

Individual planning

All planning must start with observation... you cannot possibly know what a child will enjoy doing and what they need to learn next until you have observed them during their play... you cannot extend their learning and development until you know what experiences they have already had.

So, once you have your observations in place you can use your own experience of what children like doing and the guidance in Development Matters to assess...

- What the child can do (links to Early Years Outcomes)
- What the child's individual needs are - related to his age, stage of development, ability, disability, language use (including if he uses English as a second or additional language) etc
- What the child cannot do yet - this will give you ideas for writing next steps planning
- What the child enjoys doing - this will help you to plan activities the child will enjoy
- How the child learns - including how children use learning styles, schemas etc to learn new things
- How the environment might be changed to meet the child's needs
- How relationships, with parents / practitioners / other children etc might need building on so that the child can learn more effectively

With all this information securely in place you can start to plan for the child's future learning and development. There are no rules about how you do your individual planning - you can write it however it makes sense to you - I use my play plan and next steps sheets. It must support the child's learning and you should come back to previous planning regularly check how the child has learned and developed since it was written.

Planning focus for different ages

As with observations, the focus for little ones will be on individual planning which covers the prime areas of learning, with the specific areas used to support the prime areas. Do not ignore the specific areas - they are important too. Individual planning for little ones will also focus on their care routines which include meal and sleep patterns.

Parents should be involved at every stage, updating you with information about the child's needs so you can plan their days effectively.

Older children's planning (from the age of 2) will be spread across the 7 areas of learning. You will still focus on the prime areas if there are any concerns - until they are established. Your planning should show how you are helping prepare children for starting school.

Note that childminders are no longer required to deliver the learning and development requirements of the EYFS once a child is in full time school and only attends before and after school or in the holidays.