Babies and young children are individuals first, each with a unique profile of abilities. Schedules and routines should flow with the child’s needs. All planning starts with observing children in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning.

Starting with the child

- Observe children to find out about their needs, what they are interested in and what they can do.
- Note children’s responses in different situations.
- Analyse your observations and highlight children’s achievements or their need for further support.
- Involve parents as part of the ongoing observation and assessment process.

Planning

- Planning can be for the long-/medium-term and can show how the Principles of the EYFS will be put into practice.
- Some planning will be short-term – for a week or a day and will show how you will support each child’s learning and development.
- This planning always follows the same pattern – observe, analyse, and use what you have found out about the children in your group so that you plan for the next steps in their learning.

Assessment

- Assessments are the decisions you make using what you have observed about a child’s development and/or learning.
- One type of assessment, often referred to as assessment for learning or formative assessment, is what you do every day when you observe children and note their interests or abilities.
- Another type of assessment is used to give a summary of a child’s achievements at a particular point in time so that their progress can be tracked. This is known as summative assessment. The EYFS Profile is a summative assessment of each child’s achievement at the end of the EYFS.
- You may be involved in contributing to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for a child who has additional needs. The CAF is a standardised assessment which gives a full picture of a child’s additional needs at any stage. It includes information from the child and their parents and covers all aspects of a child’s development including health, education and social development.
Effective practice

- When you are planning remember that children learn from everything, even things you haven’t planned for – such as a fall of snow.
- Plan to observe as part of the daily routine.
- Analyse your observations to help you plan ‘what next’ for individuals and groups of children.
- Develop records of learning and development.
- Ensure that parents have regular opportunities to add to records.

Challenges and dilemmas

- Ensuring flexibility in planning for the group, while keeping a focus on children’s individual and present learning needs, or interests and achievements.
- Planning time for regular observations of children who attend the setting on an irregular basis.
- Involving parents in contributing to the observation, assessment and planning cycle when they are already busy.
- Creating records that are clear and accessible to everybody who needs to see them.

Reflecting on practice

It is important to consider all the factors that affect children’s development and learning.

- Are the views of parents and practitioners reflected in children’s records?
- Do you review the environment and the resources after each session?
- Do you think about which children were involved in different activities and use this information to plan further?

What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage booklet.
- **Areas of Learning and Development** including effective practice, planning and resourcing at different stages are detailed in the Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage booklet and on the CD-ROM.
- **Early Support** information is available on the CD-ROM under areas of Learning and Development.
- **Research and resources** are available on the CD-ROM.