1 Understanding children's development

Introduction

To look after and work with children it is important that you understand their development. It is impossible to think about how you can meet a child's needs unless you know what to expect from him or her in terms of thinking, communication, and physical abilities for example. You will explore the principles of development and the five key stages from birth to age 16 years before looking at how physical, social and emotional, communication and intellectual skills are developed.

In this unit you will:

1. understand the growth and development of children
2. understand the role of observation of children's development in the workplace
3. learn how to observe children's development
4. understand the required planning to support children's needs and development.

1.1 Understand the growth and development of children

This section covers:

- principles of development
- stages and sequences of development
- physical development
- emotional development
- social development
- communication and speech development
- intellectual development
- maturation
- factors affecting growth and development

Growth and development

What do we mean by growth and development? **Growth** is the increase in size of the body – in height, weight and other measurable areas. **Development** is the gaining of skills in all aspects of the child's life. The different types of development are often split into four areas:

Physical development: this refers to the body increasing in skill and performance and includes:

- gross motor development (using large muscles), for example legs and arms
- fine motor development (precise use of muscles), for example hands and fingers.

Social and emotional development: this is the development of a child's identity and self-image, the development of relationships and feelings about him or herself and learning the skills to live in society with other people.

Intellectual development: this is learning the skills of understanding, memory and concentration.

Communication and speech development: this is learning to communicate with friends, family and all others.

However, it is important to realise that all the areas of development link together. Just stop and think about the changes that take place in the developing child.

At birth there have already been huge changes from two tiny cells as the egg and sperm joined at conception to a complex new baby at birth. Then from being a tiny helpless being at birth, by the age of 16 years the child changes to a highly complex young person who has all the basic skills for life, including talking, running, writing and the ability to think in abstract ways.

- Weight increases from 3–4 kg at birth to an average of 65 kg for a young man.
- From a length at birth of about 35 cm, height changes to more than 155 cm.
- From being a relatively immobile baby, the child is able to walk, run, skip and climb.
- From not being able to talk, the child becomes an able communicator.
- From being fully dependent, the child learns to dress, feed and think for him or herself.
- From wide arm movements and automatically grasping everything that is put into the hand, the child learns to pick up and use a pencil developing to pens, computers and other technical equipment.

Growth and development are connected, but are very different. Growth is the very visible increase in size of a child. It can be seen in many ways, including weight gain, increase in height and increase in head circumference. Children grow very quickly; ask your parents if they have kept a record of your weight and height gain.

Principles of development

There are three basic principles of human development that apply to everyone from birth.

1 **Development starts from the head and works down the body.**
A new baby cannot hold up his or her head alone. Yet, within a few months, the baby will be able to sit alone. This is because control of the spine and central nervous system develops from the top of the head down to the base of the spine. You can see this control developing in a baby as he or she starts to hold the head without support. Similarly, a new-born baby waves his or her arms around vaguely, yet in nine months' time will find the tiniest crumb or piece of Lego easy to pick up with the thumb and finger. This is because the nervous system also develops from the spinal cord out to the extremities (hands and feet).

2 **All development happens in the same order, but can occur at different rates.**
A baby has to hold his or her head up, learn to sit with support, and then without support, before he or she can stand by holding on to

furniture and then eventually walk alone. No baby can learn to walk before sitting up. But it is perfectly normal for one baby to walk at ten months and another not to learn this skill until the age of 18 months.

3 **All areas of development are linked together.**
A baby cannot start to finger feed until he or she can sit up and is developing the ability to pick things up between the fingers and thumb. The speech development of a child is affected if the child has difficulties in hearing clearly or if no one talks directly to him or her. A child who does not receive love and attention may fail to grow and develop.

Finally, remember that to develop to their best potential, children need huge amounts of support and guidance from others in their lives. Failure to meet all of the needs of a baby or child can have serious consequences on his or her development.

Did you know?

At six weeks most babies will smile socially, not because they have wind or are practising using muscles, but because they have been talked to and smiled at by parents and other carers. Sadly, not all babies have loving carers, and for all sorts of reasons may not be smiled at and talked to. These babies may not smile at six weeks. A baby who has experienced lots of talking and communication may smile much earlier than six weeks, and will vocalise with the carer.

Milestones

Child development experts have carried out a lot of research on young children to work out what most children can do at different ages and the rate at which they grow. From this research, milestones of development have been identified. A 'milestone of development' refers to the age at which most children should have reached a certain stage of development, for example, walking alone by 18 months, or smiling at six weeks.

Many children will have reached that stage of development much earlier, but what matters is whether a child has reached it by the milestone age. You will also read about average ages for developmental stages, and these will be different. An average age is in the middle of the range of ages when all children reach a certain stage, for example, for walking the range can be from 10 months to 18 months which makes the 'average' age for walking 14 months. The important thing to remember is that all children develop at different rates and may be earlier in achieving some aspects of development and later in others.

Think about it

Ask your parents if they still have the book that your weight was marked in when you were a baby to see where you were on the percentile charts. Or ask someone, perhaps a cousin, who has a young child now if you can look at their weight records.

Percentiles

Percentile charts are used to compare a child's growth and weight measurements with those of other children in the same age group. This makes it possible to track a child's growth over time and monitor how a child is growing in relation to other children. The charts can be used to recognise if there are problems with a child's height or weight, especially if the expected rate of growth is not happening. Plotting a child's growth in this way is a standard part of any visit to a clinic or developmental check-up where a baby or child is weighed and measured.

There are different charts for boys and girls because their growth rates and patterns differ and different ones again for babies who are born prematurely. The charts show the normal range of heights and weights at a certain age of thousands of children from across the country.

Stages and sequences of development

We think about growth and development in five stages:

- infancy from birth to one year
- early years from one to three years
- childhood from four to seven years
- puberty from 8–12 years
- adolescence from 13–16 years.

Birth to one year

New-born babies can:

- see faces as fuzzy shapes
- grasp an object that has touched the palm of their hand
- turn their head to look for a nipple or teat if their cheek is touched
- suck and swallow
- try to make stepping movements if they are held upright with their feet on a firm surface
- startle in response to a sudden sound or bright light
- stretch their arms suddenly and then bring them in if they feel they are falling
- recognise their mother's voice and smell
- cry when they are hungry, in pain, need feeding, changing or just cuddling.

When she is born a baby can try to make stepping movements if she is held upright with her feet on a firm surface

One to three years

By their first birthday, babies can:

■ *By his first birthday a baby can move around by crawling or shuffling*

- move around, either by crawling or shuffling or some may be standing with support and a small number walking alone
- sit up alone and feed themselves, at least with their fingers
- use their hands skilfully to move and arrange objects including dropping things on the floor and looking to see where they are
- wave 'bye bye' and point at things with their fingers
- communicate by babbling and saying two syllable words like 'dada'
- understand the world around them
- know who their main carers are and cry if they are left with someone they do not know.

Third birthday

By their third birthday, children can:

■ *By his third birthday a child can pedal a tricycle*

- run, climb and pedal a tricycle
- walk upstairs on alternate feet and walk on tiptoe
- use the toilet alone
- talk clearly so anyone can understand them
- tell the difference between boys and girls
- sometimes play co-operatively with other children
- build a tower of nine bricks and build a bridge with bricks
- undo buttons and thread beads
- enjoy playing with role play toys and dressing up
- enjoy books
- enjoy painting and may do 'pretend' writing
- have fewer temper tantrums (that started when she was about 18 months)
- enjoy copying and helping adults.

Seventh birthday

By their seventh birthday, children can:

- throw, kick and control a ball, hop and ride a bicycle
- use their hands to thread, use scissors well, build models and write clearly
- draw with meaning and detail
- take turns and play co-operatively with friends
- tell jokes and enjoy conversations
- start to understand rules
- be frightened of fictitious things like ghosts
- read and enjoy books
- dress themselves easily
- have a best friend
- worry about not being liked.

By her seventh birthday a child can control a ball

Twelfth birthday

By their twelfth birthday, children can:

- solve problems
- enjoy responsibility
- have a keen interest in hobbies
- use good co-ordination skills
- tell you what they are good at
- start to see physical changes in their body
- start to argue with their parents
- seem very grown up but also very childish at times.

By his twelfth birthday a child can have a keen interest in hobbies

Sixteenth birthday

By their sixteenth birthday a young adult can:

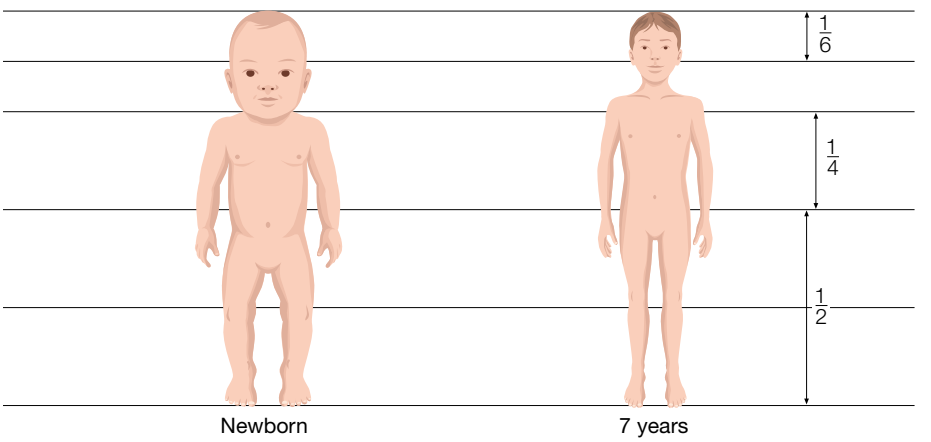
- have an adult body
- have high level of skills in some areas, for example drawing or computing
- enjoy their friends' company more than that of their family
- develop their own identity, tastes in music, clothes
- have mood swings
- feel very anxious at times

- be very confident with friends
- leave school and get married.

By her sixteenth birthday a child can feel very anxious at times

Physical development

Physical development covers the aspects of development that we can see happening. For example, relatives often comment on how much a child has grown. They are commenting on how a child has grown in terms of size, height and weight. With growth, there is also a dramatic change in body proportions. Look at the size of a new-born baby's head in proportion to the rest of the body. Compare this with a child of seven or eight years.



Comparison of the head in proportion to the rest of the body of a baby and a child of seven years

Physical development also covers the important skills of using our bodies; the use of large muscles to walk, run, climb, jump and skip and the use of our smaller muscles, for example for hand co-ordination. Look at the following table to compare the gross and fine motor skills at different stages of development.

Age	Physical development (gross and fine motor)
Birth to 4 weeks	Lies on back with head to one side Head lags when pulled up to sit Primitive reflexes, i.e. rooting, sucking, stepping, grasping
1 month	Head control still unsteady Hands in tight fists Grasps objects when they touch the palm of the hand Head and eyes move together
3 months	Kicks legs and waves arms Can lift head and turn when on front Watches movements of own hands, plays with own hands Holds rattle for a few seconds if placed in hand
4 months	Uses arms for support when lying on stomach Turns from back to side Holds on to and shakes small items
6 months	Sits with support Rolls over Pushes head, neck and chest off floor with arms when on front Uses whole hand in palmar grasp, passes toy from one hand to another
9 months	Sits alone without support Reaches out for toys when sitting May crawl or shuffle Pokes at small item with index finger Uses index and middle fingers with thumb in pincer grip to pick up small items Will take and hold a small brick in each hand Lifts block but can only release by dropping
1 year	Stands alone and starts to walk holding on ('cruising') Mobile through crawling or shuffling Enjoys self-feeding and holds cup with help Picks up anything tiny from the floor using neat pincer grip Starting to show hand preference Clicks two cubes together Puts cubes in box when shown
18 months	Can walk alone Pushes and pulls toys when walking Can walk downstairs with hand held Tries to kick a ball, rolls and throws ball Squats to pick up objects from the floor Assists with dressing and undressing Can use a spoon Uses a delicate pincer grasp for tiny objects Holds a crayon in primitive tripod grasp and scribbles Turns handles Pulls off shoes

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Age	Physical development (gross and fine motor)
2 years	Walks up and down stairs with both feet on one step. Climbs on furniture Builds a tower of six bricks Uses a spoon for self-feeding Puts shoes on Draws circles and dots Starts to use preferred hand
3 years	Stands and walks on tiptoe Can kick a ball confidently Jumps from low steps Pedals a tricycle Turns single pages in a book Can draw a face Builds bridges with blocks when shown Undoes buttons Threads large beads
4 years	Can aim and throw and catch a large ball Walks backwards and on a line Runs and hops Builds a large tower Can brush own teeth Cuts round an object with scissors and copies a square Buttons and unbuttons clothes Can do a 12-piece jigsaw
5 years	Skips Runs quickly Easily dresses and undresses Hits a ball with a bat Draws a person with a head, body and legs, and a house Can do a 20-piece jigsaw Forms letters and writes own name Accurately uses scissors
6–7 years	Enjoys hopping, bike riding, roller blading and skating Balances on a wall or beam Has finer manipulation of building bricks, jigsaws, etc Can sew simple stitches Ties and unties laces Builds intricate models Controls pencil in a small area and does detailed drawing
8–12 years	Improves physical skills that have already developed Puberty starts around 10 for girls with a growth spurt and increase in body strength
13–16 years	Brains developing with increase in reaction times and co-ordination For girls puberty is complete at about 14 and periods start For boys puberty is 13–16 and they will be stronger than girls

■ *Stages of physical development*

Social and emotional development

Learning to live with others in both our family and society generally is one of the most important parts of development – and one in which family and friends play an important part.

Socialisation is all about learning to cope in the family and society we live in. The socialisation process will by its definition vary in different societies and from family to family.

- Primary socialisation is the socialisation that takes place within the family, in the first years of a child's life. This helps children to learn how to interact with others, what is acceptable and what is not.
- Secondary socialisation starts when children come into regular contact with people and settings outside their home. This includes playgroup, nursery and school, and continues throughout life.

Secondary socialisation teaches children:

- how to interact with adults who are not family
- how to interact with friends and others
- the 'rules' of society, what is acceptable and what is not outside the home.

A number of key processes affect how well we relate to others and how well we fit into our family and social worlds. Before we look at the stages in social and emotional development we need to think about how important bonding and attachment, self-concept, personal identity and confidence are from the very beginning.

Attachment and bonding

The development of the deep feelings between parents or carers and their children comes about through a process of bonding and attachment. This attachment is helped in the early months by a number of things including:

- skin contact
- smell
- talking, and listening to parents' voices
- feeding
- bathing
- play
- eye-to-eye contact.

Multiple attachments

John Bowlby is well known for his descriptions of bonding and attachment and confirmed the idea that all children need consistent carers to allow them to develop attachments and start to form loving relationships with their carers. If the period following birth is interrupted

Did you know?

Bonding *is the development of the powerful feelings between parents and carers and their children. Successful bonding is a baby's way of making sure they are well cared for and safe from abuse or being abandoned.*

Attachment *is the close emotional bond between a baby and its carer.*

by illness in mother or baby, or is characterised by many different carers, a child may have difficulty in forming close relationships in later life.

It used to be thought that a baby could form a close attachment only to the mother, but this has been shown not to be the case. Children can and obviously do form strong bonds with a wide range of people, for example grandparents, parents, siblings, friends and others. It is regular and frequent contact that is important, and even where a child has a normal attachment to parents and family, it is important that in a nursery setting a young baby or toddler is allowed to develop an attachment to at least one regular carer.

Did you know?

It was in the 1950s that research by the Robertsons identified separation anxiety as an issue. Their research into children separated from their parents in hospital was important in developing the practice of encouraging parents to stay with their children in hospital. But until the 1970s, it was usual not to allow this as it was thought that allowing visitors would make the children too upset.

■ *A happy baby who has developed an attachment to a carer*

A child who has formed close bonds with several important people will be far more secure than a child who has not done so. Where there is a strong sense of security in a child, there is likely to be less emotional trauma caused by future separations from the main carers. Often a very clingy child will have had some difficulty in the early years in forming a close bond with carers.

However, good attachments mean that when his or her main carer is not around a baby or child will show 'separation anxiety' through crying, screaming and, if old enough, trying to follow the carer. Separation anxiety will start around six to seven months and continue until around three years when a child can understand that mummy is going to come back! Part of this is the development of a concept called 'object permanence' – that even if you cannot see something it is still there.

Think about it

Try hiding a toy under a cushion from a 12 month old. If they see you hiding the toy they will find it. If not, they will not be able to. As a child gets older they can learn to hunt for the toy in increasingly harder places.

Self-concept and personal identity

A child's **self-concept** and **personal identity** are closely linked to the quality of parenting in their early years. Many young people and adults who harm others or carry out serious crimes have had very negative experiences as children and often have a very poor self-concept.

Many psychologists have studied how we develop socially and emotionally. Some of the key theories are described in the box below.

Think about it

1 *Write down ten answers to the question 'Who am I?' (Think about your appearance, skills, personality, problems, beliefs and roles in life.)*
2 *Now try to identify who or what has been most important in forming those ideas of your self.*

Freud

Freud identified three parts to the personality, starting with a 'symbiotic' relationship between a mother and child in the first months. Here an infant sees him or herself as part of his or her mother. This is one reason why a child of about 18 months becomes 'egocentric', or aware of himself as separate, and able to say 'no' and to be in control. As we go through childhood into adulthood we develop moral views and the 'id' (I want it now!) starts to be denied by the 'super ego' (No, it's wrong.). As the 'ego' develops it helps to deal with internal arguments to produce an acceptable result.

Skinner

Skinner believed that children learn through experience or conditioning. A child will learn if they are rewarded for their behaviour even if the 'reward' is unpleasant. Positive rewards or reinforcements for good behaviour are the basis of many behaviour management programmes.

Bandura

Bandura developed the idea of 'modelling' or social learning. Children basically copy the adults around them. Watch a tiny baby copy putting its tongue out if an adult does the same. The development of aggression was seen by Bandura as being a result of social learning. His experiment with children watching a film of adults hitting dolls was fascinating as the children copied it and saw that as acceptable behaviour. There is much evidence that a child who witnesses or experiences violence at home may develop aggressive tendencies.

Biological theory

Another theory about aggression is a biological theory. This states that humans need their own space or territory and that if that space is threatened they will react with aggression. Frustration is also seen to produce aggression; observe a small child who cannot do something he or she wants to – the result may be a tantrum or an outbreak of aggression.

Moral development

An important part of social development is moral development. Children observe other children and adults behaviour, gradually developing a sense of right and wrong. Reinforcement is important in moral development where certain behaviours are promoted as being right or wrong – aggression is a good example of this.

Pro-social behaviour

An advanced stage of a child's moral development is when he or she is capable of **pro-social behaviour**. This refers to an act that helps or benefits others but may have some penalty to the person doing it. An extreme example of pro-social behaviour is someone rescuing a person from a burning house and suffering burns as a result. A more routine example might be a child giving their pocket money to a charitable cause instead of buying the toy they had been saving for. Can you think of other more everyday examples?

Age	Social and emotional development
Birth to 4 weeks	Responds positively to main carer Imitates facial expressions Stares at bright shiny objects
1 month	Gazes intently at carers Social smile at carers (by 6 weeks)
4 months	Smiles, engages and vocalises with carers
6 months	Starts to show interest in other babies, smiles Becomes more interested in social interaction, depending on amount of time spent with other children and his or her personality Shows fear of strangers and distress at separation from carer Interacts differently with various family members Uses comfort object, for example a blanket Seeks attention
9 months	Very interested in all around Recognises familiar and unfamiliar faces Shows stranger anxiety
1 year	More demanding and assertive, emotionally volatile Temper tantrums may start Unhappy at changes in routine Expresses rage at being told 'no' Distinguishes between self and others, but still egocentric – only concerned with his or her own view of the world Shows definite emotions and is aware of the emotions of others Will play alone Starting to develop object permanence
18 months	Shows stranger shyness Dislikes changes in routine Starts toilet training Starts to have tantrums when upset Has separate sense of self – egocentric Little idea of sharing and strong sense of 'mine'

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Age	Social and emotional development
2 years	Enjoys other children's company but reluctant to share toys May show concern when another child is upset Engages in parallel play (alongside others) Remains egocentric Becoming emotionally stable, but still prone to mood swings Learning to separate from carer for short periods, for example while at nursery Knows own identity
3 years	Greater social awareness Will play in twos or threes, sharing ideas May have close friends A lot of mixed play of the sexes Stable and emotionally secure Friendly to other children Increasing in independence, but still needs support from adults Fears loss of carers Strong sense of gender identity Less anxious about separation Plays alongside others
4 years	Enjoys co-operative and dramatic play Understands co-operation and competition Responds to reasoning Can take turns Enjoys independence but still needs comfort and reassurance
5 years	Becomes engrossed in activities Develops fears of ghosts, things under the bed Concerned about being disliked Good sense of self awareness developed
6–7 years	Able to form firm friendships Very supportive of each other, playing complex games Plays in separate sex groups Fairly independent and confident Increasing sense of morality (right and wrong)
8–12 years	Friendships become very important – mostly same sex Concern at thoughts of others about them Often unsure about changes in settings
13–16 years	Body changes can upset self esteem Need to resolve changes into adulthood Some are more assured about changes in settings Wants to spend more time with friends than family Peer pressure a significant influence

■ *Stages of social and emotional development*

Self-directed or imaginative play is very important in children's social and emotional development. Children will 'act out' events they have experienced in their play.

Think about it

Watch a group of children playing either in the home corner or the playground. In the home corner you may well see a child 'interacting' with a doll, or taking on the role of mum or dad.

Did you know?

There is a direct link between the rate a child's vocabulary develops and the amount the mother talked to the child in the first year. Children whose mothers talk to them a lot can be using and understanding twice as many words at 17 months than children who have had less conversation.

Source: Helen Bee: The Developing Person 1984

Think about it

Observe a group of young children playing and try to work out what is happening without listening to their speech. What were they doing apart from talking? You should have seen them using:

- *facial expressions*
- *body language*
- *listening skills*
- *different pitch intonation.*

Communication and speech development

Children communicate even before they are born. A baby in the uterus will respond to loud noises or distress by moving. A new-born baby communicates through crying and quietening with increasing sophistication. It does not take long for a carer to recognise the meanings of different cries: hungry, tired, cold, fed up, needing a cuddle, etc. Listen to a parent talking to their baby – you will probably hear them using a simple form of language that develops in complexity as the child develops language. This is called 'motherese'.

The speed of language acquisition is amazing. By eight months a child will be babbling sounds like 'dadada', by 18 months he or she will be using 30–40 words and by three years a child will be constructing complex sentences. The speed of this development depends on a number of factors, which includes some built-in ability to develop language but which is also dependent on the amount of conversation directed at a child. Naom Chomsky (a psycholinguist) was a key person in developing the idea that humans have an innate ability for language.

■ *Communication between an adult and a child*

Non-verbal communication is as important to children as it is to adults. Indeed, children probably use it more than adults do. Have a look at the section on non-verbal communication in Unit 3.

Speech is an aspect of development that can vary widely without any relationship to other developmental aspects or to the child's intelligence. Parents often become very concerned that a child is late in talking

compared with an elder sibling. This can be simply because the older child is anticipating all the younger one's needs, removing any urgent need for the child to talk, or because that child is simply a late talker.

The development of language divides into two distinct stages:

- **Pre-linguistic:** the stage up to about 12 months when a child starts to say his first words.
- **Linguistic:** words now used with meaning.

Age	Language and communication skills
Pre-linguistic stage	**Birth to 12 months**
Birth to 4 weeks	Cries when basic needs require attention, for example hunger, tiredness, distress
1 month	'Freezes' when a bell is rung gently close to the ear, moves head towards the sound Stops crying at sound of human voice (unless very upset) Coos in response to carer's talk
3 months	Becomes quiet and turns head towards sound of rattle near head Vocalises when spoken to and when alone
6 months	Makes singsong vowel sounds, for example 'aah-aah', 'goo' Laughs and chuckles and squeals aloud in play Responds differently to different tones of voice Starts to respond to noises out of sight with correct visual response
9 months	Vocalises for communication, shouts for attention Babbles loudly and tunefully using dual syllables in long strings, for example 'dad-dad', 'baba', 'mam-mam' Imitates adult vocal sounds, for example coughs, smacking lips Understands 'no' and 'bye-bye' Has instant response to a hearing test conducted 1 metre behind child, out of sight
1 year	Knows own name Jargons loudly in 'conversations', includes most vowels sounds Understands about 20 words in context, for example cup, dog, dinner, and understands simple messages, for example 'clap hands', 'where are your shoes?'
Linguistic stage	**12 months onwards**
12–18 months	First words appear – uses 6–20 recognisable words, understands many more Echoes prominent or last word in sentences Tries to join in with nursery rhymes Responds to simple instructions , for example 'fetch your shoes', 'shut the door'
18–24 months	Uses two words linked together Uses more than 200 words by two years Makes simple two-word sentences Refers to own name, talks to self during play Has telegraphic speech, that is, is using key essential words and missing out connecting words

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Age	Language and communication skills
2–3 years	Rapidly expanding vocabulary, including plurals Holds simple conversations Enjoys repetition of favourite stories Counts to ten
3–4 years	Imitates adult speech Can be understood by strangers Forms short, grammatically correct sentences Asks many questions of the type: what? why? and how? Knows parts of body, animals Still makes errors of tenses
4–8 years	Speech is fluent and correct, using descriptive language Gives full name, age, birthday and address Enjoys jokes, singing, rhymes, etc. Rapidly expanding vocabulary – 5,000 words by five years Recognises new words and asks the meaning of them Will accurately copy accents heard Produces most sounds, with some residual difficulty with some letter groups
8 years onwards	Most children are fluent speakers, readers and writers of their language Increasing use of peer influenced, coded language

■ *Development of language and communication skills*

Intellectual development

Cognitive or intellectual development is about how children learn, think and develop ideas. This is one of the areas of development that is strongly influenced by the experiences a child has. Learning the names of animals is only possible if a child has been told them. This applies to almost any knowledge or skill.

There has been a lot of research into how children develop intellectual skills. Two of the most well-known theories follow.

- **Piaget** showed that intelligence is the result of a natural sequence of stages and it develops as a result of the changing interaction of a child and its environment. A child develops 'schemas' to help him or her solve problems in their environment. For example, all dogs are thought to be black if a child's pet dog is black, seeing a white dog needs the schema to be changed.
- **Bruner** believed that as children develop they use different ways of representing the world around them. Enactive represention involves them describing their world by sensori-motor actions – that is by using their bodies – think about how you might describe a whirlpool or a spiral staircase without using your hands or body! Iconic thinking describes pictures in the mind – think about describing where you have been on holiday to a friend – often a picture or painting is the easiest way of description. The final and mature stage is the semantic, when a child can use the full range of language to describe and discuss information.

It is likely that some aspects of each theory play a part in how children develop intellectually. What is indisputable is that children develop intellectually at different rates, and some in areas that others do not. Why some children become scientists and others artists is not fully clear but it is quite reasonable to assume that experience plays a large part as well as inherited skills.

Age	Intellectual development
Birth	Blinks in reaction to bright light Turns to soft light Stares at carer Cries when basic needs require attention
1 month	Stares at soft light Gaze caught by and follows dangling ball
3 months	Follows movements of large and smaller objects
6 months	Very curious, easily distracted by movements Immediately fixes sight on small objects close by and reaches out to grasp them Puts everything in mouth Watches toys fall from hand within range of vision
9 months	Looks in correct direction for falling toys
12 months	Drops toys deliberately and watches them fall – this is called 'casting' Looks in correct place for toys that have rolled out of sight Recognises familiar people at 6 metres
18 months	Builds tower of three cubes when shown Turns pages of books, several at a time, enjoys picture books and can point to a named object Points to interesting objects outside Points to parts of the body
3 years	Copies circle and cross, draws man with head Matches two or three primary colours Paints with large brush, cuts with scissors
By 5 years	Copies square, and range of letters – some spontaneously Draws man with head, body, arms, legs and features, and will draw house Colours pictures neatly Names primary colours and matches ten or more colours Knows time of day for basic activities, for example breakfast, bedtime Matches symbols, letters and numbers Can decide on lighter and heavier objects Understands, in front of, behind, next to Counts to 20 by rote
By 6 years	Ability to write developing, is able to write some words and copy others Reads simple books Increasing sophistication in drawing and painting Knows birthday Sight reads ten or more words Can predict next events Can count up to 100 Knows half and whole

Age	Intellectual development
6–8 years	Able to understand concept of conservation , for example the amount of play dough remains the same if you make a ball of dough into a long, thin snake Developing the ability to think about several things at once Enjoys games and rules Understands the use of symbols in maths, writing, etc. Great curiosity in relation to workings of his or her environment
8–12 years	Can reason and apply logic to problems Can transfer information from one situation and use in another Becoming more creative in play Reading and writing confidently Increasing preferences for subjects
13–16 years	Developing ability to think abstractly Will question sources of information Becoming more globally aware Clear preferences for arts or sciences Choices relating to future education and careers being thought about

■ *Intellectual development from birth*

Maturation

You may hear or read about 'maturation' in relation to growth and development. Maturity means fully grown and developed. Adults are seen to be the mature form of humans. You often hear people being accused of being 'immature'. so why are some adults more mature than others?

Look back at the theories of development, many of them are based on the idea that we for example, learn through experience. Much development also depends on our inbuilt 'programming' but needs to be further developed through our experiences. For example, we are all programmed to learn to speak, but how we speak is shaped by, for example, what we hear and how we are spoken to. It does not take much imagination to realise that the quality of, for example, what we hear can be important.

Case study

Offensive language

Lee's mum was very concerned about her sons' speech. Aged four years he was using offensive language in almost every sentence. However her discussion with his nursery teacher showed the reason – every sentence she spoke contained the same language she was complaining about Lee using. Lee's teacher tried to explain that children learn to speak by example.

General behaviour is also shaped by our experiences – a child who always sees their parents behaving with care and thought for others is likely to grow up in the same way. Remember, experiences can be positive as well as negative.

An important aspect of maturation is what adults expect of children. Good support in this area is, for example, given by adults who know what is realistic to expect from a child at that age or stage of development. Conversely, if adults expect a child to do things beyond their stage of development it can have a poor effect.

We have now looked at all the key elements of development. It is worth remembering the key principles:

- No one aspect of development occurs on its own.
- Development is a gradual sequential process. We are programmed to learn many skills, for example to walk and talk in the same order, but not at the same speed.
- Many things can affect the speed of development and although there are milestones of development it is important to remember that everyone is an individual and will mature at their own rate.

What factors can affect growth and development?

Growth and development are dependent on many factors with some affecting some children more than others. The impact can be positive as well as negative. For example, the opposite of poverty is wealth and a child growing up in a home with no financial worries may be well fed and clothed and have lots of opportunities for educational development. However, these advantages can lose their impact if the child does not have a loving and supportive family.

Poverty

People who have less than 60 per cent of the income that an average person expects may be considered to be at risk of poverty and social exclusion. In 2001 an estimated 10.7 million people (18 per cent of the population) in Britain lived on or below the 60 per cent of average earnings poverty line whereas in 1979 only 4.4 million people were estimated to live in poverty. The number of people who can be considered to be poor increased dramatically between 1985 and the early 1990s. The proportion of people with low income (18 per cent of the population) has remained the same for the last few years.

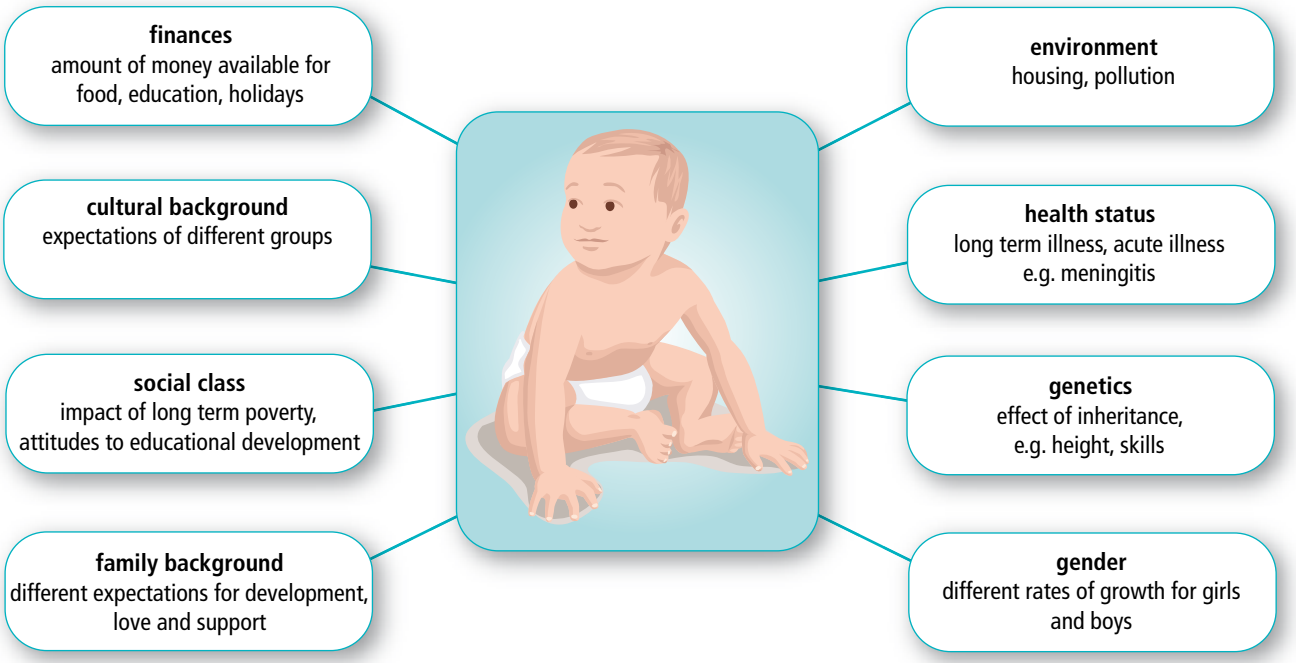
Key groups of people who have to live on very little money include one-parent families, people who are unemployed, elderly people, people who are sick or disabled, single earners and unskilled couples.

Did you know?

In 2003/04 28 per cent (3.5 million) of children in Britain were poor.

In 2004 in England only 26 per cent of children in receipt of free school meals gained five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, compared with 56 per cent of children who did not receive free meals.

Source: Child Poverty Action Group 2005



■ *Factors affecting the growth and development of a child*

Families who are poor may have enough money for food, for some clothes and for heating, but poverty means that there is little money for interesting purchases and exciting lifestyles. Families who depend on benefits have limited life choices. The latest clothes, safe reliable cars, the latest electronic equipment, holidays and so on, may not be choices for people on low incomes. Families with little money have to restrict what they can buy when they visit a supermarket or shopping centre.

In 1999 the government published a report called 'Opportunity for All' which states that the following problems prevent people (and so children) from making the most of their lives.

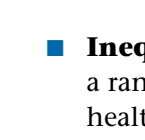
- **Lack of opportunities to work**. Work is the most important route out of low income. But the consequences of being unemployed are wider than lack of money. It can contribute to ill-health and can deny future employment opportunities.
- **Lack of opportunities to acquire education and skills**. Adults without basic skills are much more likely to spend long periods out of work.
- **Childhood deprivation**. This has linked problems of low income, poor health, poor housing and unsafe environments.
- **Disrupted families**. Evidence shows that children in lone-parent families are particularly likely to suffer the effects of persistently low household incomes. Stresses within families can lead to exclusion; in extreme cases to homelessness.

- **Inequalities in health**. Health can be affected by low income and a range of socio-economic factors such as access to good-quality health services and shops selling good-quality food at affordable prices.
- **Poor housing**. This directly affects people's quality of life and leads to a range of physical and mental health problems, and can cause difficulties for children trying to do homework.
- **Poor neighbourhoods**. The most deprived areas suffer from a combination of poor housing, high rates of crime, unemployment, poor health and family disruption.

Environment

Families who feel confident about their future income and finances can choose their lifestyle. They can also choose where they would like to live. Families in the higher social classes tend to live in more expensive housing areas with good facilities for travel and education. Families with lower incomes tend to live in more densely occupied housing areas. Families on lower incomes are often forced to rent rather than buy their homes. Different social class groups often live in different neighbourhoods. Marketing companies can use postcodes to work out what advertisements to send to different areas.

Does it matter what kind of location you live in? Many people would say that the important thing is to get on with the people you live with and that money, or the size of your house, does not matter. But there can be disadvantages to living in poor-quality or high-density housing. These can include noise, pollution, overcrowding, poor access to shops and other facilities, and stress from petty crime. When people are on a low income, household maintenance can become a problem. Poorly maintained housing can create health hazards.



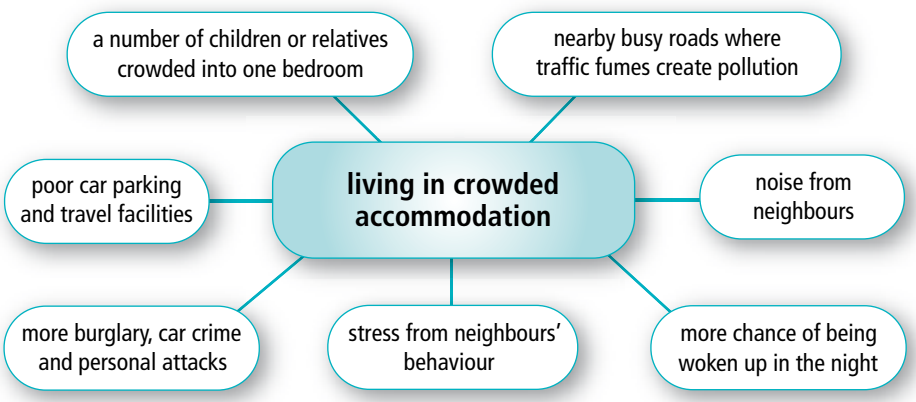
Think about it

Can you see how being poor might lead to other problems? For example, if you have a low income, you might live in a poor neighbourhood; if you live in a poor neighbourhood you may experience more fear of crime.

Did you know?

The life expectancy of a child born to a family whose parents are professionals (for example a doctor or accountant) is seven years longer than a child born at the same time to a family who are unskilled. Children from unskilled households are five times more likely to die in an accident and 15 times more likely to die in a fire.

Source: Dept of Health, Tackling Inequalities 2002



The problems created by living in overcrowded accommodation

Low income and poor housing are a source of stress to many people. The table below lists the percentages of householders who said they had problems with the issues listed in the left-hand column. In general, people with money appear to have fewer problems compared with people who live in low-income areas. Living in the suburbs or in the country may also cause less stress than living 'in town'.

Problems in the area that you live	People in wealthy suburban or rural areas	People in council or low income areas	People in wealthy urban areas	Averages
Crime	49%	66%	59%	56%
Litter and rubbish	26%	58%	49%	42%
Vandalism and hooliganism	25%	58%	42%	40%
Dogs	22%	37%	25%	29%
Noise	16%	31%	35%	23%
Graffiti	11%	36%	32%	32%
Neighbours	17%	18%	17%	13%
Racial harassment	11%	18%	19%	14%

Source: Adapted from Social Trends 2002

Think about it

Think about the housing in your area. Is the housing different in different parts? You may need to walk around the streets to note what kind of housing exists. How do you think the lifestyles of families might vary between different types of housing in your area?

Family structure

People differ from one another in the kinds of families or groups that they live in. In 2001:

- 29 per cent of homes were occupied by single people
- 23 per cent of homes were occupied by couples with dependent children
- 6 per cent were occupied by single parents with children
- 29 per cent of homes were occupied by couples with no children
- 1 per cent of homes housed more than one family.

Many people do live as couples with their children, but it would be a mistake to imagine that all people are born into and grow up in small families.

A family is a social group made up of people who are 'related' to each other. This means that other people (society) recognise that this group is related. In British society, 'family' is the word used to describe groups where adults act as parents or guardians to children. Belonging to a family can have many advantages. Family relationships can provide a safe, caring setting for children. Family groups can guide and teach children, and they can provide a source of social and emotional support for adults and older family members as well as children.

Sociologists have identified four different types of family:

- extended families
- nuclear families
- reconstituted families
- one-parent families.

Think about it

Watch the TV adverts on a typical evening. Many adverts for food products and cleaning products will show actors in a family setting. Looking at these adverts, it would seem that most houses are occupied by 30-year-old couples with two children. Is this image really how most people live?

Extended families

An extended family is where parents, children and grandparents all live together or near each other, so that they are often together. Until the mid-1950's many families in Britain lived in this way. The extended family can have many advantages. For example, parents can work all day without having to worry about who is looking after the children – the grandparents might do this. If the grandparents need care, then the parents or even the older children can help. The extended family provides a network of people who can support each other.

Case study

Living with the family

Ross lives with his brother and his mother and father on the top two floors of a very large semi-detached Victorian house near the centre of a city. Ross's mother's parents live on the ground floor of the building. They have their own bathroom and kitchen, although the whole family sometimes eat together at the weekend. Ross's parents were able to buy such a large house only because the grandparents sold their home to make it possible.

Nuclear families

A nucleus is the centre of a living cell, and the nuclear family is like the centre of the extended family on its own. By the 1950s, many people in Britain no longer lived with or near grandparents. The term nuclear family was invented to describe this new, smaller family. The original nuclear family was usually a husband who would go out to work, a wife who would look after the children while they were young, and the children.

Nowadays many couples no longer fit this description. Often both parents will have full-time work and the children are cared for by childminders, nannies, or nursery services. Male and female roles have been changing for example – men and women are now usually seen as equally responsible for household tasks. However, studies suggest that women still undertake the majority of child care and housework tasks.

Case study

Grandparents

Meena lives with her sister, mother and father in a three-bedroom, semi-detached house. Meena's grandmother (her mother's mother) lives in the Caribbean and she has not seen her for two years. Meena's father's parents live about eighty miles away, and she sees these grandparents about five to eight times each year. Meena's family moved to the house they live in three years ago when her father got a better job.

Reconstituted families

Approximately one marriage in every three now ends in divorce. Many young people live together before marriage and have children, but there is evidence that a large number of these couples split up too. Over a third of marriages each year are likely to be re-marriages, and about one million children live with a step-parent. Roughly a quarter of children might experience their parents divorcing before the age of 16.

The reconstituted family is where the couple are not both the parents of each child in the family. One partner might have been divorced from an earlier marriage, and has now re-married to create a new family. Sometimes children from different relationships may be included in a new, reconstituted family. One partner may have been single but is now married to a partner who has children from a previous relationship.

Case study

Living with a step-parent

Sarosh lives with his mother and stepfather in a modern terraced house in a small town. His mother and stepfather have been married for two years. Sarosh's 'real' father calls every other Saturday to collect him for a visit. Sarosh's mother and father divorced four years ago. His new stepfather has a daughter, Zara, who lives with her mother over two miles away. Sarosh has met Zara and they like each other, but Sarosh thinks his stepfather cares more about Zara than him.

Lone-parent families

Nearly a quarter of all families with dependent children are lone-parent families. Twenty per cent of families with dependent children are lone-parent families led by a lone mother, with just 2 per cent led by a lone father.

While some lone-parent families may be well off, many are disadvantaged. A family expenditure survey in 2000 showed that twice as many lone-parent families live on low incomes compared with couples with dependent children. Many lone parents rely on benefits or receive low income wages.

Case study

Single mother

Janice is a single mother with an eight-year-old son, living in a fourth-floor flat on a large housing estate. Janice is looking for part-time work, but her son has an attention problem at school and the school often telephones her to ask her to come and collect him or to calm him. Janice depends on Income Support to get by. She doesn't have enough money for holidays or to take her son out for the day. Janice cannot afford leisure activities which cost money. At night Janice usually stays in and watches TV. There is a high drug-related crime rate on the estate and Janice worries that her flat may be broken into.

Changing families

The type of family that a child lives in can change. An extended family can turn into a nuclear family if the grandparents die or move away. Families can become 'reconstituted' if one partner leaves and is replaced by a different person. Few people can guarantee a family style for life. When people leave their partners, divorce or die, a lone-parent family may be created. If the remaining parent finds a new partner, the lone-parent family becomes a reconstituted family. The same child might live in different family structures during childhood and adolescence.

Adult expectations

Encouragement from parents is important in how well a child develops and most parents provide motivation for their children to develop to their potential. However, over-ambitious parental expectations can have a negative impact on development as well.

Case study

Skills development

John, aged six, was the youngest of three siblings. His brother and sister were both very clever and doing very well at school. John was less interested in lessons, and was slower than his brother and sister in learning to read but was very friendly with everyone and loved helping to look after the younger children. His parents were worried and employed extra help in reading for John. He started crying before school every morning, and complaining of tummy ache. Things got worse and instead of being a friendly happy little boy, John became very quiet and unhappy. Eventually John's teacher called his parents in and pointed out to them that all children develop at different rates and that too much pressure can slow down the development of skills if a child feels under pressure. Once his parents started to accept John for his own qualities and stopped the extra reading lessons and pressure, John soon started to flourish again.

Effects of disability or sensory impairment

Disability and sensory impairment, for example loss of sight or hearing, can delay development in some children. This is because an essential part of the whole picture of development may be missing. If you think about how important hearing speech is before a child can talk, it is not surprising that communication skills may be delayed. Multi-agency child development centres work with children who have some form of disability to help to promote their development.

Promoting growth and development

There has been a lot of political activity in recent years aimed at reducing the number of children living in poverty and in reducing the impact of poverty on child development and life chances. Sure Start is one of the best known of these and its remit is to develop children's centres in areas of poverty and deprivation. A number of services aimed at helping children – from education, health and social services – work together with families to improve children's futures.

Think about it

Are there any multi-agency organisations in your area for example? Find out what they are and what they do. You could ask your tutor to invite someone from such a multi-agency organisation to talk to your group about their work.

Recent governments have finally recognised the impact of economic well being and other factors on a child's development. There have been many programmes and developments to support families and to help children to move to a more equitable situation. For example:

- **Financial support**. Family tax credits to help families financially.
- **Family centres**. These have joint working between health, education and social care agencies.
- **Children's and Young People's Trust**. This has joint working between all agencies at local authority level

Assessment activities

Assessment Activity 1

Working with a partner or in a small group think about growth and development. Write down what is meant by growth and development and the principles of growth and development.

On a large sheet of paper or flipchart answer the following:

1 What does 'holistic' mean when we are thinking about children's growth and development?

2 What do we mean by the term 'interconnected? You can draw a large diagram to illustrate this.

One principle is that development is mainly in the same sequence for all babies and young children, although the rate of development may be different for different individuals. With your partner or in your group try and write a brief explanation of what this means.

There are also different stages and sequences of growth and development.

What are these different stages? For example, birth to one year.

You can now write notes to meet the first Pass criterion (P1). For this you must describe the principles, stages and sequences of growth and development in children. Remember that this must be your own work.

continued ▶

Assessment Activity 2

Produce four charts to show how children develop in different areas of development through the different stages as follows:

1. A chart to show how children develop physically in each of the different stages: 0–3 years, 4–7 years, 8–12 years and 13–16 years.
2. A chart to show how children develop socially and emotionally.
3. A chart to show how their communication and speech develops.
4. A chart to show how they develop intellectually.

This will enable you to meet the second Pass criterion for this unit (P2) for which you have to outline the physical, emotional, social, communication and intellectual development of children 0–3 years, 4–7 years, 8–12 years and 13–16 years.

Assessment Activity 3

You can now go on to look at the differences in the development of children in the different age groups.

Using the charts you produced in Assessment Activity 2 describe the differences in development of children in the different age groups. This enables you to meet a Merit criterion (M1).

Assessment Activity 4

List all the factors that affect children's growth and development.

This will be quite a long list and should include: health, genetic inheritance, gender, family background and structure, social class, cultural background, finances, poverty, environment and housing, disability, discrimination and the agencies such as health services that work for and with children and young people. You also need to include maturation, and how this is affected by experience and expectations.

Next, write a few sentences about each of these factors.

When you have done this you will have met the third Pass criterion for this unit (P3).

Assessment Activity 5

Building on the work you have done for P3 you can now explain how parental income, health status and parental expectations might affect children's growth and development. Remember that when you explain something you have to do more than just describe it. You have to say how and why these factors might affect children.

When you have explained the effects of these factors you will have met the second Merit criterion (M2).

1.2 Understand the role of observation of children's development in the workplace

This section covers:

- purpose of careful observation
- objectivity
- confidentiality
- reporting observations
- methods of recording observations.

Purpose of careful observation

Why do you think that observation skills are so important in a child care setting?

We have already looked at how complex and variable children's development is. It is essential that anyone working with children can identify if a child is having problems and needing extra support, or is able to assess whether work with a child is effective or not.

How do you think you could identify how advanced a child is in their development and then plan activities or work with them to support them and enhance their development further?

The answer is through observation skills.

Sometime in the future, when you are very experienced as a child care worker, you should have the skills to be in a room with children and, by watching them, be able to identify aspects of their development and progress and any issues causing concern. This is a skill that takes many years of experience, and even then experienced staff still have cause to carry out a specific observation on some children.

Observing is more than just watching – you are also **noticing** and **thinking** at the same time. You might, for example, watch a child building with bricks, but notice how the child fits them together or how he holds them and how he reacts if another child is nearby. Observation is a skill, and it is a fascinating one to have. It makes working with children more interesting, and because you are more aware of children's needs and strengths, it helps makes you a more effective worker.

■ *Observing a child*

Objectivity

There are some important points to remember about observing.

Observation is time spent specifically to record certain things about a child, and then to draw conclusions from that record. It should be **objective**. This means you should almost imagine this is the first time you have seen the child so you are not jumping to conclusions. It is difficult to forget that a child is often very challenging but good observations can help you to work towards finding out why the child is 'naughty'. An essential part of observing is to avoid jumping to conclusions. Remember that early years' workers are not doctors, speech therapists or psychologists. To avoid wrongly assessing children, it is always a good idea to carry out several observations and also to ask someone else to watch a child in action. Observers can focus in on different things, so someone else who might have more experience may come to a different conclusion.

Confidentiality

Observations should be **confidential**. This means they should not be shared with everyone but only with the staff or other professional (for example psychologists or speech therapists) who need to know the results. Any records of observations should be kept in the child's file. Remember, the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information legislation gives parents access to information written about their children. You should never put anything on paper or file that is untrue or not based on evidence.

Think about it

Where are observations, assessments and conclusions about children stored in your placement? Who has access to them?

Always think about the ethical considerations of an observation. Is there a valid reason for the observation? Children are not laboratory experiments; be careful about doing observations that are not necessary – especially of a child who has special needs or behaviour difficulties who may well have been observed too often already. Sometimes, knowing they are being observed can make a child's behaviour worse.

Reporting observations

Important information from an observation should be **reported** as appropriate. As a student you are only likely to be observing children in your placement to learn about development. However, if you see something that does not seem within your expectations it is important that you report this to your supervisor as soon as possible so he or she can decide if action is needed.

Case study

Maintaining confidentiality

Jason has just completed an observation on Dylan, a four year old. He is certain that Dylan is delayed in his speech development. Just as he is finishing, Dylan's mother arrives to pick him up. Jason tells her about his theory. The mother is surprised and upset and immediately sees the supervisor.

What has Jason done wrong?

Explain why it is important not to jump to premature conclusions when observing children.

What is the process in your placement for dealing with concerns about a child based on an observation?

Think about it

Find out how your placement shares information with parents and involves them in the observation and assessment process. Find out how often your placement routinely observes children and for what purpose.

In order to get an overall picture of children, observers need to talk to the children themselves and also to their **families**. When children are observed, they may be very different from usual. At home, relaxed and with family members, children can be quite different. This can mean that a child, who appears to be very quiet at school, is talkative and boisterous at home.

Any records of observations should be shared with parents and discussed with them by qualified staff. In schools this might take place during parents' evenings. In nurseries and pre-schools the findings of observations may be shared with parents when they come to collect their child.

Case study

Observing behaviour

Izzy was puzzled about Luke, aged three. He seemed to be avoiding playing outside on the big equipment which he had always enjoyed before. She spent some time observing him doing different activities and realised he didn't seem to be using his right arm very well. Izzy told her manager about this and as a result of going to the hospital with his parents, it was discovered Luke had injured his shoulder. After treatment he was soon playing out on the slide and swings again.

Methods of recording observations

Observations may be **formal** or **informal**. As the words suggest, a formal observation is one that is planned ahead and for a specific purpose. An informal one is more opportunistic; based on perhaps seeing a child engaged in an activity that shows a particular aspect of behaviour or development.

Method	How they work	Disadvantages
Checklists, tick charts	Focus the observer on one aspect of development May be used with more than one child at a time Can be repeated	Different people might produce different results The focus on skills that the child is showing might miss out how unhappy the child is Children might feel that they have failed if they cannot do a task The checklist and tick charts have to be relevant and appropriate to the child's stage of development

Child's name ..... Date .....

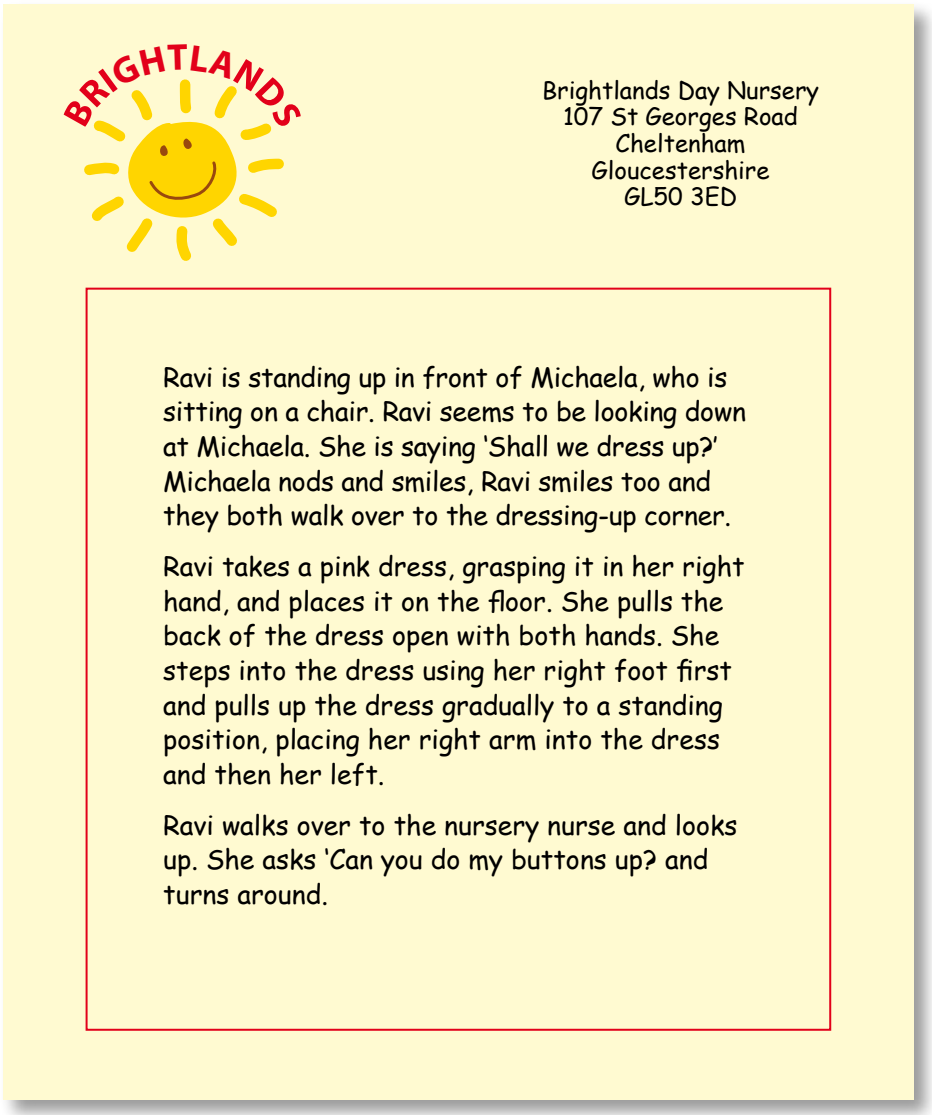
Date of Birth ..... Observer .....

Developmental checklist

By 12 months	Yes	No	Sometimes
Pick objects with finger and thumb?			
Transfer items from one hand to the other?			
Look for an object hidden under a beaker?			
Look at a person who is speaking to him or her?			
Make tuneful babbling sounds such as Da-da			
Respond to different sounds e.g. drum, bell			
Imitate gestures such as pat cake and bye bye			
Hold beaker using two hands?			
Use fingers to eat finger foods such as squares of bread?			
Pick up dropped toys?			
React to the word 'No'?			
Reacts to own name?			

■ *Example of a checklist*

Method	How they work	Disadvantages
Written records/ snapshot observations	Brief descriptions of what a child is doing in a particular time span They are popular with parents as they provide a written picture of their child Used to record any or several areas of development	Different observers might focus on different things, so can be difficult to repeat You need to be able to write quickly to capture all information It can be hard to find the right language to describe what you are seeing



■ *Example of a written record of an observation*

Method	How they work	Disadvantages
Time samples	You look at what a child does at different times over a period of time, such as a morning or part of an afternoon. This means that you gain a more complete picture of the child Can be used for more than one child and one or more areas of development	A piece of significant behaviour may not be recorded if it happens outside of the time slot

Event	Activity	Social group	Comments
11.00	Snack time	Whole group	Anna is sitting with her legs swinging on a chair. She is eating an apple. She is holding it in her left hand and she is smiling. She puts up her hand when a staff member asks who wants a biscuit.
11.15	Outdoor play Climbing frame	Anna and Ben	Anna is on the top bar of the climbing frame. She is smiling at Ben. She is calling 'Come on up here!'
11.30	Taking coats off	Anna, Ben and Manjit	Anna unzips the coat and pulls out one arm. She swings around and the coat moves around. She laughs and looks at Manjit.

Example of a time sample

Method	How they work	Disadvantages
Event samples	Used to look at how often and in what circumstances a child shows a particular behaviour – as described on the sheet – filled in when seen Can be used by more than one observer Can be used to look at unwanted behaviour such as hitting Can also be used to find out about how often a child talks or plays with other children	An observer may not always be present at the time of the behaviour May forget to fill in the event sample

Event	Time	Situation	Social group	Dialogue
1	9.16 am	Curren is hovering near the painting	Susan + 2 children table	A–C 'Do you want to come and paint a picture too?' C–A nods head
2	9.27 am	Curren is finishing painting	Susan + 2 children	A–C 'Have you finished?' C smiles 'It's a lovely picture. Tell me a little bit about it.' C–A 'It's my mum. Can't take my apron off.' A–C 'Wait still, I'll do it.' Curren hands apron to Susan and runs over to sand area
3	10.12 am	Curren is waiting for his drink snack time	Curren is sitting next to Ahmed. Jo is handing out drinks	A–C 'Milk or squash, Curren?' C–A 'Milk.' A–C 'Can you remember the magic word?' C–A 'Thank you.' A–C 'Good boy.'
4	10.19 am	Curren is putting on his coat in the cloakroom area	Jo + 5 children	C–A 'Can't put coat on.' A–C 'Keep still. There you are. You can go out now.'
5	10.36 am	Curren is waiting for his turn by the slide	Jo + 2 children	A–C 'Good boy. It's your go now.' C smiles C–A 'I go fast down now.'

■ *Example of an event sample*

Remember – observations do have limitations!

- Observations are not perfect.
- They tell you about the child at that particular moment and in that condition.
- Knowing they are being watched can affect what children do.
- Children play quite differently when they think that no one is looking at them.
- It is hard to be absolutely accurate when you are observing as there is so much to notice. Two people watching the same child can notice quite different things about the child.
- It is difficult to be totally objective, especially if unwanted behaviour is being seen!

Best practice in your work placement

How to carry out observations

- Always ask your supervisor before carrying out any observation on a child.
- Carry out observations and assessments in line with your placement's policy.
- Make sure that you have everything you need to hand.
- Observe children sensitively and without them noticing.
- Write up your observations in a sensitive and non-judgemental way.
- Avoid making any negative judgements about children.
- Make sure that any conclusions are based directly on your observations.
- Share your findings with your supervisor so that they can be passed on to parents.

Case study

Observing George

Jennifer wants to observe whether George, aged three, can draw a face. He has been busy playing, but she interrupts his play to ask him to come over to the table. She sits next to him and asks him to draw a picture of his little sister Ruby. George takes the pencil, looks at Jennifer and says he can't do it. He then asks if he can go back to play in the sand again. Jennifer says of course he can and then writes down on her paper that he cannot draw a face. She is surprised later when another member of staff shows her a painting that he has done of his family with clearly marked faces.

1 Give two reasons why George may have not drawn a face.

2 How might Jennifer have done this observation in a better way?

Assessment activities

Assessment Activity 6

Think about why it is useful to observe children. Discuss this with a partner and write some notes about the reasons for observing children. Your answer should include getting to know about a child's development and, identifying a child's needs, for example, the child may be tired or unwell. You should also include concerns about a child, for example, a particular child may be showing a lot of aggressive behaviour.

continued ▶

Assessment Activity 7

You need to think about the different ways in which we observe children. For instance we may observe them informally through watching and thinking or through more formal methods of observation. Discuss with a partner what time samples and event samples are and make notes of their meanings.

Now think about recording methods. Together with a partner, write a running record of each other or of somebody else in your class. Find a checklist that somebody has used and have a look at what it is like.

Assessment Activity 8

An important part of observation, if it is to be useful, is to ensure that we are not jumping to conclusions. We need to be objective.

Observe somebody else in your class and compare your observation with that of somebody else. This is part of checking your views with somebody else. Are there any differences in your observations? If there are any differences, what might the reasons be for these? Write these down. You should try and include things like looking at somebody else from your own viewpoint only instead of being objective and trying to stand outside of yourself. Another reason might be ignorance of the person being observed.

Assessment Activity 9

Another part of the role of observation of children is to report your findings to one of the workers in your placement. Discuss in a group who you report findings and concerns to. You may find that it is different from one placement to another. You should make some notes of your discussion as these will be useful for your assignment.

Also in your group you should discuss the importance of confidentiality and what the procedures are for sharing information. What about ethical considerations? Is it ethical to observe children to find out about them if you have not had their permission or the permission of the parent or placement staff? Again you should make notes to prepare for your assignment.

Assessment Activity 10

You should now put your notes together from these four activities.

You should have written why it is useful to observe children, what sorts of methods are used, the need to be objective and to report your findings and the need for confidentiality.

You have now covered P4, which requires you to outline the role of observation of children's development.

1.3 Know how to observe children's development

This section covers:

- observing and noting children's physical development
- observing and noting children's social and emotional development
- observing children's communication and intellectual development.

Observing children's development

Observation has a number of different roles in early years and children's settings. As you become more practised at using your skills you will cover most aspects of children's development.

Use this checklist, or find the one in your professional practice folder, to make sure that you see and practise the following aspects of development as you practice observation skills.

Observing children's physical development	Observing children's social and emotional development	Observing children's communication and intellectual development
Consider how children: ■ move about ■ co-ordinate their movements ■ use space and large equipment ■ manipulate and use small equipment.	Observe: ■ how children behave in everyday situations ■ how children express feelings and emotions ■ how children relate to each other and to adults ■ how confident children are and how they feel about themselves (self-concept).	Consider how children: ■ play ■ use their imagination ■ take on the roles of others ■ concentrate on activities ■ memorise things ■ solve problems ■ pay attention to what is around them ■ use their senses to gain new information.

■ *Checklist of aspects of development that need to be observed*

Assessment activities

Assessment Activity 11

You now need to show that you are able to observe children's development.

You should observe and record the physical, social, emotional, communication and intellectual development of children. You will probably have to observe several children over a period of time in order to achieve this.

When you have undertaken and recorded these observations you will have covered P5.

Assessment Activity 12

You now need to consider P4 as well as the observations you have undertaken. You should explain, saying how and why you undertook the steps you did to ensure the effective and appropriate observation of children. You will need to answer the following:

- What were the reasons for the observation?
- Why did you choose the methods you used?
- Whose permission did you obtain?
- How did you try to be as objective as possible and not jump to any conclusion?
- To whom did you report your findings?
- How did you maintain confidentiality?

When you have done this you will have met M3. This requires you to explain the steps undertaken to ensure the effective and appropriate observation of children.

Assessment Activity 13

You may now like to think carefully about the development of one of the children you have observed. Using the developmental charts you have already produced you should check what you would expect of a child of this age.

In order to meet Distinction criterion 1 (D1) you must compare the development of a child that you have observed with the expected development of a child of this age.

1.4 Understand the required planning to support children's needs and development

This section covers:

- planning
- participation
- children's needs and development.

Planning

Children need support and help to encourage their development in all the areas we have been looking at. The role of adults is to support the children in developing skills. This support is not possible without careful planning. Good planning is based on a thorough understanding of the needs of all the children involved.

All the planning and preparation involved in an activity will be wasted if you have not thought about a vital question: have the children reached the required stage of development, and do they possess the skills necessary to take part in and enjoy the activity? A good understanding of child development and observation of children playing and working will help you to develop the knowledge you need to work out the answer to this question. Most activities are planned with the aim of extending children's skill levels, but skills cannot be extended or developed if the child is not ready for that next step.

Think about it

It requires quite a high degree of manipulative skill to put jigsaw pieces together. Children need to learn to use slot-in jigsaw boards first. Next they move on to jigsaws with very large pieces, and then to harder puzzles. Giving a child a 20-piece jigsaw is of little use if all they have mastered so far are six-piece puzzles!

Planning cycle

Effective planning can make all the difference to the success of an activity. You may have heard of the 'planning cycle'. The planning cycle is a very useful tool in work with children.

Planning happens at a variety of levels in a children's setting. It can be over a term, a month or a week ahead. Themes can be developed especially for younger children, for example seasons, festivals or colours.

Using observations to support planning

Within the framework of the overall plan, there will be small-scale planning of individual activities to ensure that the needs of all children are met. This will be based on observations and assessments of children with the planned activities scheduled to support their development to the next phase.

Planning activities

As a student you may be lucky enough to be at meetings where the overall plan and themes are being decided, at least in the department you are working in. You certainly should be able to see the plan for the coming weeks, and look at where you could plan some individual activities within that. There are different ways of planning an activity, even within the early years curriculum.

Unstructured planning for activities

Unstructured planning occurs when an adult provides an activity for children to use in their own way. The outcomes may be very different from the intention of the adult. For example, a water play activity with different containers for different volumes and density may result in the children discarding the heavier items and larger containers and using the smaller, lighter ones as boats.

Structured activities

A structured activity is planned by the adults with a specific learning outcome as the focus. For example, a cooking activity may be used to investigate ingredients, ask why things happen, aid personal, social and emotional development, and encourage working as part of a group and taking turns.

Experiential activities

An experiential activity uses the environment and expected or unexpected activities to learn from, for example the arrival of new-born lambs in the field adjoining the nursery; an adult or child going to the dentist.

Thematic activities

Thematic activities use a realistic activity relevant to a child's experience to provide opportunities to develop in several or all areas of the curriculum, for example a trip to the local park or a 'shop' inside the setting. A thematic plan is often split into the various areas of development to ensure a range of suitable activities are provided. Extension activities can then be included, for example if there are ducks on the pond in the park a suitable story and songs can be used back at the centre. Relevant creative work using images and experiences can be planned.

Supporting children's needs

The needs of children have an overall global list for different age groups but these are then made specific to each individual. Have a look at these children and their needs.

0–3 years: comfortable, safe, secure environment
good quality care routines
close and loving relationships
inclusion and equal access
communication
opportunity to play

4–7 years:	safe, secure and encouraging environment close and consistent relationships age-appropriate activities, materials and experiences assessing risk communication consistent response to behaviour
8–12 years:	safe and secure environment opportunities for exploration and different experiences wide range of communication methods allowing to take risks praise and encouragement sensitive answers to questions about adult issues support when moving schools
13–16 years:	support learning and development positive communication assess and take risks and face challenges praise and encouragement acceptance and love

■ *Activities for children should take account of their age and needs*

Can you see the common issues regardless of age but also the increasing need to allow a child freedom to develop their individuality?

It is important to recognise that within each need there are many variations depending on each child. The secret of good support is in adapting the support to each individual child's needs.

That information can only be gained from detailed observation and assessments.

Think about it

Can you think of an activity you have prepared for which the child was not ready? What did you do in the situation?

Participation

As a student on placement you are not likely to be involved too much in the formal planning meetings held in your placement. However, you may well attend meetings and should be discussing your progress, and how effective you are in your activities and time with the children, with your supervisor.

Although you are one of the most junior members of the team you may well be seeing behaviours or trends in a child that are not noticed by other staff. You may also have ideas for activities that others have not thought of.

It is important that you do make a contribution by making suggestions – maybe in discussions with your supervisor or other slightly more senior staff. Having the confidence to do this can take time and we will be looking at how you can develop the skills needed for this in Unit 5.

One very useful way understanding how effective planning can be is to note good practice in your placement and then talk about why it works so well with someone senior.

Think about it

Choose two activities using different skills that you have helped with in your placement. Make a chart. Show the age of the children, the skills and activities required, and notes on how the children coped.

1. *Were changes made for different children?*
2. *Do you think there should have been?*

Cultural differences and equal opportunities

It is essential that the interests of all children are met in an activity. Careful consideration is needed to be sure that all children can join in, and that adaptations can be made to accommodate a child who may be shy or timid, have hearing impairments, or have poor co-ordination in his or her movements, in fact any particular need a child may have. If there are children from a range of cultural backgrounds, they should be equally considered.

Research other cultures in depth. Involve parents or other members of the community to help, and celebrate the diversity of all our cultures in a fun and interesting way. Think of ways you can promote positive images of different cultures and social classes. Think about books, posters and materials that you use. Will any child feel excluded by them? For example, a story that concentrates on a family setting with both parents at home is fine, but you need to balance this with pictures of one-parent families.

If you ask children to bring items in for a topic or the interest table, be sure it will not cost too much for the family. Be sensitive to children when talking about festivals; families who are Muslim, for example, or Jehovah's Witness do not celebrate Christmas for different reasons.

Reassessing an activity to make sure that it is suitable for all the children is often only a case of remembering the basic principles shown in the checklist below.

Think about it

Observe a well-structured and organised nursery for part of a session. At the end, ask the person in charge how the session was planned and organised. Think about aspects of the adults' roles or the use of materials that impressed you, say if anything surprised you, and indicate if you feel there were areas for improvement.

Best practice in your work placement

Planning activities

Make sure you have a thorough knowledge of all the children in your group before you start planning.

- What are each child's needs?
- How are they different to the needs of another child?
- How might this activity need adapting to meet their needs?
- Is there enough room for children to move around?
- Is the equipment suitable for all children? Have you provided a range of sizes of paint brushes, for example?
- Is there special equipment for particular children?
- Can equipment be reached by all the children, to promote independence?
- Do any of the children require practical assistance, for example putting on aprons, moving to the table?
- Ask the children if they need help, rather than waiting for them to ask you.

When you are planning activities that develop a child's creative skills, do not make the mistake of basing your planning on your own cultural or gender identity. You will not meet all needs in this way. Look at the following examples.

- When baking it would be easy to limit your ideas to those you are familiar with, especially as you want to be comfortable with the activity. A simple way of broadening it is to see if an adult from a culture other than yours can be involved.
- Look for books or computer software that are in dual languages, for example English and Urdu, which will appeal to all children in your nursery or school.
- When helping to set up an interest table, use the opportunity to focus on another culture or race.
- Choose a topic that is popularly viewed as mainly female or male, and deliberately widen the appeal and interest to both genders.

Think about it

You have chosen the story Cinderella to read to the children and develop into an activity. As you read it, you realise that it is based on gender and appearance. The wicked stepmother is very stereotypical too. How could you adapt the story, and subsequent activities, to challenge these stereotypes?

How children learn

Underlying the planning of successful activities are some basic principles about how children learn.

- Children learn best when material suits the stage they have reached in their development.
- Attention needs to be given to the whole child, that is, to physical, moral and emotional needs as well as intellectual needs.

- Children learn in an integrated manner, they do not separate learning to speak from learning about numbers.
- Children learn best when they are allowed to try things out and make mistakes.
- Children need to have their efforts recognised and valued.
- You should always start with what a child can do, not what a child cannot do.
- Conditions for learning have to be positive to ensure the development of creativity and imagination; children need materials and encouragement.
- There are particular times when a child is ready to learn certain skills.
- A child's relationships with other children and adults are very important.
- Unit 4 covers all the information about a child's physical needs: toileting, feeding and weaning that you need to consider when planning to support a child. You should be aware of a child's needs at the age and stage they have reached. It is not much use planning a day for a baby of six months and not having suitable pureed food available, or suitable nappies!
- Likewise Unit 6 covers how to support play and learning and needs to be referred to when planning play.
- Always think about the individual needs of each child and remember that two children of the same age will be very different to each other. Can you think how they might be different? Think about:
  - stage of development
  - dietary likes and dislikes
  - cultural impact
  - personality
  - parental wishes.

Assessment activities

Assessment Activity 14

Using one of the observations you have already undertaken, write how you might use this observation to plan an activity to help the child's development. For instance, you may have observed that a child's eye–hand co-ordination was not good and that you might help the child with an activity that involves threading beads.

continued ▶

Assessment Activity 15

Planning is not usually done by one person on their own. Usually a small team of people get together to discuss plans for activities for children's development.

In a small group in your class role play a planning meeting in an early years placement. Note how you and others contribute ideas and suggestions at this meeting. Discuss and write notes about this.

Assessment Activity 16

In your group brainstorm and draw up lists of how different materials can support children's play and how equipment can be useful to support different activities.

Assessment Activity 17

In a small group discuss and make notes about how children's needs can be supported by the way that caring routines such as toileting, feeding and weaning are planned.

Assessment Activity 18

Using your notes from the previous four activities you can now outline how to take part in planning to support children's development. This enables you to meet Pass criterion 6 (P6).

Assessment Activity 19

Using the observations you have already carried out, choose one of these and suggest a plan to support the development of one of the children you have observed.

This enables you to meet Merit criterion 4 (M4).

Assessment Activity 20

Using the plan you have suggested in Assessment Activity 19, describe the strengths and weaknesses of this plan to meet the development of the observed child. This enables you to meet Distinction criterion 2 (D2).