

Learning stories

Some childminders are being advised to write learning stories about the children in their care.

Learning stories are very similar to the observations, assessments and planning in children's EYFS Learning Journeys - and this can cause confusion because a learning story is not a Learning Journey file!

Learning stories can be used as part of the child's Learning Journey file or as a stand-alone way of recording a child's progress over time. Learning stories use 'story telling' or narrative descriptions of the child's play and learning... they are like giant observations, sharing a detailed description of the child's learning, development, skills, knowledge, interactions and engagement in activities with their parents.

Just like when writing observations, you can include a photo with your learning story if you have written permission from parents to take photos of their child. You would then put the photo on the learning story and write a chatty narrative about the child's learning while they were involved in the activity. If you are talking about other children in the learning story, be careful not to name them as you do not want to break confidentiality - instead simply say that eg 'Ann shared and took turns when playing with another child'.

Most learning stories are written in the first person - describing the child as 'I' and saying what the child is doing or saying at the time the observation was carried out. To note the progress the child is making, you would then link the story to the EYFS areas of learning and development from the Development Matters guidance document, comment on any learning characteristics you noted and think about how to promote the child's future learning through 'next steps' or individual planning.

Learning stories are quite a bit longer than the normal quick note style observations because they describe a whole activity rather than a child's specific learning - so you will not want to set yourself the task of writing too many! If you are advised to use them, I think they will work well alongside other types of observation, assessment and planning, maybe to help you focus on one area of learning or a specific learning outcome or to support a child who needs extra support...

Learning stories are written to be shared with and commented on by parents. There is little value to writing a learning story and putting it in your folder without sharing it with parents and using it to reflect on the child's current learning and support their future learning and development first. Like all documents about a child they are just one of the many ways we can show evidence that they are making good progress towards the Early Learning Goals of the EYFS.