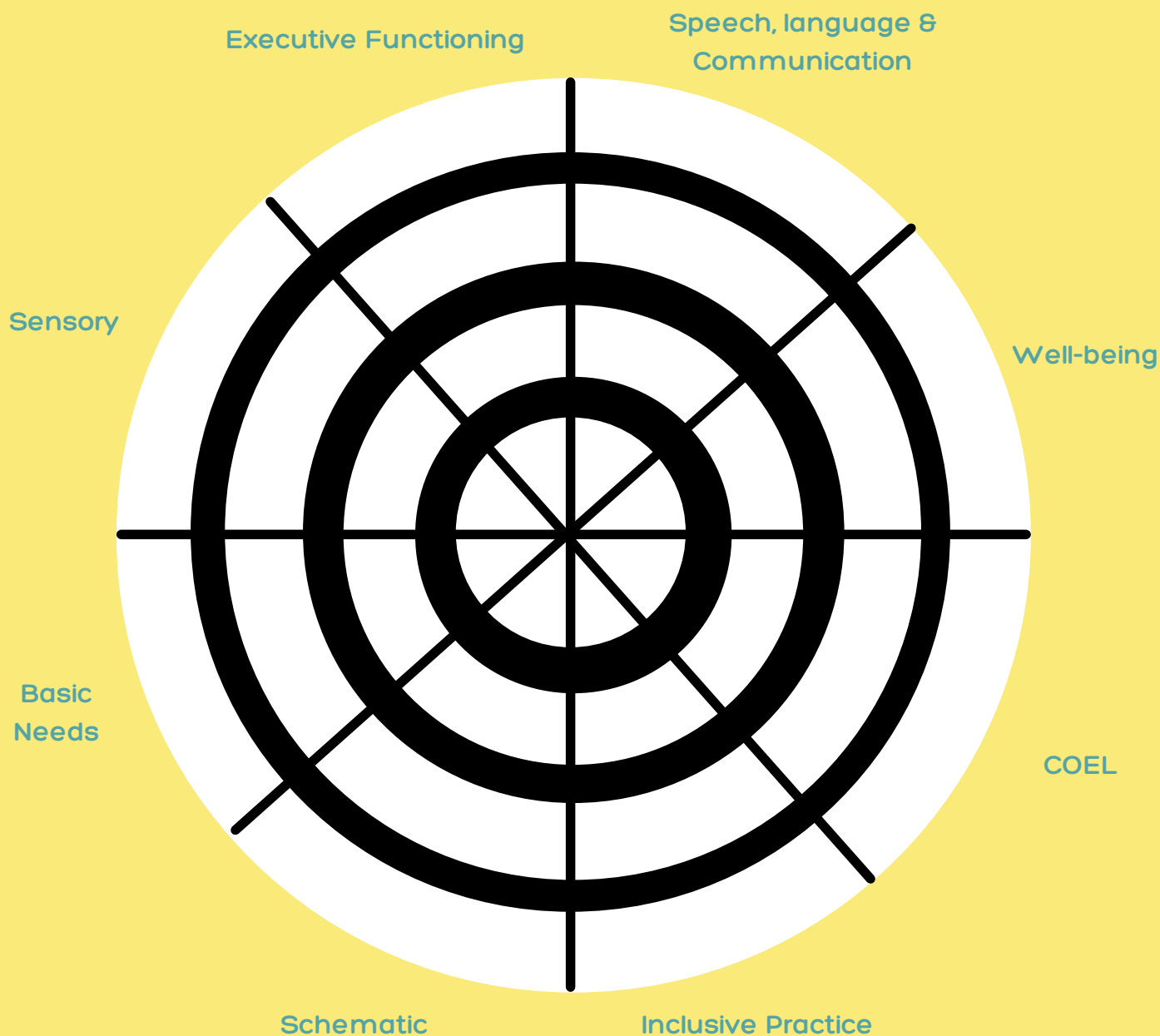


Holistic Reflection Overview

Consider your reflections completed in the previous pages and identify your main priorities by completing the holistic overview below.

There is an outer circle and 3 inner circles, giving you 4 options to choose from. The outer circle denotes that there are no barriers in this area and that the child's needs in this area are met – if this is your reflection mark all 4 sections.

The innermost circle denotes that there are significant barriers in this area and removing them should be prioritised when considering next steps of action and provision for the child.



Child's Name:



Goals

These goals should be child-centered and a collaboration between the child, the family and relevant professionals. Reflect upon the priorities identified in the Reflection Toolkit when setting new goals.



Think about what the child will need to learn in order to meet the long term goal



Long Term

Short Term

1

2

3

Child's Name:



Progress Towards Outcomes

Use these spaces to periodically update how a child is progressing towards their individual outcomes. It may be useful to date your entries.

Short term 1:

Short term 2:

Short term 3:

Long term:

Child's Name:



Actions

Use this space to write down any actions that are necessary as a result of your reflections. It might be useful to add dates and when they will be reviewed.

Child's Name:



Extra Notes

Use this space to write any extra information that would be useful, or to continue from a separate page. It may be useful to add dates to your notes.

Child's Name:



Extra Notes

Child's Name:



Extra Notes