Why Track Children’s Learning and Development?

The statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) seeks to provide quality and consistency in all early years setting, so that every child makes good progress and no child is left behind (2014, p.5).

‘The learning and development requirements are informed by the best available evidence on how children learn and reflect the broad range of skills, knowledge and attitudes children need as foundations for good future progress’ (2014, p.7).

2.1 ‘Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children’s progress, understand their needs and to plan activities and support’ (EYFS, 2014, p.14).

Ofsted Evaluation schedule for inspectors of registered early years provision outstanding criteria states: ‘Assessment at all ages is precise, sharply focused and includes all those involved in a child’s learning. It is monitored and used to secure timely interventions and support, based on a comprehensive knowledge of the child and their family’ (2014, p.8).

Ofsted Evaluation schedule for inspectors of registered early years provision good criteria states: ‘Practitioners can demonstrate that all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language, are progressing well towards the early learning goals over time, given their starting points’ (2014, p.9).

The Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) tracking documents are tools that record summative assessments based on non statutory guidelines in the Early Years Outcomes (DfE, 2013), this can be adapted to suit the needs of the setting. A summative assessment is a summary of the child’s learning and development at a specific point in time. It supports you in answering the question ‘What difference is the provision making to the learning, development and progress of the children attending?’ Are you ready for your inspection? (Ofsted, 2014).
Sample NCC documents include:

- Progress Summary – 0-36 months
- Progress Summary – 36-60+ months
- Statutory EYFS Progress Check at Age Two: (For further guidance see the ncb A Know How Guide, 2012).
- Individual Progress Tracker
- Cohort Tracker and Analysis sheet
- Sample completed Cohort Tracker and Analysis sheet

These tools are sample documents only and may be adapted for your individual setting. They will help you to identify and explain the differing rates of progress that all children are making in their learning and development. They will also help you to identify children who are working comfortably within the typical range of development for their age. Evidence gathered through on-going formative assessment (annotated photographs, spontaneous and planned observations, information from home, the voice of the child, samples of children’s experiences and achievements) builds the picture so that practitioners can make a ‘best fit’ judgement of the band that the child is working within. Formative assessments are an integral part of the learning and development process because they inform and help you to plan your provision and meet individual children’s needs and interests.

The Progress Summaries and Tracking documents are designed to be completed together, however, the onus is on the setting to decide how they use these tools and which is most beneficial to them. Please refer to Observation, Assessment and Planning Guidance (Northamptonshire County Council, 2014) to ensure that the key elements of good practice are met.

**Completing the Progress Summary**

The Progress Summary documents support practitioners to summarise children’s learning and development (0-36 months, EYFS progress check at age two and 36-60+ months). Their purpose is to enable practitioners to record children’s interests, how they learn (the characteristics of effective learning) and their typical range of development that they are predominantly working within.

- It is a ‘best fit’ model and practitioners need to make one judgement against each aspect to identify their typical level of development.
- The Progress Summary for 0-36 months requires a short written summary of the child’s development in the prime areas. There is an additional box for practitioners to identify any links to the specific areas to reflect the unique child. It is for practitioners to use their professional judgement whether to complete the specific areas at this point.
- The Progress Summary for 30-60+ months requires a short written summary of the child’s development in the prime and specific areas.
• It is good practice that the Progress Summary is shared with parents and that they are able to contribute their knowledge of their child, and in discussion with the key person agree future next steps to support the child’s learning and development.

Completing Individual Progress Tracker

On Entry Assessment (Starting Points)
In good provision, practitioners gain information from parents in relation to their child’s learning and development on entry to the setting. This could be information gathered during home visits, in ‘All About Me’ documents and during settling in sessions. This should be used to identify children’s starting points and used to plan suitably challenging experiences. The key person should complete the Individual Tracker within the first few weeks of the settling in period, taking into account contributions from parents. The key person should make one judgement per aspect to identify which age/stage band the child is working and indicate Beginning, Within or Secure. This would then be reviewed periodically throughout the year to monitor progress.

| Ofsted Evaluation schedule for inspectors of registered early years provision good criteria states: |
| ‘Where children’s starting points are below those of other children of their age, assessment shows they are improving constantly over a sustained period and the gap is closing’ (2014, p. 9). |

Tracking Progress
Ongoing formative assessments, discussions with parents and information from the Progress Summary and/or Progress Check at Two and the Individual Progress Tracker should be used to identify intervention required and evaluate the input of those changes.

Hints and Tips
• Settings should consider and agree key timings in the year to complete summative assessments. For example, a setting may opt to complete Individual Trackers in September (On entry) and then review progress in December, March and June.

• One Progress Tracker per child may be used to track progress throughout the EYFS.

• Progress can be further identified through making a ‘best fit’ judgement whether the child is beginning (B) within (W) or secure (S) in the appropriate age/stage band. Children working securely would be demonstrating attainment of the development statements consistently and independently in a range of contexts.

• A key needs to be used to identify the date when a child’s progress is recorded. For example, colour codes may be used to clearly show the differing review dates visually. Each entry should also identify the child’s current age in months within the key.
• Individual Progress Trackers should reflect the unique child and take into account learning and development across the prime areas and specific areas where relevant to the individual child. The shaded boxes on the Individual Progress Tracker relate to the Early Years Outcomes (DfE, 2013).

So What?

Gathering information about the child is not enough. Settings should consider how information about the child is used by the key person to ‘ensure that every child’s learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs’ (EYFS, 2014, p.10).

‘Paperwork should be limited to that which is absolutely necessary to promote children’s successful learning and development. Parents and/or carers should be kept up-to-date with their child’s progress and development. Practitioners should address any learning and development needs in partnership with parents and/or carers, and any relevant professionals’ (EYFS, 2014, p.13).

• It is important to analyse the individual tracker to identify children’s strengths and areas of development in relation to their attainment. This is most likely to be the accountability of the key person.

• The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage states that ‘If a child’s progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, practitioners must discuss with the child’s parents and/or carers and agree how to support the child’ (2014, p.9).

• In good practice settings, key people/leaders use their analysis to ensure children’s next steps are fed into the planning, this should reflect identified areas of development. This maximises the opportunity for children to achieve their full potential.

• Changes to practice and provision should be implemented to meet individual children’s emerging needs. These changes may include adaptations to experiences, resources, routines, the learning environment and staff continuous professional development.

Completing the Cohort Tracker

Cohort tracking enables leaders and managers to raise questions about practice and provision and specific children’s learning needs. It may help highlight patterns, trends, specific children and vulnerable groups to ensure appropriate interventions are implemented and monitored to support all children to make good progress.
Hints and Tips

• Again, settings should consider and agree key timings in the year to complete Cohort Tracking. Settings using Individual Progress Trackers would complete these and subsequently gather the information to inform the Cohort Tracking.

• In order for leaders and managers to maximise the benefits of Cohort Tracking, they should consider how best to collate the data to enable purposeful analysis. For example, settings may use one Cohort Tracker per key group, per room or per year group. This may vary dependant upon the size of the setting, age of the children and number of children attending.

• The Cohort Tracker can be used in a number of ways dependent upon the setting. For example;
  - By tallying/allocating numbers/children’s initials for the purpose to show patterns and trends and identify key strengths and areas of development for the whole group/provision.
  - To track vulnerable groups to ensure they are making good progress; this could be colour coded, shown as a tally or include children’s initials.
  - To record the information by inserting children’s initials/names within the appropriate age/stage band within each aspect. This would demonstrate any gaps in children’s learning and development, children’s progress towards the early learning goals in relation to their starting points and whether gaps for children who are disadvantaged are narrowing.

• Additional coding should be used to identify specific groups, (for example, English as an additional language, looked after child, gifted and talented, special educational needs and disability, ethnicity group, funded 2 year old, gender or term of birth).

So What?

• Simply completing the Cohort Tracker is not enough. Leaders and managers need to analyse the data to identify any patterns or trends relating to groups of children or individuals.

Ofsted Evaluation schedule for inspectors of registered early years provision good criteria states:

‘Monitoring ensures that planning and assessment are consistent, precise, and display an accurate understanding of all children’s skills, abilities and progress. As a result, individual children or groups of children with identified needs are targeted, their progress rigorously monitored so that appropriate interventions are sort and gaps are closing’ (2014, p.16).
• Specific interventions should be identified to address needs and subsequent evaluation of progress should be monitored to measure impact.

• Changes to practice and provision should be implemented to meet group or individual children’s emerging need. These changes may include adaptations to experiences, resources, routines, the learning environment and staff continuous professional development.

Ofsted Evaluation schedule for inspectors of registered early years provision states:

‘Inspections focus on how well individual children benefit from their early years experience. It is important to test the provider’s response to individual needs by observing how well they help all children to make effective progress, especially those whose needs or circumstances require particularly perceptive intervention and/or additional support’ (2014. p.5).

Reflective questions

Tracking is not statutory; however, you need to consider the following points: How would you:

• at a glance, demonstrate that all children, and in particular vulnerable groups, make good progress in relation to their starting points?
• show whether children are working within their ‘typical’ stage of development?
• keep parents informed about their child’s achievements and progress?
• as leaders and managers, know that assessment is precise, accurate and sharply focussed?
• as leaders and managers, demonstrate assessment is monitored and used to secure interventions?
• as leaders and managers, demonstrate that you have rigorous and effective systems for self evaluation that inform the setting’s priorities and are used to set targets for improvement?
• as leaders and managers, evidence that you monitor the educational programme and quality of teaching?
• as leaders and managers, highlight patterns and trends of groups of children’s learning and development?
• as leaders and managers, identify staff professional development required to support children to make effective progress?
• as leaders and managers, measure the impact of interventions and monitor progress to ensure gaps are closing?