

Brooklands College

Your Career as an Early Years Educator



Introduction



Most people who look at the picture on the left, will see a child up to her ankles in mud. They will think “Oh no, look at all that mud! How will I get that mud off her boots? I hope her hands are clean.”

An Early Years Educator (EYE) will see a child exploring her surroundings, excited by all the natural materials. An EYE will think “How exciting, look at all those learning opportunities, what is she learning? How can I extend her learning? How can I build on this experience? How can I..... the list will be endless.

You have been working and studying hard on your Early Years Educator qualification and have learnt lots of skills and gained loads of new knowledge on how to support the learning and development of babies and young children, so when you have finished your qualification you can sit back and relax.



When you work with children you never stop learning, there is always a new way of working, new legislation, new policy, new need or new skills you need to learn.

In this workbook we are going to look at your continued professional development and why it is important.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is used in many professions, it focuses on the idea that all professionals aim for continual development relevant to their chosen career and profession.

Every Early Years Educator has a responsibility to develop and maintain their skills, knowledge and competence so they can provide the very best care and education to all the children they work with. This will help to keep the children safe, secure and protected so they can learn and develop their potential.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

CPD is an acronym for Continuing (or Continuous) Professional Development. It can be broadly defined as any type of learning that you undertake which increases your knowledge, understanding and experiences of a subject area or role.

CPD is an ongoing and planned learning and development process. It focuses on what you learn and how you develop but may include a formal process of recording it (through supervision, submission of assignments etc.). You are probably already undertaking CPD without even knowing it.

Examples of CPD include:

- Work based learning (either through supervision, training courses, job-shadowing, mentoring or coaching)
- Completing a professional qualification
- Informal or experiential learning (which takes place through life and work experience)
- Mandatory Training – For example Annual Safeguarding Refresher
- Complimentary Training – For example Makaton or PECS
- Reflective thinking based on planned and unplanned experiences
- Peer mentoring or job-shadowing
- Assessing your own skills and Knowledge
- Completing a SWOT Analysis
- Reflective Practice
- Supervision and Appraisals
- Peer to Peer observation
- Shadowing other Professionals
- Sharing Best Practice
- Watching relevant Television programmes – For example The Secret Life of 4-year olds
- Reading relevant magazines – For example Nursery World or Early Years Educator

Why is CPD important?

Aside from learning about something new, there are many reasons to undertake CPD. CPD is important because it gives you up to date knowledge that may help you to deal with new or complex situations can help you achieve your career goals by focusing on learning and development will give you confidence in your role will demonstrate your commitment to developing your skills and knowledge in a subject area.

Whose responsibility is CPD?

CPD is everyone's responsibility.

If you work within an organisation then there is a shared responsibility between yourself and your manager (or your manager and your employees) to empower and support your staff to develop.

If you work independently or are employed directly by the people using a service, then CPD is your responsibility. There is no 'one size fits all' however, no matter where you are in your career or learning, CPD is yours and should reflect your learning need.

I don't have time for CPD

A common misunderstanding about CPD is that you may think that you don't have any spare time to undertake any CPD or learning.

Some of the most effective personal development results from personal experiences on a day-to-day basis. It is important to give yourself the opportunity to reflect on those experiences either on your own or for discussion with your manager. This is a form of CPD which can also be recorded as part of your 20% OTJ training.

"I can't afford to do any courses or qualifications".

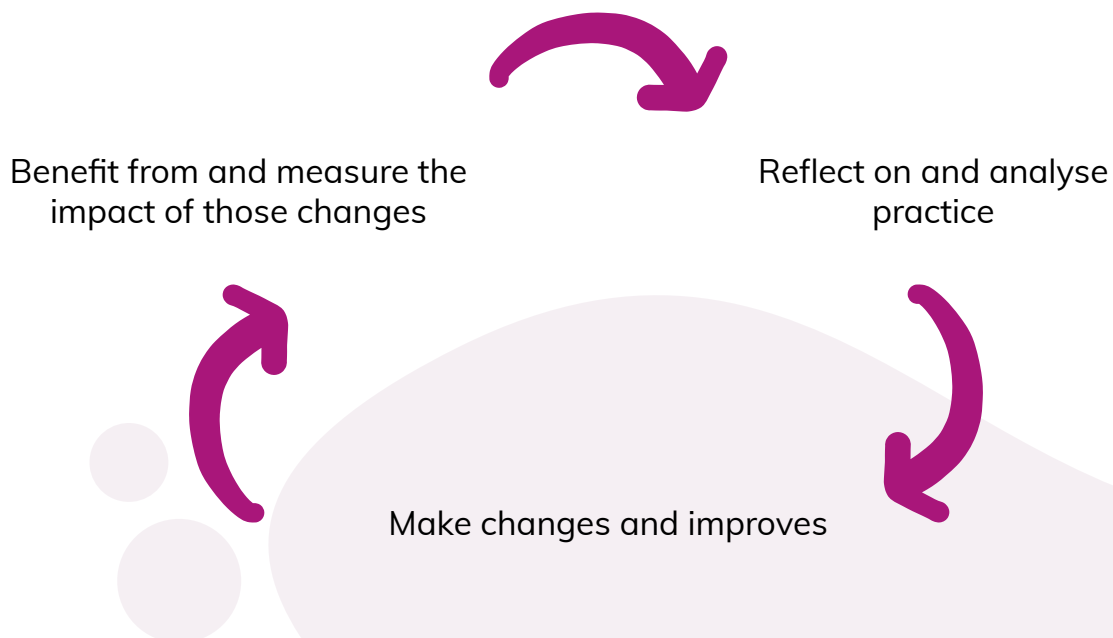
Don't forget CPD is not just about doing training courses or qualifications!

It could involve doing some work-shadowing, reading some information in a book or on a website, or talking to colleagues about how they handled a difficult situation. The key thing is to reflect on your learning and think about how it will impact your job or role in the future.

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

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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).

Where you are working with others, it will also promote team work.

Reflective Account 1

Think about a time recently when you have reflected on a situation, activity or incident.

Describe the situation or incident:

How did you manage this situation or incident?

On reflection what would or could you do to prepare yourself for the next time this situation arises?

Reflection Activity 2

Think back to when you first started your Apprenticeship and fill in the thought clouds...



As Early Years Educators we need to make sure our skills and knowledge are always up to date, please fill in this Personal Development Evaluation.

Knowledge	What did you know at the start of your Apprenticeship?	What do you know now?	What do you still need to work on?
Seven areas of learning			
Child Protection			
Role of Key Person			
Staff:Child Ratios			

Knowledge	What did you know at the start of your Apprenticeship?	What do you know now?	What do you still need to work on?
Medicines			
Food and Drink			
Accident or Injury			
Managing Behaviour			

Knowledge	What did you know at the start of your Apprenticeship?	What do you know now?	What do you still need to work on?
Safety			
Risk Assessment			
Outings			
Equal Opportunities			
Information and Records			

Key Elements of Effective Practice

	What do you do well?	What do you still need to work on?
Relationships with children and adults		
Understanding the individual and diverse ways children develop and learn		
Knowledge and understanding in order to actively support and extend children's learning in all areas and aspects of learning		
Practice meeting all children's needs, learning styles and interests		
Working with parents, carers and the wider community		
Working with other professionals within and beyond the setting		

Complete this self-evaluation of how you think you perform your duties:

	What do you do well?	What do you still need to work on?
Communicating and interacting, supporting speech language and communication development for children		
Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion		
Implementing my duty of care		
Understanding and promoting development		
Safeguarding		
Keeping children healthy and safe		

Reporting Problems Beyond Your Own Level of Competence and Authority to the Appropriate Person

Naturally, you will be expected to apply your initiative to resolving problems that arise during the course of your work. However, if during the execution of your objectives you encounter problems that you either cannot resolve because the problem is beyond your level of competence or because you do not have the authority to make the judgement and decision required, then you need to refer the matter to the appropriate person.

It is invariably better to report problems earlier than delay; as the sooner the problem is highlighted, the sooner action can be taken to resolve the situation.

Activity:

Think of 3 examples of work situations when you would need to refer a matter to your manager.

Situation	Why would you report this?
1	
2	
3	

As an Early Years Professional it is important you are able to identify your own needs as your career progresses.

It is also important to identify any opportunities available and to identify any threats to achieving your Targets or goals.

A widely recognised way for doing this is to complete a SWOT Analysis. Please complete the SWOT Analysis template on the next page.

PERSONAL SWOT ANALYSIS (Strengths and weaknesses (in terms of): knowledge, skills & best practice)
Another way of assessing how effective we are as and Early Years Educator is to complete a SWOT Analysis

Internal Factors	
Strengths (+)	Weaknesses (-)
<i>Talk about what you're good at, your unique assets and resources, and how your positive attributes are perceived by others.</i>	<i>Talk about improvements you need to make, any resources you lack, and how these negative attributes might be perceived by others.</i>

External Factors	
Opportunities (+)	Threats (-)
<i>List doors that are currently open to you, opportunities you can capitalize on, and how your strenghts can create new connections.</i>	<i>List any harmful hazards, competitors, and how known weaknesses can open the door to threats.</i>

Using Feedback from Others to Identify Your Development Needs

Both performance questionnaires and SWOT analysis can be used to gather feedback from others to identify your development needs. Appraisal reports are often a rich source of feedback on performance that you could use to form your plans for development.

A broader approach to assessment, used by many organisations is to have an appraisal system that incorporates 360-degree feedback.

360-degree feedback is feedback that comes from a range of people that work closely with the individual being reported upon.

The employee undertakes a self-evaluation along with obtaining feedback from his or her peers, subordinates, and line manager. Also, feedback may be obtained from external sources such as customers.

Managing Your Performance

Whatever your chosen career path, your employers will need to measure your progress and performance.

Being Able to Manage Personal Performance

Agreeing SMART Objectives that Align with Business Needs with your Line Manager

An objective is:

'A specific result that a person or system aims to achieve within a time frame and with available resources.'

<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/objective.html>



The word 'objectives' is often used interchangeably with the word 'targets'. Examples of objectives might be:

Example 1

A personal objective:

"To complete my qualification by the end of July 2020."

Example 2

A business objective arising from the above business goal:

"To be OFSTED ready, including Policies and evidence of Planning and Assessment for each room by June 2020"

Objective Setting

To work effectively you will need to agree objectives for yourself with your line manager.

The SMART acronym has become universal as a framework for setting effective goals.

SMART stands for:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Agreed/Achievable
- Realistic
- Timed (or Time-bounded)

SMART Objectives	
Specific	Is the objective clear and precise? What exactly has to be achieved?
Measurable	Do you know how to measure it? (Think: quality, cost, time and quantity) Is it possible to easily ascertain whether the objective has been achieved?
Agreed/Achievable	Agreement leads to greater commitment. Is it achievable? Does the person undertaking the tasks involved see it as achievable too?
Realistic	Do you think that the target is sufficiently challenging but also deliverable?
Timed	Have clear timescales for the achievement of the objective been set?

Activity:

Compile 3 SMART objectives for 3 tasks that will enable you to improve your Practice and organisational skills. The most difficult part to achieve is identification of a good measure – a measure really answers the question: how would you know when the task is completed to the required standard

Objective Measurement	Criteria Completion	Target Time/Date
1		
2		
3		



Soon it will be time to start thinking about how you progress in your chosen career when you successfully achieve your Apprenticeship.

What skills and qualities do I need?

When you are considering a career in early years it is important for you to understand the skills and qualities required for working with babies and young children. People who pursue careers in this area need to have the right kind of skills and qualities; including:

- Being an active listener
- A good communicator
- Transparent and trustworthy
- Caring
- Empathetic
- Patient
- Respectful
- Observant
- Inclusive
- Encouraging
- Imaginative
- Being an active listener
- A good communicator
- Transparent and trustworthy
- Caring
- Ability to work as part of a team
- Empathetic
- Patient
- Respectful
- Observant
- Inclusive
- Encouraging
- Imaginative
- Creative
- Flexibility
- Commitment
- Reliable
- Responsible
- Have a good sense of humour
- Motivation
- Hard working
- ... and above all professional

Getting a Permanent Role Working with Children

If you'd like a career working with children there are plenty of choices, whether you want to keep them healthy, help them learn and develop, or protect them from harm.



These are some of the things people have said about their experiences of working with children.

Are you interested in a career in teaching or nursing children, or considering becoming a paediatrician, child psychiatrist, social worker or playworker?

Many careers involve working with children and not all of them require a degree.

Safeguarding our youngest children is essential, so the first priority for any childcare employer is to check that those starting work in early years are suited to working with children. Before starting, everyone working with children must have an enhanced Disclosing and Barring Service check (DBS) and must disclose if they are living with anyone that is barred from working with children. Employers will also obtain references and ensure that new recruits are satisfactory before allowing them to work with children unsupervised. Most people working in early years will need a paediatric first aid certificate. You will also be required to have knowledge of safeguarding policies and procedures and your employer will support you to do this.

Training

Childcare can involve working with children of all ages, from babies and toddlers, to older pre-school children. You might start your career as a nursery assistant without any qualifications, but training and studying for level 2 or level 3 qualifications will allow you to progress and become a qualified nursery worker. From there, you might even be able to progress into supervisory and managerial roles. There are different types of training and qualifications you can undertake such as work based training, apprenticeships (a job with training) and college/university courses – your local college or training provider/university will be able to provide further information.

Childcare – types of employment

Careers within early years can vary greatly depending on the size and type of setting you work in; some might be small, private centres with only 20 or so children, whilst other larger chains. They might be run by private companies, community organisations, or be linked to a school.

If you are working in a **day nursery** you will be helping children from birth to 4 to develop and learn. You could work in a **privately owned nursery, a maintained setting run by your local authority or a school offering childcare**. Many private settings open from 8am to 6pm (or even longer) all year round to accommodate the needs of working parents, so you will need to be able to be flexible. Due to the long opening hours many private settings operate shifts to cover early starts and late finishes. Some maintained childcare settings operate in the same way; however, some may open term time only or open for shorter hours during the day.

Settings in schools are often called **pre-schools** and this can mean that they are not caring and educating children of all ages. Pre-schools could mean you are caring for and educating children between 2 and 4 (or five depending on the structure of the setting). Pre-schools often open for sessions e.g. morning and/or afternoons and some may have lunch club.

Playgroups are often organised by community or voluntary groups and run from community centres, church halls or even out of a school. Opening times for childcare will vary dependant on the setting. Many playgroup settings open for 3 hour sessions.

Play work, including out of school clubs, can include breakfast clubs, after school clubs or holiday play schemes. Within these roles you could be working in a school, community centre or leisure centre. The role of a play worker is very active and can be very varied. This role might involve working with children and young people aged between 4 and 13 (maybe even up to 16 in some instances) and is mostly early morning, evening, during school holiday and weekend work.

Forest Schools

Forest School is an inspirational process, that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees.

Forest School is a specialised learning approach that sits within and complements the wider context of outdoor and woodland education.

The ethos is shared by thousands of trained practitioners across the UK and beyond. Its roots reach back to early years pioneers in outdoor learning and across the sea to Scandinavia.
forestschoolassociation.org

A **crèche** provides children with a safe place to play whilst their parents engaged in short term activity. This could be training, in a sports facility, working very short hours or even shopping. The age range of children can vary within this type of work. There are a range of opportunities for working in a crèche e.g. within gyms, at shopping centres or you might join a company that has their own internal crèche for staff. Crèche sessions normally only last for around one to two hours but they may offer more than one session per day.

Registered **childminders** are self-employed and run their own business. They work on domestic premises, often from home, and are flexible in their working hours. Childminders must be registered with Ofsted, and the number of children they are legally permitted to care for will depend on the age of the children and the space available. Dependent on the hours a childminder chooses to work, there are opportunities to offer daytime, evening, weekend and overnight care if this is what a parent needs. Childminders can also employ assistants to enable them to increase the number of children in their setting. You may wish to consider becoming a childminding assistant rather than being an independent registered childminder.

Registered home carers or **nannies** work in the home of the parent or carers who are their employer. Nannies are responsible for all aspects of childcare and duties will vary dependant on the age range and number of children they are required to care for. Whilst some nannies live in with their employer (family), others live out.

Have a think about any progression you would like to make in your Early Years career and any other qualifications you may be interested in doing to help you achieve your goals:

Career Goals:	Further Qualifications:

If you would like any advice or guidance regarding your progression, please feel free to contact Brooklands College Careers Department or the Apprenticeship team:

Email: Careers@brooklands.ac.uk

Email: Apprenticeship@brooklands.ac.uk

Useful Websites

<https://targetcareers.co.uk/careers-advice/choosing-your-career/385899-im-interested-in-careers-working-with-children-what-jobs-can-i-do>

<https://www.cache.org.uk/for-learners/choosing-early-years-as-a-career>

<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/job-profiles/playworker>

<https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/training-programme>

<https://www.forestschoollassociation.org/careers/>

Acknowledgements

<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/care/early-years-and-childcare/childcare-providers/cpd>

<https://targetcareers.co.uk/careers-advice/choosing-your-career>

If you have any queries regarding the completion of this workbook please contact the Apprenticeship team at Brooklands College and we will put you in touch with a childcare assessor.

