

Developing Self Reflective Practice

This practice guidance explains the importance of self reflective practice and explores the different tools available to you

Supporting members to provide the highest standards of care and learning for children

This practice guidance is been developed for all childcare professionals in England and Wales

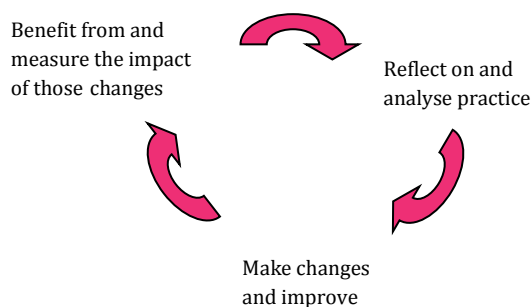
This guide covers:

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1. What is reflective practice?

As a professional in childcare and early years you want to provide the best care possible for the children in your setting. Reflective practice is an excellent way to maintain and continually improve the quality of your practice.

Reflective practice is the process of thinking about and analysing your practice, with the aim of challenging, changing, modifying, developing and improving it. This should be a continuous cycle of reflection and improvement.



To be a reflective practitioner you need to be able to take a balanced view of your practice, recognise and celebrate your strengths and what works well but acknowledge what could be improved. Evaluating your practice will help you to identify your professional development needs and, over time, will support you to become more confident in your practice.

A reflective practitioner:

- Celebrates their strengths and skills and acknowledges areas that need developing
- Takes professional responsibility for constantly improving the quality of their own practice
- Thinks about the way they work and why they choose certain ways of working
- Considers the impact of their practice on the children and families in their care
- Considers working in different ways and introduces new ways of working
- Plans how to maintain and develop their practice in future

2. Why is reflective practice important?

Reflection is an important part of your practice and will benefit the children in your setting and their parents and carers. You will also benefit both personally and professionally. Reflective practice will support you to maintain and continually improve.

Through reflection and continual improvement you will achieve better outcomes for children. Think about some of the other benefits this could include for them:

- Their individual needs are met
- Their self esteem is increased
- An appropriate, enabling, interactive environment including suitable resources for them and opportunities indoors and out

The process will also benefit parents and carers, as they will be able to see changes in your practice and feel confident that the care you are providing is high quality and constantly improving.

Continually reflecting on your practice will:

- Enhance your skills whilst improving your confidence and motivation
- Help you to focus on and take ownership of your practice
- Identify professional development needs
- Support you to set targets

This will then translate into improvements for your setting, making you more efficient, enhancing your reputation, enabling you to evidence outcomes more clearly, and therefore provide evidence for Ofsted and your SEF (England) and CSSIW or your SASS and Quality of Care (Wales). Where you are working with others it will also promote team work.

3. What can you do?

There are often barriers to reflective practice. This might include not having time or not being sure how to go about implementing reflective practice. Making the time to reflect is important but it is also about finding the tools that work best for you.

Let's explore some of the tools that you can use.

Reflective Diary

You might want to consider using a reflective diary. This can capture a range of personal developments, thoughts, experiences, feelings and reflections (Bolton, 2014). It can be a good starting point on your journey of self-reflection. Ask yourself what, how and why questions.

Activity

Think of a recent activity that you planned and carried out with children. Ask yourself:

- What worked well? How and why did it work?
- What was the impact on outcomes for the children?
- What didn't work and why?
- How could it have been improved?



Ofsted resources in England

- Settings Latest Ofsted report
- Early Years Self-evaluation form. (2015)
- Early Years Self-evaluation form guidance (2015)
- Early Years Inspection Handbook (2015)

In Wales CSSIW

Practitioners have to complete a Self Assessment of Service Statement prior to inspection that looks at four quality themes. These are:

- Well-being
- Care and Development
- Environment
- Leadership and Management

Quality Improvement Tools

A quality improvement tool is a set of tools and guidance that will support you to review your practice and make improvements that will lead to better outcomes for the children in your care and their families. It will also support your own professional development. Quality improvement should be a continual process of reviewing and improving your practice.

There are a number of tools that you could use, some examples include:

- Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, Infant and Toddler Environmental Rating Scales, Family Childcare Environmental Rating Scales, School Aged Care Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS, ITERS, FCCERS)
- Local authority quality improvement schemes

For childminders there are also:

- Childminding networks
- Quality Comes Home (Wales)

Quality improvement tools will ensure that reflection is across all areas of your practice and usually you will be working towards a set of standards. The use of a good quality improvement tool can also provide an alternative source of self- evaluation for your OFSTED/CSSIW inspection.

It is a good idea to talk to your local authority about what is available locally in relation to quality improvement tools as well as support and guidance they can offer.

Peer support

Talking to others can be a powerful vehicle for reflection as you can talk about your practice, share ideas and support each other. Positive relationships with other professionals where you reflect together will support you with new ideas to extend your practice.

Activity

Talk to one of your peers about observations, each of you should share one. Together discuss the next steps and how you will plan to meet each child's individual needs.

Joining networks and groups are one way of accessing peer support. PACEY Local is a professional community which includes online members' forums for live, interactive chat with other professionals. There are also local groups that meet in towns across England and Wales.

Peer observations

Associated with some quality improvement tools, peer observations are a good way of reflecting on your own practice and that of others. Peer observations should be focused and short and the observer should give constructive feedback, with an aim to identify strengths and areas for development within the setting. Peer observation can provide less experienced childcare professionals with opportunities to observe more experienced colleagues; equally, experienced professionals may learn new ideas and approaches from observing those less experienced within the setting.

Seeking the views of others

The perspectives of others who use your setting can be a valuable tool for reflective practice. By reflecting on the views of parents and carers, children and other professionals you will have a better understanding of them.

Parents will feel more engaged and valued if you ask them for feedback. You may choose to ask parents to provide written feedback by completing a feedback form or you might just have a chat with them at the end of the day. You probably do this all the time and make changes and improvements based on your conversations. Remember this is reflecting and improving your practice!

How do you capture the feelings of the children in your care? Do you for example offer the opportunity for children to make decisions, are your activities child-led and are your observations of children informing your planning? Are all children able to say how they are feeling and how does this influence your setting?

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

CPD is a valuable part of the reflective process and part of PACEY membership. All the tools above will form a part of your CPD. Training both accredited and non-accredited are types of professional development. You might also consider going to conferences, seminars and reading journals or magazines. When going through the reflective process it is important to plan, record and measure the impact of your CPD. Some people use a Professional Development Plan (PDP). Here is an example:

What do I want/ need to learn?	What will I do to achieve this?	What resources or support will I need?	What will be the impact on my practice?
How the EYFS has changed	Attend PACEY webinar	1. Time set aside to attend 2. Book course 3. Pay fee	My plans, policies and procedures will be up- dated in line with new requirements
How to spot and address problems with speech and language development	1. Investigate research and techniques (e.g. books, online) 2. Meet with local speech and language therapist (SLT)	1. Support from local SLT 2. Order any books	I will be better able to support children with speech and language problems

If you work in a group setting they may provide training opportunities for you, alternatively your local authority may have a training programme you can access.

"I recently attended ECAT training and learnt so much. It made me realise how little time I give children to respond and the value of using open questions. I have started to extend children's vocabulary too. Jack said 'look at this big strawberry' and I replied 'yes it's gigantic'".

Emma Price, Childminder

5. Examples and Activities

There are lots of good reasons to develop reflective practice within your setting.

Below are some comments that outstanding settings shared with Ofsted

“Outstanding providers told us that reflective practice is crucial to their success. They are not complacent but aspire continually to do better. They regularly review what they do and how this helps children. They look at areas of weakness and learn from mistakes, because they are highly motivated to move forward. They like to think creatively and be adventurous to find and try new ways to make a positive difference.”

“We don’t label ourselves as outstanding; we constantly reflect on our practice”

“We never stand still; we’re always striving for more”

“We want to change and develop ideas but also to look at what has worked and revisit it to find out why”

OFSTED (2009)

Activity	Activity
<p>For all children and families settling in to a setting is important. Reflect on the following statements.</p> <p><i>I support children to settle in by greeting children and their parents or carers by name and with a smile, trying to see my setting through their eyes and adapting my techniques to help each child settle-in and feel ‘at home’ in my setting.</i></p> <p>How do you do this? Some examples might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical reassurance • Using comfort objects • Routines <p><i>I also reassure parents or carers who are anxious about leaving their child in my care.</i></p> <p>How do you do this? Some examples might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing photographs • Sharing information and experiences about what their child has been doing 	<p>Having undertaken the reflective process, consider setting yourself SMART targets as part of your professional development plan. Take one of your areas for development that you have identified and consider the following:</p> <p>Specific – What is the task to be done? What are the details?</p> <p>Measurable – What evidence will show that you have achieved your target? What will be different if you complete the target?</p> <p>Achievable – Is the task achievable with your current work load? Do you need personal development in order to achieve the task and if so what?</p> <p>Relevant – Why is the target important? Will it improve your practice?</p> <p>Time bound – When should the task be completed by? How often should it be done?</p>

Links to PACEY Professional Standards

Here are the areas of professional standards that this factsheet relates to. Remember reading factsheets can count towards your CPD and can support you in reflecting and completing the [professional standards audit tool](#).

PACEY Professional occupational standards

PACEY Code of Ethics

2(i) Best practice requires reflection and a continuous search for improvement.

Member

Reflecting on and developing your early years and childcare practice will help you meet the standard **P1.1 Reflect on and develop my practice** by thinking about and evaluating the ideas and behaviours that underpin what you do day-to-day. As a PACEY member, you also agree to take part in professional development activities, in order to make sure you provide professional, high quality, up-to-date and safe childcare.

Affiliate

Reflecting on your early years and childcare practice will help you meet the standard **P1.2 Reflect on and develop my practice** by thinking about and evaluating the ideas and behaviours that underpin what you do day-to-day. As an affiliate member, you also agree to take part in professional development activities, in order to make sure you provide professional, high quality, up-to-date and safe childcare.

Fellow

Reflecting on your early years and childcare practice will help you meet the standard **P4.3 Use evaluation to improve the quality of my childcare practice and work with parents and carers** by critically evaluating your performance and the thinking behind your behaviour and actions and actively seek out and test new theories, techniques and ideas to improve the quality of your childcare practice and work with parents and carers.

6. References

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- DfES (2005) KEEP: Key Elements of Effective Practice. London: DfES publications.
- DfES (2005) Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for The Children's Workforce. London: DfES publications
- DfES (2008) The Early Years Foundation Stage. London:DfES
- Ghaye, A. & Ghaye, K. Teaching and Learning through Critical Reflective Practice. London: David Fulton Publishers. Leeson, C. (2004) In praise of reflective practice, in Willan, J; Parker-Rees, R & Savage, J. (ed) (2004) Early Childhood Studies. Exeter; Learning Matters Ltd, pp145 – 155.
- Ofsted (2009) Childcare groups a passion to be Outstanding: Manchester: Crown Copyright
- Ofsted (2009) Childminding a passion to be Outstanding: Manchester: Crown Copyright

- Shon, D.(1983) The Reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action. London: Temple Smith
- Teaching Agency (2012) Guidance to the Standards for the Award of Early Years professional Status. www.education.gov.uk/publications

7. Resources - websites, reading materials and books

- Lindon, J. (2012) Reflective Practice and Early Years Professionalism, 2nd Edition Linking Theory and Practice (LTP). Cheshire: Hodder Education
- Ofsted (2015) Early Years Self Evaluation Form www.ofsted.org.uk
- Ofsted (2015) Early Years Self evaluation form guidance
- Ofsted (2015) Early Years Inspection Handbook
- Cryer, D. Harms, T. & Riley C. (2003) Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales/ITERS/FCCERS/SACERS audits
- www.foundationyears.org.uk
- National Children's Bureau Quality Improvement Principles www.ncb.org.uk

8. Framework and/or Legislation

- Early Years Foundation Stage
- Ofsted
- CSSIW

9. Support from PACEY

As a PACEY member you can get more help by visiting the website www.pacey.org.uk or by calling 0300 003 0005

Available in the www.pacey.org.uk/shop is the following supporting books and/or publications:

- EYFS Framework
- EYFS and You
- How to video?

We will provide relevant link to benefits or products

PACEY is the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years. A standard-setting organisation, we promote best practice and support childcare professionals to deliver high standards of care and learning.

Since 1977 we have provided high quality support to our members and have worked with government, local authorities and others to raise standards.

Together with our members - childminders, nannies and nursery workers - we are working to become the professional association for everyone in childcare and early years and ensure our members are recognised for the vital role they play in helping children get the best start in life.

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