

How do I show children are making progress?

If you read through inspection reports on the Ofsted website, a lot of childminders are being given actions to improve the way they show that children are making good progress towards the Early Learning Goals (ELGs).

The ELGs are there as indicators of what most children 'should' (according to the Department for Education) be doing by the time they reach the age of 5 - at the end of school reception year. It is not normally a childminder's job to plot the child's progress against the ELGs - the teacher at school will do this. However, we do need to keep the ELGs in mind when we are planning for children's learning so we can make sure they are making good progress towards them.

To help ensure children are making good progress we need to use a combination of different resources at our disposal including -

- All about me / initial child information forms - completed by parents and telling us about the child's current learning and development, home learning, education elsewhere (nursery, pre-school, time spent with grandparents every weekend etc) as well as their care needs;
- Initial observations and assessments - which give information about the child's current progress across all 7 areas of learning and development. If you do not know the child's 'starting points' you will struggle to show that they are making progress so this is an important document;
- Development Matters - unique child, positive relationships and enabling environments information which helps us to make judgements about what the child might be doing at different ages and stages of development and how we can help them make good progress;
- The characteristics of the child's learning - notes about how the child learns and links to how you use the child's characteristics to enhance their future learning;
- Observations and assessments - regularly updated to show that the child is doing new things and exploring new activities and experiences which will enhance their overall learning and development;
- Individual planning - which links to the child's current interests, learning styles and any schemas they are exploring. Individual planning is also known as 'next steps' or PLODS (possible lines of development);
- 2 year progress check - as required by the EYFS 2012 - which is shared with parents and which parents are then asked to give to the Health Visitor. Even if parents have no intention of giving the progress check to their HV, you must write one and share it, putting a copy in the child's file;
- Photos of the child's play - to help demonstrate that the child is learning new things and is being encouraged and supported to experience a wide range of activities;
- Artwork and other examples of the child's paper learning such as photos of pictures and models the child has made and evidence of contributions to group displays;
- Information about any group activities the child has explored - and how these have been changed to suit the individual child's needs;
- Input from parents and other settings the child attends - which shows that the child is making links in their learning elsewhere;

- Contributions from the child - it is good practice to regularly sit down with the child and let him look through his file, adding information and photos or other bits and bobs that he wants included;
- Information and activity sharing opportunities with the child's family - so the child continues their learning at home. Feedback from parents can then be used to enhance future learning;
- Summary assessments of the child's learning - regularly updated to show that the child is making good progress against the unique child information in the Development Matters guidance document. When I say 'regularly' I mean that I write a new summary assessment for each child in my care 6 monthly - on their birthday and then 6 months later;

The best way to store all these documents is to start a Learning Journey or Journal file or folder for the child. Some childminders use a scrap book... others use an A4 folder... some use loose leaf and others prefer something pre-printed. It is totally up to you.

You should start this document / file / folder when the child first arrives in your care and update it regularly.

A Learning Journey file serves a number of different purposes -

- It shows how well the child is making progress;
- It allows you to share information about the child's learning with parents;
- It is an easy way of showing how much you do with the child - because you are constantly adding information about games you have planned, outings and experiences the child has participated in, new resources you have provided to support the child's learning etc;
- It allows you to note changes in the child's wellbeing which might indicate concerns elsewhere;
- It gives children ownership of their own learning and development record;
- It becomes a valuable record of the child's early learning;
- It can be easily shared with the child's other setting to help their learning make good progress in all the places they attend;
- It allows you to quickly spot any areas of learning and / or development where the child might need extra support;
- It is evidence for Ofsted of how you ensure children are making good progress while they are in your care, how you work in partnership, how you involve children in their own learning... and much more!

Your Learning Journey files do not need to be elaborate - you do not need to fill in multiple forms every day to show a child is making good progress - your documents should not be complicated or contain boxes you do not know how to complete!! If someone has given you a planning form or an observation sheet and you do not feel it is useful - change it to meet your needs!!

Your work with the children is much more important than your documented evidence, so you must make the documenting process as easy as you can for yourself.